
D.M.A. DOCUMENT

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Musical Arts in the Graduate School of The Ohio State University

By

Kevin Matthew Estes, B.M, M.M.

Graduate Program in Music

The Ohio State University

2014

Document Committee:

Dr. Susan Powell, Advisor

Dr. Russel Mikkelson

Professor Katherine Borst Jones
ABSTRACT

For over thirty years, collegiate and professional percussionists from all over the world have performed Nigel Westlake’s solo and chamber percussion works. The intention of this document is to provide future performers with information about the evolution and performance practices of each work. It will also serve as a reference guide detailing Westlake’s musical form and compositional approach to solo and chamber percussion between 1984 and 2009. The compositions examined in this document include, *Fabian Theory, The Hinchinbrook Riffs, The Invisible Men, Kalabash, Malachite Glass, Moving Air, Omphalo Centric Lecture*, and *Penguin Circus*.

The biography was created from several sources including interviews, biographies, articles, and two telecommunication interviews with Nigel Westlake. The biography details Westlake’s life for the past thirty years including information about his orchestral works and film scores but focusing primarily on his works for percussion. This document provides a synopsis of each percussion work including evolution, musical analysis, and performance suggestions.
DEDICATION

This document is dedicated to the memory of Eli Westlake
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express my great appreciation for my advisor Dr. Susan Powell who has been a voice of guidance and motivation throughout this research project. I am particularly grateful for her support over the past few years and fostering a community of support from my fellow studio members at The Ohio State University. Furthermore, I would like to thank Joseph Krygier who has been generous with his creative performance suggestions for this project.

I would like to thank my committee including Dr. Russel Mikkelson, Dr. David Huron, and Professor Katherine Borst Jones for their support in completing this project and for their inspiring knowledge on the stage and in the classroom. Thank you for your support and additional commitment of being a part of my committee.

Additionally, I would like to thank Dr. Michael Ptacin who has been a source inspiration and knowledge helping me to understand the technology needed to perform *Fabian Theory* in the composer’s original vision. Your assistance and friendship will always be a source of positive energy in my life.

Thank you to Nigel and Jan Westlake for the permission to reproduce numerous music examples found in this document. I would also like to thank Nigel personally for
numerous email correspondence and interviews, which became a pointed source of inspiration throughout the research process. I wish to thank you for sharing your time, music, and creative spirit with me.

I would like to thank my family Mom, Dad, Emily, Nick, and Lindsey for their encouragement and support through this project as well as supporting me through all the piano recitals, talent shows, and band camps. I would not have come this far without your love and support.

Lastly, I would like to thank my wife, Ariana, whose strength and wisdom has given me the passion and strength to complete this project. Thank you for your patience and love. And thank you for listening to me at home and on stage for the past nine years. I am extremely lucky to have met you and thankful for our life together everyday.
VITA

2009..........................................................Bachelor of Music, Performance
Virginia Commonwealth University,
Richmond, Virginia

2009..........................................................Graduate Teaching Assistant,
University of North Carolina at Greensboro
Greensboro, North Carolina

2011..........................................................Master of Music, Performance
University of North Carolina at Greensboro
Greensboro, North Carolina

FIELDS OF STUDY

Major Field: Music
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract............................................................................................................................................ ii

Dedication ........................................................................................................................................... iii

Acknowledgements ........................................................................................................................... iv

Vita..................................................................................................................................................... v

List of Tables ....................................................................................................................................... viii

List of Figures ..................................................................................................................................... ix

Chapter 1: Introduction ..................................................................................................................... 1
    Review of Literature ....................................................................................................................... 7
    Purpose and Need for this Study .................................................................................................... 13
    Biography of Nigel Westlake ......................................................................................................... 15

Percussion Ensemble

Chapter 2: Omphalo Centric Lecture ............................................................................................... 34
    History and Evolution
    Analysis
    Rehearsal and Performance Suggestions

Chapter 3: Kalabash .......................................................................................................................... 49
    History and Evolution
    Analysis
    Rehearsal and Performance Suggestions

Chapter 4: Moving Air ....................................................................................................................... 61
    History and Evolution
    Analysis
    Rehearsal and Performance Suggestions
Chapter 5: Malachite Glass
..........................................................74
  History and Evolution
  Analysis
  Rehearsal and Performance Suggestions

Percussion Solo Works

Chapter 6: Fabian Theory .................................................................92
  History and Evolution
  Analysis
  Rehearsal and Performance Suggestions

Chapter 7: The Hinchinbrook Riffs ..................................................110
  History and Evolution
  Analysis
  Rehearsal and Performance Suggestions

Percussion Ensemble Involving Film Score

Chapter 8: The Invisible Men ............................................................123
  History and Evolution
  Analysis
  Rehearsal and Performance Suggestions

Chapter 9: Penguin Circus ..............................................................152
  History and Evolution
  Analysis
  Rehearsal and Performance Suggestions

Chapter 10: Conclusion ..................................................................161
  Suggestions for further research ....................................................163

Bibliography ......................................................................................164

Appendix A – Evolution of Nigel Westlake’s Works for Percussion ..........167

Appendix B – Selected Works of Nigel Westlake from 2006 - 2013 ..........180

viii
LIST OF TABLES

Table 2.1 *Omphalo Centric Lecture* formal structure .....................................................38
Table 2.2 *Omphalo Centric Lecture* intervallic sequence .............................................41
Table 3.1 *Kalabash* formal structure ...........................................................................51
Table 4.1 *Moving Air* formal structure ..........................................................................63
Table 5.1 *Malachite Glass* formal structure ................................................................76
Table 6.1 *Fabian Theory* formal structure .....................................................................94
Table 7.1 *The Hinchinbrook Riffs* formal structure ....................................................112
Table 8.1 *The Invisible Men* formal structure ..............................................................127
Table 9.1 *Penguin Circus* formal structure ....................................................................155
LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER 2 OMPAHLO CENTRIC LECTURE

Figure 2.1 Traditional African balafon instrument .................................................................36
Figure 2.2 mm. 53-55 descending polyrhythmic contour ...........................................................39
Figure 2.3 mm. 245 distorted metric placement ........................................................................43
Figure 2.4 Suggested ensemble orientation using four marimbas ............................................44
Figure 2.5 Suggested ensemble orientation using two marimbas ...........................................46
Figure 2.6 Traditional African mallets made from tire rubber ..................................................47

CHAPTER 3 KALABASH

Figure 3.1 Kalabash measure nine syncopated ornamentation ..................................................53
Figure 3.2 Measures 13-17 dead strokes from players three and four ......................................53
Figure 3.3 Measures 48 and 49 cowbell and log drum polyphony ...........................................55
Figure 3.4 Measures 70-72 layered melodic content .................................................................56
Figure 3.5 Measures 95-98 polyrhythmic melodic patterns ......................................................57
Figure 3.6 Suggested Kalabash ensemble equipment orientation ..............................................59

CHAPTER 4 MOVING AIR

Figure 4.1 Example of rhythmic interaction between tape and performers ...............................64
Figure 4.2 Example of unison rhythmic structures to create rhythmic cadence .......................65
Figure 4.3 Motive used to disrupt pulse and foreshadow cadence .........................................66
Figure 4.4 Rhythmic unison cadential structure .....................................................................67
Figure 4.5 Subtle rhythmic changes for player three and four ..................................................68
Figure 4.6 Transitional material using new rhythmic motives in layered ostinato .................69
Figure 4.7 Recapitulation of cadential rhythmic motive ..........................................................70
Figure 4.8 Example of unison scoring between tape and performers .......................................71
Figure 4.9 Moving Air suggested ensemble orientation ............................................................72

CHAPTER 5 MALACHITE GLASS

Figure 5.1 Rhythmic cadence with timpani transition to new ostinato texture .......................78
Figure 5.2 Polyrhythmic effect from composite ostinato ..........................................................79
Figure 5.3 Glockenspiel used to transition to new texture ........................................ 80
Figure 5.4 Unison timbre and rhythmic effect between snare drum and bass clarinet ..... 81
Figure 5.5 Interaction between bass clarinet, marimbas, and log drum .................. 83
Figure 5.6 Rhythmic prolongation between cowbell and glockenspiel ................. 84
Figure 5.7 Rhythmic diminution between kick drum, timpani, and snare drum ........ 86
Figure 5.8 Suggested ensemble orientation courtesy of Sympatico Percussion Group .. 87
Figure 5.9 Suggested set-up for player four including woodblocks, cowbells, and concert toms courtesy of Sympatico Percussion Group ........................................... 88
Figure 5.10 Suggested devil chaser placement and striking surface for player four courtesy of Sympatico Percussion Group ......................................................... 89
Figure 5.11 Suggested instrument placement for player three courtesy of Sympatico Percussion Group .......................................................... 91

CHAPTER 6 FABIAN THEORY

Figure 6.1 Example of metric distortion ................................................................. 95
Figure 6.2 Rhythmic motive displacement ............................................................. 97
Figure 6.3 Delay interaction to create tempo change .......................................... 99
Figure 6.4 Three-mallet technique for the right hand with open fingers .......... 102
Figure 6.5 Three-mallet technique for the right hand with closed fingers .......... 103
Figure 6.6 Right hand triad striking position at measure 81 ............................... 104
Figure 6.7 Right hand triad striking position at measure 79 ............................... 105
Figure 6.8 Alternate example of striking position for measure 79 ................. 106
Figure 6.9 Suggested Fabian Theory instrument placement ............................. 107
Figure 6.10 Alternate instrument placement suggestion with additional toms ...... 108

CHAPTER 7 THE HINCHINBROOK RIFFS

Figure 7.1 Multiple ostinato at varying speeds ............................................... 113
Figure 7.2 Significant silent space used as transition ........................................ 113
Figure 7.3 Example of transition using range displacement and silent space .... 114
Figure 7.4 Rhythmic ostinato with altering harmonic color ......................... 115
Figure 7.5 Sudden dynamic shift creating transition to new texture .......... 116
Figure 7.6 Melodic interjections introduced by register displacement ............. 117
Figure 7.7 Example of rhythmically altered ornamentation ......................... 118
Figure 7.8 Rhythmic displacement interacting with delay to create rhythmic tension ....................................................... 119
Figure 7.9 Use of timbre to create finality with delay interaction ................. 120

CHAPTER 8 THE INVISIBLE MEN

Figure 8.1 Ascending mark tree contour assigned to consuming potion .......... 128
Figure 8.2 Disappearing sequence ending with slide whistle ..................... 129
Figure 8.3 Sudden reappearance sequence ....................................................... 130
Figure 8.4 Instruments used to indicate rise and fall in character elevation .... 131
Figure 8.5 Disappearing sequence with seamless metric modulation transition ........133
Figure 8.6 Player four expanded ensemble role....................................................134
Figure 8.7 Player two and four contributing foley type sound effect ..................135
Figure 8.8 Player three simultaneous change of ensemble role..........................136
Figure 8.9 Disappearing sequence altered with ascending marimba contour........137
Figure 8.10 Chase scene sequence with elevation change indicating falling ..........139
Figure 8.11 Contrary motion that portrays on-screen chaos in multiple directions...140
Figure 8.12 Entrance of court officials defined by timpani rhythmic gestures .......141
Figure 8.13 Log drum rhythm used to represent the sound of footsteps .................143
Figure 8.14 Final disappearing sequence................................................................144
Figure 8.15 Suggested ensemble orientation without conductor..........................146
Figure 8.16 Suggested ensemble orientation with the use of conductor ..................148
Figure 8.17 Suggested ensemble orientation courtesy of Joseph Krygier and The Ohio State University percussion ensemble .................................................................150
Figure 8.18 Suggested equipment set-up for player three (left) and player four (right) courtesy of Joseph Krygier and The Ohio State University percussion ensemble ....151

CHAPTER 9 PENGUIN CIRCUS

Figure 9.1 Penguin Circus opening snare drum solo............................................154
Figure 9.2 Example of two bar phrasing with sound effect interjection ..................155
Figure 9.3 Expanded rhythmic structure of opening snare drum solo .....................157
Figure 9.4 Suggested ensemble instrument orientation .........................................159
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Nigel Westlake, a native of Australia, has pursued a career in composition for over 30 years. His compositional output includes works for full orchestra, chamber ensemble, concertos, instrumental solos, choir, theatre, dance, radio, television, film music, percussion chamber, and percussion solo works. Westlake is internationally known for his film score *Babe* (1995), and other IMAX films such as *Antarctica* (1992), *Solarmax* (2000), and *The Edge* (1995). His most recent orchestral works include *Missa Solis Requiem for Eli* (2010) and *Compassion* (2013). Both have been recorded with the ABC Classics Record label and are available internationally.

The eight compositions that comprise Westlake’s percussion catalogue were written over the entire length of his compositional career and are considered some of his most popular works. In 1984 the Australian based percussion ensemble Synergy, commissioned *Omphalo Centric Lecture*. This marimba quartet began Westlake’s 30-year compositional career and remains one of his most popular works. It is Westlake’s most purchased work from his publishing company, Rimshot Music.

The research presented in this document will focus on the percussion works of Nigel Westlake including *Omphalo Centric Lecture, Kalabash, Moving Air, Malachite Glass, The Hinchinbrook Riffs, Fabian Theory, The Invisible Men,* and *Penguin Circus*. The document’s structure provides further organization categorizing each work into
separate sections of the document including percussion chamber works, percussion solo
works, and percussion ensemble involving film score. When using this document as a
performance guide, it is suggested that the reader secure reference scores and recordings
to supplement the research language used to analyze the music.

Several interviews and articles were consulted to provide information for this
document. In addition to these published interviews, email correspondence and
telecommunication interviews with Nigel Westlake took place to create the most accurate
biographical information. These interviews have been transcribed and included in the
appendices at the end of the document.

Definition of Terms

**ASCII** – An abbreviation for *American Standard Code for Information Interchange*,
which refers to the technology used to program computer keyboard keystrokes through a
system of assigned numbers.

**Augmentation** – “Doubling or otherwise multiplying the duration of the notes of a theme
or motive; the subject is heard at half the speed of the original presentation.”¹

**Balafon** – “A gourd-resonated framed Xylophone of the Manding peoples of West
Africa. Found in the Gambia, Senegal, Guinea-Bissau, Guinea, Mali and northern Cote
d’Ivoire.”²

Circular breathing – “Modern technique, primarily among vocalists and wind players, where the performer inhales breath through the nose while simultaneously exhaling breath through the mouth, this sustain sound for an indefinite length of time.”

Dead stroke – The striking implement is left in contact with the surface muffling any resonance of the instrument. This effect will also produce a short impactful sound.

Digital delay – “An electronic device which projects overlapping signals – i.e., a sound played directly, that same sound delayed by a small number of milliseconds, and that sound again some several milliseconds later; the delay can range to as much as several seconds, and the reproduced signal may be layered upon itself numerous times by means of a feedback circuit.”

Digital copy – The reproduced sound heard through an amplification system when employing a digital delay.

Diminution – “Polyphonic device whereby the theme is played twice as fast as its initial appearance, so that quarter notes become converted into eighth notes, eighth notes into sixteenth notes, etc.; the effect is that of a stretto, coupled with an increase in dynamic level and anticipating a decisive ending.”

---

Double Sticking – Percussion specific term that refers to using the right or left hand two times consecutively in a sticking sequence.

Flutter tonguing – “Special effect on flute family and other wind instruments consisting of rapidly repeated insertion of the tongue into mouthpiece. The technique is to roll the tongue as if trying to pronounce liquid consonants l and r.”6

Foley composition – Approach to music composition where instruments are used primarily as sound effects supporting drama seen in film footage.

Intervallic sequence – A system of organizing intervals into a pattern orientated relationship.

Looping effect – A term that refers to music that is prerecorded and played through amplification in addition to acoustic sounds produced by a performer. This effect can be created prior to performance or, with the aid of a foot-depressed electronic trigger, created during live performance.

MAX/MSP – A computer program developed for musicians and artists alike that employs a visual representation of audio and multimedia for audio processing purposes. Specifically, the program can be used to design project specific audio processing tools to aid in performances and presentations.

Multiphonics – “Modern method of wind sound production that through overblowing and special fingering results in two or more sounds simultaneously by a single performer on a monophonic instrument.”7

**Ostinato** – “A recurring theme that once begun is not deviated from. The practice of ostinato involves dual elements of constancy: the repeated theme, and the constantly evolving variations in contrapuntal voices; ostinato is thus the binding and versifying substance of a piece.”

**Polymetric ostinato** – A rhythmic sound texture comprised of multiple metric ostinato patterns that allow the listener to recognize multiple metric divisions simultaneously.

**Polymetric texture** – A rhythmic sound texture that implies multiple meters but composed in one metric structure. Thereby distorting a sense of meter but amplifying a sense of pulse.

**Portable Address System** – Abbreviated as ‘PA system’, this term is used to describe an electronic sound amplification device using an audio mixer, microphones, and speakers.

**Range displacement** – A term used to describe thematic material that occurs in several ranges of an instrument spanning multiple octaves apart from each occurrence.

**Rhythmic cadence** – A term used to classify an ending music structure using only rhythmic patterns and themes.

**Rhythmic prolongation** – Term often used in Schenkerian music analysis, a prolongation expands the use of harmonic or rhythmic structures. This effect lengthens a section of music by manipulating the use of rhythm and silent space.

---


Slap tonguing – “A technique used in playing single-reed wind instruments. Using the length of the tongue, slightly arches, the player presses hard against the reed, at the same time sucking so as to create a vacuum between reed and tongue; then draws the tongue sharply away so that the vacuum is broken and the reed is released, producing a dull slapping sound.”

Sticking – Percussion specific term referring to the order or sequence in which a player chooses to use either hand. Commonly written under musical notation using R for right hand and L for left hand. When using multiple mallets, a number system is employed from left to right using the numbers one, two, three, and four.

Tremolo – Commonly referred to in the percussion family of instruments as a ‘roll’, the term is defined as the rapid alternation of several strokes of the same pitch or striking surface.

---

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

There are multiple interviews available describing Nigel Westlake’s compositional approach to his catalogue of music. Many of these interviews examine his compositional output, creative processes, and provide minimal biographical information. In 2001, Jillian Graham interviewed Nigel Westlake with the goal of attaining information on broad concepts. She describes his, “approach to composition, the transition from performer to composer, difference between the composition of commercial and concert music, and the involvement of his family in his career.”11 While much of the information is general and does not provide specific insight to his musical development, it does provide understanding of how Westlake categorizes his concert music. Critics categorize his most famous concert work, *Omphalo Centric Lecture*, as minimalist music but Westlake disagrees:

It’s good to be at the cutting edge of something I suppose (is post-minimalism when a minimalist gets bored with begin minimal?), but I prefer not to be categorized and agree that pigeonholing is nonsense. *Omphalo Centric Lecture* has been categorized as minimalist, but I don’t think of it in that way. At the time it was written, I had been listening to African balafon music – long before I had even heard of the minimalist school. I have never aspired to produce work that could be categorized – I’ll leave that to the critics.12

---

This statement indicates that Westlake’s percussion works were influenced by traditional African music. Another attempt at categorizing his music is made when Westlake is questioned about any attempt to achieve an authentic Australian sound in his compositions. Westlake responded with, “People have said to me that they hear the sounds of the Australian landscape in my work, but there is no conscious attempt by me to sound ‘Australian’. I’m simply finding ways of putting notes together in a manner that is somehow aesthetically pleasing.”13 Clearly, he prefers not to categorize his music in any specific way.

In a 2002 radio interview, “The Wisdom Interviews on Radio National,” Peter Thompson similarly captured general information about Westlake. The interview consists of several questions pertaining to Westlake’s influences and past employment. Westlake discussed his time as a composer in residence with the group The Flying Fruit Circus, and his time as the principal clarinetist for the Australian Ensemble, a Sydney based chamber ensemble.

Thompson captures Nigel Westlake’s musical beginnings as he discusses growing up in a household of professional musicians and details his experiences with music at an early age. However, Thompson does not make connections between these experiences and Westlake’s compositional output. Westlake does speak about a spiritual event he experienced while composing the music for the IMAX film Solarmax, providing insight to the personal significance of music to Westlake.

In 2006 Philip Cooney published an article “An Introduction to the Music of Nigel Westlake.” This article is organized into seven categories including Westlake’s life as a performer and composer, the composition process, film music, concert music, Australian music, the percussion concerto, and a conclusion. By using excerpts from several published interviews, Cooney examines specific times in Westlake’s life including musical training and professional experiences. Cooney specifically discusses the music:

The rhythmic energy of the music is often paired with angular, sometimes chromatic melodies, or an insistent repetition of motives that can be relentless at times. In many pieces the structure does not revolve around a single climax point. A more even, continuous texture is more often employed with parallel presentations of melodic material (at varying pitch intervals) against the ostinato figures.14

This statement provides general insight into Westlake’s compositional approach. However, it does not provide specific examples or occurrences specific to Westlake’s percussion catalogue. The article provides readers with a brief glimpse into the life of Westlake helping to illustrate his general creative process. Westlake admits that, “the creative process is a mystery I don’t really understand.”15 Cooney attempts to speak to this mystery using additional comments from another interview when Westlake explained that, “composing, whilst in some cases is such a rewarding experience, but, also very painful and I think I’m not the only composer who feels that, I think that’s pretty

---

Cooney draws statements from these interviews to depict Nigel Westlake as a composer who reinvents the process of composition for several mediums including concert and film music. However, the article does not provide the reader with how Westlake accomplished this through specific examples.

In 2003, John Meyer discussed aspects of film music with Westlake in his interview “Pigs and Penguins, Nigel Westlake, a Profile.” This discusses some of Westlake’s most known film scores including *Babe*, and the IMAX films *Antarctica* and *The Edge*. It also provides information about Westlake’s film music training. Westlake speaks about his film music training:

> It was an eight-week course, and eight composers were mentored by these professionals. (Bill Motzing, Tommy Tycho, Michael Carlos, and George Dreyfus) My mentor was Bill Motzing, and we all wrote scores for the same film. The final day of the course was spent watching the same film eight times with eight different pieces of music, which was quite a revelation!  

Meyer’s discussion continues and Westlake reveals he is a self-taught composer learning about his craft through working professionally with many film directors. The interview provides insight about Westlake’s musical training also including limited biographical information. The discussion ends with a positive reflection of the state of Australian music. Westlake mentions specific high profile events that featured world-renowned musicians performing with Australian symphonies that draw attention to Australian music. Westlake concludes his thoughts on the subject saying, “The audience

---

wanted more. If things like that can keep happening, there’s great hope for Australian music!”

The only interview that exists examining the percussion catalogue of Nigel Westlake was carried out by Gary France, the director of percussion at the Australian National University. This 2004 interview, “The Percussion Music of Nigel Westlake: An Interview with Gary France”, discusses each percussion work in Westlake’s catalogue excluding *The Hinchinbrook Riffs*. The discussion leads readers to understand the origins and inspiration of Westlake’s percussion works and specifically includes the origins of *Kalabash* and *Omphalo Centric Lecture*. Included are insights about Westlake’s compositional processes for some of his most popular percussion works such as *The Invisible Men* and *Malachite Glass*, however the works are not closely examined. The reader is then only left with the knowledge of the origins and general creative process for each work, excluding performance practices supported with musical analysis.

Through France, Westlake provides information about approaching the technology for performing *Fabian Theory*, a marimba solo including digital delay. Westlake directs Gary France to his website where he has created a public forum that includes answers to general questions, and solutions for technology issues when performing *Fabian Theory*. While this provides solutions to possible technology barriers, these options seem limited and performance specific to each posting on the forum. A performer following these suggestions would need to procure the exact equipment and technology used to recreate the desired effect from each forum posting.

---

18 Ibid.
Jeremy Barnett, a native Australian freelance percussionist, attempted to simplify the technology requirements for performing *Fabian Theory* in his 2012 article “Understanding the Use of Digital Delay in Westlake’s *Fabian Theory*”. This article closely examines the vocabulary of digital delay providing definitions for feedback, delay time, output, and mix. Included with performance specific vocabulary, Barnett discusses several options for navigating looping technology while also providing suggestions for setting up the delay, but does not include suggestions for microphone placement or specific technology equipment. Suggestions for holding more than four mallets and navigating composition specific performance practices are not included.

In 2006, Dr. Grant Dalton compiled a research document closely examining Westlake’s work *Omphalo Centric Lecture*. Dr. Dalton’s document, “Nigel Westlake’s *Omphalo Centric Lecture*: A Guide for Performance Including a Biography of the Composer and an Examination of Different Versions of the Work”, provides substantial biographical information including insight into Westlake’s musical training, film scoring, professional performances, and significant influences. While this document provides substantial information about several performance practices of Westlake’s marimba quartet *Omphalo Centric Lecture*, it does not provide analysis for any other percussion work in Westlake’s catalogue. However, each work is mentioned briefly in the biography with short descriptions including date of composition and commissioning ensembles. Since the completion of this document, Westlake has expanded his entire composition catalogue with many new works including one marimba solo, *The Hinchinbrook Riffs*. 
PURPOSE AND NEED FOR THIS STUDY

The purpose of this document is to provide an informative reference for those performing the percussion works of Nigel Westlake. Because these works have received much attention in both academic and professional settings worldwide, research and analysis examining each percussion work is justified. Providing readers with a thorough examination detailing each work will lead to a stronger appreciation for Westlake’s compositional approach to percussion enhancing the performance quality of his music. This document will also provide readers with several performance and rehearsal suggestions to develop common performance practices for each work. Although this document will focus only on his percussion works, the research will provide insight to understanding and appreciating Westlake’s overall approach to composition.

There is limited scholarly research on Nigel Westlake’s compositions. Westlake’s *Omphalo Centric Lecture* for marimba quartet is considered one of the most performed works in percussion chamber literature. This work was extensively examined by Dr. Grant Dalton in his document “Nigel Westlake’s *Omphalo Centric Lecture*: A Guide for Performance Including a Biography of the Composer and an Examination of the Different Versions of the Work.” Dalton’s work is the only research document on Westlake.
Procedures and Methods

A synopsis of each work including a formal analysis, background description, rehearsal, and performance suggestions will be included for each work. Scores and recordings have been provided through library services and personal libraries. In addition to score analysis, commercial recordings will be referenced as well as recordings provided by Westlake to aid in the musical analysis process. Over the span of several years the author has gained additional insight about music through preparing performances of *Omphalo Centric Lecture*, *Kalabash*, *The Hinchinbrook Riffs*, and *Fabian Theory*. These personal experiences have aided in the understanding of performance practices and rehearsal techniques employed for successful performances.

Because Nigel Westlake composes across many mediums such as film scoring, orchestra, choir, mixed chamber, and solo compositions of many instruments; it is difficult to define his signature sound as a composer. To establish vocabulary defining Westlake’s compositional style for each work, interview consultation and email correspondence with Westlake will take place to gain further knowledge about the evolution of each work. These interviews will also include information about his compositions evolution as well as analyzing his compositional approach specific to percussion. The interviews will also provide biographical information detailing events of his life that have impacted music he has written.
BIOGRAPHY

Nigel Westlake was born on September 6, 1958 in Perth, Australia. His father and mother, Donald and Heather Westlake, were both musicians in the Sydney Symphony Orchestra. The family moved to Melbourne, Australia where Donald Westlake served as the bass clarinetist for the Melbourne Symphony. The family lived in Melbourne for a short time before Donald Westlake became the principal clarinetist for the Sydney Symphony. The family remained in Sydney and this is where Nigel Westlake began developing his musicianship. At an early age he began singing with a children’s choir, forming bands, and studying the clarinet with his father. Nigel Westlake first explored music in a garage rock band. This initial experience introduced the use of technology and later influenced some of Westlake’s percussion compositions. Speaking about his initial music technology experiences Westlake said, “We were all really into electronics. Even as the saxophone and clarinet player, I had a pick-up which was plugged into phase shifters, flangers, delay systems, and reverb and so I have always been interested in that stuff.” In addition to playing in this band he also studied clarinet with his father Donald Westlake. Nigel Westlake commented on studying clarinet with his father:

19 Grant B. Dalton. *Nigel Westlake’s Omphalo Centric Lecture: Guide for Performance including Biography of the Composer and an Examination of the Different Versions of the Work*. Columbus, Ohio: Ohio State University, 2006. (p. 5)
20 Ibid.
21 Nigel Westlake. Interview with Kevin Estes. Skype interview. Columbus, OH, October 23rd, 2013.
I was about ten when I first started learning the clarinet from Don. I was pretty lazy at first and he didn’t expect too much. After a while I began going to more and more concerts. Don was a featured soloist with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra on many occasions and I have vivid memories of his performances of the Copland, Nielsen, Mozart, and Weber concertos. This is what inspired me to work hard at the clarinet and eventually to think in terms of a career in music. Don discouraged me at first, but I think he was probably just testing my commitment to the idea. Coming to the realization that I had little aptitude of inclination for anything else, I left school at ten years old to pursue my clarinet career. Don agreed with my decision on the understanding that I work hard under his supervision. He was my guide and mentor throughout this period and there was a lot of pressure to practice intensively with the goal of procuring a steady orchestral job.\textsuperscript{22}

Nigel Westlake’s first professional performing experience was with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra playing bass clarinet in Stravinsky’s \textit{Rite of Spring} at the age of 17.\textsuperscript{23} A few years later at the age of 21, Westlake began performing with his group the Magic Puddin‘ Band. Westlake began exploring composition combing elements of classical, fusion, jazz, rock, and world elements into what he described as “strange concoctions.”\textsuperscript{24} Fusion ensembles of this type can be described as the combination of many music styles and genres to create a unique amalgamation of colors and sounds in one work. Janice Westlake described the group as “electro-acoustic fusion.”\textsuperscript{25} The unique explorations of the Magic Puddin’ Band led Westlake to secure a grant that enabled him to rehearse and tour a seven-member band.\textsuperscript{26} This ensemble drew the attention of many musician friends and colleagues, which challenged Westlake’s

\textsuperscript{25} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{26} Ibid.
creativity to compose for such a diverse group of performers. Westlake discussed his experience:

The band lasted for about three years. It went through about thirty members and each one of them brought their own individual musicality to the group in the form of new pieces or creative improvisation or whatever. And so it was a great testing ground for ideas.\(^\text{27}\)

The Magic Puddin’ Band helped to enhance Westlake’s composition abilities and provide a musical forum in which he could experiment with colors and timbres for many instruments and genres. Over the course of three years from 1980 - 1983, the Magic Puddin’ Band performed the music of Nigel Westlake. During this time both the band and the music of Westlake received a great deal of public exposure.\(^\text{28}\) Because of this exposure Westlake received an invitation to compose music for a performance group that features children as acrobats known as the Flying Fruit Circus. Although Westlake is not a formally trained composer, his unique approach to composition has been guided by many music listening experiences. Westlake recalled when composing came into his life saying:

Composing sort of infiltrated my life over a long period of time and from aspiring to be a clarinet player in my youth, following my father’s footsteps, he played with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra for eighteen years and he was sort of priming me for that career, composing infiltrated my life and sort of won over in the end. I’ve been doing that full time now.\(^\text{29}\)


In 1982 Westlake was invited to play with Greg Sheehan’s percussion ensemble, Utungun Percussion. The friendships with Sheehan exposed Westlake to non-western music and provided a listening experience that would later inspire the ethnic percussion writing of *Omphalo Centric Lecture* and *Kalabash*. Westlake reflected on these influential moments with Sheehan:

> When I would ever go and visit Greg, at the time *Omphalo* was written, he had dozens of old LP’s of all sorts of African stuff and he would always pick something out and play it and without remembering any titles I just kind of absorbed... And I when I first head I thought that’s where the marimba comes from!

Shortly after his experience with Greg Sheehan, Nigel Westlake briefly studied film scoring with William Motzing at The Australian Film and Television School. Over an eight-week period students in the course drafted a film score for the same film. At the end of the course the class viewed the film paired with each students film score. Nigel Westlake’s film score was so popular that he was offered work and his film-scoring

---

30 Greg Sheehan is a freelance percussionists based in Australia. Sheehan has performed on international tours all over the world and has been an important figure in Australian contemporary music. His percussion quintet, Utungun Percussion, was active in Sydney, Australia during the early 1990’s. The group performs original music that draws influence from many indigenous cultures of the world. accessed April 1st, 2014. http://www.va.com.au.

31 Grant B. Dalton. *Nigel Westlake’s Omphalo Centric Lecture: Guide for Performance including Biography of the Composer and an Examination of the Different Versions of the Work*. Columbus, Ohio: Ohio State University, 2006. (p. 9)

32 Nigel Westlake. Interview with Kevin Estes. Skype interview. Columbus, OH, October 23rd, 2013.


35 Grant B. Dalton *Nigel Westlake’s Omphalo Centric Lecture: Guide for Performance including Biography of the Composer and an Examination of the Different Versions of the Work*. Columbus, Ohio: Ohio State University, 2006. (p. 10)
career began. This led Westlake to create many film scores for documentaries and films such as *Antarctica, Solar Max, and Babe, Pig in the City*.

Another important composition was created when Westlake returned from Holland after studying contemporary bass clarinet with Harry Sparnaay in 1982. Westlake composed his work *Onomatopoeia* for bass clarinet and digital delay. Westlake discussed his experience composing *Onomatopoeia* in an interview with the author:

> That piece was written after my time in Holland and... It's funny, I spent all this time really working very hard at this contemporary repertoire and a lot of it wasn't really nice to listen to (NW: laughs), which is what my partner Janice kept telling me. It was very cutting edge like Louis Andriessen that was kind of very complex intellectual approach and I thought wouldn't it be great to take this multi-phonics and circular breathing and all those techniques and create something that was actually kind of nice to listen to (NW: laughs). So it was kind of a bit of a sell out maybe but that’s when I created *Onomatopoeia*.

*Onomatopoeia* drew the attention of Michael Askill who asked Westlake to compose a work for him in a similar fashion. This would later become one of Westlake’s most popular works for marimba titled *Fabian Theory*. Westlake recalled this progression of works commenting, “Michael Askill heard *Onomatopoeia* and he asked me to write a piece and that’s where *Fabian Theory* comes from. And it was *Fabian*...

---

36. “Harry Sparnaay specializes in bass clarinet and is considered one of the world’s foremost experts on the instrument. He has performed as a bass clarinet soloist all over the world. In 1972 he founded the Bass Clarinet Collective, which featured nine bass clarinet instruments. For several years Sparnaay served as a professor of bass clarinet and contemporary music at the Conservatory of Amsterdam.” accessed April 1st, 2014, [http://www.harrysparnaay.info/biography.htm](http://www.harrysparnaay.info/biography.htm).


39. “Michael Askill formerly served as principal percussionist with the Sydney Symphony and was a original member of the Sydney based percussion ensemble, Synergy. He currently serves as a Lecturer in Percussion at the University of Queensland.” accessed April 1st, 2014, [http://michaelaskill.com/introduction/34](http://michaelaskill.com/introduction/34).
Theory and Onomatopoeia that I got asked to write another work using delay that is called The Hinchinbrook Riffs.”

Following Onomatopoeia, Westlake completed his first percussion ensemble composition in 1984 titled Omphalo Centric Lecture. This work has become one of the most performed works in the percussion ensemble repertoire and has been recorded by several groups all over the world. Westlake discussed the evolution of this pivotal composition:

I got an invitation by some friends of mine who were playing in this percussion quartet called Synergy to write a work and that’s where Omphalo Centric Lecture came from. And it began as a trio for bass clarinet and two percussionists... two marimbas. Very soon after that Synergy asked me to rearrange that trio for four marimbas and that’s where that piece comes from. That was my first serious attempt at composition and I call it my Opus 1. To my great delight it’s a piece that still gets played and that was the piece that launched this sort of vague notion that I might be able to pursue composition on some level even though it was quite a few years until I pursued it full time.

Omphalo Centric Lecture contains compositional elements that can be found in many of Nigel Westlake’s works. These include driving ostinati, poly-metric ostinati, and polyphonic textures. These compositional techniques define Westlake’s approach to percussion composition, however it is difficult to categorize Westlake in any one style of music. Westlake has composed in so many music mediums that categorizing his compositional approach as minimalist, post-modern, or contemporary is difficult. When questioned about this Westlake responded:

I just do what I feel has to be done at the time and I don't try to categorize that or put any labels on it. But I guess what I am trying to say is I don't see myself as an

---

40 Nigel Westlake. Interview with Kevin Estes. Skype interview. Columbus, OH, October 23rd, 2013.
42 Nigel Westlake. Interview with Kevin Estes. Skype interview. Columbus, OH, October 23rd, 2013.
innovator or cutting edge composer in the same way that a lot of other contemporary composers do. I’m more about communicating to the audience about presenting ideas that I hope people will embrace and gain something from.\footnote{Ibid.}

At this early stage in his career Westlake was continuing to balance his life between composing and performing. In an interview with Bill Mackey, Westlake commented, “I don’t regard myself as a serious composer. I’m a performer/composer in that all my ideas are taken from my experience as a performer and the reason I write music is to perform it.”\footnote{Bill Mackey. “Nigel Westlake, Composer/Performer.” \textit{Sounds Australian}, Spring 1989.} From 1986 to 1996 Westlake performed with the Australia Ensemble as their clarinetist. Westlake considers this position as his first professional job:

Yes, that was my first, regularly paid job because the ensemble was based and still is, based at the University of New South Wales. My father had actually been working with them and they were looking for a replacement for their original clarinetist who was Murray Khoo. Who left I think in the mid eighties at some stage and they were trying out various people. They asked me along to do an audition and much to my disbelief I got offered the job and it was a wonderful experience. I toured with them around the world and also throughout Australia and performed all the great classical works with them and we commissioned quite a lot of new Australian compositions by various Australian composers.\footnote{Peter Thompson. “The Wisdom Interviews: Nigel Westlake.” accessed September 2\textsuperscript{nd}, 2013, http://www.rimshot.com.au.}

Soon after his appointment as a clarinetist with the Australia Ensemble, the Australian based percussion ensemble known as Synergy commissioned Westlake for a new work. In 1987 Westlake composed \textit{Moving Air} for percussion quartet and pre-recorded tape. Many of Westlake’s works inspire thoughts of nature (\textit{Entomology} 1988) or film scores of social interaction (\textit{Kiss the Night} 1986). However \textit{Moving Air} stands out amongst many of Westlake’s works because of its creative use of industrial machine...
like sounds. *Moving Air* is constructed with sounds of snapping, slamming car doors, breaking glass, vocal hissing, and drum sounds. Westlake described the evolution of this work:

That was written for a specific event for a Synergy concert. And I think there was talk amongst the group that they wanted a sort of expanded sound world that used electronics and something they could interact with. I listened to them talk about their wish list for a new work and tried to take that onboard in the writing of *Moving Air*. And I accessed a pretty basic collection, at that time, of percussion samples that I had on an old emulator.... that’s another museum piece.... [KE: & NW: laughs] That was a great American invention and it was such a cool thing when it came out. It had this little floppy disk thing in the front and I had boxes of floppy disks with all sorts of samples and was by far the best sounding thing at that time. And so I created the backing track using emulator technology. That was kind of fun! And to my surprise that piece still gets played and that’s great.46

Later that same year Westlake composed *Fabian Theory* for marimba, tom toms, and digital delay at the request of Michael Askill. This work uses similar techniques that were employed in *Onomatopoeia* and requires the percussionist to explore the use of delay and looping technology for live performance. The original technology used to compose this work (Roland SDE Series) is now obsolete and the performer must find new ways to perform the work. Westlake encourages percussionists to find new avenues to perform this work:

I know that percussionists are very resourceful and all have different ways of doing stuff and it’s very interesting to see the different creative approaches people bring to such issues in the music. The delay system the piece was written for just doesn't even exist anymore so you have to find another way.47

A few years after *Fabian Theory* was composed, the percussion group Synergy commissioned Westlake again requesting a new work that was similar to *Omphalo*.

---

46 Nigel Westlake. Interview with Kevin Estes. Skype interview. Columbus, OH, October 23rd, 2013.

47 Ibid.
Centric Lecture but to also include Westlake playing bass clarinet. In 1990 Westlake composed Malachite Glass for percussion quartet and solo bass clarinet. The work employs a broader use of harmony and sound combinations merging extended techniques for the bass clarinet with the timbre of several percussion instruments. Westlake briefly discussed the work:

Synergy asked me to write another Omphalo Centric Lecture but include your self this time... which would be with bass clarinet. So, its sort of harmonically a bit more adventurous then Omphalo Centric Lecture and sort of embraces a wider kind of form with the slower movement in the middle. I did find myself kind of diverting a bit from the minimalist language of Omphalo and becoming more adventurous with my ideas. And again I was pretty caught up with writing a virtuosic piece for the bass clarinet. Something that was challenging to play that would kind of plug into my previous experience since I had done a bit of studying in sort of cutting edge repertoire. And it tries to cover that ground.48

In 1990 John Weiley, the director of several IMAX films, approached Westlake to score music for the film Antarctica. While this film score predominately uses full orchestra and guitar, a percussion work was created for a brief comical interlude known as Penguin Circus. The intense documentary was paired with music that can be described as a powerfully raw aural depiction of bleak, cold, unforgiving elements of Antarctica. The seriousness of the images and music needed balance with comic relief, which resulted in the creation of Penguin Circus. This brief work exists as a popular percussion ensemble work, but it was never intended to have a life beyond the film. To Westlake’s surprise the work still continues to be played separate from the film footage:

I am a bit amazed that Penguin Circus exists as a piece because it was written very much as a joke. It is a beautiful film and quite serious and we thought we definitely needed to break up all the scientific narrative and all the serious tone of the film with something a bit amusing. And the best way to do that seemed to be

48 Ibid.
to kind of underscore the penguins with a circus approach. And so what I wrote I
never thought would exist beyond the film.⁴⁹

Before Westlake would compose another percussion work he would resign from
his performing position with the Australia Ensemble and focus on completing several
film score commissions and one musical score commission from 1991 to 1996. Some of
these scores include, Backsliding (1991), Antarctica (1992), Imagine (1993), musical
score Romeo and Juliet (1993), Celluloid Heroes (1995), and Babe (1995). While
completing these commissions, in 1993 Westlake began studying composition with
Australian self-taught composer, Richard Meale.⁵⁰

One of Westlake’s most known film scores was created for the feature length
international film Babe. This film tells the story of a pig that finds a place in life on a
farm helping to herd sheep. The score was awarded the 1996 Australian Performing
Right Association’s Best Film Score and in 1997 it was awarded Best Original Music
from the Film Critics Circle of Australia Award.⁵¹

In 1996 Synergy commissioned Westlake to write another work that involved a
visual component paired with the live music known as The Invisible Men. This work
pairs Westlake’s percussion writing with the Pathe Frères 1906 silent movie The Invisible
Men. In an interview with the director of the Australian Nation University percussion
program Gary France, Westlake commented on the evolution of the work:

⁴⁹ Nigel Westlake. Interview with Kevin Estes. Skype interview. Columbus, OH, October 23rd, 2013.
⁵⁰ “Richard Meale was a Australian composer and studied the piano, harp, and clarinet. His music reflects
qualities of 20th century composers and is heavily influenced by Boulez and Messiaen. As a self taught
composer he taught at Adelaide University and worked for the Australian Broadcasting Commission.”
The Invisible Men was also commissioned by Synergy. They basically told me to go and find a silent movie and score it for percussion quartet. So, I spent a long time at the Australian National Film and Sound Archives in Canberra, going through a lot of old Australian movies, documentaries and old dramas. The most intriguing bit of footage I found was an old French movie called The Invisible Men. Made in 1906 and running for about ten minutes, this movie is one of the earliest examples of trick photography and is an endearing and quirky film that I found absolutely fascinating and fantastically entertaining. It was a lot of fun putting a busy, quite complex score together that is quite demanding to perform.  

The film is the story of a wizard who creates a magical potion that when consumed renders a person invisible for a short period of time. After creating this magical potion it is stolen by two thieves who use it to create mischief. The thieves successfully avoid apprehension from police who mistakenly arrest the wizard and his partner. The energetic footage is paired with a variety of percussion instruments ranging from marimbas to a variety of whistles:

The whistles used in the score represent the characters talking and yelling at each other and much of the on-screen action is supported by ‘Foley’ type percussion writing (sound effects made in sync with the picture). It’s quite comical in a cartoon type style.  

After completing The Invisible Men, Westlake scored more films before his next percussion work in 2004. Some of these film scores include Children of the Revolution (1996), A Little bit of Soul (1997), Sydney - Story of a City (1998), Babe - Pig in the City (1998), Solarmax (2000), The Nugget (2002), and Horseplay (2003). Westlake also completed several other works during this time for orchestra, chamber ensemble, and piano. This includes Concert Suite from Babe (1996), Out of the Blue (1996), Piano

---

53 Ibid.

In 2004 Westlake returned to percussion writing with his work *Kalabash* for marimba quartet. Westlake was awarded the H.C. Coombs Creative Arts Fellowship at the Australian National University where he composed *Kalabash* for the ANU percussion ensemble, DRUMatiX.\(^{56}\) In an interview with Gary France, the head of percussion studies at ANU, Westlake discussed *Kalabash*:

> Following the success of Omphalo, it’s been in the back of my mind to write another marimba quartet. When I was offered the H.C. Coombs fellowship from the Australian National University in 2004, it gave me the opportunity to pursue this idea and write a piece for your group Gary, DRUMatiX, so I began work on *Kalabash*, using traditional African balofon music as a departure point. I began by listening to traditional kora and xylophone recordings from North Ghana, Gambia and Senegal. Whenever I write for marimba I always think of the balofon. Its important to state here that its not my agenda to duplicate or re-create the traditional balofon style, its more about getting in touch with the origins of the marimba which is what interests me.\(^{57}\)


---


\(^{56}\) Grant B. Dalton. *Nigel Westlake’s Omphalo Centric Lecture: Guide for Performance including Biography of the Composer and an Examination of the Different Versions of the Work*. Columbus, Ohio: Ohio State University, 2006. (p. 34)


While living in London in 2006, Westlake was working on the score for the film *Miss Potter*, directed by Chris Noonan. Released in 2007, *Miss Potter* was the winner of two awards from the Australian Performing Rights Association for the 2007 Best Soundtrack Album and Feature Film Score of the Year. During this time is when Westlake completed three other works mentioned previously including *Beneath the Midnight Sun*, *Shards of Jaisalmer*, and *Rare Sugar*. Westlake said, “I guess it was about 12 or 18 months of work that I was able to achieve in seven.” Reflecting on this compositional output from 2007, Westlake commented:

I really only do one thing at a time. Once I get into it I get pretty obsessed and absorbed by it and its difficult to transfer my energies into another piece so they are all done one at a time, not simultaneously at all. I guess there were a lot of opportunities there to write for particular musicians and particular projects and sometimes things come out a bit quicker and you can cover a bit more ground.

In 2007 Westlake also completed a symphonic suite known as *The Glass Soldier*. The music depicts the life of Nelson Ferguson who served in World War I as stretcher-bearer. During his service he became blinded by mustard gas during a battle for Villers-Bretonneux. After the war Ferguson acquired his nickname, The Glass Soldier, when he started a business that created stained glass windows. Although Westlake was originally approached to create a film score, the work became a stand alone symphonic suite in five movements, each one depicting an episode of Ferguson’s life. Don Farrands, the grandson of Nelson Ferguson, commissioned Westlake to write a film score based on Ferguson’s life. While the musical work was never used in a film, it was developed and

---

60 Ibid.
62 Ibid.
63 Ibid.
used in a play written by Hannie Rayson. The process was partially collaborative with Westlake composing the music while Rayson was creating the play. Westlake described the process:

She would send me drafts as they were being developed and I kind of talked to her about how she saw the music working in the context of the play and we were kind of working on the music and the play together at the same time. So I was being inspired by what she was sending me and what Don was telling me about his grandfather constantly having to be aware that the music was going to be used as a stand-alone concert suite and also be used in the play.\textsuperscript{64}

There are many elements of the work that help to create a battlefield scene of northern France during World War I. Westlake uses various percussion instruments including thunder sheets, air raid sirens, wind machine, and empty shell casings that were struck to alert others of a gas attack. Westlake employs the use of a French Advent chant to create the impression of a vacant cathedral and set a religious character to the work. Westlake appreciates the music of Shostakovich and when asked about inspiration for \textit{The Glass Soldier} he responded:

I’m a huge fan of Shostakovich and as much as I don’t consciously try to emulate him, stuff often creeps in without me even being aware of it. In many ways \textit{The Glass Soldier} suite is quite cinematic. It draws on the language of cinema music. I hear all sorts of things in there when I listen back to the work. There’s a kind of remnants of Holst in there, which of course has been a major influence for many film composers.\textsuperscript{65}

\textit{Shards of Jaisalmer} is guitar trio that Westlake completed in 2007. This guitar trio was inspired from a trip that Westlake took to India after visiting the city of Jaisalmer, which is located in the Western Indian State of Rajasthan. The work is written

\textsuperscript{64} Nigel Westlake. Interview with Kevin Estes. Skype interview. Columbus, OH, January 3\textsuperscript{rd}, 2014.
\textsuperscript{65} Ibid.
for two nylon string guitars and one twelve string guitar. Westlake composed this piece for his friend Slava Grigoryan:

This is just a little piece that I wrote for some friends of mine. You know it was on of those rare times where a piece wasn’t actually commissioned I just felt like writing it. And a good friend of mine, Slava Grigoryan, was working together with Ralph Tanner, American guitarist now based in Europe. He had a trio with Slava and an Austrian guy named Wolfgang Muthspiel. These are amazing jazz players and Slava had casually suggested, since he was doing a tour with these guys, that it might be nice if I could write them a piece.\(^{66}\)

The work is what Westlake describes as a ‘musical fantasy’, or a work that is largely organized around improvisation. This advanced work leaves room for the performers to improvise and develop ideas while still capturing the experience of Westlake’s trip to Jaisalmer of which Westlake describes as, “a little watercolor of my impression of that beautiful town and walking around in the mid-day sun getting lost in the little palaces and things within the fort.”\(^{67}\)

During his time in India, Westlake experienced traditional Rajasthan music played by musicians busking on street corners. Westlake described what he could remember of the musician’s instruments:

Beautiful desert music and all sorts of weird and wonderful instruments. Violins with two strings on them with and tiny little bodies that made a nasally sort of sound. All sorts of string instruments and percussion instruments, which are just played on the street by guys busking.\(^{68}\)

The *Shards of Jaisalmer* does not in any way try to replicate the traditional music of Rajasthan, it simply reflects on his overall trip to the city of Jaisalmer. Westlake has a

\(^{66}\) Nigel Westlake. Interview with Kevin Estes. Skype interview. Columbus, OH, January 3\(^{rd}\), 2014.

\(^{67}\) Ibid.

\(^{68}\) Ibid.
strong affection for the music and instruments of India. Discussing his love for Indian
music Westlake mentioned:

I love Indian instruments and Tabla just blows my mind every time I hear it. And
its just one of those things I know now is just a life study and that I would never
even attempt to learn it because I know I never would be able to invest the time in
practicing it but I have a huge love of Indian music and have for as long as I can
remember. My father also liked Indian music and it was quite frequently played
in our house, you know, recordings and so on. From a very young age I
remember that.  

Following an extremely productive year, Nigel and Jan Westlake lost their son Eli
Westlake to a tragic event on June 7th, 2008. Nigel Westlake experienced a lull in
creativity in the aftermath of this devastating loss. Westlake explains, “I really thought I
was finished musically. There was nothing more to be said. The muse had disappeared.
The physical exhaustion from the emotional turmoil is so draining that you just don’t
have the strength for anything else.”

During this time of emotional turmoil Nigel Westlake remained musically
dormant for an entire year, not producing any new works or accepting new commissions.
Westlake described the time after losing Eli saying:

Those sort of eight months directly after losing Eli were a very strange time. My
wife and I and my son Joel really felt out of place and at odds with the world and
found it very difficult to find any reason to hang around Sydney so we headed off
on a boat on the East coast of Australia and every night we would put the anchor
down in a quiet bay somewhere and more often then not go ashore and build a
little shrine out of coral and flowers and maybe some incense and stuff as a kind
of remembrance for Eli.

70 Ian Cuthbertson. “Composer Nigel Westlake’s Requiem for Murdered Son.” The Australian, February
2011.
In 2009 Westlake began building his emotional and creative strength again by combining selections from several film scores and re-recording them for a new album titled *Shimmering Light*. This album functioned as the initial fundraising album for the Westlake’s foundation dedicated to Eli known as the Smugglers of Light Foundation. The purpose of the foundation is to “provide assistance to young indigenous musicians and youth at risk through programs of taking film-makers and musicians to indigenous and ‘at risk’ communities to develop song-writing, story-telling, musicianship and performance skills.”

Westlake discussed this album in an interview with the author:

> My wife Janice told me you’re going to have to do something and why don’t you go back through your back catalogue and select a collection of piece and we can release a recording of a particular style of music. Just something I was searching for in the catalogue was sort of reflective music. Some of the more melodic slow moving music that had a reflective quality.

When Westlake finally returned to the studio, he began work on a musical devotion to his son, Eli, in what he described as a “daily dedication to the memory of his son.” Originally composed in 2000 as a film score for the IMAX film *Solarmax*, Westlake composed *Missa Solis Requiem for Eli* in 2010 for the Melbourne Symphony. The film score was originally created with the intention of developing a secular mass to the sun. In early 2008 the Melbourne Symphony commissioned Westlake to re-work the material from the film score to arrange a new work for live orchestra and chorus.

Westlake never sent the work after its completion. Westlake discussed his return to composition:

---

I guess when I came back to writing music there was this thing on my mind, that I know Eli would have been very upset to see me not pursue music anymore. And so I know I had to do something, and of course the first thing that had to be done was a musical dedication to him. And I had this 20-minute concert suite called *Missa Solis* commissioned by the Melbourne Symphony and I was literally about to send the score off to the Melbourne Symphony a couple weeks before Eli died. And for some reason I didn’t, and when I went back to the studio 12 months after losing Eli, there was this score, you know, and I pretty much had forgotten about it.\(^{75}\)

*Missa Solis Requiem for Eli* was composed over the course of 18 months. Westlake created an extremely moving concert suite of eight movements that requires significant use of percussion, choir, and boy sopranos. The work was premiered by the Melbourne Symphony and conducted by Benjamin Northey. Later, in 2011, the Sydney Symphony premiered the work with Westlake conducting. Westlake spent time working with Northey to perfect his conducting skills and to focus his emotions into the score and discussed this process:

> I just knew from being a player myself in an orchestra that I really couldn’t get too emotionally involved in the performance. I really just had to be there for the orchestra and not break down or anything. I really had to build up this steel mindset in order to actually do it. I think it was very emotional for all the players involved. At least they told me so. And having written and conducted it and recorded it, that was almost like a release I then felt, that I had permission to move on, now, that I had been doing that musical dedication to Eli. It was time for me to find another project and I started embarking on *Compassion*, which was the next thing.\(^{76}\)

*Compassion* was completed in 2013 in collaboration with singer Lior Attar.

Westlake composed a new song cycle for orchestra and solo vocalist. The work draws on inspiration from a collection of texts from Islam and Judaism collected by Lior that depict

\(^{75}\) Nigel Westlake. Interview by Kevin Estes. Skype interview. Columbus, OH, January 3\(^{rd}\), 2014.

\(^{76}\) Ibid.
messages of compassion between human beings. Westlake met Lior at a fundraising event for his foundation Smugglers of Light. Westlake discussed this meeting:

He came up to do a benefit concert for the foundation we formed in Eli’s memory and he ended his concert singing this beautiful Jewish hymn, *Avinu Malkeinu*, and I was so touched by that I asked him if he would mind if I took a solo recording and wrote an orchestration around his solo voice. And when I finished it we were both quite encouraged by the result and by and by we kind of worked out ways to expand it and got a commission from the Sydney Symphony.

The work's name comes from the final movement, *Avinu Malkeinu*, which is the Jewish hymn of compassion. Although the texts are centuries old they are not set to traditional Middle-Eastern melodies, but rather a contemporary depiction with orchestral accompaniment. Westlake reflected on his wishes for the work writing, “It is my hope that this music might offer its listeners the space and opportunity to reflect upon the qualities of that most noble of human sentiments, the good stuff that enriches our lives with meaning, insight, depth and intrinsic worth. The virtue of compassion.”

---

CHAPTER 2 OMPHALO CENTRIC LECTURE

History and Evolution

Westlake’s first work for percussion, *Omphalo Centric Lecture*, was written for Synergy Percussion in 1984. The work was composed after Westlake returned from Holland, where he studied contemporary bass clarinet with Harry Sparnaay. Also during his time in Holland, Westlake studied composition with composer and clarinetist, Theo Loevendie.\(^8^0\) In an interview with the author Westlake discussed the evolution of the composition:

I got back to Australia and I just kept dabbling. I got an invitation by some friends of mine who were playing in this percussion quartet called Synergy to write a work, and that’s where *Omphalo Centric Lecture* came from. And it (*Omphalo*) began as a trio for bass clarinet and two percussionists... two marimbas. Very soon after that, Synergy asked me to rearrange that trio for four marimbas, and that’s where that piece comes from. That was my first serious attempt at composition and I call it my Opus 1. To my great delight its a piece that still gets played, and that was the piece that launched this sort of vague notion that I might be able to pursue composition on some level. Even though it was quite a few years until I pursued it full time.\(^8^1\)

---

\(^8^0\) "Theo Loevendie is a native composer of Amsterdam. He studied clarinet and composition at the Amsterdam Conservatory. Loevendie has taught composition at Rotterdam Conservatory of Music, the Royal Conservatory of Music and Sweelinck Conservatory of Music in Amsterdam." accessed April 1\(^{st}\), 2014, http://www.theoloevendi.com/biography.htm.

\(^8^1\) Nigel Westlake. Interview with the Kevin Estes. Skype interview. Columbus, OH, October 23\(^{rd}\), 2013.
Westlake originally composed *Omphalo Centric Lecture* for his trio Touchwood. The group featured Westlake playing bass clarinet and two percussionists, Graeme Leak\(^{82}\) and Michael Askill, playing marimba. *Omphalo Centric Lecture* was one of the first serious pieces during Westlake’s extensive 29-year composition career.\(^{83}\) Its driving ostinati and rhythmic development created a new voice in the percussion literature. Similar to *Malachite Glass*, which will be discussed in chapter five, Westlake originally incorporated extended techniques used on bass clarinet for the work:

> Two of the main members of Synergy were really great marimba players and they inspired me to write in the style that was technically quite challenging. The bass clarinet was used very percussively in the original version, and I do recall there was slap tonguing and rhythmically driving material that I was able to translate to the other marimba parts when I made that original quartet arrangement. It was really just a matter of substituting the bass clarinet part with marimba and expanding on the form of the piece making it longer and introducing the logs.\(^{84}\)

Drawing on inspiration from African balafon music, Westlake tries to capture the spirit of traditional balafon music in *Omphalo Centric Lecture*. The gourd resonating xylophone is traditionally played in pairs when one player contributes a basic melodic pattern and the other contributes variations of the melody through improvisation.\(^{85}\) A traditional balafon instrument is shown in Figure 2.1.

---

\(^{82}\) “Graeme Leak is an independent composer and percussionist from Australia. For over 30 years he has composed and performed original works in the UK, Australia, and USA. From 1980 to 1986 he performed with Synergy Percussion as one of the core members of the group.” accessed April 1\(^{st}\), 2014, http://www.graemeleak.com.


\(^{84}\) Nigel Westlake. Interview with Kevin Estes. Skype interview. Columbus, OH, October 23\(^{rd}\), 2013.

Greg Sheehan introduced Westlake to a variety of African recordings. Westlake recalled this in an interview saying, “When I would ever go visit Greg, at the time *Omphalo* was written, he had dozens of old LP’s of all sorts of African stuff and he would always pick something out an play it and without remembering any titles I just kind of absorbed it.”

Westlake feels that there is another possible cultural influence for his work. Directions in the score indicate for players two and three to mute the instruments by placing material between the upper and lower manual of the marimba. The sound created resembles muted gamelan of Bali, although Westlake does not intend to emulate Indonesian percussion instruments. Westlake admits to these other possible influences of his music:

---

86 Nigel Westlake. Interview with Kevin Estes. Skype interview. Columbus, OH, October 23rd, 2013.

---
Because of Australia’s proximity to Indonesia, we have a bunch of rich percussion heritage to be found in the Island of Indonesia... particularly Bali, where the gamelan is so popular there. I haven’t really studied it technically but I have been there several times and spent many hours listening to the incredible virtuosity of the Gamelan orchestras. The Balinese Gamelan is highly virtuosic, very integrated, and very structured; and it’s amazing how tightly these big ensembles can play. And how they can start and finish together. It’s very exciting to hear. That’s probably been an influence, not in a specific way its just something that when you hear such wonderful music its hard to not take something away from it. Sometimes you look back on pieces you have written and are wondering where stuff came from and you think, “oh yeah? I remember hearing something similar to that!” Even though I don’t consciously set out to emulate or rip off ideas from my listening experiences, I think inevitably they end up being absorbed in the language and find a way of revealing themselves in the work at some point or other.  

Analysis

This document will provide an analysis of Westlake’s 1984 edition that utilizes four 4.3 marimbas, three log drums, one splash cymbal, and one shaker. The new 2007 edition revised for two marimbas will be addressed in the performance suggestions portion of this chapter. Westlake believes, “Omphalo Centric Lecture is the start of any notion of a career as a composer.” Because of this, many of his compositional tools and approaches are found in this work and have been identified for this analysis. These include musical form, poly-metric ostinati, rhythmic prolongation, instrumentation, player assignments, and ensemble roles. The analysis will begin with a synopsis of the musical form. The work can be divided into eight sections, some of which repeat with subtle variation.

---

87 Ibid.
88 Nigel Westlake. Interview with Kevin Estes. Skype interview. Columbus, OH, October 23rd, 2013.
Table 2.1 *Omphalo Centric Lecture* Formal Structure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Measure Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>1 - 44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>45 - 68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III - (I’)</td>
<td>69 - 103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II’</td>
<td>104 - 127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV</td>
<td>128 - 157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>158 - 177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI</td>
<td>178 - 197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V’</td>
<td>198 - 215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII’</td>
<td>216 - 228</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIII</td>
<td>229 - 287</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Understanding the form of *Omphalo Centric Lecture* is a critical step in grasping Westlake’s compositional approach to percussion. Many of Westlake’s percussion quartets are organized into two groups of players. Each group serves a specific role in the ensemble. For example, players three and four begin the work creating a composite ostinato, while player one performs a harmonically static melodic contour. Player two does not enter until the beginning of section two at measure 45 with a solo entrance.

Player two’s entrance is marked with ‘solo,’ as there might be some confusion as to which voice is the prominent role. Although player three’s part is more melodically...
intricate, it is not the prominent melodic voice of the texture. Player three performs an ostinato pattern that repeats every seven beats creating the illusion of a long polymetric structure. This example shows Westlake’s use of polymetric structure and how these structures create rhythmic tension. Westlake indicates player two is the soloist, although there is no melodic contour. This signifies the importance of rhythmic motives to the foundation of the work. Player two’s solo ends with a polymetric descending contour. This contour consists groupings of five sixteenth notes placed over player three’s ostinato show in Figure 2.2.

Figure 2.2 Omphalo Centric Lecture mm. 53 – 55 descending polymetric contour
Player four then begins their solo in a short interlude including several meter changes creating an unsettled feel. Player two supports player four through providing an ostinato. However, now the rhythmic material is not the primary voice as Westlake diverts to melodic content to develop the music further. Beginning at measure 61, Westlake assigns players to melodic content, or a composite ostinato, creating transitional material. Measure 61 is an excellent example of how Westlake assigns player roles in quartet settings. Player one and three both perform the same melodic contour only separated by one octave and player two and four create a composite ostinato.

The formal analysis in Table 2.1 indicates that section three can also be recognized as section one-prime. This repeated material uses the same ostinato foundation and static melodic material from section one. Westlake expands on his original presentation using octaves, slightly altered composite ostinato, changing timbre, and doubling the melodic content.

Westlake increases the presence of the ostinato by assigning two voices to player four, requiring multiple mallets. This slightly changes the original presentation of section one’s ostinato. Westlake also adds another dimension of timbre to the ensemble by removing the mutes from player three’s marimba and doubling the melodic content for players one and two. Although this section contains similar melodic and rhythmic content to section one, its adaptations allow it to be recognized as a completely new texture.

A closer analysis of section four shows that Westlake begins to explore a new texture using intervallic sequencing versus changing the rhythmic structure through
polymetric variation. Over the span of 30 measures, Westlake uses two primary intervallic patterns to create this tonal sequence. Table 2.2 indicates the intervallic structures used extracting the tonal ostinato.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure Number</th>
<th>Interval used</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>128</td>
<td>Minor 7\textsuperscript{th}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>129</td>
<td>Major 3\textsuperscript{rd}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>130</td>
<td>Major 2\textsuperscript{nd}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>131</td>
<td>Diminished 5\textsuperscript{th}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>132</td>
<td>Minor 3\textsuperscript{rd}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>133</td>
<td>Major 6\textsuperscript{th}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>134</td>
<td>Minor 2\textsuperscript{nd}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>135</td>
<td>Minor 6\textsuperscript{th}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>136</td>
<td>Perfect 4\textsuperscript{th}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>137</td>
<td>Major 6\textsuperscript{th}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>138</td>
<td>Diminished 5\textsuperscript{th}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>140</td>
<td>Minor 7\textsuperscript{th}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>141</td>
<td>Major 3\textsuperscript{rd}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>142</td>
<td>Major 2\textsuperscript{nd}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>143</td>
<td>Diminished 5\textsuperscript{th}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>144</td>
<td>Minor 3\textsuperscript{rd}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>145</td>
<td>Major 6\textsuperscript{th}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>146</td>
<td>Minor 2\textsuperscript{nd}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>147</td>
<td>Minor 6\textsuperscript{th}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>148</td>
<td>Minor 7\textsuperscript{th}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>149</td>
<td>Major 3\textsuperscript{rd}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>150</td>
<td>Major 2\textsuperscript{nd}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>151</td>
<td>Diminished 5th</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.2 *Omphalo Centric Lecture* intervallic sequence

The variation that occurs in measure 136 is paired with the entrance of a rhythmic ostinato from player one. This rhythmic pattern develops into its full ostinato.
presentation at the same moment the intervallic sequence begins again in measure 140. This calm, yet suspenseful section is also used in section seven. In both instances the intervallic sequence can be recognized as a harmonically unstable event because it never solidifies a single tonality. In a general sense, Westlake uses this sequence to transition to new ideas and textures capitalizing on the harmonic uncertainty. This highly developed intervallic sequence can be heard in Westlake’s works *The Hinchinbrook Riffs* and *Fabian Theory*. The use of intervallic sequencing in *Fabian Theory* and *The Hinchinbrook Riffs* will be discussed in their respective chapters.

Section five features player two and player three in very melodically structured phrases. Following player three’s feature, each ensemble member enters layering ostinati and creating a dense composite texture that builds dynamically to transitional silent space. The use of space as a transition is not employed until this point in the work. This space is extremely important from the audience perspective as Westlake bombards the listeners with a new metric structure, elongated ostinati, and new timbres including log drums and splash cymbal. Again, Westlake pairs the quartet parts combining the same contour and accented rhythms between player two and four, while player one and three contribute melodic content. The texture created is metrically disorienting and chaotic, however the solo-like interjection of players one and three help to establish some sense of phrase and structure.

Following the recapitulation of section five and six, Westlake transitions to a new meter in section seven. Through borrowing an ostinato pattern from the previous section and adopting the rhythm to a new meter, Westlake creates a smooth transition. The new
meditative section introduces two timbres employing a shaker and an ascending marimba glissando using the shafts of the mallets. Although the character of this final section is perceived as smooth and delicate, the actual placement of rhythms can be difficult to execute. Player two enters with the melodic material on the downbeat of measure 231, but the melodic material then begins to shift away from the downbeat and begins again in measure 245 on the fourth sixteenth note (or & of beat two). This shift in the presentation of the melodic material is anchored by the bass part, which is also executed on the fourth sixteenth (or & of two). Even though each part is written and performed on weak beats of the meter, the audience will most likely perceive the bass line occurring on strong beats of the meter.

Figure 2.3 *Omphalo Centric Lecture* mm. 245 distorted metric placement
Rehearsal and Performance Suggestions

The most commonly accepted ensemble set-up for *Omphalo Centric Lecture* employs four marimbas arranged in a box facing inwards to provide the performers with the most visual contact for chamber ensemble communication. The diagram below provides a suggested ensemble set-up using four marimbas, log drums, and splash cymbal.

![Diagram of ensemble orientation using four marimbas](image)

Figure 2.4 Omphalo Centric Lecture suggested ensemble orientation using four marimbas.

This suggested equipment arrangement allows for optimal ensemble communication when music stands are being used. For example, players three and four...
begin the work in the bass end of each instrument and, using this set-up, there are no visual obstructions between the players. Therefore it is suggested that each performer memorize the ostinato pattern, focusing primarily on keeping time and providing a sense of pulse or groove by matching striking motions as closely as possible. This ensemble set-up also allows player two and player three to match sticking’s of the accent pattern at measure 178 without visual obstructions between log drums and marimba.

If at all possible, it is also suggested that the marimbas used are made from the same instrument company including the same model and bar material to achieve a better blend in regards to intonation, articulation, and timbre. Artificial bar materials have widely different sonic capabilities versus natural bar materials and because of this it is not suggested to attempt any blend instruments of different types, but only instruments of similar construction. The author recognizes that four instruments of the same type may not be obtainable and therefore suggests that ensembles use Westlake’s 2007 revision of the score that rearranges the music to require only two marimbas. The diagram below depicts a suggested set-up for the newly revised score.
Figure 2.5 *Omphalo Centric Lecture* suggested ensemble orientation using two marimba.

Balafons of Africa are played with mallets created from natural resins and recycled tire rubber, which produces a sharp articulation and quickly activates the bar. An example of rubber mallets used for balafon playing can be seen in Figure 2.6.
Choosing the correct implement is necessary in achieving the best blend or timbre and articulation. Commercially made rubber mallets can closely resemble this traditional sound and is the suggested mallet choice for the majority of the work. As section six transitions to the calming meditative texture of section seven, it is suggested that the performers take this time to expand the mallet choices used in the work to reflect a softer articulation and rounded timbre in an attempt to find the most resonant sound for player two and four. Exploration between cord and medium yarn mallets is suggested for section seven. In this situation player one will still be using rubber mallets and can explore warmer playing areas to help blend the timbre of the mallet change. However, mallet choice can vary widely dependent on the bar material and instrument type in
which case it is suggested that performers explore a multitude of mallets in an effort to enhance the overall blend and articulation of the ensemble.
CHAPTER 3 KALABASH

History and Evolution

Composed in 2004, Kalabash is Westlake’s second marimba quartet. The work was commissioned by the Australian National University percussion studio headed by Gary France. Drawing inspiration from the instrumentation of Omphalo Centric Lecture, Westlake created a similar marimba quartet that requires the use of two five-octave marimbas, splash cymbals, and log drums. Westlake composed Kalabash while in residency at ANU with inspiration from Africa:

I began by listening to traditional kora and xylophone recordings from North Ghana, Gambia and Senegal. Whenever I write for marimba I always think of Balofon. Its important to state here that its not my agenda to duplicate or re-create the traditional balofone style, it is more about getting in touch with the origins of the marimba which is what interests me. 

Inspired by the balafon music of Northern Ghana, Kalabash employs a unique shuffle groove that at times uses polyrhythms and poly-metric devices similar to improvisation heard in African music. In the excerpt below Westlake describes his compositional influence, why he writes for marimba in this manner, and why the music of Africa is such a strong influence for the work:

---

I've got various ethnological CD's of African Balafon music. I think there is one that was recorded in Angola and I think its called music from the Angolan border and there are a few others as well. When I would ever go and visit Greg, at the time *Omphalo* was written, he had dozens of old LP's of all sorts of African stuff and he would always pick something out and play it and without remembering any titles, I just kind of absorbed it. And when I first heard I thought, “that’s where the marimba comes from!” And wow, that makes so much sense, and how could you even think of writing anything in a different style for the marimba because it just seemed to be so at home with that use of repetition and kind of funky rhythmic approach... shuffle approach... It just seemed to fit so well, and I thought when I write for marimba I'm really going to plug into that feel, and not sort of any kind of specific rip of a particular area or style of balafon playing, but just sort of a general approach. And I wonder if that’s where this whole minimal things comes from in a way. Its one specific thing but really more of a general observation, it seems to me. It was something to take note of and use for future experiences in writing.\(^90\)

*Kalabash* utilizes limited harmonic development, but develops the use of rhythm drawing similarities to many of Westlake’s other works. The work explores a unique shuffle groove while also developing rhythmic motives, sudden changes in range, sudden changes in dynamics, and sudden changes in timbre. Westlake makes it clear that his intention is to not re-create a traditional African piece, but to explore the originality and ancestral sound of the marimba.\(^91\) In an interview, Westlake was questioned about creating *Kalabash*, to which he responded:

> Look, writing, for me is almost a subliminal process. I don’t know where the ideas come from, but I spend time trying to develop riffs and rhythmic inventions and then play with them. Shuffling them around and trying to fit them into the bigger scheme of things. I go through a lot of ideas when I’m writing; I throw a lot of things out... I have to feel really comfortable with the groove that I’m working with. It doesn’t matter what the piece is, whether it’s a piano concerto, a percussion work, or a film score. You’ve got to feel good about the instrumentation and, you know, the tempo and feel just have to ‘click’ somehow. And when you’re on that track it becomes a stream of consciousness... the notes

---

\(^{90}\) Nigel Westlake. Interview with Kevin Estes. Skype interview. Columbus, OH, October 23rd, 2013.

almost write themselves. Ideas flow, you’re in an environment where you can comfortably develop and use the ideas as stepping-stones to other ideas, and the piece just organically grows.92

Analysis

The structure of this analysis provides readers with a synopsis of the musical form, the use of rhythm to build textures, the variation of timbres, the use of range and harmonic density, and player roles within the ensemble. Westlake commonly structures quartet compositions through pairing two players together that provide a rhythmic ostinato while the other two players contribute melodic material. This ensemble organization process and the aforementioned will be outlined in this analysis. The table below outlines the formal structure of the work.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Measure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intro</td>
<td>1 – 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>9 – 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>13 – 23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III</td>
<td>24 – 35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV</td>
<td>36 – 57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>58 – 69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI</td>
<td>70 - 91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII</td>
<td>92 -116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intro recap.</td>
<td>117 - 130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III’</td>
<td>131 - 149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coda</td>
<td>150 - 157</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.1 *Kalabash* Formal Structure

Kalabash begins with each performer playing one bar from a four bar phrase that is repeated in unison at measure five with the addition of log drums. The first eight bars of the work is a brief example of how Westlake builds texture and musical energy through expanding timbre, range, and dynamic. Beginning at measure five, Westlake places three of the four performers in the lowest range of the marimba. Together, the ensemble plays a unison rhythmic figure extremely close in range, which creates a dense ensemble sound.

Without establishing a harmonic character, there is a heightened attention given to the rhythmic texture. Westlake also employs the use of log drums, which move in and out of rhythmic unison with the other performers. The mixture of timbres produces a sound similar to traditional balafon pairings, which amplify articulation of a dull wooden sound more than a modern resonant pitched marimba. Westlake develops articulation by requiring the performers to use the mallet handles as a striking implement producing a thin wooden articulation.

Section one introduces a rhythmic theme that is used consistently throughout the work. This thirty-second note grouping is found in all parts with the exclusion of player four. The motive can be recognized as an embellishment or ornamentation, but it is presented as a highly syncopated rhythmic structure most commonly associated with the reoccurring melodic theme. This rhythm is first heard at measure nine from marimba one and two.
Westlake further explores timbre by implementing ‘dead strokes’. This technique requires the performer to leave the mallet in contact with the bar prohibiting the full resonance of the bar creating a short impactful sound. This is first explored in section two by players three and four in a call and response type of interplay.
The ensemble texture of section three is rhythmically less active in comparison to the previous material stated. This is an example of how Westlake assigns player roles within quartet settings. Player one begins this section with a playful melody that is accompanied by player three and four using dead strokes. The player roles are then switched. Player three then provides the melodic segment, while player two provides accompanying dead stroke material. Westlake organizes the parts in this way allowing the accompanying dead stroke material to be acknowledged as a counter melody, although it emphasizes the melodic material introduced by player one. The rhythmic counterpoint is also at times substituted for cowbell and log drums. This is yet another example of Westlake using timbre to expand the sound dimensions of the work.

Westlake brings attention to the timbre of the log drums in section four by writing a extended passage that highlights player one as a soloist and players two and four in supporting roles. As the section progresses, player four punctuates two bar phrases with interplay between splash cymbal, cowbell, and log drums. The rhythms executed by player four, in measure 48 and 49 expands the timbre, which develops additional polyphony creating the effect of multiple players.
Section five develops solo material between players two and four, while players one and three provide supporting rhythmic ostinato. Players two and four exchange melodic cells in what can be recognized as three distinct voices. Shown in Figure 2.4, Westlake expands on this idea in section six by allowing for each player to quickly move between melodic lines that intertwine through a slowly descending melody. The audience will perceive this descending line between players one and three while also hearing the shuffle-grove ostinato between players two and four. In addition to the aforementioned, players one and three also exchange melodic cells that bring another element of polyphony to the section. By altering the final pitch of each melodic interjection, Westlake creates a very slow melodic rhythm that is emphasized by the performers using dead strokes.
Section six continues with repeated material that includes elements of chromaticism, contrary motion, and melodic material from section one that is doubled by two players. Westlake organizes the performers in two groups each playing a unison figure of melodic material or supporting material. Section seven becomes a major departure from section six employing significant uses of log drums supported by melodic figures, performed by player three, and augments an melodic line heard from player one. The augmenting ostinato heard from player one can be comprehended as a polymetric contour seen in Figure 3.5. Although the rhythm played is also organized through sextuplets, the pitches move from groups of three to six incrementally. This creates the
perception that the melody is occurring in different meters simultaneously with the other performers.

Figure 3.5 Kalabash measures 95 – 98 polymetric melodic patterns

Section seven continues at measure 100 with unison punctuations surrounded by Westlake’s shuffle groove. The texture created in this section becomes more chaotic as the phrases begin to vary drastically in dynamics. The voice leading becomes more chromatically adventurous, weaving in ascending and descending patterns before the recapitulation of the introduction. Westlake builds musical energy by slowly making the formal structure unpredictable, exploring the vertical feel of the shuffle groove while also employing linear phrases of unison chromatic contours. It is also worth noting that even though dynamic shifts may not be indicated in the music at times, Westlake punctuates rhythmic textures by suddenly scoring all players in unison figures. This creates density in the timbre and articulation.

The recapitulation of the introduction in measure 117 utilizes the cowbell to emphasize the shuffle groove as well as an extended log drum feature. Westlake then
expands the dynamic texture by removing the cowbell and requiring player two to join player one and three in unison. This dynamic shift is also accompanied by printed dynamics emphasizing this arrival point. However, the climax is contrasted three measures later with a sudden variation in dynamics and range before the recapitulation of section three. The coda only uses two ostinato figures, which simply evaporate dynamically and bring the work to an end.

**Rehearsal and Performance Suggestions**

There are many similarities between *Kalabash* and *Omphalo Centric Lecture* that inform many of the suggestions in this section including ensemble set-up, instrumentation, and stylistic phrasing. Some of these similarities can be seen in the ensemble set-up and general aesthetic of the work. A significant difference between the two works is the consistent use of unison rhythmic figures that occur in many sections of *Kalabash*. Because of this, it is suggested that the performers use the same sticking approach to unison passages and build consistency in similar passages throughout. For example, at measure five all players should use the same sticking’s as each player is in rhythmic unison. When this passage returns at measure 117, player one and two should employ the same sticking’s used at measure five to build consistency in the natural inflection of this passage. This will aid in the clarity and blend of natural inflection inherent with leaps and possible double-sticking’s that may be used to execute certain passages.

Another similarity between *Omphalo Centric Lecture* and *Kalabash* can be found in the ensemble set-up. Westlake recently revised *Omphalo Centric Lecture* for two
marimbas instead of four marimbas, significantly reducing the size of the equipment arrangement. A similar set-up was employed in the creation of *Kalabash*, with the exception of the necessity of two five-octave marimbas. A suggested ensemble set-up for *Kalabash* is shown in Figure 3.6 below.

![Figure 3.6 Suggested *Kalabash* ensemble equipment orientation](image)

This set-up places the splash cymbals in between the two marimbas to build consistency in the location of the sound production and also to fulfill a visual impact that can be experienced by an audience in live performance. The difficulty with this
particular ensemble organization may come from the use of music stands. It is important that the music stand placement does not interfere with chamber ensemble communication. Additionally, it is important to consider the music stand placement so that there is no interference with the location of the splash cymbals.

In an effort to blend articulation and instrument timbre, it is suggested that the work be performed on two similar instrument of the same brand, model, and bar material. It is also suggested that the performers explore mallet options that bring out similarities between the marimba and African balafon ensembles. Traditionally, balafons are struck with rubber implements made from recycled rubber materials or natural resin composites that are attached to the end of sticks seen in Figure 2.6. Similar mallets are made and commercially available for purchase. However, it is not recommended to use rubber mallets in the lowest range of a five-octave marimba due to the possibility of damage to individual bars. Instead, it is suggested that wrapped cord mallets with rubber cores be used to intensify the slap like articulation of the traditional African balafon, which also assist in amplifying the resonant tone of the marimba.

All players must also consider the articulation produced on the splash cymbals from the chosen mallets. Specifically, players one and four should search for mallets that can also be used on log drums, cowbell, and splash cymbal, as there is little to no time between instrument changes.
CHAPTER 4 MOVING AIR

History and Evolution

*Moving Air* is Westlake’s only percussion work that uses pre-recorded tape. It was composed in 1987 and commissioned by Synergy Percussion. The pre-recorded tape part is a large departure in the structure from his other percussion works. *Moving Air* is Westlake’s exploration of industrial, metallic, ‘junk’ type sounds paired with traditional percussion instruments. This sound combination allows the audience to experience a somewhat abrasive yet exciting composite texture. Westlake describes the work:

*Moving Air* is a short, up-tempo work for four percussionists and pre-recorded CD. The tape part consists of various unconventional sounds derived from the slamming of car doors, the breaking of glass, and the collision of garbage cans. These are combined with conventional percussion sounds, all of which have been sampled and triggered to play in sequence, sometimes forwards (sounding as they normally do), and sometimes backwards (the sound is reversed so that the decay becomes the attack). The players are instructed to “play it loud!” to create optimum movement of air - hence the title.  

The quartet is scored with players one and two providing a melodic contour, while players three and four use a variety of percussion instruments. The specific instrumentation required for *Moving Air* is:

---

Player One
Six tom toms

Player Two
Six tom toms

Player Three
Cabassa
Two congas
Two wood blocks (high and low)
Metal sheet
Small China cymbal

Player Four
Two bass drums
Four log drums (low to high)
Metal sheet (can be shared with player three)

Players are required to create hissing sounds with their voice and also to snap their fingers. These sounds are also included in the pre-recorded tape. Westlake reflected on the evolution of this work in an interview:

I think I set out to write something kind of loud and brash that wouldn’t wear out its welcome, and people could get involved with and have fun with for a brief moment in time. Synergy has a huge warehouse space that’s filled with all sorts of instruments. I guess I wanted something with impact an industrial seemed to be the way to go with that one and was a departure from previous explorations so.... why not? Usually, I just start writing something and I don't analyze it too much. I try to get absorbed by the process and just have some fun with it and don't over intellectualize about it. I probably didn't think too much about it and was probably just drawn to those sounds and wanted something fast and loud.94

Analysis

Moving Air last approximately five minutes and can be divided into five major sections not including an introduction and coda. The overall structure can be seen below in Figure 4.1.

94 Nigel Westlake. Interview with Kevin Estes. Skype interview. Columbus, OH, October 23rd, 2013.
This analysis will provide a brief formal overview including a synopsis of reoccurring rhythmic motives, silent space, and how Westlake uses rhythmic tension in his approach to transitions. It will also examine Westlake’s use of ostinati that builds foundation for phrasing and is found in the main theme of the work.

At the beginning of *Moving Air*, Westlake uses a shaker sound to establish time and tempo for the musicians. The foundational material of the introduction heavily employs players one and two. They provide a composite sixteenth note ostinato, which interchanges at random while players three and four provide melodic and thematic material. Player four and the tape part perform in unison with player three accenting each
phrase ending. Each melodic interjection from player four can last anywhere from two beats to five beats and contains thematic material using a thirty-second note embellishment to indicate the start of each idea. The introduction comes to an end when the ensemble executes a unison phrase, which creates a rhythmic cadence for the listener at the downbeat of measure 13.

Section one involves much more space in comparison to the chaotic introduction of the work. In some sense the silence may feel chaotic for the performers because there is no accompanying click track with the work. One performer plays in unison at each entrance of the tape part while others interject short passages. This creates fast composite rhythms lasting only for a short period. Figure 4.1 is an example of how Westlake interacts with the tape part to build a composite melody using silence and shared rhythmic content. The staves from top to bottom are players one, two, three, four, and then finally the accompanying tape part.

Figure 4.1 Example of rhythmic interaction between tape part and performers
This sparse phrasing changes at measure 29 at the first entrance of an ostinato from the tape part. Westlake creates an ostinato in the tape part while continuing to write interjections for each performer that, at times, creates composite melodic phrasing. Westlake uses syncopation to create a unison rhythmic cadence to complete section one at measure 35. At measure 36 the phrase moves towards a final cymbal note however, not one player completes an entire melodic phrase until later sections of the work.

![Figure 4.2 Example of unison rhythmic structures to create rhythmic cadences](image)

Westlake then creates a composite ostinato between all parts including the tape though layering rhythmic variations. The audience will most likely not perceive any change to this composite ostinato until player two enters with a solo-like interjection in
measure 43. At this moment, the parts begin to separate through accented syncopations. Westlake effectively uses dynamics to heighten the musical direction and prepares the listener for another chaotic episode of rhythmic intensity. The first instance of this chaos begins with player one in measure 50 as shown in Figure 4.3. This rhythmic motive was first introduced to the listener in section one at measure 34. In both occurrences, this rhythmic motive foreshadows a rhythmic cadence.

![Figure 4.3 Rhythmic motives used to disrupt pulse and foreshadow cadence](image)

Becoming more adventurous with his use of rhythm in section three, Westlake explores odd rhythmic groupings performed in unison with the tape part. Although this is
one of the shortest sections of the work, it is worth noting that Westlake uses this moment to create a unique rhythmic exchange between the tape part and the performers. Although short lived, this interaction ends with yet another familiar rhythmic unison phrase in measure 63. Westlake uses dense unison rhythms to formulate a cadential phrase structure at the end of the introduction, at the end of section three, and in the coda. An example of this structure can be seen in Figure 4.4.

Figure 4.4 Rhythmic unison cadential structures
A prominent feature of section four is Westlake’s use of ostinato demonstrated in Figure 4.5. After another chaotic section of rhythmic ambiguity, Westlake writes consistent ostinato patterns for players two and four, while player one and three have slight alterations reducing the size of the ostinato patterns. These small alterations create subtle changes in the composite rhythmic structure of the ostinato, which discretely changes the overall texture.

![Figure 4.5 Subtle rhythmic changes for player three and four](image)

The transition that occurs at measure 96 contains new rhythmic motives that are introduced in an ostinato setting, but not developed into a full section. It can be realized as a coda for section four though the ostinato patterns created are significantly different.
and can be recognized as a new texture. Player three is removed from the texture, which significantly reduces the density of the composite rhythm. This allows the listener to simultaneously recognize two separate ostinati between the remaining parts. At this point, player four interacts with the tape providing a unison ostinato, which is shown in Figure 4.6.

Figure 4.6 Transitional material using new rhythmic motives in layered ostinato

Westlake then moves to a recapitulation of section one. At the end of this section the audience hears another familiar rhythmic motive at measure 121 indicating the imminent cadence to follow at measure 123.
The final section is very similar in form to the introduction. Again, Westlake uses a thirty-second note embellishment to begin syncopated rhythmic gestures. Player four creates a unison ostinato with the tape while player three accents the overall phrase, therefore dividing the quartet into two separate unison parts. One being a supportive role while the other provides melodic content. The work ends with a unison rhythmic cadence comprised of sextuplets shown in Figure 4.8.
Performance Suggestions

*Moving Air* requires the use of amplified tape in collaboration with acoustic percussion instruments. This can create some difficulty in balancing the ensembles overall sound. Because the work uses large drums that are often played in unison, there should not be a need to amplify the instruments in most performance settings. This may change depending on the size and dry/wet acoustic properties of a performance space. Therefore, amplifying the instruments should remain a second option, only if needed. It is also suggested that the tape be played through a portable amplifying system placed near the ensemble. This is to assure that the prerecorded tape sound emanates from the same position of the acoustic sound creating equal balance. The speaker placement is crucial to the effectiveness of the performance because the tape does not include a click
track. Consequently, performers must interact with the tape as if it is a click track. A suggested position for the speakers would be behind players three and four so that the acoustic and tape sound travels to the audience at the same rate.

Another important consideration for *Moving Air* is the ensemble stage set-up. The image below is designed so that the performers have optimal visual awareness to enhance ensemble communication and responsiveness.

![Moving Air suggested ensemble orientation](image)

Figure 4.9 *Moving Air* suggested ensemble orientation
In addition to ensemble equipment orientation, it is important to consider the overall sound of the tom tom’s. In general, twelve tom toms used at once can distort rhythmic clarity due to the general low pitch and resonant sound typical of the instrument. It is suggested that each performer use some form of muffling to improve clarity to the overall texture. Player four may also need to explore options for muffling to enhance the clarity and sound difference between two bass drums.

Preparing for a successful performance of this work entails rigorous individual preparation and significant time spent understanding how each part fits within the ensemble, as well as the tape. It is suggested that individual familiarization with the tape become routine preparation when practicing for the ensemble rehearsal. In addition, ensemble rehearsals should contain moments of playing with and without the tape. The track provided with the score breaks the work into ten sections that make it possible to rehearse separate sections of the work without having to search for specific sections from either end of the entire tape part.

It is also suggested that player one and player two attempt to equalize the pitch of each set of concert toms as closely as possible. Although Westlake writes for non-specific pitches, composite rhythms and ostinati can be lost if one set of concert toms sounds drastically different from the other. In instances when each player contributes elements of a composite ostinato, the texture created becomes more connected if the instruments are tuned to match each other.
CHAPTER 5 MALACHITE GLASS

History and Evolution

Nigel Westlake composed *Malachite Glass* in 1990 for Synergy Percussion and incorporated himself playing the bass clarinet. Synergy Percussion requested something that was similar to *Omphalo Centric Lecture* and to include Westlake playing bass clarinet as a soloist in the work.

Westlake composed *Malachite Glass* shortly after his return from Holland where he had studied contemporary bass clarinet with Harry Sparnaay. During his time in Holland, Westlake absorbed techniques required to perform difficult contemporary repertoire for the bass clarinet. Some of skills he studied are known as slap tonguing, flutter tonguing, circular breathing, and multi-phonics. Many of these techniques are found in the bass clarinet part for *Malachite Glass*.

In an interview with Gary France, Westlake briefly discussed the evolution of *Malachite Glass*:

Michael Askill suggested I write something that I could play with the band. At that time, I had just come back from studying bass clarinet in Holland with Harry Spaarnay. Consequently, it’s quite a demanding bass clarinet part. In a sense it uses *Omphalo* as a departure point again. Two percussionists play ostinato figures on marimba and the other two players have various kits of stuff. It’s challenging, fun kind of piece. And the bass clarinetist needs to be amplified to keep up with the rest of the ensemble. I’ve performed it a few times with Synergy...
and made a recording. This work gets played from time to time in the States and Australia.\textsuperscript{95}

The quintet is scored for one bass clarinet soloist, who also plays cowbell and four percussionists playing a multitude of instruments including two marimbas. The percussion instruments required for \textit{Malachite Glass} are as follows:

\textit{Percussion One}
- Marimba 4.3
- Japanese taiko drum (shime, daiko, or high tom tom)
- Wind gong

\textit{Percussion Two}
- Marimba 4.3
- Japanese taiko drum (large marubo, or daiby, or high to low tom tom)
- Two woodblocks (high and medium)
- Shaker
- Guiro

\textit{Percussion Three}
- Three tom toms
- Three cow bells (high, medium, and low)
- Glockenspiel
- Guiro

\textit{Percussion Four}
- Two timpani (range low F to E-flat in staff)
- Three cymbals (ride, crash, and splash)
- Four cowbells (high, medium, medium low, and low)
- Devil chaser
- Three woodblocks (high, medium, and low)
- One temple block
- One low pitched snare drum
- Three tom toms (high, medium, and low)
- Cabassa
- Wind Gong
- Shaker

Westlake explains the solo bass clarinet part should be “treated as an equal rather than as a soloist,”96 and that it “bubbles and shakes its way throughout, supporting the rhythmic drive and providing melodic fragments.”97

Analysis

*Malachite Glass* spans a total of 323 measures and lasts approximately 11 minutes. Through its subtle variations, the work creates an exciting atmosphere for the audience by challenging the technical prowess of the performers. Westlake blends extended techniques of the bass clarinet seamlessly melding them with the timbre of the percussion instruments, which allows the bass clarinet to be recognized as a percussive timbre. The work can be organized into three large sections each broken up into smaller variations and sections. This document will provide a synopsis of each larger section.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Measures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>1-143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>144-216</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III</td>
<td>217-323</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.1 *Malachite Glass* formal structure

---

97 Ibid.
Section I

*Malachite Glass* begins with a 22 bar introduction. The introduction establishes a new rhythmic component every four bars moving from the highest pitched drum to the lowest pitched drum. Westlake does this to build dynamic energy while simultaneously creating a composite ostinato through a layered rhythmic effect. The introduction of *Malachite Glass* is an example of Westlake’s use of rhythmic prolongation and layering ostinatos to create a seamless texture of rhythm. There are no tonal instruments establishing a harmonic form in the introduction, therefore combine the use of composite ostinato and silent space to create a transition.

This space in each rhythmic layer of the introduction allows for other voices to become integrated within the composite ostinato, without overwhelming the overall texture. Developing this relationship between rhythm and silent space, Westlake creates a rhythmic cadence at measure 22 when all ostinato rhythms resolve on beat one. Figure 5.1 is an example of Westlake’s textural phrasing through increasing dynamics, intensifying rhythmic integration, building composite ostinato, and using silence to break the texture before introducing a new theme. This effect can be analyzed as a rhythmic cadence before the timpani part breaks this silence in a ‘fanfare’ like introduction to the next texture.
As section one continues, Westlake incorporates the use of rhythmic ostinato in conjunction with a polyrhythmic feel. Westlake expands the length of his ostinati by two bars overlapping the marimba patterns with a Glockenspiel ostinato. The new ostinato patterns are organized in a way that allows the listener to recognize multiple metric structures simultaneously. This polyrhythmic effect creates a pulsed rhythmic texture that played alone can disguise the perception of a discernable downbeat.
The percussion writing at this point remains in sixteenth-note divisions while the bass clarinet introduces sixteenth-note triplet rhythms. The predominant use of triplets in the bass clarinet entrance separates its voice rhythmically from the floating texture provided by the percussionists, establishing the bass clarinet as the solo voice.

Westlake creates a subtle transition through using a rapid glockenspiel glissando. This effectively transitions the listener to a new section, which explores a rhythmic conversation between the bass clarinet and marimba shown in figure 5.3. The soloist and player one do not play in unison, but instead share the melodic responsibility performing similarly inspired melodic interjections. Meanwhile, players two and four provide a stable rhythmic foundation throughout this brief melodic interaction.
Westlake explores using a bass clarinet slap tonguing technique in an effort to blend the timbre and articulation with the marimba. He develops a composite ostinato that occurs between the bass clarinet and players one and two. To provide clarity in the growing rhythmic intensity, Westlake cleverly incorporates silence allowing for the audience to perceive the delicate balance between accents and syncopated rhythms that float between each performer. After a brief four bar interlude the bass clarinetist provides an ostinato contour that begins a similar effect from the introduction. However, in this occurrence the bass clarinet provides a rhythmic foundation of sixteenths and the soloists original cowbell portion is moved to player three.
Although the same material is repeated beginning at measure 81, the percussionists and the bass clarinetist now incorporate sixteenth based rhythms, triplet rhythms, and ornamented passages expanding on its original rhythmic and melodic contour. The conversation between the bass clarinetist and player one is repeated after a transitional glissando from the glockenspiel. Westlake transitions rhythmically using the snare drum and bass clarinet through performing a unison rhythm in measure 101. He then connects the two instruments by melding the timbre using a buzz roll in the snare drum and flutter tongue in the bass clarinet, shown in Figure 5.4. The staff order from top to bottom is bass clarinet, percussion one, percussion two, percussion three, and percussion four.

Figure 5.4 Unison timbre and rhythmic effect between snare drum and bass clarinet

81
Westlake continues to pair the snare drum and bass clarinet by using rhythmic gestures on one note providing no melodic content. The bass clarinet’s sextuplets shaped contours provide melodic content but do not develop. Instead player two mirrors the contours performing in unison with the bass clarinet. In the final moments of section one the bass clarinet holds an extremely long trill, which is paired with slow harmonic motion from the marimba voices.

Section II

When discussing Malachite Glass, Westlake briefly described section two of the work:

It’s sort of harmonically a bit more adventurous than Omphalo Centric Lecture, and sort of embraces a wider kind of form with the slower movement in the middle. I did find myself kind of diverting a bit from the minimalist language of Omphalo and becoming more adventurous with my ideas. And again I was pretty caught up with writing a virtuosic piece for the bass clarinet.98

Section two of Malachite Glass is less active then the previous section exploring a slower presentation of similar compositional elements. The esthetic is sparse and spacious while allowing for melodic interjections from the bass clarinet, marimba one, marimba two, and later in the log drums. The section begins with the bass clarinet and marimba’s alternating in a slow interaction playing the same melodic and rhythmic contours. This interaction is a central element explored throughout the work, but is essential to the function of section two.

Marimba two and the bass clarinet begin to break away, separating for a short time allowing the log drum voice to enter as a soloist. The bass clarinet then adds to the

composite ostinato before suddenly entering in unison with marimba. At this point all three voices begin to interact as Westlake separates the bass clarinet and marimba, which brings focus to the log drum interjections. In the last bars of the second section, the alternation becomes closer together and shorter in duration, as seen in the accented passages found in Figure 5.5.

![Figure 5.5 Interaction between bass clarinet, marimba, and log drum](image)

Throughout section two, Westlake becomes adventurous with his use of rhythm by developing long motives that build tension through rhythmic prolongation. Using silence within the supporting ostinato, he creates a unique interaction between the bass clarinet and ensemble members so that the audience loses their perception of what voice
is the soloist. He further develops this interaction by blending similar timbres such as marimbas, log drums, and bass clarinet, which all perform identical melodic and/or rhythmic figures.

**Section III**

The third and final section of this work begins with ostinato provided from the marimbas, which disguises the downbeat, but enhances the sensation of pulse. Player three provides a rhythmic prolongation between the cowbell and glockenspiel entrances aiding in the concealment of a downbeat. This is accomplished by elongating the time between the entrance of the cowbell and the next entrance of the glockenspiel by one-quarter note’s length. This prolongation removes anticipation of metric organization and the resulting effect obscures the metric organization.

![Figure 5.6 Rhythmic prolongation between cowbell and glockenspiel](image)

Figure 5.6 Rhythmic prolongation between cowbell and glockenspiel
At measure 243, Westlake drastically changes the character of section two. The texture becomes thin as both marimba and bass clarinet move to a much higher range. Additionally, the texture is simplified as the ostinato from player two becomes rhythmically less dense, wood blocks are introduced replacing metallic sounds, and the melodic interjections of the concert toms are dynamically softer then previous entrances.

Following the presentation of this lighter texture, Westlake suddenly returns to the lower register of the marimba employing the original ostinato from the beginning of section three. Westlake expands this original texture creating a somewhat chaotic interplay between devil chasers, tom toms, timpani, and snare drum, which are all performed by player four. Rhythmic diminution is used between unison quarter notes heard in the kick drum, tom toms, and then immediately presented in the snare drum. This interplay adds to the metric distortion. Westlake also distorts the rhythmic diminution by incorporating long spaces between the entrances and using the timpani glissando as part of the rhythmic motive shown in Figure 5.7.
At measure 270 the texture returns to a thinner quality, which is matched with longer durations heard in the bass clarinet part. This texture is short lived as measure 278 marks a large textural departure in range and timbre. The ostinato formed between the marimba parts is at its widest range and most balanced rhythmic structure. Westlake also pairs the melodic content of the bass clarinet with wood blocks. As the section continues, more timbres are added filling in the overall texture and building dynamic through long linear passages between the clarinet and wood blocks. In the final moments of the work Westlake uses the cymbals, timpani, and wind gong to create rupturing like effect of metallic sounds to bring the work to a climatic ending.
Rehearsal and Performance Suggestions

The ensemble stage arrangement is an important logistical component to consider when performing *Malachite Glass*. The diagram below suggests a general ensemble set-up, however does not include detailed arrangement for trap tables. Trap tables include smaller instruments such as wood blocks, cowbells, cabassa, shakers, and striking implements and will be discussed later in this chapter. This suggested set-up provides the percussionists with the ability to communicate visually to promote ensemble chamber communication when a conductor is not present.

![Diagram of ensemble setup](image)

Figure 5.8 Suggested ensemble orientations, courtesy of Sympatico Percussion Group
Another important element to consider is the placement of the soloist concerning the overall balance of the ensemble. Placing the soloist at the front of the ensemble brings visual and auditory attention to the bass clarinet. To compete with the multitude of percussion instruments, the soloist should be amplified with careful microphone placement as to not amplify other percussion instruments.

Player three and player four must navigate a multiple percussion set-up that involves fast mallet changes, moving quickly between instruments often without time to change striking implements. The image below is a suggestion for the cowbell and wood block organization performed by player four.

![Figure 5.9 Suggested set-up for player four including woodblocks, cowbells, and concert toms courtesy of Sympatico Percussion Group](image)

Figure 5.9 Suggested set-up for player four including woodblocks, cowbells, and concert toms courtesy of Sympatico Percussion Group
The image reveals that the cowbells and woodblocks playing surfaces are arranged in the same striking plane. The leveling of the two playing surfaces aids in the accessibility of each instrument, which is important at times when player four must play both instruments in one phrase. Additionally, player four must quickly navigate other instruments including concert toms, devil chaser, and snare drum. The devil chaser is a percussion instrument from Southern Asia that is made from bamboo stalk traditionally played by striking the edge of the stalk to the opposite hand creating a buzz-like vibration. Westlake writes for the devil chaser in a rhythmic interplay with the bass clarinet soloist. Player four must also move quickly to concert tom and timpani in between the brief devil chaser interjection. A solution to navigate this fast instrument change is shown in the image below.

Figure 5.10 Suggested devil chaser placement and striking surface for player four courtesy of Sympatico Percussion Group
Using the soft rubber side of a drum practice pad, player four can strike the devil chaser on edge of the practice pad to produce the desired sound. The practice pad serves two purposes in this instance. It can be used as a trap table to store the devil chaser and shaker when not being used and double as a striking surface for the devil chaser. This allows for the other hand to be free to hold another striking implement for the concert toms and timpani.

It is important that player three and four choose mallets that are effective on multiple playing surfaces. For example, player three must move immediately to glockenspiel from wood blocks and cowbells at measure 52. It is imperative that player three selects a mallet that allows for the optimal sound on glockenspiel and cowbell to avoid having to omit measures for a mallet change. Player three can use a light touch to play the wood blocks or protect the wood block with a small strip of moleskin or foam and play with glockenspiel mallets. The suggested set up for player three is shown in Figure 5.11.
Figure 5.11 Suggested instrument placement for player three courtesy of Sympatico Percussion Group
CHAPTER 6 FABIAN THEORY

History and Evolution

In 1987 Westlake was commissioned by Synergy Percussion to compose Fabian Theory for Australian percussionist, Michael Askill. Fabian Theory is a popular solo marimba work that is performed by percussionists all over the world. The work challenges the performer to navigate the use of digital delay and looping technology creating an expanded sound capacity for solo marimba performances. At a young age, Westlake was exploring the use of electronics through acoustic woodwind and electronic instruments. Westlake explains his initial exploration of electronic effects in his compositions:

You know that goes back quite a bit further when I was a teenager, and I was experimenting with what we call garage rock bands. This particular band I had, we used to transcribe music of Frank Zappa and John McLaughlin, which was quite challenging stuff. And we were all really into electronics. Even as the saxophone and clarinet player I had a pick-up that was plugged into phase shifters and flangers and delay systems and reverb, and so I have always been interested in that stuff.99

This garage band exposed Westlake to the digital effects employed in Fabian Theory. Westlake’s use of digital delay finds its origins in his solo work Onomatopoeia, for bass clarinet and digital delay, which contains many compositional similarities with

99 Nigel Westlake. Interview with Kevin Estes. Skype interview. Columbus, OH, October 23rd, 2013.
Fabian Theory. *Onomatopoeia* uses loop sequences, digital delay, and considerable use of extended techniques for bass clarinet. Westlake spoke about *Onomatopoeia* and reflected on the evolution of *Fabian Theory*:

I did publish that work (*Onomatopoeia*) for a while and I heard other people play it but they never quite got it... somehow... and I ended up withdrawing it from the catalogue because I realized it was really more of a performance piece that I had written for myself. Even though it was all notated it was semi-improvised. And the events kind of occur freely, and each within the context of each performance. I found that whenever I heard it played by anyone else they just didn't get the whole piece. It didn't make much sense so I ended up withdrawing it. I did perform a lot it for a little while, and it was through that piece that Michael Askill heard *Onomatopoeia* and he asked me to write a piece for him, and that’s where *Fabian Theory* comes from.\(^{100}\)

**Analysis**

*Fabian Theory* is composed for a 4.3 octave marimba, three tom toms, electronic digital delay, and requires a loop sequencer device. The score includes detailed instructions for the percussionists to program the delay time, regeneration, and output for performance. Westlake composed the work using a Roland SDE series digital delay effect unit that is no longer produced. Percussionists from all over the world have created unique ways to resolve this problem and perform the piece. In an encouraging tone, Westlake commented on other percussionist’s clever adaptations:

I know that percussionists are very resourceful and all have different ways of doing stuff and it’s very interesting to see the different creative approaches people bring to such issues in the music. The delay system the piece was written for just doesn't even exist anymore so you have to find another way.\(^{101}\)

In addition to a musical synopsis of *Fabian Theory*, the author will also provide technology suggestions for constructing, organizing, and operating the technology

---

\(^{100}\) Nigel Westlake. Interview with Kevin Estes. Skype interview. Columbus, OH, October 23, 2013.

\(^{101}\) Ibid.
required to perform the work. The author referenced Michael Askill’s recording of

*Fabian Theory* from the album, *Australian Percussion*, as a guide for Westlake’s musical
intentions. Westlake’s description of the work gives insight to his vision for using digital
delay with marimba and tom toms writing:

An electronic delay system is employed throughout the piece, serving to
reproduce the ‘live’ signal 566 milliseconds after it has been played, thereby
building a multi-marimba illusion and creating rhythmic counterpoint. The player
is requested to play in tight synchronization with the delayed signal and by
moving through a number of tempo changes, different rhythmic effects are
achieved.

The chart below outlines the four major sections of the work including which
effect is to be used during each section.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sections</th>
<th>Measure Number</th>
<th>Effect Employed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>1 - 48</td>
<td>Delay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>49 - 86</td>
<td>Looped delay only, no delay effect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III</td>
<td>87 - 192</td>
<td>Delay, no loop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV</td>
<td>193 - 238</td>
<td>Delay</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.1 *Fabian Theory* formal analysis
Section one is largely organized into distinct smaller phrases. The first portion of these phrases always end in upward pitch inflection and the second phrase answers in downward pitch inflection. Westlake also uses multiple meters that are paired with this call and response motive and consistently fills them with rests. This space distorts the listener’s ability to anticipate entrances or feel any sensation of consistent meter.

![Figure 6.1 Example of metric distortion](image)

As section one comes to a close, Westlake requires the performer to loop the rhythmic material from measure 49 and 50. The looped pattern still employs the delay effect, Westlake explains, “It’s just the final quarter notes ‘worth’ of the pattern that is being played into the delay. Whatever were the last four 16th notes that were played are the ones that the unit will capture for looping.”¹⁰² The original Roland SDE Digital Delay rack system that was used to create this work used a foot switch that, when

---

depressed, looped material that remained in the delay memory. Westlake explains this further:

Once the ‘hold’ switch is hit, whatever stuff is currently caught in the delay is then looped. At the point of depression of the footswitch, the actual delay function then ceases to work. Being an early form of digital delay, it could only do one thing at a time (i.e. either ‘delay’ or ‘loop’).\textsuperscript{103}

Michael Askill created a seamless transition in his 1988 recording of the work because the pedal function allowed for the looped delay to continue sounding without any audio processing interruptions. The effect that is created at measure 49 and 50 produces a looped delay pattern providing a rhythmic ostinato. New material is then introduced at the beginning of measure 51, but it is not processed with delay because originally only one effect could be used at a time. The delay effect is re-engaged at measure 87 and the loop effect is not used anymore. While the original recording of \textit{Fabian Theory} by Michael Askill uses the delay effect when capturing the loop at measure 49 and 50, this is not a required effect to perform the work, Westlake commented:

I don’t mind if players wish to pre-record the full two bars of the loop pattern – as long as the repeated material includes those four pitches and also contains a constant 16\textsuperscript{th} note ostinato. It really doesn’t matter what order the pitches are in – or even if there are multiple layers of the pattern stacked on top of itself.\textsuperscript{104}

The new material in measure 51 performed over the loop is a large departure from the previous material heard in section one. Westlake revised the four mallet score in 2003 to include an optional five-mallet part, which was the original version composed. Although five-mallet playing may be technically difficult to achieve, it is worth noting that the articulation and harmonic structure produced with the extra mallet enhances the

\textsuperscript{103} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{104} Nigel Westlake. Email correspondence with Kevin Estes. January 16\textsuperscript{th}, 2014.
presence of the marimba and achieves a better balance between the fullness of the concert toms and the articulation of the marimba. Suggestions for the technical abilities to play the optional five-mallet part are included in the performance suggestions.

Westlake first introduces one concert tom using it to emphasize only one marimba note. This is expanded moments later when Westlake uses a rhythmic motive that is varied in its placement over four bars. This rhythmic motive emerges in the texture again, however slightly altered in section three.

![Figure 6.2 Rhythmic motive displacement](image)

Westlake then begins to expand the tonality of the work by exploring the different tonal structures available in the lower range of a 4.3 octave marimba. This effect is slowly expanded in the right hand as the chords move from an F-major triad to inversions of other root position triads. This constantly changing tonal effect is also employed in other works by Westlake including, *Omphalo Centric Lecture* and *The Hinchinbrook Riffs*. When listening to *Fabian Theory*, it is difficult to recognize a structure or
sequenced tonal-rhythm because of the brevity of this section and the sudden chromatic shifts that occur.

A sudden shift in the texture at measure 87 marks the beginning of section three. Westlake instructs the performer to switch off the loop function and turn on the delay function. However, the language used may be somewhat confusing because Westlake writes ‘delay hold off’. This can be explained through reading the user manual of the Roland SDE Digital Delay rack system directions. The operation instructions explain that the hold function is recorded material that is literally held in the memory of the device and then repeated. Westlake is simply instructing the performer to turn off the looped material at this point. When the performer disengages the loop pattern it reengages the delay effect creating a new texture for section three.

Section three also includes the concert toms drawing emphasis to a similar rhythmic motive from section two. The listener will experience an immediate arrival point because there are much fewer tonality shifts, which finally gives the audience a sense of harmonic and metric organization. Westlake expands the work in section three by suddenly changing the pulse of the work. In measure 110, the performer must immediately change from the tempo of 106 to 134. This change brings a new rhythmic texture to the delay sound. For example, in the measures leading up to 110, the listener should perceive consistent triplets, or three note groupings, that are played in unison with the delay. However, in measure 110, the audience will perceive a constant stream of 16\textsuperscript{th} notes at 134 interacting with the delay to create a faster tempo.
Westlake expands on the variations of pulse through the delay in section four by first returning to the original tempo, quarter note equals 106. Next he transitions to quarter note equals 134, builds the dynamic, and expands the range of each phrase to create an arrival point at measure 215. This arrival point is the final change in pulse marked at quarter note equals 90. The resulting composite rhythm with the delay effect in measure 215 is a consistent stream of triplet 16th notes. Westlake makes it clear that throughout *Fabian Theory* the different tempo markings are not in any relation to each other metrically, but rather strict shifts in tempo to create a new composite rhythmic texture in relation to the delay effect. There are some close relationships that may help to find the sudden tempo shifts suggested in the performance suggestions.
Rehearsal and Performance Suggestions

*Fabian Theory* presents numerous challenges to the performer when considering the optional five-mallet part and negotiating movement between marimba and tom toms. One of the most daunting challenges includes navigating technology to create Westlake’s desired electronic effects. The work is designed for the performer to play in synchronization with the delay signal and, at times, play at different unrelated tempos. This allows for the performer to produce different rhythmic effects such as 16ths or 16<sup>th</sup> triplets. While the performer can prepare the music with traditional means of metronome practice, it is suggested that part of the preparation should include practicing with the delay signal, but at a slower regeneration rate. For example, the work is performed at quarter note equals 106, which equates to .566 milliseconds for the delay effect. When preparing the work, adjust the delay effect to a longer regeneration time thus making the overall tempo slower (.6 milliseconds = 100bpm). This type of practice can aid the performer in monitoring the delay signal, while also discovering the rhythmic relationships created at different tempos. As the performer becomes more comfortable with monitoring the delay signal, he or she can adjust the delay regeneration to a faster rate slowly approaching the desired tempo.

To find the various tempos throughout the work, it may be helpful to understand a close relationship between the changing tempos. The first tempo written of 106 requires the performer to play 16ths in unison with the delay signal. The first tempo change occurs at measure 110. This sudden change can be closely achieved by inferring the dotted eighth note pulse in the right hand as the new quarter note in relation to the
measures leading up to 110. Another difficult tempo change occurs later in the final section when the work moves from a tempo of 134 to 90. This can be achieved by immediately switching to a dotted eighth rhythm played at tempo of 134, which is extremely close to the pulse of 90 beats per minute.

The delay and looping effects can be achieved through many options, some of which are simpler than others. Depending on the equipment the performer has at their disposal, one option is to use a guitar effect pedal for looping and for the delay signal. However, this option requires the performer to navigate two effect pedals and may not be the most cost effective option. This option would also require much more choreography to correctly negotiate the timing of each foot pedal, making live performance stressful and unpredictable. Another suggestion would be to use a computer program known as MAX/MSP that can program an audio ‘patch’ designed to operate with numerous ASCII controllers. ASCII controllers are programed keyboard strokes such as depressing the space bar, or a USB wireless mouse click that activates the audio patch. The use of a prerecorded loop is also suggested until the performer feels comfortable creating a loop in live performance.

The MAX audio program can also be used for technology-based repertoire involving technology beyond Westlake’s Fabian Theory, and therefore is the recommended technology option. An audio patch was developed by Dr. Michael Ptacin for the author to rehearse and perform Fabian Theory. With the permission of Dr. Ptacin, percussionists interested in performing Fabian Theory can use the same patch to emulate Westlake’s original vision of the work. Dr. Ptacin’s patch includes options for practicing
with delay using a metronome, live looping function, and pre-recorded loop option. This allows for the performer to choose between live looping and pre-recorded looping, enabling the player to feel confident in preparation and performance.

Westlake originally composed the work for five-mallets, three in the right and two in the left. This can be technically challenging to accomplish and may be disregarded by performers without prior experience in more than four-mallet playing. However, the additional tone added increases the presence of the marimba and allows it to fairly compete with the concert toms in the overall balance. The image below suggests one option for appropriately holding the extra mallet.

![Three-mallet technique for the right hand with open fingers](image)

Figure 6.4 Three-mallet technique for the right hand with open fingers
Begin with a Leigh Stevens\textsuperscript{105} four-mallet grip and insert the extra mallet underneath the inside mallet. Larger and smaller intervals can be developed through pushing the extra mallet with the index finger for a larger interval and pulling back towards the palm with the middle finger to create smaller intervals. The inner mallet is controlled with the thumb and index. A fifth mallet is not needed until measure 51 and so it is suggested that the initial section of the work be performed with four mallets and the fifth added while the loop is playing. Figure 6.5 demonstrates how the mallet is controlled from a closed finger position.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{three-mallet-technique-right-hand-closed-fingers.png}
\caption{Three-mallet technique right hand with closed fingers}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{105} Leigh Stevens is a marimba artist who in the 1970’s revolutionized four-mallet technique for playing marimba still widely used to this day. His approach to four-mallet technique is published in his pedagogical method book, Method of Movement.
Using this technique, the performer is capable of playing dyads while still holding the additional mallet. Executing dyads while still holding the additional mallet is required of the performer beginning at measure 96. Isolating the outer two mallets by rotating the stroke around the inner mallet, similar to movement associated with Stevens four-mallet technique, can achieve this. This can also be replicated using the inner two mallets as the striking mallets and rotating around the outermost mallet.

The best playing areas on the bars can be difficult to attain at times, but it is possible to strike each chord tone including pitches played on the upper and lower manual simultaneously using this grip. The image below shows an example of suggested striking areas on the upper and lower manual chord structure used in measure 81. A similar structure is also found in measure 78.

Figure 6.6 Right hand triad striking position at measure 81
Using these striking points, it is possible for the performer to strike each note of the chord and still achieve balance with each chord. However, it is difficult to perform this chord without striking the G-flat shown in Figure 6.6. Slow methodical practice employing using the highest technical standard is required to accurately play these chords. Measure 79 includes one of the more difficult chord structures to execute as the outer most mallet is striking an upper manual note while the inner two strike a lower manual note. Figure 6.7 contains one suggestion for playing this chord.

Figure 6.7 Right hand triad striking position at measure 79
This suggestion requires the performer to extend the added mallet to the playing area closest to him or her while still achieving appropriate playing areas for the other chord tones. A second suggestion, demonstrated in Figure 6.8, moves the additional mallet closer to the middle portion of the bar. However, this may disrupt the playing area of the middle mallet depending on the size and variation of marimba models.

Figure 6.8 Alternate example of striking positions for measure 79
It is suggested that, in preparation for the optional five-mallet part, the player rests the mallets on the bars. This allows for the player to explore the position of each mallet shaft in the hand and to discover how to move each mallet avoiding issues from the additional weight of the extra mallet. Simple exercises in ascending/descending triads and dyads, with double and triple vertical strokes, can aid in building strength and the technical prowess to perform the work using five mallets.

Another issue to consider when preparing *Fabian Theory* is the placement of the tom toms in relation to the performer. Traditionally when this work is performed, the tom toms are placed in front of the keyboard so that the performer must reach across the instrument to strike them. While this method easily works on smaller marimba models, when using a larger instrument the performer should consider a different option that allows for more controllable choreography. The diagram below shows a more traditional set-up for the concert toms.

![Diagram of concert toms](image)

Figure 6.9 Suggested *Fabian Theory* instrument placements
This traditional set-up allows the performer to centralize the placement of the concert toms, but it can make some passages much more difficult due to their location. For example, beginning at measure 87, the performer is required to play in synchronization with the delay while also playing interjections on the tom toms. Reaching across the instrument can dramatically reduce the ability to return to a proper bar playing area and lead to missed notes or fluctuation in time distorting the delay. Therefore it is suggested that the performer use four toms total placing two in front of the instrument, and two next to the performer as shown in Figure 6.10.

![Figure 6.10 Alternate instrument placement suggestion with additional toms](image)

This allows for the performer to reduce the movement needed to play the tom toms in section three, but also still maintains two toms in front of the instrument for moments when that instrument placement is more appropriate.
In Michael Askill’s 1988 recording of *Fabian Theory* made under the supervision of Nigel Westlake, the tom tom interjections at measure 87 are not processed through delay. As a result the marimba has the delay effect, the concert toms are not heard with any regeneration. To replicate this in a live performance, it is suggested that the extra two toms to the left of the performer in the above diagram be substituted with a digital input that triggers a sampled tom tom sound separately from the regenerated marimba delay signal. This allows for the rhythmic motive to be clearly heard in the concert tom part against the delay pattern of the marimba.

In addition to using a digital input, it is important to consider the placement of the microphones. Using multiple microphones, the performer can amplify the tom toms at a separate level from the marimba allowing for more control of the drum sound in the overall balance. It is also suggested that the performer explore placing the microphones above and below the marimba. Placing the microphones underneath the instrument helps to reduce feedback, as the resonators will shield the microphones from the regenerated sound in small performance environments. Placing the microphones above the instrument may be more appropriate for a large performing space when feedback is a minimal acoustic issue.
CHAPTER 7 THE HINCHINBROOK RIFFS

History and Evolution

Westlake’s *The Hinchinbrook Riffs* for marimba and digital delay was inspired by a trip he took to Hinchinbrook Island off the coast of Australia. Westlake was emotionally touched by the serene tropical wilderness when he first experienced the island’s magnificence in 1975. He describes the origins of the work writing:

I first encountered the island whilst cruising the coral coast on my father’s yacht in 1975, and I was awestruck and inspired by the overwhelming grandeur of the rugged peaks and lush tropical gorges. A number of musical motives, or ‘riffs’ immediately came to mind, which I notated and initially incorporated into one of my very first compositions, *The Hinchinbrook Riffs*, written for my garage band at the time “Eggs Benedict”.

Although the work originates from Westlake’s formative years, the use of a delay effect in his compositions would not develop until his return from Holland. In his mid-twenties he used delay in two other works known as *Onomatopoeia* for bass clarinet, and *Fabian Theory*, for marimba and tom toms. In an interview with the author Westlake discussed *The Hinchinbrook Riffs*:

I did perform *Onomatopoeia* a lot for a little while and it was through that piece that Michael Askill asked me to write a piece for him and that’s where *Fabian Theory* comes from. And it was from *Fabian Theory* and *Onomatopoeia* that I got asked to write another work using delay that is called *The Hinchinbrook Riffs*.

---

I'm not sure if you are aware, but that was originally written for guitar. And so if you look at it from the viewpoint of a guitarist, it's actually quite player friendly and uses a lot of open strings and it tries to capitalize on the resonance of the guitar. Rebecca Lagos, the principal percussionist from the Sydney Symphony, suggested that it would make a great marimba piece and so I did an arrangement for her to play and that’s how that evolved. And so Fabian Theory and The Hinchinbrook Riffs have their origins in Onomatopoeia, in a sense.107

Analysis

Regarding The Hinchinbrook Riffs, Westlake writes in the score:

The piece consists of a string of ‘motives’ or ‘riffs’ that are digitally copied within the delay and made to repeat 600 milliseconds (about half a second) after they have been performed ‘live’. The performer is required to interlock with the delay signal by adhering to a strict tempo indication (100 beats per minute), creating the riffs to interplay and trip over themselves, causing intersecting rhythmic and melodic variants that surge and ebb in wave-like formations.108

The Hinchinbrook Riffs can be organized into seven sections that each transition through the use of silent space or sudden dynamic shift. Silent space is used to transition mainly to allow for the delay signal to fully dissipate before introducing new material. Occasionally, Westlake introduces new material by forcing a new texture through a sudden dynamic shift. By using space, he can expand motives by slightly shifting the rhythmic or harmonic direction introducing an altered rhythm or, at times, only one new pitch. Figure 7.1 organizes the work into seven sections.

107 Nigel Westlake. Interview with Kevin Estes. Skype interview. Columbus, OH, October 3rd, 2013.
Section one introduces basic compositional elements found throughout the work. Using different rhythmic values of both whole notes and $16^{th}$ notes, Westlake creates two ostinato patterns that are perceived at different rates of speed. On the downbeat of each two bar phrase in the introduction, the performer plays a low E. This longer rhythm, in conjunction with the delay, can be perceived at a slower rate then what is played in the mid range of the instrument. Westlake fills this space in the mid range of the marimba using a syncopated ostinato that produces flowing $16^{th}$s through the delay, but is slightly varied by pitch and expanded in each two bar phrase.
The development of section one continues as Westlake begins to explore the range of the instrument. Westlake creates a third voice by introducing new melodic fragments in a high range that are paired with the first two ostinati. Westlake creates variety in section one by combing elements of pitch and range variation, while slowly introducing rhythmic variations. Section one transitions to section two through significant the use of silent space in measure 40, allowing for the regenerated sound to fully dissipate before introducing new material.
Beginning at measure 41, Westlake introduces the mid range prior to using the low range of the instrument. Although section two is the shortest section of the work, it encompasses a similar development process to section one expanding the range and small pitch changes each two bar phrase. Westlake creates a transition through using a syncopated three note rhythmic structure, range displacement, and silent space. This allows for the entrance of section three to stand out as new material.

![Figure 7.3 Example of transition using range displacement and silent space](image)

Westlake expands his use of timbre in the third section by introducing a staccato articulation that is executed with a dead stroke and a tremolo, known to percussionists as a roll. Varying the articulation creates emphasis in the syncopation establishing a new rhythmic feel in the music. This rhythmic feel subsides as the dynamic shifts begin to take over and create long phrases climaxing at measure 72. While space has been used to transition to new sections, this transition uses a sudden dynamic shift paired with a tremolo that seamlessly connects the two sections. This is the only roll employed in the work thereby expanding the timbre in the transition.
Section four begins immediately after the G-sharp tremolo in measure 72 introducing a mid-range ostinato. Creating a depth of polyphony, Westlake creates two recurring patterns in the mid-range, one that varies slightly and one that remains constant. The repetitions that remain constant use two accented notes of each pitch F-sharp, C-sharp, E-natural, and B-natural over four-bar phrasing. This pattern provides a consistent melodic line throughout the section, but exists in a longer textural context. The ostinato that changes occurs in un-accented notes, which act as unaccented passing tones and create an expanded harmonic foundation. After each four bar phrase, the unaccented tones change slightly by one or two pitches creating significant alterations in the harmonic color. Westlake explores harmony in this way throughout the work. Small pitch changes create subtle chord changes allowing for the audience to experience a seamless ostinato with altering harmonic colors.

Figure 7.4 Rhythmic ostinato with altering harmonic color

After extensive diminuendo, the phrase dissolves and Westlake uses another example of significant silent space to transition to a new section. Although this formal analysis assigns section five as a new section, it can also be acknowledged as a variation
of section one using the same pitch contours and ostinato. Westlake expands the section presenting similar rhythmic motives and pitches in different ranges of the instrument. Originally written for guitar, these moments would be performed playing harmonic equivalents on the strings presenting the notes in a much higher register. This sound cannot be replicated on marimba, instead Westlake chose to use the highest register to interject similar melodic fragments.

In most instances, Westlake uses space to transition from section to section. However, he uses two compositional approaches to create a different transition from section five to six. The first compositional approach exploits the listener’s anticipation through a long diminuendo. This is normally followed by a significant amount of silent space but instead, he employs a sudden dynamic shift. Westlake then pairs this dynamic shift with the only use of eighth-note triplets in the entire work. This new rhythm creates a transition through combining rhythmic variation with sudden dynamic shift to introduce the listener to a new texture.

Figure 7.5 Sudden dynamic shift creating transition to new texture
Section six contains some of the most adventurous rhythmic passages in the work exploring accented syncopation, ornamentation, and ostinato. The fundamental rhythmic gesture is the ostinato, which is most prevalent in the initial moments of the section. Beginning in measure 121, Westlake introduces the ostinato to the listener and then begins to expand on the pattern dynamically with a four bar decrescendo. Westlake then moves to incorporating a triplet rhythmic gesture, followed by expanding the range through using the highest register to interject melodic fragments. This compositional approach is used in many places throughout the work. Westlake uses an ostinato as a basis of manipulation to introduce new melodic fragments rhythmically and through register displacement.

![Figure 7.6 Melodic interjections introduced by register displacement](image)

Measure 153 is the beginning of a transitional phrase to section seven. In this sequence, Westlake uses three main compositional tools to vary the fundamental ostinato pattern. The tools used are accented syncopation, ornamentation, and articulation to vary
the fundamental ostinato. Examining measure 153 reveals that Westlake first uses
accented syncopation with altering one pitch per bar in a descending major second
intervallic sequence. (F-sharp - E-natural, A-sharp - G-sharp, F-sharp - E-natural)
Sequences that disrupt the flow of tonality can be heard in two of Westlake’s other works
from the time period that *Fabian Theory* and *Omphalo Centric Lecture* were written.

Next Westlake uses ornamentation in two forms. The first appears in measure
157 as a melodic fragment that is then rhythmically augmented in measure 158
incorporating additional ascending pitches. This is a significant deviation from previous
 expansions of phrasing because of its interaction with the digital delay. The
ornamentation in measure 157 can be realized in tempo, however, the ornamentation in
measure 158 will most likely only be heard as a melodic gesture resembling a glissando
demonstrated in Figure 7.7.

![Figure 7.7 Example of rhythmically altered ornamentation](image)

Lastly, Westlake employs a decrescendo with a descending melodic phrase. He
then suddenly interjects a two-note ostinato that is altered in timbre by using dead
strokes. This dwindles to silent space and used as a transition to the final section of the work.

Section seven explores many of the same compositional ideas from previous sections combining elements of range displacement, ornamentation, and ostinato. However, Westlake uses ostinato in an interesting way. Westlake incorporates ostinato throughout the work so that the audience can discern pulse including a consistent downbeat. In measure 172 Westlake explores rhythmic displacement to dissolve any sensation of anticipated pulse. This develops tension that is relieved through a syncopated rhythmic cadence. He then pairs this cadence with brief silent space at measure 177 before beginning to transition to the final phrase of the work.

![Figure 7.8 Rhythmic displacement interacting with delay to create rhythmic tension](image.png)

The coda begins as a recapitulation of the introduction of the work. A long diminuendo follows the recapitulation over the course of 6 bars towards the lower range of the instrument. Once here, the performer uses dead strokes to create a subtle change in
timbre allowing for the final note to fully resonate bringing a sense of finality to the work.

![Figure 7.9 Use of timbre to create finality with delay interaction](image)

**Performance Suggestions**

The technology required to perform *The Hinchinbrook Riffs* is very similar to what is required to perform *Fabian Theory*. Each uses a delay effect although *The Hinchinbrook Riffs* does not use a loop effect. Therefore, *The Hinchinbrook Riffs* can be performed using a pedal delay machine or a computer audio program, like Logic or Garageband, and a high quality USB microphone. Larger instruments may require the use of two microphones to capture the entire range of the instrument. When using computer programs, simply change the audio driver of the computer to use the USB microphone for sound input and the headphone port as the sound output. With the addition of an audio interface, the performer can control the monitored headphone volume while also controlling the balance of the delay signal through the speaker system. Additionally, this suggested technological approach requires minimal set-up and can easily be adapted to small practice spaces. However, the quality, sensitivity, and
placement of the microphone can alter the overall performance of the work. This creates the possibility that the performance set-up and sound levels may not exactly reflect the practice situation. It is then suggested that the performer schedules adequate time in the performance space to test balance and technology logistics.

Using computer programs such as Garageband or Logic, the performer can edit a real instrument track and add effects to the amplified sound. Simply enter in the appropriate parameters in the programs effect options that Westlake outlines in the score and play in unison with the delay signal. Similar to the suggestions for preparing *Fabian Theory*, the performer can alter the delay signal to create a slower tempo to practice monitoring and playing in synchronization with the delay signal. This builds the skills necessary to learn how to effectively interact with the delay signal.

Additionally, the delay signal should be monitored using in-ear headphones. A wedge monitor may send unwanted delay signal back through the microphone. The digital delay signal can be sent to a general sound system that is built into performance spaces, however it is suggested to use a portable sound system placed near the marimba. Using a portable PA system to amplify the delay signal and placing it near the marimba will create a centralized location for both acoustic and digital delay sound to emanate. Therefore, the audience will not be able to perceive the regenerated signal as a different sound, or different in volume, from the acoustic sound of the marimba. The performer will also be able to control the balance between the acoustic sound and the regenerated delay signal more accurately when speakers are near to the instrument.
Choosing the correct striking implement for this work is challenging. The work traverses nearly the entire range of the marimba and moves from extremely soft dynamics to loud dynamics. It is also important to take into consideration the articulation produced from various types of mallets. A yarn mallet is normally made using less-dense material that minimizes attack, but a mallet with thin cord amplifies the initial articulation. It is suggested to control the articulation of the work through the performers own touch and sensitivity, taking special care for how the chosen mallet responds at various ranges of the instrument. It is then possible that the performer can use a medium-yarn mallet with a dense core that can activate a bar quickly with the proper stroke, but can also desensitize the perception of articulation with light touch and low striking velocity.
CHAPTER 8 THE INVISIBLE MEN

History and Evolution

_The Invisible Men_ is a silent film made in France by Pathé Frères in 1907. In 1996, Westlake paired music with the footage after a commission from Synergy Percussion. The footage tells a story about a wizard who creates a potion that causes a person to become invisible after consuming it. After creating the potion, the wizard and his assistant leave and two thieves break into the shop and steal the potion. The thieves use the potion to steal food and clothing and the multiple victims go to the police who then chase the criminals.

To elude the police, the thieves return to the wizard’s workshop and drink the potion. The thieves disappear and the police mistakenly arrest the wizard and his assistant. The wizard and his assistant present their story to a judge who drinks the potion and disappears. The wizard then casts a spell on the remaining characters, turning them into vegetables and splashes his invisibility potion on them. Once the vegetables disappear the wizard and his assistant drink the potion and the screen turns black ending the film.
Westlake is predominantly a film scorer and at the time he created *The Invisible Men*, he had a considerable amount of experience pairing music with film. Westlake described his thoughts on composing for film versus concert music in a 2006 interview:

Film music and concert music are, in a sense, completely different disciplines and I find it difficult to talk of them in the same breath. Film scoring is a collaborative process where the composer is required to work within the constraints of a pre-determined structure (i.e. the film) in partnership with other filmmakers (i.e. the director, producer, editor, etc.). Virtually every note becomes part of a score for a specific reason (in support of the drama and subtext of the film) and any musical reference to visual elements are of course obvious. When I write concert music, I hardly ever draw inspiration from visual reference, so in a sense, a listener who perceives this in my music is simply using the sound to trigger a visual response from their own imagination.  

Because of the intense detail and thought given to each musical element of *The Invisible Men*, a formal in-depth analysis is beyond the scope of this document. The author has selected specific attributes of each scene emphasize for the analysis such as instrument sound roles, player roles, and rhythmic structure. In an interview with the author, Westlake discussed his approach for choosing the instruments heard in *The Invisible Men*:

Just as I was writing the work, I was mocking it up using samples and a sequence system. I think I just experimented so I wrote that score very much with the same approach as I would for a film, so I was constantly watching the film. I think I was using digital performer at the time as a sequencer, and I think I was running that in sync with the picture, so I was constantly reviewing what I was writing as I was writing it and looking at it with the image and seeing what fitted. I know that I wanted it to be a very challenging work because I knew that Synergy Percussion, as are most percussionists, aren’t afraid to get their hands dirty with some very technical licks. And I knew it would be good to have two marimbas a harmonic anchor for the whole work and to sort of embellish that sound with all those other colors. So it was very much a trial and error process. And also probably talking to Synergy going about what instruments they were going to be.

---

using for that particular concert, and find out what they would like to be playing probably had a role in that as well.¹¹⁰

The quartet is scored for many instruments, which include:

_Percussion One_
- Marimba 4.3
- Mouth siren
- Flexitone
- Police whistle
- Duck call

_Percussion Two_
- Marimba 4.3
- Mouth siren
- 2 mounted bongos
- Flexitone
- China cymbal
- Xylophone
- Timpani
- Police whistle
- 2 small Chinese gongs

_Percussion Three_
- Snare
- Kick drum
- Hi-hat cymbals
- 4 woodblocks (high - low)
- Ice bell
- Cowbell (high)
- China cymbal
- Police whistle
- Sand blocks (mounted)
- Bell tree
- Mark tree
- 2 mounted bongos
- Log drums (5 pitches)
- Flexitone
- Wind gong
- 4 tom toms (Shared with Percussion 4)
- Bike horn (mounted)

_Percussion Four_
- China cymbal
- 4 tom toms

¹¹⁰ Nigel Westlake. Interview with Kevin Estes. Skype interview. Columbus, OH, October 23rd, 2013.
4 woodblocks
Ratchet (mounted)
Police whistle
Wind gong
Ice bell
Duck call
Cowbell (high)
Vibraslap
Swanee whistle
Tambourine (skinless)
Broken glass
2 small Chinese gongs
Flexitone
Glockenspiel
Mouth siren
Cuckoo whistle
4 Timpani
Sand blocks

Analysis

*The Invisible Men* is approximately 12 minutes in length and spans a total of 347 measures. This work is challenging to perform and difficult to analyze because of its compositional detail. The demanding rhythms, tempo changes, unstable harmonic motion, multiple instrument surfaces, and film timing, create many difficulties in execution. Therefore, everything in this music analysis, including the aforementioned, will be discussed with player roles, instrument roles, and a scene analysis. To provide insight on the form of this work, the author has organized the piece by scene to help provide a synopsis of the interaction between film and percussion, and provide organization to the analysis. The table below outlines the organization of scenes.
Table 8.1 *The Invisible Men* formal structure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scene Number</th>
<th>Film Timing</th>
<th>Measure Numbers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>0:00 - 2:30</td>
<td>1 - 92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>2:31 - 4:26</td>
<td>93 - 149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III</td>
<td>4:27 - 5:23</td>
<td>150 - 188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV</td>
<td>5:24 - 7:01</td>
<td>189 - 238</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>7:02 - 7:39</td>
<td>239 - 257</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI</td>
<td>8:31 - 9:42</td>
<td>258 - 328</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII</td>
<td>9:43 - 10:21</td>
<td>329 - 347</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Scene I**

In the opening sequence, the marimbas enter with a composite ostinato composed of various triplet rhythms. The role of these unstable rhythms paired with an unstable harmonic motion creates a mood of anxiety and stress visually seen in the wizard.

Meanwhile, the other percussionists begin to introduce a variety of timbres exactly matching the drama on the screen known as a foley type compositional approach. A central theme Westlake uses throughout the work is the pairing of these sounds to similar motions. He pairs rim-shots with page turning and metallic sounds of an ice bell and china cymbal with hand gestures indicating frustration. Westlake also assigns instrument roles to ratchet sounds showing the mixing of ingredients, turning of locks, and opening...

---

doors. The opening sequence climaxes with the frantic sounds of police whistles that represent character vocalizations throughout the work in a variety of ways. The police whistle sound is generally paired with fast tempo changes and rising pitch contour helping to establish excitement in the footage.

The first scene introduces instrument roles that represent the action of becoming invisible, which Westlake consistently uses throughout the work. The disappearing sequence begins with mark tree sounding from lowest chime to highest, indicating the action of drinking the potion or as simple as the bottle rising in elevation shown in Figure 8.1.

![Figure 8.1 Ascending mark tree contour assigned to consuming potion](image-url)
This initial sound in the disappearing sequence is then followed by flexitones, which are played randomly, but must slowly glissando to a higher pitch indicating disappearing shown in Figure 8.2. The final instrument role assigned to the disappearing sequence is the slide whistle, sounding only a ascending glissando.

Figure 8.2 Disappearing sequence ending with slide whistle
Westlake then assigns a group of instruments to represent a character reappearing. In the opening sequence, the wizard’s sudden reappearance is represented through forceful attacks from a cymbal, kick drum, and marimbas creating a surprising effect.

![Figure 8.3 Sudden reappearing sequence](image)

In the same scene, the wizard’s assistant drinks the potion, which begins the instrumental disappearing sequence. After his partner reappears, the two celebrate and lock the potion in the closet. As the two men exit, Westlake transitions to a new scene employing a solitary kick drum sound paired with a closing door.
Scene II

The second scene begins with the thieves outside the workshop where one gestures towards his stomach expressing hunger. Westlake assigns the tambourine for the instrumental role of the thief's dialog and hand gestures. At this point the other thief suggests that they break into the workshop to search for food, but without a key they must break in.

To gain entrance, the thieves break the glass transom and the two men climb over the door and fall into the workshop. The instrumental roles paired with falling men are descending flourishes in the marimba. Westlake consistently indicates the literal elevation of characters and gestures by pairing the elevation change with rising and descending pitch.

Figure 8.4 Instruments used to indicate rise and fall in character elevation

131
Once inside the workshop, inanimate objects that have come to life frighten the criminals. The two thieves are so frightened they try to escape by exiting through a near door, but instead, open the closet where the wizard keeps his skeleton and hid the invisible potion. In a brief side scene that seems to be insignificant to the story line, the skeleton comes to life and dances. The instrumental roles paired with the skeleton dance are xylophone, wood blocks, marimba, and Chinese gongs. The music is not paired exactly with the motion on screen, but instead helps to highlight a sort of childlike playfulness seen in the skeletons motions. In their hurry to exit, one thieves discovers the invisibility potion and drinks it. Westlake employs the same disappearing sequence for the thieves.

Westlake uses the log drums consistently throughout the work to represent frantic footsteps. The remaining thief’s frantic search is paired with log drums as he searches for his accomplice. When the vanished thief reappears, Westlake uses the siren whistle to indicate the criminal’s scream of surprise. The disappearing sequence is then followed again in measure 145-149. However, player one performs a metric modulation in tandem with the disappearing sequence seamlessly transitioning shown in Figure 8.5.
Scene III

The film to this point has only used two characters on the screen at once, however scene three adds a third character by introduction the clothing shop owner. To accommodate for the extra character that brings additional visual action, players one and two maintain their role providing rhythmic foundation on marimba. Westlake broadens the responsibilities of player four to produce foley sounds for two characters on screen. This includes the shop owner and one of the thieves represented by glockenspiel, mouth siren, and cymbal.
The thieves choose the clothing they want to steal and then drink the potion, which begins the disappearing sequence heard in the mark tree, flexitone, and slide whistle. At this point the shop owner is the only character left on screen. The bongos first represented the thieves, but at this point switch character roles to portray the shop owner with the addition of tom toms. In the last sequence of this scene, players three and four perform interlocking sixteenth rhythms in log drums and tom toms representing the shop owner’s dramatic search for the criminals. The fast tempo and angled rhythms of the drums support the shop owners disbelief and overall frustration that he has been robbed.
Scene IV

After stealing clothing from the shop owner, the two thieves then travel to a tavern in search of food. This scene increases the number of characters moving on screen with as many as six characters in the footage at once. However, sound roles are only assigned to three characters that are providing the most important motions relevant to the drama of the scene. Although the mother and children are on screen, their presence is difficult to perceive because they do not have a sound role assigned to them. They are practically motionless with the exception of a child bringing food to the table and accidently breaking the dish.

Because there are more characters present and multiple physical interactions occur between three people, player two begins to incorporate the marimba as a foley type sound in tandem with player four using wood block.

Figure 8.7 Player two and four contributing foley type sound effects
Although Westlake only scores for three characters motions, he also includes conversation between characters represented in police whistles, mouth siren, and occasionally marimba. This presents difficulties in coordination for the performer who must operate a whistle while also playing other instruments. Seen in Figure 8.8, the role of player three moves between rhythmic foundation and foley interjections using kick drum, police whistle, cowbell, woodblocks, and snare drum.

Figure 8.8 Player three simultaneous change of ensemble role

To avoid paying their bill, the thieves drink the invisibility potion and disappear. Again the disappearing sequence uses the mark tree showing the consumption of potion and flexitones representing disappearing. However, in this sequence the ascending sound of the slide whistle is replaced by player one’s marimba. This is an example of
instrumental roles easily switching from a rhythmic and harmonic structure to aiding in the foley instrumental representation representing the action occurring in the footage.

Figure 8.9 Disappearing sequence altered with ascending marimba contour

The tavern owner cannot locate the thieves and the clothing shop owner enters yelling, explaining what happened to him. The two victims go to the police station to report the crimes. Westlake employs the cuckoo whistle only once throughout the work used in this instance of dialogue in measure 240. The two thieves watch the men enter
the police station and break the lamp outside so they cannot be identified. This catches the attention of the police who go outside to investigate.

**Scene V**

The police and the shop owners exit the building and begin chasing the thieves. Players three and four frantically play a police whistle, which represents the police vocal warnings and shop owner’s complaints. This allows players one and two to accelerate an anxious eighth note phrase just prior to the chase scene. Player four also assists players one and two in the accelerando by providing a simple ostinato played on Chinese gongs.

The next sequence shows the police with the shop owners running after the thieves. Westlake again pairs the frantic running action on screen with log drums. This instrumental sound role was employed in earlier scenes when the wizard’s assistant and thief’s accomplice frantically look for their partner, who has vanished after drinking the potion. Player three executes a simple ostinato that is strengthened two bars later by percussion four. Players one and two have now taken over the foley instrument role, using police whistles while also playing marimba and numerous metallic instruments simultaneously. This particular sequence ends with all four characters on screen falling down. Westlake pairs this small literal change in elevation with a descending semi-improvised line on marimba and log drums seen in Figure 8.10.
The next sequence depicts the thieves slowing down in front of the wizards shop. Westlake uses an aggressive ritardando, which spans over a short period as the thieves quickly run out of breath. To elude police, the thieves consume the potion and leave the bottle in front of the wizard’s shop. The wizard and his partner discover the potion bottle and have it in their hands when the police arrive. In keeping with his foundational construction of the work, Westlake assigns the role of players one and two to provide rhythmic foundation, while players three and four provide the foley type interjections. When the police arrive, the scene ends with the marimbas playing a semi-improvised contour heard in contrary motion. This helps support the frantic confusion seen in the footage. Westlake has consistently used similar contours to indicate direction of
elevation, however the melodic contour in this instance has changed to project confusion, disorientation, and anxiety.

Figure 8.11 Contrary motion that portrays on-screen chaos in multiple directions

Scene VI

A drum roll between timpani and snare begin when the judge and other officials enter the courtroom shown in Figure 8.12. The roll of players three and four in the beginning of this scene provides an aural representation of government, most likely
represented by the militaristic rhythmic collaboration between snare drum and timpani. As each court official enters, a new rhythmic motive is played on the timpani. Players one and two help transition accommodating for more characters arriving in the courtroom. This sequence begins with players one and two using the marimba, wood blocks, and flexitone paired with laughter and hand gestures seen in the court officials.

![Figure 8.12 Entrance of court officials defined by timpani rhythmic gestures](image)

As the court officials make their way to the judge’s bench, they remove their hats and place them on the table. Previously used as the instrument role of disappearing, Westlake introduces the slide whistle again, however in this instance it depicts an elevation gesture from high to low as the slide whistle only descends. Players one and two revert to their original roles of providing rhythmic and harmonic foundation played on marimbas, while players three and four add to the gestures on screen using timpani, police whistles, and snare drum.
While this scene moves by very quickly, Westlake uses players two and four to provide simple ostinato accompaniment while simultaneously playing whistles to capture the dialogue. Their role has now expanded to performing rhythmic foundation while also contributing to the foley action. Players one and three are paired in a rhythmic unison semi-melodic contour, which reflects characters moving throughout the footage as well as dialogue. Although there are ten characters seen, only three to four characters assume sound roles. This is because, at most, only three characters interact with significant dialogue or gestures relevant to the scene. This creates some visual clarity with respect to the music, which pairs excellently with Westlake’s instrument roles.

**Scene VII**

Scene six transitions to scene seven in the moments after the judge consumes the potion and disappears. The ensuing chaos shown by all characters frantically searching the room for the judge is paired with percussion one, three, and four using whistles and log drums. A central theme Westlake explores throughout the entire work pairs the action of frantically searching throughout scenery with log drums, and the chaotic yelling of the characters with siren and police whistles demonstrated in Figure 8.13. The role of percussion two is not only to provide rhythmic stability, but also to add to the uncertainty of what occurred on screen by chromatically moving up and down the marimba bringing chaos to the harmonic motion.
Scene seven begins at measure 329 in the music when the wizard turns the scene to a black backdrop, to which the characters respond with more frantic motions and fear. In the final moments of the work, the wizard casts a spell on the characters turning them into vegetables. He then splashes the potion on the vegetables and they begin to disappear. However, Westlake does not follow the usual protocol using similar instruments for the disappearing sequence. Instead, Westlake uses dynamic energy to represent the characters disappearing from the scene. The marimbas then switch instrument roles from providing rhythmic foundation to playing a melodic ascending chromatic line prolonging the disappearing sequence shown in Figure 8.14. In previous disappearing sequences, the slide whistle has completed the action with one ascending glissando. In this last sequence, Westlake expands this idea rhythmically and
harmonically by assigning this instrument disappearing role to the marimbas and expanding the length of the ascending chromatic line previously heard in slide whistle, signaling the end of the work.

Figure 8.14 Final disappearing sequence

**Performance Suggestions**

The performance of *The Invisible Men* is a large undertaking in many aspects including equipment logistics, ensemble rehearsal, technology navigation, player preparation, and ensemble equipment orientation. It is the goal of this performance suggestion section to aid in the areas listed above with emphasis in ensemble equipment orientation, which may be the most challenging aspect with exception to executing the overall performance of the work.
Because this work requires pairing live music with a film, it is suggested that the ensemble members use the click track provided with in-ear headphones to perform the work. The click track provided with the score also includes occasional measure numbers as a fail safe in the event that an ensemble member becomes lost in performance. A drawback to this performance suggestion may be the ensemble members’ ability to accurately balance and blend the textures, in part due to the in-ear click track preventing the musicians from accessing their full potential to hear other members of the ensemble. A possible solution to this limitation is to use microphones and run the amplified signal through the headphones with the click track.

The diagram in Figure 8.15 is a suggested ensemble equipment orientation. This diagram does not include small portable instruments, but only the largest instruments. Mounted instruments can be easily placed between instruments with enough space to include music stands and headphone cords.
The previous ensemble equipment orientation suggests that player three and four are both seated to allow for equal access to the concert toms. Sharing the concert toms can allow for a reduced ensemble set-up size and increase ensemble communication between players three and four. In the event that concert toms cannot be arranged for player three to play comfortably, the above diagram also suggests where two additional concert toms may be placed for player four. This arrangement reduces the total number of instruments allowing for a more condensed set-up. It is also important to point out this suggested equipment orientation allows for player two to share the timpani with player four, as long as a travel space is maintained between the highest timpani and the higher range of player two’s marimba. Another important issue to consider is the type of headphone monitoring system with particular attention paid to the placement of...
headphone cords. It is suggested that a headphone amplifier be placed in a centralized location between the marimbas and glockenspiel so that headphone cords can be organized in such a way that allows for player one to travel between marimba and timpani, as well as player four to move between his or her seated set-up and timpani. To completely avoid this logistical issue, it is suggested that a wireless headphone monitoring system be employed to avoid cord-tangling issues. In an interview with the author, Westlake made suggestions for ensembles preparing The Invisible Men for performance:

It would be good to have a conductor as someone to supervise the rehearsals and I think the first performance all players had ear pieces with a click track and the click track has a bar count as well, so if you get lost you can find your way back in. It would probably be better to have just the conductor use the click track and all the other players just being guided by the conductor. So the players would be free to move around and not be tied down by an earpiece with an annoying click in it. The best approach would be to just get the music sitting right first technically and get everyone comfortable with his or her parts, and then work on the sync with the film. I imagine that might be a good approach for that. Initially, just treat as a regular percussion work and get the notes right, and get the transitions right, and get the balance right, and then put it with the picture.\footnote{Nigel Westlake. Interview with the Kevin Estes. Skype interview. Columbus, OH, October 23rd, 2013.}

Additionally, it is suggested that prior to the first rehearsal with the conductor, each member of the ensemble spend a significant amount of time watching the film and studying the score to build a deep knowledge of transitions and scene sections. This will also aid in understanding individual roles within the ensemble knowing for what and whom to listen. The diagram below includes a suggested set-up when the use of a conductor is employed.
The above set-up allows for player two to share the timpani with player four, however the distance traveled around the xylophone may cause travel issues. It is then suggested that the xylophone be moved to the other side of player two’s marimba. Additionally, players three and four would be seated so that the concert toms can be shared. From a seated position, players three and four may encounter visual obstructions with the conductor from a music stand or timpani. It is therefore suggested that the conductor use a raised podium so that all ensemble members can clearly view the conductor. Furthermore, the placement of the screen showing the footage versus the
location of the ensemble may have an impact on the audience’s overall experience. In an effort to avoid unwanted distractions from the movement of the percussionists, it is suggested to place the screen in front of the ensemble blocking the audience’s view of the ensemble members. This allows for additional lighting for the ensemble instruments and travel paths, making the execution of the work more approachable. This suggestion also reduces any distractions the conductor may create for the audience from cueing or general conducting patterns. In the best scenario, an orchestra pit that is large enough to accommodate the instruments will provide the best visual experience for the audience.

Assuming that *The Invisible Men* would be part of a larger concert program, using the orchestra pit will allow for additional pieces to be set on stage preventing logistical issues ensembles may encounter when programming other works in the same performance.

In addition to the previous suggested ensemble equipment orientation diagrams, the image below suggests another possibility for a condensed equipment organization. The suggested ensemble orientation, seen below in Figure 8.17, places the two marimbas in close proximity so that players one and two face each other. This allows for optimal chamber communication between players and reduces the overall size of the entire ensemble set-up. This equipment orientation also allows for optimal communication between all players when needed.
Additionally, players three and four must navigate several instruments each requiring a specific equipment organization. There are many options for organizing these intricate equipment stations, however it is suggested that performers use the suggested set-up shown in Figure 8.18 for players three and four. This condensed set-up requires player three to move to player four’s equipment area for the tom tom’s when needed.
Figure 8.18 Suggested equipment set-up for player three (left) and player four (right) courtesy of Joseph Krygier and The Ohio State University percussion ensemble

From a seated position, player three can access all instruments required of the part except tom toms, which are located in player four’s equipment area. Using multiple striking implements, varying the striking area, and substituting plastic temple blocks for wood blocks, player three can achieve the best possible tones with minimal implement changes.

From a standing position, player four can access all instruments required of their part. Using multiple music stands as trap tables and positioning many of the instruments in close proximity to the tom toms, player four can navigate the required sounds with ease. It is also suggested that all players wear the required whistles around their neck to reduce choreography and free up space on trap tables.
CHAPTER 9 PENGUIN CIRCUS

History and Evolution

Nominated in 1993 by the Australian Recording Industry Association for best film soundtrack, *Antarctica* was developed as an IMAX feature film that explores the habitat, animal life, landscape, and general ecology of the continent Antarctica. This would be the first of five IMAX films Westlake would score music for in collaboration with director John Weiley. In an interview with John Meyer, Westlake discussed the wishes of the director for this initial film scoring opportunity:

He was looking for a score that was a little more on edge than your average documentary score. He wanted something that stood up and barked a bit. He fashioned me in a way to write music that I would never have written, had he not taken me under his wing. That score, I look back now, is very elemental, its very basic, but in a way it had to be because the medium of IMAX is so overwhelming it actually requires very simple ideas. The orchestration is very raw in a way because I hadn’t done much orchestration at that stage, but I think he had wanted that anyways - a very earthy and raw approach to orchestration, many percussion elements predominating.\(^\text{113}\)

Resembling the foley type writing of his work *The Invisible Men*, Westlake uses the music to support a comical, yet playful scene between the penguins. In an interview with Gary France, Westlake commented on *Penguin Circus* discussing some details about the work and its important role in the overall film score of *Antarctica*:

---
Well, that section of the score (*Penguin Circus*) came about because we needed some comic relief in the midst of a very serious scientific documentary. The penguins put on a bit of a show for the cameras, jumping into the water, stealing rocks from each others nests, waddling around and so forth. And I decided to support these antics with a very slapstick, incredibly corny, ‘cartoon hack-style’ circus track using xylophones, flexatones, duck calls, wobble boards and so on. To my eternal embarrassment, this piece has gone on to have a life of its own outside of the movie. I cringe whenever I hear it, but I think kids especially get something from playing it. I never really intended for it to become so popular.\textsuperscript{114}

Although the music is simple and is primarily performed by youth school percussion ensembles, it requires eight percussionists and some specific percussion equipment. The score lists the instruments needed by part, which are indicated below:

\textit{Player 1 (FX)}
- Swanee whistle
- Duck call
- Pots and pans
- Finger snaps
- Mouth clicks
- Bike horn
- Kids’ toy
- Guiro
- Wood blocks
- Sampled brass band

\textit{Player 2 (Whistles)}
- Siren
- Samba whistle
- Train whistle
- Bike horn

\textit{Player 3}
- Flexitone

\textit{Player 4}
- Wood blocks

\textit{Player 5}
- Chromatic cowbells or xylophone or other tuned/sampled percussion instrument

\textit{Player 6}
- Xylophone

Player 7
Kit including snare, splash cymbal, crash cymbal, and kick drum
Player 8
Bass

Westlake discussed aspects of *The Invisible Men* and *Penguin Circus*:

All the physical attributes on the screen reflected in a kind of cartoony way musically. They are very similar in that regard. I am a bit amazed that *Penguin Circus* exists as a piece because it was written very much as a joke. It is a beautiful film and quite serious and we thought we definitely needed to break up all the scientific narrative and all the serious tone of the film with something a bit amusing. And the best way to do that seemed to be to kind of underscore the penguins with a circus approach. And so what I wrote I never thought would exist beyond the film.115

Analysis

Lasting only two minutes, *Penguin Circus* has three sections of material that are repeated, surrounded by an introduction and end with a coda, which are outlined in the formal structure shown in Table 9.1. This analysis includes musical themes, musical form, and player roles in the ensemble.

---

115 Nigel Westlake. Interview with Kevin Estes. Skype interview. Columbus, OH, October 23rd, 2013.
Westlake employs a quasi rudimental-style, which is first heard in the drum kit solo at the beginning of the work resembling a circus-like march. Similar to many of Westlake’s works, this intermediate level work builds rhythmic tension by using silent space as a means of prolonging a rhythmic cadence. He employs this technique in the first three bars of the work in the opening snare drum solo seen in Figure 9.1.

![Figure 9.1 Penguin Circus opening snare drum solo](image)

Table 9.1 *Penguin Circus* formal structure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Measure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1 - 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>6 - 18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>19 - 29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III</td>
<td>30 - 45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II’</td>
<td>46 - 58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II’</td>
<td>59 - 62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coda</td>
<td>62 - 65</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 9.1 Penguin Circus formal structure*
Silent space is used to accent the end of phrases or develop a rhythmic cadence throughout the whole work. As the work progresses, Westlake develops ideas in the music through melodic parts such as cowbell, pots and pans, and xylophone. An example of this can be seen through section one every two bars until measure 18, demonstrated in Figure 9.2.

The work is also structured so that the ensemble has a supporting rhythm section, which includes bass and drum kit. This is then paired with melodic instruments and supporting sound effects. While the bass and drum kit players provide a simple rhythmic foundation, players one and four create the majority of the melodic content with some
sound effect interjections from other players. However, at measure 14 the ensemble roles change and player five creates the melodic material while player one moves to a foley sound effect role.

Player five contributes the first melodic phrase on cowbells at measure 19, the beginning of section two. Westlake again pairs this melodic content with sound effects from player one and supported by the rhythm section. The first entrance of the xylophone marks the end of section two with a transition from the flexitone to section three. It is worth mentioning that the acoustic sounds scored at times may not reflect what is heard in the film score soundtrack recording. For example, the sound scored as flexitone is actually a wobble board sound effect in the film. Although the flexitone can still capture the comical atmosphere of the work, it may be worth exploring additional sounds to capture this effect from the film.

The third section of the work is without the rhythm section, which the listener may have grown accustomed to by this point. Westlake switches this role to player four using wood blocks. This dilutes the texture a bit and provides more room for musical exchange between the performers. The exchange lasts nine bars before the kit player begins a variation of the work’s solo introduction. Westlake expands the rhythmic cells of this introduction by including the rhythm of the previous melodic theme heard in the cowbells shown in Figure 9.3.
The recapitulation of section two begins at measure 46 with the xylophone contributing the melodic material supported by the rhythm section. Throughout the entire section, there are no supporting sounds or sound effects. All players remain tacet from this point on until the coda, which begins at measure 62. The splash cymbal in the coda resembles penguins diving into the water one at a time in the film. All penguins vanish from the screen and a sampled brass fanfare sounds indicating that the penguins have completed performing comical acrobatics.

**Performance Suggestions**

*Penguin Circus* is capable of performance by a youth intermediate percussion ensemble, although there are some instrument substitutions that may be required. Its generally uncommon for youth ensembles to have access to an entire set of tuned cowbells, therefore it is suggested that player five substitute tuned cowbells for a second xylophone or other mallet instrument played in a high range. Westlake also writes for two un-pitched cowbells played by player five, which can be placed in front of the xylophone slightly overlapping the upper manual of the keyboard. This will allow for player five to perform measures 14 and 15, which require the performer to play both cowbell and xylophone in the same phrase.
Player one must navigate a large assortment of sound effects including a sampled brass sound effect in the final moment of the work. To perform these effects, it is suggested that player one use a digital input product such as a *Roland Handsonic*. Although the texture is thin at measure 12 and 13, the finger snaps and mouth clicks may not be able to compete with the volume of the drum set and bass player, therefore these sounds may need to be electronically produced or amplified. It is also suggested that player one program other sound effects to be performed electronically to ease logistical requirements. This will help avoid player position changes, or mallet changes inherent from the acoustic performance option. In the event that a bass player is not available, this sound can also be produced electronically using a keyboard synthesizer.

Figure 9.4 indicates a suggested ensemble set-up that allows for the ensemble to be in clear communication with a conductor, which may be needed for performance by a youth ensemble. This particular instrument organization also allows for an ensemble to perform without a conductor due to its open inward facing orientation.
Figure 9.4 Suggested ensemble instrument orientation
CHAPTER 10 CONCLUSION

For over thirty years Australian native Nigel Westlake has composed music for film, orchestra, mixed chamber ensemble, circus, radio, television, percussion solo and chamber works. His compositions reach a wide range of audiences across the globe in theatres and performance halls alike. Although his complete list of works warrants research, this document focuses on Westlake’s percussion works including *Kalabash*, *Omphalo Centric Lecture*, *Moving Air*, *The Invisible Men*, *Penguin Circus*, *Malachite Glass*, *Fabian Theory*, and *The Hinchinbrook Riffs*. Bringing attention to all of Westlake’s percussion works gives insight to his compositional process from 1984 to 2009.

In a professional role as a clarinetist, Westlake began receiving commissions for chamber works and film scores balancing performing and composing. Later he would focus primarily on composition, however in this early period Westlake composed his first percussion work *Omphalo Centric Lecture*, which developed the foundation for a professional 30 year career in composition. In response to his success with *Omphalo Centric Lecture*, Westlake composed another marimba quartet inspired from African balafon music known as *Kalabash* while in residency at Australian National University.
During the period from the mid to late 1980’s, Westlake composed *Fabian Theory* and *Moving Air*, which were both commissioned from Australian percussion group Synergy. *Fabian Theory* is one of Westlake’s most popular works, traversing solo marimba with concert toms and digital delay and *Moving Air* employs the use of pre-recorded tape. Westlake would use digital delay again with his second solo marimba work, *The Hinchinbrook Riffs*. Originally written for guitar, *The Hinchinbrook Riffs* was created in the 1970’s when Westlake was exploring music with his garage band Eggs Benedict. Another commission from this period includes *Malachite Glass*, which Westlake composed for Synergy and himself to perform using bass clarinet.

The IMAX film *Australia* was Westlake’s first large scale film score released in 1991. To provide comic relief for the serious tone of the film, Westlake composed *Penguin Circus*, which employs foley-type sound effects that are matched with comical antics of penguins. Similarly in 1996 Synergy Percussion commissioned Westlake to write *The Invisible Men*, which is a silent film performed with live percussion ensemble.

The close examination of these work found in this document serve to provide a deeper understanding of Westlake’s compositional approach and offer a useful resource for the preparation and performance of his works. Further study of these works may include a deeper understanding of the harmonic development and its use amongst his pitched percussion music. Additionally, one may consider expanding the research of Westlake’s music to include the use of percussion in other genres such as mixed chamber and orchestral works.
SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The examination of Nigel Westlake’s eight percussion works found in this document yield analytical information pertaining to his compositional approach for percussion. Additionally, Westlake has composed music across several mediums including film, orchestra, and mixed chamber ensemble. Examining these works may lead to a broader understanding of Westlake’s compositional approach to percussion.

In his most recent orchestral song cycle titled *Compassion*, Westlake approaches the orchestral percussion section as a chamber ensemble in conjunction with the vocal soloist. A closer examination of this work may include Westlake’s approach to the orchestral percussion section and yield new compositional methods. Additionally, further examination of the use of percussion in his orchestral work *Missa Solis Requiem for Eli* may lead to similar findings.

Furthermore, Westlake’s extensive chamber music catalogue includes works for percussion and a multitude of other instrumentalists including clarinet, violin, soprano sax, bass clarinet, guitar, and piano. Detailed research of these works may reveal new insight to his use of percussion in mixed chamber settings including the use of electronic effects beyond a solo capacity.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Westlake, Nigel. Interview Sydney Symphony promotional interview video. www.sydeynsymphony.com


Westlake, Nigel. Interview with Kevin Estes. Skype interview. Columbus, OH, October 23rd, 2013.

Westlake, Nigel. Interview with Kevin Estes. Skype interview. Columbus, OH, January 3rd, 2014.
APPENDIX A:

Interview with Nigel Westlake

Evolution of Nigel Westlake’s Works for Percussion

October 23rd, 2013
KE: I thought I could start with telling you the direction of the paper so far. What I would like to do is complete a biographical outline. I was also thinking I could focus primarily on all of your percussion works... *Fabian Theory, The Hinchinbrook Riffs, Omphalo, Kalabash, Penguin Circus, Malachite, Invisible Men*, and *Moving Air*.

NW: Wow...

KE: I know it sounds like a lot. I would like to present all of your works to the percussion community so studios that perform *Omphalo* and *Kalabash* will also consider performing *Fabian Theory*, and might consider doing *Invisible Men*. And then for each one, I would provide a brief synopsis, brief analysis, and include performance suggestions. Does that seem like an ok direction? Or were you thinking about something else?

NW: That sounds like a great idea! It sounds like a big job!

KE: I thought I would focus on just a few pieces at first. I just couldn’t choose between your works with film score or solo works or ensemble works. So I thought I would just do all of them! (NW: & KE: laughs)

KE: When I present the works, I would like to categorize them. The Percussion Ensemble category would include *Moving Air, Kalabash, and Omphalo*... The Solo category would include *Fabian Theory* and *The Hinchinbrook Riffs*.... and the Film Score category would include *Penguin Circus* and *The Invisible Men*... Then I was curious about *Malachite Glass*?

KE: How do you categorize *Malachite Glass*? Is it a mixed chamber piece or percussion ensemble?

NW: I guess its kind of a mixture of both categories. I think of it usually as a percussion piece, because it was written for a percussion ensemble, and I just included myself as a performer playing the bass clarinet. Yes, I do think of it as a percussion ensemble piece with bass clarinet.

KE: Can you discuss your creative process for composition when you returned from Holland in 1983?

NW: Your going back 30 years which is probably before you were born I'm guessing... (laughs) [KE: Yes it was.. (laughs)]
So I will do my best to remember. I went to Holland primarily to study contemporary bass clarinet techniques with the great, Harry Sparnaay. That was a very inspirational time; it was just 6 months or so of very intense period of learning and absorbing that repertoire. Harry was well known at that time as a leading exponent of contemporary music and promoter of works for bass clarinet; having commissioned many hundreds of them himself and from composers all over the world. It was very formative to work with him and see his enthusiasm for new work. It was very infectious, and at that time I wasn't writing much music myself. I considered dabbling in composition just for my own pleasure. I was using composition really as a way of becoming more involved in the music I was performing as a musician. In other words, as a tool to get inside the composers head to kind of find out what it is like to write a piece of music, so that then I could take that knowledge and use it in my performance. I wasn't really taking it at all seriously and even though I had some composition lessons with Theo Leovendie in Holland, who's work I very much admire, he was kind enough to take me on as a novice and show me some stuff. And when I got back to Australia, I just kept dabbling and I got an invitation by some friends of mine, who were playing in this percussion quartet called Synergy, to write a work and that's were Omphalo Centric Lecture came from. And it (Omphalo) began as a trio for bass clarinet and two percussionists... two marimbas. Very soon after that, Synergy asked me to rearrange that trio for four marimbas and that's where that piece comes from. That was my first serious attempt at composition and I call it my Opus 1. To my great delight, its a piece that still gets played and that was the piece that launched this sort of vague notion that I might be able to pursue composition on some level. Even though it was quite a few years until I pursued it full time. I still kept mucking around and kept getting invitations to write for radio and theatre and, bit by bit, for television and various other concert groups. And the more I got into it, the more I kind of liked the process and thought I should study it more and get better technically informed, which is something that I am constantly working on. So Omphalo Centric Lecture is the start of any notion of a career as a composer. And these days I haven't played the clarinet for quite a few years and have been focusing 100% on composition; and more recently on conducting especially orchestral conducting of my own works.

KE: I was wondering how did Omphalo evolve from the trio to a marimba quartet? What was that process compositionally?

NW: Two of the members of the main member of Synergy were really great marimba players and they inspired me to write in the style that was technically quite challenging. The bass clarinet was used very percussively in the original version and I do recall there was slap tonguing and rhythmically driving material that I was able to translate to the other marimba parts, when I made that original quartet arrangement. It was really just a matter of substituting the bass clarinet part with marimba, and expanding on the form of the piece making it longer and introducing the log drums. It's really tough to be more specific then that because it was so long ago. I would have to track the piece down and have a look at it.
KE: I was curious because the trio version idea seems so far from the quartet version.

NW: It was really a perfect scenario for work-shopping ideas that gave me some really good ideas to form the quartet that you know and have played.

KE: Around the same time you composed *Onomatopoeia*. And that piece uses significant extended techniques such as slap tonguing?

NW: Yea! That piece was written after my time in Holland and... It's funny, I spent all this time really working very hard at this contemporary repertoire and a lot of it wasn't really nice to listen to (NW: laughs), which is what my partner Janice kept telling me. It was very cutting edge like Louis Andriessen that was kind of very complexitus, intellectual approach. And I thought wouldn't it be great to take this multi-phonics and circular breathing and all those techniques, and create something that was actually kind of nice to listen to (NW: laughs). So it was kind of a bit of a sell out, maybe, but that's when I created Onomatopoeia. And I did publish that work for a while and I heard other people play it but they never quite got it... somehow... and I ended up withdrawing it from the catalogue because I realized it was really more of a performance piece that I had written for myself. Even though it was all notated it was semi-improvised, and the events kind of occur freely, each within the context of each performance. I found that whenever I heard it played by anyone else, they just didn't get the whole piece. It didn't make much sense so I ended up with drawing it. I did perform a lot it for a little while and it was through that piece that Michael Askill heard Onomatopoeia and he asked me to write a piece for him, and that's where Fabian Theory comes from. And it was from Fabian Theory and Onomatopoeia that I got asked to write another work using delay that is called The Hinchinbrook Riffs. I'm not sure if you are aware but that was originally written for guitar. And so if you look at if from the viewpoint of a guitarist, its actually quite player friendly and uses a lot of open strings and it tries to capitalize on the resonance of the guitar. Rebecca Lagos, the principal percussionist from the Sydney Symphony, suggested that it would make a great marimba piece and so I did an arrangement for her to play and that's how that evolved. And so Fabian Theory and The Hinchinbrook Riffs have their origins in Onomatopoeia.... In a sense...

KE: When I first heard *Onomatopoeia*, my initial reaction was almost jealousy because I did not play clarinet... (NW: laughs... oh really?) I just thought it was just such a great piece and I could see how Michael Askill would want you to compose a piece like *Fabian Theory* for him.

NW: Thanks Kevin that's very kind of you!

KE: Sure! Another thing that came to mind when I was listening to all of your works, especially with *Onomatopoeia*, is when did you decide that you would explore
the idea of using delay? When was that moment when you actually picked up the technology and thought maybe I can do something with this?

NW: You know that goes back quite a bit further when I was a teenager and I was experimenting with what we call garage rock bands. This particular band I had used to transcribe music and Frank Zappa and John McLaughlin, which was quite challenging stuff. And we were all really into electronics. Even as the saxophone and clarinet player, I had a pick-up, which was plugged into phase shifters, flangers, delay systems, and reverbs; and so I have always been interested in that stuff. I had an old Roland Space Echo, which is one of those old tape loop things, which had actual tape in it, which I don't know if you have ever seen? [KE: I have not... (laughs)] NW: Yea... probably not (laughs) I always loved that stuff and always mucked around with it. And I guess when Roland first came out with that digital delay SDE series, I couldn't believe it! And the fact that it had continuous loop function was just a dream come true. I used to just jam with it and mucked around and locked myself away. I just set-up loops and improvised and those pieces just grew from just mucking around really...

KE: At any point through your exploration had you ever considered composing any of these pieces without delay? Would it be something totally different without the delay?

NW: It would yes... I can't imagine Onomatopoeia without it. You would have to have a clarinet ensemble, but that would be so difficult to perform... I can't imagine. Recently, some friends of mine have adapted Hinchinbrook Riffs for two guitars without delay. They are both playing the same notes but one guy plays it a bit later. And it actually works quite well! And you could actually do that with marimba to come to think of it. That's an interesting concept but I think because Onomatopoeia and probably Fabian Theory are so reliant on the loop function, I don't know how that would go without delay and without that electronic component. It would be interesting to try, but my instincts would be to stick with the electronics. But Hinchinbrook Riffs works quite well without it. They actually recorded an album and its pretty good!

KE: I know you have received many questions about the technology required to perform Fabian Theory and your website has great tips about how to prepare and perform the work. I was curious if you had a favorite way in which the piece is performed?

NW: You know Kevin I know it gets played a lot because we get a lot of orders for the music and people write to me saying I included it in my recital and it went really well. But you know I haven't heard it played live in so many years, so I can't really say that I have heard any other version other than they original, which was done with one of those old Roland delays with the loop pedal that makes the click. You are probably in a better place than me for kind of advising on the best technique to perform that work.
KE: Is there a possible way that you know of to perform the work without a foot switch?

NW: I have heard of people pre-recording the loop in just a simple computer program and then somehow triggering it at the right time. That's probably an interesting way of doing it, having the loop continuously going ready to be used on cue. I don't know? That would seem like a sensible approach. But then again I'm not even sure what's on the market these days in terms of delays. I know they are pretty sophisticated. I'm sure you would able to advise on that?

KE: In a previous interview you had mentioned that as long as the performer captures the essence of the music you didn't mind how or what technology the performer used. Do you still feel that way about it?

NW: Oh sure! I know that percussionists are very resourceful and all have different ways of doing stuff. It's very interesting to see the different creative approaches people bring to such issues in the music. The delay system the piece was written for just doesn't even exist anymore, so you have to find another way.

KE: Yes I tried to find it myself and I could not find one anywhere.

NW: You might find one in a museum somewhere. [KE: & NW: laughs]

NW: So you have to reinvent the idea... the piece has to be adapted to the new technology available.

KE: I was thinking that there was a possible solution to create a sort of interactive click track. Where the looping is pre-recorded so that the effects are timed.

NW: That's also very possible. I haven't written any delay pieces lately, so I'm not exactly sure how to approach but as you say there are many ways of tackling the technology issue.

KE: Speaking of pre-recorded tapes, did you also compose Moving Air in the same year as Fabian Theory?

NW: I think I did... They were pretty close together. That was written for a specific event for a Synergy concert. And I think there was talk amongst the group that they wanted a sort of expanded sound world that used electronics and something they could interact with. I listened to them talk about their wish list for a new a work and tried to take that onboard in the writing of Moving Air. And I accessed a pretty basic collection, at that time, of percussion samples that I had on an old emulator.... that's another museum piece.... [KE: & NW: laughs] That was a great American invention and it was such a cool thing when it came out. It had this little floppy disk thing in the front and I had
boxes of floppy disks with all sorts of samples. It was by far the best sounding thing at that time. And so I created the backing track using emulator technology. That was kind of fun! And to my surprise that piece still gets played and that’s great.

KE: That piece stands out to me from all the other pieces. Mostly because I feel that a lot of your pieces remind me of creation of nature-like sounds similar to Entomology or give me some sort of visual representation like The Hinchinbrook Riffs. But, with this piece the sounds are mechanical or industrial like slamming car doors and breaking glass. Why did you sort of lean in the direction of this sort of industrial sound?

NW: The best answer I can give is I probably got out my emulator and put in this floppy disk of percussion sounds and just loved it and thought... Wow! Lets use this! That’s probably what started it!

KE: It fits so well with the instrumentation. And I was wondering what came first. Was it the pre-recorded sounds, or was it the instruments? What was the process of composing the work?

NW: I think I set out to write something kind of loud and brash, that wouldn’t wear out its welcome, and people could get involved with and have fun with for a brief moment in time. Synergy has a huge warehouse space that’s filled with all sorts of instruments. I guess I wanted something with impact and industrial seemed to be the way to go with that one. And was a departure from previous explorations so... why not? Usually, I just start writing something and I don't analyze it too much. I try to get absorbed by the process and just have some fun with it and don't over intellectualize about it. I probably didn't think too much about it and was probably just drawn to those sounds and wanted something fast and loud. It was so long ago I can't really call many specifics about it.

KE: No, that is fine. When I was thinking about categorizing these pieces these are the sorts of questions that come to mind. I was also trying to come up with new questions different from interviews you have already done about the works to find out more about their origins.

NW: Oh sure! I did actually write some music for a documentary with the lead percussionist from Synergy, Michael Askill. It was a four-part documentary about the influence of China on the western world. And there is a section of the documentary that dealt with contemporary China and its industrial aspects, and I wrote this really aggressive nasty kind of industrial piece very percussive called New Born Rap? Again it was generated through an emulator sound world and probably used quite a bit of the same sample that Moving Air does. And was also written around the same time Moving Air was and may have been an influence.
KE: Let's move on to *Malachite Glass*. I love this piece! There's something really unique about this piece. In many of your works you have a driving ostinato rhythm and the melodic content is performed on a marimba, which does not sustain for very long. And I think the collaboration between bass clarinet and percussion works so well!

NW: Oh thank you Kevin! Again this was in response to Omphalo Centric Lecture. Synergy asked me to write another Omphalo Centric Lecture but include myself this time, which would be with bass clarinet. So, its sort of harmonically a bit more adventurous then Omphalo Centric Lecture. And sort of embraces a wider kind of form with the slower movement in the middle. I did find myself kind of diverting a bit from the minimalist language of Omphalo, and becoming more adventurous with my ideas. And again I was pretty caught up with writing a virtuosic piece for the bass clarinet. Something that was challenging to play that would kind of plug into my previous experience since I had done a bit of studying in sort of cutting edge repertoire. And it tries to cover that ground. Have you played it?

KE: I have not played it yet. But I have heard my professors play it and I believe they are programming it again soon! And you had mentioned that Synergy commissioned you for this work. When they commissioned you for these works was it a group collaborative process or where you the sole creator of the works?

NW: It wasn't really. There is a system in Australian where you can apply for government grants to commission a new work. Its no large amount of money by any means, but it just means once you accept the commission, you are locked in to deliver it on certain days. And they still, to this day, have a very vigorous commissioning program where they invite composers to contribute to their repertoire. So I think they generally leave it up to the composers to work on their own, and perhaps consult about instrumentation. They specified what sort of instrument set-up they were going to have, and the repertoire that the particular concert was going to involve. After the first rehearsal, I think we might have made a few adjustment to the score, in terms of what was playing, and instrument set-ups, and be sure we weren't being to ambitious with any of the players playing to many instruments or changing sticks. I pretty much wrote all those pieces left to my own devices.

KE: I was just curious to ask you about the commissioning process because Synergy had commissioned you so much if it was a collaborative process or if it was just you.

NW: That’s very much what it was. Me just walking up with the score and kind of saying, “here it is guys.”

KE: In 1991 you composed the film score for *Antarctica* and part of that film score is *Penguin Circus*. Are there similarities in how you paired the footage in *Penguin Circus*.
**Circus with Invisible Men?** Did you use the same approach for those two pieces even though they are extremely different?

NW: They both fall into the category of the same slap-stick scoring. All the physical attributes on the screen are reflected in a kind of cartoony way musically. They are very similar in that regard. I am a bit amazed that Penguin Circus exists as a piece because it was written very much as a joke. It is a beautiful film, and quite serious, and we thought we definitely needed to break up all the scientific narrative and all the serious tone of the film with something a bit amusing. And the best way to do that seemed to be to kind of underscore the penguins with a circus approach. And so what I wrote I never thought would exist beyond the film.

KE: Do you think it would be possible for a youth ensemble to perform it in a similar fashion as Invisible Men with the footage of the Penguins?

NW: I do actually! Yes, I think could work quite well! I know it is played as a stand-alone piece by school ensembles, but I don't think they use the footage. I think it would probably make more sense with the footage, but you would have to sort out the synchronization with the picture, create a click track, and maybe use a conductor. That would be an interesting project; unfortunately I'm not attached to the music enough to do that.

KE: I can understand that would be a big undertaking to set-up the tracking and timing for everything.

NW: Its not that big of a job, I just don't really see the musical marriage in that.

KE: In the same vain so to say, how did you pick the instruments for Invisible Men? How did you approach picking the instruments to represent the action? For example, the whistles that represent ‘yelling’, or the flex-atones that represent disappearing?

NW: Well, again I guess... just as I was writing the work, I was mocking it up using samples and a sequence system. I think I just experimented so I wrote that score very much with the same approach as I would for a film. I was constantly watching the film. I think I was using digital performer at the time as a sequencer. And I think I was running that in sync with the picture, so I was constantly reviewing what I was writing as I was writing it, and looking at it with the image and seeing what fitted. I knew that I wanted it to be a very challenging work because I knew that Synergy Percussion, as are most percussionists, aren’t afraid to get their hands dirty with some very technical licks. And I knew it would be good to have two marimbas as a harmonic anchor for the whole work. And to sort of embellish that sound with all those other colors. So it was very much a trial and error process and also probably talking to Synergy going about what
instruments they were going to be using for that particular concert and find out what they would like to be playing probably had a role in that as well.

KE: After reviewing the score and watching the film I can tell it is a very large challenge. I have seen it performed but that was a few years ago and that’s why I asked you for a video that you would have because I couldn't remember the video.

NW: That video I sent is the original video mock up that I created when I was writing the piece. Once I had done that, I then notated the whole thing and tried to work out the logistics. When I look back at the score now, there is probably a little room for improvement. [NW: laughs] In terms of distributions of instruments and stickings. I was probably a little bit cruel, but again it does get played a bit, which is great!

KE: What sort of advice would you give to the performers? Or what sort of advice would you give to a teacher working to prepare this piece for performance?

NW: I imagine that it would be good to have a conductor as someone to supervise the rehearsals. And I think the first performance all players had earpieces with a click track. The click track has a bar count as well so if you get lost you can find your way back in. It would be probably be better to have just the conductor use the click track and all the other players just being guided by the conductor so the players would be free to move around and not be tied down by an earpiece with an annoying click in it. The best approach would be to just get the music sitting right first technically, and get everyone comfortable with his or her parts, and then work on the sync with the film. I imagine that might be a good approach for that. Initially, just treat as a regular percussion work and get the notes right, and get the transitions right, and get the balance right, and then put it with the picture.

KE: I haven't yet had a chance to go through the process myself yet but I imagine that would be a great way to prepare the piece.

NW: I imagine so... I've never actually supervised the playing of that piece but I imagine that might be a good approach... Perhaps you can let me know (laughs NW and KE).

KE: I have read in previous interviews that you have had some influence from African balafon music and your friend, Greg Sheehan, had a large influence with this. Was there any particular recordings or rhythms or places or anything that you can remember, which was really inspirational for that shuffle groove for Kalabash?

NW: I've got various ethnological CD's of African Balafon music. I think there is one that was recorded in Angola and I think its called music from the Angolan border and there are a few others as well. When I would ever go and visit Greg, at the time Omphalo was written, he had dozens of old LP’s of all sorts of African stuff and he would always picks something out and play it. And without remembering any titles, I just kind
of absorbed. And when I first heard it I thought, “that’s where the marimba comes from! And wow that makes so much sense! How could you even think of writing anything in a different style for the marimba?” It just seemed to be so at home with that use of repetition and kind of funky rhythmic approach... shuffle approach... it just seemed to fit so well and I thought when I write for marimba, I'm really going to plug into that feel. And not sort of any kind of specific rip of a particular area or style of balafon playing, but just sort of a general approach and I wonder if that’s where this whole minimal things comes from in a way. Its one specific thing but really more of a general observation seems to me. It was something to take note of and use for future experiences in writing.

KE: Is there any other culture or styles of music that influenced your writing with percussion?

NW: I have to admit because of Australia's proximity to Indonesia, we have a bunch of rich percussion heritage to be found in the Island of Indonesia... particularly Bali where the gamelan is so popular there. I haven’t really studied it technically but I have been there several times and spent many hours listening to the incredible virtuosity of the Gamelan orchestras. The Balinese Gamelan is highly virtuosic, very integrated, and very structured; and it’s amazing how tightly these big ensembles can play and how they can start and finish together, its very exciting to hear. That’s probably been an influence, not in a specific way, its just something that when you hear such wonderful music its hard to not take something away from it. Sometimes you look back on pieces you have written and are wondering where stuff came from and you think "oh yea? I remember hearing something similar to that!" Even though I don't consciously set out to emulate or rip off ideas from my listening experiences, I think inevitably, they end up being absorbed in the language and find a way of revealing themselves in the work at some point or other.

KE: You have been asked a few times how you categorize yourself as a composer... aka Post modern, minimalist, or other do you have an idea of what that would be for you right now?

NW: Umm.... well... Gosh Kevin I don't know yet. The answer is No. I think my most recent work is a song cycle for orchestra and voice called Compassion. And we just finished recording with the Sydney Symphony and I'm just about to tour it through Australia conducting performances. Its written for a guy called Lior, who is a beautiful kind of indie pop folk singer. He has an amazing voice with a beautiful range, beautiful falsetto, and beautiful deep baritone as well. And it’s a very approachable work. I can send you a link as well because it contains some interesting percussion writing as well as part of the orchestration. There’s nothing cutting edge. Its pretty traditional in terms of its orchestration. It’s quite melodic and it’s a long work, about 42 minutes. I’m just telling you this because its a work I’m actually quite proud of. And its sort of in a way... some parts of it are quite romantic and other parts of it are really sort of percussion feel to them. I just do what I feel has to be done at the time and I don't try to categorize that
or put any labels on it. But I guess what I am trying to say is, I don't see myself as an innovator or cutting edge composer in the same way that a lot of other contemporary composers do. I’m more about communicating to the audience, about presenting ideas that I hope people will embrace and gain something from. And so this work, Compassion, really tries to address something specific emotionally. And its been getting a very good response from the performances we have done and that’s been a great journey. I like to think of myself as a communicator, if you'd like to put a label on it.

KE: I was pondering this questions because you compose in so many areas that its difficult to try to put it into words and the more and more I thought about it the less words I could come up with! (laughs NW and KE) So I think "communicator" is the best word because you can use it to describe your film scores or your orchestral works or percussion works.

KE: And lastly, when I was collecting materials for my research, I received a handwritten score of Entomology and its was published by Sounds Australia in 1990. And I was wondering if there is a difference in your approach to composition whether you are handwriting the music or if you are using some sort of technology to compose? Do the ideas come to you the same way or is it different?

NW: I guess the long answer to that is I’m self-taught as a composer. And I use whatever tools are available to me. I do tend to, as I spoke to you earlier about the process of writing Invisible Men, I do tend to mock up the works as they go electronically. And that hand written score would have been a hand written notation of an electronic file. So I would have written the music in the sequencer first and then transcribed it by hand. And the difference now is that I import the midi file into a transcription program. Like Sibelius and lay out the score like that. Entomology, I had all the samples, which I was triggering on the emulator, and then I was kind of working with the instruments as I was going and using the insects as additional percussion instruments and textures. The answer is no. The approach has always kind of been the same I think.

KE: I think I have a lot of great stuff to start with here! I will work on transcribing this interview and send it to you. And over the next few months I would love to schedule a follow up interview with you incase more questions come to mind. And I will begin writing the paper and send it to you to be sure that everything is correct and you are being portrayed the way you want to be in the document.

NW: Ok Kevin that sounds great! Sure! I would love to see what you have written and I appreciate you running that by me! It's been very nice talking to you. And thank you very much for your interest in the works! I wish you all the best!

KE: Thank you and thanks for your time! It’s been an honor to get to speak with you today. As a young musician sometimes you are just kind of given the music and
your told prepare this part for your performance you kind of forget that there is a
person behind all of those notes and all those ideas. And as I matured a little bit I
started having this yearning to want to meet you and some other composers. And I
am very happy that I am doing this and I am very honored that I got to speak with
you today.

NW: That's very kind Kevin, Thank you. I guess the thing about percussionists is most of
the composers are still alive, which is not really the case with violinists... (laughs) Well
great! Thanks again and I look forward to hearing from you soon.

KE: Thank you Nigel!

NW: All the best!
APPENDIX B:

Interview with Nigel Westlake

Selected Works of Nigel Westlake from 2006 – 2013

January 3rd, 2014
KE: I thought for today we could focus on your works from 2006 until now starting with your percussion concerto. I was wondering if you could discuss the evolution of this piece?

NW: To be honest I haven't heard the piece since I wrote it. I couldn't even be there at the premiere. I was in London at the time. It had three performances with the Sydney Symphony but unfortunately it hasn't been performed since. One reason is it has quite a large percussion set-up. It was premiered by Rebecca Lagos, principal percussionist for the Sydney Symphony, and I worked very closely with her developing the percussion part and involve quite a large orchestra.

KE: How did you come to organize the work into the two sections?

NW: I guess the first section does feature a lot of xylophone but it’s really more of a mixed percussion part for the soloist. And the second part is mainly marimba with some gongs and some singing bowls. The percussionist has one side of the stage set-up for part one and the other side of the stage is set-up for part two. Part one has a lot of jumping around between the instruments whereas part two is much more static and more focused on marimba.

KE: In the past you have said that when you are composing music you think a lot about the performer. I was wondering what you had in mind for Rebecca as the performer for this piece.

NW: She is a really great marimba player so I wanted to focus on that at least for some of the piece. It's very virtuosic, the xylophone parts is very... umm choppy you know... and having that resource of highly trained virtuosic player was kind of irresistible in terms of writing a very difficult part. It’s something that even she had to work on for quite a long time to get it right. I guess I thought that it really should be for a good part of it quite virtuosic... at that time at least. I found it very difficult to write a percussion concerto. I think I may revisit the piece and make some adjustments. It's hard to maintain the musical narrative throughout without it seeming to be a kind of novelty concerto because you have so many options of so many colors.

KE: Speaking of all the colors you chose to use, why did you chose to write a spring drum cadenza? I’m not sure I even know what that is?

NW: I’m wondering if it’s called anything else? She bought one from an established percussion supplier. It’s just a single head drum that has a spring attached to the head that comes through the body of the drum similar to a cuica but it’s a spring. So by
tapping the spring and rattling it around the head amplifies the sound... (KE: Oh! Does it sounds a little bit like thunder?) NW: Yea! On a small scale, it sounds like an old reverb spring. Its very light and its easily held and quite an interesting sound. And I thought while she was traveling from one set-up across the stage for part two she could actually make a theatrical thing of playing the spring drum while she walks. So it’s kind of a transitional idea.

KE: When I was reading the description of the work off your website I was very curious about that part and what it looked and sounded like.

NW: Yea sure! I just can't think of what else those things are called.

KE: I was also wondering in 2007 you have listed a lot of works that came out like Rare Sugar, The Glass Soldier, and Shards of Jaisalmer. Had you been working on all of these at the same time?

NW: I guess I had. In 2006 I was mainly in London doing the score for Miss Potter. I guess it was about 12 or 18 months of work that I was able to achieve in 7.

KE: Did you find it difficult to balance so many works at the same time? They sound so different but also so wonderful!

NW: Thanks Kevin! I really only do one thing at a time. Once I get into it I get pretty obsessed and absorbed by it and its difficult to transfer my energies into another piece so they are all done one at a time, not simultaneously at all. I guess there were a lot of opportunities there to write for particular musicians and particular projects and sometimes things come out a bit quicker and you can cover a bit more ground.

KE: The story of The Glass Soldier is very inspiring. I was wondering if you could describe that works evolution? Do you describe it as a tone poem, programmatic music, or like a symphonic suite?

NW: Its a symphonic suite but its also programmatic in that it follows the contour of Nelson Fergussons life, the glass soldier himself. And that was a lovely thing to work on because I was commission by Nelson's grandson, Don is his name, and he has become a very good friend. He came to me 12 years ago or so and told me this wonderful story and how he was hoping to commission me to write a film score for a film about his grandfather. Despite numerous attempts that didn't happen, but in the interim, he managed to get a well-known playwright to take on the story and create a play. His idea was that I would write a symphonic suite based on Nelson's life, or inspired by events in his life. And then that suite might then be used in the play and Don himself funded the commissioning and the recording of the suite. And while I was writing that I was working also with the playwright, Hannie Rayson was her name. And she would send me drafts as they were being developed and I kind of talked to her about how she saw the
music working in the context of the play. And we were kind of working on the music and the play together at the same time. So I was being inspired by what she was sending me and what Don was telling me about his grandfather constantly having to be aware that the music was going to be used as a stand-alone concert suite and also be used in the play. And that’s how it happened. I think there was a median supervisor that was attached to the theatre company who was able to take the orchestral recording and manipulate it to fit with sections of the play and that worked really well! The suite itself has been performed several times as a stand alone orchestral work. It was a really great thing to work on and I felt very honored to have the support of Don's family behind the commission. And it was an honor to be asked to take Nelson’s life and realize it and create a musical dedication to it.

KE: That sounds like a wonderful collaboration to create the work.

NW: Indeed. It was partially a collaborative process working with Don and Hannie.

KE: When I was listening to the work I was drawn to the second movement, the one that has the air raid sirens and the thunder sheets. And I was wondering how you used those sound effects in conjunction with the orchestral instruments to create this sort of battlefield atmosphere?

NW: Well, they are incorporated into the score. It’s quite a large percussion section, which includes actual sirens, and thunder sheets and empty gas cylinders. Or empty bomb cartridges, which they used to use on the battlefield as an air raid warning or gas warning. And so the idea was that these are set-up on the extremities of the percussion section so you get a sort of stereophonic effect. But all that stuff is played live when the piece is performed. It’s a loud cacophony as you might imagine.

KE: There are also parts of that second movement that reminds me of the music of Shostakovich, especially his Symphony no. 10. I was wondering if Shostakovich had any impact or inspiration for this work?

NW: Yea of course. I’m a huge fan of Shostakovich and as much as I don’t consciously try to emulate him, stuff often creeps in without me even being aware of it. In many ways The Glass Soldier suite is quite cinematic. It draws on the language of cinema music. I hear all sorts of things in there when I listen back to the work. There are kind of remnants of Holst in there, which of course has been a major influence for many film composers. When I was writing I was thinking, because you know Don originally wanted it to be a film score, so I think that was always in the back of my mind that it should be quite filmic and have that approachability and not to be overly threatening to an audience. Something that people could sort of jump into and imagine. The couple of times I have seen it performed live I think it does work on that level: that the audience is able to take on board and loose themselves in the music and in the story.
KE: It did that for me even when I was just listening to it through my stereo system! Does the chant in the fourth movement, *Veni Veni Emmanuel*, have any sort of specific significance?

NW: Not really. I wanted the narrative to be set in France on the battlefields where Nelson is actually admiring the stain glass window in an empty cathedral just before it gets bombed. So I thought that’s such an iconic French melody that would be great to incorporate it. It’s nothing more or less in terms of its significance. It’s used to A - set the tone of a religious venue and B - specifically is a French chant.

KE: The whole work is just wonderful and I have really enjoyed listening to it. And specifically the finale of the work is quite moving. And you say in your description that it’s optimistic and uplifting and speaks to the hope and rebirth and regeneration of the human spirit. And I was wondering if you could... I mean it sounds exactly like that description... I was wondering if you could in some way put into words how you made it sound like that description?

NW: Oh wow... Gosh I... I’m trying to think if I have a score in front of me.... I was just so touched by Don's story. And he had told me how his grandfather received the operation on his eyes and how his sight was restored and how it was really a form of rebirth right at the end of his life. It was a very inspiring story as you might imagine. I just got the score open in front of me now. Without sort of going into some sort of analysis the idea is that from a very simple trumpet cadenza it’s a very gradual build and accumulation of textures and movement. I’m glad that you feel that way. I can’t really put my finger on something specific.

KE: That’s ok. After reading that description and listening to the work. I was trying to come up with questions for you and I didn't know if you could come up with anything different or elaborate on the description you had already written. I mean it just fits those words so perfectly. So I thought I could get you to elaborate a little more but you don't have to go into an analysis of the work. I thought maybe you had some additional thoughts on that particular moment in the work.

NW: Yea um.... Not really.... (NW and KE laughs) sorry to disappoint you.

KE: Ok that’s all right. Maybe we should move onto the *Shard of Jaisalmer*.

NW: This is just a little piece that I wrote for some friends of mine. You know it was one of those rare times where a piece wasn't actually commission I just felt like writing it. And a good friend of mine, Slava Grigoryan, was working together with Ralph Tanner... American guitarist now based in Europe, he had a trio with Slava and an Austrian guy named Wolfgang Muthspiel. These are amazing jazz players and Slava had casually suggested, since he was doing a tour with these guys, that it might be nice if I could write them a piece. So I had just been to India for a few weeks and Jaisalmer is just on the
West border of India near Pakistan and it’s an amazing place. It’s like a war fortress town right in the middle of the desert. It’s a very colorful place and very inspiring. The piece doesn't emulate Indian music at all. I guess its a little watercolor of my impression of that beautiful town and sort of walking around in the mid-day sun and getting lost in the little palaces and things within the fort. Nothing more than a short fantasy which incorporates a bit of improvising for all the players because it was their wish that it would do that. They are mainly improvisation players so as it turns out, that particular trio never performed the work, but Slava made sure that it was played with his brother and some other people as well. It has been recorded and performed a bit but not for the original people it was written.

KE: When I listen to that music it does sort of remind of a Sitar player with the bending of the string and the embellishments. Had you had any listening experiences while you were there?

NW: I did. I heard a lot of traditional Rajasthan music, which is from that Northern area of India: beautiful desert music and all sorts of weird and wonderful instruments. Violins with two strings on them with tiny little bodies that made a nasally sort of sound: all sorts of string instruments and percussion instruments. A lot of which are just played on the street by guys busking or just for the hell of it I guess. Its a very colorful area and very musically alive with all the local indigenous color that so enriching and wonderful to witness. Again I didn't try to copy any of that. I thought the most important thing when I got back to Australia was reflecting on the trip and on that particular part of India and Rajasthan and Jaisalmer.

KE: Have you ever had any experiences playing other instruments from other countries like a Sitar or Tabla?

NW: I have mucked around a little bit with Tabla. And I love Indian instruments and Tabla just blows my mind every time I hear it. And its just one of those things I know now is just a life study and now that I would never even attempt to learn it because I know I never be able to invest the time in practicing it but I have a huge love of Indian music and have for as long as I can remember. My father also liked Indian music and it was quite frequently played in our house, you know recordings and so on. From a very young age I remember that.

KE: Lets move on to the next piece I have written on my list, Beneath the Midnight Sun.

NW: This came about when I was assembling a collection, well; it’s a very long story. In 2008 I lost my son Eli and it was a huge shock and I couldn't really do anything for about a year and I never actually thought I would ever get back to writing music. It was a very traumatic time for me and for the family. Just the nature of his death and everything about it was such a terrible shock. My wife Janice told me you going to have to do
something so why don't you go back through your back catalogue and select a collection of pieces and we can release a recording of particular style of music. Just something I was searching for in the catalogue was sort of reflective music. Some of the more melodic slow moving music that had a reflective quality and I came across that particular theme, which I had written many years earlier for a film called Antarctica. An IMAX film, it was one of the first IMAX films I did. And I thought it would be nice to rearrange that for violin and harp. And in fact a violin and harp duo had asked me to write something for them so I just arranged it and they agreed to come and record it and we included it on this CD called Shimmering Light. And that was one of sort of twenty or so pieces in that collection and its really just straight out of the film. I think I extended it a little bit and kind of given a bit more shape so that it made a bit more sense to be performed live rather than a 16 or 32 bar theme from a movie. Again its a short piece, an interlude really, but its been played a few times and seems to work ok. And it certainly fitted in with the music of that particular collection for which it was originally conceived, The Shimmering Light album.

KE: I had a lot of questions about it but you just answered most of them. (NW and KE laugh) When I got the shimmering light album and I was listening through it and it got to this last piece, Beneath the Midnight Sun, and I was just sort of captivated for a moment. I was listening to the music and trying to get some things together for some research on you and. I don't know it just seemed like time was suspended for a moment. And I didn't have the booklet to read but I recognized it. And when I got the booklet and realized I had heard it from Antarctica. I read in the pamphlet that the theme is called Scott's theme. I was wondering if you could just describe what Scott's theme is?

NW: Robert Scott was the British explorer who lost his life in a race to the South Pole with Roland Amundsen. Not sure if you knew that history but that's very much part of the IMAX film Antarctica and it kind of talks about what Scott had to endure to get there and how these men died a very cruel death basically from frostbite and hunger. And so that became a very poignant and historical focus for the movie and so he had to have his own theme within the context of the movie. And so that's the theme I developed for Robert Scott and was used several times in the film and funny enough never actually made it to the Antarctica guitar concerto. So I thought it’s a nice little theme that probably maybe deserved to have a life outside of the movie and that was the thinking behind that.

KE: I was going back and trying to find where I heard it. Was it a soprano that sings it?

NW: Yea that’s right, Soprano or boy soprano and cello in the film.

KE: How did you move from the orchestra from the film to harp and violin? Was because you had already known a harp and violin player duo and thought it would work well?
NW: Yes, I just mutually had this standing offer from a harp and violin duo that were good friends who were trying to get a bit of repertoire together and commission new works and so on and I just thought it would be nice to adapt that melody for them. I guess sometimes instead of forging new ground and create new work, its nice to revisit some old pieces and see if there is more life to be had particularly film music. I mean Antarctica has had a very long life. It still gets shown all these years later in Sydney. It still gets shown a few mornings each week in the Sydney IMAX theatre. But movies come and go and you spend many tortured month writing scores and they are never heard again so sometimes its kind of nice to dip into that material and breathe some new life into music that maybe deserves it, maybe not.

KE: The next piece I have on my list is Requiem for Eli. I have read about this work on your website and I have been thinking a lot about it lately and I have listened to it several times now but I struggle a bit with finding questions for you because its such an incredible work and obviously holds such a special meaning for you. And I thought maybe you could just talk about it in general. And maybe give me some thoughts on the piece today, or thoughts you had when creating it. Whatever you feel like sharing with us today.

NW: Sure Kevin; If you have read all the notes I'm not sure if I will be able to say anything new about it, but I guess when I came back to writing music there was this thing in my mind that I know Eli would have been very upset to see me not pursue music anymore. And so I know I had to do something and of course the first thing that had to be done was a musical dedication to him. And I had this 20 minute concert suite called Missa Solis, commissioned by the Melbourne Symphony and I was literally about to send the score off to the Melbourne Symphony a couple weeks before Eli died and for some reason I didn't. And when I went back to the studio 12 months after losing Eli there was this score you know and I pretty much forgotten about it. And I started looking through it and thought, 'oh wow! There’s some good stuff in here'. It seemed to be very emotionally raw, some of the music, and I thought I could really use some of this material to start work again. And because the idea of starting a whole new piece fresh after not writing for a year was almost to overwhelming and so to have those ideas sitting there as something maybe I could use that was a way for me to get back and to composing. And so I just started fleshing it all out and extending bits and adding new bits and cutting bits out and making the orchestration broader and doing much more stuff with choir and adding sections with boy sopranos and so that’s how it came about. It took me a long time but it was amazing to hear it come to life. And then to be invited to conduct it myself as you could imagine was a very challenging experience. I cried to this, I've been very unhappy with my conducting technique and the guy that premiered was a young guy from Melbourne, Benjamin Northey. Who since has become a very close friend. He did such a great job that I asked him to teach me how to conduct and he very graciously accepted. And I had quite a few hours with him going through the score and learning to find points of conducting so that when I came to conduct it with the Sydney symphony it would be as
good as I could give it sort of thing and the performances went pretty well. And I was asked to conduct it in Melbourne and that also went well. I just knew from being a player myself in an orchestra that I really couldn't get to emotionally involved in the performance. I really just had to be there for the orchestra and not break down or anything. I really had to build up this steel mind-set in order to actually do it. I think it was very emotional for all the players involved. At least they told me so. And having written that and having conducted it and recorded it, that was almost like a release I then felt that I had permission to move on now that I had been doing that musical dedication to Eli. It was then time for me to find another project and I started embarking. I guess, Compassion was the next thing. Does that shed any light on that?

KE: It does! I was going to ask you about your experience conducting the piece. Were there any moments, I understand you had to prepare yourself and get emotionally ready to conduct the work., but were there any moments in that piece where I guess in your Sydney premier of that, were there any moments where you were on that edge fighting back tears?

NW: No. I had practice my conducting so hard that I know I could do it. And so many tears had been shed in the writing of the work that when it came to conduct it, it was like I had to move on to a different level. It’s difficult to talk about. I was absolutely determined. To answer your question, no, I never came close to crying in the performance but I could see the musicians crying when they were not playing. It was very intense as you might imagine and of course I felt Eli's spirit in the room very much, particularly the first performance I did in the Sydney Opera House and that was such an exhilarating thing to feel and to stand, I don't know if you have ever conducted an orchestra, but you are standing in that sweet spot where everyone’s instrument is pointing straight at you and all these energies coming at you and to feel that emotion was very overwhelming in a sense. But I was resolved to be there for the musicians to show them the way through the work and to show them without that emotional kind of breaking down because I knew that would get in the way of the music and I didn't want that to happen.

KE: Thank you very much for sharing that with me. It’s such an incredible work and incredible story to read. I watched a partial video of the premier and I remember seeing you conduct it and thinking to myself, 'Wow! What a strong conductor!' Seeing those musicians I could imagine how difficult it would be to perform with you there but having the same resolve you did for Eli I’m sure it was an incredible experience. Thanks again for sharing that with me.

NW: Oh sure not at all. As you can imagine after such an intense emotional period with the lead up to the concert everything was just very intense it took quite a while to adjust to normal life afterwards. But anyway, I’m glad I did it. I wouldn’t have had it any other way. It was wonderful to have the opportunity to express those emotions and that sense of grief supported by the audience and orchestra and I felt very privileged to do that and
that must be a very rare thing for a grieving parent or person to be able to express. To have that public form to express and feel so embraced and so loved by all those people on stage and members of the audience. Because of course you know there were a lot of people in the audience, like Eli’s friends, who had never heard an orchestra before you know? They are all kind of hip-hop dudes and DJ’s and stuff and never been to the opera house and never heard an orchestra and they all really seemed to love it as well. It was quite interesting from that point of view to.

KE: In a similar expression you composed another piece called Mosstrooper Peak?

NW: Yea that’s right! Again some of the material for that was written prior to Eli’s death, but again I kind of felt compelled to have that musical dedication to him as well on a much smaller scale. It exists as a guitar solo and a duo for two guitars and Slava and his brother are about to tour it through Europe and they will be giving it quite a thrashing over there. Timothy Kain, who had commissioned the work, had been speaking to me for quite a number of years about writing a large scale solo work and that was a bit scary at first because I’m not a guitarist at all yet I seemed to be asked a lot to write for the guitar. So it had been in the back of my mind I guess for quite some time to write this solo guitar work, which was also a significant duration and significantly challenging. It moves through a lot of musically emotional landscapes and so on.

KE: This is another piece I searched for and could not find a recording and I emailed Tim and ask him if he had a recording and he told me he was recording it later this year.

NW: Yea he did one but he wasn't happy with it so he is doing another.

KE: Do you have a recording of the work that I might be able to check out?

NW: I can send you a demo of that one. I will set you up a drop box with the percussion concerto and mosstrooper so that you can see what that is about. Yea Tim toured it last year but I don't think any of those performances were recorded but anyway the Midi version gives you a very good idea about what the piece is about.

KE: That would be great! Since I have been listening to so much of your percussion music and then doing more research about all the other work I have been wanted to listen to all of them! But I also understand Mosstrooper Peak has 6 movements about specific places you went?

NW: That’s right. Those sorts of 8 months directly after loosing Eli were a very strange time. My wife and I and my son Joel really felt really out of place and at odds with the world and found it very difficult to find any reason to hang around Sydney so we headed off on a boat on the East coast of Australia and every night we would put the anchor down in a quiet bay somewhere and more often then not go ashore and build a little
shrine out of coral and flowers and maybe some incense and stuff as a kind of remembrance for Eli. I guess you probably know the story, just before he was killed, I was actually sailing up the east coast with him and his grandfather so there were three of us on board. It was a trip to the Great Barrier Reef that we had been planning for many years and finally I decided to take some time off work and take a few months and do this trip. Half-way up the coast our rudder broke and we had to get rescued and we left the boat just at the southern edge of the New South Whales/Queensland Border and the three of us headed back to Sydney while the rudder was being repaired and that was when Eli got killed a week or so later and so after loosing Eli and the rudder was fixed, Joel and Jan and I decided we would continue that trip. We spent a lot of time thinking about Eli and making these shrines and initially they started off as these small little things on the edge of the beach and as time went on they became more and more epic and the last few were kind of the result of climbing up some mountains and building rock shrines on the top of these islands. It became kind of thing in a way we could take him with his. And Mosstrooper Peak's 6 movement’s names are taken from some of the places where these shrines are built on the east coast of Australia.

KE: I look forward to hearing this work. And then moving on to your latest piece *Compassion*, How is the tour going for that work?

NW: Its been going really well thanks Kevin! We got a couple shows coming up in February. Its just exceeded my wildest expectations and Lior who I met when he came up to do a benefit concert for the foundation we formed in Eli's memory and he ended his concert singing this beautiful Jewish hymn, Avinu Malkeinu, and I was so touch by that I asked him if he would mind if I took a solo recording and wrote an orchestration around his solo voice. And when I finished it we were both quite encouraged by the result and by and by we kind of worked out ways to expand it and got a commission from the Sydney Symphony. He's a really great singer and wonderful man and I was very inspired by working with him. He's such an incredible performer. The first half of the concert is all of his own stuff with a couple of new orchestration a couple of which I have done, but we commissioned some other composers to do those as well. So it's like a chamber orchestra with a bit of a percussion section singing all of his repertoire and then the second half is Compassion which is a solid 42 minutes of singing for him and he does the whole concert from memory. It's really great working with him and I really hope we can bring this to the states sometime. In fact, someone in New York wrote about it in some magazine and its been going pretty far there. There is a YouTube clip of one of the movements that's been notching up quite a few thousand hits in the last week or so. We really hope that we can tour it and we are also talking about doing a Compassion 2 sort of thing (laughs) but I'm not sure when or how that will evolve but yea its something the orchestra has enjoyed playing and they love working with Lior and after each performance we get so many comments from the players saying how much they loved it and I think its turned out pretty well and something I love conducting. It's really something you can really get stuck into and get lost in.
KE: How did you come to the title Compassion?

NW: Well the initial piece that I orchestrated, Avinu Malkeinu, is actually the Jewish hymn of compassion and so when we were talking about expanding the work Lior suggested that all they other text should be related to somehow Compassion and he was able to find text in Hebrew and Arabic that talk about Compassion. Its not a religious piece, its a secular work but it does draw upon these ancient texts thousands of years old verses, poems, sayings, just writings that talk about compassion on a humanitarian level between people. The texts are either sung in Hebrew or Arabic and that was Lior's job to find those texts and to create his own vocal part. He would find these verses and live with them for a few weeks and then create a part and record it just as a solo vocal and then send it to me as an mp3 file and more often then not I could just hear where it was going and what needed to happen in the orchestration. So it was a very interesting way of working.

KE: It’s a wonderful work. I have been sharing it a lot with my colleagues at the school of music and they all have the same reaction that I have. It’s just so refreshing and such a unique work that we don't normally experience in the school of music as we can be so stuck in Baroque or Romantic music... and to hear something like this is such a nice experience.

NW: Thank you very much Kevin that’s lovely to hear.

KE: And if you come to the states you have to tell me so I know where you will be!

NW: Absolutely! We both kind of love the piece so much we really want to perform it more. And Lior is a pretty determined guy so I’m pretty sure we will be touring it somewhere at some stage.

KE: Ok well let me know if I can be of any help... I don’t know what I could do but I would help out if I can.

KE: Well lastly to kind of wrap things up here, I read in an interview that at the time of Missa Solis you were in a process of reinventing yourself and that your approach to music has changed and that you are seeking to express things differently in music now. And you kind of already touch on this a little bit but I was just wondering if you could give us a little more detail about that?

NW: I guess the bottom line since loosing Eli. Music sounds different to me now. It really does fire up different parts of the brain then it did before and I guess I have become much less tolerant that doesn't address some sort of spirituality or it doesn't address the heart or isn't emotionally engaged somehow and in fact I look back on a lot of my early work and even that I find difficult to listen to because its just seems so intellectual and emotionally cold and so I think that really is what drove me to pursue the
compassion idea and having written the requiem and having realized how important emotion is in music and how that is what really seems to feed something that performers respond to so much. I really see that as a priority now, and so I think what I am trying to do is find musical projects, compositions that I'm really able to invest myself emotionally in, and kind of explore that side of the music much more than any intellectual pursuits. In a way it makes a bit more difficult. Compassion was such an obvious thing to do, and I have been offered quite a bit of commissions and I’m trying to work out how they fit and how I’m going to address that emotional agenda in next few years.

KE: This was wonderful thank you for sharing this with me. I know some of that might have been difficult to talk about but it’s wonderful to hear you speak about it.

NW: Thank you Kevin and I appreciate all the research you have done and you are obviously taking it very seriously and I’m happy to be sharing this all with you. It's been lovely talking with you!

KE: Well thanks again Nigel I hope you enjoy the rest of your weekend.

NW: Thanks Kevin and we will be in-touch soon!