Peter in Italy: compositional responses to place through an employment of musical topics

[Commentary]

Peter Longworth

A thesis submitted for the degree of PhD
at the
Royal Conservatoire of Scotland
&
University of St Andrews

2024

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I was admitted as a research student at the University of St Andrews and the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland in September 2016.

I received funding from the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland and have acknowledged this in the full text of my thesis.

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GENERAL ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Over the past seven years of research, I have been immensely fortunate to be surrounded by kind and supportive people, from family and friends, to the inspiring members of the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland's Research and Knowledge Exchange department. As such, I owe a great debt of gratitude to a large number of people. Chief amongst them is my principal supervisor, Dr Stuart MacRae, who has given so generously of his time and been supportive not only of my research, but of my music in a wider sense. His insightful comments and perceptive advice have made me a better composer, whilst, during more difficult times, it has been his encouragement and belief in my ability alone which has empowered me to continue composing. Supporting Stuart brilliantly in the form of a second supervisor has been my long-term mentor and friend, Matthew King, whose encyclopaedic knowledge and passion for musical playfulness continue to inspire me after so many years. My one regret during the course of my research is that I have not been able to spend more time in Glasgow, owing to work commitments in London. That I have felt so thoroughly supported in my work, and included in conservatoire life in spite of this, is testament to the kindness not only of my fellow doctoral candidates, but of Professor Stephen Broad and Dr Bethany Whiteside, whose warmth and generosity has been astonishing.

Undertaking a doctorate can become an all-consuming process, and throughout its various challenges, my incredible wife, Barbara, has been a remarkable pillar of strength, supporting me relentlessly through a whirlwind of emotions. Over the past few years she has performed many roles with her inimitable energy, positivity, and patience, from first-listener to my pieces, to wise confidante. She has, moreover, been a muse — the contours of her wonderfully musical speaking voice directly

resulting in many a musical idea in my portfolio. Barbara's family — her parents, Valeria and Mario, her aunt and uncle, Paola and Cesare, and her late grandfather, Italiano — have been unfailingly loving and supportive of me during this time, too, and I am particularly grateful to them for introducing me to so much of Italy, which has become such a crucial source of inspiration to my music.

I would, moreover, like to express my deepest and most heartfelt thanks to my very first supporters: my mother, Kate, my father, Robin, and my own late grandfather, Alan, without whom no acknowledgement would be complete. Not a day goes by when I am not grateful to my father for sharing with me his love of jazz, cinema, and, above all, Ravel. Put simply, my music would sound very different were it not for our time spent listening to music and watching films together. If I write music at all, however, it is thanks to my mother, whose greatest gift to me has been that of imagination. My earliest memories are of reading and inventing stories with her, and this love of escaping into made-up worlds is what fuels my need to compose to this day. This would, of course, be more than enough, and yet she has also dedicated an incalculable number of hours to proofreading my thesis in its various drafts, always ready at the end of a phone to debate comma placements, wordings, and sentence lengths!

Finally, none of the submitted compositions would exist in their current form – or, in some cases, at all – were it not for the ensembles and musicians who commissioned them. I would, therefore, like to place on record my thanks to the London Mozart Players and trumpeter, Paul Archibald; the Orchestra of Opera North and their Music Director, Garry Walker; the Orion Orchestra and their former conductor, Gary Matthewman; the Edinburgh Quartet; and the Hebrides Ensemble whose Artistic Director, Will Conway, has been a continual presence in my development as a composer. The opportunity to write for these well-established ensembles has been both an honour and a source of encouragement for me as a composer, and I have learnt a great deal from working with such knowledgeable and experienced performers.

I consider myself immensely fortunate, moreover, to have close relationships with many of my talented contemporaries. Such collaborations are represented in my portfolio by works written, with gratitude, for the following performers and dear friends: violinist, Emily Davis-Robb; guitarist, Sasha Savaloni; oboist, Mary Noden (whom I have known since our time as members of the National Youth Orchestra of Scotland); flutist, Adriana Ferreira; trumpeter, Alfonso González Barquín (a long-term performer of my trumpet music); and trumpet quartet, Bella Tromba, whose founder, Jo Harris, has championed my music for well over a decade at the time of writing.

A few votes of thanks are also due with regard to my orchestral work, *Manhattan Matins.* The work, in its original orchestration, was commissioned by the Wimbledon Community Orchestra (made possible by a generous donation from a good friend who wishes to remain anonymous), with a subsequent version for chamber orchestra recorded by the Guildhall Session Orchestra, owing to the kind generosity of Professor Mike Roberts, Head of Electronic and Produced Music at the Guildhall School. The version of *Manhattan Matins* for symphony orchestra which is included in my portfolio was, meanwhile, premiered in Manhattan itself by the New Conductors Orchestra of New York City under the baton of Dr Mark Powell. I am incredibly grateful to all of these ensembles and their musicians for enabling the piece to have such a rich and varied start to its life.

FUNDING

This research was made possible with the generous support of a Royal Conservatoire of Scotland Studentship, for which I am extremely grateful.

ABSTRACT

This body of work is informed by the composer's experiences of, and interest in, specific places, with his wife's native Italy a recurrent source of inspiration. The research explores this creative stimulus from different angles through a portfolio of eleven original compositions, ranging from solo works to orchestral pieces. Many of these respond to the sonic or physical landscapes of specific places, or to the sensations that are awakened by the composer's memories of being in a certain location, often during a particular time of day. Other works are more indirect in their approach, engaging with places in a cultural context through the lens of literature or traditional melodies.

These various types of engagement with place are united by the employment of topics: 'musical signs [which] consist of a signifier (a certain disposition of musical dimensions) and a signified (a conventional stylistic unit, often but not always referential in quality)' (Agawu, 1991, p.49). Rather than inventing new topics, the music harnesses the evocative capacity of a collection of pre-existing topics, from nocturnes and fanfares to different manifestations of the pastoral, in response to various place-informed stimuli. In the portfolio's most pictorial works, imitations (drawn largely from transcriptions of field recordings) of bird- and insect-song, church bells, and vehicle noises constitute, moreover, examples of what musicologist Raymond Monelle termed 'iconic topics' through their 'representation… of natural [and in this case, man-made] sounds' (Monelle, 2006, p.28). That 'topic' derives from the Greek topos or 'place' is apposite given the nature of the research, and the submitted works may be heard as an exploration of this connection through their use of 'musical places' to suggest elements of physical, or remembered, ones.

PORTFOLIO CONTENTS

This research, comprising eleven compositions and an accompanying commentary, is submitted in three folders as set out below. A fourth folder contains the relevant permission forms.

Folder 1: 'P. Longworth – PhD Composition Portfolio – Scores'
1. Days of Bells and Flying Creatures.pdf
2. Sonata con serenata.pdf
3. Prelude (with bird, cicadas, and bells).pdf
4. Tales from the Pentamerone.pdf
5. Island Verses.pdf
6. In the golden sky the swallows turn.pdf
7. Tu scendi dalle stelle.pdf
8. Bergamasca.pdf
9. Manhattan Matins.pdf
10. Nocturne (with rain and poplars).pdf
11. Nocturne & Masquerade.pdf

Folder 2: 'P. Longworth – PhD Composition Portfolio – Audio'
1a. Days of Bells and Flying Creatures, I. Bird, Cicadas, Fly.aif
1b. Days of Bells and Flying Creatures, II. Morning Bells and Sunday Mass.aiff
1c. Days of Bells and Flying Creatures, III. Dove Aria.aiff
1d. Days of Bells and Flying Creatures, IV. Midday Bells.aiff
1e. Days of Bells and Flying Creatures, V. Waltzing Doves.aiff
1f. Days of Bells and Flying Creatures, VI. Bird, Cicadas, Rooster.aiff
1g. Days of Bells and Flying Creatures, VII. Evening Bells.aiff
2. Sonata con serenata.wav
3. Prelude (with bird, cicadas, and bells).mp3
4. Tales from the Pentamerone.mp3
5. Island Verses.wav
6. In the golden sky the swallows turn.wav
7. Tu scendi dalle stelle.wav
8. Bergamasca.mp3
9. Manhattan Matins.mov
10. Nocturne (with rain and poplars).aiff
11. Nocturne & Masquerade.mp4

Folder 3: 'P. Longworth - PhD Commentary'
Thesis-Peter-Longworth-commentary.docx
Thesis-Peter-Longworth-commentary.pdf

Folder 4: 'P. Longworth – PhD Composition Portfolio – Permissions'
Signed permission form – Richard Wigmore, translator.pdf

COMMENTARY CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Background

As an only child growing up in rural Scotland, I spent many hours lost in my own imagination, inventing stories to keep myself entertained. It was perhaps, then, natural that upon developing an interest in music, I should be drawn to its powers of evocation, and my burgeoning fascination was supplemented by reading the biographies of composers – in some cases before hearing a note of their music. One such biography, Robert Layton's *Sibelius* (1965), made a particularly strong impression on me, owing to the connections that it drew between the composer's music and the landscape in which he lived (p.78). Layton's descriptions of the lakes and forests of Sibelius' native Finland did not seem so different from their Scottish counterparts, and – as I was not yet equipped to 'hear' the score excerpts included within the text – I formed my own impression of how this music might sound. I did not attempt to notate the sounds that I imagined, and I quickly discovered that the music in my head bore little resemblance to Sibelius' own. Nevertheless, my 'imagined' pieces, to borrow an expression from John Adams (2008, p.22), were valuable, proto-compositional exercises which encouraged me to consider how musical ideas might be stimulated by one's environment.

These confessional opening sentences contextualise my current compositional approach which – in its mining of my own experiences in places I have lived or spent time – remains decidedly autobiographical in outlook. Unlike Sibelius, however, my own work looks but rarely to my native country. Instead my pieces, at the level of extra-musical impetus, may initially appear more closely aligned with those of a musical 'tourist' such as Mendelssohn (Seaton, 2004, pp.100-103), in their tendency to look abroad for inspiration. This comparison is certainly applicable to works such as my

orchestral 'postcard' of New York City, *Manhattan Matins* (2021)[1], but is a less precise fit for the collection of Tuscan-inspired pieces which account for a significant portion of my portfolio.

The consequence of my marriage to an Italian, and the sustained periods of time that I have spent in her family's home near Pisa, these Tuscan works stem from a more prolonged cultural immersion than that experienced by the majority of non-Italian composers (from Elgar[2] to Birtwistle[3]) who have drawn inspiration from *il bel paese*. Indeed, my affinity with Tuscany has, over time, deepened to the extent that I no longer consider my connection to the region to be that of a typical tourist. Rather my position is more readily comparable to that of Hans Werner Henze, whose emigrant experiences of living in Italy (Griffiths, 1995, p.173) were an important influence upon his work.

As exemplified by my Tuscan pieces, the act of returning to the same place for inspiration has become an important part of my practice, with *Days of Bells and Flying Creatures* (2017)[4], *In the golden sky the swallows turn* (2020)[5], and the final movement of *Island Verses* (2018)[6] responding, respectively, to Tuscany's natural sounds, poetry, and architecture. These works are included in the portfolio alongside a handful of other pieces inspired by the Italian city of Naples. Rooted in my wider fascination with Italy, these pieces explore my curiosity about Neapolitan culture and traditions, and thus remain essentially place-inspired, despite being composed before my first visit to the city. As exemplified by Debussy's evocations of the Alhambra[7], or of India[8], which were, in reality, inspired by a postcard and 'an account in a Parisian newspaper' respectively (Roberts, 2008, p.187), such an approach to topographical inspiration is not without precedent.

[1] First performers: New Conductors Orchestra
[2] Elgar, E. (1904) *In the South*
[3] Birtwistle, H. (1987) *Endless Parade*
[4] First performers: Bella Tromba
[5] First performer: Emily Davis-Robb
[6] First performers: Edinburgh Quartet
[7] Debussy, C. (1912-1913) *La Puerta del vino*
[8] Debussy, C. (1912-1913) *La Terrasse des audiences du clair de lune*

Aims

This research sets out to explore the various ways in which my experiences and impressions of specific places inform my compositional practice. Rather than compose a small number of extended paeans to a particular location, I present my research through a collection of shorter works which engage with facets of specific places – an approach which enables the same subject matter to be explored through different instrumentations. Another advantage of this approach is that it allows my work both to absorb the deepening familiarity with a location acquired through repeated visits, and to reflect more clearly any gradual developments in compositional approach that may occur over an extended period. Thus my portfolio comprises eleven original compositions which respond to the following place-related phenomena: landscapes (both physical and sonic); literature; folk music; and cultural traditions. Over the course of the portfolio, these stimuli inform – at one point or another – my treatment of every aspect of composition.

My research's other main aim is the development of a compositional approach which is enriched by, yet never subordinate to, the poetic ideas outlined above. Although such ideas are important to my practice, I consider it essential that the construction of my works is predominantly governed by a purely musical logic, in order that they may function independently of their 'programmes' as absolute music, and it is primarily on this level that I wish to engage the listener.

Nevertheless, the music is programmatic insofar as it 'acknowledges and re-vindicates its links with other phenomena' (Mâche, 1992, p.39), and I have no desire to conceal its more poetic ideas from an audience. Indeed, I am comfortable with the notion that a listener's experience may be rendered more immediate through an awareness of a work's extra-musical origins. The descriptive titles with which I provide my pieces invite listeners to hear my music within a certain temporal or geographical context, which may enable them to relate their experience of hearing a work to events from their own lives. Beyond such 'invitations', however, I do not wish to be overly prescriptive, and this

commentary is less concerned with showing how extra-musical ideas are made recognisable within my music than it is with demonstrating the ways in which they are integrated with abstract processes at the levels of harmony, development of material, orchestration, and the employment of topics.

Context

Central to my musical identity is the innate sense of kinship that I feel toward composers of often-playful and transparently-textured music which unfolds within concise durations. As such I consider my chief points of influence to be Domenico Scarlatti, Ravel, and Poulenc. My admiration for Scarlatti's music may be detected at various points within my portfolio, its formal clarity informing my use of repetition, and the rapidly repeating pitches of his Sonata in D minor, K.141 inspiring the toccata-like passage located in the second movement of my *Nocturne & Masquerade* (2018)[9].

Poulenc's music, meanwhile, has influenced my embrace of multi-movement structures, throwaway endings, and autobiographical elements – all features of a work such as his *Les Soirées de Nazelles* (1930-1936). Poulenc's gaudy use of the orchestra in works such as *Les biches* (1924) has, additionally, had a strong impact on my own approach to orchestration. No influence upon my musical thought has been greater, however, than that of Ravel, whose works have inspired my music both poetically, through their responses to fairytales and childhood experiences (*Ma mère l'Oye* (1911)), and technically, as regards their clarity of texture and elegant explorations of traditional forms (*Le Tombeau de Couperin* (1917)).

Given this set of influences, it is perhaps logical that, amongst more contemporary figures, I am attracted to composers who may be considered descendants of the early 20th century French tradition,

[9] First performers: Hebrides Ensemble

from Henri Dutilleux, to Oliver Knussen (through studies with his former student, Mark-Anthony Turnage), to Helen Grime.

Standing alongside such points of musical reference are my formative experiences of performing 19th century orchestral works as a trumpet player, which fostered in me a close affinity for the orchestra and a love of melody. This regard for lyricism explains, in part, my fondness of Neapolitan song, and my sense of connection to what Sally Beamish has described as the 'directness and honesty' of much 20th century American music (Beamish, 1999). Indeed it was my exposure to John Adams' *Harmonielehre* (1985) which persuaded me that contemporary concert music could still contain melody and triadic harmony, and my enjoyment of these works led me to an admiration of other American composers including Augusta Read Thomas and Stephen Hartke. The other consequence of being a trumpet player was a childhood spent listening to jazz, the influence of which often appears, unbidden, in my work.

Topics: Overview

Many of the aforementioned composers have made prominent use of topics as part of their practice, and their combined influence has contributed to the presence of topics in my own music. 'Topics' writes Kofi Agawu (1991, p.49) are 'musical signs [which] consist of a signifier (a certain disposition of musical dimensions) and a signified (a conventional stylistic unit, often but not always referential in quality)'. Divided by Leonard Ratner into 'types' (in the form of dances and marches) and 'styles', such as hunting or military (Mirka, 2014, p.1), topics would have awakened connections with certain 'social contexts' (2014, p.28) in the minds of 18th century listeners, and, as such, would have been 'associated with various feelings and affections' (Ratner, 1980, p.9). With regard to more contemporary music, Philip Rupprecht has described how Thomas Adès, in his work, *Living Toys* (1993) 'constructs a Spanish topical field by a fusion of signs' including 'clicking castanets…

Flamenco-tinged harmonies… [and] characteristic *jota* triplets', as well as explaining how jazz is 'framed as a historical topic' (Rupprecht, 2022, p.7).

Byron Almén has, furthermore, advocated for 'a combined theory of topic and narrative' (Almén, 2008, p.73) which examines the ways in which 'a change of topic can reinforce, highlight, or even constitute the primary oppositions within a narrative trajectory' (2008, p.70). Some of my shorter, individual movements of music constitute what Almén terms 'character pieces' (2008, p.76) in their use of a single topic (e.g. pastoral or march) to 'frame' (2008, p.68) the concise exploration of a small set of musical ideas. More frequently, however, my works are characterised by a juxtaposition of multiple topics, connected through their association with places as I have experienced or imagined them.

The order in which topics are presented in my pieces is not intended to conform to any of the 'narrative archetypes' (romance; tragic; ironic; comic) which Almén borrows from the writings of Northrop Frye and James Jakób Liszka (2008, pp.64-66). This does not, however, mean that I wish to exclude the possibility for such an understanding of my music.

Through the use of transcribed recordings to generate raw material, my music often grows out of an employment of what Monelle (2006, p.28) categorised as 'iconic topics': imitations of natural or man-made sounds which, to borrow from Robert S. Hatten (2017, p.68), 'possess strong correlations or associations with expressive meaning'. References in my pieces to 'musical events' such as serenades, fanfares, or dance types (defined by Monelle as 'indexical topics' (2006, p.28)) are, by contrast, introduced only after pitch material has been established, often emerging organically from improvisations and sketches upon my material.

Although Monelle's categorisation of topics has been challenged by musicologist, Danuta Mirka –

who argues that his iconic topics are not, in fact, topics at all 'because they do not form cross-references between styles or genres' (Mirka, 2014, p.35) – I have chosen to adopt Monelle's terminology for this commentary in order to explain the two semiotic strands of my compositional approach as clearly as possible. Whether my mimeses of bells or insect-song constitute topics, or are simply – as Mirka would have it – 'signs based… on the imitation of extra-musical sounds' (2014, pp.35-36) has no bearing on my practice. Catalogued in the tables below, therefore, are the various iconic and indexical topics that appear within my music. Designed to provide an overview of the topics for which I harbour a close, and often autobiographically-motivated, attachment, these tables do not constitute a comprehensive survey of the topics present within the portfolio, but rather list only those appearing in multiple works. (Topics which appear in only one work typically do so in response to a piece-specific poetic idea, and are addressed within the chapters dedicated to individual compositions.)

Table 1. Iconic Topics

	Bells	Bird-song	Insect-song	Water	Vehicles
Days of Bells and Flying Creatures (2017)	✓	✓	✓		
Sonata con serenata (2019)[10]	✓		✓		
Prelude (with bird, cicadas, and bells) (2019)[11]	✓	✓	✓		
Island Verses (2018)	✓			✓ (mimesis of waves striking the side of a boat)	
In the golden sky the swallows turn (2020)		✓			
Bergamasca (2021)[12]	✓				✓ (mimesis of car / scooter engines)
Manhattan Matins (2021)					✓ (mimesis of car horns)
Nocturne (with rain and poplars) (2020)[13]				✓ (mimesis of falling rain)	
Nocturne & Masquerade (2018)	✓	✓			

[10] Recorded by Adriana Ferreira / Alfonso González Barquín
[11] First performers: Orion Orchestra
[12] First performers: Orchestra of Opera North
[13] First performer: Sasha Savaloni

Table 2.1. Indexical Topics (Types)[14]

	Nocturne / Serenade	Dance	March	Walking Bass	Fanfare	Lullaby
Days (2017)		✓ (waltz)				✓
Sonata (2019)	✓					
Prelude (2019)		✓ (rustic, mixed metre dance)				
Tales from the Pentamerone (2021)[15]					✓	
Island Verses (2018)		✓ (gig)	✓	✓		
Swallows (2020)		✓ (rustic, mixed metre dance and *siciliana*)				✓
Tu scendi dalle stelle (2016)[16]		✓ (*pastorale*)	✓		✓	
Bergamasca (2021)		✓ (lively, mixed metre dance)				
Matins (2021)			✓			
Nocturne (with rain and poplars) (2020)	✓	✓ (rain-inspired, mixed metre dance)				
Nocturne & Masquerade (2018)	✓		✓	✓		

Table 2.2. Indexical Topics (Styles)

	Folk-music (influence of)	Neapolitan song (influence of)	Jazz (influence of)
Sonata (2019)		✓	
Prelude (2019)	✓		
Island Verses (2018)	✓		
Swallows (2020)	✓		
Tu scendi (2016)	✓	✓	
Matins (2021)			✓
Nocturne (with rain and poplars) (2020)	✓		✓
Nocturne & Masquerade (2018)		✓	✓

[14] See Ratner's definitions of topics above.
[15] Recorded by Mary Noden
[16] First performers: London Mozart Players

Whilst these tables show a seemingly large number of topics, the majority may be grouped under a handful of 'topical umbrellas' (Agawu, 2009, p.50) which reflect my music's engagement with various locations. The most prominently and frequently employed of these are discussed in the following three sections.

Topics: Pastoral

'The dominant idea of pastoral' writes Peter Marinelli (1971, cited in Hatten, 2017, p.5) 'is a search for simplicity away from complexity represented by either a specific location… from which the refuge is in a rural retreat to Arcadia; or from a specific period of individual human existence (adulthood), from which the refuge is in the visions of childhood'.

In 2010 I discovered my own form of Arcadia when visiting my wife's family in rural Tuscany for the first time. Finding calm in the culture's slower pace of life, its valuing of longstanding traditions and small daily rituals, I adopted Tuscany as a form of creative 'refuge' (to borrow Marinelli's term), and the practice of writing music about it provided respite from the intensity of London life.

Marinelli's words also feel pertinent to my use of elements from the folk-music that I would hear during childhood, which I consequently associate with rural life. This influence is primarily manifested through the use of open strings to colour the textures of *Island Verses*, *Swallows, Tu scendi*, and *Prelude*, as well as through the simplicity of the *faux* folk-songs which constitute much of the melodic material in these works. Despite becoming familiar with these particular musical characteristics within the context of the Scottish folk tradition, they embody, for me, a more universal pastoral quality, and consequently I draw no distinction between their use in the Scottish-inspired movements of *Island Verses* and their employment in my Tuscan-inspired pieces.

On one level, my pastoral works maintain a pictorial approach, responding to the landscapes of Tuscany and Scotland through imitations of their natural sounds: bird-song, insect-song and the noises of water. Frequently however, such sounds are juxtaposed or combined with the folk-inspired elements mentioned above, or with passages of dance-like material which, with their Stravinskian juxtapositions of metres, are my invented equivalents of the rustic dances in the pastoral works of composers from Mahler[17] to Poulenc[18]. These passages look to the historical use of dance forms to signify the pastoral, and, by extension, to the 18th century mythologising of the countryside, exemplified by the paintings of Boucher and Fragonard, as a location for merrymaking and romantic pursuits (Levey, 1962, pp.214-217). Through this integrated use of indexical and iconic sub-topics, works such as *Prelude*, in particular, seek to unite two contrasting views of the pastoral: one idealised, with its 'classical shepherds, … aulós-players, satyrs, [and]… fauns' (Monelle, 2006, p.244); and the other derived from the Romantic era's celebration 'of the sublime in a landscape with only minimal human presence and with no suggestion of human history' (Rosen, 1995, p.156).

Topics: Bells

My first memorable experience of hearing the ringing of church bells was as a teenager, during a trip to the Italian city of Bergamo. I was instantly beguiled by this sound, which embedded itself in my consciousness as the sonic symbol of a place that was the antithesis to everywhere I had known, yet was, simultaneously, somewhere in which I felt an innate sense of belonging. In the intervening years, what was once exotically, thrillingly 'other' about Italian bells has become familiar and comforting, the knowledge that their sound has been heard for centuries in that part of the world providing a reassuring sense of perspective. As such, my practice of responding to their sound often transforms the composition process into what feels like an almost meditative act.

[17] Mahler, G (1888) Symphony No. 1 – II.
[18] Poulenc, F. (1952) *Matelote provençale*

The impression of constancy that I associate with bells is also connected to the frequency with which they are heard in Italy, their chiming every quarter hour a reminder of the incremental passing of time. This function of bells is alluded to in both *Days* and *Nocturne & Masquerade*, whilst their marking of marriage and funeral rituals – occasions symbolic of time in its more protracted and profound sense – inspired material in *Sonata* and *Island Verses* respectively. In referencing the role of bells in such events, and the contrasting emotions associated with their sound, these latter two pieces touch upon an important theme in the poetry of Giovanni Pascoli[19], not to mention Edgar Allan Poe's *The Bells* (1849) and its setting by Rachmaninov (1913).

The ringing of bells holds, moreover, a locational significance in my work. As described above, my initial exposure to church bells occurred in urban Italy, and, consequently, their sound belongs to my conception not only of Italy itself, but of larger communities, too – a perspective which influenced passages in my pieces *Bergamasca* and *Prelude*. Whilst *Bergamasca* uses a melody sounded by bells in Bergamo as a totem of the city, *Prelude*'s central episode draws upon my memories of hearing bells from nearby towns when cycling in the Tuscan hills, their sounds serving as reminders of human existence – and of something quasi-urban – within the quiet of the countryside.

Topics: Times of Day

As exemplified by works such as Debussy's *La mer* (1905) and Respighi's *Fontane di Roma* (1916), composers have often sought to evoke a specific location through the prism of particular times of day. A similar intersection of the locational and the temporal occurs in my own practice, and is perhaps most clearly apparent in *Days*, which, in charting the course of a day in rural Tuscany, follows a similar model to Respighi's, with its dawn, morning, noon, and sunset impressions of various Roman fountains. It is, however, more usual for my pieces to focus upon a single time of day, and within this

[19] Pascoli, G. (1892) *Festa lontana*; (1893) *Alba festiva*

portfolio the theme of night-time features most prominently, signified (like the pastoral realm) by a combination of indexical and iconic topics.

In his treatise, *School of Practical Composition*, composer Carl Czerny (1848) explains that the nocturne is 'an imitation of those vocal pieces which are termed *Serenades*', opining that 'the peculiar object of such works – that of being performed by night, before the dwelling of an esteemed individual – must always exercise an influence upon its character' (p.97). This influence is apparent in my own pieces, *Nocturne (with rain and poplars)* and *Nocturne & Masquerade*: their combinations of song-like melodic lines and arpeggiated, accompanimental figurations echo the textures heard in the *Nocturnes* of both Field and Chopin. From an iconic perspective both *Nocturne & Masquerade* and *Sonata* contain imitations of the mandolin, in reference to its close association with the serenade genre as typified by Mozart's 'Deh, vieni alla finestra' from *Don Giovanni* (1787).

In considering this nocturnal strand of my work it is also helpful to acknowledge the distinction drawn by Anna Stoll Knecht (in her writings on the Nachtmusik movements of Mahler's Symphony No. 7) between a 'night piece', or 'music *about* the night', and 'nightmusic', which 'is to be played *during* the night' (Knecht, 2019, p.161). My music, with its references to the serenade, would fall squarely into Knecht's second category were it not for the un-mandolin-related passages of fluttering sounds which appear in *Nocturne (with rain and poplars)* and *Nocturne & Masquerade*. Such episodes, which reflect my experiences of hearing the busy murmurings of insects on summer nights in Italy, are similar in spirit (if not in style) to the night music of Bartók[20], and may thus be heard as 'music *about* the night' in the manner of the second movement of Mahler's Seventh Symphony.

[20] Examples include the third movement of Bartók's String Quartet No. 4 (1929) (Cooper, 2015, pp.230-231).

Starting Points and Methodology

The topics in my music largely emerge from different types of 'raw' material that I use as the starting point for each new work. This material, selected for its evocative or symbolic connection with the extra-musical subject to which I have chosen to respond, is typically drawn from one of the following sources: cryptograms; material borrowed from the music of earlier composers; transcriptions of either field recordings or recordings of my wife's voice. There are instances (e.g. the explicit use of transcribed bells or natural sounds) in which raw material and topic may be considered one and the same. On other occasions, however, the raw material may form the basis of an apparently unrelated topic which, in turn, could determine, if not a work's extra-musical subject, then the angle from which it is approached. This latter scenario is, typically, arrived at through an extensive period of sketching, during which I develop the raw material through a variety of processes in order to generate as much music from a single source as possible. These 'processes' include the use of inversions and retrogrades, the vertical arrangement of horizontal ideas (and vice versa), fragmentation, sequential writing, and transposition. My employment of each of these techniques is explained more comprehensively, on a piece by piece basis, in the chapters that follow. Where appropriate, these explanations will be illustrated by score excerpts, reductions, and examples of my sketches (supplemented in the Appendices). Additionally, the following chapters will demonstrate how my raw material is also often used as a basis for the construction of modes, sonorities, and thematic ideas.

In using my transcriptions of recordings as a source of pitch material, I intend that the character of the recorded sounds – and, by extension, the essence of the location in which they were recorded – may permeate a work's harmonic 'DNA', thereby binding the music to its extra-musical origins. The (admittedly mystical) idea that a recorded sound might act as a totem of a particular place is presented most explicitly through the thematic use of bell-like material derived from melodic fragments of bells recorded in Italy. In transcribing and subsequently using this music in my work, my intention is not only to reproduce my perception of the bells' sound, but also, crucially, to preserve my memories of

hearing them in their Italian surroundings. Given the role of subjective experience in this process I have never felt compelled to utilise audio analysis software during the period of transcription, preferring instead to work exclusively with the pitches that I am able to hear with my 'naked' ear. This approach – which I consider to be a musical equivalent of painting from a sketch made *en plein air* – stands in contrast to the comparatively photographic approach of spectralism, wherein the use of technology to analyse 'the acoustic substance of sounds' (Anderson, 2020, p.418), including bells, has proved fundamental to the generation of new material. It may be argued that my own less sonically accurate representations of bells are, in one sense, less faithful than those heard in a work such as Julian Anderson's Symphony No. 2 (2021), for instance, which takes technology-aided analyses of bells as a departure point (Anderson and Small, 2022). In my music however, no qualitative distinction is made between transcriptions of recorded bells and invented, bell-like sounds, drawing the focus onto the extra-musical associations of bells rather than their sonic properties.

Grouping of pieces

I have grouped the eleven pieces of the portfolio into four sections (Table 3) elucidating my interest in specific topics, as well as the various ways in which I approach the same broad set of poetic stimuli.

Table 3. Structure of portfolio.

PART 1: SUMMER (IN THE VINEYARDS AND PIAZZAS)

TITLE	INSTRUMENTATION	DURATION	FIRST PERFORMER(S)
Days of Bells and Flying Creatures (2017)	trumpet quartet	c.14 minutes	Bella Tromba
Sonata con serenata (2019)	flute and trumpet	c.6 minutes	Adriana Ferreira / Alfonso González Barquín
Prelude (with bird, cicadas, and bells) (2019)	chamber orchestra	c.6 minutes	Orion Orchestra (cond. Gary Matthewman)

PART 2: MUSICAL VERSES

Tales from the Pentamerone (2021)	solo oboe	c.8 minutes	Mary Noden
Island Verses (2018)	string quartet	c.23 minutes	Edinburgh Quartet
In the golden sky the swallows turn (2020)	solo violin	c.7 minutes	Emily Davis-Robb

PART 3: FANTASIAS

Tu scendi dalle stelle (2016)	trumpet and strings	c.5 minutes	London Mozart Players
Bergamasca (2021)	symphony orchestra	c.1 minute	Orchestra of Opera North (cond. Garry Walker)
Manhattan Matins (2021)	symphony orchestra	c.6 minutes	New Conductors Orchestra (cond. Mark Powell)

PART 4: NIGHT

Nocturne (with rain and poplars) (2021)	solo guitar	c.6 minutes	Sasha Savaloni
Nocturne & Masquerade (2018)	mixed sextet	c.11 minutes	Hebrides Ensemble

SUMMER (IN THE VINEYARDS AND PIAZZAS)

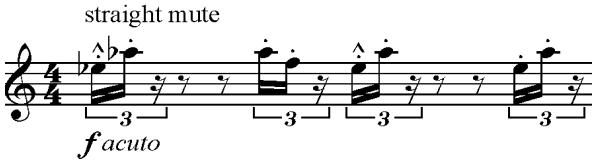
Summer consists of three Italian-inspired works – *Days of Bells and Flying Creatures* (2017); *Sonata con serenata* (2019); and *Prelude (with bird, cicadas, and bells)* (2019) – which are strongly pictorial in their representation of the same collection of sounds: bells; birdsong; and insect-song. These pieces are further linked by their focus on wind instruments. Written almost exactly two years apart, both *Days* and *Prelude* were largely composed during stays in Tuscany, amongst the sounds they imitate, whilst *Sonata* was completed in London three months after *Prelude*. The proximity of these latter two pieces explains, perhaps, *Sonata*'s exact replication of an *ostinato* found in *Prelude* – an idea which I was not, evidently, yet ready to leave.

DAYS OF BELLS AND FLYING CREATURES

Days of Bells and Flying Creatures (for trumpet quartet) was largely composed at an artists' residency situated within a mill in the countryside of Chianti. Whilst there I spent much of my time making recordings of the sounds that surrounded me on a daily basis: most notably the songs of birds and insects, and the ringing of church bells. My transcriptions of these recordings provided me with the raw material for a diaristic, seven-movement work which charts the course of a summer's day in the Tuscan countryside.

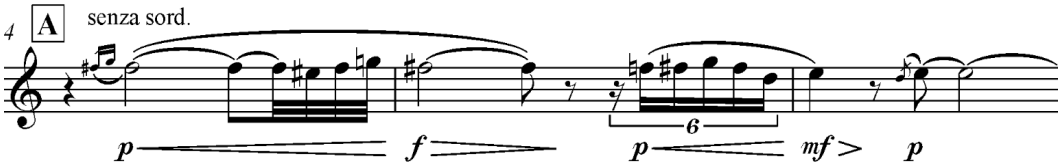
The opening movement, *Bird, Cicadas, Fly*[21], commences with the imitation of a bird which would shriek outside my studio at regular intervals. The shrillness of the creature's fragmented song is reflected in its scoring for piccolo trumpet, the instrument's already-bright tone lent additional acuteness by the use of straight mute.

Ex. 1.1. *I. Bird, Cicadas, Fly*. Bar 1 (piccolo trumpet): Bird material.



Beneath the piccolo trumpet's two-note chirping figures, a melody derived from the sound of a fly that entered my work space is then introduced by the bass trumpet in bar 5. The line's juxtapositions of sustained pitches with flurries of shorter note values seeks to suggest the manner in which a fly alights – and pauses – upon a surface, before abruptly darting elsewhere, whilst its *acciaccature* inflections allude to the insect's capacity for small, sudden movements.

Ex. 1.2. *I. Bird, Cicadas, Fly*. Bars 4-6 (bass trumpet): Fly material.

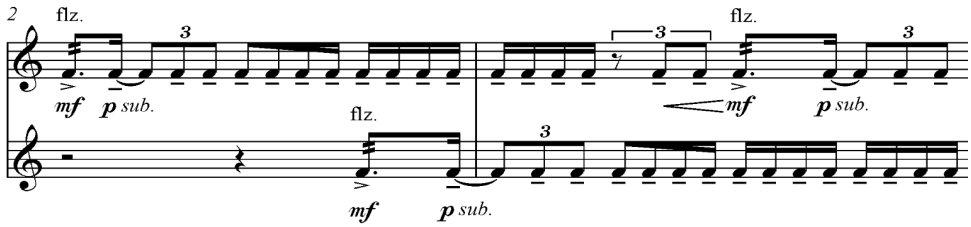


Through its use of chromaticism to imply a buzzing sound, this melody also appeals to a tradition of works which includes Bartók's *From the Diary of a Fly*[22], although my own 'figurative' depiction of this insect ultimately gives way to a more literal one in the movement's final two bars. Here the 2nd trumpet takes over the last note of the bass trumpet line, playing it through a detached mouthpiece to create a buzzing effect which is sustained beyond the notes of the other three instruments.

[21] See Appendix 1b. for my preliminary sketches of this movement.
[22] Bartók, B. (1926-1939) *Mikrokosmos*, Vol. VI.

Underpinning both the fly- and bird-inspired material is a pedal point derived from another natural sound imitated by Bartók[23] and, more recently, by the contemporary American composer, Arlene Sierra[24]: the drone-like chattering of cicadas[25]. Informed by a field recording, which captures the song of a lone cicada being joined by that of another, this strand of music comprises a six-beat rhythmic *ostinato*, played as a canon by the 2nd and 3rd trumpets. The *ostinato* imitates the manner in which a cicada's song often starts with a rattling sound and then settles into a series of repeated pitches (which accelerate towards a consistent speed before winding down again), whilst the canon creates a consistently cross-rhythmic effect in allusion to the dense sound of multiple cicadas singing simultaneously at independent tempi. The metallic timbre of their song, and the fullness of length which characterises each individual pitch within it, are, meanwhile, replicated by the use of straight mutes and *tenuto* articulations respectively.

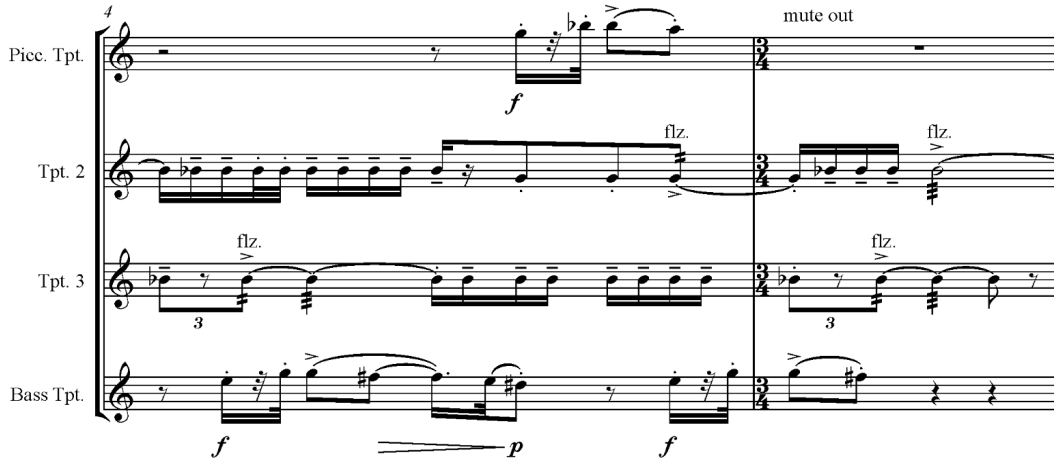
Ex. 1.3. *I. Bird, Cicadas, Fly*. Bars 2-3 (2nd and 3rd trumpets): Cicada material.



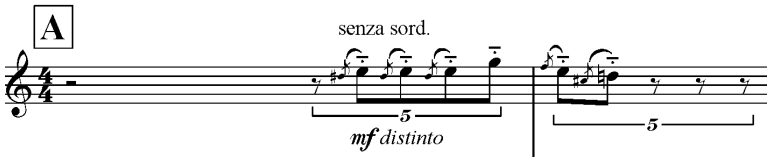
The mimesis of cicadas also forms the backdrop to the sixth movement, *Bird, Cicadas, Rooster*, where it supports the music's imitation of two new creatures (shown by the examples below).

[23] Bartók, B. (1926) 'The Night's Music' from *Out of Doors*
[24] Sierra, A (2007) 'Cicada Sketch' from *Birds and Insects, Book 1 for Solo Piano*
[25] See Appendix 1.1 (p.98).

Ex. 1.4. *VI. Bird, Cicadas, Rooster.* Bars 4-5: Rooster music exchanged between piccolo and bass trumpet.



Ex. 1.5. *VI. Bird, Cicadas, Rooster*. Letter A (piccolo trumpet): Bird material.

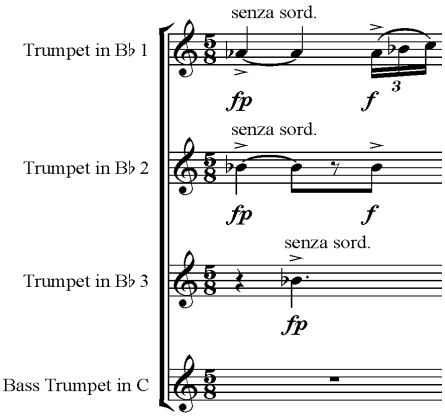


These two movements were conceived as soundscapes, or sonic 'still lifes', in which musical objects co-exist (rather than interact) with one another – much as bird and insect songs do in nature. In this respect these aphoristic 'diary entries' are the antithesis of the work's third and fifth movements (*Dove Aria* and *Waltzing Doves*) which take a more fantastical approach to mimesis: personifying birds by making their songs the basis of quintessentially human forms, such as the waltz. Written in the spirit of works such as Rameau's *La Poule* (c.1727-1730), both 'dove movements' develop short fragments of dove and wood pigeon sounds through traditional techniques such as transposition and inversion, creating dance-like, accompanimental textures for freely-composed, non-mimetic melodies. Such musical 'daydreams' provide moments of introspection within a work which is otherwise fascinated by the external, as represented not only by the imitation of natural sounds, but also through bell-inspired movements which denote the passing of time.

The first of these, *II. Morning Bells and Sunday Mass*, is the work's most narrative-driven movement,

and its material is chiefly drawn from recordings I made in the nearby town of Greve in Chianti, and, in particular, from within its Basilica di Santa Croce during a mass. The opening bar's repeated pitches replicate those of the church's sacristy bell (which was rung in advance of the ceremony), before an ascending triplet alludes to the manner in which the pitches of the bell's upper partials only became fully identifiable during the resonance that followed its final ring.

Ex. 1.6. *II. Morning Bells and Sunday Mass*. Bar 1: Sacristy bell material.



This idea gives way, in bar 2, to material built with fragments from my transcriptions of the church's main bells, and the resulting music contains a number of the bell-inspired elements which will be addressed in the following chapter on *Sonata*:

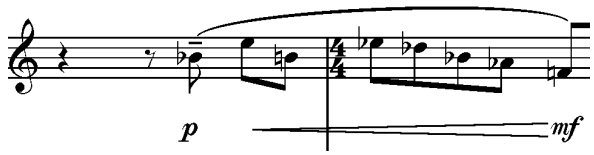
- Attack and decay effects
- Melodic material based on the first three notes of the major scale
- Different rhythmic layers (suggesting the independent tempi of multiple ringing bells)
- Dotted rhythms

Also explicit in *Morning Bells*, is the imitation of a characteristic common to many sets of bells across Italy: the melodic oscillation between two pitches a major second apart. These oscillations are largely

presented through hocketing textures[26] for two trumpets which, through their constant variations in rhythm, also seek to recreate the irregularities of rhythm and the changing tempi of Greve's bells (which took place over an extended period). Indeed, with the exception of the sacristy bell imitation in bar 1, the movement's opening episode is, essentially, the distillation of a much longer recording of bell-ringing, and condenses its gradual decrease in tempo, and conclusive reiterations of a single pitch, into less than thirty seconds of music.

Above this softer, slower chiming, the 1st trumpet introduces a more lyrical idea in bar 12, inspired by the off-key rendition of a hymn tune sung by the congregation's most forthright, yet out-of-tune, member. The tritone outlined by the first two notes of my line faithfully replicates her confident, if flawed, execution of the hymn's opening interval of a perfect fourth.

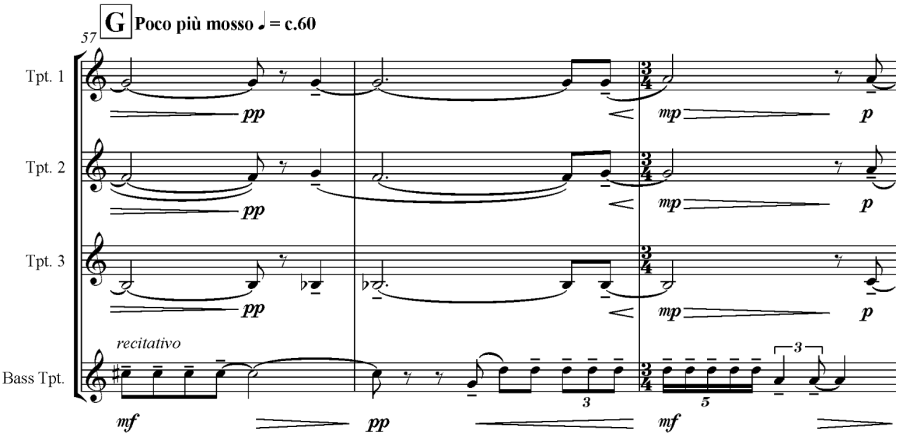
Ex. 1.7. *II. Morning Bells and Sunday Mass*. Bars 12-13 (1st trumpet): Hymn tune transcription.



A second response to the human voice is then heard at letter F following the movement's climax when the music recalls the mass which took place following the ringing of the bells. Based upon my recordings of a priest's homily, the episode's melody combines fragments from my transcription of his voice, with its chant-like rhythms and falling cadences. Carried by the similarly sonorous tone of the bass trumpet, this recitative-like line is punctuated by chordal interjections from the rest of the ensemble (e.g. bar 56) which imitate the *amens* intoned by the church's congregation.

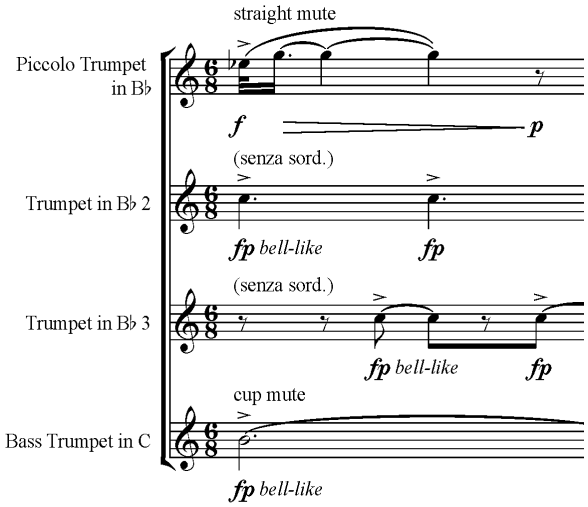
[26] My use of hockets is discussed in greater detail in the chapter on *Bergamasca*.

Ex. 1.8. *II. Morning Bells and Sunday Mass.* Letter G: Homily transcription with chordal accompaniment.



The next mimesis of bells occurs in the work's central movement, *IV. Midday Bells* – its poetic significance reflected structurally through its location at the heart of the piece. Despite its title's use of the plural, 'bells', this movement is based upon the sonority of a single bell – reproduced in the first bar – which I recorded in the hamlet of Montefioralle, a few minutes walk from the mill.

Ex. 1.9. *IV. Midday Bells*. Bar 1: Free transcription of Montefioralle bell.



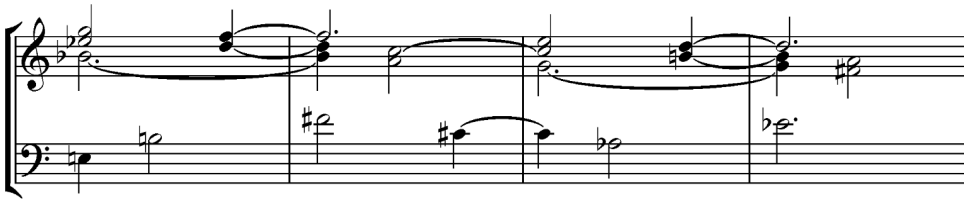
In transcribing my recording, I was particularly struck by the location of the bell's 'hum note' a minor ninth below that of its 'strike note' (Johnston 1986, p.46) and decided that this pronounced dissonance could be used to symbolise the searing noon heat of Chianti in summer. Thus, during the opening bars, the bass trumpet's line consistently sounds a minor ninth beneath either the chiming Cs of the

2nd and 3rd trumpets, or else below the longer, second notes of the piccolo trumpet's rising couplets (which initially outline the bell's most audible upper partials).

Meanwhile, the co-existence of muted and unmuted colours responds to the different timbres of the bell's partials. The warmth of its hum note is recreated through the use of cup mute; the clarity of its strike note through open sonorities; and the buzz of its upper partials through the more metallic sound of the straight mute.

The opening texture of this fourth movement is later recalled at the outset of the work's epilogue, *VII. Evening Bells.* Here it serves as the vessel for a new bell sonority (also recorded in Montefioralle) which subsequently becomes the basis of a meditative, chorale-like passage at letter A. The chorale examines this sonority – an E flat major chord above an E natural – in a systematic fashion, transposing it through consecutive circles of fifths at letters A and B respectively.

Ex. 1.10. *VII. Evening Bells*. Harmonic reduction of Letter A to bar 8.



The harmony's movement by fifth then continues – albeit in a more fragmented fashion – from bar 17, before the passage concludes with a low reiteration of the opening bell texture. Over the course of this chorale, the triad formed by the upper three notes of the bell sonority turns from major to minor (bar 9), creating a new chord type which is then used in alternation with the original bell chord from letter B. This paragraph of music does not seek to imitate the effect of the bell's chiming, but instead attempts – through a methodical exploration of the bell's luminous harmonic properties – to suggest the warmth of the light in which the countryside would bask around sunset. The chorale's slow tempo, *legato* lines and chains of suspensions respond, meanwhile, to the sensation of relaxation associated

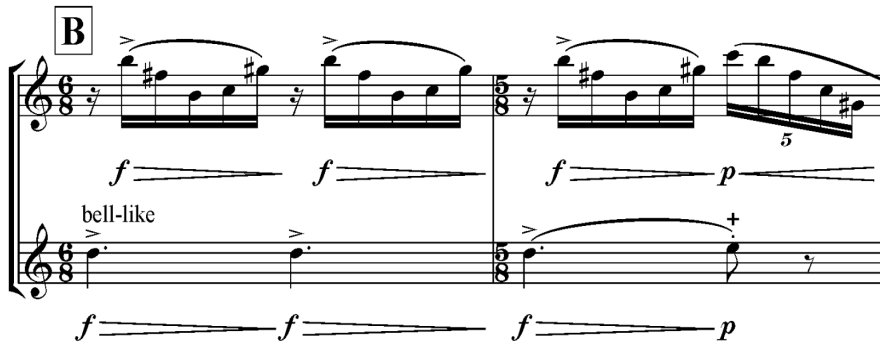
with evening and the customary late-hour *passeggiata*. From letter D, the remainder of the piece then takes the form of memory-kaleidoscope in which figures encountered in previous movements alternately separate, embroider, and emerge from new presentations of the bell sonority.

SONATA CON SERENATA

Love and Italy are the extra-musical focal points of *Sonata con serenata* for flute and trumpet: a work composed to celebrate the anniversary of its two Rome-dwelling commissioners. Contrasting facets of the former theme are represented at various points within the piece through both 'domestic', conversational writing, and a serenade which contributes a more lyrical dimension to the music. Italy, meanwhile, is symbolised through the mimesis of bells and by the muted trumpet's rapidly-articulated, cicada-inspired *ostinato*, which occurs at various points throughout the piece.

Following the flute's succinct, cadenza-like introduction to the piece, *Sonata*'s poetic component first appears during the first subject exposition (letter A) – where the trumpet's 'cicada *ostinato*' underpins an exuberant, eight-bar period in the flute – before the second subject commences with the imitation of a chiming bell (letter B). This idea is most noticeably expressed through the repeated notes of the trumpet which mimic the sharp attack and subsequent decay of a struck bell through juxtapositions of *marcato* articulations and *diminuendi*. Surrounding this figure are 'halos' of flute semiquavers which seek to transcend the harmonic limitations of the work's two-part texture by implying, in horizontal fashion, the overtones of the trumpet's bell evocation. The momentum created through these semiquavers, meanwhile, suggests the sense of energy that is present within the quivering sound of reverberating bells.

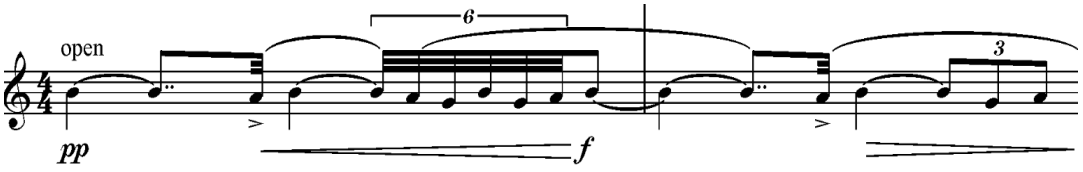
Ex. 2.1. Letter B: Example of ‘chime music’.



This ‘chime music’ then gives way to the second subject’s second half: a passage representative of the intimate and playful aspects of love, in which the two instruments dovetail in flirtatious conversation, and even complete each other’s phrases (two bars before letter C).

Both second subject ideas evolve over the course of the work but not before contrasting responses to their extra-musical stimuli are presented during the developmental and titular *serenata* episodes, which constitute the music’s central section. The first developmental passage begins with the introduction of a new, and much slower, bell-inspired idea in the trumpet (letter H). Unlike the preceding ‘chime music’ however, this writing is not informed by a bell’s sonic envelope, but rather – as is evident from its pitch material – by my recordings of Italian church bells tuned to the first three notes of a major scale. Although this passage is not a literal transcription, its dotted rhythms and use of lower neighbour notes to inflect a single, repeating pitch (in this case, a B) are recurring characteristics of various bells that I have recorded throughout the country.

Ex. 2.2. Letter H (trumpet): Three-note bell material.

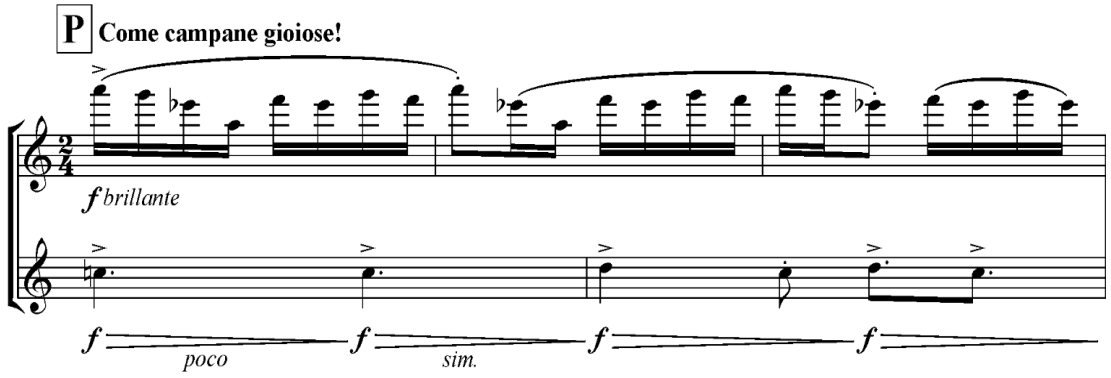


At letter I, the *serenata* episode then eschews the serenade's traditional, gender-defined roles of serenader and serenaded, as each player takes a turn to carry the episode's song-like line. The other instrument, meanwhile, fulfils a guitar-like function, performing an accompaniment of arpeggiated figurations (augmentations of the flute's aforementioned 'halo' figures) which propel the music forward. Through its use of *acciaccature*, trills, and flutter-tongued effects, the *serenata* melody references the mandolin tremolos and oft-ornamented vocal lines of Neapolitan song – a musical genre rich in serenades[27] – whilst simultaneously alluding to the hum of insects that fills the Italian night air in summer.

Following the *serenata*, the development of the second-subject's 'chime music' sees its material extended over a series of accelerating phrases which gradually increase in dynamic (letters L to N). On a narrative level, the passage's *accelerandi* and tiered *crescendo* depict the work's dedicatees approaching a church's piazza during one of their walks through Rome, hearing the sound of its bells drawing progressively closer. The more urgent type of bell-ringing that this episode implies is subsequently revisited at the climactic recapitulation of the second subject (letter P), which pictures my friends now standing in the middle of the fictional piazza between two pealing bell-towers (a scenario which also inspires episodes in my works *Bergamasca* and *Nocturne & Masquerade*). The rhythmic complexity that, I imagined, might be created by the contemporaneous ringing of these bells, is here evoked through a polymetric passage in which renditions of both the trumpet's chiming melody and the flute's overtone-inspired 'halos' are allowed to unfold over a more continuous expanse of time. The flute plays in 2/4 throughout this section, whilst continuing to share the quaver pulse of the trumpet, which remains in 6/8 – the different stresses created through their separate metres, and largely unaligned downbeats, suggesting the layered rhythms of two sets of bells chiming in independent tempi.

[27] Examples include De Curtis, E. (1913) *Sona chitarra!*

Ex. 2.3. Letter P: Polymetric bell material (2nd subject recapitulation).



Whilst still intended to be evocative of Italy, this material also seeks to draw out the well-established association of bells with notions of love and indeed matrimony (as explored by composers including Vaughan Williams[28] and John Adams[29]), thereby unifying the work's two sources of extra-musical inspiration ahead of its flirtatious coda.

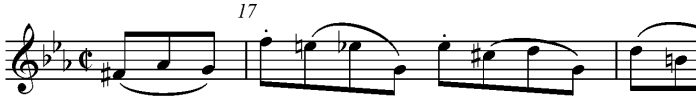
[28] Vaughan Willams, R (1909) 'Bredon Hill' from *On Wenlock Edge*
[29] Adams, J. (2006) 'The Wedding' from *A Flowering Tree*, Act 1

PRELUDE (WITH BIRD, CICADAS, AND BELLS)

Prelude (with bird, cicadas, and bells) responds to some of the same iconic topics that are presented in both *Days* and *Sonata*, taking advantage of the wider timbral palette that an orchestra provides in order to explore them in more varied and nuanced ways.

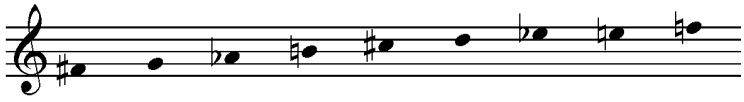
The starting point for *Prelude* was not, however, an extra-musical subject, but a musical one, from which poetic ideas subsequently grew. Commissioned to precede a performance of Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 24 in C minor, the piece is largely based upon a fragment of the concerto's third movement, which caught my ear with its striking use of chromaticism.

Ex. 3.1. W.A. Mozart, K. 491: Third movement fragment.

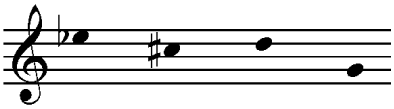


From the fragment's pitches I created a mode (Ex. 3.2) upon which my entire work is based, whilst much of my musical material is derived from a short figure – comprised of the last four notes of Mozart's bar 17 – which I refer to hereafter as the 'Mozart cell' (Ex. 3.3).

Ex. 3.2. Mode derived from Mozart fragment.



Ex. 3.3. ‘Mozart cell’.

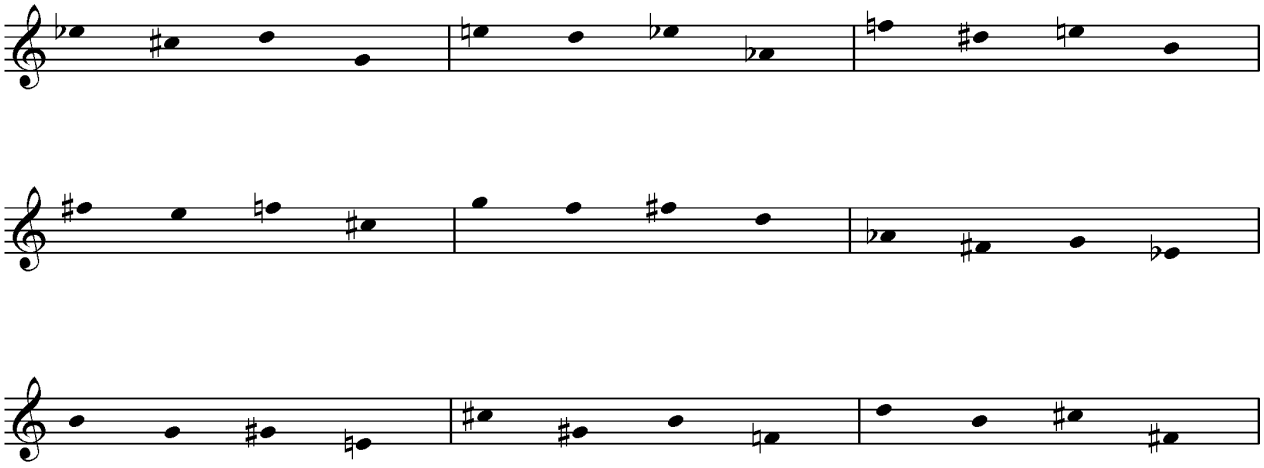


Conditioned by my experience in Chianti two years earlier (where the line between natural sounds and music became somewhat obfuscated for me), I came to hear, while playing the cell, a resemblance between its coiled contours and those of the fly-inspired melody from *Days*. This similarity triggered memories of further Tuscan sounds which suggested a poetic context for my exploration of the material.

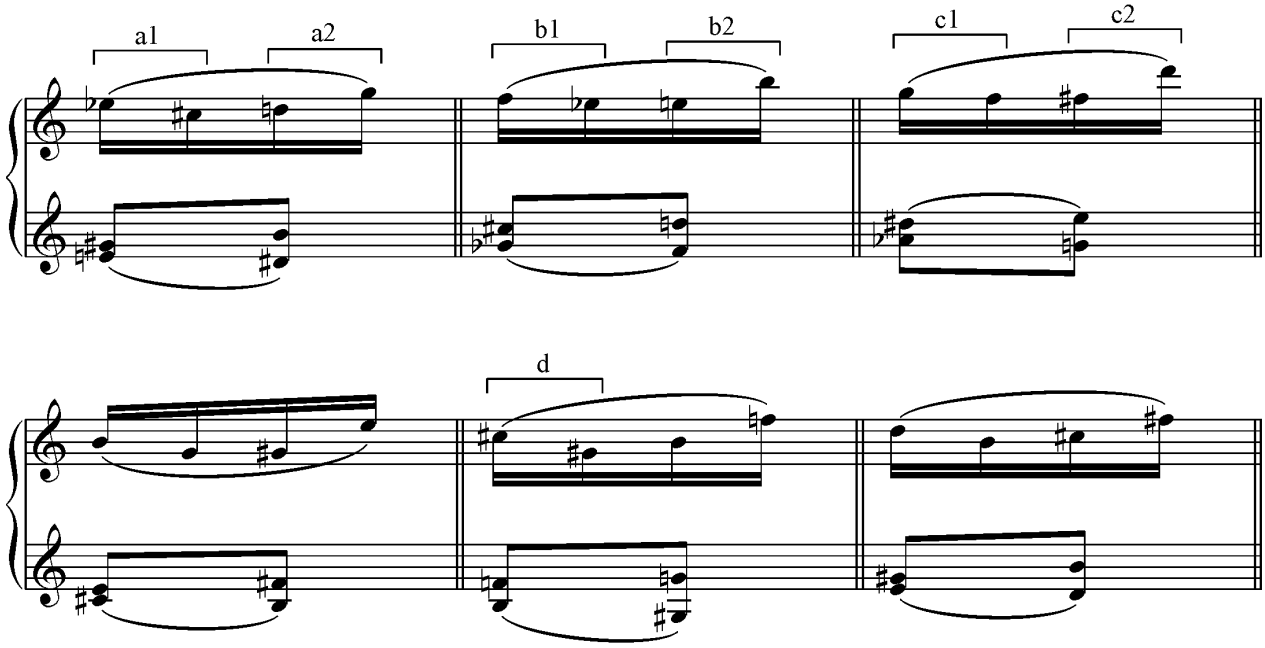
This approach is illustrated in the work’s opening bars which are populated by chirping figures derived from my sketches[30] upon the cell (Ex. 3.4). Chosen for their close resemblance to their bird-inspired motifs which open *Days*, their presence at the near-identical outset of *Prelude* is akin to the same character appearing in two separate stories.

[30] See Appendix 2 (pp.100-111) for more extensive sketches.

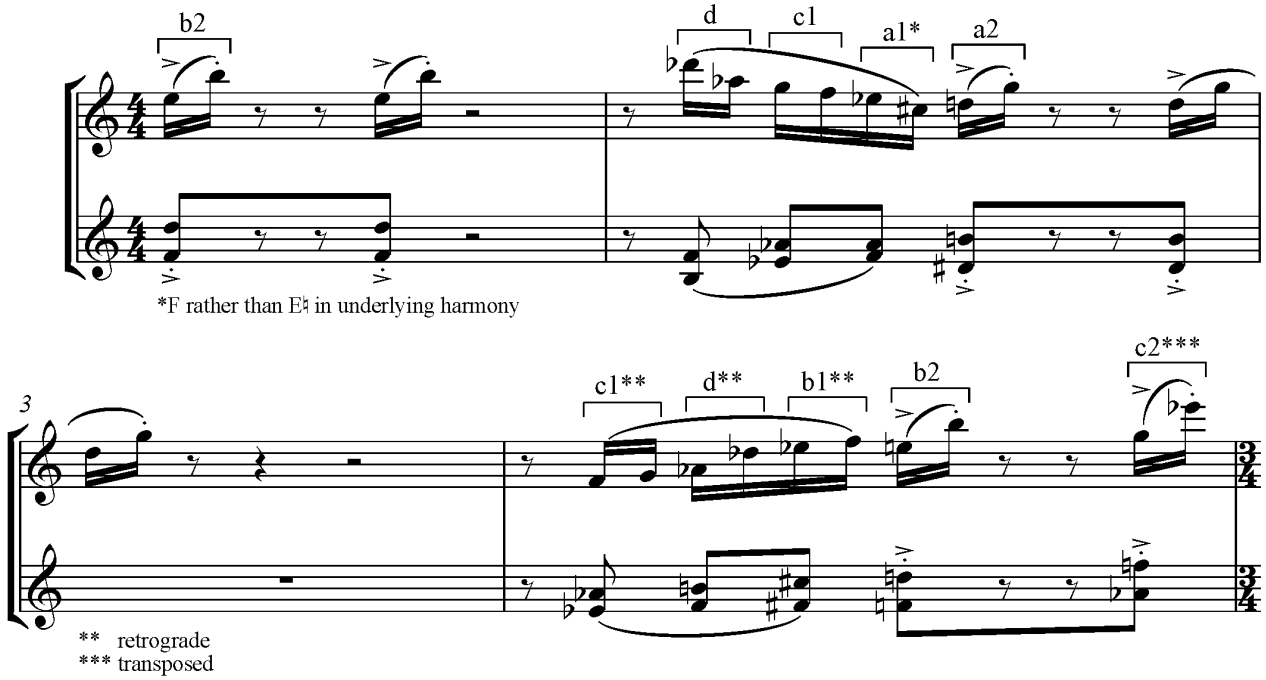
Ex. 3.4a. Transpositions of ‘Mozart cell’ within mode.



Ex. 3.4b. Harmonisations of selected ‘Mozart cell’ transpositions, with octave displacements of final pitches. Brackets indicate fragments used in the finished work.

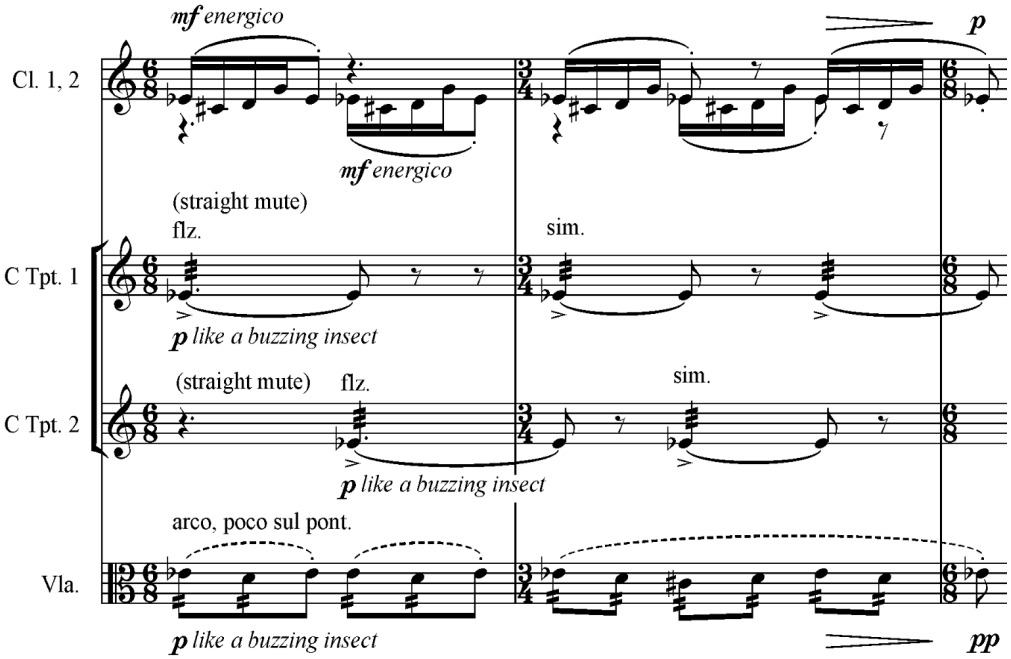


Ex. 3.4c. Reduction of *Prelude* (bb. 1-4) showing use of fragments drawn from harmonisations of the 'Mozart cell'.



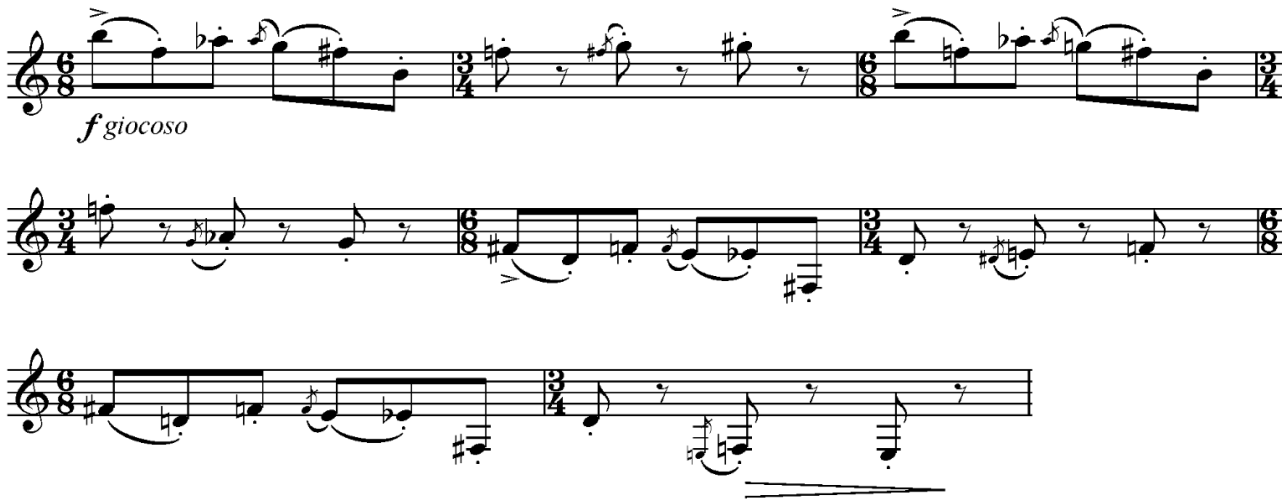
The next significant Tuscan influence is found in the *Allegro e scherzoso* episode of letter B. The germ of this section (introduced by the clarinets in bars 18-19) is a propulsive, two-bar figure created from repetitions of the complete Mozart cell, which unfolds in a juxtaposition of 6/8 and 3/4 metres. My perception of the cell as insect-like in character is made explicit here through its orchestral realisation, which surrounds its repetitions in the clarinets with a texture of buzzing effects. This buzzing is first created through the sound of muted, flutter-tongued trumpets (as in *Days*), combined with a re-imagining of their timbre in the form of viola *sul ponticello* tremolos (Ex. 3.5). Such combinations of brass and string 'equivalents' (as I consider them) then continue throughout the piece in various forms, lending a busy and insect-like surface to much of the music.

Ex. 3.5. Bars 18-20: Repeating Mozart cell with buzzing accompanimental texture.



At letter B (and later at letter G), these realisations of the repeating cell accompany alternate phrases of a boisterous, dance-like melody (Ex. 3.6) which, through its repeating rhythms and *acciaccatura*-enhanced spirit of playfulness, bears the influence of folk music. Partly inspired by the statue *Peasant with a Bagpipe* in Florence's Boboli Gardens, this material is intended to be evocative of idealised, rustic merrymaking in the tradition of the Scherzo from Beethoven's Symphony No. 6 'Pastoral' (1808), and contributes, as such, an indexical element to the work's (predominantly iconic) exploration of the pastoral topic. Largely absent from my signification of the pastoral in *Days*, this indexical dimension is compounded by the use of timbre. Presented as a call and response, its unaccompanied 'calls' are assigned to instruments with well-established bucolic associations, from the oboe (letter B) and solo cello (acting as a proxy for the folk fiddle at bar 20), to the horn and bassoons in bars 63 and 67 respectively.

Ex. 3.6. Letter B – bar 23: Rustic, dance-like melody.

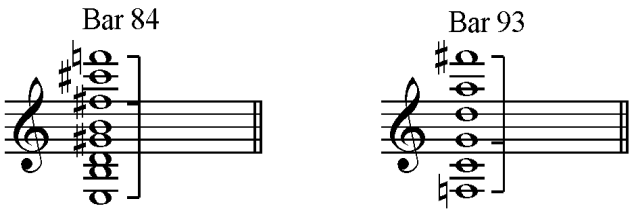


Orchestral bells

Separating *Prelude*'s outer sections of bird- and insect-inspired music is its central episode (letters I to L), during which the sound of bells is, once more, the predominant influence upon the material. This is most overt at letter K which transposes the bell-derived techniques discussed in the previous two chapters onto an orchestral canvas.

Prior to this, however, the influence of bells appears in a different – more subtle – guise, informing the sonorities which underpin the angular, melodic lines of the trumpet and horn between bar 84 and 95. These sonorities are not derived from transcriptions of existent bells, but are bells of my own imagining – their pitches drawn intuitively from the work's nine-note mode and presented in spacings of major and perfect intervals. Inspired by memories of the resonant, yet piquant, properties of Italian bells, each chord contains a dissonant kernel of three chromatic notes which are dispersed amongst the other pitches.

Ex. 3.7. Examples of invented bell chords, with brackets showing chromatic kernels.



The orchestration of some of these sonorities is also bell-inspired, building upon the attempts made in *Days* to recreate the different timbres which are contained within the sound of a single, chiming bell. This is evident in the voicings of the chords heard in bars 84-86, 92, and 93, which enter around the sustained pitches of the trumpet's melody. With the trumpet's notes representing a bell's penetrating strike tone near the centre of the chord, the rounder sounds of horn (bar 84) and clarinet (bar 93) on the sonorities' lowest notes imitate the warmth of a hum tone. The more ethereal quality of a bell's upper partials is suggested, meanwhile, by the harmonics of both flute and solo violin, which are used both independently of, and in combination with, one another. The introduction of these dense blocks of harmony brings about a pronounced shift in the work's texture, their intrusion upon the music's previously transparent and contrapuntal sound-world alluding to the manner in which tolling bells periodically overwhelm the more delicate, chirping sounds of the Tuscan countryside.

MUSICAL VERSES

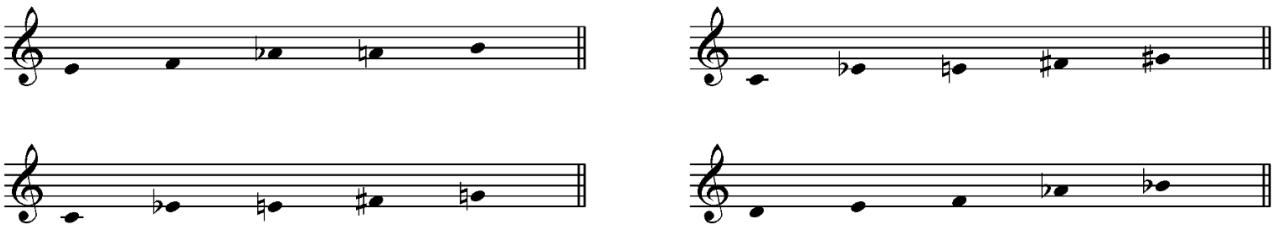
The works which comprise *Musical Verses – Tales from the Pentamerone* (2021); *Island Verses* (2018); and *In the golden sky the swallows turn* (2020) – are unified by connections to text as well as place. *Swallows* and *Tales* explore different parts of Italy through the prism of writings by Giovanni Pascoli and Giambattista Basile respectively. Less conventionally, *Island Verses* was commissioned to form a musical 'frame' for texts that were to be written subsequently by various authors. Each of these works also use the contours of the speaking voice as the source of their material. *Island Verses* marks my first engagement with this approach before *Swallows* and *Tales* develop it further.

TALES FROM THE PENTAMERONE

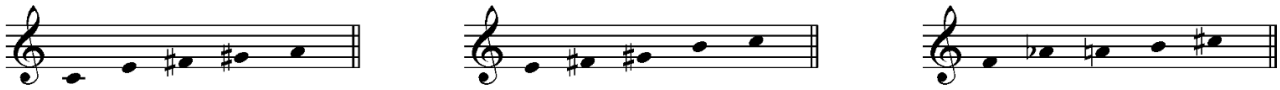
Tales from the Pentamerone (for solo oboe) is inspired by Giambattista Basile's collection of literary fairy tales, the *Pentamerone*, which was published between 1634 and 1636. Containing some of the earliest recorded versions of folktales including *Cinderella* (Canepa, 1999, pp.145, 161), Basile's Neapolitan-language masterpiece is filled with evocative references to music. In Basile's tales, clubs write 'counterpoint on the staves' of villains' backs; suspicious nobles hear the unstable interval of a diminished fifth; and hanged men are said to sing 'three-part madrigals' (Basile, 2007, pp.20, 215, 311). Drawing a parallel between this use of metaphor and my own practice of using music to suggest aspects of the external world, I quickly came to see Basile's text as a repository of potential musical topics.

During the period of pre-composition, I devised – in a numerological allusion to the *Pentamerone*'s five-day structure – a collection of five-note modes (Ex. 4.1a and 4.1b) in order to ensure, through limited pitch material, a harmonic clarity for the eventual piece that would be comparable to the simplicity of a fairytale.

Ex. 4.1a. 1st movement modes.



Ex.4.1b. 2nd movement modes.



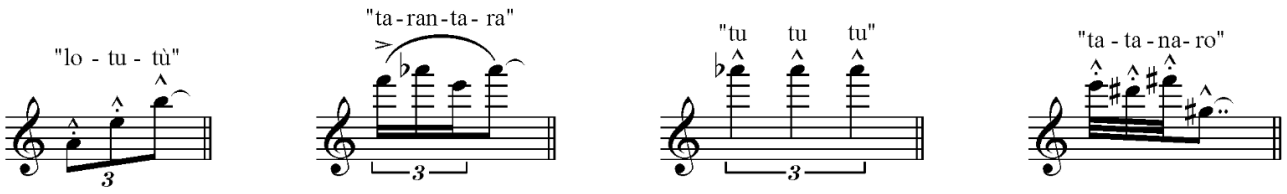
In preparation for writing the piece, I also re-read the *Pentamerone* specifically for its mentions of music, logging over one hundred and forty examples, before organising any recurring references into topical categories – e.g. laments; birdsong; bagpipes. Any, or all, of these topics could conceivably have formed the basis of an oboe piece, but instead I found myself drawn, initially, to the various ways in which Basile evokes the sound of trumpets through the following onomatopoeic words and phrases: 'lotutù'; 'tarantara'; 'tu tu tu'; 'ta-ta-naro' (Basile, 2015, pp.213, 50, 20).

1. 'ntroduzzione

Musical fragments derived from the contours and rhythms of these words (Ex. 4.2) form the basis of the first movement of my piece, *'ntroduzzione*, which – through its exploitation of the oboe's bright, upper register – invites the listener to hear the instrument as a form of otherworldly trumpet. In 'setting' Basile's words for the oboe, I sought merely to amplify their existent fanfare-like attributes,

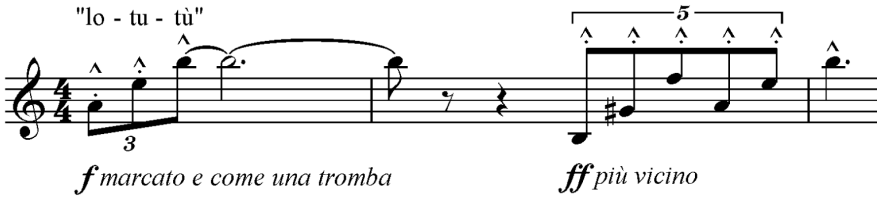
taking care not to distort their evocative rhythmic properties, whilst often exaggerating their melodic contours in order to lend the writing an angular theatricality, analogous to Basile's hyperbolic writing style.

Ex. 4.2. Settings of Basile's trumpet-inspired onomatopoeia.



Simultaneously alluded to, through the intervallic content and implied harmony of this material, is the sense of mystery which pervades the *Pentamerone*. This is exemplified by the movement's opening 'lotutù'-derived passage in which the stable sounds of figures built from ascending perfect fifths (characteristic fanfare intervals[31]), are instantly undermined by the outlines of the diminished triads with which they are alternated.

Ex. 4.3. *1. 'ntroduzzione*. Bars 1-3.



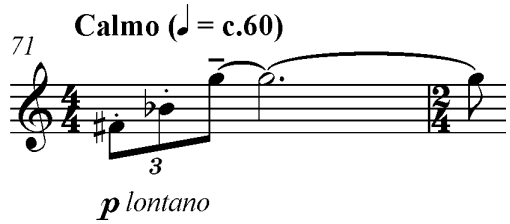
Such juxtapositions symbolise the co-existence of familiar fairytale tropes and macabre details in Basile's tales, and this latter feature of the prose also inspired the frequency with which dissonant intervals are outlined by the movement's fanfare figures (e.g. bars 22-23).

Although the music is, typically, more concerned with the evocative quality of Basile's onomatopoeia than with the specific narrative contexts in which it appears, I was nonetheless intrigued by the tales'

[31] Examples include Julian Anderson's *Fantasias* (2009).

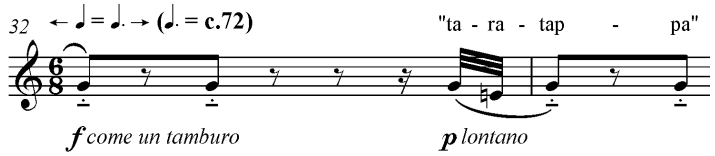
repeated mentions of the trumpeter, who, during Basile's time, accompanied the town crier of the Neapolitan Court of the Vicaria (Basile, 2007, p.19), and these references to the trumpet's historical, heraldic function inspired my attempts to suggest distance within the movement. Shorn of any antiphonal possibilities with which to convey this notion, the music relies on contrasts between *forte* '*vicino*', and *piano* '*lontano*' dynamics, until the arrival at the movement's final episode (bar 71), which strives to banish its 'lotutù' figures even further into the distance. Here the outline of a major ninth, which has, thus far, signalled the start of each near exploration of the 'lotutù' material, is narrowed by a semitone in order to make the figure sound smaller, and, consequently, further away (Ex. 4.4). The more dissonant minor ninth now heard between the first and third notes of the gesture functions, moreover, as a further reminder of the crueller elements contained with the *Pentamerone*, introducing the sense of instability which underpins the movement's fragmentary final phrases.

Ex. 4.4. *1. 'ntroduzzione*. Bar 71: Narrowed 'lotutù' figure.



Separating the *'ntroduzzione*'s fanfare episodes, meanwhile, are two passages (bars 32-47 and 65-70) which are derived from the word 'taratappa' (Basile, 2015, p.85) – one of Basile's uncanny onomatopoeic evocations of another instrument with martial associations: the drum. Preserving the taut rhythmic quality of the word from which it is drawn, the 'taratappa' music (Ex. 4.5) unfolds in terse phrases built from short, melodic cells consisting of major and minor thirds. The passages' narrow contours and, in particular, use of repeated pitches, allude to a drum's indefinite pitch, whilst clearly delineating their material from that of the angular, surrounding fanfares. This 'tattoo' does, however, share a similarity with the fanfares, its implied octatonicism representing another form of harmonic response to the more mysterious, sinister aspects of Basile's prose.

Ex. 4.5. *1. 'ntroduzzione*. Bars 32-33: 'Taratappa' material.



2. Aiero de no naimuozzo

In its response to Basile's evocation of a singing *naimuozzo* ('tiny little man') (Basile, 2007, p.8), the work's second movement also looks primarily to the tales' descriptions of music for inspiration. Whilst reading Basile's vivid account of the *naimuozzo*'s vocal delivery,[32] I could not help but hear a vivid description of the *coloratura* style. Thus the outset of *Aiero* affectionately caricatures the virtuosic passages of arias such as Donizetti's 'Il dolce suono'[33], through rapid, scalic runs; the playfully persistent use of trills; and angular, staccato figures located in the oboe's upper register. This cadenza-like opening (bars 1-7) pays homage to Basile's own fondness for parody, and seeks to depict not only the *naimuozzo*'s singing, but also his movements, the music's ascending gestures denoting his emergence from a walnut and climb onto a windowsill. Subsequently the music assumes a more lyrical character through the introduction of two melodies which showcase the oboe's expressive qualities, whilst imagining a less ornate dimension to the *naimuozzo*'s song than is, perhaps, implied by the text.

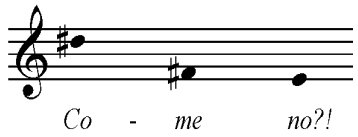
[32] See p.7 of score.
[33] Donizetti, G. (1835) *Lucia di Lammermoor*, Act 3

ISLAND VERSES

Island Verses was commissioned by the Edinburgh Quartet who requested a work inspired by their season's themes of exile and island life. Their other stipulation was that it should contain passages within which texts – written by island dwellers in response to these themes – could be recited. Consequently, the piece includes three *Text Interludes*, built from the same material as the movements they separate, which are designed to be repeated freely to accompany a narrator.

Given my tendency to write diaristic music, the themes set out in the commission brief presented me with an unfamiliar challenge, for I had no first-hand experience of either island life or exile to draw upon. Realising my creative need to forge a more intimate connection to the extra-musical subject matter, I decided to respond to memories of my rural upbringing – aspects of which, I imagined, could be comparable to island life. Meanwhile, my interest in the work of Dante Alighieri – who wrote *La divina commedia* during his banishment from Florence – provided me with a lens through which to view the subject of exile. In order to contemplate this latter subject I also felt compelled to determine what *home* meant me, ultimately concluding that it was not, in fact, a place, but rather a person, in the form of my wife, Barbara. Long in love with the musicality of her speaking voice, I decided to make a recording of her in conversation one afternoon, and her angular delivery of the Italian expression '*come no*?!' gave rise to a three-note figure, referred to hereafter as the 'seed cell' (Ex. 5.1). This cell is used as the basis for almost all of my musical material, creating a thematic unity between the movements which, I hope, balances the work's disparate array of external influences.

Ex. 5.1. Seed cell.

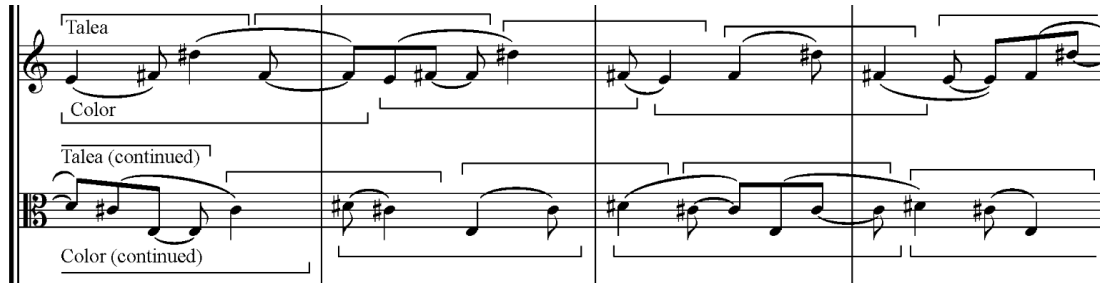


I. Boat Song

The first movement, *Boat Song*, seeks to establish the music's island theme, and is heavily informed by my early recollections of being on and around sailing boats in Scotland. Inspired by the distorted reflections that can be seen in the surface of a body of water, the movement opens with unaligned, mirrored figures (derived from the seed cell and its inversion), which are played by muted 2nd violin and viola. The lilting, interlocking rhythms and overlapping *legato* phrases of these instruments are intended, moreover, to evoke the motion of lapping waves – their imagined swell depicted by the frequent *crescendi* and *diminuendi* of both parts.

In the approach to letter A, these figurations coalesce into similar, yet distinct isorhythmic patterns which both consist of four-note *colors*, and *taleas* of five quavers' duration.

Ex. 5.2. *I. Boat Song*. Letter A (2nd violin and viola): Isorhythmic patterns.



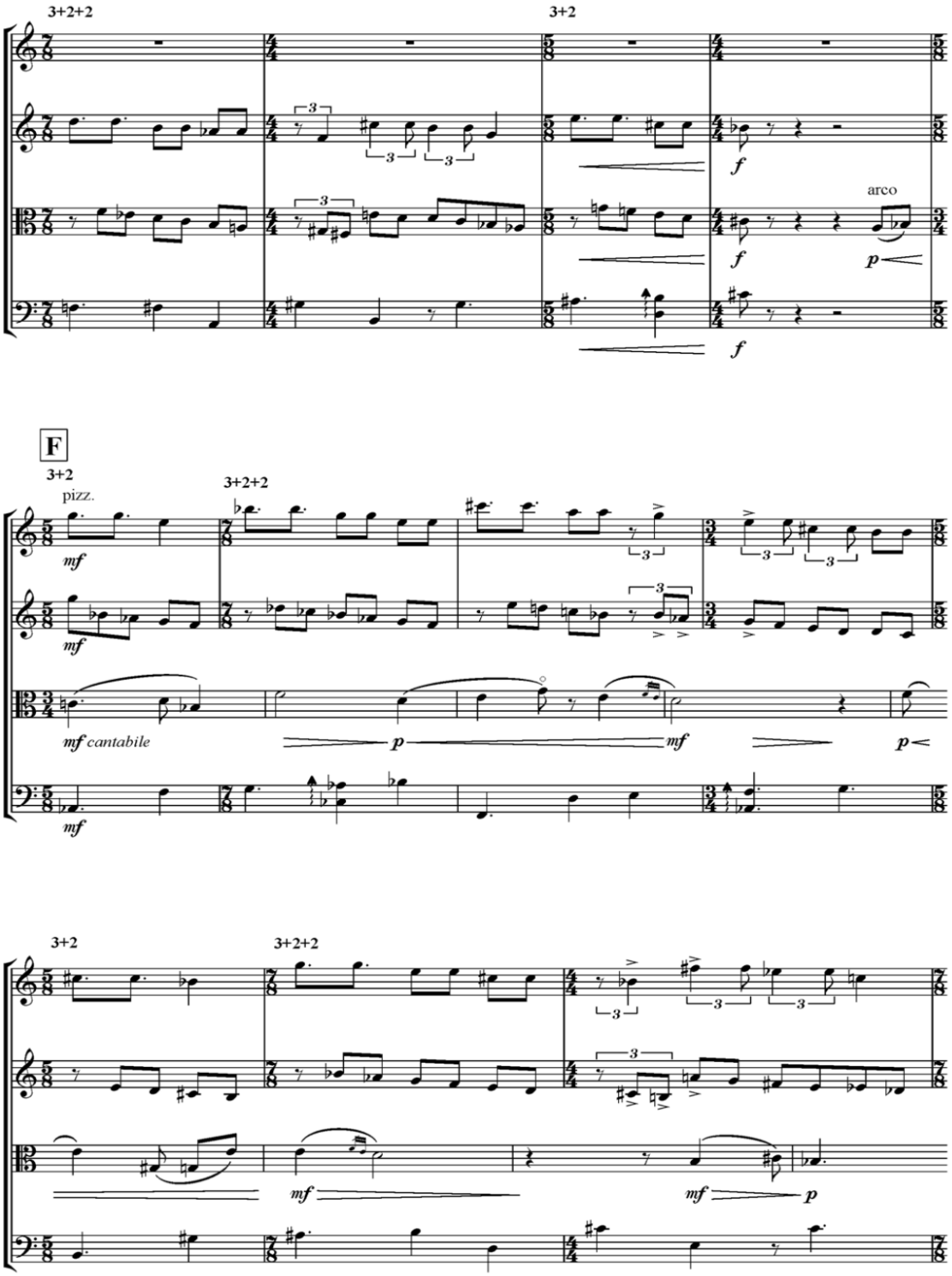
These attributes liberate both from the conventional dotted crotchet stress of the music's 6/8 metre, which is, however, preserved through the introduction of the cello's pizzicato bass-line three bars

before letter A, its steady, oar-like motion adding a slower rhythmic layer to the texture.

This trio of instruments is then joined by the 1st violin at letter A, the duplets of its melodic line introducing a tugging, cross-rhythmic element to the music, which is intended to evoke the pull of a current of water. Rather than occupying a register distinct from that of the rest of the quartet, this melody emerges (unmuted) from amidst the 2nd violin's figurations in an allusion to my memory of seeing the grey forms of lochs come into view, through the mist, while on childhood walks. This sense of emergence is also enhanced by the melody's dynamic envelopes which, subsequently, enable the line to drift in and out of the music's foreground: an allusion to the manner in which bobbing waves render the forms that sit atop them – such as birds, buoys, or even boats – more or less visible.

Subsequently, the basis of the movement's central section is an invented folk-song, introduced by the viola at letter F, and repeated, at letter G, by the 2nd violin. Characterised by its 3/4 metre, strongly modal opening, and grace note decorations (inspired by the embellishments of fiddle players in Scottish traditional music), the arrival of this melody creates a polymetre with the constantly changing time signatures of its pizzicato accompaniment. Haltingly introduced at letter E, this accompanying texture (derived from a more vertical realisation of the seed cell) responds – through its unpredictability of metre, cross rhythms, and arpeggiated sonorities – to my recollection of hearing waves strike the sides of a sailing dinghy in unevenly-accented rhythms. The passage's pizzicato sonorities seek, meanwhile, to recreate the delicately percussive timbre of this sound, which I remember as possessing an almost marimba-like quality.

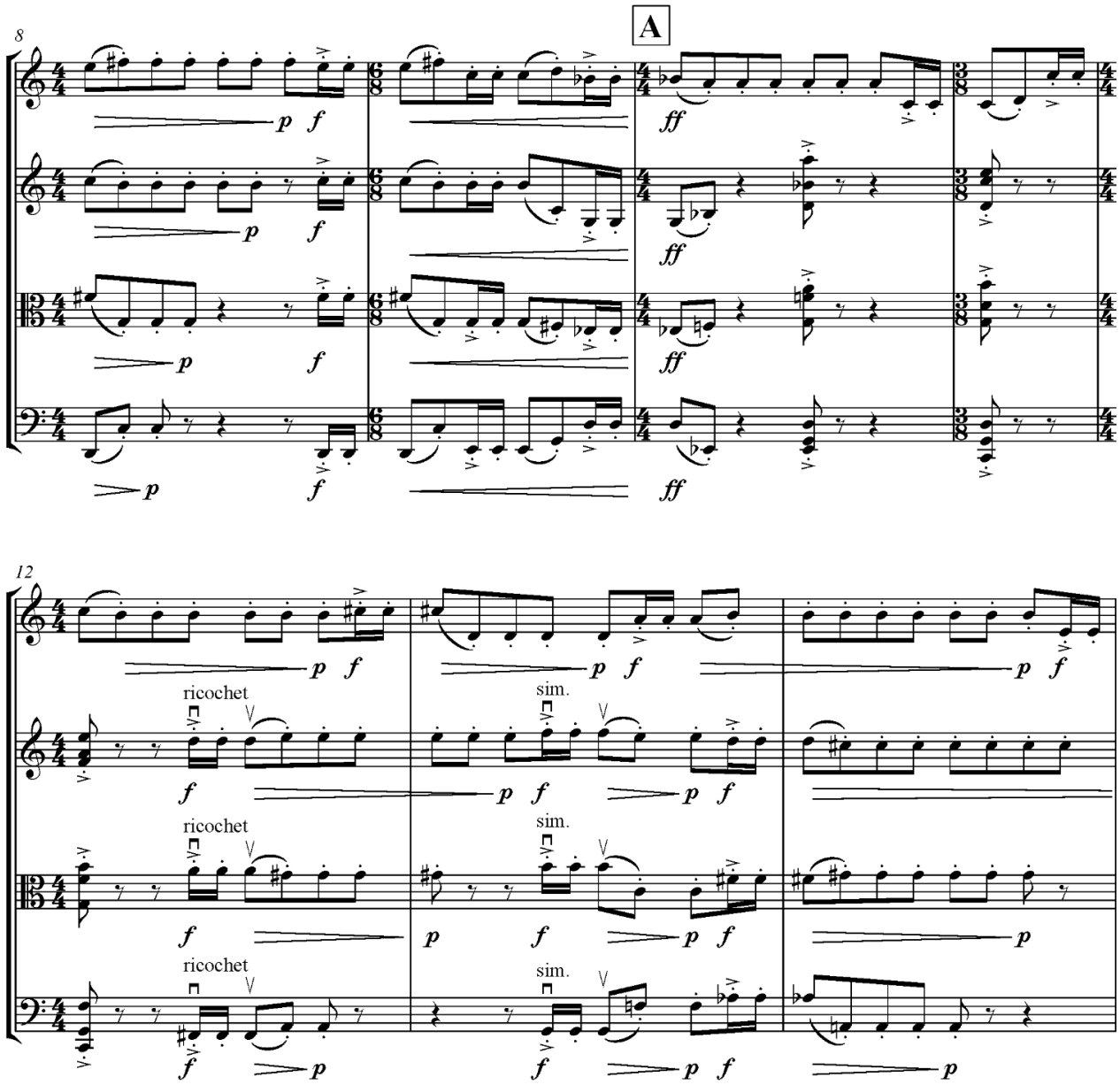
Ex. 5.3. *I. Boat Song*. Excerpt from polymetric central episode.



II. Scherzo; III. Lament

The quartet's second and third movements respond to the manner in which small, rural communities are often united by ritual, whether in the form of seasonal celebrations or acts of mourning. The former type of occasion was the catalyst for *Scherzo*: its rapid tempo, energetic use of *ricochet* gestures, and playful juxtapositions of timbres inspired by the joyful vibrancy of the New Year ceilidhs that were held in the village of Brig o'Turk where I grew up. Like *Sonata*, this movement uses rhythmic unisons across all four parts to represent the feelings of solidarity that such events would engender amongst those present. At various points in the music, however, a single instrument breaks away from the rest of the group to create a new rhythmic layer: an analogy for the way in which colourful individuals from the community would occasionally draw attention to themselves during the festivities.

Ex. 5.4. *II. Scherzo*. Bars 8-14: Departure of 1st violin from unison texture.

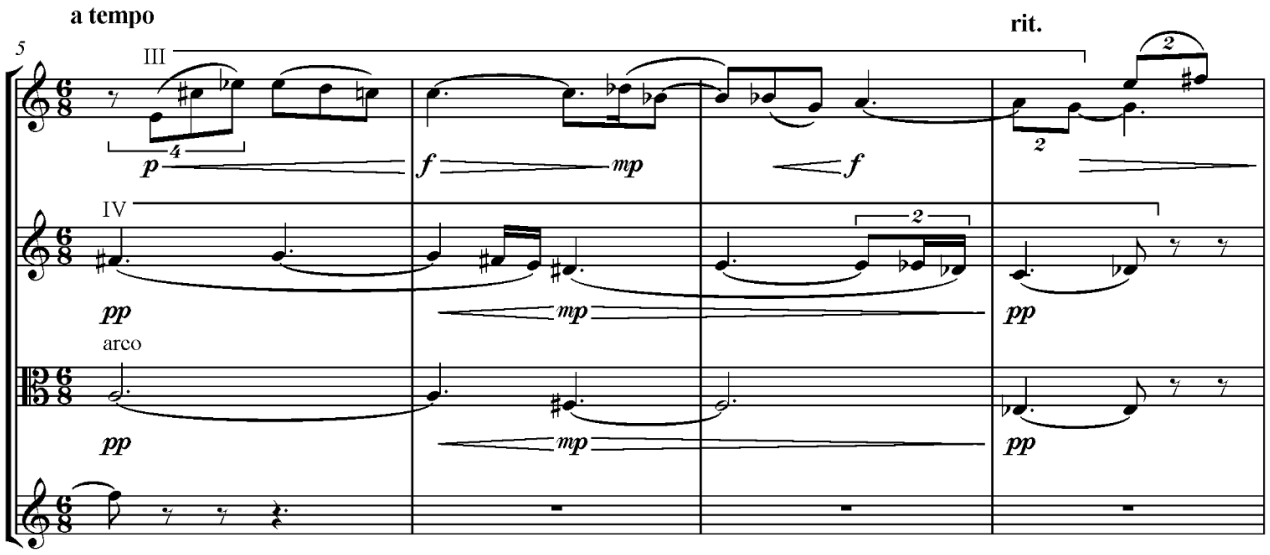


By contrast, *Lament* imagines a funereal scene which draws upon my early memories of seeing James Guthrie's Brig o'Turk-set painting, *A Funeral Service in the Highlands* (1882), and my subsequent awareness of the village as the location for a markedly different form of social gathering. The falling trajectories of the movement's first subject melody and accompaniment stem from the *pianto* topic – 'the falling minor second that signifies weeping' (Monelle, 2006, p.4) – and the related use of longer descending lines to represent the same phenomenon[34]. The notion of falling tears informs my rhythmic

[34] Examples include '2. Last Lullaby for Hans' from Mark-Anthony Turnage's Piano Concerto (2013).

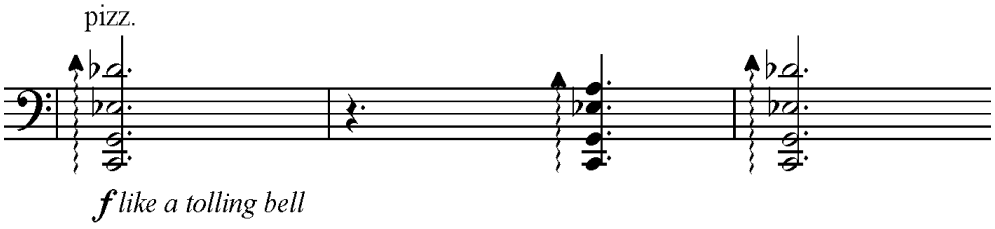
language, too, which lends a sobbing character to the material through the jerking motion of its dotted figures and semiquaver couplets.

Ex. 5.5. *III. Lament*. Bars 5-8: Weeping figures in 1st subject's melodic and accompanimental lines.



The music's depictions of grief-induced emotional states – which are continued through the second subject's restless, tremolo texture – are then suspended at the heart of the work (letter D) where the tolling of the cello's strummed sonorities, beneath a 1st violin pedal point, imagines the sound of a bell chiming in the stillness of an empty square. The dissonance and low register of these chords invoke the more sombre association of bells with funeral rites[35], their ringing recreated through the resonance of the instrument's open strings (Ex. 5.6).

Ex. 5.6. *III. Lament*. Bars 50-52 (cello): Funeral bell.

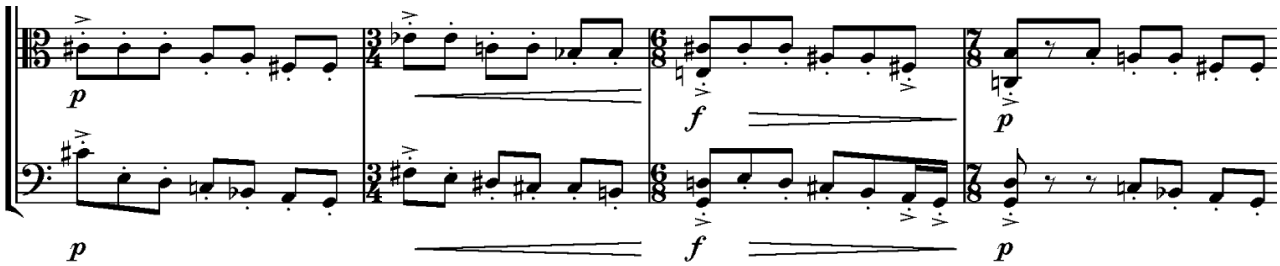


[35] Examples include Matthew King's Venetian Sonata 4: *R.W. in Venice, 1883* (2022).

IV. Finale

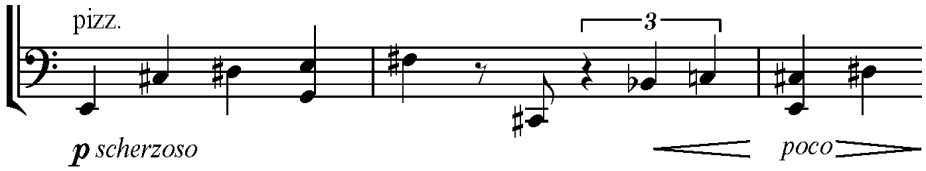
In its final movement, *Island Verses* turns its gaze toward the theme of exile. Inspired by lines 55-60 from Canto XVII of Dante's *Paradiso* – 'You shall leave everything you love most dearly / ... You are to know... / how hard a path it is for one who goes / descending and ascending others' stairs' (Alighieri, 1995, p.459) – the music imagines multiple flights of steps through brisk, quaver patterns, based on the seed cell in its original, descending form. Aware of Dante's Florentine heritage, I was revisited, whilst reading the poet's words, by memories of descending the steep, stone stairways of Tuscany's medieval hilltop towns. The often-cracked surfaces of these steps are represented musically through the manner in which the aforementioned descending cells unfold in patterns of ever-changing lengths (Ex. 5.7).

Ex. 5.7. *IV. Finale*. Letter B (viola and cello): Descending step material.



Conversely, the act of ascending such steps is symbolised by the steadier crotchet movement and rising contours of the cello's pizzicato walking bass line (based on inversions of the seed cell), which is first introduced, unaccompanied, at letter E.

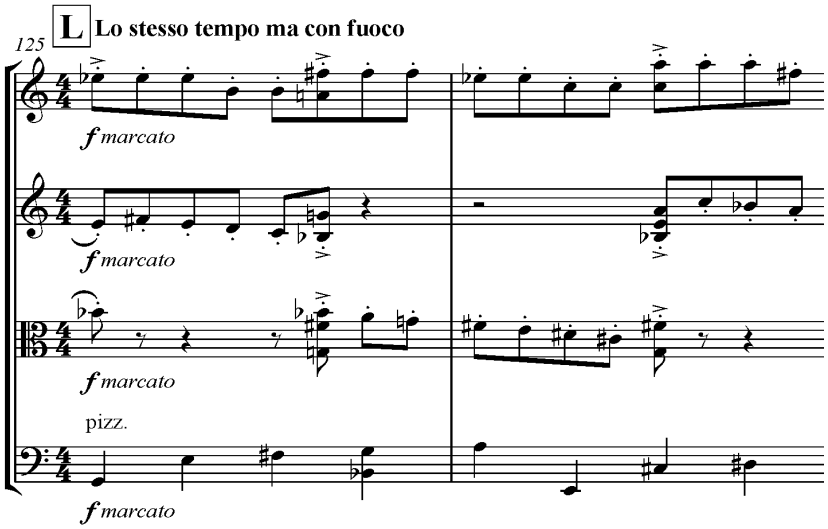
Ex. 5.8. *IV. Finale*. Letter E (cello): Ascending step material.



This idea then returns during the work's energetic closing stages at letter L where its ascending

patterns move in contrary motion to the descending seed cell motifs. The co-existence of both ideas – with their unaligned and continually-changing phrase lengths – suggests a perpetual struggle which alludes to the challenges of exile as described by Dante (Ex. 5.9).

Ex. 5.9. *IV. Finale*. Letter L: Combination of ascending and descending step ideas.



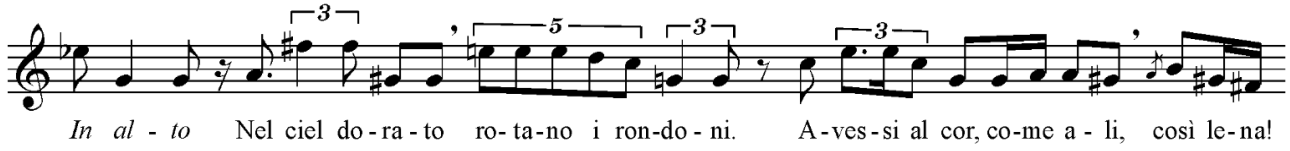
IN THE GOLDEN SKY THE SWALLOWS TURN

In the golden sky the swallows turn is inspired by Giovanni Pascoli's poem *In alto* (1889)[36], and by my own memories of time spent in the mountainous, Tuscan region of Garfagnana where Pascoli lived, and where *In alto* is likely set. Pascoli's poem recounts the experience of a farm-worker who, while watching the acrobatic flight of swifts and hearing their cries, finds himself envying their freedom. My title is a deliberate mistranslation of the poem's opening line with the 'swifts' of the original text being replaced by 'swallows', in reference to the many occasions on which I have observed the latter bird whilst cycling in the Tuscan hills. Rather than follow *In alto*'s narrative too closely, my composition takes the contrasting realities of Pascoli's earthbound labourer and the birds that circle above him as a point of departure – distilling this polarity into a set of wistful 'songs' and playful dances.

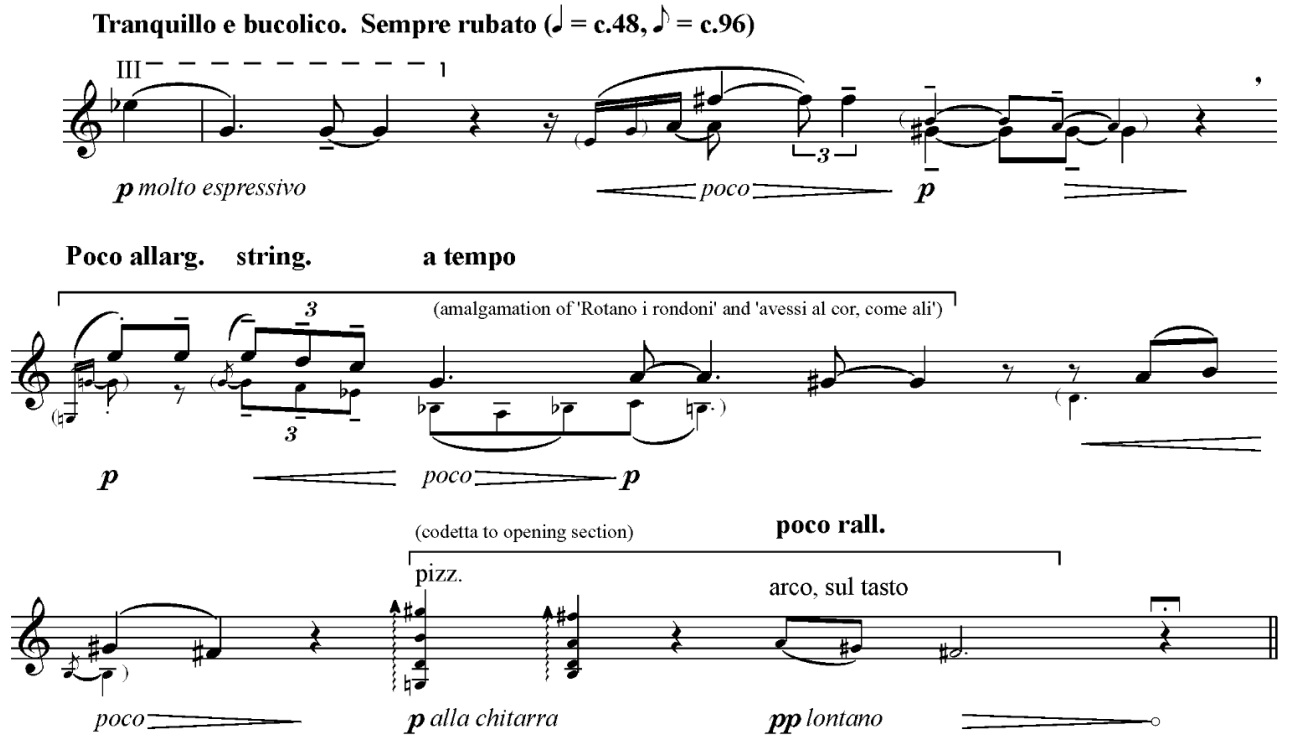
Building upon the approach used in *Island Verses*, the pitch content and, to a slightly lesser degree, rhythmic language of the work's divergent types of material are derived from a transcription that I made of my wife reciting Pascoli's poem[37], and thus the piece may be considered a form of wordless setting. As shown by the figures below, the pitches of *Swallow*'s opening section are largely faithful to Barbara's reading of the poem's first two lines, with the most significant difference being the amalgamation of the phrases 'Rotano i rondoni' and 'avessi al cor, come ali' (Pascoli, 2010, p.213).

[36] See preface to score.
[37] For the complete transcription, see Appendix 3 (p.112).

Ex. 6.1. Excerpt 1 from my transcription of Barbara's reading of *In alto* (recorded on 13th May 2020).



Ex. 6.2. Opening of *Swallows*.
Smaller, bracketed notes indicate amendments and alterations to the transcription.

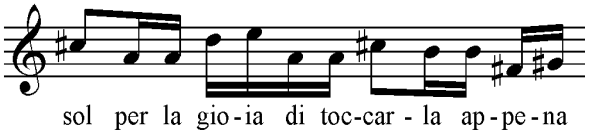


Whilst my settings of certain words in *Tales* convey something of the text's intended meaning (owing to the strongly onomatopoeic quality of Basile's writing), I did not expect the same outcome in this instance, given the larger quantity of text and Pascoli's subtler, if still onomatopoeic, writing style. My request that Barbara recite the poem was, therefore, a preliminary step in the compositional process: a method for generating 'raw' material from which Pascoli-inspired ideas could be sculpted. Aspects of this sculpting process may be understood through further comparison of the two figures above whose differences, as already touched upon, reveal certain compositional 'interventions' with regard to the material of the transcription. In addition to the aforementioned amalgamation of phrases – which was musically-motivated – my augmentation of the transcription's note values transforms

the clipped rhythms of Barbara's recitation into music that is more *arioso* in character, lending the episode a spaciousness intended to suggest both the location of Pascoli's worker within an expanse of landscape, and the laboured quality of his movements. This latter notion is further alluded to through the presence of two-part textures in the music, the tightening and release of harmonic tension within them symbolic of the flexing and relaxation of the muscles during physical labour.

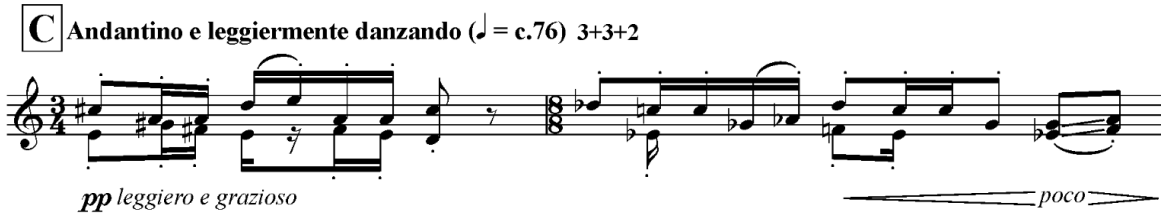
After this opening episode come the first of three dance-like passages which occur during the course of the piece (at letters C, E, and I). The melodic germ (and opening bar) of each stems from Barbara's recitation of the line 'sol per la gioia di toccarla appena' (Pascoli, 2010, p.213).

Ex. 6.3. Excerpt 2 from my transcription of Barbara's reading.



Viewing the major triad that Barbara's voice outlined while speaking about *gioia* (joy) as a compositional gift, I reproduced the resulting fragment of transcription with relatively little alteration: its inherent brightness imbuing the material with a carefree character that echoes the enviable freedom of *In alto*'s birds.

Ex. 6.4. Letter C: Dance-like music derived from the material shown in Ex. 6.3.



Of equal importance in expressing both this sense of liberty and the rural setting of Pascoli's text is the music's playful unpredictability of rhythm and continuous changes of metre: characteristics

informed by the rhythmic language of works such as Stravinsky's *L'Histoire du soldat* (1918). From an indexical perspective, the influence of such folk-informed music – as well as my allusions to the *siciliana* through the lilting figures of letter F – helps to establish the music's pastoral character. Poetically, meanwhile, these facets of the writing are intended to evoke the idea of a bird's weightlessness, but also reflect the sense of joy that I myself experience when cycling in Garfagnana. In writing the piece I equated the poem's image of a bird diving to touch the earth with the sensation of pedalling down Garfagnana's steep mountain slopes, and the hurtling, descending figures heard shortly after letters J (bars 2-7) and K (bars 6-13) are intended to suggest both phenomena.

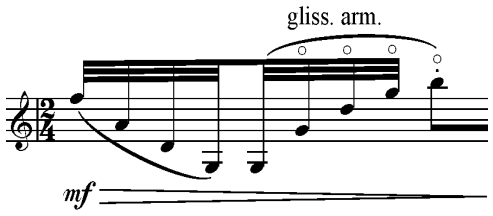
Throughout such passages the frequent employment of open strings recalls the violin's use in folk-music, imbuing the material with a rustic, unvarnished timbre in a further signification of the pastoral. The use of open strings epitomises, moreover, the work's wider treatment of the violin whereby idiomatic playing techniques and the instrument's natural properties are harnessed for poetic ends. This approach is established from the outset where the performer is instructed to play the opening gesture of a falling minor sixth exclusively on the D string, creating, through the resulting quasi-*glissando*, a sighing effect which symbolises the weariness of Pascoli's narrator. This figure then returns an octave higher on the E string during the work's closing stages, where it depicts, paradoxically, the gliding of an airborne bird, an image which the music explores elsewhere in the form of other short *glissandi* (eg. Letter C, second bar).

Also inspired by avian movement are the ascending figures which unfurl throughout the piece – depicting the more effortful actions of a bird taking wing[38] – as well as the various 'swooping' motifs which populate the music. These latter gestures – which typically appear as cross-string flourishes, and, in one instance, include a *glissando* on natural harmonics (Ex. 6.5) – further demonstrate the manner in which characteristic violin figurations often assume a pictorial function within the music.

[38] Examples include the bar before letter G, and the *Rilassato* passage two bars before letter L.

This idiomatic approach to the violin writing helps enable the fluent delivery of the work's more bravura passages, too, mirroring the apparent ease with which birds perform the most acrobatic of aerial manoeuvres.

Ex. 6.5. Letter F, bar 9: Swooping motif.



Despite the music's subject matter, the highest register of the violin is heard relatively little during such material, and only fully emerges in the penultimate episode of the piece (letter L) where fragments of the dance material form the basis of a dialogue between distant, airy harmonics and earthy outbursts featuring the violin's open G and D strings. This succinct episode, which seeks to encapsulate *In alto*'s central conflict, soon gives way to a recapitulatory coda (letter M) in which the work's opening theme returns, as previously mentioned, an octave higher. Here the relocation of the music's more 'human' material into what might be heard as a bird-like space – replete with chirping harmonics and ornamentation – implies the farm-worker becoming one with his desires, whilst also denoting the sense of resignation that he experiences during *In alto*'s closing lines.

FANTASIAS

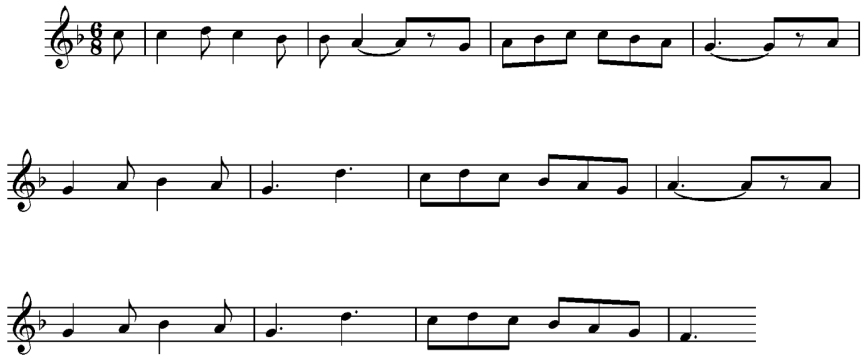
My *Fantasias* are based upon pre-existing melodies evocative of particular locations. The material of these works – *Tu scendi* (2016); *Bergamasca* (2021); and *Manhattan Matins* (2021) – is developed using similar processes to those applied to other types of material in my portfolio. In *Tu scendi*, the earliest written work submitted, the source material is readily identifiable throughout much of the piece, whereas in the more mature works, *Bergamasca* and *Manhattan Matins*, a more comprehensive deconstruction of the material, and a less faithful treatment of the borrowed melodies results, respectively, in their fuller integration into my musical language.

TU SCENDI DALLE STELLE

Tu scendi dalle stelle (for trumpet and strings) is a fantasia upon the traditional *pastorale* of the same name. The setting of a nativity-inspired text by Neapolitan bishop, Alphonsus Maria de' Liguori (1696-1787) (Brugnano 2002, p.6), the *pastorale*'s melody is quoted in Respighi's *L'adorazione dei magi*[39], and remains a well-known Christmas carol in Italy, where I first heard it sung.

[39] Respighi, O. (1927) *Trittico Botticelliano*

Ex. 7.1. Opening of *Tu scendi dalle stelle* (Trad.).



What initially interested me about the material, however, was its Neapolitan origins and its common use as a piece of *zampogna*[40] music. Historically the *zampogna* was played at Christmas time 'by shepherds who came down… from the Calabrian highlands to Naples, to perform before the churches and wayside shrines' (Monelle, 2006, p.198) and, during the Baroque period, composers[41] began to use the 'rocking meters… [and] drone basses' of this shepherd music as signifiers of the pastoral – and by extension, Christmas – within their own work (2006, pp.216-217). Marking my portfolio's most indexical engagement with the pastoral topic, this piece continues the tradition of such composers, preserving (with only a few exceptions) the rhythms and metre of the original *pastorale*, whilst also responding to the *zampogna*'s musical properties, and the style in which it is played.

Although composers such as Leoncavallo[42] have suggested the *zampogna*'s timbre through the use of woodwind, the instrumentation of my piece prevented me from taking a similar approach. I therefore decided to emulate the ornamented playing style of the *zampogna* players that I had heard on recordings by embellishing the opening phrases of the *pastorale*'s exposition (bars 8-15) with mordents and grace notes (Ex. 7.2). These decorative features also allude, simultaneously, to a more contemporary form of Neapolitan music as epitomised by folk-singers such as Lina Sastri, whose

[40] A type of Southern Italian bagpipe.
[41] Examples include the *pastorale* of Arcangelo Corelli's Concerto Grosso in G minor, Op. 6, No. 8 'Fatto per la notte di Natale' (1714).
[42] Leoncavallo, R. (1892) 'I zampognari!' from *Pagliacci*, Act 1.

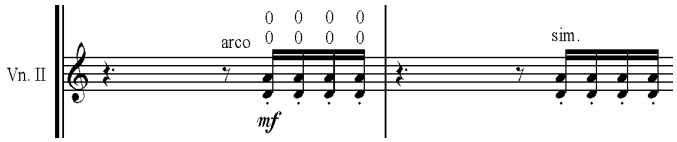
vocal styles are similarly ornate. The florid character established by this passage is maintained throughout the remainder of the piece through the extensive use of trills and virtuosic semiquaver lines which (in addition to the work's contrapuntal textures) owe as much to the trumpet *concerti*[43] of de' Liguori's 18th century contemporaries as to *zampogna* music.

Ex. 7.2 Bars 8-16 (trumpet and 1st violin): Ornamentation of *pastorale*.

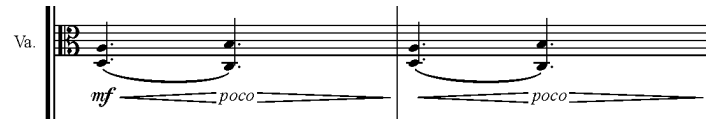
Also *zampogna*-inspired is my accompaniment of the *pastorale* melody which alludes to the instrument's drone through a combination of pedals and *ostinato* elements (Ex. 7.3a – 7.3c).

[43] Examples include Georg Philipp Telemann's Trumpet Concerto in D (1714).

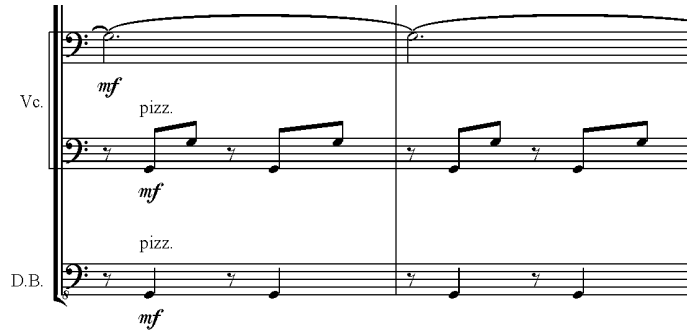
Ex. 7.3a. Bars 8-9 (2nd violins).



Ex. 7.3b. Bars 8-9 (violas).



Ex. 7.3c. Bars 8-9 ('celli and double basses).

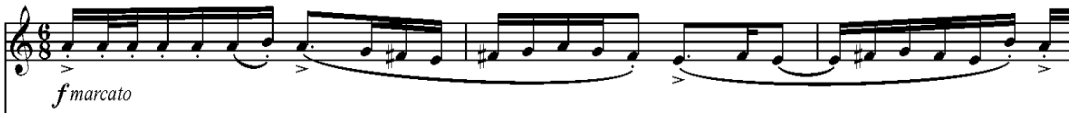


These figures are not, as may be deduced from the repeated sevenths in the violas, intended to be faithful replications of the instrument's intonation, but rather represent a *zampogna* of my own imagining. The prominence of perfect fifths and the use of the 2nd violins' open strings, meanwhile, imbue the overall texture with a folk-like quality, lending a more overtly rustic dimension to the already pastoral character of the music.

In keeping with the spirit of a fantasia, *Tu scendi* also reimagines the very character of the *pastorale*, and initially presents its pitches through an entirely different topic, in the form of the fanfare that begins the work (Ex. 7.4). Unlike the fanfare writing of *Tales* (which is characterised, primarily, by

its use of wide, ascending intervals), *Tu scendi*'s fanfares follow the contours of the *pastorale* melody through crisp, repeating notes, which showcase the trumpet's oft-exploited[44] suitability for such material.

Ex. 7.4. Bars 1-3 (trumpet): Fanfare figure derived from *pastorale*'s pitches.



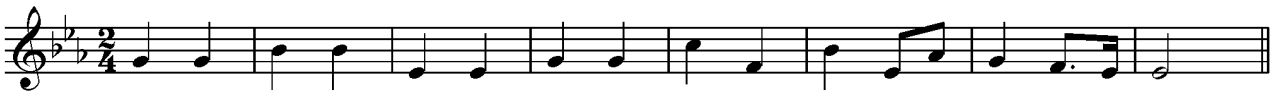
Written before my first visit to Naples, the piece draws further inspiration from a mythologised version of the city and its surrounding area which is derived partly from film and literature, but also from my recollections of seeing softly-lit *presepi*[45] in Italian households and churches at Christmas time: their figurines of *zampogna*-playing shepherds, and recreations of Southern Italy's rocky landscapes – replete with crumbling, balconied edifices – suggesting a world frozen in time. Bound up in this 'Naples of my dreams' (to paraphrase Ravel)[46] is the image of the candlelit, religious procession in which a statue of a saint is paraded through the streets of a town. Such a procession is thought to have been the inspiration for the second movement of Mendelssohn's Symphony No. 4 'Italian' (1833) (Hussey, 1949, pp.169-170), and it was to a romanticised vision of this ritual that my imagination drifted as I engaged with this Neapolitan *pastorale*.

[44] Examples include Augusta Read Thomas' *Radiant Circles* (2010).
[45] Nativity crèche
[46] Ravel's description of *Daphnis et Chloé* as 'the Greece of my dreams' (Larner, 1996, p.117)

BERGAMASCA

Bergamasca[47] is a distillation of the main strands of my compositional style, condensing imitations of bells, dance-like passages, and moments of overt lyricism into a minute-long ode to the town of Bergamo. Perched on a hilltop in the shadow of the Bergamasque Alps – an elevated position alluded to by the music's ascending, opening flourish – Bergamo is a compact nest of medieval bell-towers, churches, and villas. The catalyst for my first meaningful foray into composition as a teenager, my experiences in Bergamo have continued to inform my musical imagination, and the stimulus for this particular work was the hymn tune, *Christus Vincit*, which is sounded by the bells of the town's Piazza Vecchia.

Ex. 8.1. Transcription of the opening to *Christus Vincit*, as sounded by bells in Bergamo Alta (recorded on 12th November 2017).



The hymn tune's first eight bars are the source of nearly all of the work's material[48], but of equal importance to the music's conception was my association of the melody with ringing bells. *Bergamasca*'s presentation of *Christus Vincit* therefore uses many of the same bell-inspired elements that characterised my treatment of two- and three-note ideas in *Days*, *Sonata*, and *Prelude* (discussed in Chapters 1-3). This stylistic continuity is immediately apparent in the initial presentation of the hymn tune (letter A), which is scored for a pair of horns, imitated a perfect fifth higher by two,

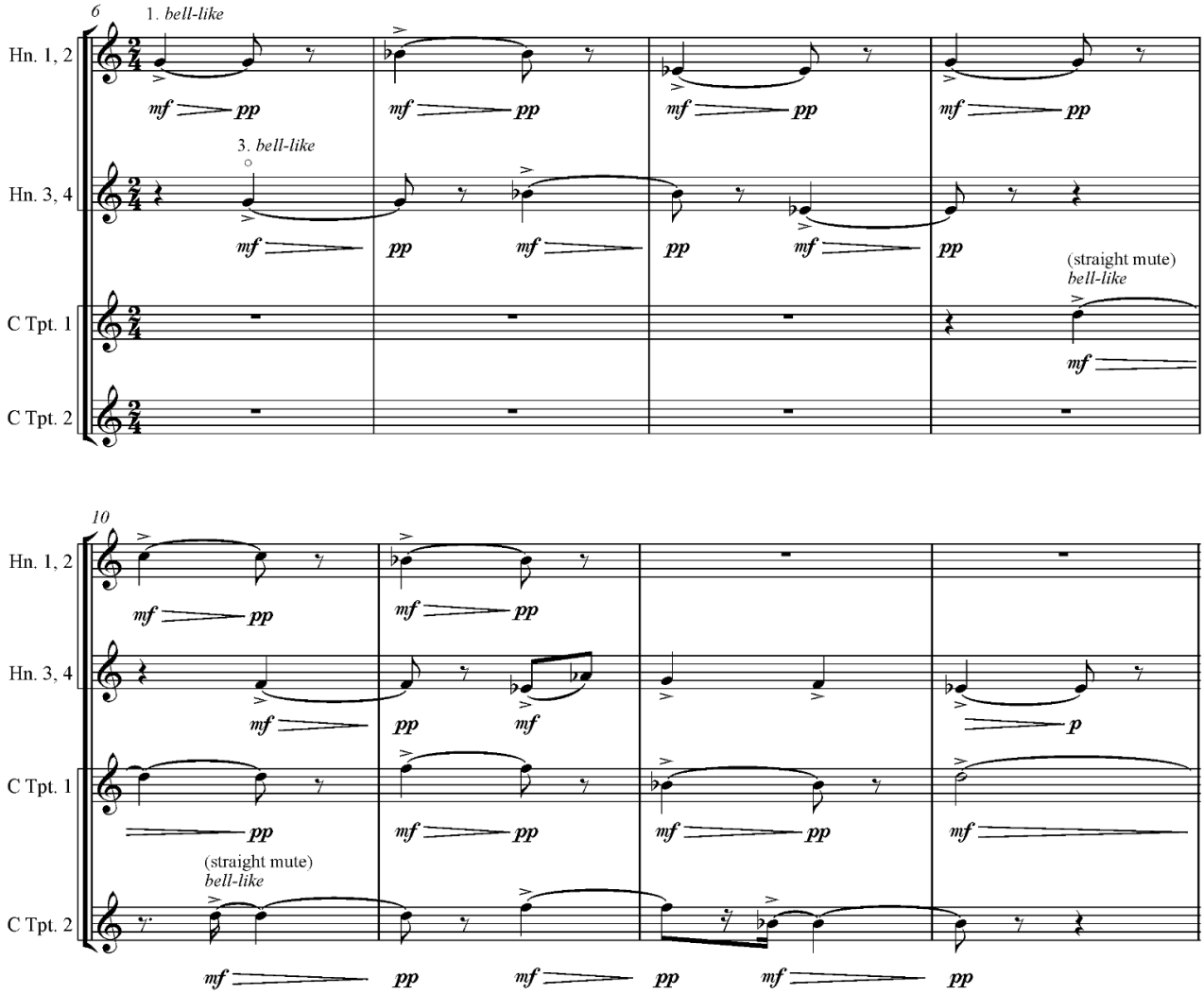
[47] The title, *Bergamasca*, refers to the geographical source of the work's inspiration and to the dance-like nature of the work's central section, which is not, however, intended to resemble the 16th century dance of the same name.
[48] For further examples of my treatment of this material, see Appendix 4 (pp.112-114).

straight-muted trumpets,[49] the orchestration further exemplifying my practice of using brass instruments as bell proxies.

Both the horns and trumpets execute their rendition of the melody as a hocket – a device employed extensively in all three of the pieces mentioned above, but not addressed until this chapter. On a poetic level this technique enables the melody to sound as if it is being played by multiple chiming bells, the overlapping of notes creating a constant ringing effect. Practically, meanwhile, the division of the melodic line between two instruments allows each brass player to be assigned longer notes, ensuring a more effective execution of the passage's 'attack and decay' effects.

[49] The trumpets' use of straight mutes on this occasion does not allude to the different timbres of a bell's frequencies, but is, rather, intended to symbolise the contrasting sounds of the different sets of bells heard throughout Bergamo Alta.

Ex. 8.2. Letter A (horns and trumpets): Hymn tune realised through the use of a hocket.



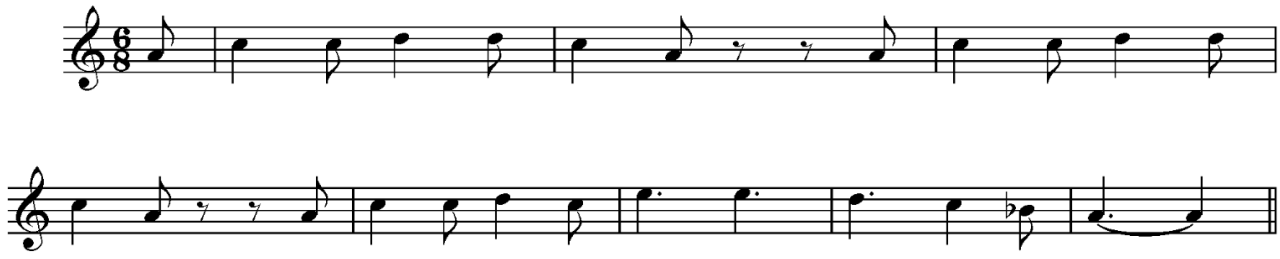
The imitative treatment of the *Christus Vincit* (both at letters A and E) is, meanwhile, an allusion to my fantastical impression that – through their jumbled volleys of antiphonal pealing – the bell-towers of Bergamo engage in conversation with one another throughout the day. Although it may also be a fanciful notion that two separate bell towers – located within metres of one another – would play the same melody (as my piece implies), the very idea of conversing bell-towers lies within the realm of the imagination. Therefore the use of imitation – a device oft-used in children's songs and musical games – felt wholly appropriate in conjuring what is, essentially, a child-like impression of the town's bells.

One significant difference in *Bergamasca*'s approach lies, however, in its use of instrumentation. If the instrumental forces of *Prelude* facilitated a more nuanced exploration of the techniques used in my bell-inspired chamber works, then *Bergamasca*'s scoring for symphony orchestra – with its larger percussion section – enabled me to reference bells in a more literal fashion through the inherently tintinnabular sounds of glockenspiel, vibraphone, and also harp. Indeed, these latter two instruments – which are initially used to enhance the bell-like quality of the horns and trumpets at letter A – are the last we hear in the work, their resonance extending beyond the orchestra's conclusive, staccato chord in a final, explicit reference to the ringing of Bergamo's bells.

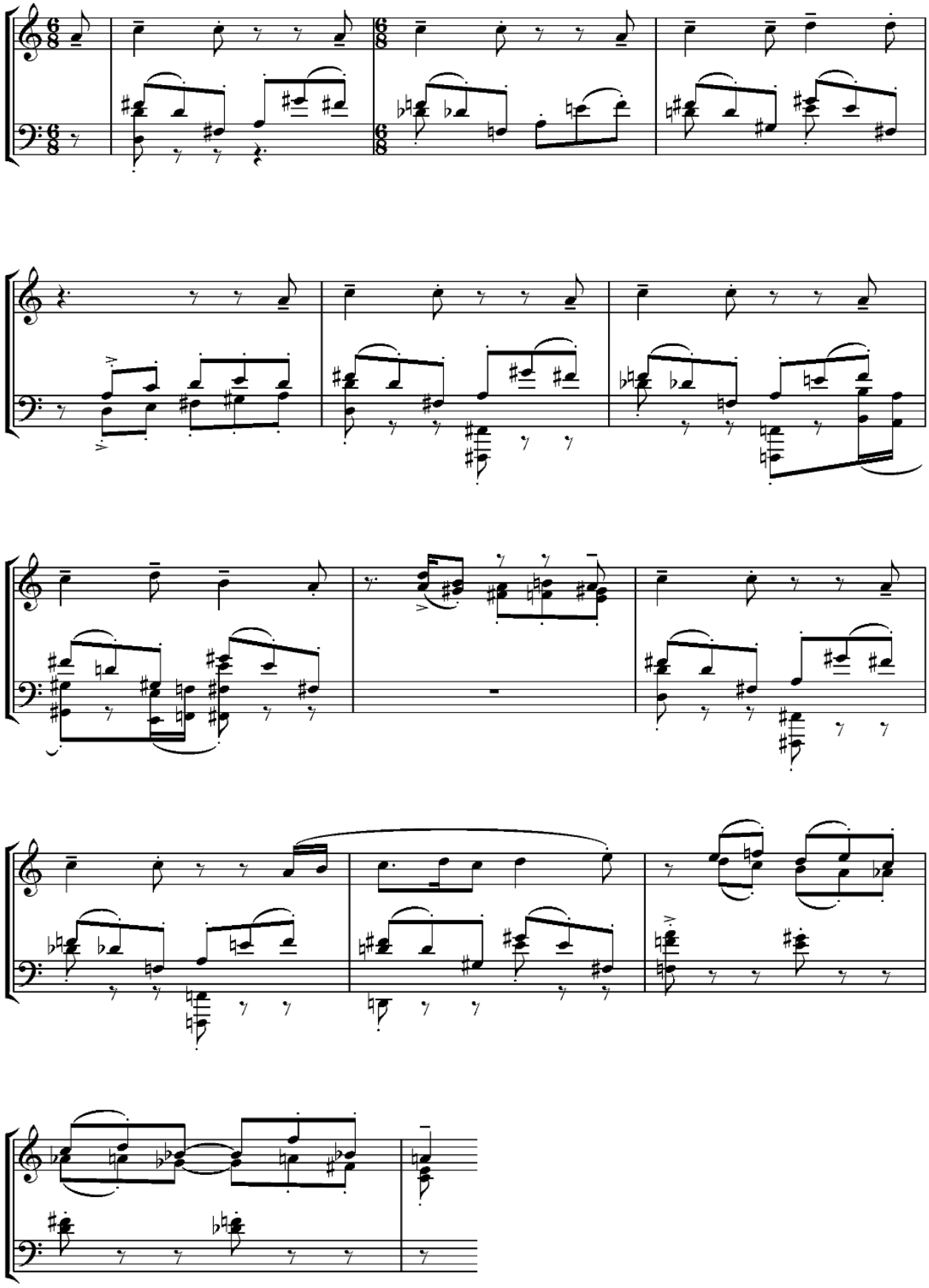
MANHATTAN MATINS

My orchestral work, *Manhattan Matins*, is derived – perhaps unexpectedly, given its title – from the nursery rhyme, *La bella lavanderina* (Ex. 9.1). Shortly after hearing this melody for the first time, possible variations of it began to percolate through my mind, resulting in the harmonised, re-imagined version shown in Ex. 9.1b.

Ex. 9.1a. *La bella lavanderina* (Trad.).



Ex. 9.1b. Re-imagining of *La bella lavanderina*.



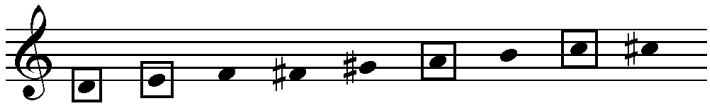
In playing through my material, I was particularly struck by the following elements, which, in combination with each other, created a somewhat jazz-like character:

- Ascending minor thirds
- Lilting 6/8 rhythms (reminiscent of swing quavers)
- Sequences of seventh chords, formed by the combination of melody and accompaniment

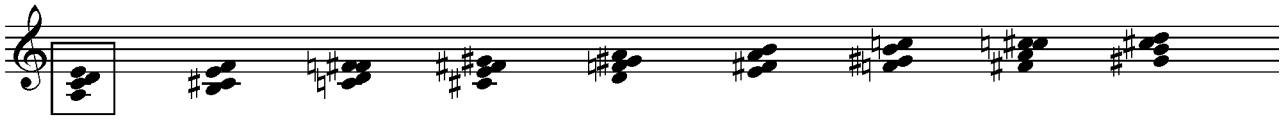
My perception of this material as jazz-like brought New York to mind, in the form of both jazz-influenced works inspired by the city – such as Copland's *Music for a Great City* (1964) – and my own experiences of Manhattan. Whilst all of the work's thematic material is derived from my variation of the nursery rhyme melody (hereafter referred to as *Lavanderina*), these two New York-related stimuli were influential upon my approach to harmony, texture, and orchestration.

This balance of the abstract and the figurative is present in the opening bars, which seek to denote both the ground-level and subterranean elements of the city using pitch material drawn almost exclusively from *Lavanderina*. Central to this introductory passage is the work's 'skyscraper music': a chorale-like augmentation of *Lavanderina*, which, through its rising melodic contour, four-part harmony, and brass-heavy scoring, represents the manner in which the human eye is drawn upwards by Manhattan's buildings, as well as the imposing, monolithic quality of the structures themselves. The quartal and ninth sonorities which comprise this 'chorale' are all vertically-arranged transpositions of the *Lavanderina*'s most prominent pitches – chosen for their perceived jazz-like qualities from a wider pool of similarly-constructed chords (Ex. 9.2). In counterpoint with this idea, meanwhile, is a looser outline of the same melodic material, scored brashly for the lower instruments of the orchestra, the tremolo of the timpani, celli and double basses imitating the rumble of Manhattan's subway (Ex. 9.3).

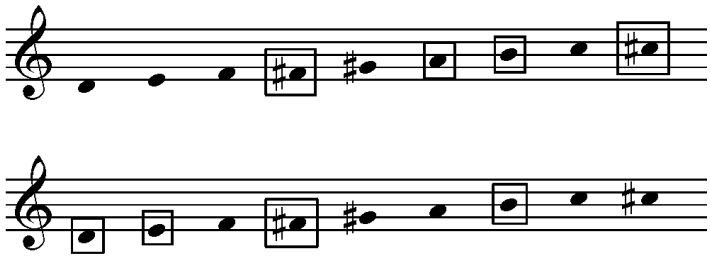
Ex. 9.2a. Mode used for *Manhattan Matins*, with the most prominent pitches of *Lavanderina* displayed in boxes.



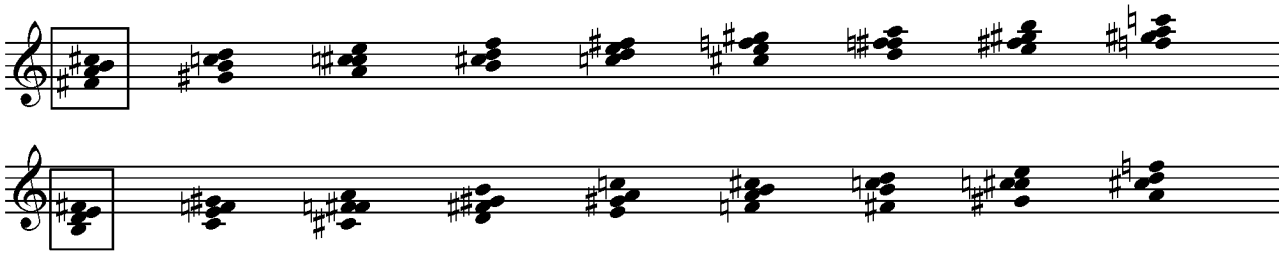
Ex. 9.2b. Vertical organisation of prominent pitches, followed by its transpositions within the mode.



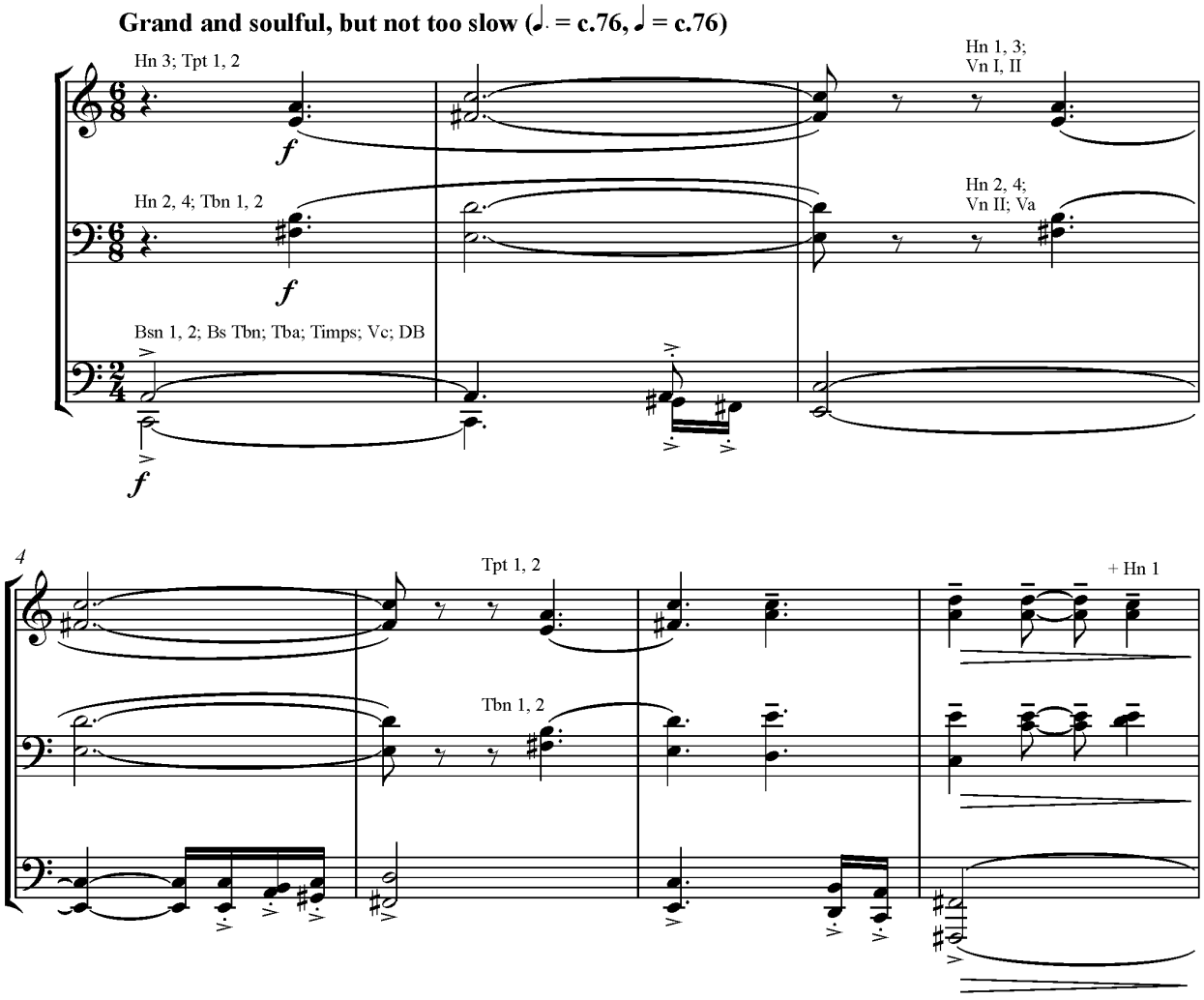
Ex. 9.2c. Exact transpositions of *Lavanderina*'s most prominent pitches shown within the mode.



Ex. 9.2d. Vertical organisations of the prominent pitches shown in Ex. 9.2c, followed by their transpositions within the mode.



Ex. 9.3. Bars 1-7 (orchestral reduction).



Subsequently the work unfolds as a sonata-rondo in which my *Lavanderina* variation serves as the *ritornello*. Its pitches are then re-configured during the music's 'B sections' (letters E-J and S-V), where they form the bass-line to a sweeping, subordinate theme. Representing a panoramic or airborne view of the city, this latter, more expansive music stands in contrast to the comparatively intimate, 'street-level' perspective which is proffered by the *ritornello* with its short, pithy phrases. This perception is reinforced by the *ritornello*'s appearance within different textures throughout the piece, suggesting – in the manner of Berlioz's *Harold en Italie* (1834) (Horton, 2013, pp.194-195) – a character moving through ever-changing surroundings. The most overtly pictorial of these textures occurs at letter P where a variation of the *ritornello* is presented as a dialogue between solo trumpet (or small woodwind groups), and the massed forces of horns, lower brass, and strings: the unbalanced

nature of the exchange analogous to my memories of feeling Lilliputian within the gigantic dimensions of Manhattan's structures. In spite of this, the city depicted in *Matins* is not the chaotic hub of urban-themed works like Carpenter's *Skyscrapers* (1926), but more typically the calmer Manhattan of my early morning walks through Central Park and the Upper East Side.

Like the portfolio's other orchestral works, *Matins* was initially written in short score, which enabled me to enhance the jazz-like character of certain lines, and include further pictorial references to the music, during the process of orchestration. Consequently the clarinet and trumpet are afforded *quasi*-soloistic roles throughout the piece in homage to their prominent use in Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue*, whilst the sporadic interjections of pizzicato double bass, suspended cymbal, and cabasa are references to the sounds of a jazz rhythm section and its occasional incorporation of Latin American percussion in works such as Wynton Marsalis' New York-inspired Symphony No. 4 'The Jungle' (2016).

A further – iconic – reference to New York may be heard, too, in the 'car-horn' motifs (e.g. bar 49) which appear as repeated major seconds within the quaver accompaniment of the work's subordinate theme. Consistent with my preference for allusion over literal representation (as exemplified by my imitations of bells in other pieces) these motifs are not assigned to actual car-horns in the tradition of American works such as Converse's *Flivver Ten Million* (1926). Instead they are scored for pairs of horns and trumpets, the contrasting timbres of their open, hand-stopped, and muted sounds suggesting various types of car-horn, as well as differences in proximity between the cars on a street and a listener standing on a sidewalk. Admittedly, the car-horns captured on the 'field recordings' I made while walking through Manhattan are all characterised by their various tunings of major and minor thirds, but, within the broadly consonant harmonic context of this piece, the dissonant properties of major seconds seemed to me to be more evocative of a klaxon-like abrasiveness.

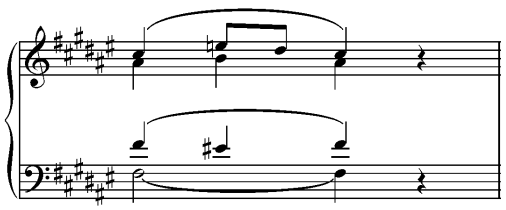
NIGHT

Night is comprised of *Nocturne (with rain and poplars)* (2020) and *Nocturne & Masquerade* (2018). Explorations of the same topical ground, both works extend the portfolio's Italian thread through their engagement with the *serenata*. As suggested by their titles, the two works locate their *serenata* material within different contexts. In *Poplars*, serenade episodes are framed by responses to nature, whereas *Nocturne & Masquerade* embeds its references to the genre within a musical world inspired by the *Commedia dell'arte*.

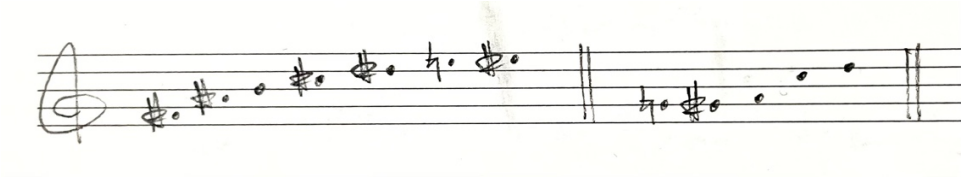
NOCTURNE (WITH RAIN AND POPLARS)

Nocturne (with rain and poplars) for solo guitar was commissioned as part of a series of responses to Schubert's various moon-inspired *lieder*, and takes as its departure point his setting of Ludwig Gotthard Kosegarten's *Die Mondnacht* (1815). My piece derives its pitch content from the complement of the pitches heard in bar 4 of the *lied* (Ex. 10.1), but is otherwise less informed by Schubert's music than it is by extra-musical ideas born from Kosegarten's text.

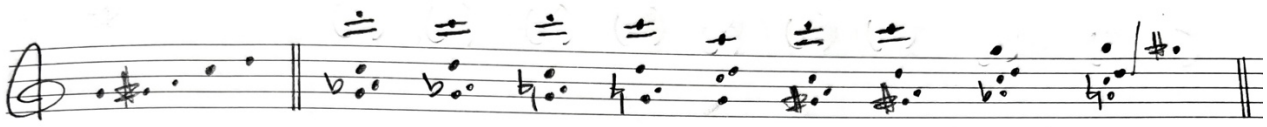
Ex. 10.1a. Schubert, *Die Mondnacht*, b.4.



Ex. 10.1b. Sketch showing pitches of *Die Mondnacht*'s fourth bar, then its complement.



Ex. 10.1c. Sketch showing four note sonorities drawn from the complement. All of *Nocturne*'s material is derived from these sonorities and their transpositions.

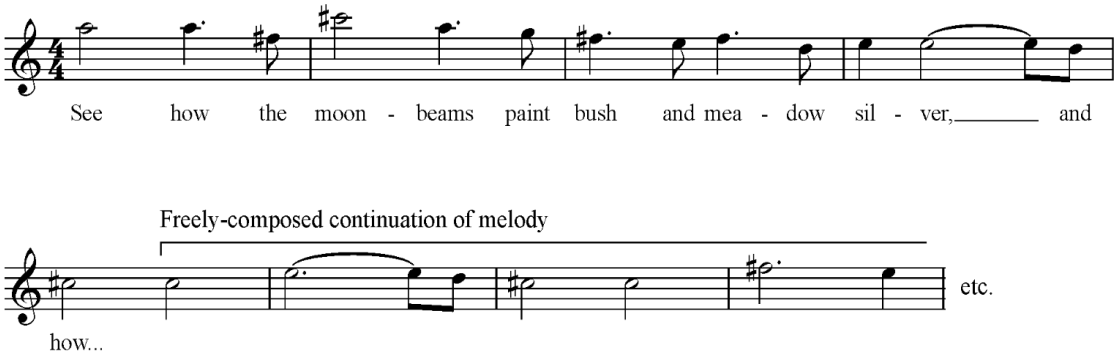


Through a transparently episodic structure, my piece imagines a serenade being performed within the pastoral surroundings that *Die Mondnacht* depicts, juxtaposing song-like passages with pictorial evocations of natural phenomena drawn from the poem. Following a brief introduction, the serenade is the first of the work's ideas to emerge fully-formed (bar 6). Its simple melody and perambulating accompaniment create a characteristic nocturne-texture which embraces the guitar's historic role in nocturnal music-making.

The serenade's melody began life as a wordless setting of Kosegarten's text, in its English translation by Richard Wigmore (1988) (Ex. 10.2). Unlike the 'setting' of poetry in *Swallows*[50] this melody was written spontaneously and does not seek to faithfully replicate the contours of the speaking voice.

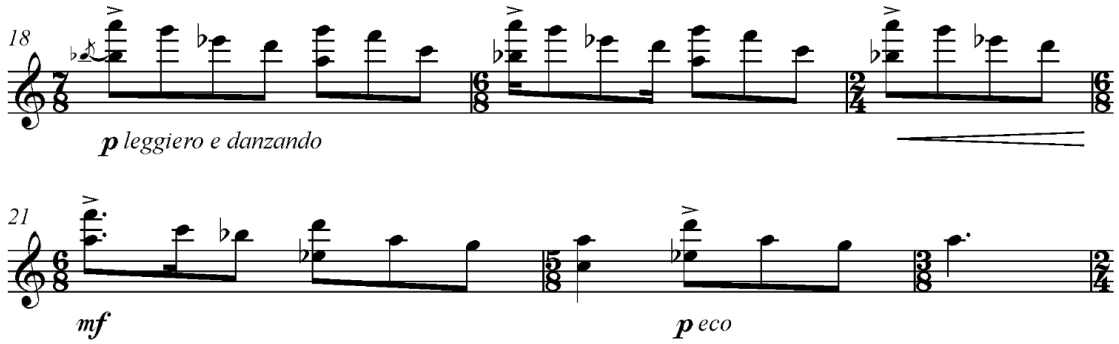
[50] See pp.60-62.

Ex. 10.2. *Nocturne (with rain and poplars)*. Bars 6-13: Serenade melody excerpt (minus accompaniment).



Both occurrences of the twelve-bar serenade are framed by passages inspired by rain: its falling suggested by descending figures of four or five notes (Ex. 10.3). Scored chiefly in the guitar's less-resonant upper register, the timbral dryness of these passages is intended to replicate the percussive, staccato sound of raindrops striking a hard surface such as a roof or window, whilst the *tessitura* itself refers to rain's aerial provenance. The material's dotted rhythms, syncopations, and constantly changing metres imagine the rebounding of raindrops off the ground as a form of graceful dance: a gentle, lilting descendent of Debussy's *Jardins sous la pluie* from *Estampes* (1903).

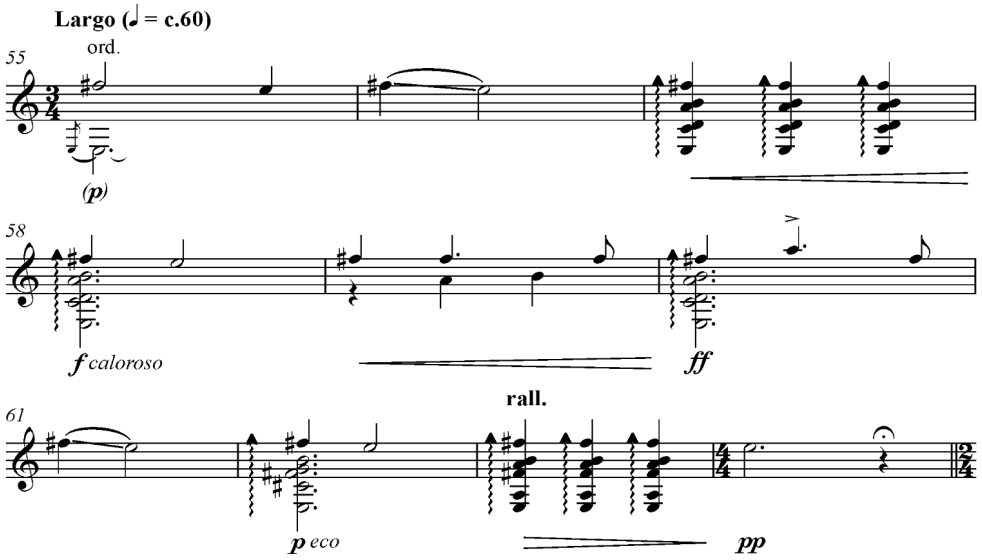
Ex. 10.3. Bars 18-23: Rain music.



In contrast to the work's rain-inspired material is its more spacious 'poplar' music which responds to Kosegarten's description of the trees' 'swaying tops' (Wigmore, 1988) gleaming in the moonlight. The trees are represented by arpeggiated, six-note chords, which, through their fullness of sound, contrast with the work's predominantly monodic or two-part textures: an analogy for the manner in which poplars stand out against the flat skylines of the plains outside Pisa. The repetition of these

chords imagines one of the characteristic lines of poplars which border many a lane in this area, whilst the trees' swaying movement is depicted by the use of *glissandi*, and through the gentle lilt of dotted rhythms and slow triple time (Ex. 10.4). These latter facets lend the music a lullaby-like character which infers that the poem's trees are swaying through sleep or tiredness: a further example of the piece seeking to personify elements of the natural world.

Ex. 10.4. Bars 55-64: Poplar music.



The origins of the idea to represent trees through arpeggiated gestures are twofold. On a pictorial level, the upward trajectories of the arpeggiations symbolise the manner in which poplars taper off elegantly at their crowns. The technique's employment also stems from a childhood memory of forest walks on which I would push through the lower branches of the firs that blocked my path, only to see – and hear – them spring back into place behind me. The arpeggiations physically embody this tactile recollection, the movement of the guitarist's thumb across the strings (and their momentary bending under his touch) equivalent to my own movement through the branches, and the memory of feeling them give way to my body.

NOCTURNE & MASQUERADE

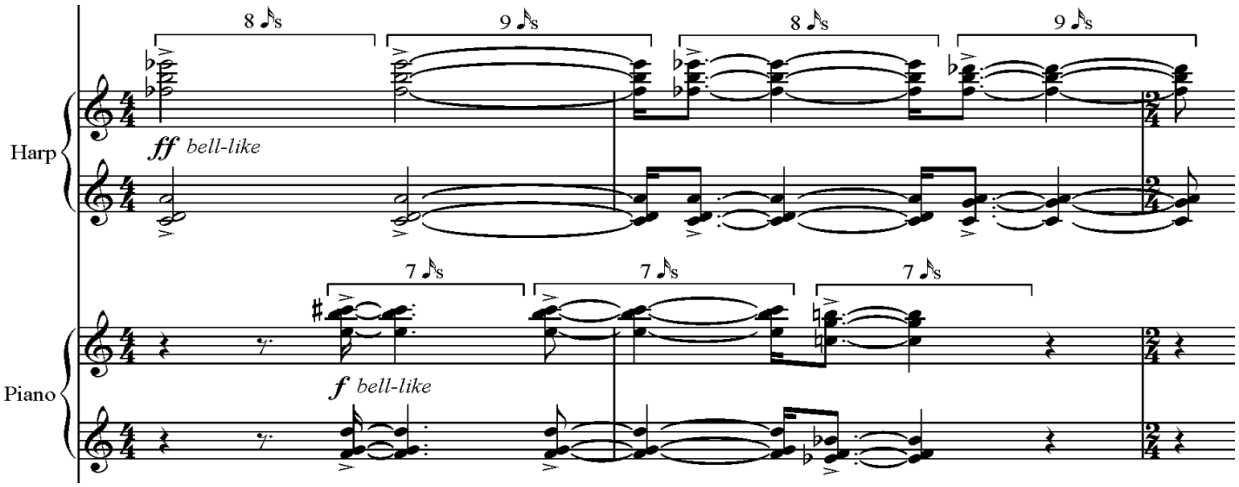
Commissioned to commemorate the centenary of Debussy's death, my *Nocturne & Masquerade* takes its inspiration from *commedia dell'arte* – a topic to which the French composer was drawn on various occasions[51]. Whilst Debussy's view of the *commedia* was through the Gallic prism of Paul Verlaine's poetry and Jean-Antoine Watteau's paintings (Roberts, 2008, p.80), my piece explores the subject through responses to a more Italianate set of stimuli (although Watteau's influence is, nevertheless, retained).

I. Nocturne with bells

The first movement, *Nocturne with bells*, draws once more upon my experiences in Bergamo – home of the *commedia* character, Brighella (Duchartre, 1966, p.161) – returning to my fanciful impression of hearing a conversation between bells ringing from opposite quarters of the town. The opening bars recreate this 'dialogue' through chiming sonorities for harp and piano, their mingled resonances creating a harmonic haze intended to resemble the sound of bells hanging in the air. During the opening five bars the piano's sonorities are re-articulated every seven semiquavers, and the harp's at alternating intervals of eight and nine semiquavers (Ex. 11.1), before the instruments swap rhythms in bar 6. Following the use of polymetres in *Sonata* and the uneven rhythms heard in the hockets of both *Days* and *Prelude*, this combination of different notes lengths represents another approach to evoking the independent tempi of two separate bell-towers chiming simultaneously.

[51] Examples include 'Fantoches' from *Fêtes galantes* (1891).

Ex. 11.1. *I. Nocturne with bells*. Bars 1-3 (harp and piano): Note lengths of opening bell texture.



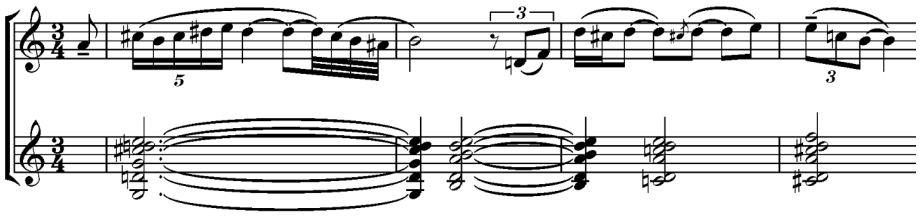
More than my portfolio's other works, this movement seeks to place the sound of bells within a wider acoustic environment. The introduction of the violin's *arpeggiando* figures (letter A) and the harp's *bisbigliandi* (bar 22) beneath receding bell material, recalls, for instance, the way in which more delicate sounds – such as conversation or birdsong – often become audible only as a bell's tolling becomes less frequent and its resonance starts to fade. Conversely the opposite phenomenon is suggested in bars 20 and 32 where delicate textures are interrupted by loud piano chimes, the instrument's apparent obliviousness to other musical ideas symbolising the indiscriminate manner with which church bells intrude upon the sounds of the everyday.

The nocturnal aspects of the movement, meanwhile, are expressed both iconically, through the rustling sounds of the *arpeggiando* and *bisbigliando* figures mentioned above, and indexically, by way of the central serenade episode in which yearning melodic lines unfold around the harp and piano's arpeggiated, semiquaver accompaniment (letter E). A further reference to the serenade topic comes through the strummed sonorities which are heard in both the cello (bar 11), and violin (bar 22). These figures were inspired by the nocturnal world of Watteau's *Fête galante* paintings with their costumed, guitar-playing lovers, and by the *Sérénade* of Debussy's *commedia*-inspired Sonata for Cello and Piano (1915), which uses the same technique to suggest the sound of Pierrot's guitar

(Nichols, 1980, p.71).

The theme of *commedia dell'arte* also brought me back to the topic of Neapolitan song with its many mentions of the city's famous 'son', Pulcinella. *Nocturne with bells* first pays homage to Neapolitan song through the embellished line that begins in the flute at letter C before passing to the viola in bar 29. The pronounced dissonances between some of its pitches and the accompanying harmony (Ex. 11.2) are an attempt to find an equivalent (within the context of my own musical language) to the haunting chromaticism – created by the use of the Neapolitan Sixth – which characterises the melodic lines of songs such as Mario Costa's *Scètate!* (1887).

Ex. 11.2. *I. Nocturne with bells*. Letter C to bar 27: Neapolitan song-inspired melody with a harmonic reduction of its accompaniment.



Continuing the movement's mimesis of other instruments, another reference to Neapolitan music is then heard at letter G, where the harp's tremolos mimic those of a mandolin, in a rather more accurate imitation of the instrument than that performed by the flute in *Sonata*.

II. Masquerade

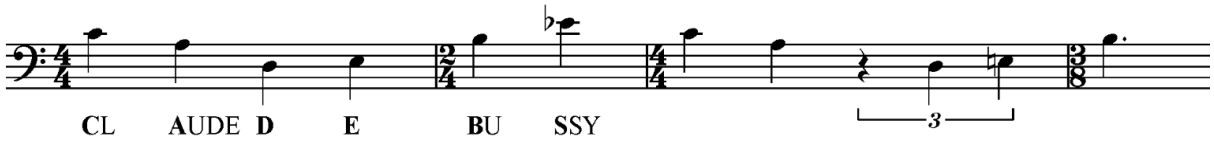
Also inspired by *commedia dell'arte*, the outset of the work's second movement, *Masquerade*, pictures a parading troupe of masked figures. Their movement is denoted by a walking bass (which moves from the pizzicato cello to the piano), and by the quaver line of the harp which joins the texture at letter A. Both ideas imagine the troupe's drunken revellers stumbling periodically, as bars of 3/8 – and the sporadic use of triplet and quintuplet rhythms – disrupt the otherwise even rhythm of the

music.

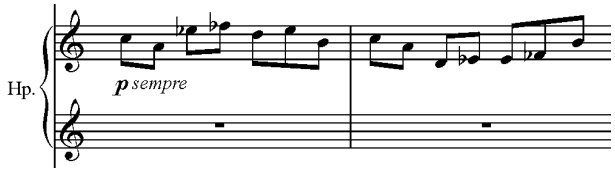
Lending a hard edge to this texture are the percussive sounds of slapped cello strings, the tongue and snap pizzicati of flute and strings respectively, and the quasi drum-like quality that is emitted by the harp when it is played with a strip of paper woven through its strings. These timbres allude to the slapstick violence of *commedia dell'arte* which was once meted out by the clubs of characters such as Arlecchino and Punchinello. This broad comedic style is also reflected through the quirky character of the harp's pitch bends, and through the sharp 'falls' of the strings which populate the movement's early stages.

At letter C the merrymaking of my imagined troupe is then further evoked through a breezy dance in 7/8 time, the metre's off-kilter feel suggesting, once again, the tipsy movement of its characters. This dance is underpinned by a two-bar quaver *ostinato* which – like the opening's walking bass – draws its pitches from the letters of Debussy's name.

Ex. 11.3a. *II. Masquerade*. Bars 1-4: Walking bass derived from the letters of Debussy's name.



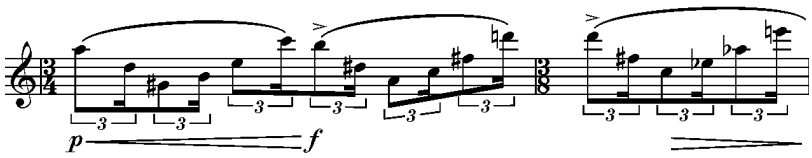
Ex. 11.3b. *II. Masquerade*. Letter C (harp): Ostinato based on a re-ordering of cryptogram's pitches.



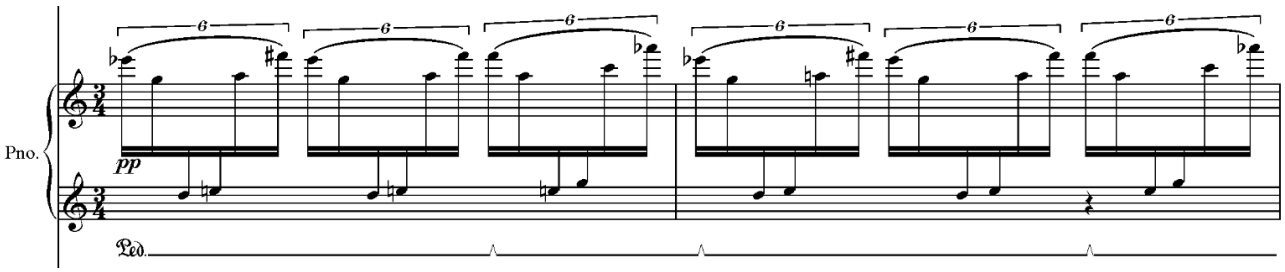
Of equal importance to the movement's construction is a *commedia*-inspired fresco by Giandomenico Tiepolo, titled *L'altalena dei Pulcinella* (1793). Housed in Venice's Ca' Rezzonico, the work depicts one Pulcinella rocking another on a swing, whilst two more identically-costumed figures await their

turn. In response to this image, two of *Masquerade*'s principle musical ideas emulate a swing's arcing contours (Ex. 11.4a and 11.4b). Derived from the same collection of transposed cells, these two ideas are defined by their respective rhythmic properties. The first's lopsided triplet figures allude to the swung rhythms of jazz in an attempt to suggest the evident playfulness of Tiepolo's Pulcinellas, whilst the 'straight', sextuplet semiquavers of the second respond to the palpable sense of kinetic energy that the fresco emits.

Ex. 11.4a. *II. Masquerade*. Two bars before letter P (flute): Example of swing-inspired material in 'swung' rhythms.



Ex. 11.4b. *II. Masquerade*. Letter P (piano): Example of swing-inspired material in sextuplets.



An extended sequence of these latter figures (played by the piano) is used to fulfil a more overtly pictorial role at letter P, representing the rapid movement of Tiepolo's airborne Pulcinella. This sextuplet line is accompanied by the strings which offer their own, idiomatic equivalent to the piano's swing-inspired figures through undulating harmonic *glissandi*. The staggered presentation of these *glissandi* creates a continuously rippling texture, which – in combination with the ethereal timbre of the harmonics – suggests both Pulcinella's elevated location, and the 'whoosh' of his swing zipping through the wind. At letter Q, the music then imagines the Pulcinella being thrown from the swing as the *glissandi* abruptly stop, leaving the piano to careen forward into a space inhabited by the sound of chirping birds (denoted by the flutter-tongued notes of the flute, and the staccato, *acciaccatura*-

inflected quavers of the violin).

This dream-like response to Tiepolo's surreal scene is then re-imagined as a thundering rollercoaster ride for the work's climax at letter W, the piano's material now reinforced by a separate line of sextuplets in the piccolo, and bathed in a continuous wash of harp *glissandi* and arpeggiated string figures. Upon the conclusion of this episode, the work is brought to a close by a low, romping outburst of the 'swung' material, which symbolises Pulcinella's reinstatement amongst his bickering companions on the ground.

CONCLUSION

Having written a number of pre-doctoral works inspired by Tuscan landscapes, Pascoli's poetry, and bells, I began my research with a collection of place-related stimuli already established. To these sources of inspiration, I added bird- and insect-song, and these sounds play a prominent role in the portfolio's earlier works, albeit not to the same extent as bells, which remain a near constant presence throughout the research. By contrast, the influence of physical landscapes proved less strong than I had anticipated. Although the portfolio contains music inspired by interactions with certain surroundings, I was more frequently attracted to the more ephemeral sensations attached to experiencing a place during a specific time of day. This perspective had, hitherto, been under-explored in my work, and the research process facilitated a more conscious engagement with it, allowing it to become a central part of my practice.

Equally unforeseen was the extent to which the contours and rhythms of the spoken word would shape my music. The first time I explored this idea was to generate, from a transcription of my wife's speaking voice, the three-note cell which forms the basis of *Island Verses*. Following my initial use of this technique, I felt emboldened to 'set' more extended transcriptions of her readings for *Swallows*, before taking a less rigorous approach in *Tales* by drawing melodic shapes from my own pronunciation of onomatopoeic words. My imitations of bells and natural sounds underwent a similar evolution, initially arising from transcriptions of field recordings before being created intuitively from other sources of raw material in later works.

A further development in my research concerned the role of melody. Although melodies feature prominently throughout the portfolio, they are, overwhelmingly, juxtaposed with passages of more gestural or textural writing. In composing the later solo works and fantasias, however, I became increasingly comfortable with creating music that is more squarely focused on melodic writing.

Parallel to this development, was a move toward a greater formal simplicity over the course of the research. This began with the undisguised repetition of material in *Sonata*, and continues in the clearly delineated episodes of both *Tales* and *Nocturne (with rain and poplars)*, before culminating in *Matins*' transparent use of sonata-rondo form. In these works, forms act as vehicles for the clearest possible presentation of material, suggesting, I believe, an increasing confidence in the strength of my ideas.

A greater practical familiarity with topics and an increased understanding of topic theory, meanwhile, made me more alert to the topical potential of intuitively-sketched musical material, and caused me to reflect more deeply upon the potential role of topics when planning new works. As outlined in the introduction, my engagement with topics crystallises around explorations of bells, the nocturne, and the pastoral. Whilst employed by many other contemporary composers, my own, repeated use of these particular topics, in response to a collection of Italianate stimuli, is, I believe, more individual, and constitutes a defining characteristic of this research. My preoccupation with their enduring expressive potential was such that the portfolio contains only fleeting references to more contemporary 'signs' (Agawu, 1991, p.49) like engine noises and car horns.

My post-doctoral music – a pastoral setting of a Pascoli poem, and a violin concerto inspired by bells and Tuscan folklore – reaffirms the ongoing importance of topics to my practice and the continued use of places as stimuli. I am, moreover, fascinated by the effects of time upon both a subject and the style of the artist depicting it, as exemplified, for instance, by the self-portraits that Rembrandt made

throughout his life (Levey, 1962, p.196). Through revisiting the same subject matter in future pieces, it is my hope that this phenomenon may become apparent in my own work, as my musical language and perceptions continue to evolve.

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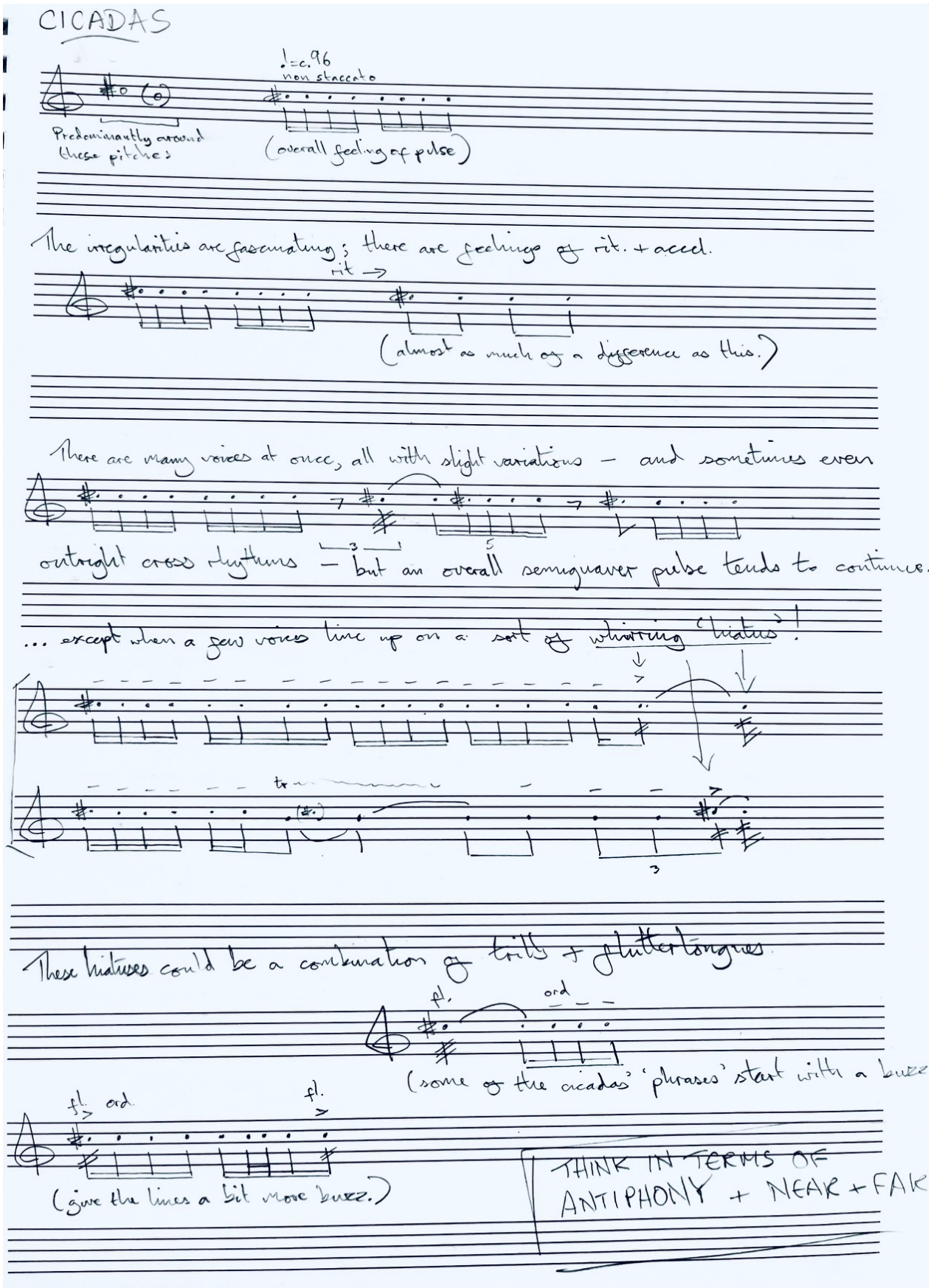
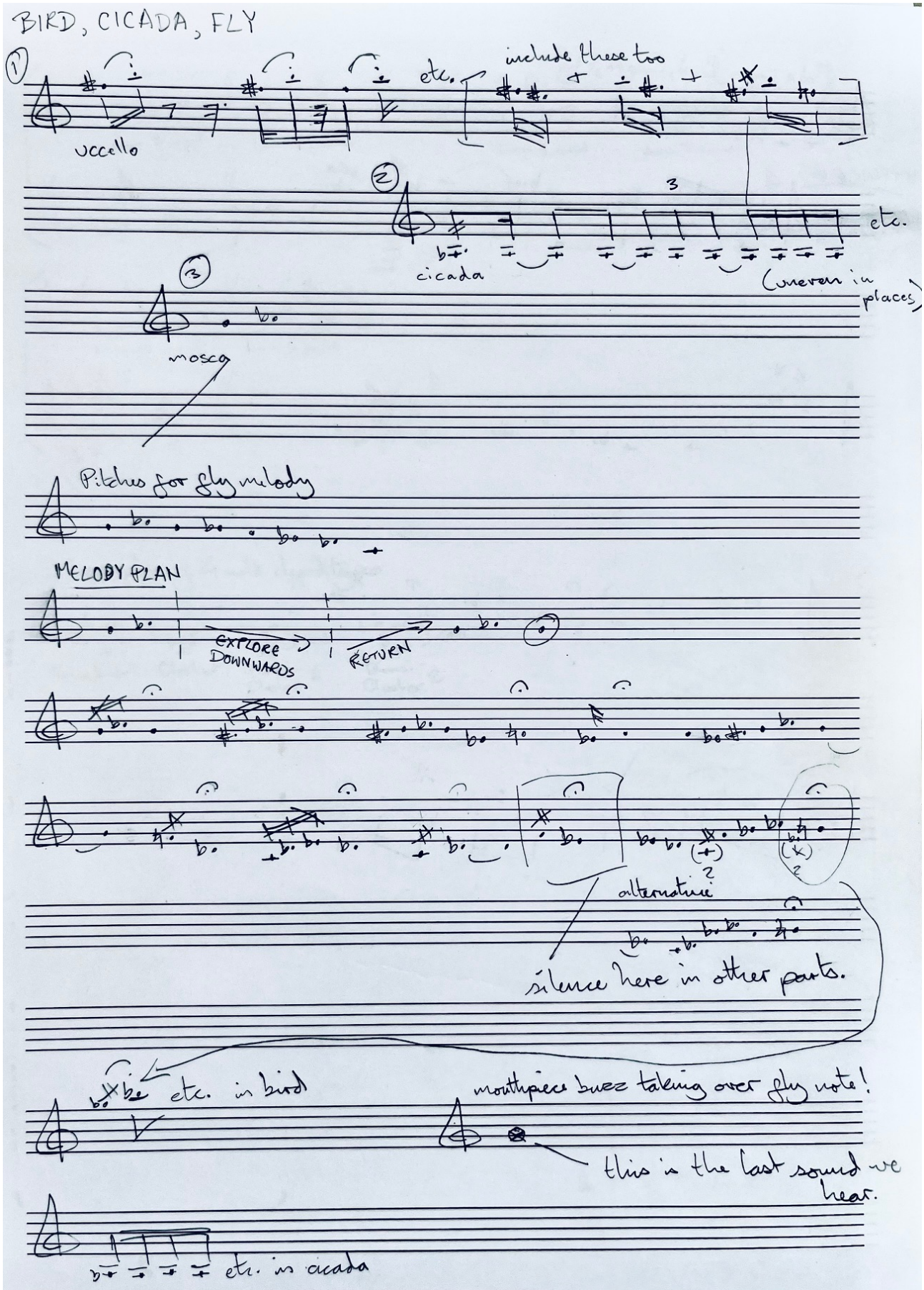
APPENDICES

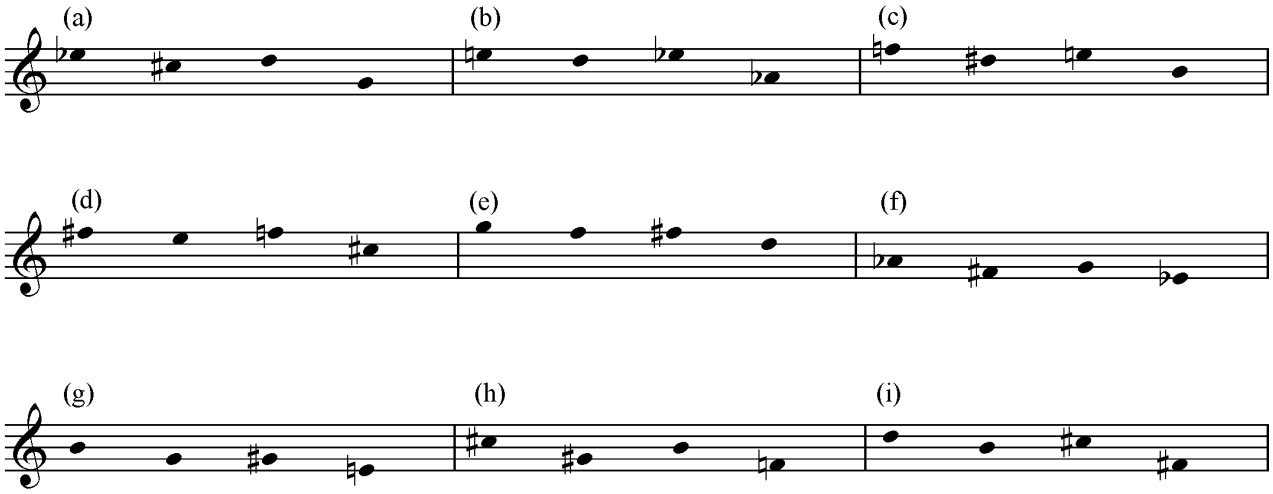
Appendix 1.1. Initial sketches and observations on cicada-song, heard and transcribed in Chianti, July 2017.



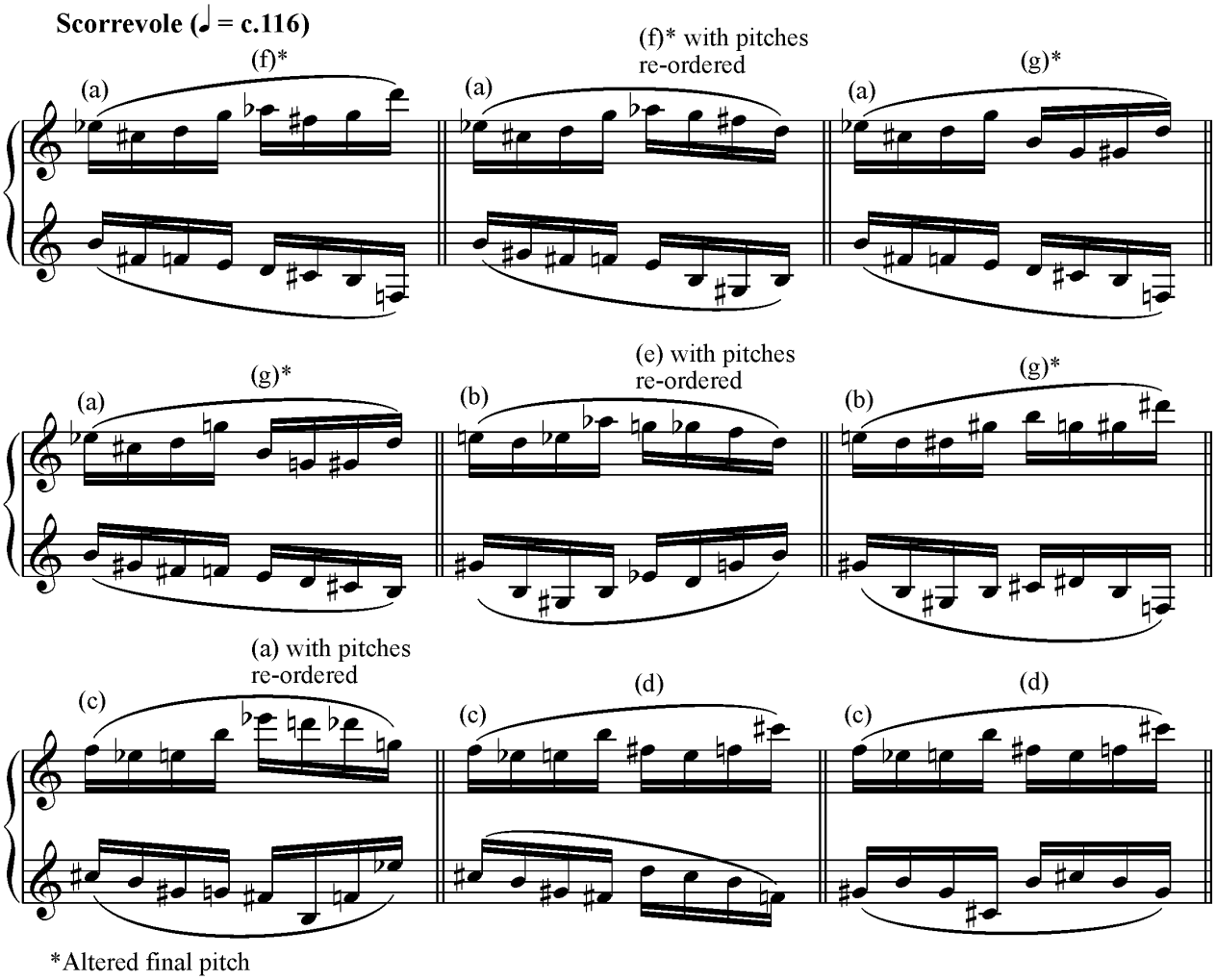
Appendix 1.2. Preliminary sketches for *I. Bird, Cicadas, Fly*. For a fuller discussion of this movement, see pp.27-28.



Appendix 2.1. Transpositions of the 'Mozart cell' within the mode used for *Prelude* (see p.40).

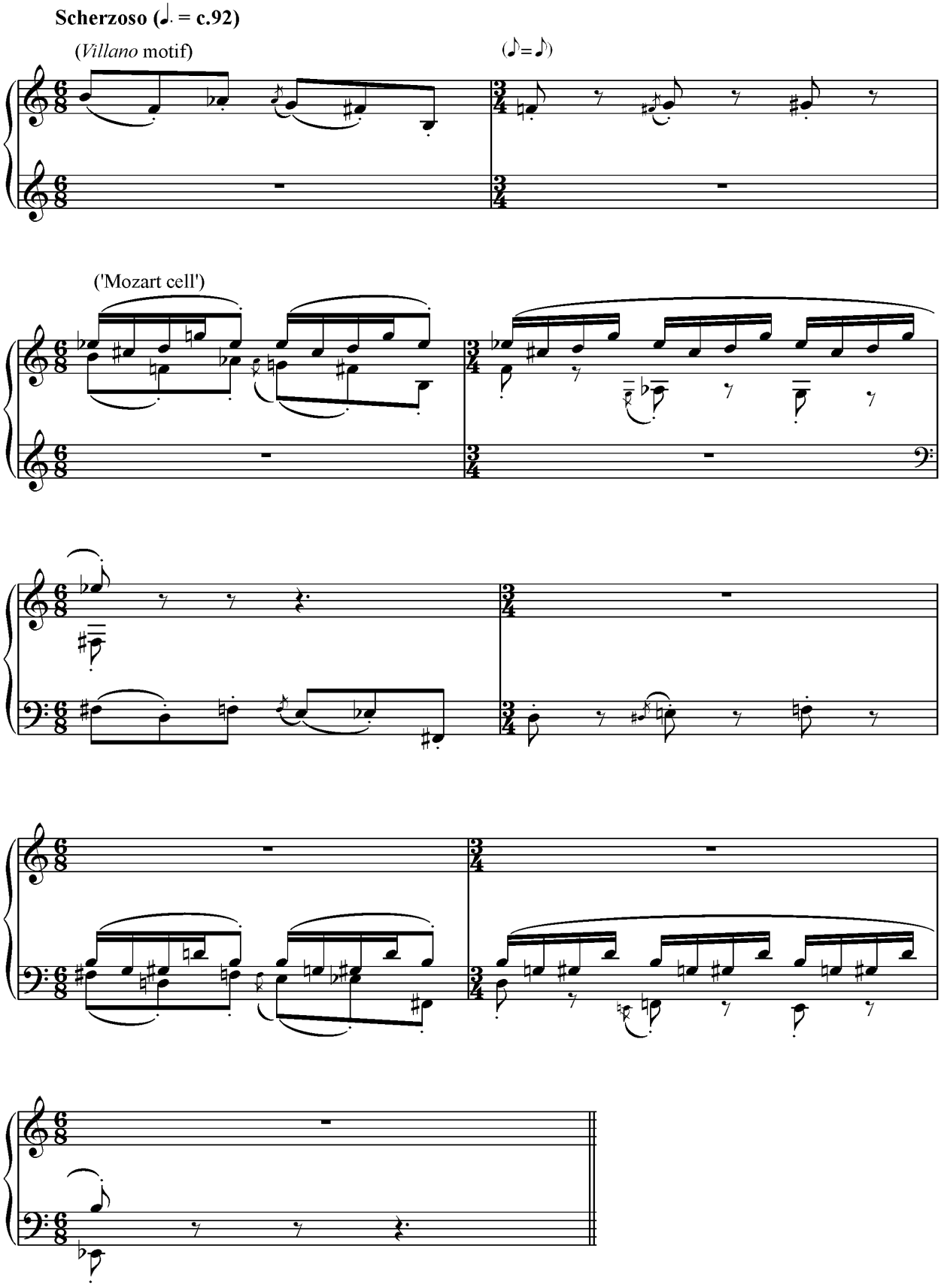


Appendix 2.2. 'Arabesque' fragments based on harmonised chains of transposed 'Mozart cells' (the final pitches of which are displaced by an octave). These sketches are the genesis of the clarinets' material in bb.9, 179, and 181 of *Prelude*.

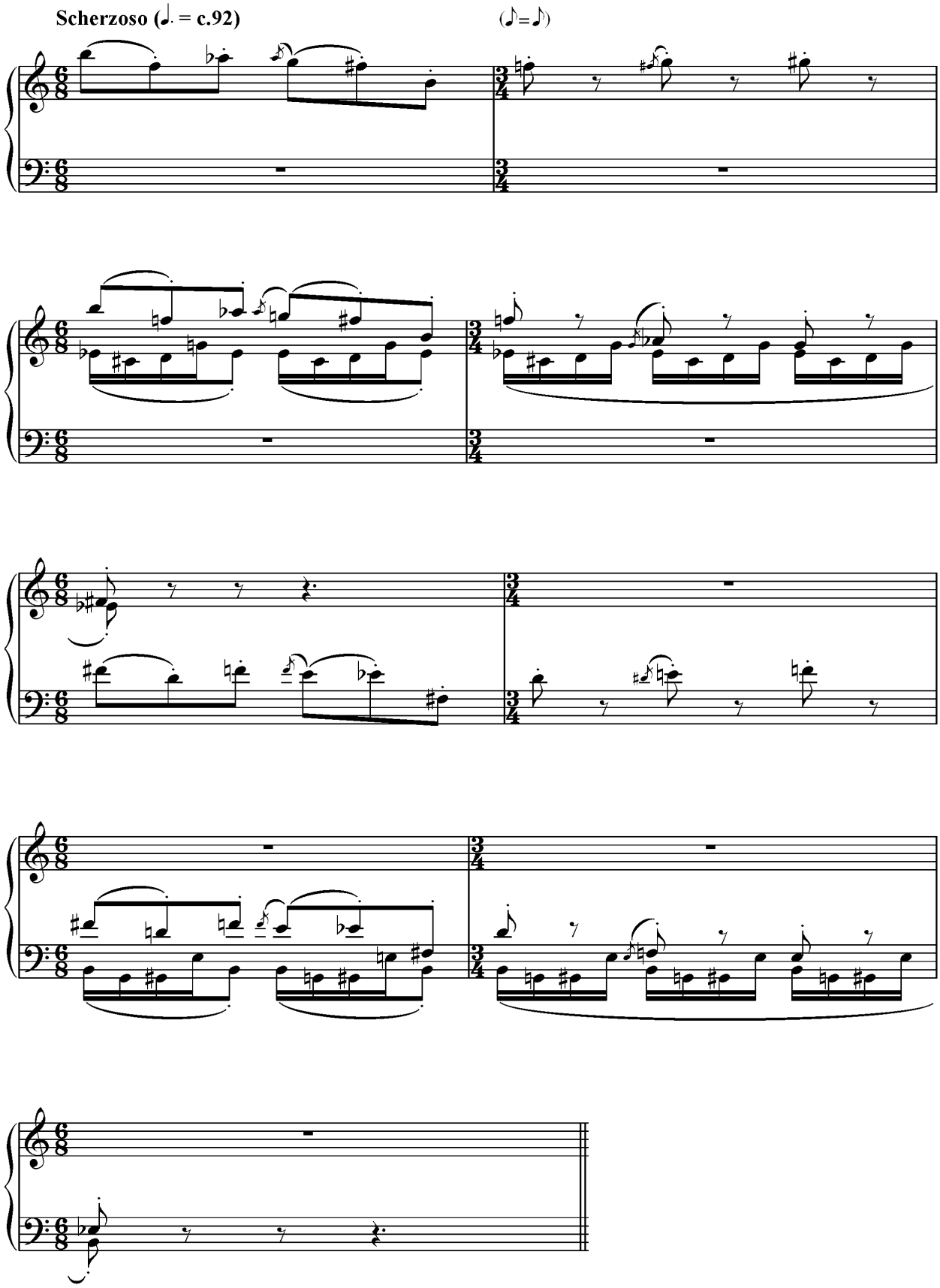


*Altered final pitch

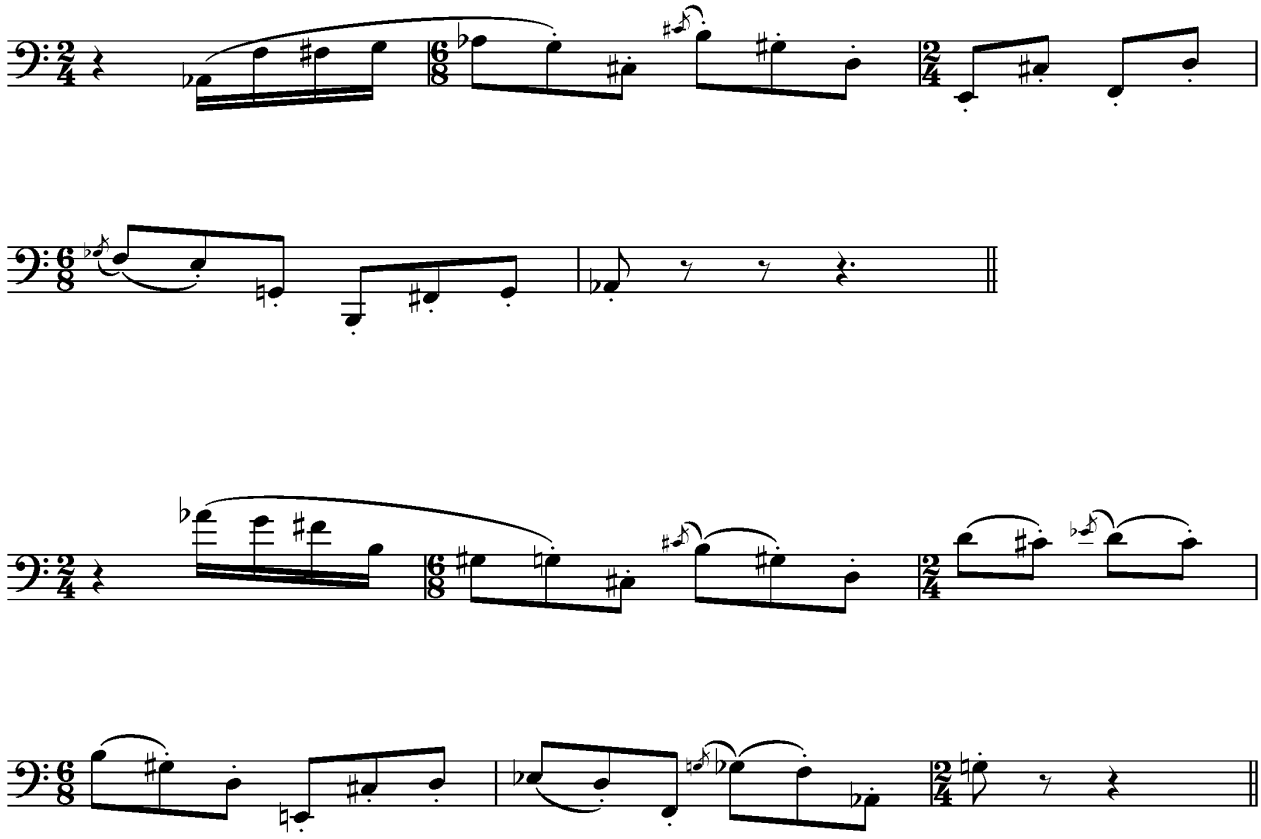
Appendix 2.3a. Sketch No. 1 of a dance-like melody (referred to during the sketching process, and within this appendix, as the '*Villano* motif') accompanied by repetitions of the 'Mozart cell'. This material constitutes bb.63-70 of *Prelude*.



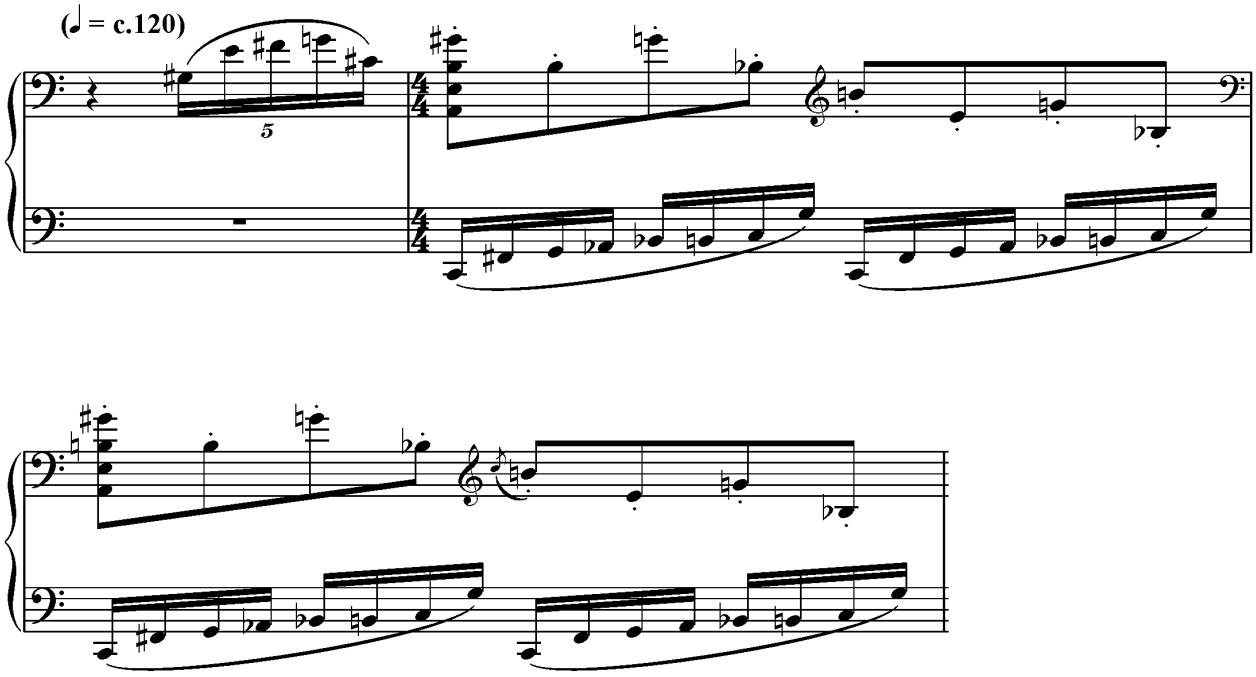
Appendix 2.3b. Sketch No. 2 of the '*Villano* motif' accompanied by repetitions of the 'Mozart cell', with counterpoint inverted. This material constitutes bb.16-23 of *Prelude* and is discussed on p.43 of this commentary.



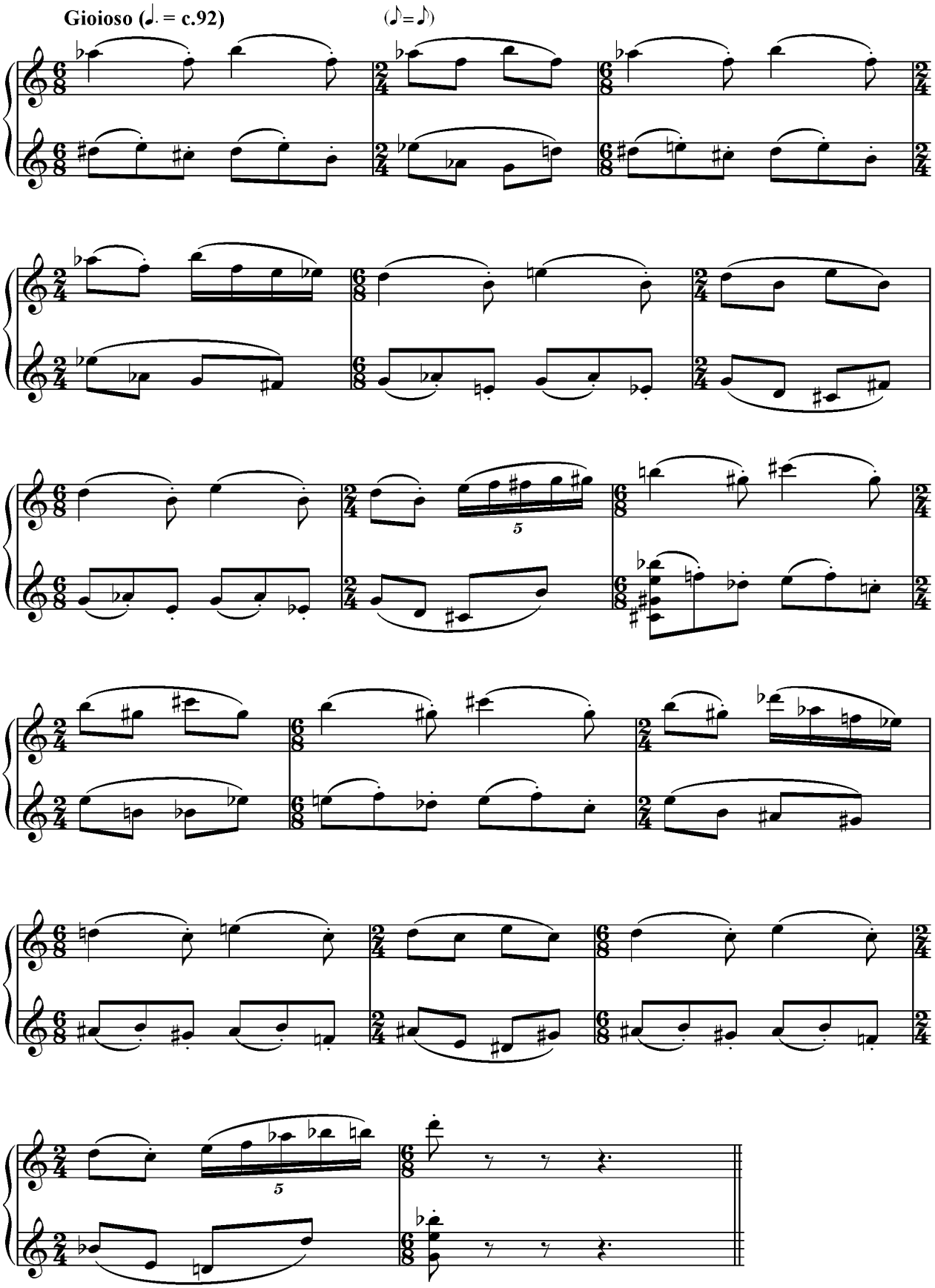
Appendix 2.4. Two 'characters' based on fragments of the '*Villano* motif', and its transpositions within the work's mode. These sketches form the basis of bb.28-37 of *Prelude*.



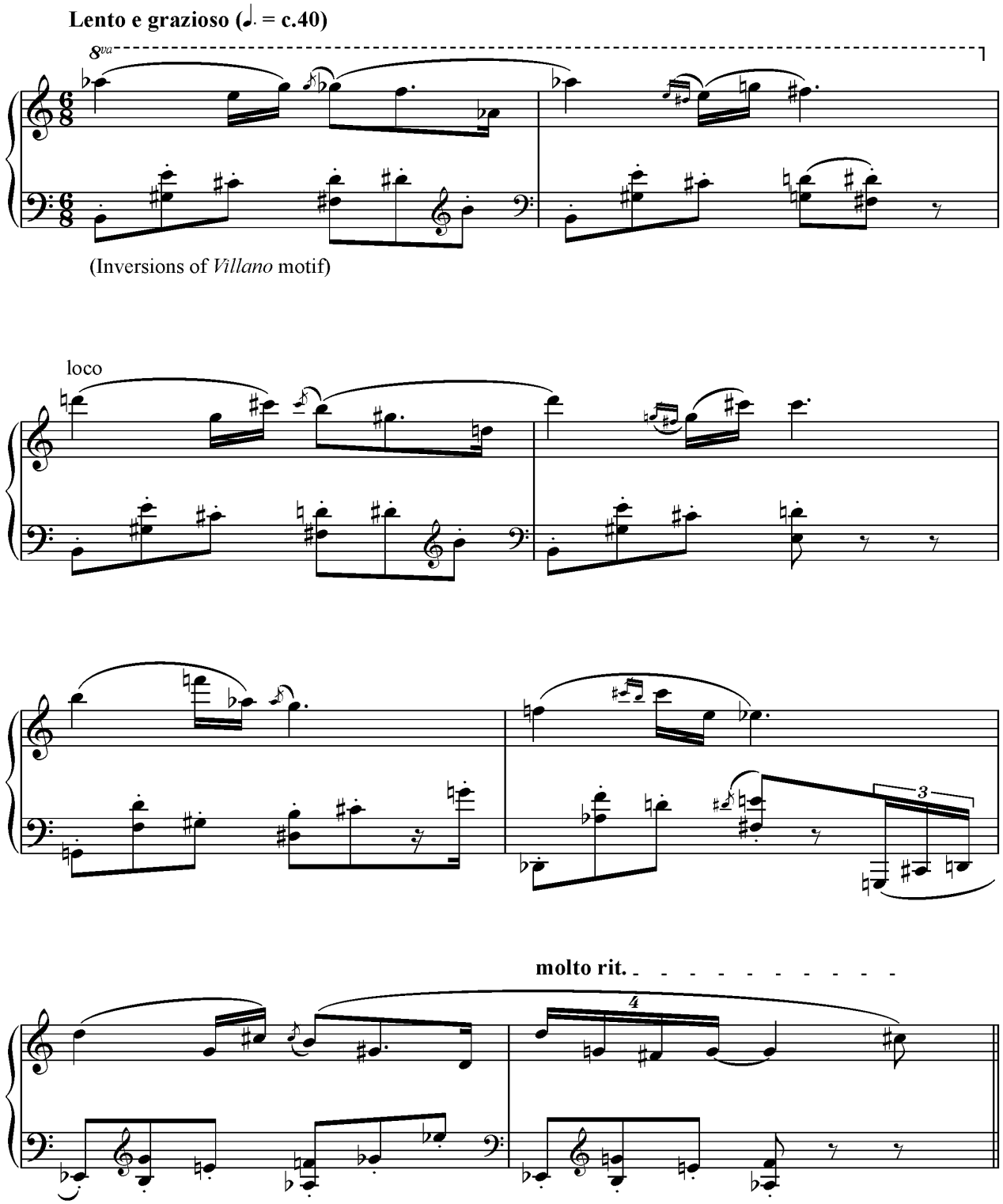
Appendix 2.5. Combinations of short fragments, drawn from the '*Villano* motif' and its transpositions (upper stave), with a repeated figure derived from the 'Mozart cell' (lower stave). A similar combination of these ideas is heard in b.43 of *Prelude*.



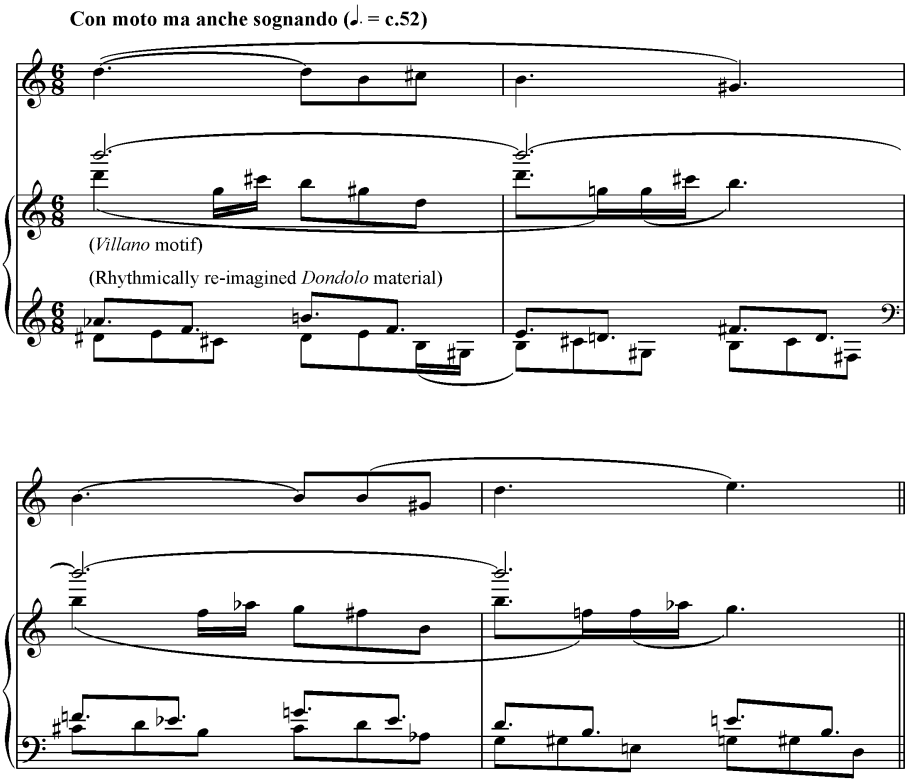
Appendix 2.6. An early sketch for what was referred to, during the initial stages of writing, as '*dondolo* (rocking) material'. A more developed version of this music is heard during bb.46-60 of *Prelude*.



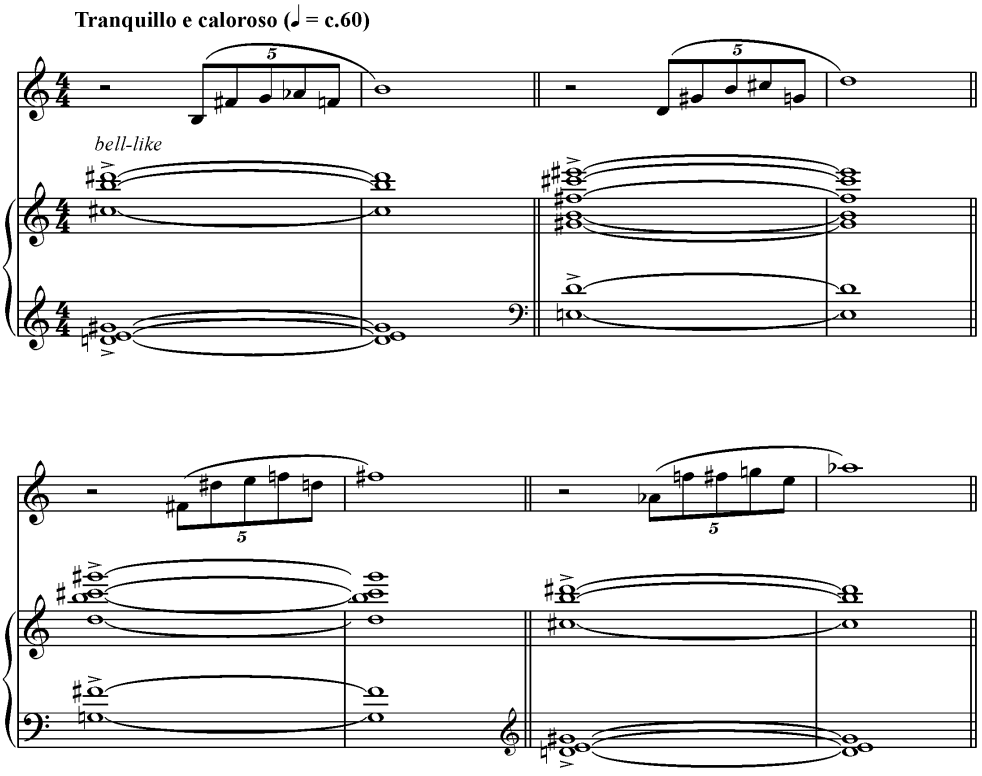
Appendix 2.7a. Unused *siciliana* variation on the '*Villano* motif'.



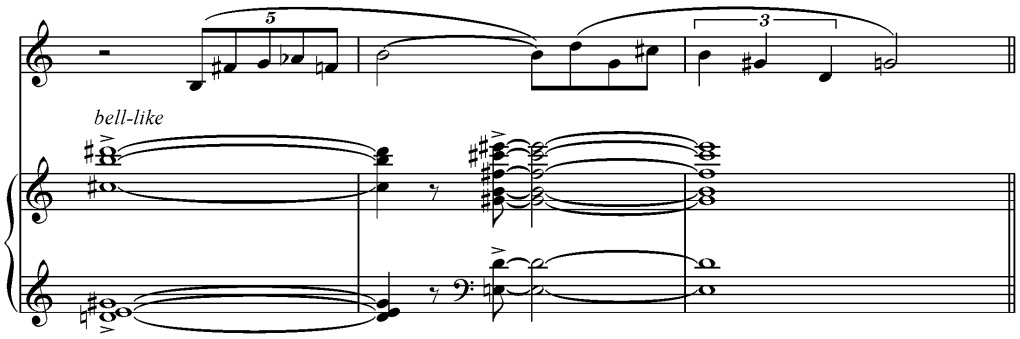
Appendix 2.7b. Unused *siciliana* variation on the '*Villano* motif' over an accompaniment derived from the '*dondolo* material' (see Appendix 2.6).



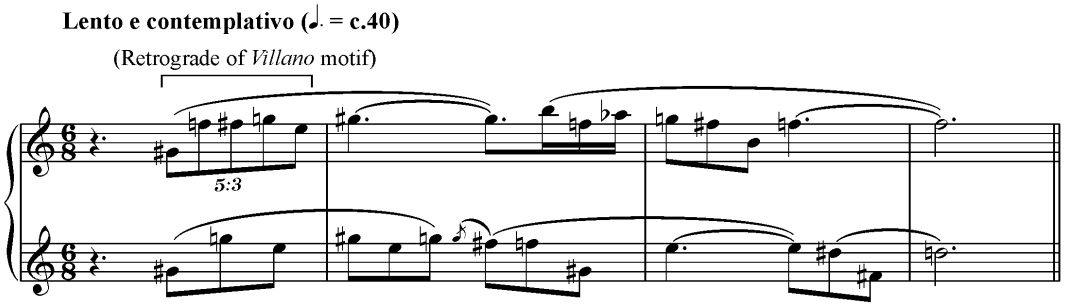
Appendix 2.8a. Samples of '*Villano* motif' fragments in retrograde (and in different transpositions) against bell-like sonorities. These sonorities are discussed in greater detail on pp.44-45 of this commentary.



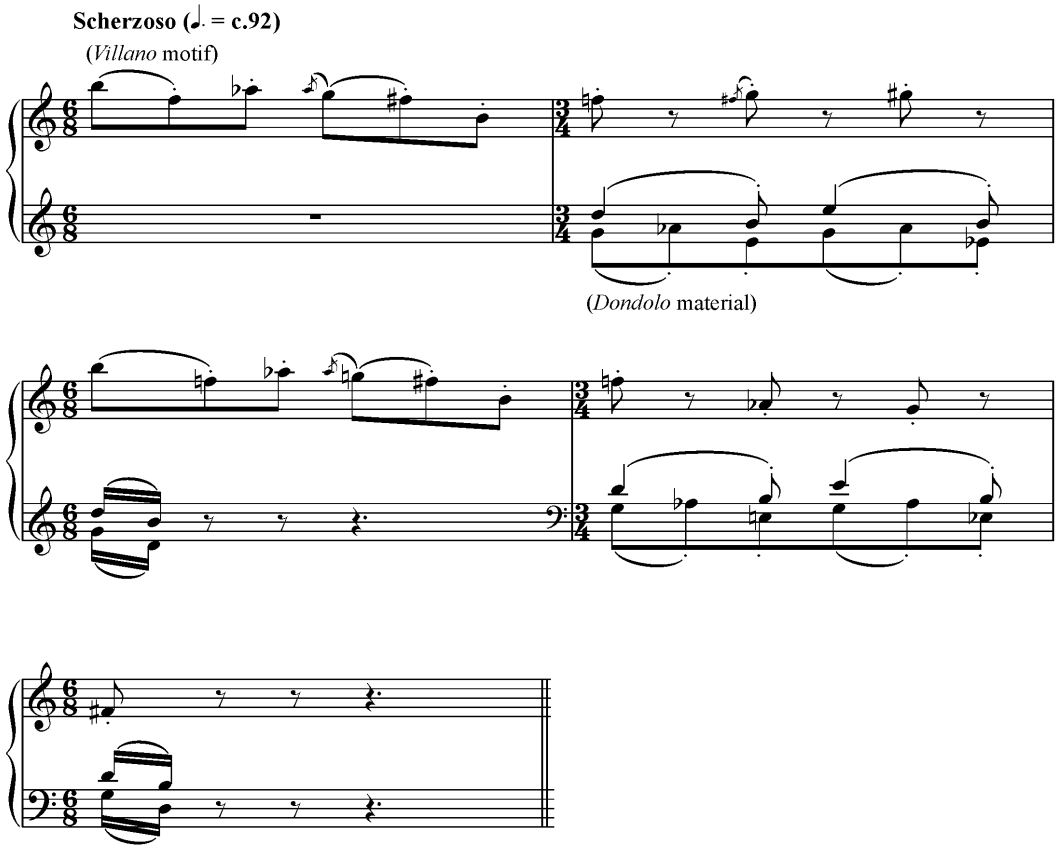
Appendix 2.8b. An early sketch for bb.83-85 of *Prelude*.



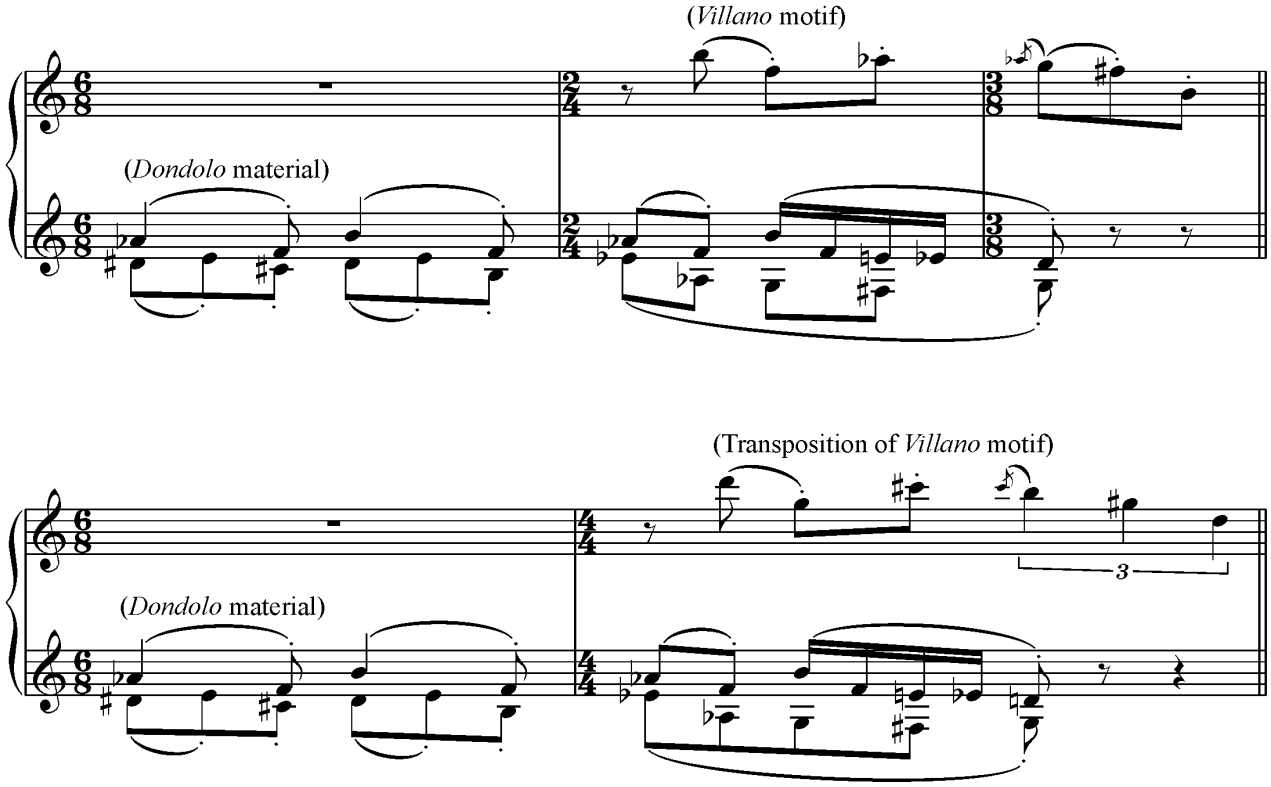
Appendix 2.9. Unused fragment comprised of intertwining '*Villano* motifs'.



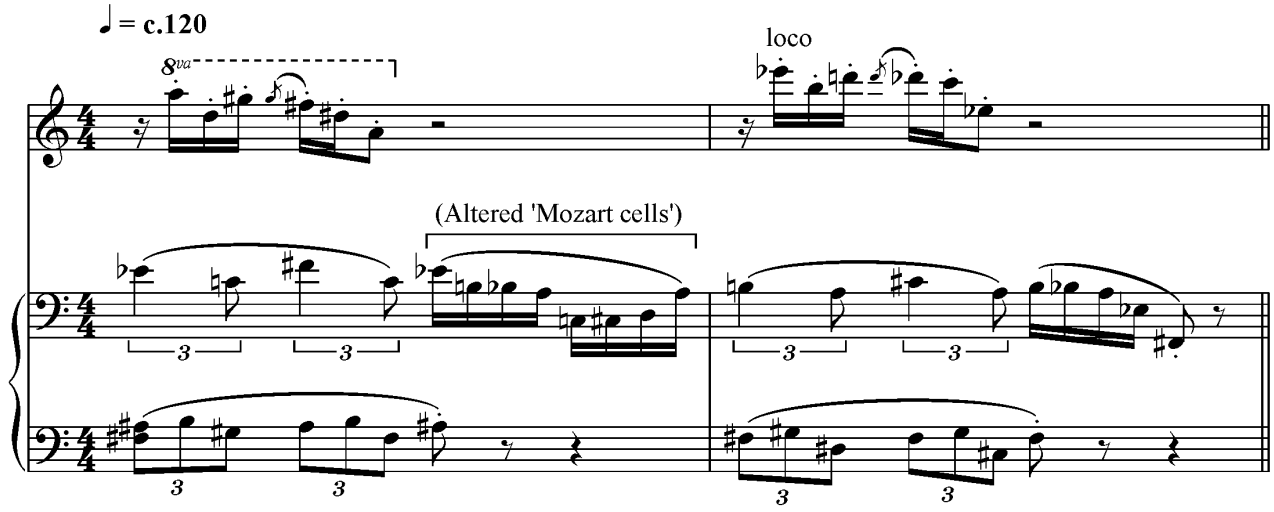
Appendix 2.10. Ideas in conversation: an early version of the material heard in bb.164-165 and bb.167-168 of *Prelude*.



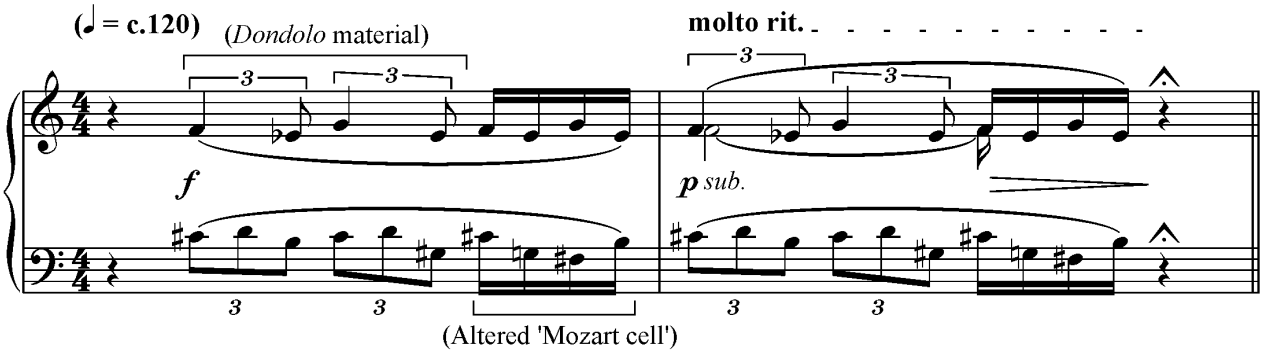
Appendix 2.11. Two examples of the '*dondolo* material' being interrupted by the '*Villano* motif'. A different version of this idea appears in bb.10-11 of *Prelude*.

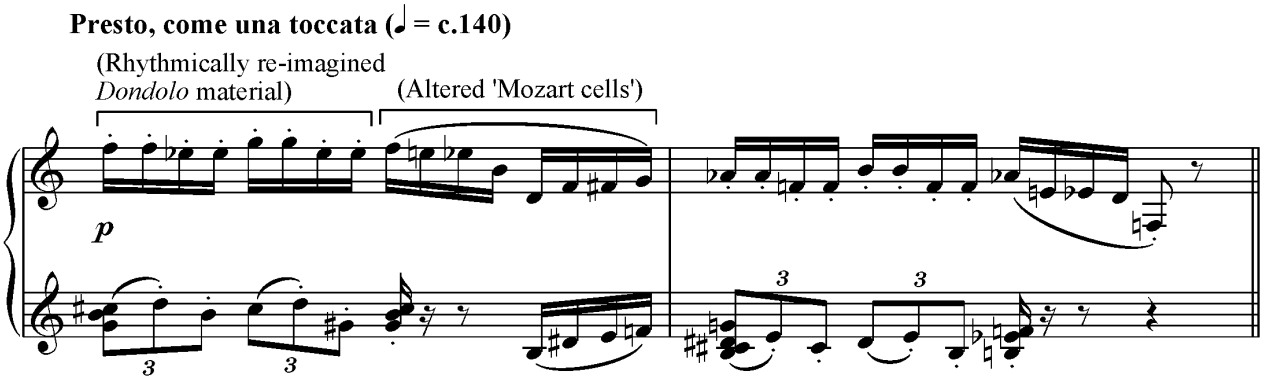


Appendix 2.12. Superimposed ideas: an early version of the material heard in bb.119-121 of *Prelude*.

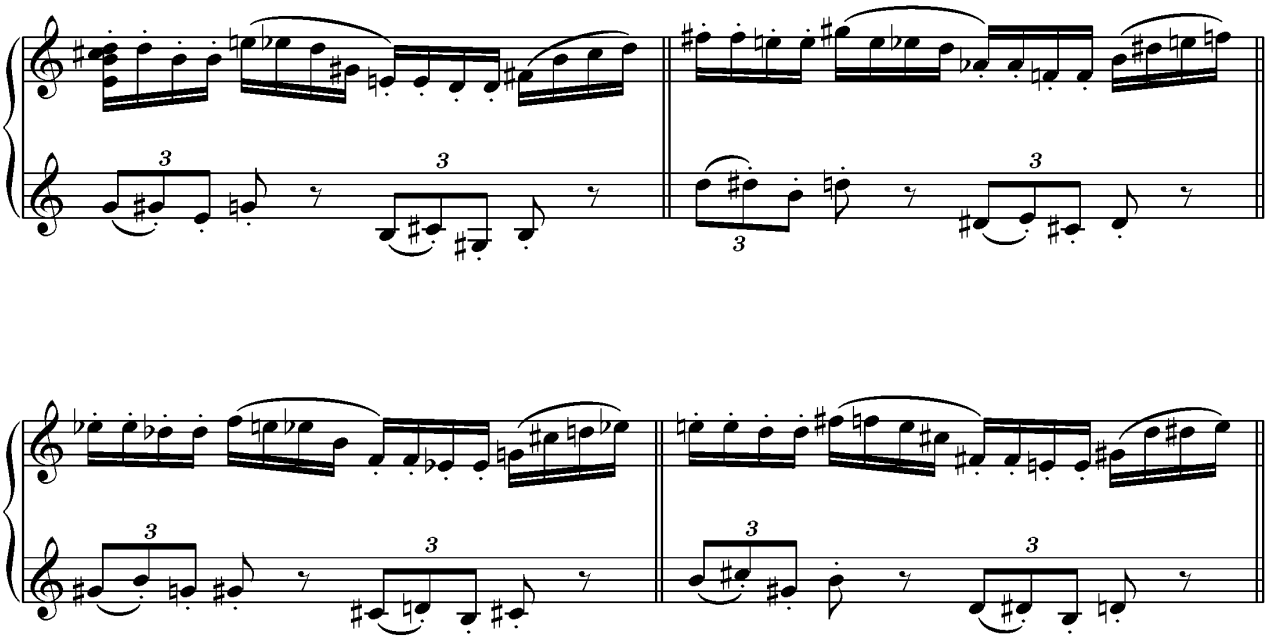


Appendix 2.13a. Two sketches juxtaposing '*dondolo* material' with altered 'Mozart cells'. The first sketch constitutes an early version of the material heard in bb.141-142 of *Prelude*.

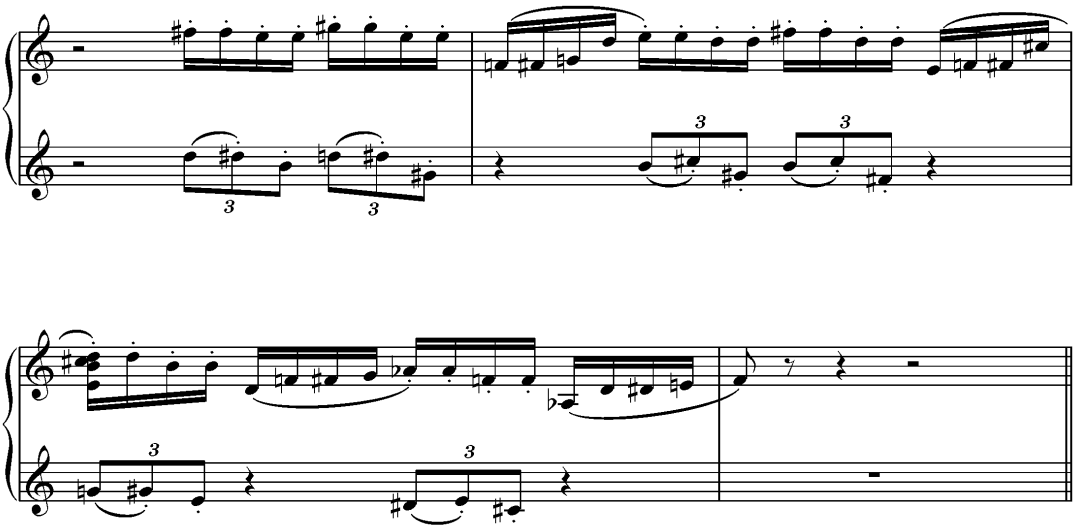




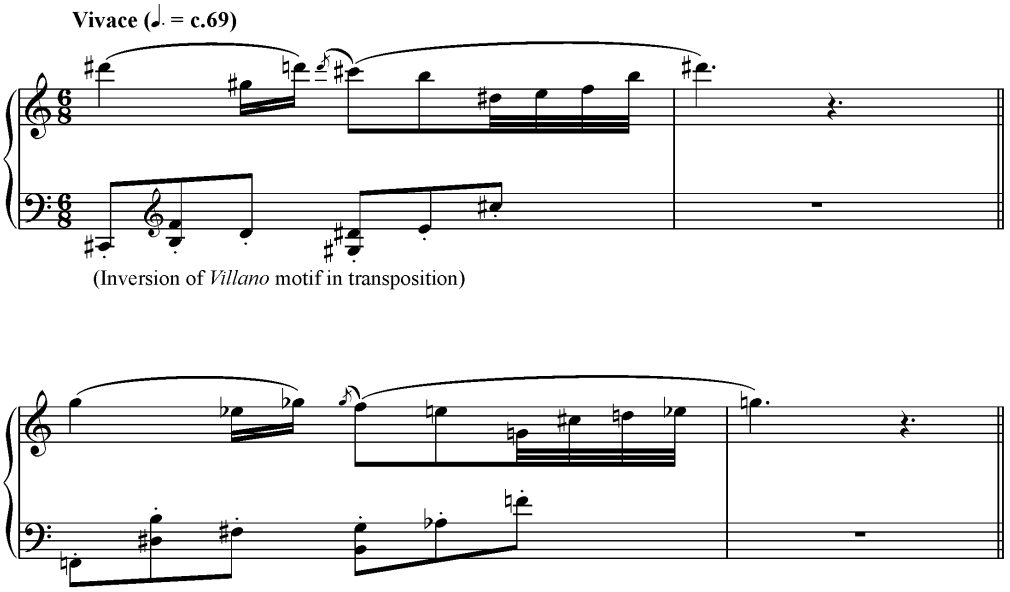
Appendix 2.13b. Unused sketches for more compressed versions of the juxtapositions shown in Appendix 2.13a, Sketch No. 2.



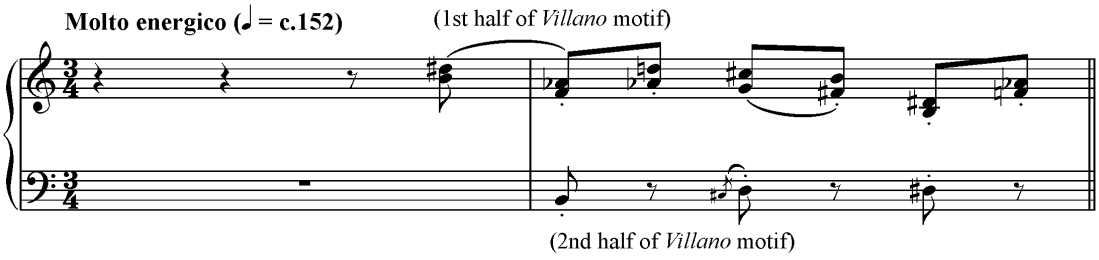
Appendix 2.13c. Unused sketches showing shortening statements of rhythmically-adapted '*dondolo* material', alternating with re-arranged 'Mozart cells'.



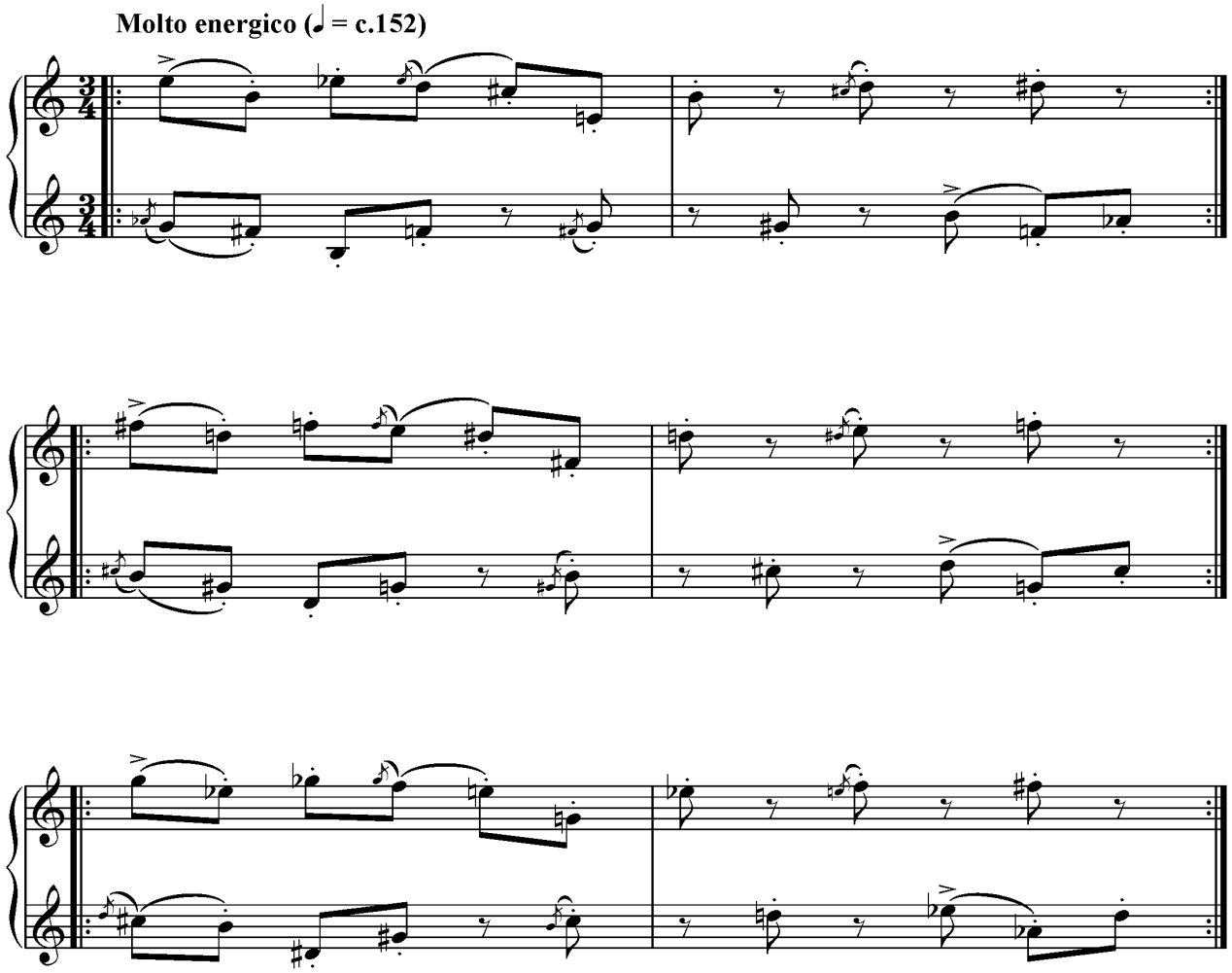
Appendix 2.14. Two further (unused) *siciliana* variations based on the '*Villano* motif', above accompaniments drawn from inversions of the motif in different transpositions.



Appendix 2.15. A 'cubist' presentation of the '*Villano* motif'. A more developed version of this material is heard in b.177 of *Prelude*.

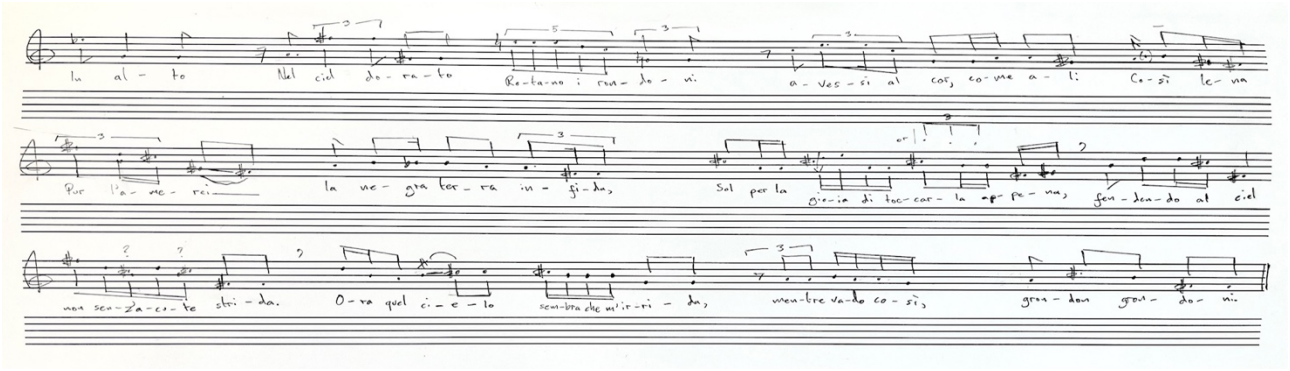


Appendix 2.16. Three examples of *ostinati* created through imitative treatment of the '*Villano* motif'. The first of these appears during bb.182-187 of *Prelude*.



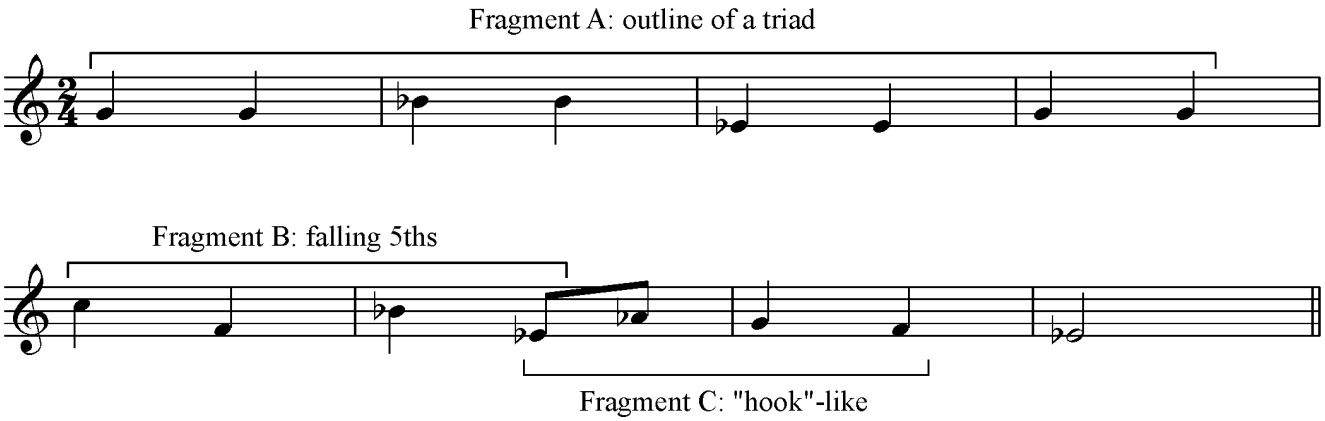
APPENDIX 3: *IN THE GOLDEN SKY THE SWALLOWS TURN*

Appendix 3.1. Full transcription of Giovanni Pascoli's *In alto* (1889), as read by Barbara De Biasi (recorded on 13th May 2020). My compositional use of this material is discussed on pp.60-62.

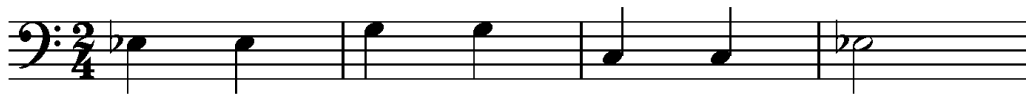


APPENDIX 4: *BERGAMASCA*

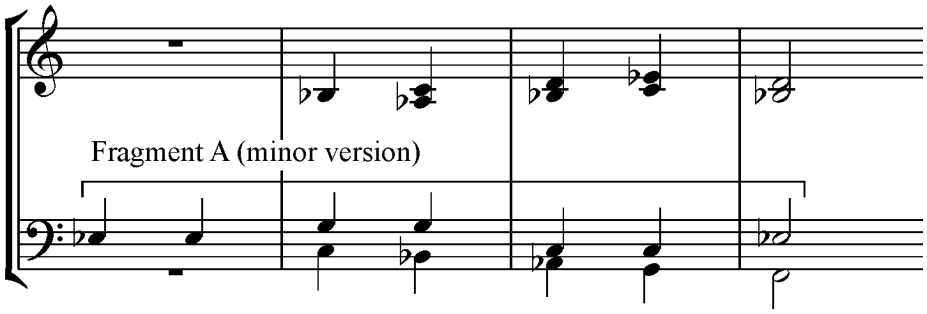
Appendix 4.1. Fragmentation of the hymn tune, *Christus Vincit*.



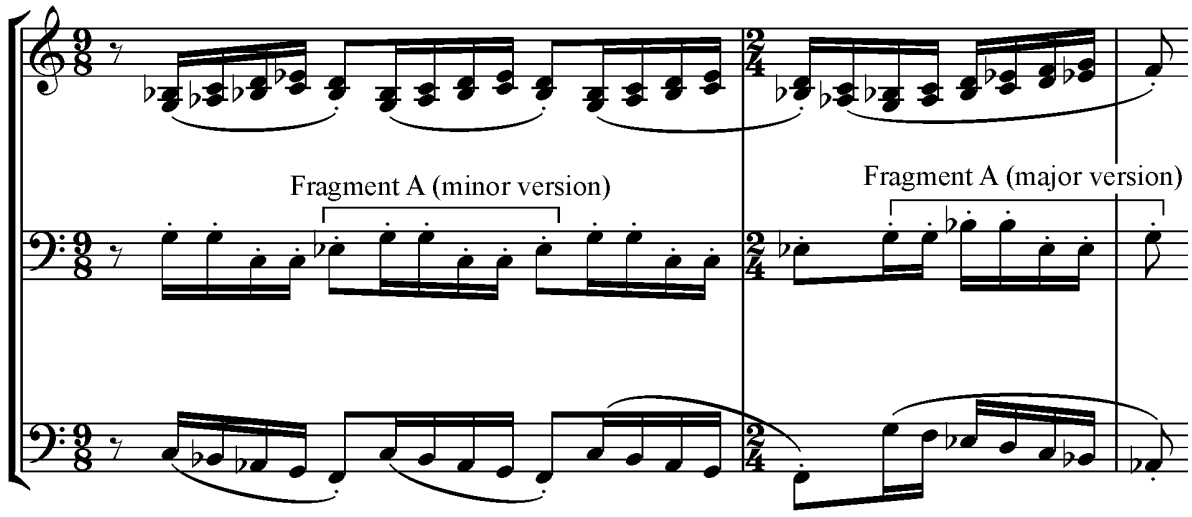
Appendix 4.2a. Fragment A altered to outline a minor, rather than major, triad.



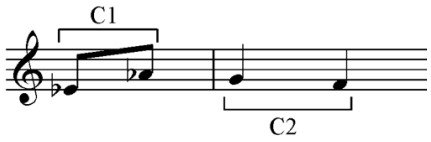
Appendix 4.2b. Harmonisation of Fragment A (in its minor form).



Appendix 4.2c. Reduction of Fragment A's harmonisation in its ultimate realisation, as heard in *Bergamasca* (bb.33-34).



Appendix 4.3a. Further fragmentation of Fragment C.



Appendix 4.3b. Fragments C1 and C2 re-ordered and rhythmically re-imagined to form the material heard (at the pitch shown) in bb.15-16 of *Bergamasca*.

Appendix 4.4. Analysis showing the construction of *Bergamasca*'s melodic line (bb.15-26) from juxtapositions of Fragments B, C1, and C2.