

“Beyond genre: Towards new compositional paradigms; inclusion and consideration in contemporary music.”

The utilisation of styles and techniques found in modern electronic sub-genres, as a method of promotion and inclusion; highlighting issues of social importance.

Through practical research and the creation of new sound transmission, I will investigate how to make contemporary classical music more accessible to listeners, by challenging the paradigms that validate certain genres most respected in art music today.

Through applied technological research, the primary focus is the use of modern electronic vocal effects pedals with choir, and stylistic production techniques used in modern electronic sub-genres in an ensemble setting. The pieces will utilise standard equipment in modern electronic and popular music, within a contemporary classical context.

The focus will be a completely novel use of electronic vocal effects pedals in a ‘2D choir’ design—a sound not yet explored by Irish composers. Stylistic sounds and production methods from modern electronic sub-genres will be used in fixed media, including edits of recorded poems, scores, performances and recordings, to accompany a large ensemble performance.

The theoretical framework for these compositions highlights important social issues and the perceived aversion to electronic and popular music with its rich history (Jerrentrup, 2000) - promoting the rightful esteem of popular electronic music sub-genres, which have been typically less revered in academic study to date. The readings point to the issues of racism, classism and sexual identity and gender disparities as historically being, largely, the underlying reasons for this arguable prejudice (Lynch & O’Neill, 1994) and the perception of elitism in art music (Reimer, 1987).

This research informed my approach to sourcing societal and political poetry as a basis from which to compose the pieces. A decision was made to use the works of migrant poets of colour, poets from the LGBTQ+ community and other marginalised backgrounds—to give their own pieces a new voice, and to highlight the disparity in the treatment of marginalised people, to date, in Western Classical music (Becker, 1986).

Themes include ‘othering’, loneliness, and a sense of belonging, or not belonging. Additionally, the research promotes transcultural awareness and the democratisation of sound/expression in contemporary Western art music.

Bibliography:

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Lynch K., O'Neill C., (1994). *The Colonisation of Social Class in Education*. British Journal of Sociology of Education, 1994, Vol. 15, No. 3 (1994), pp. 307- 324: Taylor & Francis, Ltd.

Reimer B., (1987). *A Response to the Question of Elitism: Elitism, Open and Shut*. Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education, Late Summer, 1987, No. 93 (Late Summer, 1987), pp. 22-25: University of Illinois Press on behalf of the Council for Research in Music Education.

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Julia Mahon is currently undertaking a PhD in electro-acoustic composition, with Prof. Gráinne Mulvey in TU Dublin. Having completed a BMus in composition and an MA in composition, her work is now investigating techniques and sonic aesthetics traditionally used in contemporary song writing, pop and hip-hop music, using these to create contemporary classical ensemble works which probe the possible area between songwriting and contemporary composition. Parallel to, and through these various mediums, her work challenges the perceived elitism of art music and its place in academia. Julia is particularly interested in ideas surrounding the democratising of creative output, and the promotion of urban music and contemporaneous sub-genres in academic study. As an educator, Julia lectures in a variety of creative, practical and academic subjects including songwriting and composition, performance-in-context, research methods, essential development skills, final year research thesis and project management classes.

