

### **The Post-Pastoral in Contemporary Composition**

#### **Building a practice centred around the entanglements between humans and nature.**

Post-pastoralism as a mode of thought allows us to feel ourselves as an interconnected part of an eco-system or of multiple eco-systems; urban, rural, natural, and man-made. This paper will explore the ways in which my composition navigates between approaches to some of the key dyads which exist in the post-pastoral, for example human/ nature, nature/culture, and objective distance/ subjective immersion, in a continual process of entanglement which is neither fixed nor linear. I will examine and critique my immersed compositional practice, embodied in the landscape of my home on the Scottish Isle of Arran, highlighting the cultural violence and inequalities which landscape can conceal, as well as the tensions which my music, so bonded to the changing landscape, confronts in an age of environmental catastrophe. Drawing upon the fields of eco-musicology, cultural ecology, anthropology and cultural geography, I will define the distinctions between my versions of the pastoral, post-pastoral, landscape, and nature as a means of exploring how it might be possible to build a compositional practice which acknowledges the anthropocentric ways that we seek to frame and materialize nature, and the entanglements between humans and nature which it might be possible to express in new composition. My presentation will be particularly relevant to the 'Artistic Research in the Anthropocene' theme of the conference. Music and the arts have a key role to play in exploring new sustainable relationships we can form with the natural world and through my research I am seeking to uncover the ways that my composition can express an ecology of interwoven life forms. In this presentation I will discuss the method and processes I used to compose three recently premiered works; '*Waves caress the skin of an ancient rock...*' (an International Guitar Foundation commission for solo acoustic guitar), '*Mastiha*' (a Royal Philharmonic Society/ Presteigne Festival commission for string orchestra), and '*The Sleeping Warrior- A Mountain Contour Song for Two Islands*' (a Tangram Ensemble commission for Chinese percussion and flute, Winner of the University of Oxford Henfrey Composition Prize). Having attended the AEC conference in Copenhagen last year for a performance of my new commission for quarter-tone accordionist Lore Amenabar, I am keen to present my artistic research at this year's conference.

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Parallel Session

**Electra Perivolaris**  
**University of Oxford, UK.**  
**Electra.perivolaris@magd.ox.ac.uk**

Electra Perivolaris is a composer and pianist of mixed Scottish and Greek heritage. She has been described as 'A Classical Star of the Future' by BBC Introducing and 'One of a new generation of female trailblazers' by BBC Radio 3. She has been commissioned by the London Symphony Orchestra, London Sinfonietta, BBC Singers, BBC Concert Orchestra and Scottish Chamber Orchestra. Electra is a Doctor of Philosophy candidate in Composition at the University of Oxford, after completing Undergraduate studies at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland and

Masters studies at London's Royal Academy of Music, winning the DipRAM Award for an Outstanding Final Composition Portfolio. Recent premieres include two performances in the Queen Elizabeth Hall of commissions Electra composed for the BBC Concert Orchestra, one of which was the culmination of Electra's work with Streetwise Opera when she created an opera in collaboration with a homeless shelter. Electra is a 2022-2023 Royal Philharmonic Society Composer. <https://www.electraperivolariscomposer.com/>

