MUSIC of BALANCE: CIRCLES and SQUARES

by

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PLEASE NOTE: The audio and audio/video discs accompanying this thesis are not available on this site.
Abstract

*Music of Balance* is a portfolio of eight compositions, all of which bear the concealed influence of mandalas in their conception – these are made manifest musically in cyclic structures with shifting drones, pedals and tonal ambiguities. The compositional process maximises minimal materials – *circles* and *squares* – symbolically.

Organising thought, feeling and knowledge into a balanced acoustic musical form of expression is the objective of this creative project - which is carried out under the influence of symbols.

Whilst the compositional processes are intuitive, they involve a disciplinary measure which employs the circle and square as tools. Acting symbolically these tools imbue the music with meaning deeper than the obvious listening surface, and provide a rich substance of sound. Programmatic influences have been absented; replaced instead by the language of symbols – namely the mandala symbol. A range of apparent opposites arising from circles and squares – physical/ephemeral matter, chronological/eternal time and form/expression – are investigated for musical reconciliation. The compositional exploration is guided and focused by the circle in a square image understood as a universal symbol (grounded in the ancient Indian Arts, Tibetan Buddhism, Sufism and Jungian psychology), and active in representing, and thus restoring the natural balance of the soul in the universe.
Dedicated to

John Handel
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Many thanks go to the instrumentalists who have performed and recorded my music:


I am especially appreciative of the great help I have received from John Handel who meticulously checked and advised me on editing the guitar music, and who scanned all of the scores into the computer for digital storage, access and presentation.

Finally, I wish to acknowledge my parents, John and Joan White for the generous assistance and encouragement I received to finish this project.
Declaration

The work presented in this thesis and in the musical scores is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, original except where acknowledged in the text. I hereby declare that I have not submitted this material, either in whole or part, for a degree at this or any other institution.

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Track 4  *Dry Red*  (6:42)
Track 5  *Again the Rainbow* and *Always the Ocean*  (10:22)
Track 6  *Zardash*  (3:58)
Track 7  *Crystal Amulet*  (9:22)
Track 8  *Red, Yellow, Black and White*  (10:50)

Total duration: 68:56

Digital Video Disc: (DVD) track titles

Track 1  *Red, Yellow, Black and White*  (11:48)
Track 2  *Zardash*  (4:13)
Track 3  *Sand Dollar Mandala*  (13:45)
Track 4  *Goarounds and Grounds*  (5:53)
Track 5  i. *Again the Rainbow*  (5:01);  ii. *Always the Ocean*  (5:51)
Track 6  *Without Feet They Dance*  (10:08)

Total duration: 56:39

CD and DVD items are pocketed in the back cover.
Chapter 1

Introduction
Chapter 1

1.1 A Question of Balance

Music is a manifestation or form of expression available from a vast and continuous spectrum of creative possibilities. The properties of light, colour, sound, texture, motion, density, shape, line and direction (to mention only a few) have translations into all forms of art, and potentially convey intrinsic meaning and significance. My inclination to create is directed towards musical expression, although some of my earlier creative endeavours (which stem from the same imaginative forces) lay in visual art and dance. The art of composition is a rigorous pursuit, which calls upon a sizeable intellectual dedication to master its craft as a prerequisite to the engagement of imagination and emotion. This presents a dilemma, whereby the creative urge may be ready to deliver, whilst the technical skills are insufficient to embody the expression successfully. On the other hand, if one pursues an academic study of composition, the intellectual attraction and fascination with its ever increasing levels of complexity might distract and distort a composer’s utterance. Recognising a potential imbalance in the composer’s path, I have designed this project with a view to maintaining my artistic creative integrity whilst incorporating new knowledge with the discoveries and experiences that life inevitably brings.

Attempting to penetrate beneath the surface of musical sound, I have employed symbols as deliberate alternatives to narrative and descriptive stimuli. Likewise they offer an alternative to a serialised method of composing. Just prior to embarking on this project, an encounter made by chance with certain Sufi teachings has become most significant. Although I have never practised meditation, the methods elucidated by Hazrat Inayat Khan to strengthen concentration and harness the mind have deep resonance with my artistic ideals. I have now absorbed and intentionally integrated these methods into my composing.

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Emerging as a self-taught composer (about fifteen years ago), I first relied on the local community’s responses to test the worth and significance of my work, and to fashion its development. After a decade of modestly successful compositional activity, I suspected that my creativity was too comfortably concerned with pleasing a rather casual audience. Exploring new ways to stretch and deepen my internal resources necessitated a divergence from my former approach. However, this new creative venture remains constant in one respect – it is tempered by the inescapable constraints of financial resources and time. Addressing the problem of how to initiate an authentically fresh creative path I imposed a discipline on my methods, placing restrictions on the stimuli to simultaneously focus and stretch myself. In maximising minimal materials various polarities arose which were addressed under the umbrella of form and expression. The balancing of opposites is largely reflected in the shape, size and style of the compositional work I present here. There are also polarities associated with the composition’s context (in the community) which are reconciled without compromising either the complexity or appeal of the music.

The symbolic implement employed to make a departure from programmatic or formularised tendencies is the circle set inside a square. This abiding symbol subliminally influences matters of form and expression in my compositions within this folio. It symbolises physical and ephemeral ideas and chronological and eternal perceptions of time. It also represents motion and stasis, expansion and contraction. Each of the compositions has been subject to the discipline of the circle in a square, to a greater or lesser symbolic or literal degree.

The musical presentation is the result of an exploration I have carried out with the intention of finding not only a balanced compositional aesthetic, but a context for my contribution to the community of performers, students and listeners around me. My work follows in the tradition of Western Art music by extending it from within, rather than adopting an iconoclastic stance (which originally pitted itself against tradition, but ironically became a tradition in its own right). As an adherent to the tradition of artistic evolution, compositional replicas and pastiches of past musics are anathema to me, but neither can I subscribe to Boulez’ doctrine of amnesia, where each new work...

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negates all others before it by professing to be unequivocally free of influence. For me, Stravinsky’s creative path demonstrates the ideal model of growth from within a culture of dialogue and comment
. This is underscored by Berio, who speaks about the necessity of having a sense of history. His utopian vision is for the transmission of a common musical language…

… that will allow music and musicians to speak and to be universally spoken. Without this…music cannot move, loses one of its dialectical reasons for existing and drifts from one mannerism to the next.

The heritage and canon of Western art music have evolved through renewal; furthermore, its survival depends on a continuation of this process.

The philosopher Roger Scruton explains how artistic culture is a cumulative process.

The most original works of art may be genial applications of a well-known vocabulary, like the late quartets of Haydn… What makes them original is not their defiance of the past or their rude assault on settled expectations, but the element of surprise with which they invest the forms and repertoire of a tradition. Without tradition, originality cannot exist: for it is only against tradition that it becomes perceivable.

Before presenting the compositional work fully in chapters 2 and 3, a summary of my preliminary research is given in chapter 1.2, followed by a brief discussion of my compositional aesthetic in chapter 1.3.

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1.2 The Circle in a Square: an investigation

My readings and research suggest that the symbol of a circle in a square is a phenomenon common to many cultural traditions throughout the world. It eludes any one given definition but is generally understood in the East as a *mandala*. Its existence in the field of modern psychology (Jungian)\(^6\) is also relevant to this study since the mandala has appeared in the Western world with new dimensions of meaning. Firstly, I will give a brief definition and description of the mandala with its appearances, meanings and functions in Indian Art and in Buddhist Tibet. Following that, the subject is brought closer to my own time and place, providing a context for compositional exploration. My research shows how the mandala is adopted into the work of composers such as Pauline Oliveros and David Lumsdaine.

Indian art - the circle in the square

My interest in the circle in a square concept came about by chance while studying Indian Odissi Dance in 1998, before initiating this compositional project. The six systems (*darsanas*) within the traditional Indian Arts are contained in Sanskrit texts called the *Upanishads*. Approximately translated, these six disciplines cover speculative thought, ritual sacrifice, theatre, architecture, the body of man (in geometry), and musical sound. In her book *The Square and the Circle of the Indian Arts*, Vatsyayan states that:

> There is an accepted principle that the Indian architect, sculptor, musician and dancer are preoccupied with an exploration of time in limited space.\(^7\)

These explorations through different media consistently reveal the mandala design and principle. The circle in a square is the organising principle and the perfect symbol representing Indian thought. Specifically in regard to music, the tonic is held as the


fixed centre of the circle, and rhythm is treated on the principle of 'cosmic rhythm', which moves in a spiral. Vatsyayan's explanations are summarised here:

The musician selects a pattern of notes which becomes the yantra (diagram) and draws through sound, the vertical, horizontal and diagonal features. Fundamental to the design is the concept of inner silence and the centre as the tonic. Gradually other patterns evolve with infinite possibilities. All are connected within the centre and held together within the circumference.

The Mandala in Tibet

The term mandala is a Sanskrit word for circle. Mandalas are geometrical designs or patterns within a circle, which in turn are encompassed inside a square. In Buddhist ritual, mandalas are used to assist in meditation, and can be described as objects of contemplation. Physically, the forms they may take are designs in sand on a temple floor, painted onto a wall, or they may appear in ink on paper or cloth. The mandala was also frequently used as a principle for the architectural layout of temples. Among the earliest known examples of architectural mandalas are the Buddhist temple in Borobudur, Java (c.800), and the Samye monastery in Tibet (c.780).

In Tibetan ritual mandalas are employed both conceptually and physically. In the realisation process mandalas might be laid out with compass and straight edge, and filled with coloured powders as an act of ritual geometry. Complex planetary configurations and intricate representations of deities are the result of knowledge in shape and proportion, based in art and science. Mandalas also serve as the basis for organising sequences of ritual acts and the structuring of musical performance.

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8 Ibid., p.46.
10 A demonstration of this is given in recordings (and booklet) by John Levy, Tibetan Buddhist Rites from the Monasteries of Bhutan. (4 vols.) New York: Lyricord Discs Inc. LYRCD 9001, 1994.
Ellingson explains some of the reasons for mandala diagramming in his dissertation 'The Mandala of Sound':

Mandala structures represent a primary cognitive map of Tibetan Buddhist thought, and are useful for showing multiple levels of relationship.  

He makes a geometrical correlation with music by drawing attention to the construction factors, which are based on proportion and contour, as opposed to exact arithmetical quantification. Summarising the musical concepts and theory of Tibetan ritual music, Ellingson writes: “In addition to beauty, ritual music must also possess meaning and function.”

Modern Psychology

Carl Jung, a pioneer of Twentieth Century psychoanalysis describes significant appearances (in the unconscious mind) of circles and squares, which he called mandalas. The unconscious mind reveals images of circles and squares in dreams and in art, which convey meaning related to the individual in the universe. As Jaffé points out in her chapter on 'Symbolism in the Visual Arts' in Jung's book *Man and His Symbols* :

The circle is a symbol of the psyche (even Plato described the psyche as a sphere). The square is a symbol of earth bound matter, of the body and reality. In most modern art, the connection between these two primary forms is either nonexistent or loose and casual. Their separation is another symbolic expression of the psychic state of 20th-century man.

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12 Ibid., p.390.
Jung described the mandala concept as a universally recurring image which also has functions arising from its symbolism. Von Franz says:

> The mandala serves a conservative purpose – namely, to restore a previously existing order. It also serves the creative purpose of giving expression and form to something that does not yet exist, something new and unique.\(^{14}\)

**Composers – David Lumsdaine and Pauline Oliveros**

In researching circles and squares with a view to musical translation, I conducted a broad survey of composers who have employed mandalas. I found Lumsdaine (b. 1931) and Oliveros (b. 1932) the most interesting among these, especially because their paths diverge substantially from one another despite arising from a similar philosophical and musical heritage. When I began this compositional project my path was on the verge of changing course, so I investigated the musical processes of Lumsdaine and Oliveros with great interest. A condensation of my research follows.

As a young emerging Australian composer, David Lumsdaine left his homeland to pursue an academic musical life in England. His occasional return visits to Australia after long periods of absence have provided him with raw materials and a listening perspective which have reinforced his leanings to the mandala as a musical notion.

Many of David Lumsdaine's compositions have their roots in the aural observation of a particular location or place. When Lumsdaine analysed his sound recordings (on slow playback) of birds and landscape, he discovered the cyclical structures of rhythm in nature. These discoveries led him to pursue cyclical concepts in composition to deal with time and place.

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Concerning location, Lumsdaine writes:

…most of my metaphor will be taken from landscape, but in no sense is my music pictorial, or descriptive. It is simply that while its general language has been derived, inevitably, from the traditional world of music, many of its most important formal ideas have crystallised around phenomena I have experienced in the open world.

In his programme notes and scripts, Lumsdaine presents the idea that as music exists in time, it also invites a transcendence of time itself. He believes that it is 'form' which essentially allows for the perception of music in its temporal existence. Form is what makes the recollection of music possible. Form is not something to be imposed on to a piece of music externally, but rather the music assumes its own form. Structure, on the other hand, is considered by Lumsdaine to be something akin to the temporal networkings within, and remains unknown until it is experienced 'formally'. Concerning time, he found solutions to the problems of using sequential text in a non-sequential way. These structural solutions are defined by the three metaphors; labyrinth, reflection and transformation, which are employed in Aria for Edward John Eyre (1972) and other subsequent works. There is a vast multi-layering of isorhythms within canons, which drop in and out of synchronisation and create a time warp effect in his music.

Pauline Oliveros, currently based in New York, has spent her life in the United States of America. Her earlier years were devoted to studying modernist music at University. Eventually the sounds of her natural and domestic environment, along with her commitment to serious listening became fundamental to her musical aesthetic and gave rise to the mandala as a structure or vehicle for this.

16 Ibid., see all prog. notes and scripts.
Oliveros’ *Deep Listening* (1988) was recorded underground in an enormous empty cistern using only a battery operated recorder. The sound of mighty drones played on didjeridu, garden hose, and trombone provide a powerful sense of motion in circles. As the sound moves and physically inhabits the performance space, it seems to penetrate the physical realm of the listener. Oliveros plays an accordion in ‘just’ tuning, which further enhances certain physical effects that the listener might experience in breathing and active relaxation. The three performers use long sustained vocal tones exploring their relationship in pitch with the fundamental. The music seems deeply hypnotic and capable of inducing a trance-like state.

The long drone tones which lured Oliveros away from harmonic function and progression instigated an intense search leading to a new perspective on music. She observes:

> Drones of all kinds [such as motors, fluorescent lighting, freeway noise] are ever present. The mantra of the electronic age is *hum* rather than *Om.*

Perhaps the most significant aspect of the mandala in Oliveros’ teaching work is the way she has presented a circle with a dot in the centre (a mandala image) as a model for managing the mind and body during musical activity or performance. The dot in the centre represents concentration and attention while the surrounding circle represents the awareness of peripheral and physical concerns. She believes that what is necessary for growth and development for the whole person is the ability to focus attention and find awareness in each area, inward or outward, flexibly or at will, in any combination of the modes. Separation of attention and awareness is a useful theoretical concept.

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20 Ibid., p.175.
To conclude, a comparison of Lumsdaine and Oliveros is drawn in summary here. Lumsdaine's mandalas have meaning and function as facilitators of transcendental meditation and worldly withdrawal. By contrast, Oliveros’ mandalas have their meaning and function in sonic meditation and bodily movement. However, for both composers the mandala lends itself to applications that are capable of subverting linear time.

Oliveros and Lumsdaine present great differences in their vision and handling of the mandala from each other. While the results of my survey do not afford me with specific compositional models, they do represent a significant step in my development, and my interest is further piqued in the musical exploration of the circle in a square.
1.3 A Compositional Aesthetic

**Behind the music**

My view of and involvement in composition is integrated with all aspects of my life and being. Life’s journey has not led me into an academic compositional training. Instead, my music has been generated from spontaneous and holistic initiatives from a broad field of experiences. These call equally on the mind, soul, heart, imagination, intellect and body. Although the intellect is indispensible in composition, I see it as a less influential component of the mind. According to Sufi teachings, the heart and mind are equated as one and the same but with different perspectives. Hazrat Inayat Khan writes about the nature of the mind from a spiritual perspective, saying:

> Thought, memory, will and reason, together with the ego as the fifth and principal factor, constitute the heart. It is these five things that may be called the heart, but in definitely naming the different parts of the heart we call the surface of it mind, and the depth of it heart.

My musical process demands devoted internal work in conceiving and formulating an artistic image or vision for the work. This artistic image lies behind and before the music. It goes beyond the obvious to include conceptualisation of visual aspects such as line, colour, shape and luminosity, all of which carry subjective resonances with various combinations of pitches (without conscious contrivance). My artistic image for a work also draws on perceptions of physical sensation which I ponder before translation into musical sound. For example, I incorporate conceptual aspects such as the physical medium and density – solid, liquid or vaporous stuff, the textural feeling – as if you could touch it, the temperature with its tendency for expansion or contraction and finally the capacity for movement and its quality of momentum.

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At the very heart of my conceptual work (which is done well before notation) is the crystallisation of the essential sentiment. This type of deep concentration is what I believe makes the finished composition more likely to communicate strongly. So long as my craft and imaginative foundations are sound, I believe I can avoid the boredom of inconsequential expression.

**Adopting symbolism**

I began to conceive a new direction in my music – towards balance – through the circle and square image which departs from serial techniques or any form of narrative or descriptive influence. Working intuitively with the powerful influence of the mandala, I upheld this visual icon as a benchmark to achieve something new and unique with balance. This principle arose from my initial research which was expounded with specific Jungian references in the previous subchapter (pp. 7-8). My objective was to use the mandala symbol – where the circle rests within the square – as a guide in finding balanced expression and form in my creative endeavours.

The square is a symbol of earth bound matter; the circle is a symbol of the psyche. The square represents the physical boundaries of the piece, for example the duration, instrumentation and the circumstances surrounding its first performance (which includes rehearsal time, the character and standard of the performer, the venue and audience), and the projected usage beyond the premiere. The form and layout are dependent to some extent on these facts. The circle is the symbolisation and embodiment of my personal expression which lie behind the music, as explained above.

The vast historical catalogue of signs and symbols is an accumulation of universal memory. Symbolism can also be connected with personal memory – remembered experience – but its ramifications are different. The personal memory of experience through perception has a musical protagonist in Debussy. Although Debussy is called an Impressionist, he does more than merely depict impressions captured by the senses. Debussy goes to the stage beyond the first impression from the natural world to symbolise its synthesis with the memory. He works in symbols of sound, seeking out the essence rather than recalling and describing experiences with external phenomena.
Schmitz discusses these extraordinary innovations in Debussy’s music, which are inextricably linked with transmutations of creative stimuli:

…the content of a certain object creates a chain of thought-reactions both in the creator and in the auditor or interpreter…they soon separate the direct from the indirect content and set the symbol over the meaning.[24]

Debussy’s use of symbolism in his piano preludes captivated and transfixed me as a pianist several years before I began composing. Even though my work has no particular resemblance to Debussy’s music, there is an intrinsic influence of his art on my compositional approach.

**Symbolic implications of writing by hand**

The number five appears in my music intuitively arising in many of the time signatures and sectional layouts. This is not contrived, but is something I observed later in the compositional analyses. I was interested to learn that one significance traditionally ascribed to the number five, is that it:

…symbolises man after the fall, but, once applied to this order of earthly things, it signifies health and love. Esoteric thinking sees this, not as the effect but, in fact, as the cause of man’s five extremities with the number five inscribed also on each hand and foot.[25]

This symbolic aspect of the hand is significant because I compose and present my music by hand. I have cultivated my musical calligraphy because I feel that the script has great aesthetic value. It embodies the subtleties of thought, motion and sentiment directly for interpretive reading. The commitment of ink to paper calls for a strong investment of will and intention, drawing heavily on the powers of internal audition.

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I was interested to find the following historical idea of the hand as:

[a]…corporeal manifestation of the inner state of the human being (and because) it expresses an attitude of mind in terms other than the acoustic (-or, in other words, a gesture).\(^{26}\)

**Sound sources: Piano and Guitar**

To play the piano or the guitar requires the dexterous use of both hands, as opposed to other instruments whose sound is generated by blowing, bowing or striking. (Nonetheless, each of these three alternative articulations is represented at least once in the instrumentation for the piano and guitar compositions). The two chosen instruments of focus exemplify opposites in musical genre: the piano is firmly associated with high art music, and the guitar is entrenched in popular music. My compositions for these instruments are situated in somewhat dangerous territory – between the horns of the bull (so to speak). The guitar and piano are arguably the most commonly acquired instruments in households, and most people are familiar with them to some extent. In keeping with my commitment to utilise and build upon existing ground, the guitar and piano represent the most appropriate sources to explore. Berio makes an interesting comment regarding attempts by composers to break new ground with the invention of new sound sources:

…a musical instrument is in itself a piece of musical language. To try to invent a new one would be as futile and pathetic as trying to invent a new grammatical rule for our language. The composer can only contribute to the transformation of musical instruments by using them, and trying to understand post factum the complex nature of the transformations.\(^{27}\)

\(^{26}\) Marius Schneider, *El Origen musical de los animales-símbolos en la mitología y la escultura antiguas*, (Barcelona 1946) quoted in Cirlot, *Symbols*. p.131. Interpolations in parentheses are Cirlot’s.

\(^{27}\) Berio, *Two Interviews*, p.91.
He goes on to compare the logic and continuity of instrumental transformations with changes to a transport system, pointing out that change stems from the system itself – not the traveller.

**Introducing my compositions**

The order that the eight works appear in the thesis is not the order of their creation. Instead for continuity they are presented in two instrumental categories: chapter 2 – four compositions for guitar, and chapter 3 – four compositions for piano. The titles and instrumental details are listed here in chronological order:

- April 1999 - *Goarounds and Grounds* (guitar and flute)
- December 1999 - *Again the Rainbow* and *Always the Ocean* (piano duet pair)
- May 2000 – *Red, Yellow, Black and White* (two pianos and percussion)
- December 2000 – *Sand Dollar Mandala* (guitar solo)
- June 2001 – *Zardash* (piano solo)
- September 2001 – *Crystal Amulet* (piano solo)
- April 2002 – *Dry Red* (guitar, violin, cello and percussion)
- January 2003 – *Without Feet They Dance* (guitar solo)

Each composition is discussed in four subsections under the following headings: **Setting the square, Within the circle, Musical Analysis** and **Review**. While Setting the square generally alludes to formal procedures and Within the circle to expressive matters, these do not represent absolute demarcations in my compositional process because creativity cannot be scheduled. Instead, my work has proceeded intuitively in a circuitous manner without a formula. Musical Analysis of the scores was undertaken some considerable time after completion and realisation. Rather than demonstrating comprehensive analyses of the compositions, I have chosen to highlight a different area of interest and exploration in each work. The discussion on each of the compositions concludes with a brief section entitled Review which presents a summary of the preceding three sections. (Final conclusions are collected and summarised in Chapter 4 – Conclusion).
I believe that the first important test of a work is its translation into sound through the performer. The score’s capacity to convey the essential artistic image to a competent instrumentalist is the crux of its successful realisation. However, there are several factors which contribute to the risk of being misrepresented, which are intrinsic to score-based composition. The results of this trial process and matters arising from the score associated with its technical and practical execution are collected and observed briefly in *From composition to performance*, which concludes each instrumental chapter. Seeking the balance between composer and performer, I am presenting the work to the musical community with enough directions and information necessary to realise the work faithfully, (avoiding complex and prescriptive requirements) which might allow new perspectives to arise in its realisation through creative instrumental interpretation.

The circle in a square is the governing principle of the compositions presented, however the image has various reflections throughout the portfolio. In some, the symbolism is clearly revealed while in others it is embedded beneath the surface of the work. The more contemplative compositions are designed with the scope and depth to explore the interface connecting one’s inner and outer worlds. These may become vehicles carrying wordless thought and memory in sound. Khan presents a mystical view in a chapter headed ‘The Silent Life’:

> Sound gives to the consciousness an evidence of its existence, although it is in fact the active part of consciousness itself which turns into sound… It is therefore that sound appeals to man. All things being derived from and formed of vibrations have sound hidden within them, as fire is hidden in flint. And each atom of the universe confesses by its tone: ’My sole origin is sound’. If any sonorous body is struck it will answer back: ’I am sound’.

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Chapter 2

Compositions for the Guitar
Chapter 2

2.1 Introducing the compositions for Guitar

Background and influences

Although the classical guitar is one of the most easily accessed instruments in the world, it is very difficult to compose for. Its repertoire remains fairly small which accounts for the great interest in new compositions among ‘classical’ guitarists. The instrument is so idiosyncratic that its repertoire has been largely built up by guitarist composers who compose from the fretboard.

My own direct experience with the guitar commenced in my teenage years when I taught myself how to play some chords and strum just for fun. The next association came some years later (1992–5), when I was playing soprano saxophone in Balkan and Arabic bands which included the oud, saz and the guitar itself. The sound of the oud and the repertoire of traditional melodies, which I learnt and played by ear, has had an unintentional influence on my compositions for guitar.

A particularly influential experience came about in the period from 1992 – 2000, when I was involved with Flamenco music and dance. While exploring the history and evolution of Flamenco, I was exposed to a great deal of guitar music, and was collaborating closely with a guitarist from 1996 onwards. As a semi-professional solo dancer, I was able to direct the flow and form of a performance by requesting certain harmonic progressions within the choreography and by giving rhythmic direction from the feet. I became well acquainted with the Flamenco guitarist’s right hand techniques and percussive effects which are used at crucial moments in the dance to highlight and enhance the dancer’s expression.

It is significant to note that these informal influences have been absorbed as a participant observer and translated into my musical language. I have engaged with
these musics in a manner which is authentic to their traditions. While I acknowledge having a continuous attraction to the traditional music of Eastern Europe, the Middle East, India and Andalusia, I recognise and emphasise that its presence in my sound world and scores is purely intuitive.

**Approach and context**

I began to compose for the guitar when my husband John, (who plays classical guitar for leisure) persuaded me to write something. I found it very difficult to get started and felt hindered by the tedious but essential testing at the fretboard. My first compositions were introduced to Peter Constant, and the Sydney Guitar Trio – resident artists at a Guitar Summer School in Sydney in 1998. Since then I have been busy with the guitar, first writing a set of duos *The Salas Set* for the Z.O.O. Duo whose members were then active teachers at the Victorian College of the Arts. Next, the Sydney Guitar Trio requested a substantial work to include in their concert at the Darwin International Guitar Festival for the following year. I attended the premiere of the new trio composition *Dances to the Night Sky* (three movements) at the festival in 1999 which took place in the first year of this research project. The four guitar works in this presentation have come about from a relay of circumstances stemming from the premiere of the Trios, yet each new work has arisen with different requirements and reasons. As a composer for guitar my context has been defined through the initial circumstances outlined above. My work is tailored to the professional performers and the tertiary students that I have met personally. These guitarists represent a network of associates with whose standards, desires and needs I have become well acquainted and aim to accommodate in my guitar compositions.

Four compositions featuring the guitar are discussed in the next four main subchapters (2.2 – 2.5). The subchapter entitled *Setting the square* relates the circumstances and factors which initiated the work and influenced its formation, whilst *Within the circle* searches out the expressions and meanings which I have channelled into the concept symbolically. A *Musical Analysis* follows in which compositional details are exposed and finally a short *Review* serves as a summary.

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29 Z.O.O. Duo members are guitarists Peter Constant and Marion Schaup, who from late 1998 have been based in Amsterdam.
2.2 Goarounds and Grounds

Goarounds and Grounds is a sonic exploration of the mandala concept. There are five phases of tempi which evolve through processes of transformation and reflect the archwork of the overall structure. The ground figure is set in perpetual motion incorporating ongoing modifications like a spiral moving on shifting planes.

Setting the square – genesis of the work

For guitar and flute, Goarounds and Grounds was written as an entry into the composition workshops and competition event at the Darwin International Guitar Festival of 1999. It was workshopped and premiered by Raffaele Agostino from the Sydney Guitar Trio and Januz Kwansky, principal flute from the Darwin Symphony Orchestra. The piece was successful and won a commission to compose a larger work for the next festival in 2002.

One of the competition requirements I was obliged to address in Goarounds and Grounds was to feature the guitar. The coupling of guitar and flute often results in some form of arpeggiated guitar accompaniment to a flute feature; instead my work calls on the flute to play a supportive role to the guitar. The guitar part features a lot of cross-stringing which promotes resonance and is reminiscent of the sitar, especially in fast passages. The flute part provides colour and texture as a backdrop and is for the most part free of virtuosity. However, its role in the mandalic function (explained below) is significant. The music opens with a breathy emergence of pitch from the subtone. Wide vibrato and pitch bends follow with a visceral sound texture that attempts to draw the listener into the music with a heightened awareness of his/her own breathing. I decided to have the flautist play from the score (not providing a separate part), introducing challenges and roles of a completely different kind.

Having only just begun this project when embarking on the composition, Goarounds and Grounds was my first exploration of the mandala concept. My (seemingly) non-musical interests, Sufism and Yoga, revealed unexpected commonalities between the creation, practice and performance of music. I became aware of the nature and
motion of thought within the whole body, observing how erratic, destructive and repetitive it can be when left unharnessed. In this composition I was attempting to make music which would contribute towards a state of fluidity and integration between the senses through directed listening.

This approach is similar to that of Pauline Oliveros who states:

As a musician, I am interested in the sensual nature of sound, its power of synchronisation, coordination, release and change. Hearing represents the primary sense organ – hearing happens involuntarily. Listening is cultured and represents our experience and training. 

**Within the circle – concept and symbolism**

The contemplative and abstract ideas which shape the piece are encompassed within the cover illustration (see score). This was designed to act as a kind of guide; a point of continual return for myself in the compositional process, and potentially for the players in performance, also for the audience if printed in the concert programme. In this way the sonic rendition itself might be considered as a working mandala and the visual design as its blueprint or prompt. This calligraphic gesture illustrated on the score cover is based on a circle which fits inside a square. The shapely line is similar (in part) to the spiral motion of pen on paper when drawing a treble clef sign. The music, its title and its cover image are invested with movement, which translates to the disciplined passage of thought within the human being. Here I have adopted the mandala in motion, as a variation on the usual practice in meditation where stillness is the objective. Traditional Buddhist mandalas are created to draw the viewer into the centre of the mandala. It is universally understood that visual mandalas have their ultimate focus on the centre, and so too do those constructed on the floor in sand as ritual meditations, where the participants work the designs in sand from the outer edges and progress inwards to the centre.

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This attainment of the centre is not the end in itself, rather it is the approach which counts when engaging the mandala, described as follows:

Even though the mandala always alludes to the concept of the Centre – never actually depicting it visually but suggesting it by means of the concentricity of the figures – at the same time it exemplifies the obstacles in the way of achieving and assimilating the Centre.

Although I am not personally engaged with visual mandalas for meditation, all of my present involvement with mandalas stems from the recent realisation that my unconscious musical method has many resonances with some of the Eastern teachings on meditation.

In *Goarounds and Grounds* I have attempted to provide a medium through which the participants can focus inwards. The absence of pictorial and programmatic suggestions in the conception and title of the work frees the listener of imposed connections from the outside world, and presents instead an opportunity to internalise the sensory focus. Encouraging a state of equanimity, a listener might observe how thought processes migrate from the mind, transform the emotions, and find (sometimes unwelcome) lodgings in the body. This type of ‘self’ consciousness is taught in the practice of Yoga – although obviously with different techniques and in various forms. Mr. B.K.S. Iyengar, an influential yogi practitioner and teacher says “You should know that though the brain is situated in the head, the mind exists in the entire fabric of man.”

**Musical Analysis**

My mandala illustration symbolises the motion and direction of the melodic lines, connected with the ground bass harmonic presence, hence the neologistic title *Goarounds and Grounds*. The analysis will be traced within an outline of the form, observing the direction of contour, motion and modality.

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Brief Overview

The tonality of the entire piece is static – held on E. In it there is almost no harmonic progression and no modulation, but there is some modal interchange. After a relatively large introductory Lento section, the layout might appear to suggest an arch form, defined by the modifications to meter and tempo. The tempi headings are as follows: Andante, Allegretto, Animato, Allegretto and Andante. However, there is no exact replication of material in sections bearing the same tempo marking. Instead, a process of transformation affects the original motivic material as it passes through different time frames and textures. Delineation between the sections is managed smoothly under the disguise of transitional passages. This evasion of direct contrast and the absence of harmonic progression removes any landmarks or events in the course of listening and thus creates a sense of non-linear time. The archwork of tempi is designed to promote the overall containment of motion, as the music travels, as if in a full circle.

Analytical Details

Lento: crotchet = 60 (bars 1 – 16)

The ground bass on guitar establishes the fundamental pitch as E, with a strong presence of the raised 4th (the 5th string is retuned to A#). Harmonically the guitar spells out a chord comprising the 5th scale degree, two mirrored tritones, and a subverted 3rd degree. The G is ambiguously refracted in the form of its third upper partial, sounding D a 12th above. This harmonic was actually employed as a timbral device principally to add colour and light to an otherwise dark modality. The flute clearly plays the D but likewise omits the G. The pitches represented in the Lento are: E F A# B C D E (absent 3rd), acting like a phrygian scale with a strong gravitational pull to the tonic through the flattened 2nd, but different because of a secondary magnetic pull to the dominant note through the raised 4th. The 5/4 meter places the low E tonic on the strong beat until bar 12, which is the pivot point into either the optional improvisation or the codetta. The placement of the quaver duplet in the crotchet pulses oscillates between the second and third beats in each alternate bar, subtly evading total regularity and repetition. Here, and throughout the piece, the
ground bass and other patterns are intentionally irregular to avoid inducing a state of passive hypnosis.

**Andante**: crotchet = 76 (bars 17 – 30)

A new motif is played by the guitar which introduces both D# and a confident presence of G, both of which immediately change the modality. The flute’s phrases are given in augmented values derived from this motif. The pitches represented now are: E F G A# B C D# E, thus maintaining an E tonality but with less of a phrygian flavour. The scale construction features two augmented 2nds and four sets of semitones. The basic melodic contour is shaped by ornamental turns in semitone clusters around the upper tonic E, and dominant B pitches. A cadential figure is formed from the G, F and E stepping downwards. The function of the pitches in the motivic make-up outlined immediately above is retained through all subsequent alteration in the transformation process. The ground bass in this section is a straightforward broken octave where the upper and lower parts play in contrary motion, so that the descending melody appears to meet with the bass upper tonic. There is a transitional section of unison playing marked *stringendo* which augments the 3/4 to a 6/4 meter. A hemiola is outlined at bar 29 by the configuration of descending semiquavers, and underpinned by three E drone minims. There is a hint at the two main 6/4 accents in bar 30 which is metrically matched with the next section.

**Allegretto**: crotchet = 88 (bars 31 – 46)

The original ground bass emerges for two bars in 6/4 time, then the original 5/4 meter is restored. The regularity of the ground bass is altered, sounding the fundamental pitch every six, then every four beats. The flute motifs heard through bars 35 to 40 are imported from bars 17 to 20, and the metric alteration of the ground is compounded by their cyclic entries placed on beats 3, 4, 5, 1, 2, then 3, 4 and finally beat 5, which leads into the transitional section. The transition in 4/4 sets up some canonic imitation between the instruments which outlines the tritone, above the symmetrical placement of the fundamental E pedal note.
**Animato**: crotchet = 108 (bars 47 – 60)

In this section the E pedal is retained, although somewhat irregularly, and the ground pattern is temporarily relinquished. A motivic idea emerges from the extension and ornamentation of the semitones twisting and turning around B, set in alternating 5/4 and 6/4 meters. The passage from bar 51 to 55 is the only instance where chords are heard. There is a bass line underpinning the static E minor chords where the added C and A# notes just hint at chord changes. Above this is the longest and most highlighted flute phrase in the work. It descends from the high register to closure on the cadence figure G-F-E. The cadence figure is reiterated three times by the guitar, and finally it ushers in the next section.

**Allegretto**: crotchet = 84 (bars 61 – 68)

A similar texture and the alternating meter are maintained from the *Animato* section, again without the ground bass figure. The guitar parallel fifths with their glissandi articulations add a new aspect to the colour and resonance at bars 63 and 64. There is a glimpse of the ground bass in bar 65 before a passage of two part imitative counterpoint, which concludes this *Allegretto* section, again with the cadential G-F-E guitar octaves. An ornamented version of the cadential figure appears in the flute contour above.

**Andante**: crotchet = 76 (bars 69 – 87)

Stepping right out of the cadential phrase is an altered version of the guitar ground now sounding three tonic pitches across a two octave span, in an unbroken quaver motion. The shape of this figure is circular and places the highest E on the first beat of each bar, (all but once). Now in 3/4 time the flute repeats the ornamented cadential contour, above the newly configured ground until the 5/4 pivotal bar. A coda section concludes the composition in 2/4 time with rapid unison passage playing, in which only one reference to the fundamental low E pitch is given in bar 81. Descending through dips and turns in the scale, the flute and guitar sound the cadence rhythmically augmented in double octaves. The last word is had by the guitar in a hammered G#, presenting the 3rd scale degree decisively, effecting a *tierce de picardie*. 
Review – through the lens

*Goarounds and Grounds* explores an abstract subject matter – the mandala – engaging musical figures on multiple cyclic levels. Time is carried through metric structures in a transformative process which passes through five sections. Arch form is assumed in the sectional ordering of *tempi*, but since there is no direct repetition of material across the sections its structure is more like a spiral than an arch. Indeed the overall momentum of the work may be likened to two interlocking spirals on the horizontal and vertical planes. There is considerable but subtle variation applied to the cycles of *goaround* and *ground* material demonstrating the process of transformation. This may be translated similarly to unseen processes within the performer and listener. Thus *Goarounds and Grounds* invites active internal attention to the concealed workings of the human mind and organism.
2.3 *Sand Dollar Mandala*

*Sand Dollar Mandala* is designed as a contemplation series on a five-faceted notion, where time proceeds in alternating stages of stasis and motion. The contemplative aspects associated with the circle are housed within *Sand Dollar Mandala*’s framework – symbolically associated with the square.

**Setting the square – genesis of the work**

This piece for solo guitar was inspired while I was at the Darwin International Guitar Festival in July 1999. While taking a walk on the nearby beach one day at sunset, my husband John picked up a disc shaped shell from the incoming tide and presented it to me as a possible mandala. The little sandy disc is an echinoderm related to sea urchins and star fish, commonly known as a *sand dollar*. The marine animal secretes a fragile disc shaped shell of about three centimetres in diameter which is left in the sand when it dies. The shell presents five-fold radial symmetry and has a surface impression of a five pointed petaloid in its centre. The circumference is made up of five longer edges, each linked by a shorter one. The ten sides are not strictly straight and the meeting points of these long and short edges are rounded. Close-up photographs were taken for some simple geometric analysis in preparation for the composition. A photograph of the object can be seen on the Digital Video Disc (DVD) menu page of track 2: *Sand Dollar Mandala*.

The geometry of the specimen is reflected in the sectional layout of the piece. Set in rondo form it constitutes five main episodes of contrasting material which are connected by a relatively short ritornello theme, acting as a beginning and an ending to the main contents. The five longer edges on the object’s perimeter represent larger segments of the whole area and translate to the five larger musical sections. The shell’s alternate five smaller segments on the circumference correspond to the

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34 I dedicated the piece to John Handel, writing it both in his honour and as a musical challenge for him. Unfortunately the composition’s commencement was postponed for over a year, but eventually it was presented in December 2000 as a birthday gift.
ritornello theme. Using the enlarged photograph, I made measurements of the total ten edges, but found it difficult to determine precise points from which to measure, since the lines and angles are organic and have been irregularly rounded by the course of time and motion in the sea and sand. The proportion of long to short sides is approximately 5:3. Initially I was curious to experiment with a mathematical approach to making pitch and duration selections. However, these preliminary attempts to make correspondences between quantitative numbers and musical expression alienated me from any sense of creative inclusion. Instead I created and proportioned the musical material intuitively, maintaining a strong internal concentration on the image of the sand dollar and the idea of making a mandala in sound.

Contemplating the little shell being tossed around in the sea and sand gave rise to a rootless and unmetered, somewhat unstable motif. This short passage became the *ritornello* motif which holds the piece together and translates to the shorter edges on the sand dollar’s circumference. The ritornello beckons the turning of the mandala onwards, cementing the five larger sections of stronger material together and perpetuating the sense of rotary motion.

The time and motion factors applied to the composition convey a sense of rotary motion in a process which is analogous to the ritual making of mandalas in sand. The focus in both cases is on rotary motion as a process, rather than placing direct focus on the centre. This mandala composition is progressive as opposed to being developmental – metaphorically the division of segments is like the turning spokes of a wheel in revolution.

**Within the circle – concept and symbolism**

Symbology (the study of symbols) is a point of departure for me in musical exploration as it provides a universal language. Symbols can be used as tools of wordless and non-descriptive expression. Their acquired strength throughout the religions and cultures of the world over the ages gives me the confidence to use them. A widely recognised symbol sharing a resemblance with the sand dollar is a pentagram, where the human figure is seen as a microcosm, contained within a circle which is met at five points on the perimeter by the head, the arms stretched out to the
sides and the legs straddled below. The number five has several traditional historical meanings attributed to it. Those most closely related to my work are included as follows:

The pentagon, being endless, shares the symbolism of the perfection and the power of the circle and five is a circular number as it produces itself in its last digit when raised to its powers… Five is the marriage number of the *hieros gamos* as the combination of feminine, even, number two and the masculine, odd, three. It also symbolizes meditation; religion; agency; versatility and except in the East, the five senses…

As the fivefold petaloid impression on the sand dollar’s surface design underscores the idea of five in one, I sought out an appropriate quinary to carry and bind five separate ideas under one umbrella. The concept emerged through sensual memory as described in the next paragraph..

The scene where the sand dollar was encountered provoked associations between the environmental forces and the senses perceiving them. Briefly I will use descriptive language in lieu of abstract explanation to demonstrate the umbrella I chose to bind the five elements in the work. “The starkness of the sun going down over the sea, looked like a huge ball of fire rapidly heading for the water. The sea was dark and silvery with only a gentle sound heard in the breaking waves. The sand shifted softly underfoot and the air touched the skin, invisibly present. The combination of light and atmosphere produced hues of red, orange and purple in streaks across the sky like ethereal flames over the horizon”.

Since overtly descriptive landscape imagery would defeat the notion of the mandala, a more abstract approach was taken in titling the five main ‘movements’. Thus the titles: *Earth, Water, Fire, Air* and *Ether* are in fact the physical elements which were

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present and experienced in the sand dollar’s environment. In the mandalic function, these five Aristotelian elements provide the essential objects for contemplation and the five corresponding senses of perception: smell, taste, vision, touch and hearing, respectively offer raw material for further contemplation. This partnering of elements with the senses is established in the ancient Hindu Upanishads, and the Sufi teachings also explore these correspondences.

A paradox lies in the connections drawn by the Hindu metaphysical system linking elements with senses where the particular element given cannot be perceived by its corresponding sense. This paradox incorporates a hierarchical explanation of our perceptions which Daniélou writes about under the heading ‘The Theory of Elements’:

The sense corresponding to each of these elements can also perceive the lower senses but not the higher ones. Thus earth, whose corresponding sense is smell, can be perceived by all senses; water, which corresponds to the sense of taste, is perceived by all the senses except smell; fire (identified with light) corresponds to sight and cannot be tasted or smelled; air, which corresponds to touch, is no longer visible; and finally, ether can be perceived only through sound.

This presents a panorama for further contemplation. Briefly here are some of my preliminary thoughts extending from this paradox:

*Earth* is linked with smell, but has no smell or fragrance at all unless it has traces of or the effects of another element such fire, air, and/or water, as the processes of oxidisation or decay (of organic matter – a combination of elements) take place.

*Water* and taste are linked, but pure water has no taste unless it has traces from other sources, for instance, salt or something of the earth.

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37 Khan, *The Mysticism of Sound and Music*. pp.120-123.
Fire is linked with vision which we use to see material objects. Although we can see fire, like the sun, it is actually the source of light which illuminates that which we perceive (visually) – objects of the earth.

Air and touch are linked for contemplation, but the air doesn’t make active tactile connection with the body unless it is in motion – wind. The body tangibly knows earth, water and fire far more readily than the air whose presence is very subtle on the skin.

Ether and the sense of hearing is at first a confounding partnership since there is nothing audible in the realm of the ether. It lacks the necessary medium of air, through which sound travels to meet the ear drum where it is perceived.

Much has been written philosophically exploring the paradox of hearing and the ether. The notion of inaudible music is colloquially linked with angelic or celestial music and can be sometimes called the music of the spheres (celestial). A less casual perspective is given here in the words of Daniélou whose explanation reveals the forces of motion:

The universe is called in Sanskrit jagat (that which moves) because nothing exists but by the combination of forces and movements. But every movement generates a vibration and therefore a sound that is peculiar to it. Such a sound, of course, may not be audible to our rudimentary ears, but it does exist as pure sound.  

A view from the Western world on inaudible sound is given by John Cage. In Silence he muses on the nature of sound and silence in the context of art and life. The paradox held in the partnership of elements and their corresponding senses is the key to the contemplation which is ultimately gleaned from an individual bank of remembered experience.

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40 John Cage, *Silence: Lectures and Writings*. London: Calder and Boyers, 1968. This collection of lectures and articles covers the areas of composition process, experimental music, indeterminacy and much more with a perspective on silence.
Musical Analysis

In analysing this work, I will investigate its motion, and how this carries its structure. All pitch selections made in melodic formation and in harmonic construction are non-developmental, relating to a different fixed tonic in each section, and linked to an overarching cyclicity. Tonality and harmony will be considered in the *Earth* section only, as an example demonstrating how my pitch selections underscore motion. Otherwise pitch is put aside to focus on movement, meter and aspects relating to the mandala’s function.

*Earth*

The opening chordal section gradually descends in an alternating 5 and 3 beat meter, then grounds onto E octaves, establishing the tonic (bar 16). Out of the drone emerges the main material for this movement (in both structural and rhythmic senses). The fundamental bass motif – an E (with or without octave double) with the diminished 4\(^\text{th}\) dyad of C# and F (bars 17 – 31), is locked into the alternating 3 and 5 beat meter with small rhythmic variations and some irregularities to the metric alternation. While the bass motif is stable and solid it also carries motion locked within. There is a push and pull effect between E and C#, caused by F’s dual relationship; serving melodically as a leading note to E, and harmonically as the major 3\(^\text{rd}\) in C# (being the enharmonic equivalent of E#). An upper melodic line picks up from the end of bar 20 through to 31, which brings a brighter shade of harmony as the motif shifts up a step with an inexact transposition hinting at resolution by introducing pitches derived from E’s harmonic series – D and G# (bars 26, 27, 30). One pivotal bar brings in the ritornello theme picking up momentum and cancelling the previous tenets of meter and tonal centre.

The *ritornello* is like shifting sand; irregular and unfounded. Bar lines serve only to assist with the reading of shapes and gestures. The melodic contours suggest tossing and turning, shaking off the traces of the previous element to arrive at the new, unattached. This two part melody is difficult for the ear to catch hold of and settle upon. This elusive uncatchable ritornello has no strings attached, but each of the four times it emerges between movements it is made up of the same material for the first ten of its bars, in a combination of dotted and undotted quaver beats in asymmetric
measures. Rhythmically the second, fourth, sixth and eighth bars are consistently set in three semiquaver notes. After the running of the ten bars, the theme unfurls itself slightly differently each time, disassociating itself from the familiar toward the next contemplation through melodic direction, rhythm and tempo changes.

Water
This movement has a regular 5 beat measure. It begins slowly with an ambiguity facilitating freedom of movement. For the 8 bar opening (bars 47 – 54), the guitarist will find three simultaneous readings, which when undertaken will flow in a polymeter and prevent the motion being marked or measured. Firstly, and most obvious is the metric reading, emphasising the *tenuto* notes on the first beat of the bar which also highlights the movement of pitch from the low A up through B, C# to G, then running over the next four bars from low G up to A, B and C#. Within this flexible water medium a second reading can be integrated through the pattern of notes which brings the low A pitch to the ear as the starting point of a 4 beat cycle then switching to G for the next 4 bars, unsynchronised with the bar grid. The third aspect to integrate is the movement of the quaver figures whose irregular occurrences do not comply with the other two cycles. The syncopated quaver is always heard at a higher pitch, which breaks up the static crotchet pulse and attracts the ear’s attention by virtue of its placement in register. This contribution to the motion then feeds a quasi-melodic line of quaver pulses arising at bar 55 and underpinned by bass notes finding places to sound in between, until bar 60, when with a sweep a new gesture comes into play. In the under part, scales of rapid and liquid rhythmic variation cascade bringing added activity until a short pause at bar 67. A change of meter to 4/4, and a more rhythmically dense packing of the bars, gives an illusion of rushing towards a sluice, like a river’s acceleration towards the edge of the fall. On the brink with this potential energy at bar 73, the ritornello theme drops in and takes over for 15 bars, merging the sound and semiquaver motion into the next section without pause.

Fire
The 5/8 meter marked ‘with energy’ is built on 2+3 quaver beats, but carried mostly in semiquaver denominations. The opening six bars (88 – 93) demonstrate rhythmic

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41 These pitches are cited only as a means to delineate the cross metric cycle which runs against those which are evident in rhythmic notation - bar lines and durations.
compression and expansion which might be likened to friction on flint, then the
ignition of the flame. While the middle section is fairly steady, there is a quality of
flexibility stemming from the compression and expansion of the melodic line, but
which differs from the pliability in the previous movement – Water. Fire is energy in
motion and has the capacity to do constructive or destructive work. I do not wish to
impose a scenario on the music, but I suggest that the middle period from bar 94 to
the end of bar 111, is open for the contemplation of what fire might intrinsically be,
how it moves, and its potential to transform other elements in combustion. The
rhythmic writing is not a relentless delivery of speed and power to convey energy and
motion; instead, the organisation of note values in compression and expansion, and
the slight inflections of tempo (as at bar 101, 107 and 111), exhibit the fluctuation of
potential and released energy. The final bars (from 112 – 117), continue to surge and
recede in this way, but they are resolute in their push towards an exit. With an
accelerando, the ritornello theme appears again at bar 118, and comes to a close on a
pause whose attacca instruction issues the turn in the metaphorical wheel.

Air
Most of the Air movement is borne on a triple meter with simple rhythmic allocations.
The tempo is set at ‘easy’ and has unhurried accelerandi in 5/4 time (bars 142 and
154), prompting a rubato approach. These instances in two note quaver slurs might be
used to remember the sensation of air when breathing. This same two bar gesture in
(5/4 and 3/4) is preceded each time by a bar of 4/4. These changes of meter foster a
feeling of intangibility which conveys weightlessness, elevating it above the ground
(earth). The use of dotted crotchets and tied notes over bar lines (e.g. bars 139 – 140)
helps to obscure the strong beat and leads it away from the obvious and regular
pulsation of dance motion. This contemplation of air gives an illusion of stillness but
done so with a rhythmic motion designed to elude the measure. Its simplicity offers
subtlety and freedom by removing the demand to measure time. The pressing
accelerando passage of repeated off the beat B’s and the reference to the 5/4 motif
(bars 161 – 165) usher out this section. Two bars of ritornello repeated material are
inserted just before it is reiterated, for the last time.
Ether

The paradox of sound and silence is at the heart of the Ether movement. The music is designated to a 12/16 meter which is notated very precisely off the beat. The instruction is to play with a steady swing, but the sounds are placed in such a way that this swing can only be felt with keen grasp on the sounds which are not actually struck: ties and rests. The ear is denied the materialisation (as it were) of the pulse to pin down the main dotted quaver beats, against which the swing makes its reference. If the beats were to be uniformly and continually anticipated (such as in bar 2) there would be a resulting regularity which might convince the ear to accommodate the anticipated sound in place of the beat. So, the sporadic meshing of sounds placed on the beat to reference it, and off the beat to anticipate it, is a consistent feature of this movement. The swing feel is complicated further by the pairs of dotted semiquavers subverting the triplet, and also in the reversal of long and short values in the pairing of notes, so that the short precedes the long, as in bar 190. The frequent use of residual sound in the tied notes implies silence, but presents a bigger challenge to the ear than rests do. The execution of rests is effected by a definite performance action made as an event enhancing the beat, albeit silently. There is no fluctuation of tempo or sectioning off in terms of motion in this movement. Closure is effected harmonic resolution on E, and a short pause leads into the dissolution of the whole piece as a ritual.

Dissolution

This concluding movement draws parallels with the ritual destruction of Buddhist sand mandalas, where the creative labours in colour and geometry are dashed, swept up and cast aside, usually into a body of water. There is a definite disconnection made from the mind-set of meditation. Personal investments of time and energy in the mandala creation are abruptly forsaken. Similarly, the Sand Dollar Mandala score calls for detachment and departure at the end. The dissolution material bears no traces of the elements, except to close with the resounding of full bodied chords, which loosely resemble the work’s opening bars. These new chords, although composed of different pitches, are similar in their intervallic makeup and thus complete the circle of the mandala, so to speak. There are six pairs of 3 and 5 beat measures which move resolutely down the guitar neck and effect a full cessation of movement in the last bar. The work’s opening bars are paired in 5 and 3 beat measures which is mirrored here at
its closure. (This, incidentally was not contrived). The final chords and sounds are simply consecutive, they make no shapes in motion, they just happen. The ear perceives six parallel gestures, (in the paired bars of 5 and 3 beats) without any particular feeling of pulse. There is nothing to entice or lead the ear/mind backward to reflection or forward to development. There is a thinning down over the final five beats of the piece. From the final chord of three octave E pitches, each subsequent beat loses the sound of one E by a dampening of the string until apparent silence at the fourth beat when all E’s have been dampened. However, there is a sympathetic vibration factor acting on the untouched fifth string, (re)sounding with an extended fifth and final beat.

Review – through the lens

The Sand Dollar in the work’s title does not supply the subject matter for musical portrayal, instead it provides a point of departure whereby the object is stripped back to raw essentials – elements. The mandala aspect of the composition seeks out a concentrated speculation on the powers of perception and the role of memory in human experience. Each element is represented in isolation by a minimal amount of musical material which is delivered without development. As objects of musical contemplation, the ‘elements’ reflect a sense of the five respective energies, rather than being attached to descriptive or emotional associations. The overarching form is cemented by the ritornello theme and rounded up in the Dissolution. This implies a gesture of revolution, to accompany a contemplation of not only the elements and senses, but the wheel of life.

42 Some particularly resonant guitars will have resultant harmonics effected by sympathetic vibration of the second string B as well, since it is also untouched in the last bar.
2.4 Without Feet They Dance

*Without Feet They Dance* is an optimistic expression set in three dance movements acknowledging the plight of people who have been dislocated by war and denied safe refuge. The work represents not only those “without feet”, but those without somewhere to put their feet down to live and to dance. The three movements create a progressive dance series, throughout which the most active ingredient is a single cell.

**Setting the square – genesis of the work**

This project with its folio of compositions represents a challenge to my creative resourcefulness. The circle and square – as my chosen tools and symbols in exploring balance – offer no opportunity for prescriptive or descriptive compositional methods. *Without Feet They Dance*, however makes a small concession on this point to meet the commissioner’s request for a theme/programme which would connect the music to a specific cause.\(^{43}\) I have gleaned a few keywords from the poetry of Rumi\(^{44}\) whose life and artistic legacy make an apt historical connection with the political climate of the twenty-first century. In the thirteenth century the Mongols invaded Afghanistan forcing Rumi’s family to flee their home and find refuge in Turkey. The composition’s title and each of its three movements’ titles have been selected from the poem *A Great Wagon*.\(^{45}\) I have not used the poem’s own title nor interpreted it for description or portrayal; instead I have used it to connect my own sentiments and views to a historical parallel. This kind of compositional task with its humanitarian purpose is not foreign to me. I was an office bearer in Amnesty International and an active campaigner for global human rights in the 1980s. Over those years I also engaged with similar issues in special compositions for benefit concerts.

\(^{43}\) While at the Darwin International Guitar Festival in 2002, Dr Paul Nash, (an accomplished amateur guitarist), asked me to write a solo work especially for him to present at an Amnesty International Benefit concert in May 2003. He requested a work in two or three movements carrying a theme sympathetic to the issues concerned with international refuge.

\(^{44}\) The Persian poet and dervish Jalaluddin Balkhi was born in 1207, and is known as Rumi.

Within the circle – concept and symbolism

The four phrases – without feet they dance, the one great turning, the door is round and open, the stones are spinning – do not attempt to relate Rumi’s meaning or context in any way. For my purposes, the phrases are used symbolically as points of departure. (Incidentally, they are selected from three of its eight stanzas and appear in reverse order to that of the poem’s). The symbolic perspective of the composition’s title *Without Feet They Dance* was related in the introductory paragraph above.

The first movement’s title ‘The One Great Turning’ presents an objective view of the inexorable turning of the times and tides of the Earth, in a timeless continuum. However, the music itself conveys a subjective feeling – human experience, as it seems to tread a slow and difficult path. The tempo adjustments and variations allude to human toil, labour and fatigue. A recurring ‘signature’ motif appears throughout, as if to mark the cycle of the seasons.

Likewise the second movement’s title is symbolic and objective, while the music is experiential and personal. ‘The Door is Round and Open’ as a title is a statement of faith and hope. It speaks of the acceptance of those who wish to enter, and it suggests freedom for those who are incarcerated. A “round open door” implies a sense of welcome across global territories. The opening phrases herald an invitation which leads on to celebratory dance passages. The movement concludes with a recalling of the signature motif in a brighter light.

‘The Stones are Spinning’ as a title might evoke an image of the solar system from the outsider’s (or God’s) perspective, but where time and matter have been massively reduced to render the dimensions and functions of the universe as mere spinning stones. The musical involvement, like the other two movements, is on an earthly plane. It is claimed that exhilarating experiences cause the ground to move such as when people are intoxicated, or after engaging in twirling/spinning dances. The signature motif is finally presented in a heavily compressed disguise.
Musical Analysis

This work is built, bound and held on a minimal idea or unit – the semitone Ab to G – which appears in various formations and figures. It is the most active ingredient in the composition. I will refer to it as the signature semitone, tracing its path through the work, observing its harmonic and textural settings, and noting how these are modified in the passage of the three movements.

I. 'The One Great Turning'
The greater part of this movement is constructed on three levels: an upper melody, an inner harmony (also with a divided countermelody), and a bass line. The signature semitone announces the composition, appearing as a glissando duplet locked inside a G-B third. This motif is placed on weak and strong beats in an irregular pattern through the Adagio introductory section, where the meter is organised in hemiola sequences of 3+3 then 2+2+2 crotchets. It is initially surrounded by various natural harmonics resulting in the pitches D, B then E, under a searching chromatic upper melody line. Initially the pitch selection elusively suggests a G tonic, but a bass line emerges at bar 12 which establishes an E tonic at the cadence into Andante at bar 20. The signature semitone is always situated in between the upper melody and the bass line, and is usually heard as a self contained entity at punctuation points. However, some linear part interaction is evident at bars 15 to 16 and bars 65 to 67. Occasionally the semitone is loosened from the G-B cluster chord and altered slightly, in a move towards transformation (e.g. bars 65, 67, 73 then carried into 78 – 80). The central Con Vivo episode (bars 47 – 59) offers relief from the three part texture, and an apparent absence of the signature motif. However, amongst the web of rapid semiquavers, the Ab and G although not set motivically, become obvious in their oscillation through bars 55 to 58. The final 8 bars hear the signature semitone again in its original cluster motif form, alternating with a new assertive bass octave figure. The opening motif with a D harmonic is recalled intact at the conclusion, by which time it has lost its connection with E root notes.

46 The bar 1 harmonic on the 7th fret of the G string, produces D, a 12th above the fundamental, which is one octave higher than the D pitch produced from the harmonic on the 12th fret of the D string at bar 86. In terms of harmony they are the same but the timbral effect of the lower pitched harmonic at bar 68 renders the motif more clearly related to a G tonic than its more elusive introduction at bar 1.
II. ‘The Door is Round and Open’

The *signature semitone* has a more covert presence in this movement which is almost entirely written on two levels: melody and accompaniment, in which the *signature semitone* sounds in the upper part. The movement opens with pentatonic phrases and counter-motivic material selected from the G mixolydian mode, without any trace of previous ideas (or Ab).

New motifs are introduced for recycling and resetting, rendering the *signature semitone* a disguised feature. The Ab first sounds incidentally at bar 20, inside a phrase effecting a modal interchange, and the semitone with G comes in reverse order – ascending. A new motif emerges in the lower part at bars 25 to 26, which is immediately imitated in the upper part, with the *signature semitone* pitches again in reverse. The harmonised semitone *glissando* motif introduced at bar 28 appears in both reversed and original motion, another five times. Instances where the *signature semitone* appears in its original descent are heard melodically at bars 32, 39, 74, 81, 91, 92, and are usually syncopated. The central episode (bars 43 – 59) is demarked metrically, modally and motivically. In triple time now (except for four bars), it calls on all seven G mixolydian pitches and delivers a new oud-like melody on the first string. The double *glissando* semitone motif at bars 60 and 61 is used as a pivot to recall the bar 1 opening figure, which at bars 62 to 65 is sounded antiphonally with the motif from bar 26. The following section (bars 62 – 95) summarises the previous material and laces fragments of it together more closely. Like the first movement, this one concludes with the descending *signature semitone* in *glissandi* octaves, but now at a two octave interval. The figure is rhythmically assertive and clearly belongs to a G tonic. In contrast to the first movement, it concludes with an expanded register in triple octaves, but similarly ends with a D harmonic preceding the final semitone figure.

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47 While the melody is new material in this piece, its origins can be found in *Dry Red* (composed earlier in 2002), with similar contours, but in a different tonality, meter and textural setting.
III. ‘The Stones are Spinning’
Transformation of the signature semitone has taken place in the course of the two previous movements, and here again. It now presents four different perspectives. Firstly, its motion is nearly always reversed, (ascending rather than descending). Secondly, its appearances are compressed together rendering a new motivic identity (at bar 1) differing from the original motifs which were punctuated and separated in time by other material. Thirdly, the signature semitone now features above all else in the texture, which has been reduced from three to two to only one line (or part). Fourthly, the signature semitone is intrinsic to the movement’s assured tonality, as opposed to its previous appearances with ambiguous tonics and fluctuating modality.

This movement employs a secondary motif taken from the second movement’s opening, but in reversed pitch direction. Established at bar 3 after its attempts to gain footholds in bars 1 and 2, this secondary motif it is heard again at bars 8 and 13. There are small citations of the original Ab–G descending in bars 6, 11, 12, and finally, in synchronicity with the other movements, the signature semitone is sounded in octaves. Here in the penultimate bar it is amalgamated into a melodic contour, which confirms the homogenous synthetic mode for the movement on G, Ab, B, C, D, F, (G), with a strong chord on the tonic major.

After conducting this analysis I recalled with interest that Peter Sculthorpe employs a G –Ab-G figure with symbolic significance in his music. This particular semitone motion represents a pitch calculation based on the Earth’s mass and velocity in orbit. The astronomer Kepler (1571–1630) presented calculations based on the theory and notion of the ‘music of the spheres’. Neither Sculthorpe or myself use astronomical calculations or applications to compose music. Instead Sculthorpe adopts the G-Ab-G pitch palindrome on a symbolic level, whilst my own usage has arisen incidentally. To extend the point here however, I have noticed the synchronicity of my original interpretive perspectives for Without Feet They Dance – involving the cosmic bodies in a general sense (outlined in Within the Circle) – with Kepler’s planetary model.

48 In my work Without Feet They Dance the pitch palindrome presents in reverse order: Ab-G-Ab.
Review – through the lens

*Without Feet They Dance* broaches a prerequisite subject matter (specified by the work’s commissioner). Here I have approached the plight of refugees – as the given theme – without recourse to a portrayal of the obvious and immediate issues faced by refugees. The minimal key-words I selected from the associated poetry text have been employed to mount the work in a symbolic way, adding layers of meaning to the composition – which I believe imbues it with depth. The *signature semitone* provides coherency across the work’s entire form, as it suggests an aural reference point by which transformation may be experienced (although not necessarily noticed), throughout the three movements. The work prompts a contemplation on circles/spheres, cycles/orbits, time/history and humanity.
2.5 Dry Red

*Dry Red* is set as a vibrant dance characterised by dynamic colour contrasts and surprising rhythmic changes. It was created for a festive occasion – a festival premiere. Dance exemplifies the human body in connection with the earth, and is the metaphor which links the body and the earth together – both associated symbolically with the square. The internal musical processes can be likened to those of viticulture and are associated symbolically with the circle.

**Setting the square – genesis of the work**

This quartet for guitar, violin, cello and percussion, was commissioned for the Darwin International Guitar Festival in July 2002. When I was at the guitar festival in 1999, I also visited Kakadu and Litchfield National Parks. These places made a great impression on me, and I recognised a strong sense of ‘place’ which carried into the guitar festival itself. The Northern Territory is much celebrated in Peter Sculthorpe’s guitar compositions: *Into the Dreaming, From Kakadu, Darwin Samba, Tropic* and *Nourlangie*. These have enjoyed a high profile on the festival programme and set the tone. Even though I don’t intend to directly emulate Peter Sculthorpe’s landscape style, I found that when I began working on my commissioned piece, I too was compelled by the memory of places in the Northern Territory and Sculthorpe’s work *Nourlangie*. Rather than postcard imagery, it is the combined elements of colour, line, substance-texture and temperature which I have extracted for musical realisation. A work within a time frame of six to eight minutes for an ensemble in which the guitar should be central was specified to fulfill the commission. My choice of instrumentation was based on feelings for a dry sound quality. To complement the guitar’s central presence, I chose the violin and cello, thus forming a well integrated pitch range in the string section. The percussion section is written for one player on unpitched instruments which are deliberately chosen to create a consistent, coherent

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52 The instrumentation of *Dry Red* is similar to *Nourlangie* but for the reduced number of players in *Dry Red*.
dry red palette. All of the sound sources are generated from tangible, natural raw
materials: wood, strings and skins, articulated with horse hair, fingertips and nails.

**Within the circle – concept and symbolism**

Contemplating the symbolic association of the circle with the soul in my search for
expression brought the ancient Greek mythological gods Apollo and Dionysus to
mind. They might be considered the representatives of form and expression
respectively. Apollo epitomises aesthetics, order, perfection, precision and discipline,
and has a concern for external appearances. Dionysus on the other hand epitomises
indulgence and abandon; portrayed as one who gratifies the senses, is unbound to the
dictates of convention and often intoxicated with wine. The symbolism of the fruit
of the vine is what I found here to marry into the dance.

The grape resembles and represents the circle, carrying the notions of expression and
the soul. The grape bears a further two-fold symbolism. Its physical aspect means that
it will spoil and perish over time, but its spiritual context emerges in the process of
wine making. The grape’s life is preserved in the form of wine, but at the expense of
its individuality. The refinement of the human soul residing in the mortal flesh is the
underlying analogy here. This symbolic idea is held in the Christian faith and in many
other religions as well. Taking up on the idea of the wine, the Sufi teacher Hazrat
Inayat Khan expounds on its symbolic meaning saying:

> Wine comes from the annihilation of grapes, immortality comes from
the annihilation of self…the grape lives as wine, and the longer it lives
the better the wine becomes…This is the essence of all philosophy
and the secret of mysticism.

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54 For example see Hazrat Inayat Khan, *The Gathas: The Sufi Message. vol XIII*. Delhi: Motilal
55 Ibid. p 108.
My ideas and intentions found resonances in several of the symbolic meanings attributed to red as a colour.

It is the masculine active principle; fire; the sun; love; joy; festivity; passion; energy; health; strength; also blood and magnanimity...The colour of the desert.\(^8\)

My title *Dry Red* stands for two things: the red earth in the dry season, and dry red wine. These are symbolised in my illustration on the cover of the score, where the calligraphy strokes describe curves which are ambiguously arranged to conjure either a bunch of hanging grapes or a very fleshy dancing woman, framed in a plain square.\(^7\) The grape and the art of viticulture provide a lens through which drinking and dancing can be viewed as a celebration of physical elements and mysticism.

One of my purposes in this compositional project *Music of Balance* is the reconciliation of opposites. *Dry Red* brings the religious ideas and secular activities together in a way which is relevant to the times and the society in which I live. At first this looks like a contrast to Ross Edwards, who has divided his works into two distinct categories: sacred and *maninya* (dance). His dance style works acknowledge the musicians and audiences who require and enjoy a more accessible and functional kind of music. Edwards writes:

About 1980, recognising my inability to work solely on a disembodied spiritual plane but unwilling to relax the gnomic severity of the *Sacred Series*, I responded with enthusiasm to my own impulse to leap in a new direction and compose exuberant dance music … I began to produce works in …my *Maninya* style…\(^8\)

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\(^{56}\) Cooper, *Encyclopaedia of Traditional Symbols*. pp. 40 -41.
\(^{57}\) Actually the woman image emerged entirely by accident, as my focus was directed on the shaping of grapes. The Venus-like woman was pointed out to me by other people soon after I’d drawn her.
Two works demonstrating this distinction are *Kumari* (for piano) written in the contemplative, static ‘sacred’ style, and *Black Wattle Caprices* (for guitar). Of the latter work Edwards writes in his programme note: “They’re light but intricate pieces, the first a song, the second a dance, or more exactly a *maninya* (Australian dance/chant)”. Edwards’ delineation of the *sacred* and *maninya* into separate series of compositions is in direct contrast here to my own approach for *Dry Red*, which unifies the religious and secular within one work. However, the heart of the matter reveals far more resonance than disparity between Edwards and myself.

**Musical Analysis**

Although *Dry Red* assumes a dance on the surface, I have not modelled the work on any existing dance form or structure that I am acquainted with. Essentially, the whole work deploys time through a rhythmic meshing which allows the pitches – in the form of motifs and themes – to be threaded and woven in. *Dry Red* is the working of time through rhythm rather than the workings of harmony through themes. This is achieved in processes of transmutation rather than development. Development is a process which necessitates referral back to the initial material, whereas the transmutation process looks and moves only forward.

Material when undergoing *development* retains its presence and traces of identity – these remain of ultimate interest throughout the composition’s duration. *Transmutation* on the other hand occurs when the initial matter/material is not manipulated as such – it is relinquished and replaced. In *Dry Red* transmutation is effected by the application of certain techniques and devices to the existing material during transitional passages. These time/spaces allow the shedding of the old, and the emergence of the new. Attempting to uphold metaphorical translations in the musical analysis (albeit in hindsight to the composing of it), I have noticed a simultaneity in spiritual and physical arenas concerning transmutation – it begins with renunciation.

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Formal Outline

Although I have delineated the music into the sections listed below, the compositional work was entirely intuitive and its form assumed itself organically. Sectional structuring in the compositional process took place keeping the prescribed time frame in mind. The outline shows a clear arch form, where two themes are introduced early in the work and reinstated near the end. This reveals an incidental similarity with sonata form. However, my disinclination towards sonata form is evident in the absence of any development of these themes between their exposition and reiteration. *Dry Red* proceeds through juxtaposition of material in rhythmic rather than harmonic schemes. In my unplanned negation of sonata form I have gained a new perspective on the passage and workings of time in the fibres of rhythm. (The labelling below is not done with faithfulness to the technical meanings of traditional terminology, but is done here for the sake of comparison, convenience and simplification).

**Introduction:**  
*Moderato* 4/4 (bars 1 – 6)

**Exposition:**  
theme 1 *Moderato* 4/4 (bars 7 – 12)  
theme 2 *Con moto* 4/4, then 5/4 (bars 13 – 34)

**New non-development contrasting sections:**  
A - *Allegretto* 15/8 (bars 35 – 42)  
B - *Allegro* 3/4 alternating with 3/8 (bars 43 – 63)  
C - *Comodamente* 3/4 alternating with 6/8 (bars 64 – 110)

**Reiteration:**  
theme 1 *Adagio liberamente* 4/4 (bars 111 – 116)  
theme 2 *Vivace* 4/4 (bars 117 – 122)

**Extended coda:**  
phase 1 *Quasi presto* 4/4 (bars 123 – 136)  
phase 2 *Fuoco* 4/4 (bars 137 – 144)

The scope of this analysis confines me to cite three contrasting examples which demonstrate how material is transmuted to fabricate/construct the sectional structure of *Dry Red*. The first and second examples show the emergence of new material, while the third shows the reinstatement of old material.

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61 This is not to say that I am making a rhythmic translation of sonata form.
Example #1:
Theme 2 (bar 13) to non-developmental section A (bar 35)

What I have called ‘theme 2’ appears at Con moto (bar 13) in semiquavers on the guitar underpinned by E and B pedal notes on cello. After some rhythmic and drone support, the violin takes the motivic cadence figure at bar 20 after which a canonic dialogue is established and upheld until bar 29. This is done by passing fragments of the theme between the guitar and violin. The guitar pizz articulation in bars 21 and 22 parrots the violin pizzicato 4ths, (with diminished 5th ornamentation) from bar 15. Now at bar 22 through to 24, this figure is translated into similar intervals on the guitar in quick syncopated chords. The texture is thickened and the motion is compelled forwards with a rhythmic figure that has gradually intensified from its first appearance in bar 15, to be tightly locked in on the claves at bars 21 to 26 with the other instruments. There is release from the cello drone at bar 27 when it is taken over as E octaves on violin, and the cello instead doubles the guitar in a surging scalic motif of exit from theme 2. At this pivotal point (bar 28) the meter is lengthened to 5 crotchet beats and the E drone is passed back to the cello. The tonic is then relinquished for a considerable time. The melodic octave unisons in bars 29 and 30 disassociate themselves from the anchors of the previous section. Transition is facilitated by the triplet figure introduced and established in this passage preparing for the mesh with the coming 15/8 section at bar 35, which allows entirely new material to emerge.

Example #2
Non-developmental section A (bar 35) to section B (bar 43)

The (A section) Allegretto in 15/8 time delivers a new melody on the cello which is held by a rhythmic cyclical grid running counter to the phrasing and the meter. The tom toms continue to play the three beat rhythmic cell which was introduced at bar 32 in the transition, and then set up as an anacrusis to kick in this 15/8 section (at bar 34). The guitar and violin assume totally harmonic and rhythmic roles, playing gently dissonant plucked chords interlocking in a four beat cell over a five beat bar. This polymetric grid is sustained for forty beats before the guitar forces its way out by taking a fragment of the cello’s melody in augmentation (on F#, G#, A, B, C at bars
39 to 41), while dipping in to echo its former role with the violin at bar 40. The cello theme is bolstered by the guitar’s octave reinforcements while the violin maintains the out of phase *pizzicato* rhythmic cell. This section climaxes with rhythmic alignment which abruptly terminates on a truncated beat, cropping the measure to 14/8. It is this fifth undotted beat in bar 42 which gives an element of shock value while making the rhythmic transition to 3/4 time practical in performance. The pitch ascent and crescendo leading to this point of silent tension enhances the impact that the impending juxtaposition makes. The *Allegro* (B section) is different in every way. The alternating 3/4 and 3/8 measures host a textural and timbral departure from the previous sections as well as their more obvious metric diversion. This B section drops in at bar 43 like a “butt splice” sweeping the listener up into the high register on all instruments inside the new sectional meter and tempo. The effect is one of momentary stasis then change, without any sense of traditional resolution. Here the guitar plays a riff-style staccato melody over a backdrop of strings playing various harmonics (mostly artificial) and small *glissandi* which lend it colourful support.

**Example #3**

Reiteration of theme 1 (bars 111-116)

The pause on the first chord of this *Adagio liberamente* section acts as a hiatus, opening an opportunity for new material to emerge. However, the first theme reappears here on the violin, recalling the guitar at bar 7, now two octaves higher and pausing for the interspersed reflections of the guitar. The texture is significantly reduced by the total withdrawal of percussion, and the minimal contribution of the cello which plays only a sustained high harmonic and a few *pizzicati*. This narrowing and sudden stilling puts a spotlight on this section. In performance this is where the guitar is highlighted, effectively putting the reiteration of the first theme into the background. This reduces its thematic importance but offers it nonetheless as a faint reminiscence. This theme does not proceed as it did in the first hearing, instead it stalls and hesitates before suddenly unravelling itself into theme 2 at bar 117, *Vivace*.

The transmuted reemergence of themes 1 and 2 in the reiteration section makes an analogy with the grape symbolism, where the essence of the original substance (theme/grape) is still relevant.
Review – through the lens

*Dry Red*’s features a considerable diversity of material and momentum. Contrast is presented in a smooth passage and carriage of time which is afforded by its rhythmic schemes. The delivery of its two main themes near the beginning and near the end of the work draw a loose resemblance to Sonata form, which might suggest a linear experience of time. However, the definitive absence of thematic development between the so-called ‘exposition’ and ‘reiteration’ sections steers the work on a non-linear path. It is the alternative process of thematic transmutation employed in *Dry Red* which generates an experience of time akin to a successful passage through a small labyrinth. The composition embodies a duality for participation and contemplation – physical form and expression in dance, and mystical form and expression in symbolism.
2.6 From Composition to Performance

Each of the four guitar compositions is listed here with brief observations relating to the trial process of interpretation and performance.

Considerations and observations

In workshopping Goarounds and Grounds I found that my score was executed without any need for revision. Only a few points were raised by the players regarding cross-stringing details on the guitar part, and some clarification was sought by the flautist who had never encountered the wide vibrato and improvisation option that appears in the opening section of the work. On the other hand the next performers to approach this score had no qualms about it, vindicating the notation and writing.

Sand Dollar Mandala was played at home by John Handel immediately after the score was prepared. Many small revisions were made which arose from his own preferred fingering and management of the instrument, but were probably coloured by my influence in the close collaboration. Since there had been no opportunity for the festival guitarist (Owen Thompson) to consult with me before the work’s premiere, his rendition was a total surprise to me. Maintaining an accurate reading of the score he brought a delicacy and stillness I had not envisaged. His interpretation is not necessarily definitive, but I am pleased to discover that the score alone can accommodate a range of perspectives. About two years after drafting the Sand Dollar Mandala composition I discovered that Larry Sitsky had written The Five Elements: Sonata for solo guitar in 1974 with surprisingly similar conceptual ideas, but it is ultimately very different. Sitsky’s work is complex, employing serial and extended instrumental techniques. It was written for, and recorded by Timothy Kain.

The conditions under which I wrote Without Feet They Dance were personal and pleasant but involved the accommodation of prescriptive technical requirements. Forwarding drafts in installments to the work’s commissioner, I received ongoing

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queries and suggestions over technical/notational details concerning the duration of vibration of specific strings. I found that some suggestions to render precise durational quantitatives not only obscured, but misrepresented the intended rhythm, harmony, melody and articulation. I had to consider whether to use notation as a literal performance directive, or to employ it as a language of symbols which can be approached somewhat more musically and descriptively. Out of the many different ways to write the same thing, I endeavoured to find the most mathematically accurate one which would also convey interpretive matters – such as phrasing (which seldom appears on contemporary guitar music),\textsuperscript{64} metric and rhythmic accents, agogie and harmonic stresses – rather than the technical matters of execution.

Having established this approach so carefully, rhythmic misreadings in \textit{Without Feet They Dance} were present at its premiere. However, it was interesting to hear one persistent pitch misreading – D in the melodic line erroneously played as Db – in the final movement. Initially I found the intrusive pitch quite attractive and considered adopting it. However, after careful deliberation I discovered that the foreign pitch detracted from the overall direction of tonality, which was leading conclusively to G\! mixolydian. It seems that the process of realisation may uncover possibilities untapped in the composition stage, albeit in the form of performance deviations.

The instrumental parts of \textit{Dry Red} deliberately present no technical difficulties because the writing was tailored to meet a minimal rehearsal schedule. Although the performers contracted to give the premiere were of the highest standard, they were unable to prepare the seven minute work adequately in the three short rehearsals allocated in the festival. Fortunately, the opening and closing sections held together tightly enough to make a very favorable impact on the audience at the premiere, but the main body of the work did not represent the score at all.

\textsuperscript{64} Peter Sculthorpe addresses this problem by writing - “legato slurs and phrase lengths represent the intended musical sense, although their actual sounding durations may not last for their notated lengths”, in his performance notes for the guitar solos: \textit{From Kakadu} and \textit{Into the Dreaming}. London: Faber Music, 1994.
A year later I hired a quartet of tertiary students from Sydney Conservatorium who dedicated a little more rehearsal time to *Dry Red*, and recorded it for this presentation with much greater success.

These experiences with the realisation of the guitar works alerted me to physical and financial realities of rehearsal time. I have also become cautious with using unusual notation, realising that I cannot presume accomplished professional musicians are, by definition, well versed in extended techniques and departures from standard approaches to reading. Notwithstanding this, I do believe that my presence as the composer resides in the written score, and the performers are invested with the role and responsibility of artistic re-creation. This is the case especially for premieres, where the first audition is like a birth, giving flesh to the spirit of the music. I refrain from writing lengthy and prescriptive performance instructions because I feel they can minimise, if not negate the performer’s opportunity to contribute his/her specialisation to the rendition of the composition. Trusting instrumentalists to read basic notation accurately, I credit them with having a more intimate knowledge of their instruments than I do, so I provide only brief performance directions and include programme notes for basic guidance in technical and interpretive areas. To some extent there is a resonance here with David Lumsdaine’s comments made in the programme notes for his work *Mandala V* (1988):

> An author or composer has a privileged view of their work but I do not believe that theirs is the ultimate view. What they might have meant by their work is not important compared to what the reader or listener may understand through the work.

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65 Notwithstanding this, technical difficulties arose which have compromised the recording to some degree. The studio’s engine room was out of order on the day of recording, so a portable tape recorder was used inside the performance room. Furthermore, the best and final take was later found to be unuseable due to oxidisation of the tape at that particular place. While these problems are easily solved, they entail delays in rebooking the studio and require extra finance to rehire the musicians to re-record the work, the costs of which I am unable to meet.

66 Having made this statement, I do acknowledge that some degree of human error is inevitable.

Chapter 3

Compositions for the Piano
Chapter 3

3.1 Introduction to the compositions for Piano

Background and influences

My early formal musical training took shape in piano lessons with a local suburban teacher from the age of eight. Many years later, when I was preparing for the L.Mus.A Diploma of Performance examination as a private piano student with the great pedagogue Miss Nancy Salas, I decided to write music. Miss Salas strongly encouraged me to study composition, recognising some ability in me. However, soon after setting a course of study for me, she sadly passed away. So it was alone that I analysed solo and small ensemble piano scores, training myself in the art of composition as best I could. The composers who were particularly influential on my initial development were Bartók and Debussy. Their music naturally led me to investigate the work of many others who followed in their paths, such as Ligeti, Messiaen and Berio. However, in my piano works I detect the strongest imprints stemming from the two contrasting sources of Bartók’s Mikrokosmos and Debussy’s Preludes. The piano is capable of generating an enormous spectrum of sounds, and it also answers the call of rhythmic precision, which it delivers with impact. These aspects of sound are what interest me most and are what I seek to explore in my compositions for the piano.

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68 Miss Nancy Salas founded the Bartok Society in Australia when she was resident keyboardist with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra under Eugene Goosens. She was a commanding lecturer in piano and keyboard at Sydney Conservatorium for almost thirty years.
69 Financial and family circumstances prevented me from undertaking formal studies in composition.
Approach and context

As a piano teacher and performer now of many years standing, I have acquainted myself well with the instrument’s repertoire. Before starting this project, I had written a considerable amount of music for solo piano and small piano ensembles, for specific concerts at which I performed with local colleagues for community audiences. I had also written some intermediate level pieces for teaching purposes. The four works presented in this chapter represent a clear departure from my former style, which had been designed primarily to be attractive and accessible to musically untrained audiences. In setting those requirements aside, I hoped to explore my creativity more deeply and chart territory I had not yet ventured into. However, in saying this I do not propose to sacrifice the appealing qualities of musical expression, but to invest my creative forms with new rigour and serious contemplation to embody this co-existence of apparent opposites.

While external circumstances inevitably impose limitations of some sort on one’s creative ideas, they are a fact of life and call for a balanced approach. My new piano works have been born of the circle and the square, each with a different reason and reflection.

75 By external circumstances I mean the availability of performers, venues and recording facilities. All of these require financial and technical support which is generally unaffordable.
3.2 *Again the Rainbow and Always the Ocean*

*Again the Rainbow and Always the Ocean* is a paired work which embodies the timeless and ageless qualities of the human spirit. These are set in a sonic vibration of energy, light, colour and motion. The music engages with loss of life and attends to profound grief by employing mantras in cyclic processes which culminate and resolve in states of stimulated tranquility and dynamic calm.

**Setting the square – genesis of the work**

Sharda and Noor Oerton were aged four and two years when they lost their lives in a fire which overtook their home on Friday May 21\textsuperscript{st}, 1999. Their parents Hakim and Miriam had brought the girls (who were only babies at the time) along with their older brother Sharif to the Blue Mountains Conservatorium, where I was conducting the Early Childhood Music classes until the end of 1997. About 18 months later my contact with the family was re-established in the aftermath of the tragedy. I was asked to play reflective piano music in the service following the funeral. It was during this service that I discovered with a strange surprise (since I had encountered Sufism independently in 1997) that Hakim and Miriam were the leaders of the Sufi movement in Australia.

Sufism dates back to the 6th century BC in Persia with Zoroaster (Zarathustra) and is a movement which has incorporated teachings from Judaism, Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam and Christianity within a vision of unity. It is a method rather than a religion, which teaches that imposed dogma should be rejected but not interfered with. The Sufi path seeks to develop the intuitive faculty and the language of the heart through symbolism.

In the difficult months following the fire and loss of life, it became clear to me that music holds great power to communicate deep feelings which words cannot adequately convey. I realised that I could offer music in deep memory of Sharda and Noor in a kind of tribute to their lives and identities which might offer a little comfort and healing. The idea of composing music with such altruistic expectations inspired
me, but at the same time it was a daunting prospect. I was given all of the precious remaining photographs of Sharda and Noor along with a list of attributes and qualities for each girl compiled by their mother. As I was trying to get started, I began to feel doubtful about undertaking the creation of beautiful and suitable music in the face of grief. My belief and resolve in the proposed gift was fortunately confirmed in two dreams I had when trying to start each of the pieces. Without relaying the dreams in full detail here, I understood that to present the music would be a life giving gesture.

**Within the circle – concept and symbolism**

Photographs of Sharda and Noor (DVD track 5i and 5ii menu pages), show the two beautiful, golden haired little girls which prompt memories of their lives. I had the idea to create music which would act on a more vibrational level than a pictorial one, to induce a deep timeless and ageless memory of their souls. Khan says:

> Before its incarnation the soul is sound. It is for this reason that we love sound...The mystic says that sound comes from the soul, the heart and the mind. [66]

I sought out the musical luminosity and energy which reflected each girl’s personality by constructing a palette of colour to enhance and uphold these images. Because this composition arose from such unspeakable circumstances, it was necessary to avoid retelling the events, but to acknowledge the loss. Here I began thinking about language for imagery in the work’s titles that would elude time and events. The circuitous aspect of Haiku poetry gave me a model to avoid active and passive entanglements in language. Joachim Berendt explains how the Asian languages differ from the European in the use of active and passive modes saying:

> ...the thinking behind the Chinese and Japanese languages, does not move in a straight line from the subject to the object with the aid of the verb. It circles around its object and envelopes it until it is specified... [77]

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This indirect approach to words helped me search out titles for the duets which would suggest time and place with the simultaneous capacity to evade them. The relationship between sound and the body is illuminated eloquently here in the words of Vilayat Inayat Khan who says:

Each creature is a crystallisation of a part of this symphony of vibrations. Thus we are like a sound petrified in solid matter which continues indefinitely to resound in this matter and the word became flesh

and the word became flesh

and the word became flesh

and the word became flesh

and ..... 

So you must become pure vibration and pass on through the other side.

While mantras are thought of as words, their power arises from sound. Otherwise a mantra is a word or a short phrase vocalised, whose sounds carry vibrations more important than their meaning. Thus the mantra element in this composition is given instrumentally and mentioned in the subtitles Mantra and Song for Sharda and Mantra and Pavan for Noor. The titling of the piano duets was shaped by the ideas above in conjunction with a list of attributes given to me by the girls’ mother. The titles are explained below:

Again the Rainbow holds an image with an implied promise of renewal in the word ‘again’. There is colour and movement for the memory of Sharda corresponding to her strong, sensual presence with energy like the glow of sunshine, pulsating with light and life. The colours associated with Sharda are bright ones, especially pinks, oranges and yellows, hence the rainbow. Metaphorically the element ‘air’ is the substance of and the setting for Again the Rainbow.

78 Vilayat Inayat Khan, quoted in Berendt, ibid. p.34.
Always the Ocean conveys imagery and hope. The words imply a constancy which eludes specific events and places. For Noor's memory there is a projected palette of deep greens, purples and blues. She had ethereal qualities, divine sweetness and serenity. Her music is imbued with and moves metaphorically in the ‘water’ element.

**Musical Analysis**

The analysis demonstrates the cyclic use of minimal thematic material – mantras. Repetition and multi layering of the mantra material, drones and pedals are exposed as the tools in the recycling and resetting of mantras.

*Again the Rainbow: Mantra and Song for Sharda*

After five bright opening fanning gestures, the four note ascending mantra on G#, A, B and C is introduced at bar 11. Throughout this first section the mantra motif is reinforced in single and double treble octaves inside a bright pitch bass framework which continually confirms E as the fixed tonic. Gradually the mantra octaves fragment or split across three hands (bars 25-6), to be articulated in pulsating semiquavers while locked into the clearly defined 6/8 pulse. This pulse, however, twice eases with descending pitches into 7/8 closures at bars 17 and 24, preparing for the next section’s unfolding.

The song-like central section from bar 33 is cast in a more leisurely tempo of alternating 7/8 and 6/8 meters. A warm alto register melody is offset by a sprinkling of unrelated motifs in the extreme treble. This effects a duality where the attraction of the melody draws an emotional involvement, and the sparkling timbres above command attention. This melody/song subtly shifts through parallel progressions to land on an evasive D for two bars before settling on C in bar 51, as the fundamental tonic until the end of the piece.

The final section repeats the original four note mantra transposed down a semitone in a completely transformed colour and atmosphere. The mantra sounds in different voicings and textural densities, woven around oscillating figures and pedals held on C (and sometimes C#) in a swinging 12/8 metre.
Always the Ocean: Mantra and Pavan for Noor

Like the first duet, the second has a central episode flanked by mantra sections on either side. It is introduced gently like a curtain of water in separated streams of dotted minims, dotted crotchets, crotchets and quavers in a 6/4 metre distributed across the four hands. The scale used in this introduction is a dorian/phrygian fusion transposed to A and extends across most of the keyboard range. The mantra section then begins, taking its pitches from this mode but anchoring the bass on Bb then D respectively for a two phrased mantra. The 6/4 meter alternates between 2+4 and 3+3 crotchet beat groupings, which at a rather slow tempo creates rhythmic ambiguity.

Then at bar 29, the Pavan emerges comfortably in a quadruple metre, sitting on non-functional harmonic changes around Db, before a more dedicated progression of four chords is established at bar 49 and repeated in various configurations. These chords are loaded with gentle dissonance, which only hint at harmonic tension and resolution.

There is a transitional four-bar passage (bars 65 – 68) of sounds reminiscent of the introduction in a multi layering of descending scales, the altered mantra and E pedals in the inner parts. At bar 69 the mantra arrives in its original pitches over a syncopated D pedal. After another short section of transition and fragmentation, the mantra emerges at bar 85 fortified by octave voicings in the treble register, in augmentation and anchored on an E bass pedal. There is a multi-layered meter securing the mantra in this section. The E mid range pedal moves in six pulses per bar evading the strong beats while the mantra on top plays on the two main beats. The bar is divided into four pulses in the bass part where again the pedal note refrains from sounding on the strong beats. Amongst this the Pavan chord progression is gently reechoed. The descending mantra then turns around just before the end, ascending through E,F,G,A, (reminiscent of Sharda's rainbow music), then Bb,C,D,E vanishing into the high register before the music finally comes to rest on a very deep Bb.

Review – through the lens

This paired duet work arising from tragic circumstances represents a challenge and call beyond anything I had ever envisaged as a composer. *Again the Rainbow* and *Always the Ocean* are creations which draw on the language of the heart through symbols. The music emerged through a process of sublimation of my personal distress, as opposed to making an immediate emotional response to the grievous circumstance. The repetitive motivic mantra cells continuously undergo subtle change as they shift through new cycles, phases and dimensions in the course of each piece. This invites a stimulated (as opposed to a passive) participation in the music which also embodies the properties of energy, light and motion translated from the timeless individual attributes of the deceased souls. This paired work *Again the Rainbow* and *Always the Ocean* is a vehicle for the ongoing contemplation of loved ones and the mysterious cycles of life and death.
3.3 **Zardash**

The ultimate source of light and energy – the sun – is the symbol behind Zardash. The music is characterised by ephemeral sprays and strings of colour which continually shift and oscillate revealing new aspects of motion and texture. The musical gestures move in ways which always evade focusing on a motif or theme. This is analogous to looking directly into the sun and being imprinted with a blind spot which then distorts visual perception and conceals objects.

**Setting the square – genesis of the work**

In May, 2001 the young concert pianist Aaron McMillan requested a short piano solo to include on a recording of Australian piano music. The project was initiated as a cultural gift representing Australia to the Alexandria Library in Egypt, celebrating its rebuilding. Aaron wanted to have the piece within six weeks, and so I began working immediately with an idea I had just encountered. In a Sufi book Zardash appeared in a chapter on symbology under a subheading ‘The Symbol of the Sun’, reading as follows:

> In ancient Persia there used to be a gold disc behind the head of the King, picturing him as the Sun, and they used to call this disc Zardash. The name Zarathustra has the same origin; the word simply meant gold disc.  

The rebuilt ancient Egyptian library (as the destination of the impending composition) bore a connection with the ‘zardash’ in my mind (if only in a small way). People who emanate light, energy, power and love have been recognised for millennia, and recorded in art symbolically with a gold circle around the head and shoulders. The zardash is now more commonly known as a halo, nimbus or aura. The source of these phenomena is understood to be divine, and therefore it is a sign of divine presence in humanity.

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In *Zardash* there is no preconceived harmonic plan or sectional design and no ear-catching thematic or rhythmic material. This has an analogous counterpart in the notion that when looking at light itself, nothing is illuminated. I sought to capture the behaviour and movement of light in sound, similar to Ravel’s piano masterpiece *Jeux d’eau*[^61] with its breathtaking play of water in sound. I have not consciously drawn on specific models or methods to construct the piece, but commonalities with impressionism may be evident.

**Within the circle – concept and symbolism**

The Greek myth of Icarus relates a connection with the experiments I made in composing *Zardash*. The ingenious creator and inventor Daedalus made two pairs of wings, and taught himself and his son Icarus to fly. Icarus was instructed to follow his father on a journey, making his flight at a moderate level to avoid the clogging effect of dampness when flying too low. He was also warned not to fly too high because the wax which sealed the feathers into the wing form would melt when close to the sun. The young man however, was exultant in his flight, and being very much attracted to the beauty of the sun, he soared upwards. As he did, the wings melted and were unable to sustain his flight, so he crashed and died.[^82]

Icarus’ blind ecstasy in the joyride causes his loss of perspective and subsequent demise. Similarly, when harmonic anchors are separated for long intervals of time by material in the high register, it is difficult to maintain motion and direction. A composition can too easily meander, and in so doing fails to convey its overarching idea, collapsing in mid-air. This might be like staying with a great idea for too long, ignoring the necessity to project it within the time/distance framework which underpins the listening shape. Writing *Zardash* was a challenge as I tested the boundaries of register, harmonic ambiguity and metric function. Mindful of the pitfalls but nevertheless venturing near them, I searched out a high pitched sound scheme to convey the images and ideas of the sun, fire and heat as energies in motion.

[^61]: Maurice Ravel, *Jeux d’Eau*, 1901. London: Schott, undated. While I admire and acknowledge the influence of this piece, I have in no way modelled my composition on this score.

I had conceived of time moving fluidly and flexibly, unmarked and unpulsed, experienced like a series of light emissions. The improvisatory style and apparent freedom from the meter caused me to explore many notational alternatives and graphic options in scoring. However, my ideas proved to be more succinct in standard notation, which I used with only the smallest modifications. An observation is made by Berio, whose experience with performers led him to conclude:

The piece is very difficult, and I therefore adopted a notation that was very precise, but allowed a margin of flexibility in order that the player might have the freedom – psychological rather than musical – to adapt the piece here and there to his technical stature. But instead, this notation has allowed many players – none of them by any means shining examples of professional integrity – to perpetrate adaptations that were little short of piratical. In fact, I hope to rewrite Sequenza I in rhythmic notation: maybe it will be less “open” and more authoritarian, but at least it will be reliable.  

Musical Analysis

The discussion will focus on tonality with a view to its metaphorical gravitational pull. My pitch selection was made axiomatically at the keyboard in the search for bright colours. Having no formal plan, the sectional structure arises incidentally to receive the shapes of light.

The main set of pitches employed through the work is the synthetic mode: Fx, G#, A#, B, C#, D#, E#, Fx – which is introduced (with some enharmonic spellings) at bar 1. I considered writing the score with this key signature to tidy up the page and make the recognition of contour easier for the player. I was reluctant to convert it to flats because of subjective associations with descent and shade. In reality though, both key signature options seemed absurd and frustrating. I experimented with transposing the whole piece to reduce the heavy key signature, but the resulting sounds were dull. This awkward dilemma in the pitch/tonality parameter had reared uncannily through my axiomatic (hands on) approach. The necessity to make the

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83 Berio, Two Interviews. p.99.
score readable resulted in the use of particular enharmonic equivalent spellings applied consistently to certain motifs.

Concerning tonality, there is an unquestionable central tonic G pitch. At bars 4, 6, 8 and 15 a motif with variant spelling: pitches G, B (natural) and D#, acts as a transitory tonic triad (which however is not built on scale degrees 1, 3 and 5). Here, D# (the sixth degree) as the augmented 5th, refuses to resolve conclusively as it fluctuates and is hinged enharmonically onto Eb’s major triad. The two harmonies oscillate, sharing two of three pitches. The foreign note in Eb’s major triad (B natural), renders an augmented 5th (bars 5, 7 and 14) in common with the original G augmented triad.

The ostinato figure employed on the pitches G, Ab, Bb, Cb, Db is intended as a colour or hue rather than a harmonic/rhythmic offering. It enters first at bars 9 to 14 in the treble, then reappears in the mid register at bars 30 to 35, serving as backdrop to other flashes of colour in the higher regions. The pitch relationships are stable and tonal, but are also camouflaged in the enharmonically equivalent spellings and sprinklings of chromaticism as seen in bars 16 to 19. Even though the synthetic mode on G is well established it cannot find conclusion because of the usurping dominant note D#. There is a change of modality at bar 46 shifting the work into the whole tone scale but sustaining an elusive tonic on G which accommodates D# as the 5th scale degree.

The whole tone series undermines any gravitational pull towards a particular tonic, instead permitting resolution on any of the pitches. Therefore the G recedes as a tonic and there is a feeling of freedom from the forces of tonal gravity. As the work draws to its conclusion there is a sense of approaching the ‘zardash’ or the sun, which metaphorically conflicts with the musical mechanics necessary to make an effective closure. The concluding wholetone section is relatively short and unexplored, to induce a sense of dislocation from gravity and the pull of the Earth. An unconscious recognition of the G as the untrumpeted unbroken tonic is however maintained.
The final landing is made on a G7#4#5 chord.4

Because the music has no strong harmonic scheme, performance factors such as volume, tonal balance and the manipulation of tempi are paramount in successfully shaping the performance of Zardash.

Review – through the lens

The compositional experiment undertaken in Zardash was to use the upper pitch register without placing regular rhythmic/harmonic anchors, whilst creating a satisfactory sense of form. This problem was resolved by finding alternative anchors – colouristic and textural. The piece is held together by a stable, although ambiguous tonic and by recurring ostinato motifs. These ‘constants’ supply the axes through which colouristic and textural fluctuation occurs. This variety enables both a sense of motion and stasis to exist in the work. The gold disc symbol – zardash – as a halo and as the sun, represents a duality of powers – spiritual (divine) and physical (solar), thus Zardash offers a contemplation on the nature, source and various manifestations of light.

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4 The question of tonality and the often presumed importance of establishing a tonic pitch is discussed by Peter Platt and summarised in this point made from his experience with the repertoires of Indian Classical, Plainchant, Debussy and early Stravinsky: ‘the ear/brain does not need an unequivocal tonic, provided it can feel at home with the relationships afforded by the melodic/harmonic confluence’. Platt makes further comment at this point regarding the chant pitches children use to taunt one another (e.g. “sticks and stones may break my bones”). The pitches in these universal pentatonics don’t present the ear/brain with any need to decide which note is the tonic. This is one example or model showing an unconfusing sort of tonal ambiguity. Peter Platt, ‘Debussy and the Harmonic Series’ in Essays in Honour of David Evatt Tunley, ed. Frank Callaway. CIRCME, School of Music, Univ. of WA., 1995, p. 52.
3.4 Crystal Amulet

This suite comprises five individual pieces presented as articles for contemplation. Each piece is a fairly static reflection of the light, colour and qualities associated with a particular gemstone – aspects of the circle symbol. The square is symbolically represented by the thread which links the suite’s components together formally and aurally – the role and presence of the pitch E.

Setting the square – genesis of the work

Crystal Amulet for piano solo arose from a palimpsest – Sand Dollar Mandala (for guitar). Crystal Amulet was written largely as an exploration of harmony. On the piano I was free to explore harmony more fully than on the guitar, where tuning and physical matters present several constraints. The pitch centre for both the guitar and piano works is E, but the Crystal Amulet is an exploration into relationships between the nominated tonic and other contending tonics. The motifs taken from the guitar work have not been subject to development, and so remain similarly brief. Each piece presents a different reflection and dynamic from the others and its template. The Crystal Amulet suite has no ritornello theme, and its five pieces are arranged according to their harmonic and tempo properties, which assumes an arch, in a different playing order from the Sand Dollar Mandala.

Within the circle – concept and symbolism

My tendency to associate colour with sound, and sound with element, led to the idea of crystals. From the elements earth, water, fire, air and ether- which are the subtitled sections of the Sand Dollar Mandala – I made the following correspondences.

Earth = Topaz  
Water = Emerald  
Fire = Garnet  
Air = Moonstone  
Ether = Amethyst

[85] The idiomatic guitar writing style used in the Water movement did not present me with anything satisfying for the piano, so I created something completely new for the corresponding Emerald piece.
The formation of crystals happens over many thousands of years which is an eternity in relation to the human life span. My renditions of the crystals are quite static in terms of harmonic motion, and therefore convey an effect of crystallised time. Crystals have a long history of veneration all over the world as symbols of the spirit and as objects of contemplation. Cirlot makes the following observation about crystals:

> The state of transparency is defined as one of the most effective and beautiful conjunctions of opposites: matter ‘exists’ but it is as if it did not exist, because one can see through it.  

Here the aspect of transparency is linked to timelessness. Like mandalas, crystals are objects of contemplation which elude the passage of measured time and deflect emotional involvements.

An amulet is a charm in the form of a piece of jewellery with engraving and stones, found in societies all over the world. Amulet wearing stems from superstition but has evolved over the centuries and adapted to the times. The current use of crystals in the postmodern therapy and healing context is not relevant to me personally, but if others wish to combine these practices with my music I am content. The traditional and historical symbolism I have associated with the music is listed here.

- **Topaz:** Divine goodness, faithfulness, friendship, love, sagacity, the sun.
- **Moonstone:** The moon, tenderness, lovers.
- **Emerald:** Immortality, hope, Spring, youth, faithfulness, the waxing moon.
- **Amethyst:** Humility, peace of mind, piety, resignation, the gem of healing.
- **Garnet:** Devotion, loyalty, energy, grace.

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Musical Analysis

When composing the pieces, there was no plan other than to present the pitch E in five different perspectives, through intuitive exploration. Each of the pieces will be analysed and detailed harmonically.

I. ‘Topaz’
In the first 16 of the total 52 bars there is a rhythmic grounding of E (in the bass), coloured with a persistent major 3rd diad which is spelled as C# with F. The tonality of the piece is hinged on this group of three pitches, with a pervading sense of ambiguity. While E clearly anchors the work, there is a very strong pull towards a C# tonic because of its partnering with F, the major 3rd. The dynamics which support gravitation to an E tonic are the F, as phrygian leading note, and the long B dominant notes in the melody. The melodic G#'s at bars 25, 40 and 45 mark moments of E tonic resolution, but because they are suspended, they quietly act as pivotal dominants to C#. Harmonically the G# is coupled with D in a tritone and heard from bar 24 onwards as either and both E7 or C#b9. The E and C# contending tonics are a minor 3rd apart. Eventually the ground shifts (in a manner of speaking) at bar 48 when C# establishes itself with reasonable assurance as the tonic, but with its own major/minor ambiguity. The final five bars quietly recall the initial E tonic anchor which is now heard with its minor 3rd – G, in a chord which is interlocked with C# and its major 3rd – F. Since the lowest pitch sustained throughout the final five bars is C# (not E), the ear can easily accommodate either of the two pitches as the temporary tonic.

II. ‘Moonstone’
While this piece is undisputedly defined in C major territory, there is a preference given to the sounding of the other triad notes E and G, which were featured at the conclusion of the previous piece. The three main pitches (C E G) cause E to be flanked on either side by a major 3rd and a minor 3rd. There is significant representation of the leading note B, which is given mostly in a weakened status inside the tonic Cmaj7 chord. There is no functional harmonic tension in this piece because the outright dominant chord is avoided. During the course of the piece, it

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88 This may depend on the individual listener’s whim, and on the balance of volume levels and acoustics rendered in a particular performance.
relaxes in cadences closing on C six times: bars 4, 8, 14, 21, 27 and 32. None of these resolutions are conclusive because they land (in most instances) on the second inversion and include a major 7th – B. These cadences are mitigated further by elusive dominant preparation. In ‘Moonstone’ as in ‘Topaz’ G#’s are heard, but here they serve timbral purposes only. Sounded at a pianissimo level in the highest register of the keyboard and blended with G’s at a piano level two/three octaves below, they deliver a quiet ‘noise’. The only other chromatic note is the final sound – a very high Bb. This flattened 7th is voiced for a timbral effect with G, two octaves lower. While it is timbrally similar to the G/G# motifs at bars 2, 11, 15 and 28, the Bb’s closer association in the harmonic series has a discernable relationship with the tonic C which the ‘noisy’ G/G# pairs do not. Immediately prior to the last note (bars 32 – 34) there is a confirmation of ‘Moonstone’s foundation in C major given with the featured sounds of E as its major 3rd but covertly hinting at the tonic of the whole suite.

III. ‘Emerald’
In this piece placed at the centre of the suite, the oscillation of E and D as tonics is the main feature. An E7 broken chord (doubling D) in the treble is given as a motif for six of the first thirteen bars which make up the unmeasured introductory section. Above this an appoggiatura-like motif is shaped from an E and G which falls down (a major 6th) to meet at the semitone with G#. This decorative figure is employed throughout, and is similarly set as a falling major 7th from A to Bb (bars 10 and 11). Parallel major 7ths appear in the treble colouring the melodic line from bar 9 to 12. Unlike the two previous pieces, this one does not have any leading note representation. The semitone is used only decoratively and its inversion is reflected in the major 7th figures. The phrases (motifs) in this first section open and close underscored by D (e.g. bars 5 – 7). The D comes into its own at the close of the section, by sliding into a D7 chord with major/minor colour at bar 13.

The central section from bars 14 to 29 is constructed on a four bar chord progression anchored first on bass pedals D and E (a 9th apart) for eight bars, then on E octaves for the remainder. In this progression the middle register diminished triads topped with a major 7th (half diminished chords) hold the foreground which is the only moving part, stepping down bar by bar. In the treble layer there are static E octaves, then A octaves, which after nine bars compress down through 7th, 6th and diminished 5th intervals.
This process of compression through bars 22 to 26, transforms the octave idea (of the central section), back into the original decorative E7 motif. While pedal layers in the extreme registers support the meter and enclose the harmonic progression in the middle ground, their density excludes the motif’s emergence until bar 26. Three bars of the original E7 motif are heard until bar 29 when the progression settles on D7, delicately laced with two F naturals and a G# tritone.

The coda section of six unmeasured bars negotiates the oscillation again between E and D as possible tonics as if in an open conference without bias. Eventually the ambivalence is resolved as it stabilises on a D7 split chord, reminiscent of bar 13, having an F# in the block and then an F natural ascending a major 7th above.

IV. ‘Amethyst’
This piece collects some of the intervallic ideas from the first three pieces and resets them without motivic reiteration in another perspective of harmonic colour. The opening C7 second inversion chord is underpinned with a G pedal and sounded as a recolouring of ‘Moonstone’s’ tonality. This flattened 7th flavour makes a link with ‘Emerald’ whose prevailing colours are E7 and D7. Throughout ‘Amethyst’ there is a strong pull towards E which finds arrival points on bass anchors at approximately every second or third bar and often with related chord notes above it (e.g. bars 5, 8, 10). However, closures on E are not definitive since the music often just as easily slides into D with a sense of added post cadential relaxation. These instances at bars 6, 11 and 19 are echoes of ‘Emerald’.

There is a contention in this piece between the B and Bb for the role of E’s dominant. Bb (as the tritone) is juxtaposed against root E’s melodically as in bar 10, and as a triad (bar 3). There is another presentation of the tritone in its C7 context with the new spelling of E–A#, which appears at bar 12. This idea arises from the D–G# tritone bass figure heard previously in bars 8 and 9, then oscillates between bars 12 and 13 and is then stated emphatically at bar 17. The close position triads of Bb, C and D major group themselves into a recurring treble clef motivic figure throughout the piece, from bar 2 up until the coda at bar 20.
The coda is hinged from the anacrusis into bar 20 which acts as a pivot both rhythmically and tonally. The compound metre is blended into an undotted one alternating between quadruple and triple time. The bass pulls towards an E tonic and reintroduces the melodic tritone slur F to B, imported from ‘Topaz’. There are five melodic two note slurs ascending over two octaves where the highest pitch is Bb (as in ‘Moonstone’). Active conflict is maintained melodically between the B and Bb possible dominants. The low bass notes in the coda alternate between G and E but the bias is ambiguous. The harmonic flavour is so strongly reminiscent of ‘Topaz’ for just two bars (20 and 21) that the outcome seems predictable. However, there is a quick fluctuation to include scraps of C7 flavour (bars 22 and 23) before concluding on C#, which sounds perfectly obvious. There is a tritone relationship in C#, made with the G octave melody pitches in a suspension which subtly resolves at the very end on C#’s dominant – G#. The F emerges then as the mediant note in C# major (enharmonically) and the strength of the tritone (G natural in the left hand) recedes as the sound decays. Thus the strong presence of E throughout – first as the major 3\textsuperscript{rd} of C, then as the minor 3\textsuperscript{rd} of C# – is finally absent from, but nevertheless is inaudibly implied in the concluding chord.

V. ‘Garnet’
Like ‘Amethyst’, ‘Garnet’ is a summary of the previous pieces in terms of intervallic harmony and fundamental pitch relationships. There is no ambiguity as to the identity of the tonic – E, which is surrounded by a constellation of significant secondary pitch centres. These secondary pitches – C and Db (Db previously given as C#) – are gathered now as acquaintances whose interactions are more refined and defined than before. The major/minor fluctuations are still present in the G and G# semitone in E harmony (e.g. bars 10 and 11). In Db, this semitone pair produce G# as the dominant (enharmonic equivalent, e.g. bar 13), and G as the flattened 5\textsuperscript{th} tritone (e.g. bars 14 and 15).

The introductory \textit{ad lib.} section exposes the colours of E and C as root notes. In the C tonic setting, the G# is heard at bar 5 as an augmented 5\textsuperscript{th}. The central section (bars 8 to 16) in 6/8 time is like a dance, continuing with firm roots alternating on E and Db in broken chord formation with melodic and decorative figures above. In ‘Topaz’ and ‘Amethyst’ the C# tonic exerted ambivalence but here in ‘Garnet’, re-spelt as Db it is
defined more interdependently with rich confirmation and confident association with the tonic E. The transitional material in bars 17 and 18 loosens the metric structure by regrouping the bass quavers into 2+2+2 over which three groups of triplets play A and G# in two note slurs, offset. Thereafter the meter is reduced to 5/8, then finally 4/8 is implied in the ad lib concluding section.

The last appearance of C# is in the transition (bar 18) which acts as a pivot to the 5/8 section whose motifs are based on E, C, A and F, until bar 24. The final four bar coda reinstates the harmonic order established at the outset, but with a trace of the ‘Emerald’ major 7th (Bb to A) in the penultimate bar kicking in the resolute E. This tonic E, though conclusive, comfortably accommodates both G and G#, along with F. Focus is narrowed on a middle register single E, which quietly has the last word, not only in the context of this piece, but the whole set. A link is made with the opening of ‘Topaz’ on E, thus aurally validating the overarching tonal centre of Crystal Amulet.

**Review – through the lens**

Rather than using a constant tonic or drone to centre the work, this set of pieces explores five different harmonic and tonal settings in the context of, and through one chosen note (E). Subtly, both contention and cooperation are evident in all of the relationships presented within the suite. These harmonic relationships are designed to correspond to the crystal-titles of the pieces which in turn carry symbolic human attributes. Each piece has its own somewhat static reflection which implies an absence of motion, time and carriage. This may be interpreted or felt as suspended time or timelessness. As objects of contemplation the components of Crystal Amulet offer a distillation of thought focused on relationships and the existence of solid matter beheld in (almost) transparent form – crystals.

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89 At the premiere of Crystal Amulet I was pleased and surprised to receive the compliments of an audience member who reported very emotional responses to the work. He further requested my contact details on behalf of his daughter (a graduate dancer), who he felt sure would want to choreograph the pieces. Although I had envisaged the work promoting a stilling effect on the body and mind, these comments demonstrate the work’s apparent capacity to stimulate the emotions and move the body.
3.5 *Red, Yellow, Black and White: Music for Reconciliation.*

*Red, Yellow, Black and White* comprises four rhythmic dance celebrations, each presenting its own palette of tonal and instrumental colour in unbroken juxtaposed phases. Short transitional zones delineate the colour-titled phases and effect changes to the parameters of tonality, time and timbre. The four constituent sections symbolise the four sides of a square, while the circle is represented by the cyclic use of motivic material.

**Setting the square – genesis of the work**

When starting the composition (in April 2000) I deepened my research into percussion instruments through reading, listening and dialogues with percussionists. My instrumentation choices and many of the sounds I drew upon in the composition were based on a consultation I arranged with a professional percussionist, who played each instrument in isolation and demonstrated many of the articulations and mallets available. I also absorbed myself in Bartók’s seminal work, *Sonata for two Pianos and Percussion*. While its impact was strong, its influence is osmotic and not particularly obvious in my work.

Father Arthur Bridge, director of Ars Musica Australis commissioned me to write a work “reflecting the spirit of Australia in the year of the Olympics – 2000”. The contract specified a minimum five minute work for two pianos and double percussion, planned for premiere in 2000. I had difficulties with approaching the Olympic theme musically, and after much soul searching, I took a risk on an alternative idea, abandoning the Olympic theme entirely. As the year 2000 approached, I felt that the most significant event in that year would be the attempted apology to, and reconciliation with Australia’s Indigenous people. I completed the score’s first draft with this theme on National Sorry Day – May 28th, 2000. Unforeseen organisational

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[90] Bela Bartók’s *Sonata for two Pianos and Percussion* (written in 1937), was the earliest composition of which I am aware to use this instrumentation. The score I studied is published by Boosey & Hawkes – # 8675, HPS 51.
circumstances prevented the planned November concert from taking place. Thereafter the work’s future was uncertain until at last it was programmed for the Joan Sutherland Performing Arts Centre Piano Festival in 2002, with Michael Leslie and Daniel Herscovitch at the pianos, joined by Daryl Pratt and Alison Eddington on percussion.

**Within the circle – concept and symbolism**

The four colours *red, yellow, black* and *white* are symbolic in three ways. First of all, they represent the diversity of skin colours of the human races on Earth, and reflect the current multicultural make-up of Australian society. Secondly, the colours *red, yellow* and *black* are those on the Aboriginal flag, while *white* stands in for the British colonised society. However, the most significant symbolic aspect in my musical concept goes beyond the retelling of local history and the timely issues of race and place. This third perspective (outlined below) is eternal, ancient and universal:

*Red* stands for the Earth, to which we are all bound at birth by necessity and gravity – (whether born with red, yellow, black or white skin).

*Yellow* represents the Sun, the central body of the solar system whose energy sustains all forms of life on Earth.

*Black* and *White* represent the fundamental experience of the earth and sun in their orbital relationship, manifesting the time phases – night and day.

These colour correspondences demonstrate a universal perspective, where an ageless, timeless interdependency exists in continuum. They also display the irrevocable interconnectedness of the world and all its people.

With only a few weeks to go before the composition’s premiere, through chance it acquired another dimension of meaning. When visiting Kakadu National Park and Arnhemland (after attending the 2002 Darwin International Guitar Festival), I encountered a friend of the late Bill Neidjie, who introduced me to his work and
vision for the Australian land. Randomly opening up a book of Bill’s sayings Story About Feeling, I saw in my first glance these words, which he always said to visitors:

This law, country, people…
No-matter who you people,
Red, yellow, black and white…
But the blood is same.
Country, you in other place
But exactly blood, bone… the same.

The synchronicity of his words with my title and concept was astounding. It provoked a strong desire to offer my music to Bill Neidjie’s memory, as a gesture of respect and to celebrate his long and fruitful life. Since Bill had only recently passed on, I corresponded with his family by letter, through the friend I had met, to express sympathy and discuss whether my wishes were fitting, and if so, to request permission to speak and print the name of their deceased relative. All was happily granted with the assurance that Bill would have been proud. He expressly wanted his vision extended with his name attached. A few weeks later at the premiere I introduced the composition with the dedication, and had the above words printed in the programme notes with the publisher’s permission.

**Musical Analysis**

The circle in a square principle is reflected in Red, Yellow, Black and White’s structural notions in a different way from all my other works. As mentioned above, the macro-structure is not round, arched, or circular – but somewhat square. There is no recycling or return of sectional or thematic material, but cyclicity is evident in its cells at the micro-level. Instances of cyclic activity will be noticed incidentally occurring throughout the analytical outline and discussion.

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91 Bill Neidjie (1912 – 2002) was very influential in the Kakadu region’s preservation, declared as a National Park in 1979. He was a tribal custodian of neighbouring areas in Arnhemland, into which he greeted interested tourists, to show the land and tell about traditional Aboriginal law. I met Bill’s good friend Yuri Mucenieks on 16/7/2002 on a restricted tour. Yuri operates Magela Tours from Jabiru.

The colour-phases are distinguished from one another through rhythmic fabrics and densities, instrumental selection and usage, and tonal area. Formally, the structure is assumed organically as new material is added to the existing, extending and changing it without development, on a reconciliatory principle. Border zones act as transitions which house the reconciliations and accommodate the colour changing process. Although all factors inextricably contribute to the work’s effectiveness, it is largely rhythmic modification that allows new material to be grafted onto existing material. For the purpose of brief demonstration the work’s surface is scanned under the parameters of tonality and timbre, then discussed more fully in terms of working time.

1. **Tonality**

Each colour-phase of the work is loosely grounded in a different tonal area.

**Red** = A

**Yellow** = F

**Black** = C

**White** = D

All colour-phases feature a diversity of synthetic modalities whose intervallic relationships exploit chromaticism (within non-functional harmony).

2. **Timbre**

Instrumental choices and usages are listed in summary, rather than in discussion. Colour correspondences are based on subjective selections, which can only render arbitrary results. A detailed list of the percussion selections for each of the colour-phases is shown with the score in volume 2. Here the colours are displayed with notes about their usage in self-explanatory points.

**Red**  Percussion: sources mostly of wood and skins – dry, jagged, rattling, rasping articulations densely packed without sustain. Pianos: non-legato, disconnected punching note attacks, middle to treble register, dry, no sustaining pedal – little resonance but for the opening ten note rolled cluster set to resonate with dampers off throughout (by use of sostenuto pedals).
Yellow  Percussion: sources of metal (featuring glockenspiel) and timpani – sustained, shimmering, luminous, ambient space. Pianos: legato with sustain and gentle resonance, mostly single line work and open broken chord voicings, strings inside case plucked and glissed over with mallet.


White  Percussion: (I) features tuned timpani with bright cork-headed sticks, frequent glissandi. (II) features the piercing sound of crotales using a violin bow, incorporates most of the other instruments in dazzling searing expanses of sound, then finally rhythmic pulsating drumming. Pianos: generally high register (until near the end), resonant chords and sustained tremelos, glissandi on high strings, staccato appoggiatura attacks applied to split chords, ‘delay’ or ‘strobe’ effects shimmer single lines between the hands.

3. Time

The discussion of time is much more detailed, as it demonstrates how the work proceeds, changes and takes its form through metric and rhythmic constructs.

Red is set in an asymmetrical 11/8 meter, which is configured as either five or four mixed beats. Single bars of 12/8 are inserted periodically to create rhythmic cycles, each of which result in time-intervals of either five or nine bars (depending on the repeat sign). These 12/8 cadence points have a malleability afforded by their dotted beats (e.g. bar 10), which allow reconfigured versions of 11/8 to emerge easily. The periodic fluctuation of beat quality discourages metric entrenchment and unlocks the rhythmic regime. Tempo decreases are made in progressive plateaus, preparing for the new colour-phase’s entry. In the pivotal, or grafting zone (bars 30 – 34), it is again the 12/8 measure which accommodates change. The new metre 6/4 is of equal length, but now its beats are undotted. Piano I alone holds the old dotted beat against the newly emerging pulse throughout this zone.
**Yellow**’s slow stable 6/4 is loaded with gentle syncopation and sprinkled with triplets, which behave like seeds. At bar 52 to 54 the triplet starts to get a foothold in piano II by alternating syncopated triplets and duplets over regular bass duplets. Nonetheless, these bass notes harmonically reflect groupings of three. Bars 55 to 57 reiterate the previous phrase reset as 12/8. Throughout the yellow-phase, metric entrenchment is again evaded by the use of triplets and duplets. In **Red** they are of unequal beat lengths which are employed consecutively, whereas in **Yellow** they are in uniform beat types employed simultaneously, or vertically. It is the triplet ‘seed’ which allows the grafting in of the next colour-phase. After an ambiguous zone of duplets against triplets (bars 58 – 60) the seed emerges fully germinated in a 12/8 meter.

**Black** has a syncopated rhythmic motif, based on a two beat cell given on the bass drum at bar 62, which is cycled and passed around the instrumental forces until bar 76. The triplet figure becomes intensified in the black-phase through subdivision of the quaver pulses. Introduced ornamentally at bar 64, it is increasingly highlighted in the melodic material through to bar 76, supported by the first syncopated motif. Both of these are overtaken by new divisions when piano I splits the quaver pulse in halves, and piano II splits the main beat in halves. The resulting duplet is passed onto piano I at bar 82, against piano II’s sextuplet of semiquavers figured in threes. The triplet/duplet dialogue has a different reflection and density from before, but it is the key to the work’s coherency, and the means by which grafting is effected. The zone of exit (bars 88 – 89) relinquishes triplets and duplets, reforming the four dotted beat measure into three undotted beats to usher in the day.

**White** witnesses the culmination and transformation of all previous rhythmic and metric fabrics. The new 3/2 meter is a different, but related reflection of 12/8 and 6/4. Its three spacious beats absorb and stabilise the ambiguous triplet/duplet dialogue. For the first part of the white-phase the colouristic passages (bars 96 – 98), pauses and long tremelos dissolve any sense of rhythmic identity. However, a timpani phrase given covertly at bars 96 to 98, re-enters assuredly at the end of bar 107, with a now identifiable theme in plain crotchets and minimis. This musters the involvement of the pianos, which join it from bar 111, creating a canonic texture. The tempo progressively increases in plateau sections (similarly but opposite to **Red**), with metric stability and conviction. The triplet/duplet dialogue does not operate in **White** to
loosen the rhythmic grid as it did in the other colour-phases, but the triplet (which has so far been absent), is re-established in the form of a sextuplet, filling out a whole (minim) beat at bar 123. This double triplet figure underscores the theme on untuned drums, and decorates it in both piano parts right until the end. The timpani’s straight minim and crotchet values outline the theme, and hold the intensified canonic activity firm until the work’s closure.

Review – through the lens

This commissioned work challenged a different part of my function and identity as a composer and an individual. In *Red, Yellow, Black and White* I endeavoured to create music which would speak on behalf of my compatriots and reflect the spirit of Australia’s current times and affairs. The principle of reconciliation is applied in the composition symbolically and is also translated technically. The work features sectional juxtaposition whereby the characteristic colour of the each section maintains its identity and intensity, and yet the four are accommodated coherently within the one-movement form of the work. There is no development nor reiteration of material across the four constituent sections. Instead, cyclic treatments applied to motivic cells and rhythmic constructs based on the triplet seed, facilitate change and evolution in the work. The macro-structure represents the square and the micro-structure represents the circle. While the work is immediately vibrant and dance-like, it simultaneously embodies a deeper perspective for reflection – the inevitable interconnectedness of the universe, the world and all its peoples.
3.6 From Composition to Performance

A short account follows for each of the piano works relating to the process of interpretation and realisation.

Observations and considerations

*Again the Rainbow* and *Always the Ocean* duets had their first reading, performance and recording undertaken by myself with one of my piano students, Ahana Sofia. Notational issues did not arise, but significant rehearsal time was necessary to balance the multi-layered texture. Editorial adjustments were made to the dynamic levels in the rehearsal process. Ahana’s patience and sensitivity was enormously helpful.

Although *Zardash* was written for Aaron McMillan, the first pianist to play the score was Timothy Young who made some suggestions to improve the work’s initial conclusion. When Timothy first played through my draft over the phone I discovered some careless (on my part) omissions of accidental signs. When the score was correct and complete Tim recorded the piece for me. I was surprised at how much luminosity and colour he brought to the work. Later when Aaron McMillan performed and recorded *Zardash*, he imbued the work with considerable motion. The two renditions demonstrate quite different reflections of the light and motion inherent in the score. I am fortunate to have had the piece interpreted by two such well accomplished and very different musicians. Berio’s comments suggest a confirmation in kind here: “When music has sufficient complexity and semantic depth, it can be approached and understood in different ways.”

*Crystal Amulet* was recorded by myself soon after its completion, then premiered two years later, by myself. Therefore, unfortunately I have been unable to gain the benefit of hearing an independent interpretation. I have taught *Crystal Amulet* to a student who presented it for her final university performance examination. Teaching the work proved more difficult (musically rather than technically) than I had estimated.

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91 Timothy Young is pianist in residence at the National Academy of Music in Melbourne. He teaches the institution’s curriculum of chamber music which is based on the canonised repertoire of Western art music.


95 Performance details are documented in Appendix B.
The *Red, Yellow, Black and White* score and parts were delivered by the commissioner to the performers, with whom I was not able to converse until rehearsals began. These performers were of the highest musical stature and had no questions about the score. A few obvious copying errors were uncovered without drama. Unfortunately there were very few rehearsals, since Michael Leslie arrived in Australia only a week before the premiere at which the Bartók Sonata was also programmed and required considerable rehearsal. I attended a rehearsal of my work on the day before, at which time the piece had still not yet been played through in its entirety. Nevertheless, the risky performance was very successful. The players however, expressed regrets about the ensemble accuracy and felt their performance was hesitant. The pianists (who are close colleagues) have told me that they intend to play the work again (and improve on its performance), when Michael Leslie next visits Australia.

I deliberately kept this composition straightforward and free of technical complexities, as initially the premiere was to be given by excellent, but as then, unidentified young performers. Nevertheless, experience has shown that straightforwardness is also advantageous when working with higher level professionals, who may not be able to devote as much rehearsal time to the work as is required.

An interesting observation I have made is that my new works for piano have generally enjoyed less attention than the guitar works have received. I cannot decide whether this is a reflection on the compositions themselves, or on the collective tastes represented by the communities of instrumentalists. The following comment is made in a paper by David Lumsdaine addressing postgraduate composition students in England; it sheds a philosophical light on my observation.

> Our tastes are not only the expression of our most personal development, they are also our meeting point with the people about us… And most particularly is this true of our musical tastes, since music is at once the most useless and therefore the most personal and most social of all the arts.

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Thus I have come to the conclusion that unless I am fulfilling a commission where guidelines and tastes are specified, my efforts to attract any particular group of people to play my music may be disappointed. However, regardless of the uncertainties involved, the principle of balance in music is worthwhile following for my own part as a listener, performer, teacher and composer of music.
Chapter 4

Conclusion
Chapter 4

Reflection

The circle and square have served ably as tools and guides to explore a *Music of Balance*. Adopted from the mandala, these symbols provide the lens through which my music is focused and reflected. Although the overarching compositional process is intuitive, on a practical level I have employed these symbols in the conceptual stages, simultaneously carrying them through the structural stages of the compositional process. The circle and square do not prescribe a compositional formula. Instead, I have held the mandala as an abiding concern – the symbol epitomising balance – where the circle (psyche) is held within the square (earth bound matter). From this point I have wrestled intuitively to shape the form(s) which encompass my expression. In creating and realising these eight compositions, I have discovered what measure of expressive latitude might be taken within specific physical limitations.

From beneath the listening surface of my music I have unearthed some musical jewels. The analytical process (*post factum*) was like digging up a treasure chest, of which the general location was known but the contents’ details were yet to be discovered. Some idiosyncratic traits in my musical language emerged from the score analyses, several of which overlap across the portfolio. The most salient features are summarised below:

*Goarounds and Grounds*

The number five shows special significance structurally, metrically and rhythmically. The texture, motivic activity and subsectional structures employ cyclic treatments. Modal harmony with some chromaticism and modal interchange is evident but harmonic progression is absent. There is frequent use of semitones and perfect intervals, simultaneous major and minor thirds, and the flattened second degree functioning as the leading note to a secure fundamental tonic.

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97 The correspondences between the circle representing the psyche and the square representing earth bound matter are drawn from Jungian principles which are cited on p7 of this thesis.
The process of transformation is employed to generate variation and change to the \textit{ostinato} material whilst maintaining its motion and upholding its identity.

\textit{Sand Dollar Mandala}

The number five again shows special significance structurally.

Metric and rhythmic structures employ cyclicity.

The harmony is drawn from various modalities with much use of the tritone, the flattened second degree and perfect intervals.

Thematic material is minimal and does not undergo development. Instead new and contrasting sectional material is accommodated coherently into the macro-structure by the use of a \textit{ritornello} motif.

The tonality is based on secure fundamental tonics which are maintained for varying lengths of time. Functional harmony and modulation are absent.

\textit{Without Feet They Dance}

The number five is important metrically.

Cyclic use of rhythmic cell structures produce non-linear motion.

The minimal motivic cell – a semitone – provides the thread which binds the three separate traditional movements into one work. It promotes a spiraling progression of time rather than a linear one.

Although tonics are secure, phases of tonal ambiguity and textural modification exist which temporarily obscure the fundamental pitch.

Harmony and melody are drawn from modes which feature the flattened second and seventh degrees, the tritone and perfect intervals.

\textit{Dry Red}

The formal process follows principles of transmutation rather than thematic and harmonic development.

The juxtaposing thematic material is threaded into this one-movement form by employing rhythmic rather than harmonic schemes.

Frequent use of drones, pedals and cyclic motivic cells are upheld for short periods of time before shifting into new transmutations.
*Again the Rainbow and Always the Ocean*

Minimal thematic material – mantras – are set in a multi-layered texture of drones, *ostinati* and pedals.

Tonality is based on secure fundamental tonics which proceed in phases and undergo clear shifts to other tonics, but not in the functional sense of modulation.

Repetition and recycling of material is always undertaken with variation and change.

Harmony and melody are derived from various modes with some chromaticism.

New sub-sections emerge through rhythmic osmosis and metric transformation of triplet and duplet figures.

*Zardash*

Employs *ostinato* scale figures derived from the prevailing synthetic mode.

Although tonality is ambiguous the fundamental note is constant, secure and stable.

Harmonic oscillation frequently occurs, superimposed on pedals and *ostinati*. This affects texture rather than effecting harmonic progression.

Musical material is transformed through shifts of color and motion rather than being developed in harmonic schemes.

*Crystal Amulet*

The number five is significantly represented in the suite’s meter and structure.

Minimal motivic material is employed without development.

Tonality is focused on one overarching fundamental pitch which is presented in different perspectives and relationships revealing various degrees of ambiguity and tension.

Oscillations and shifts between two contending tonics occur without effecting harmonic progression or modulation.

Harmony and melody are modal, featuring the flattened second and seventh degrees, the tritone, octaves and the simultaneous use of the major and minor third.

*Red, Yellow, Black and White*

Cyclicity is evident in the cell structure and is employed on the micro-level.

Structure is assumed by extension and change rather than development or reiteration of thematic material.
Drones and pedals are employed in a multi-layered texture with fixed tonics which are carried through phases of time.

Shifts and changes are facilitated through rhythmic rather than harmonic modification. The rhythmic scheme and the coherency of the work is hinged on the continual transformation and osmosis of minimal materials – the duplet and triplet figures. There is much use of chromaticism within the synthetically constructed modes employed.

**Conclusion**

Collectively the features gleaned from the analyses produce a music which is not experienced in linear time or in a sequential manner. Instead, the compositions are either fairly static crystallisations of time, or they are frameworks housing dynamic motion with the properties of expansion and spiral – which warp the time/space outside the clock’s regime.

I have called upon the language of symbols as an alternative to narrative influences, descriptive methods and prescriptive formulae in order to create music with a quality of balance. Balance is intrinsic to each composition rather than being imposed. Using balance as the criteria and the mandala as a subliminal influence, I have attempted to create music which will be strong enough to make a musical and cultural contribution, while providing originality within the evolution of the artistic tradition. The written scores have been trialled in the process of translation into sound by several different student and professional instrumentalists. Results of the interpretation process indicate a capacity inherent in the scores to accommodate a diversity of perspectives for performance and appreciation. The eight compositions have extended the repertoire in the territory I have investigated and they have proved ready for direct use.

I believe that the discipline of using the circle and square as guides, confining my artistic stimuli and minimising my working materials has refined my creative process. The mandalic symbolism has imbued my expression with more depth and significance than my former compositions possessed. Based on the results of actual performance
and recording, I believe that this portfolio of compositions – born of the circle and square – is diverse, rich and engaging on many levels.

Now that this project is complete, I look forward to venturing into new and different territory with the influence of the circle and square indelibly absorbed. This symbolic benchmark with its restrictions and discipline has escorted me on a journey of discovery akin to a compositional rite of passage. At the project’s outset, I decidedly turned away from narrative and descriptive programmatic influences to avoid the trappings of mere musical entertainment or superficial expression. Likewise, prescriptive formulae were absented from my processes to avoid making clever compositions devoid of human wholeness. Perhaps narrative and pictorial subjects present a fitting challenge for my attention and resolution in the next stage of my compositional voyage. I feel drawn to approach areas loosely associated with some of those avoided before – land, myth and metaphor – with balance in mind, and the circle and square in heart and hands.

Over the passage of time, the imprint of the mandala might recede from the surface of my work, nevertheless, its legacy is assured. From this point onwards the circle and square will continue to be active as guides effecting the integration, distillation and shaping of my ideas into sound.
PART II

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Goarounds and Grounds
Goarounds and Grounds

for guitar and flute

by Amanda Handel, April 1999.

Performance Notes:

- The score is prepared for the use of both players, whose roles require equal participation in the performance. Here, the flute is not the melodic soloist and therefore a score reading is required. (A separate part is not provided.)

- Metronome speeds are given as approximations only, but their relative changes need to be observed.

- An improvised section led by the flute may be created after bar 12 (and before bar 13) to extend the introductory section. Players can use the material given in bars 1 to 12 as a guide. The flautist can signal the end of the improvisation at any reasonable time, then both players should return to the score at bar 13 proceeding as written.

Guitar:

- Tune string 5 to A#.  
- Cross stringing is desirable whenever possible to promote resonance in the instrument. The stringing suggestions are indicated as options.  
- Symbol: Pitch bends. Push pitch up then return to the note written.  
- Consider the incidental timbral effects generated in pitch bends and glissandi to be of more importance to the overall sound than absolute clarity of pitch.  
- Harmonics appear with open note heads for quick identification. However, the rhythmic values are of a crotchet value or less in all cases.

Flute:

- Intensity of tone colour and density of texture are requested from the flute.  
- For bars 7-8 and 11-12 glissandi, spend at least one full beat effecting the semitone distance, bending the pitch as gradually as possible. (Finger C for the B to C glissando.)  
- Do not taper the volume at slur endings unless the diminuendo sign is indicated.
Goarounds and Grounds

for guitar and flute by Amanda Handel, April 1999.

Programme Notes

Goarounds is a made-up word suggesting the lines and shapes within the musical fabric. Grounds refers to the continual presence of the bass pattern and the fundamental note or tonic.

The music bears no descriptive or narrative associations, only the abstract allusions to motion and direction which are given in the title. Goarounds and Grounds is designed as a type of sonic mandala. Mandalas are geometrical illustrations formed by a circle within a square. This is a universal design which represents the soul within the Cosmos. Mandalas are created in various media for use as aids in contemplation and Eastern ritual.

The illustration on the cover is loosely based on a circle inside a square. The shapely curving movement spirals around, and then grounds itself down – seen inside standing and supine circles, and housed in a square. This presents an optical illusion where the horizontal and vertical aspects are set on dislocated planes, yet they are connected albeit ambiguously. The music is a translation of this calligraphic gesture. On a deeper level it is also an exploration of thought. How it moves through the intellect, imagination, heart, the will, body, emotions and how it is eventually made manifest.

Essentially the music is an opportunity for the instrumentalists and those who are listening to engage with the purely sensorial nature of sound.

Guitar: Raffaele Agostino.
Flute: Janusz Kwansky.

First radio broadcast: Llewellyn Hall Canberra, Friday 17th September 1999.
Presenter: John Crawford on ABC Classic FM.
Guitar: Carolyn Kidd.
Flute: Virginia Taylor

Choreographed for Contemporary dance ensemble by Fiona James 2002.
'GOAROUNDS AND GROUNDS'

Amanda Handel
April 1999.

Gtr G to Aflat

Lento $d=60$ (c.)

Flute

Guitar

[Staff notation with instructions and dynamics]

*poco sord.*

*See Performance Notes Page.
Sand Dollar Mandala
Sand Dollar Mandala

a guitar solo


This work was written for John Handel, and is designed for the contemplation of the five elements with their paradoxically linked corresponding senses.

Earth - sense of smell.

Water - sense of taste.

Fire - sense of sight.

Air - sense of touch.

Ether - sense of hearing.

Performance Notes:

- The five main sections of the work are linked by a ritornello ending theme which leads into the next section without undue pause.

- Flexibility with care for the proportions of the various tempi is necessary to create a continuum of the five sections.

- The ritornello material acts as a transition and should be played each time at the same tempo or approximately so.

- Whenever possible, allow the strings to ring longer than the written value. Cross stringing will give the desired effect.
Sand Dollar Mandala

*a guitar solo by Amanda Handel, December 2000.*

**Programme Notes:**

The idea to write this piece for guitar came about when I encountered an actual sand dollar on the beach near the Northern Territory University where I was attending the Darwin International Guitar Festival in July 1999.

The sand dollar animal is an echinoderm related to sea urchins and star fish. It secretes a fragile disc shaped shell of about 3 cm in diameter which is left in the sand when it dies. The shell shows five-fold radial symmetry and has a surface impression of a five pointed petaloid in its centre. The circumference is made up of five longer straight edges, each linked by a shorter one. The concept of the music arose from these features and its resemblance to mandalas.

Equally inspiring was the stunning starkness of the natural setting on the beach that afternoon. There was nothing there but the cooling sand, a gentle surf, the huge sun sinking, sticky air moving and the sky beyond, streaked with hues like flames. The elements experienced in the sand dollar’s environment led me to make musical contemplations on the five Aristotelian elements: Earth, Water, Fire, Air and Ether.

The geometry of the sand dollar determines the formal structure of the guitar solo. It is one continuous piece (of about 10 minutes) made up of five different sections each linked by a short ritornello, functioning as both an ending and an introduction. This cyclic layout of the music underscores its similarity with the visual mandala and so the design lends itself to contemplation through sound.

The concluding section ‘Dissolution’ corresponds to the practice Tibetan monks have when their mandalas are complete. Their beautiful designs in sand are promptly dashed, swept up and cast away.

*Sand Dollar Mandala* was written for John Handel as a challenge and a diversion. It was a present given on his birthday in December 2000.

The first performance of *Sand Dollar Mandala* was given by Owen Thompson at the Darwin International Guitar Festival in July 2002.
For John Handel


I

Earth: sense of smell.

Quite slow

\[ \frac{4}{4} \]

More motion and rhythmic definition

[Music notation not transcribed]
II. Water: sense of taste.

Flowing \( \frac{J=60}{p} \)

\( \frac{J=75}{p} \) poco cresce... mp^2

\( \frac{J=72}{p} \)
III.  \( \triangle \)  Fire: sense of sight.

With Energy  \( \text{\small \textit{$\frac{d}{T} = 112 \text{ ca.}$}} \)

[Musical notation]

[Additional musical notation]

[Further musical notation]
*Option: Instead of playing the grace, the high A may be played as an acciaccatura (before the beat) & tied.  *Play the ornament on the beat.
Iv. Air: sense of touch.

Easy $d = 66\text{ca.}$

\[ \text{RH. XII sim.} \]

\[ \text{mp dolce} \]

\[ \text{RH. XII sim.} \]

\[ \text{a tempo} \]

\[ \text{poco accel} \]

\[ \text{a tempo} \]

\[ \text{poco accel} \]
V. *Ether: sense of hearing.*

Steady Swing

\[ J = 62 \text{ a, Steady Swing} \]
Dissolution.

\[ \text{Flick strings near bridge} \]

\[ \text{Resonant Pitches, audible from 0 (unmuted)} \]

I.V. until silent

*Damp at the octave harmonics.
Without Feet

They Dance
Without Feet They Dance

gn solo guitar,


Commissioned by Dr Paul Nash.

Programme Notes:

This work comprises three movements which proceed from an initial slow, ponderous motion, into a light and lively dance, then on to a rapid and vigorous conclusion. The total duration of the composition in performance is between 9 and 10 minutes. The subtitled movements carry concepts of cyclicity and the images therein suggest a long journey or search, and the orbital nature of the Earth.

The One Great Turning

The Door Is Round and Open

The Stones are Spinning

The elusive title of the composition and those of its movements have been gleaned from the poetry of Rumi who was born into the Persian Empire in 1207. In Rumi’s youth, his family fled from their home when the Mongols invaded Afghanistan. Finding refuge in Turkey, he there assumed the life of a theological scholar and dervish, composing a wealth of mystical poetry throughout his lifetime. Now, eight centuries since Rumi’s lifetime, the latest foreign invasion of Afghanistan has forced yet another exodus bringing uprooted people to Australia. The current political circumstance and climate prevents most Afghan and other refugees from putting their feet down on Australian soil. Sadly at present, there is no relief, no feasting, no dancing, and no welcome for the homeless refugees of war.

The music invites optimistic contemplation on the great turning of times and tides, and looks ahead with hope to the opening of the global door and to the continuous motion of life on Earth.

Without Feet They Dance acknowledges the plight with empathy for all those whose lives have been ruined or dislocated by war. The music was written especially for Paul Nash who organised and gave the premiere performance at an Amnesty International Benefit Concert in Melbourne on May 4th, 2003.
I. The One Great Turning

Amanda Handel

Adagio (MM 1=69 ca.)

Guitar

[Handwritten musical notation]

poco più moto Andante (1=74)

Cresc.
poco a poco accel.

\( \text{\textit{Con Vivo}} \)
II. The Door is Round and Open

Amanda Handel

Allegretto (M.M. = 116 ca.)

Guitar

\[ \text{f} \]

\(\text{mf}^{3}\)

\(\text{mp}^{3}\)

\(\text{f}^{3}\)

\((\text{f})\text{ vibrato}\)

\(\text{mp}^{3}\)

\(\text{mf}^{3}\)

\(\text{mp}^{3}\)

\(\text{mf}^{3}\)
III. The Stones are Spinning

Con Fuoco (MM 184+)

Sempre f

meno f

(meno f)

più f

(damp)
Dry

Red
Dry Red
for quartet

by Amanda Handel, April 2002.

Commissioned by Adrian Walter for the Darwin International Guitar Festival.

Programme Notes:

Dry Red for quartet: Guitar, Violin, Cello and Percussion, alludes to the earth and in particular, to the Australian land in the dry season. The work is driven by rhythmic forces which conjure the motions of dance, thus it is an earthy dance. The title also suggests the fruit of the vine. The grape is traditionally a symbol of the flesh which carries the potential for spiritual refinement and immortality. The cultivation and appreciation of wine is considered by many to embody the essence of life.

Performance Notes:

Dry Red is one continuous movement in which several transformations of meter and tempo are forged. In bringing about these changes of motion, the players should work as an interactive unit, handling the fabric of the material cooperatively. (Metronome speeds indicate tempo approximately and relatively).

While the guitar is featured more than the other instruments, its role in the composition is not that of a soloist; nevertheless it is the fulcrum of the ensemble and will need a small amount of amplification.

Duration is approximately 7 minutes.

Percussion Instrumentation List:

• Three tom toms - a well tuned mounted pair and a floor tom
• Bongos - a mounted pair
• Ratchet - small to medium size
• Claves - Australian type is preferable, hand carved from ironwood
• Shaker - small, preferably made of wood with contents of organic matter
• Wood block - standard type with hard stick(s)
• Drum sticks - medium headed pair

Note The percussionist can use hands and fingers (as indicated) on either or both of the bongo drums in the Allegro section (bars 43 –58). Depending on the acoustics of the performance space, the drums can be played with hands rather than sticks from bar 117 until the end if the volume balance is undesirable.
Dry Red

Amanda Handel

Moderato \( \text{L}=72 \text{cm} \)

Violin

Cello

Perc.

\text{mf}

\text{pizz}

\text{ratchet}

\text{wood block}

\text{Floor Tom}

\text{medium sticks}

\text{mf}
Allegro (1=120)

Orchestrated notation with specific instructions for shaker, drum (not sticks), and various string instruments, indicating dynamic markings such as "mf" and "p". Instructions include "swipe the palm" and "palm on skin."
Vivace (l = 84)

Gr.
m.f

Vln.
m.f

Vc.
m.f (arco)

3 Tom 3 Tom's
use hands or medium sticks

Bongos
3 Tom 3 Tom's

Bongos
3 Tom 3 Tom's

mp

mp

mp

mp
Again the Rainbow & Always the Ocean
Again the Rainbow
Mantra and Song for Sharda

and

Always the Ocean
Mantra and Pavan for Noor

A pair of piano duets by Amanda Handel,
November and December, 1999.

Programme Notes:

Sharda and Noor Oerton lost their young lives in May 1999, when their home at Mount Victoria burst into flames. The little girls had just turned two and four years old when the tragedy struck. In the terrible months after the fire I decided to write these pieces for Sharda and Noor as a gesture to offer some comfort to the family who were so dreadfully bereaved. While the music acknowledges the profound sadness and loss, it focuses on the force of life. The timeless and ageless dimensions of light, vibration, energy and colour are given as the medium to engage with in remembering the girls. Sharda was a bright, vital and exuberant little person, while her younger sister Noor was sweet and graceful, exuding a sense of deep serenity. I have sought to reflect these attributes in the music.

The titles of the pieces convey a trace of hope in the elusive imagery of time and place.

Again the Rainbow has an ascending mantra-like recurring motif which is set in radiant colour and motion. There is a section of song-like melody in the middle of the piece before the return of the mantra, which concludes in an ambience of stimulated tranquility.

Always the Ocean grows out of a descending motif which similarly acts as a mantra, but this time in an ethereal, watery space. The music moves in fluid layers of rhythm until the Pavan arrives. Here a regular pulse defines the dance-like central section. Noor’s mantra then returns with intensity, and the duet pair is finalised with the brief mingling of Sharda’s mantra. The music comes to rest in a state of dynamic calm.

The duets were recorded on CD and presented to the family on 21st May 2000, at the One Year memorial service for Sharda and Noor at Wentworth Falls. The music was also heard live in the order of service, played by Ahana Sofia and myself.

Again the Rainbow and Always the Ocean have been choreographed by Fiona James who presented these beautiful dances with her teenage daughters, Kelly and Grace, on 29th November 2002 at the Katoomba Dance Theatre Annual Concert.
Again the Rainbow
Mantra and Song for Sharda

*

Always the Ocean
Mantra and Pavan for Noor

*

piano duets

by Amanda Handel,

November and December 1999.

Music in deep memory of Sharda and Noor, for their family - Hakim, Miriam, Sharif and Amina Oerton.
"AGAIN THE RAINBOW"
MANTRA & SONG FOR SHARDA
Amanda Handel
7th Nov 1999.
"ALWAYS THE OCEAN"  Amanda Kandel  5th Dec. 1999

Piano Duet
MANTRA & PAVAN FOR NOOR

\[ d = 128 \text{ ca.} \]

\[ \text{mp} \]

\[ \text{poco dim e rall.} \]

\[ \text{ped. sim.} \]

\[ \text{Molto Sostenuto} \]

\[ a\text{ tempo} \]

\[ \text{più p} \]

\[ \text{poco dim} \]

\[ a\text{ tempo mp} \]

\[ \text{poco dim} \]

\[ p \]
Meno Mosso \( \approx 120 \text{ ca.} \)

\[
(\text{2}+\text{3})_{\text{4}} \quad \text{mf}
\]

\[
(\text{2}+\text{3})_{\text{4}} \quad \text{sim...}
\]
Zardash
Zardash

a piano solo


Programme Notes:

The word Zardash dates back to the times of Zarathustra. It means gold disc and is associated with the sun. The Zardash is a Persian symbol appearing in visual art as a circle of light emanating from kings and other mortals of great spiritual power. For millenia in European art the halo, nimbus and aura have been portrayed in the same way. The source of these phenomena is generally thought of as divine, and therefore a sign of divine presence in humanity.

In writing this work, I have incorporated another facet of the Zardash symbol, which is the ultimate physical source of light - the sun. The music works and moves in ways which evade an aural focus just as when one looks directly into the sun and is imprinted with a blind spot which conceals any object of focus and distorts visual perception. Thus there is no significant thematic material in Zardash for the ear to catch onto as an object of focus; instead, ephemeral sprays and strings of color shift and flick in expanding and constricting gestures as they throw and shed light around in a flexible open space.

There is an ambiguity surrounding the tonic G pitch which is harmonically evasive and serves to keep the music off the ground - so to speak. When writing Zardash, I was mindful of the Greek myth concerning Icarus whose story holds a warning associated with the sun.

Icarus' father Daedelus was an ingenious creator and inventor who had made wings for a journey and taught himself to fly. He instructed Icarus to follow, taking his flight path at a moderate level: flying not too low where dampness would clog his wings and not too high where the sun would melt the wax which sealed the form of his wings. The young man soared upwards exulting in his flight, and was so strongly attracted to the beauty of the sun that he was forgetful of the danger. His wings fell apart and he crashed down to earth.

Zardash was written for, and recorded by Aaron McMillan on Arc of Light, a C.D. presentation of Australian piano music for the Alexandria Library in Egypt.
Zardash

*a piano solo by Amanda Handel, June 2001*

Performance Notes:

- The duration of the piece is 3 to 4 minutes.

- The following metronome speeds are given here as a rough guide:
  Andante = 66, Vivo = 78, Presto = 96, Prestissimo = 108.

- A degree of flexibility in tempo is asked of the performer in making transitions between the sections. Subtle compressing and spreading within sections will enhance the dynamics well.

- Pedal markings are indicated to convey the desired sonic effect, however these will need to be amended to suit the individual performer and instrument. The half pedal indications especially call for flexible treatment to produce various levels of less than full resonance. Consider sonority the priority when pedalling.

- The runs of demisemiquavers in the Andante sections can be accelerated a little to underline the direction of the gesture. When doing so, allow the following long note to absorb the spare time.

- The demisemiquavers from bar 46 to the end should be played so as to create a band of sound rather than as articulated pitches and therefore should not be considered as exact rhythmic subdivisions of the beat, and need not align with the bass note values.

Option:

- In bars 48 and 49 the performer might like to add a few extra groups of the FGAB demisemiquavers (similarly in 56), balancing the sense of time and space to prepare for the conclusion. This will depend on the playing speed, the qualities of the instrument and the acoustic of the venue - at the performer’s discretion.
ZARZASH

Amanda Handel
7 June 2001

Piano

Ad Lib.

p

mp

p

pedal

accel.

Vivo

mf

(below)

mf

(below)

mf

(below)

sim.

mf

sub.p

Reᵇ. Brightly

(½ ped) — sim.

pp
Crystal

Amulet
Crystal Amulet

a piano solo

Topaz
Moonstone
Emerald
Amethyst
Garnet

Programme Notes:

Crystal Amulet is a set of sonic renditions reflecting different qualities of light, structure and colour in five gemstones. The listener is invited to contemplate the crystallisation of time captured in these ancient and beautiful pieces of transparent solid matter.

A few of the traditional symbolic attributes associated with the crystals are listed here for further reflection.

Topaz - friendship and faithfulness.
Moonstone - lovers and tenderness.
Emerald - hope and immortality.
Amethyst - inner peace and healing.
Garnet - loyalty, energy and grace.

Performance Notes:

- The damper pedal should be used constantly in all the varying degrees of depression from full to just a tinge of resonance, maintaining the ambience and links between bass anchors.

- Since Crystal Amulet is conceived as one integrated work, the five pieces should be performed in the given order without undue pause between each.

- Metronome markings are only approximate. The total duration is about 9 minutes 30 seconds.

- Grace notes are to be played slightly before, and crushed into, the main note on the beat.
III. Emerald

Flexibly measured

J (d = 69 ca.)
IV. Amethyst

With a subtle swing (d. = 64 ca.)
Red
Yellow
Black
&
White
Red, Yellow, Black and White: Music for Reconciliation.

A work for two pianos and double percussion

Programme Notes:

This composition is a single continuum of dance passages which reconciles apparent opposites and contrasts through the notion and workings of interdependency. The idea is demonstrated symbolically in the four colours of the title:

Red stands for the Earth to which we are all bound at birth - whether born in red, yellow, black or white skin.
Yellow stands for the Sun whose energy sustains all forms of life on Earth.
Black and White represent our fundamental experience of time. Night and day are the manifestations of the Earth’s orbit around the Sun.

In this work I have primarily sought to create a vibrant piece of dance music to be felt and enjoyed in the moment. However, on a deeper level I hope that it will prompt reflection on the inevitable interconnectedness of the world and all its peoples.

Just weeks before the work’s premiere, I happened to visit the tribal land of the late Bill Neidjie in Kakadu. There I became aware of his work and vision for Australia. Bill’s words printed below express his feelings about the very topical issues of land and race. Since his words struck such a clear resonance with my music and its title, I wanted to extend this meeting place; and so I offer Red, Yellow, Black and White: Music for Reconciliation to the memory of Bill Neidjie as a gesture of deep respect, celebrating his long and fruitful life.

This Law, country, people...
no-matter who you people,
red, yellow, black and white...
but the blood is same.
Country, you in other place
but exactly blood, bone...e same. *

The composition was commissioned by Ars Musica Australis and recorded live by the ABC. The premiere was given by Michael Leslie and Daniel Herscovitch on two pianos, with Daryl Pratt and Alison Eddington on percussion at the Joan Sutherland Centre in Sydney’s West on the 24th of August 2002.

* from Story About Feeling by Bill Neidjie. Magabala Books, Aboriginal Corporation WA. Printed with permission.
Red, Yellow, Black and White: Music for Reconciliation.

For two pianos and double percussion.

Performance Notes for the piano players:

- Metronome speeds are approximate, but the relative changes should be observed and consideration given to the acoustic properties of the performance venue.

- *Pedal II* denotes the sostenuto pedal (middle pedal), which is held by both pianists throughout the *Red* section.

- Some damper pedal markings including *senza ped* have been indicated specifically throughout the score, however, the unmarked passages are left to the performers’ discretion.

- Glissandi over the piano strings are shown with approximate pitch ranges. Since all pianos vary in construction, performers can choose the most convenient sector between cross beams relating to the pitches notated.

- Each pianist will need a medium headed percussion mallet to effect the following glissandi: piano I – bar 36, and piano II – bar 49.

- Indicates piano string(s) to be plucked with the finger or thumb nail at bars 49-53.

- The dampers on piano I should be prepared with stickers to locate the required pitches.

- At bar 49, beats 1, 2 and 3 can be very flexible with a short pause before the *a tempo*. Then the player of piano I should lead the ensemble out of the *muito rall* passage using the string plucking on beats 4, 5, and 6 to re-establish the tempo.
Percussion Instrumentation List.
(the instruments are listed approximately in running order of the sections)

Percussion I

RED
3 x Tom toms: 14", 12" and 10"
Bass drum: 32" minimum
Snare drum: 6½" deep (always c.c.)
Double headed sticks: hard/soft for the drums above
China type cymbal 22" with soft headed stick

YELLOW
3 x Timpani with medium headed sticks, tuned:

China type cymbal with same timpani sticks.

BLACK
China cymbal with soft sticks
Snare drum (c.c.) and tom toms with normal, quite hard headed sticks

WHITE
Timpani with cork headed sticks and retuned to:
Percussion II

RED
Cabassa (rolls in bars 1-4 play one handed)
Claves: the Australian type is preferable, hand carved ironwood
Bass drum with medium headed stick
Xylophone with hard headed rubber sticks.

YELLOW
Triangle with normal metal stick
Sizzle cymbal 18" played with finger tips
Mounted crotales using triangle stick on pitches:

\[ \text{Glockenspiel with thin brass headed sticks} \]

BLACK
Bass drum with medium headed sticks
Claves
Shaker made of metal or hard plastic

WHITE
Shaker and sizzle cymbal with fingertips played simultaneously
Crotales using violin bow on pitches:

\[ \text{Xylophone (same hard rubber headed sticks)} \]
Triangle and sizzle cymbal with metal stick
Bass drum with medium headed stick
Tom toms and bass drum with double headed sticks (hard/soft)
Sizzle cymbal with the soft end of the double headed stick.

Performance Notes for the percussion players:

- Metronome speeds are approximate, but the relative changes should be observed and consideration given to the acoustic properties of the performance venue.

- Allow the sounds to vibrate over into the following rests unless damp is shown.

- The layout of instrumentation illustrated above is merely a suggestion. The players should organise the instruments conveniently to suit themselves and the shape of the performance space.

- At bar 49, beats 1, 2 and 3 can be very flexible with a short pause before the a tempo. The player of piano 1 will lead the ensemble out of the molto rall passage using the string plucking on beats 4, 5, and 6 to re-establish the tempo.
to croakles with bow

go
Appendix A

Bibliography

Books (also journals and electronic sources)


Lumsdaine, David. *Programme Notes and Scripts and Articles about David Lumsdaine.* (2 vols.) Unpublished manuscripts held at the Australian Music Centre: Sydney, undated.


**Music scores and recordings**


______. *Sonata for Two Pianos and Percussion* 1937. Boosey & Hawkes – #8675, HPS 51, undated publication.


Appendix B

Documentation of premiere and other significant public performances

Goarounds and Grounds

Premiere – Raffaele Agostino (guitar) and Janusz Kwansky (flute). Darwin International Guitar Festival, Northern Territory University Theatre on 6th July 1999.

Carolyn Kidd (guitar) and Virginia Taylor (flute). ABC Classic FM recital broadcast live from Llewellyn Hall Canberra on 17th September 1999.

Raffaele Agostino (guitar) and Rebecca Steele (flute). Sydney Guitar Society concert, at the Crows Nest Performing Arts Centre, in November 1999.

Carolyn Kidd (guitar) and Meldi Arkinstall (flute). National Festival of Women’s Music, Australian National University Arts Centre Canberra, on 1st September 2001.

Concert Practice examinations by guitar students at the Sydney Conservatorium (James Holland) and the University of Western Sydney (Rachel Zoglmeier) in 2000.

Choreographed performances by the Fiona James Contemporary Dance Ensemble. Royal Academy of Dance Gala at the Riverside Theatre Parramatta, on 19th May 2002, Dance Week Festival Springwood, on 1st June 2002, and the Winter Magic Festival Ball Katoomba, on 29th June 2002.

Sand Dollar Mandala


Owen Thompson (guitar). Darwin International Guitar Festival, Northern Territory University Theatre on 11th July 2002.

Without Feet They Dance

**Dry Red**

Premiere – Owen Thompson (guitar), Paul Tanner (percussion), Julia Brittain (violin) and Julia Ryder (cello). Darwin International Guitar Festival, Northern Territory University Theatre on 12th July, 2002.

James Holland (guitar), Thomas Dethlefs (violin), Kirsty Vickers (cello) and Joe Gould (percussion). Recorded in 2003 at 2MBS FM radio studios and broadcast on 24th April 2004.

**Again the Rainbow and Always the Ocean**


**Zardash**

Timothy Young (piano). Joan Sutherland Performing Arts Centre Piano Festival recital encore on 4th August 2001.

Aaron McMillan (piano). Joan Sutherland Performing Arts Centre Piano Festival, CD launch concert on 14th September, 2002.


Broadcast by 2MBS FM radio on 24th April 2004. Timothy Young (piano).

**Crystal Amulet**


Performed by Bachelor of Music student, Mariaenna Pertralia at her final Concert Practice examination at the University of Western Sydney, November, 2001.

**Red, Yellow, Black and White**

Appendix C

Compact Disc Recording track titles and details

Track 1  *Goarounds and Grounds* (6:05)
  Recorded by the ABC. Broadcast live from Llewellyn Hall, Canberra.

Track 2  *Sand Dollar Mandala* (12:26)
  Guitar solo: John Handel.
  Recorded by John Summers at Lee Street Studios.

Track 3  *Without Feet They Dance* (8:30)
  Guitar solo: John Handel.
  Recorded by John Summers at Lee Street Studios.

Track 4  *Dry Red* (6:42)
  Guitar: James Holland, Violin: Thomas Defleths, Cello: Kirsty Vickers,

Track 5  *Again the Rainbow* and *Always the Ocean* (10:22)
  Piano duet: Ahana Sofia (treble) and Amanda Handel (bass).
  Recorded by Wayne Bennett at the UWS music area recording studio.

Track 6  *Zardash* (3:58)
  Piano solo: Timothy Young.
  Recorded by Kerry Joyner at Radio 2MBS studios.

Track 7  *Crystal Amulet* (9:22)
  Piano solo: Amanda Handel.
  Recorded by Jeff Todd at the Joan Sutherland Performing Arts Centre.

Track 8  *Red, Yellow, Black and White* (10:50)
  Pianos: Michael Leslie and Daniel Herscovitch.
  Percussion: Daryl Pratt and Alison Eddington.
  Recorded live by the ABC at the Joan Sutherland Performing Arts Centre.

Total duration: 68:56
Appendix D

Digital Video Disc track titles and details

Track 1  **Red, Yellow, Black and White** (11:48)
Premiere performance - Joan Sutherland Performing Arts Centre Piano Festival, on 24th August 2002.
Pianos: Michael Leslie and Daniel Herscovitch. Percussion: Daryl Pratt and Alison Eddington. (Venue routine documentation footage)

Track 2  **Zardash** (4:13)
Premiere performance - Joan Sutherland Performing Arts Centre Piano Festival, on 14th September 2002.
Piano: Aaron McMillan. (Venue routine documentation footage)

Track 3  **Sand Dollar Mandala** (13:45)
Premiere performance - Darwin International Guitar Festival, on 11th July 2002. Guitar: Owen Thompson. (Home video camera footage)

Track 4  **Goarounds and Grounds** (5:53)
Choreographed performance – Blue Mountains Dance Week Festival at Springwood High School, on 1st June 2002.
Choreographed by Fiona James and performed by her dance students. (Routine festival documentation footage)

Track 5  i.  **Again the Rainbow** (5:01);  ii.  **Always the Ocean** (5:51)
Choreographed performance – Katoomba Dance Theatre Concert at Wentworth Falls School of the Arts, on 30th November 2002.
Choreographed by Fiona James and performed with her daughters Kelly and Grace James. (Routine concert documentation footage)

Track 6  **Without Feet They Dance** (10:08)
Premiere performance – Amnesty International Benefit Concert in the home of Paul Nash in Melbourne, on 4th May 2003.
Guitar: Paul Nash. (Home video footage supplied by Paul Nash)

Total duration: 56:39