

David Bremner --- logic ballad #2: The guarded tourist makes the guide the test.

A video of a performance by Elizabeth Hilliard

The guarded tourist... is an 18-minute notated music theatre piece for solo soprano, entirely constructed from three-word phrases related by very simple permutational processes. The text was chosen from a pool of 25 words:

across awake coast continue detonate eyes faded fear from hid if into latitude night paradise reefs since slowly story swung together turned underneath view you.

The pitches were selected from a pool of 16 pitches.

My approach to process here is as a means of making explicit in performance the balance between potential and actual, what can happen and what does happen. The dramaturgical idea is that the permutations represent a (stylised) thought process, and the theatrical element derives from the visibility/audibility of the performer 'working out' the story, and the unpredictability of its journey. The dramatic development happens through the changes of function of each word as it is gradually both juxtaposed with more and more of the other words, and set to different pitches. Each phrase is like a freeze-frame and conjures up poetically a particular instant or situation in the story. The resulting scenario seems a little reminiscent of the world of Alex Garland's 1990s backpacker novel *The Beach*. The title is a line from William Empson's poem *Aubade*.

The various permutational processes used are indicated in the score by codes such as 23X, 31X, 2X1...for example, 2X1 (applied to pitches) would mean that each phrase in the section consists of the second pitch of the previous phrase, then a pitch freely chosen from the pool, then the first pitch of the previous phrase. In the following example, the text uses permutation 31X, and the pitches permutation 2X1.

The image shows a musical score snippet starting at measure 87, marked *mp*. It consists of four phrases, each represented by a five-line staff with three notes. The notes are connected by a horizontal line. Below each staff, the words of the phrase are listed: 'hid coast underneath', 'underneath hid from', 'from underneath story', and 'story from fear'. The pitch sequence for the notes in each phrase is 3, 1, 2 (where 1 is the lowest pitch and 3 is the highest). The permutation 31X is demonstrated by the fact that the first note of each phrase is the second note of the previous phrase: 'coast' (pitch 2) is the first note of the second phrase; 'underneath' (pitch 1) is the first note of the third phrase; 'story' (pitch 2) is the first note of the fourth phrase.

It is intended that, once one becomes acclimatised to the style of the work, each of the different processes will have a subtle flavour of its own. It's worth pointing out that the result of these processes can often re-create simple effects that have been used traditionally to achieve a lyrical impact, such as the repetition of a word to a different pitch to indicate a change of mood; or the opposite, a setting of two words to the same pitch.

Processes were usually chosen so that a word or pitch ceases to be present after three occurrences; (an exception to this can be seen in the process 13X, where the first element remains in place throughout). In general a word and pitch are 'set' to a different pitch and word on a subsequent phrase. When there are exceptions to this (eg. when text and music have the same process), it is for one of the following reasons: for increased emphasis, to make it more practical for the performer when the tempo is fast, or for the increased awareness of the poetic repetition patterns.

The work is divided into formalised sections, which frequently focus on a smaller portion of text than the complete pool. The following table indicates the allocation of processes to sections, and other details. Indentation of a section indicates that it is a sub-section.

Section	Significant Harmonic area	Text Process	Music Process	Tempo
Caption		31X	23X	<i>Moderato</i>
First Action Setting the Scene	F sharp minor (without 3rd)/D Lydian--B flat	2X1 2X1	13X 2X1	<i>Andante--Adagio</i> <i>--Andante</i>
Story	A minor	31X	2X1	<i>Moderato</i>
Digression		X31	2X1	<i>Adagio--Moderato</i>
Resumption		31X	2X1	<i>Adagio--Moderato</i>
Question Mark		31X	2X1	<i>Moderato</i>
Problem-Solving		31X	31X	<i>Moderato</i>
Glitch		31X	31X	<i>Adagio</i>
Realisation (Sudden)	F wholetone + G sharp	X31	2X1	<i>Moderato--Presto--</i> <i>Andante</i>
Explanation of Causes		X12	X31	<i>Andante--Adagio</i>
Aria/Reflection	B minor -- C 'overtone' scale	2X1	X31	<i>Andante</i>
		2X1	X13	
		2X1	X31	
Second Action	F octatonic---	31X	X12	<i>Moderato</i>
Realisation (Gradual)		X12	X31	<i>Adagio--Presto--</i> <i>Adagio</i>
Explanation of Causes	F whole-tone + G sharp	31X	31X	<i>Presto</i>
Climax		31X	2X1	<i>Adagio--Allegro</i>
Caption		31X	23X	<i>Moderato</i>
Resumption of Climax	C = pitch centre	3X2	X31	<i>Presto</i>
Memory of Initial Scene	F sharp minor	2X1	13X	<i>Andante</i>
		2X1	2X1	

The principle of balance between potential and actual is applied to the long-term structure. It's a potential of the material to cross-over into some of the same territory as 'conventional' music/drama. The intention was to allow this potential to be realised from time to time without allowing a preconceived plan to determine the development. (Having said that, there are elements of conventional dramaturgy at work, for example, the division into two acts (with more 'at stake' in the second than the first), and the climax occurring towards the end.) The choices of pitch also reflect this principle; tonal centres are suggested but rarely confirmed. This is in order to focus upon the moment-to-moment decisions, as if we are living inside the patterns.

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