Words and Music: using a chosen set of criteria to inform a creative response in composing two contrasting song cycles.

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I declare that the research presented here is my own original work and has not been submitted to any other institution for the award of a degree.

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Preface

Song cycles, their composition and performance, have long held a fascination for me. The modern song cycles of Arnold Schoenberg, Benjamin Britten and Samuel Barber have been touchstones during my journey as a composition student. In addition, I have always wanted to capture the sonorous world of French composers, Claude Debussy and Maurice Ravel with the poeticism of Polish composer, Frédéric Chopin’s piano scores.

While I originally had ambitions to compose an opera, I found that the song cycle provided the opportunity to exercise compositional technique while exploring the influence of the above composers on my compositional ‘voice’. It was a perfect opportunity to improve my writing for piano and chorale. The challenge was not to create a pastiche of Romantic work. Rather, songs that would be identified as contemporary repertoire.

I would like to thank Dr Paul Stanhope, my supervisor for 2014, whose teaching directed me and inspired me to work harder on my existing songs into works of which I am proud. Thank you, too, to Dr Matthew Hindson, Chair of the Sydney Conservatorium of Music Composition Department, for his continued support and encouragement during my candidature. Dr Michael Smetanin also requires acknowledgement; as my original supervisor in 2011, Michael encouraged me to challenge my thinking and find different ways to approach composition.
Abstract

Since song cycles entered the lexicography of European music in the 1800s, it can be argued that composers have lacked a clear set of ‘rules’ that govern the musical elements of composing song cycles. This has led to some confusion as to what are the most important compositional features to use when composing a song cycle; for example, the premise that words may be more important than music.

While there are many analyses of song cycles in literature resulting in some consensus as to what compositional elements contribute to a composition being identified as a ‘song cycle’, previous work has failed to directly apply the findings to the actual art of composition from a composer’s point of view.

The first objective of this study is to define a set of criteria that will inform my compositional process based on previous research of the song cycle in the European tradition. Broadly speaking, these criteria are textual, musical, timbral and hermeneutic elements. The second objective is to explore the application of the criteria as a creative response through two compositions. I then analyse and discuss the compositional success of the portfolio using the criteria.

The study found that understanding the history of the song cycle in the European tradition greatly assists in defining one’s own criteria in crafting a song cycle. Approaching song cycles with predetermined and informed criteria enhances compositional approaches allowing the composition of song cycles to be musically unified.
# Table of Contents

## Chapter 1: Song Cycles
- Introduction ......................................................................................................................... 1
- Compositional Processes and Objectives.............................................................................. 2
  - Objective 1 .............................................................................................................................. 2
  - Objective 2 .............................................................................................................................. 4
- Defining the Song Cycle in the European Tradition ............................................................ 5

## Chapter 2: Overview of Snow White’s Other Journey Song Cycle
- Introduction ............................................................................................................................ 9
- The Use of Fairy-tales ............................................................................................................ 9
- Synopsis of Snow White’s Other Journey ............................................................................. 12
- Jung, Campbell and Volger and their Influence on the Narrative ........................................ 14
- Text Construction ................................................................................................................. 20
- Musical Construction ........................................................................................................... 24
- Summary ............................................................................................................................... 29

## Chapter 3: Songs of Snow White’s Other Journey
- Song 1. Ordinary World ....................................................................................................... 30
- Song 2. The Guardian .......................................................................................................... 34
- Song 3. The New Queen was so Special and Song 4. Snow Accepts the Call ...................... 36
- Song 5. In the Bar with the Peddler ..................................................................................... 45
- Song 6. Snow’s Coming of Age Ball (Devil’s Waltz) ............................................................ 48
- Song 7. Snow’s First Ordeal ............................................................................................... 53
- Song 8. Snow’s Second Ordeal (Nobody Knows) ................................................................. 54
- Song 9. The Prince’s Sword ............................................................................................... 57
- Song 10. Snow’s Triumph ................................................................................................. 59

## Chapter 4. Overview of Songs of Amy Song Cycle
- Introduction ............................................................................................................................ 62
- About the poet, Amy Levy (1861-1889) .............................................................................. 62
- Text Selection ....................................................................................................................... 63
- Musical Construction ........................................................................................................... 64
- Summary ............................................................................................................................... 65

## Chapter 5. Songs of Song of Amy
- Song 1. New Love, New Life ............................................................................................. 66
- Song 2. The Lost Friend ..................................................................................................... 70
- Song 3. Borderland ............................................................................................................ 72
- Song 4. Cross-Road Epitaph ............................................................................................. 77

## Chapter 6: Research Findings
- Limitations .......................................................................................................................... 78
- Conclusion ........................................................................................................................... 79

## References ........................................................................................................................ 82
List of Tables and Figures

Chapter 2: Overview of Snow White’s Other Journey Song Cycle ................................................................. 9
Table 2.1: Comparison of Volger’s (2007) archetypes .................................................................................. 17
Figure 2.1: Reinterpretation of Volger’s Hero’s Journey .......................................................................... 18
Table 2.2: Volger’s hero journey and the correlation to Snow White’s Other Journey songs .................. 19
Figure 2.2: Chance in creating text ........................................................................................................... 21
Figure 2.3: Comparing Snow White’s Other Journey to Volger’s hero’s journey ................................. 24
Figure 2.4: Twelve-tone row ....................................................................................................................... 25
Figure 2.5: a) Twelve-tone row and harmony from Snow White’s Other Journey ............................ 26
Figure 2.5: b) Twelve-tone row and harmony; accidental for that note only ........................................ 26
Table 2.3: Combination of harmonic language, specific motifs and the story arc ............................... 28

Chapter 3: Songs of Snow White’s Other Journey ......................................................................................... 30
Table 3.1: Song 1 structure .......................................................................................................................... 30
Figure 3.1: Song 1, Bars 1-7 ......................................................................................................................... 31
Figure 3.2: Song 1, Bar 11-13 ....................................................................................................................... 32
Figure 3.3: Song 1, Bars 21-28 ..................................................................................................................... 33
Figure 3.4: Song 1, Bars 56-60 ..................................................................................................................... 33
Figure 3.5: Song 2, Bars 1-17 ....................................................................................................................... 35
Table 3.2: Structure of Songs 3 and 4 .......................................................................................................... 37
Figure 3.5: Song 3, Bars 1-12 ....................................................................................................................... 38
Figure 3.6: Song 3, Bars 62-70 .................................................................................................................... 39
Figure 3.7: Song 3, Bars 81-89 .................................................................................................................... 41
Figure 3.8: Song 4, Bars 102-107 .............................................................................................................. 42
Figure 3.9: Song 4, Bars 121-126 .............................................................................................................. 43
Table 3.3: Song 5 structure .......................................................................................................................... 45
Figure 3.11: Song 5, Bars 1-6 ...................................................................................................................... 46
Figure 3.12: Song 5, Bars 28-34 ................................................................................................................ 47
Figure 3.13: Song 5, Bars 66-69 ................................................................................................................ 48
Table 3.4: Song 6 structure .......................................................................................................................... 49
Figure 3.14: Song 6, Bars 1-6 ...................................................................................................................... 50
Figure 3.15: Song 6, Bars 35-41 .................................................................................................................. 51
Figure 3.16: Song 6, Bars 75-79 ................................................................................................................ 52
Figure 3.17: Song 7, Bars 10-13 ................................................................................................................ 54
Figure 3.18: Song 8 Bars 11-16 ................................................................................................................ 55
Figure 3.19: (i) Song 8, Bars 28-30 compared with (ii) Song 4, Bars 98-101 ........................................... 56
Table 3.5: Song 9 structure ........................................................................................................................ 57
Figure 3.20 (i) Song 9, Bars 1-6 and (ii) Song 6, Bar 45-47 .................................................................... 58
Figure 3.21: Song 10, Bars 7-13 .............................................................................................................. 60
Figure 3.22: Song 10, Bars 83-end .......................................................................................................... 61

Chapter 5. Songs of Song of Amy .............................................................................................................. 66
Figure 5.1: Song 1, Bars 1-22 ..................................................................................................................... 67
Figure 5.2: Song 1, Bars 23-40 ................................................................................................................... 69
Table 5.1: Song 1 ranges ............................................................................................................................... 70
Figure 5.3: Song 2, Bars 19-26 .................................................................................................................. 71
Table 5.2: Song 3 musical structure ........................................................................................................ 73
Figure 5.4: Song 3, Bars 1-8 ....................................................................................................................... 74
Figure 5.5: Song 3, Bars 13-24 .................................................................................................................. 75
Figure 5.6a: Song 3, Bars 25-28 .............................................................................................................. 76
Figure 5.6b: Song 2, Bars 35-37 .............................................................................................................. 76
Chapter 1: Song Cycles

Introduction

Song cycles have long held a fascination for me as a performer and composer. As a young vocal performer, the musical form provided a ready-made program of works, while as a composer, the absence of a distinct definition of the genre has provided an expansive blank canvas on which to arrange musical, textual and timbral ideas.

In this Chapter, I broadly describe my compositional process and objectives in composing two contrasting works using a pre-determined set of criteria allowing the composition of song cycles to be musically unified. In determining a set of criteria, a very brief history of song cycles from the Western tradition of music is provided, especially the musical environment of the Romantic and Early 20th Century period and the influence on composition and performance practice. In Chapters 2 to 5, I analyse my creative response, and summarise the research findings in Chapter 6.

While I originally had ambitions to compose an opera, the song cycle provides the opportunity to exercise compositional technique in a less complex setting. Explored are the influences of composers of modern song cycles such as Arnold Schoenberg, Benjamin Britten and Samuel Barber on my compositional voice. In addition, the influence of the sonorous world of French composers, Claude Debussy and Maurice Ravel with the poeticism of Polish composer, Frédéric Chopin’s piano scores are examined.

Emerging from the creative process were aspects of my compositional voice that had previously been unconscious influences. Firstly, my preference for recycling nineteenth century ensemble styles and forms, such as the song cycle. Secondly, a post-modernist and/or serialism approach to harmony and melody to introduce sophisticated dissonant harmonies as part of the compositional palette that continuously contested with my preference for modal, yet contemporary, harmonies. The pulling tensions of the
dualism is used consistently across the compositional voice. Thirdly, a preference for strong narratives that feature distinct ‘characters’ textually and those characters’ influences on the creation of motto-themes. Lastly, structure shaped by storytelling. The storytelling can be described as ‘filmic’ and follows storytelling conventions (i.e., a beginning, middle and an ending) which draws on many contemporary psychological archetypes. For example, the post-modern preference of retelling fairy-tales in a modern-day context and characters who all have a psychological as well as a storytelling function.

According to Jossey-Bass, Smith and Dean (2009), creative practice is a form of research. Although an emerging research phenomenon, practice research can be defined as a form of academic research which incorporates an element of practice in the methodology or research output (Rust, Mottram and Till, 2007). Study through the creative art of music composition is regarded as practice research. The impacts of the set criteria and influences of romantic and contemporary composers on my compositional voice are studied as part of the analysis of my creative response.

**Compositional Processes and Objectives**

**Objective 1**

The first objective of this study is to define a set of criteria that will inform my compositional process based on previous research of the song cycle in the European tradition. Broadly speaking, these criteria are textual, musical, timbral and hermeneutic elements and are defined below. It is important to note that other composers may posit alternate definitions.
Textual elements

In my compositional process, the role, quality and intention of the text and communicating the text through the human voice/s in the composition is of critical importance. Choices may include a strong narrative or a selection of high-quality poetry, choosing to order the text, story or poems in a particular way, selecting an overriding cyclic theme (e.g. a journey, life to death or nature), or select text from a single body of work (e.g. one poet).

Musical elements

In my compositional process, the musical elements are of equal importance to the text. Text may influence the musical setting of the narrative or the musical elements may require the text to be presented in a specific manner. It was my objective to devise a distinct musical plan or sonic experience that links the text of each song together as a unit.

Timbral elements

A single ensemble is selected for the entire song cycle in my compositional process, of which a single voice or group of voices is important. This is to distinguish a song cycle from musical theatre or opera where a number of characters may be represented through different voices. In my approach, each song cycle is scored for the same ensemble throughout.

Hermeneutic elements

In my compositional process, inconsistencies or deviations from the words or music are intentional and informed. Deviations may include composing music independent of the planned musical structure to create a sonic experience that portrays a particular
moment in the story; for example contrasting a dissonant section with a section written in a diatonic mode. Deviations in text may be to eliminate sibilance on words that end in ‘s’; for example exchanging ‘was’ for ‘were’. If inconsistency or deviation occurs it is not an ‘error’ and does not interfere with the song cycle as a whole.

**Objective 2**

The second objective is to explore the application of the criteria as a creative response through two compositions.

Composition 1, *Snow White’s Other Journey*, is written for mezzo-soprano and piano and consists of a strong narrative using surrealist poetry that describes a journey. Presented over ten songs, the composition uses a twelve-tone row which is broken into motifs and from which a harmonic world is constructed. Chapter 2 provides an introduction to Composition 1, explaining the importance of text and its construction as well as the design of the musical elements. Chapter 3 explores each individual song in detail and explains how the text has informed the music or where musical elements were regarded as more important. Where the composition has deviated from constructed textual or musical elements is highlighted with an explanation on why the compositional deviations were necessary for storytelling.

Composition 2, *Songs of Amy*, is written for four female voices and consists of four poems written by Amy Levy (1861-1889). Harmony is constructed through the prevalent use of modes, specifically through the use of the intervals of 2nds and 4ths and their juxtapositions. Chapter 4 provides an introduction to *Songs of Amy*; how and why Levy’s poetry was selected is discussed as well as the composition’s musical elements. Chapter 5 explores each of the four songs in detail.
Chapter 6 discusses the compositional success of the using the criteria to compose a song cycle. Limitations are also considered and what this may mean for future compositional approaches. The conclusion will consider the implications of this research for composers.

**Defining the Song Cycle in the European Tradition**

The term, ‘song cycle’ did not enter lexicography until 1865, in Arrey von Dommer’s edition of Koch’s *Musikalisches Lexikon* (Youens, 2014). From this definition, Tunbridge (2010) identifies the two significant characteristics that contribute to our general understanding of the song cycle today. Firstly, that the group of songs emphasise coherence and comprehensiveness. Secondly, that individual pieces within the group can stand alone. Von Dommer (in Tunbridge, 2010) chose Beethoven’s *An die ferne Geliebte* (1816) as his archetypal song cycle on which to base his definition. However, Youens (2014) found that this was not a model followed by later composers.

There is an argument that the song cycle’s lack of consistent structure was driven by early 19th century publishers creating portfolios for the growing educated middle class and the practice of Hausmusik (amateur performances at home). Tunbridge (2010) states that the early 1800s saw a steady increase in the demand for music arrangements for voice and the relatively new instrument of the upright piano. Commercial viability of publishing operations, because of increased competition, became a critical factor in programming. Therefore, early song cycles could encompass many different types (and quality) of songs.

Youens’ (2014, online) description of a song cycle is much broader, encompassing a group of individually complete songs designed as a unit, for solo or ensemble voices, with or without instrumental accompaniment. They may be as brief as two songs (dyad-cycles) or as long as 30 or more (e.g. Schoeck’s *Das holde Bescheiden* Op.62 (1947-...
Youens (2014) continues that coherence is regarded as a necessary attribute of song cycles; coherence may be textual (e.g. setting the work of a single poet, creating a narrative, using a central theme or topic, or employing a single poetic form or genre), musical (e.g. creating a unifying mood, employing tonal schemes and reoccurring motifs, applying formal structures or using methods of timbral organisation) or a combination of these attributes. Yet, Youens (2014, online) states that for every song cycle that fits neatly into her definition, there are exceptions. For example, Schumann’s *Myrthen* Op.25 (1840) sets the words of more than one poet, Schubert’s songs from *The Lady of the Lake* Op. 52 (1825) combine choral numbers and solo song and Schoenberg’s *Pierrot Lunaire*, Op. 21 (1912) used different permutations of an ensemble of soprano, flute/piccolo, clarinet/bass clarinet, violin/viola, cello, and piano.

Tunbridge (2010) states that nineteenth century European cultural and artistic trends had a significant impact on the development of the song cycle. Firstly, the well-regarded status of poetry, especially the lyric poem, improved the literary standard of the text used in songs. Secondly, to encourage audiences to view the form as closed and complete, composers set and publishers grouped poems to create narratives or themes. Like the well-known Schubert song cycle for voice and piano, *Winterreise* (*Winter Journey*) (D. 911, Op. 89, 1828), song cycles were written in the first person and dealing with personal expression, narratives would be typically inspired by nature or a journey, poetry by a single author, or a story. Thus, the order of the songs became more important. Thirdly, the increasingly advanced vocal expression and technique required and complexity of musical accompaniment took the song cycle out of the realm of amateur performance and into the concert hall (Tunbridge, 2010).

Lodato (2001) proposes six ways in which a composer may approach composing a song cycle; textual, musical, hermeneutic, literary genre, performance practice and
audience reception. Textual analysis is based on the narrative or arrangement of the order of poems or lyrics of the song cycle. Many analyses of Schubert’s *Winterreise* (D. 911, Op. 89, 1828) are analysed in context of the life the poet, Wilhelm Müller. Musical analysis investigates the musical setting of the narrative; for example, in motivic connections or tonal and key plans. Agawu (1999) uses a musical approach in his analysis of Schumann’s *Frauenliebe und Leben*, Op. 42 (1840) focusing on the various ways the music shaped the delivery of the text. Hermeneutic elements may include biographical or other contextual information to explain textual or musical inconsistencies. Literary genre analysis analyses song cycles with a dominant literary coherence, as in Bernhart’s (2001) analysis of Britten’s *Winter Words* Op.52 (1954). Performance practice is used to analyse song cycles through the frame social meaning, such as Kramer’s (1994) analysis of performance and social meaning in Schubert's *Erster Verlust*. Lodato (2001) cites analysing the audience reception of song cycles from the modernist or conservative reception it may receive, which is also explored by Tunbridge’s (2010) analysis of modern pop/rock song cycles.

Bernhart (2001) highlights English composer, Benjamin Britten’s important contribution to composing song cycles. Britten (1913-1976) was a prolific composer writing song cycles in every period of his creative life. Bernhart (2001, p.212) cites that the main body of Britten’s songs consists of 17 song collections which Bernhart divides into three types of song cycle; loose, literary and musical. ‘Loose’ song cycle are characterised by being less coherent (if any coherence exists at all). Of Britten’s song cycles, *On This Island* (1937) is the most popular and typical of the loose style. Coherence of text, with or without musical coherence are defined by Bernhart as the ‘literary’ song cycle. Britten’s *Winter Words* Op.52 (1954) is regarded by Bernhart (2001, p.217) as his most artistic and unified literary song cycle through its ‘lyric attitude of… melancholic
fatalism’. Song cycles that contain a dominant musical coherence are described as ‘musical’ song cycles. Bernhart (2001, pp.220-221) cites three of Britten’s works for the musical approach due to their symphonic texture and the use of ‘motto themes’ and motifs and the sequence of songs reminiscent of a symphonic structure; *Our Hunting Fathers* (1936), *Nocturne* (1958) and *Songs and Proverbs of William Blake* (1965). Whilst Bernhart’s (2001) three descriptions or ‘loose’, ‘literary’ and ‘musical’ appear straightforward, it is critical to be aware that within each approach lie further segmentations by Bernhart and exceptions to Bernhart’s original definition.


In Australia, the song cycle’s significance and prestige is elevated with the Paul Lowin Prize. Importantly, the prize guidelines state that the text of the work must have a unifying theme, which suggests that a textual compositional approach is an important criterion (Australian Music Centre, 2013).

The combination of the approaches to composing a song cycle and the evolving practice of creating large thematic works based on songs in a number of performance mediums, from orchestral works, ensemble, voice and piano to rock and pop has led to a rich compositional practice. Yet, as a composer it is difficult to know where to begin to formulate a creative response. Hence, I felt compelled to create a set of previously defined criteria to guide my personal compositional approach.
Chapter 2: Overview of Snow White’s Other Journey Song Cycle

Introduction

Composition 1, Snow White’s Other Journey, is written for mezzo-soprano and piano and consists of a strong narrative based on a fairy-tale presented over ten songs. The performance is around 35 minutes in total. There were several motivations for composing this particular song cycle.

Firstly, my vocal repertoire as a singing student included American composer, Samuel Barber. I performed his song cycle, Despite and Still Op.41 (1968-1969) as well as a number of songs from Hermit Songs (1953). Secondly, writing for piano and voice allowed me to compose art songs that could be performed independently of the song cycle.

The artistic motivation for choosing the narrative of Snow White was that is illustrated a similar personal journey of my own, particularly being newly married and adjusting to the role of stepmother for two teenage children. The difficulties I faced in this role led me to reflect on the portrayal of Snow White and her stepmother.

This chapter begins by exploring the influence of fairy-tales and the importance of the well-known version of the fairy-tale, Snow White, as central to the song cycle, Snow White’s Other Journey. A synopsis is given for the story, how it fits with the tradition of mythic storytelling and the key differences between this narrative and the 1937 Walt Disney animated production of Snow White. Next is a broad overview of the musical construction as well as the dramatic musical arc of the song cycle and its connection to mythic storytelling. Chapter 3 examines each piece of the song cycle in detail.

The Use of Fairy-tales

Fairy-tales are rooted in oral traditions (Zipes, 2012). They predate and are distinct from literary fairy-tales; for example, those tales collected by the Brothers Grimm and
Hans Christian Anderson in the 19th century. *Snow White*, or *Schneewittchen*, is a German fairy-tale (Wellbery, Ryan, and Gumbrecht, 2004) and the Brothers Grimm literary version (1857) together with 1937 Walt Disney animated production, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, has made Snow White one of the most well-known fairy-tales worldwide.

Before written language, fairy-tales were passed down through generations and refashioned as social conditions changed (Mitchell, 2014). Many pre-literary fairy-tales were much darker and more violent than those that are told today; for example, Mitchell (2014) explains that in an earlier version of the fairy-tale, Sleeping Beauty is raped by the Prince while she is sleeping subsequently giving birth to twins. As the Prince is already married, his wife tries to cook the children and serve them to the King. The tale of Sleeping Beauty was first written down in 1528 (Mitchell, 2014), and was reimagined in the romanticised version made popular by Disney in 1937, which itself is based on a French retelling by Charles Perrault, *La Belle au bois dormant* (Canepa, 1997). Perrault and Disney “expelled most of the demons and turned the heroine into an emblem of chaste and cheerful domestic normalcy” (Scott, 2012, online). In another example, Rupunzel’s original name was Persinette (Parsley). Parsley, when decocted in concentration, was a popular abortifacient (Warner, 2008). This contrasts with Grimms’ version where the story begins, “There was a husband and wife who had been wishing in vain for a child” (Zipes, 1991, p.52).

Many contemporary authors and filmmakers use the lens of the fairy-tale to examine issues of gender, class, and race, often retelling from feminist perspectives and examining the human condition from the simple framework a fairy-tale provides (Zipes, 2007). The archetype of the ‘damsel in distress’ has been particularly attacked by many
feminist critics including Angela Carter's *The Bloody Chamber* (1979), which retells a number of fairy-tales from a feminist point of view.

Snow White’s story, its main charter and the characters that support the story, is a moveable archetype having been reimagined by many authors and filmmakers. In Catherynne M. Valente’s (2013) *Six-Gun Snow White*, the name, Snow White, is the insulting nickname given to a half-white, half-native American girl by her stepmother, who wants to taunt Snow’s darker skin. Neil Gaiman (1994) writes from the perspective of the step-mother in *Snow, Glass, Apples*. Here, Snow White is probably a vampiric monster, and the stepmother is a desperate woman trying to protect her kingdom. Roald Dahl's, *Revolting Rhymes* (1982) features a Snow White who steals the Magic Mirror and uses it to make a fortune betting on horse races. Marissa Meyer's *Lunar Chronicles* series (2013-2015) retells the story of Snow White (amongst other fairy-tale heroines) from a futuristic, science-fiction perspective. The motion picture, *Snow White and the Huntsman* (Roth, Mercer and Sanders, 2012), presents the fairy-tale as a gothic fantasy where Scott (2012) describes Snow White as “cast at the precise point of intersection between action heroine and damsel in distress with added romantic indecision” (online) between her affections for the Huntsman and the Prince.

In constructing my narrative for the song-cycle, *Snow White’s Other Journey*, it is important to acknowledge the chapter, *The Tale of the Apple* in *Kissing the Witch: Old Tales in New Skins* (Donoghue, 1997). Elements of Donoghue’s story that influenced my version of the narrative includes the stepmother being similarly aged to an older Snow White and does not use magic. Further, the stepmother is angry because she wants to free herself from the injustice of the king after being unable to deliver an heir. Donoghue shows Snow White as a tough girl who is capable of protecting herself without the help of
a charming prince. In *Snow White’s Other Journey*, Snow White learns to become that ‘tough girl’ through hard lessons including betrayal and abandonment.

*Snow White’s Other Journey* explores the conditions of a newly blended family from Snow White’s point of view. Due to conflicting personal desires and motivations of the main and supporting characters, the family never accomplishes cohesion. This is explored with themes of inference-observation confusion, betrayal and abandonment.

What drives Snow White throughout the narrative is learning inner resilience and taking responsibility. The theme of the deceptiveness of appearances is also explored. For example, the ‘wicked stepmother’ is only wicked from Snow’s perspective, and Snow’s ally, the Peddler, is actually a Prince.

**Synopsis of Snow White’s Other Journey**

The song cycle is performed from the viewpoint of the character of Snow White. The challenge for the composer is to express as much of the narrative through the words and subtleties of the story through music. In order to appreciate the musical and textual elements used in the composition, it is necessary to understand the synopsis of *Snow White’s Other Journey*. In contrast, opera or musical theatre provides opportunities to cast other characters and give them a personal voice. The performance practice of live theatre also allows for the addition of lights, sets, costumes, sound effects and other enhancements to illuminate the plot. The synopsis of the story is provided below.

Princess Snow White is 17 years old. Her father, the King, is absent for much of the time leaving Snow to grow up naïve, immature in many aspects and certainly not groomed to ‘rule’. Snow’s unusual teacher and protector is a foreign-born Peddler with a mysterious past who tries to guide her, especially in regards to politics.
Early in the story, after chasing one of the lambs into the forest, Snow becomes lost and pursued by brigands but is rescued by an unknown man. The romantic Princess become infatuated with the unknown man, her ‘rescuer’. She becomes drawn to the mysterious Prince Hunt, who has come to the castle to attend her father’s wedding and who reminds her of her rescuer.

The stepmother is the beautiful Lily Rivers who, at age 24, has been bartered by her manipulative father into this political marriage so the Rivers family can gain stature. The River’s family is a successful military family and Lily is an esteemed warrior. Lily’s father has negotiated that the son of Lily and the King is to assume the throne over Snow’s claim. The King is impotent, but has not told anyone of his condition and he fails to consummate the marriage. Lily, feeling betrayed and abandoned, plots to escape the marriage. The King, however, is killed during battle and when Lily assumes rule, Snow believes Lily is responsible for his death.

The Peddler influences Snow to take charge of the situation and defeat Lily to take the throne. Peddler, who is an exiled Prince of a distant kingdom, intends to take Snow for his bride and use the Kingdom’s armies to retake his throne.

Snow comes-of-age at 18 years of age. Lily, whose rule is new and fragile, decides to disgrace Snow. Prince Hunt is to seduce Snow and ruin chances of a good marriage. Prince Hunt agrees, but stumbles in his task as he recognises the girl he rescued from the forest, and flees.

Snow recognises the Prince at the ball as her rescuer and wants to make love despite Peddler’s warnings. She becomes confused by the Prince’s romantic advances and then resistance. Despairing, she locks herself in her chambers and refuses to come out.
Lily is miserable and longs for freedom and confides in the Peddler. Peddler, seeing a new opportunity and feeling betrayed by Snow’s love for Prince Hunt, reveals his true identity and tells Lily he has fallen in love with her.

Snow rallies and decides she must confront Lily. As she forms this new resilience, Prince Hunt returns to Snow and pledges his sword and armies, as well as asking Snow to marry him. Snow accepts his pledge, but refuses to marry him, and they march to face the Queen. When Snow raises the challenge, Lily, who could have cut Snow down with a few expert flashes of her sword, surprises Snow by accepting her banishment with generous financial compensation. The people celebrate Snow’s ‘triumph’.

Reoccurring themes throughout the narrative include characters’ failure to understand the dual nature of people, both friend and foe, and the many complexities that become mirrored and distorted as a result.

**Jung, Campbell and Volger and their Influence on the Narrative**

Archetypes and the hero’s journey are important in the construction of the narrative in *Snow White’s Other Journey*. Being aware of the archetypes of the Snow White fairy-tale assisted in the compositional and narrative approach.

According to the Jungian approach to psychology, highly developed elements of the collective unconscious are called archetypes (Mattoon, 2005). The collective unconscious is a concept that was popularised by the Austrian neurologist and psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud (Bynum, Browne & Porter, 1981). Mattoon (2005) describes “visible psyches” as subjective; they are the “face one presents to the world to gain recognition and approval” (p.17). In contrast, “hidden” or “unconscious psyches” (p.26) are the “shadow self” (p.27). Matton states that “Jung characterised the collective unconsciousness as the objective psyche...” (p.35). Being unconscious, the existence of
archetypes can only be deduced indirectly by examining behaviour, images, art, myths, religions or dreams (Stevens, 2006). Jung describes archetypal events: birth, death, separation from parents, initiation, marriage, the union of opposites; archetypal figures: great mother, father, child, devil, god, wise old man, wise old woman, the trickster, the hero; and archetypal motifs: the apocalypse, the deluge, the creation (Jacobi, 1959/1971).

Joseph Campbell's concept of monomyth refers to his theory that all mythic narratives are variations of a single great story. Many of Campbell’s ideas were based on the work of Jung, particularly on Jung’s archetypes. Of critical interest to Campbell was the archetype of the Hero, and the subject of his most well-known book, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1949). The book argues that hero stories, such as Krishna, Buddha and Jesus, share a similar mythological basis. Campbell began to popularise the notion that all stories and images draw on universal themes.

Campbell’s book also illustrates that hero stories often hold similar ideas of what a hero represents despite vastly different cultures and beliefs. The monomyth or Hero's Journey consists of three separate stages including the Departure, Initiation, and Return. Within these stages there are several archetypal events that the hero may follow including the call to adventure, supernatural aid, proceeding down a road of trials, achieving a journey to self-knowledge and attaining the freedom to live through their quest or journey.

Christopher Volger became well known for his company memo, *A Practical Guide to The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1985, online). In this memo, Volger cited Campbell’s work and revolutionised the approach to creating storylines for motion pictures. Volger’s 2007 book, *The Writer's Journey: Mythic Structure for Writers* interprets Campbell’s theory describing the Hero’s Journey. Volger states that the hero’s journey arc can be seen in films such as Star Wars, Lord of the Rings, Fight Club and The Lion King (Volger, 1985 and 2007).
The first part of Volger’s book describes eight major character archetypes; basic psyches that tend to appear in every story and are often represented as ‘standard’ characters in stories. In *Snow White’s Other Journey*, the narrative takes advantage of the audience’s understanding of the traditional archetypal Snow White characters and creates twists and new archetypes. In Table 2.1, compared are a selection of Volger’s archetypal characters with the characters in *Snow White's Other Journey*. There was a conscious exploration of the archetypes and, in Chapter 3, a further exposition of the archetypal symbolism in each song will be described where appropriate and its effect on the musical composition.
Table 2.1: Comparison of Volger’s (2007) archetypes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Archetype</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Character from <em>Snow White’s Other Journey</em></th>
<th>Well-known Snow White archetype</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Hero           | Someone who is willing to sacrifice his/her own needs on behalf of others       | Snow White                                                                                               | ‘Princess’
                |                                                                                | Naïve, gullible, damsel in distress who realises she must toughen up and rescue herself.        | Innocent, cheerful, sweet-natured, damsel in distress who needs rescuing.                      |
| Mentor         | All the characters who teach and protect heroes and give them gifts. The hero’s guide or guiding principles. | Peddler, ally of Snow                                                                                   | There is no equivalent role in the traditional fairy-tale.                                      |
| Threshold      | The force or character that stands in the way at important turning points.     | Reality in the face of Snow’s naivety.                                                                    | Woodsman                                                                                         |
| Guardian       |                                                                                |                                                                                                           |                                                                                                |
| Herald         | Person or event that call the hero to adventure.                               | Death of the King.                                                                                       | Magic Mirror                                                                                     |
| Shape shifter  | Characters who change constantly from the hero's point of view.                | Prince Hunt                                                                                              | Stepmother / Crone                                                                               |
|                | Represents change or ambiguity, the way our perceptions of others keep changing. | Peddler                                                                                                   |                                                                                                |
| Shadow         | Character who represents the energy of the dark side.                          | King                                                                                                      | King                                                                                             |
|                | ‘Absent father / husband’                                                       | ‘Absent father’                                                                                            | ‘Absent father’                                                                                  |
| Ally           | Someone who travels with the hero                                              | Peddler                                                                                                   | Dwarfs                                                                                           |
The second part of Volger’s book describes the twelve stages of the Hero's journey. The stages are illustrated in Figure 2.1 in a reinterpretation of Volger’s cyclic journey together with the hero’s inner journey.

*Figure 2.1: Reinterpretation of Volger’s Hero’s Journey*

The narrative of *Snow White’s Other Journey* follows Volger’s hero story arc. The songs of *Snow White’s Other Journey* correlate with Volger’s structure as shown in Table 2.2.
Table 2.2: Volger’s hero journey and the correlation to Snow White’s Other Journey songs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Volger’s description of the hero journey (2007)</th>
<th><em>Snow White’s Other Journey related song</em></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Heroes are introduced in the ordinary world</td>
<td>1. Snow's Ordinary World</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Snow’s Guardian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. They receive the call to adventure</td>
<td>3. The New Queen was So Special</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. They are reluctant at first or refuse the call but</td>
<td>4. Snow's Refusal and the Call to Adventure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. are encouraged by a mentor to</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. cross the threshold and enter the Special World, where</td>
<td>5. Snow and Peddler at the Bar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. they encounter tests, allies and enemies.</td>
<td>6. Snow's Coming-of-Age Ball</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. They approach the in-most cave, cross a second threshold</td>
<td>7. Snow's First Ordeal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. where they endure the ordeal</td>
<td>8. Snow's Second Ordeal (Nobody Knows)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. They take possession of their reward and</td>
<td>9. The Prince Pledges his Sword to Snow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. are pursued on the road back to the Ordinary World.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. They cross the third threshold, experience a resurrection and are transformed by the experience.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. They return with the elixir, a boon or treasure to benefit the Ordinary World.</td>
<td>10. Snow's Triumphant Return</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Text Construction

After struggling with several drafts, I used a method which I called ‘repurposed text’ to create the narrative of *Snow White’s Other Journey*. Quality of language was very important to adhere to the song cycle criteria (outlined in chapter 1) so existing poetry was reimagined. Second hand books of poetry, nursery rhymes and speeches were purchased and cut up into very small stanzas and lines. Stanzas were selected randomly and pertinent lines were chosen to suit the narrative. Text was embellished or simplified as appropriate. While the selection of the stanzas was random, there was conscious intervention on choosing words and phrases that best described the thematic thought that suited the section of narrative I was creating. Figure 2.2 demonstrates the process to write the opening song, *Ordinary World*.

Chance was very important to this process and was chosen because of the difficulty of finding a suitable existing narrative that met the archetypal requirements and character development that was desired. It didn’t exist and had to be written in its entirety. Chance, in this context, can be described as a process which creates a fixed outcome.

A similar approach was adopted by Australian poets, James McAuley and Harold Stewart in 1943. McAuley and Stewart created Ern Malley, a fictional writer whose body of work was created as a hoax (Lehman, 2002). Lehman (2002) explains that Ern Malley’s entire body of work was created in one day as McAuley and Stewart wrote down the first thing that came into their heads, lifting words and phrases from the *Concise Oxford Dictionary*, a *Collected Shakespeare*, and a *Dictionary of Quotations*. Ern Malley is now considered an excellent and important example of Australian surrealist poetry (Rainey, 2009).
Figure 2.2: Chance in creating text.

Step 1: Word soup; a variety of text pieces that are selected by chance.

Step 2: Words chosen that may suit the narrative.
Step 3. Constructing the new poem

We hied
Desolate
Incessant sun
Seduction
Deep-seated
Vespers

Tin hands
Maintaunted mice
Joy, to clamber
Pace for play.
Beasts happen
To man us.
These things are connected.

These graves, these hills
This tree—
Let the living creative be
Mortal, guilty, beautiful.
Dissolve in vixen tears
Caught
In her swinging spheres.

Won't you tell me, mother, please
And by you find yourself saying, "Well."

Shed off your clothes:
You are capable of
Forgetting, completely.

Dream of the deep
where I wave free and
 crown'd
O'er my own realm,
Alone apart.

But
I am in a narrow place
Little streets are used
Because the absence of
Her face
Has robbed my world
Sullen air of gold.

I am rescued as
He reaches with
Vagare hands
And leaves as it
A ghost upon my
Common earth.

We have no means
Of learning what
Is really going on.
Final poem

| Whelm'd, desolate,                          | This tree. Caught! |
| A ghost upon this common earth,             | Living creatures,  |
| Irresistible Snow.                         | Beautiful dissolve |
| Narrow place, little streets cold.          | Virgin tears.      |
| Absent her face,                           | Won't you tell me mother, please? |
| Sullen air robbed of gold.                 | King wipes no tears! |
| Dream deep, free and crown'd,              | Exile is at home   |
| Over my realm,                             | Nights and days of fears |
| Alone, apart.                              | Alone, apart.      |
| Huh! Tiny lamb!                            | Rescuer            |
| Mountains and mice,                        | He reaches         |
| Joy to clamber,                            | Vague hands.       |
| Place to play the Tiger!                   | He says, “Strip off all your clothes, |
|                                          | You forget completely.” |
| Beasts                                    |
| These graves, these hills,                 |
Musical Construction

**Ensemble**

The song cycle is written for mezzo-soprano and piano. This combination was selected initially as it was the traditional combination for song cycles in the 19th century (Tunbridge, 2010). A second reason was the practicability to perform the song cycle myself and add to the repertoire of 21st century art songs for the mezzo-soprano voice.

**Story Arc**

Figure 2.3 illustrates the story arc of *Snow White’s Other Journey* in relation to Volger’s (2007) hero’s journey. Whereas Volger’s hero’s journey has 12 stages (refer to previous Figure 2.1 and Table 2.2), this song cycle has 10 songs. Song 1 includes Volger’s stages 1+2, song 5 includes stages 4+5 and song 9 includes stages 9+10+11. Stages are combined to improve the pacing of the composition.

*Figure 2.3: Comparing Snow White’s Other Journey to Volger’s hero’s journey*
Act 1 consists of songs 1 to 5 and has a duration of around 17 minutes. Act 2 comprises songs 6-10 and has a duration of around 18 minutes. The song cycle can be performed without interval or a brief interval between Acts.

**Twelve-tone row**

The harmonic language of *Snow White’s Other Journey* is dominated by a twelve-tone row (see Figure 2.4) where the notes have been randomly drawn. Aleatoricism, or the incorporation of chance into the process of creation was important. The twelve-tones of the chromatic scale were written onto scraps of paper and drawn randomly from a hat. As notes were drawn, they were written as the subsequent note in the row. Although there are twelve-tones, the row is not used as per the strict requirements of Schoenberg’s twelve-tone technique (see further Rosen, 1975, p.23). For example, the series does not have to be played in its entirety before repeating any notes. Sometimes the notes of the row are combined to form a motif (such as the first three notes of the row in Song 1) or used in the harmonic chord format described in Figure 2.5.

*Figure 2.4: Twelve-tone row.*
**Colour**

As shown in Figure 2.5, to create chords the row is layered starting at the 3rd, 5th and 8th pitch of the row. The original row is restated as the ‘bass’ note.

*Figure 2.5: a) Twelve-tone row and harmony from Snow White’s Other Journey*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Eb</th>
<th>Bb</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>G</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>Db</th>
<th>Gb</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>Ab</th>
<th>Eb</th>
<th>Bb</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>Db</td>
<td>Gb</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Ab</td>
<td>Eb</td>
<td>Bb</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>Db</td>
<td>Gb</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Ab</td>
<td>Eb</td>
<td>Bb</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>B</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Db</td>
<td>Gb</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Ab</td>
<td>Eb</td>
<td>Bb</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>E</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eb</td>
<td>Bb</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>Db</td>
<td>Gb</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Ab</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>II</td>
<td>III</td>
<td>IV</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>VI</td>
<td>VII</td>
<td>VIII</td>
<td>IX</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>XI</td>
<td>XII</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 2.5: b) Twelve-tone row and harmony; accidental for that note only*

This method of selecting and determining pitch was principally used to escape the tyranny of harmonic rules from the western tonal tradition usually associated with the era 1600-1900. The process can be described as Aleatoricism; a process based on chance arriving at a fixed outcome (P. Stanhope, personal communication, February 2, 2015). The choice in approaching harmony in this manner was strongly influenced by techniques
learned through my music (composition) undergraduate degree completed under the tutelage of Bozidar Kos from 1992-1995.

The harmonic structure provides a broad palette from which to draw different combinations of harmonic colour. The entire work begins and ends in reference to the principal note, Eb. Chord I is the tonal centre of the entire cycle and post-tonal avant-garde methods from the 20th century tradition are realised through the use of the harmonic language.

*Harmonic language, style and the story arc*

The harmonic world is gradually introduced through the prudent introduction of notes from Chord I and the first few notes of the row. Depending on the narrative arc, chords are selected that either promote the atonality or clustered sounds of the progression or the tonal qualities. Although each piece is treated individually with a particular style and colour to interpret the narrative and build tension throughout the cycle, the earlier songs use chords selected for their relative dissonance while the later songs use chords that promote clearer tonal centres. Some pieces purposely abandon the harmonic system to introduce other tonal worlds specific to the text and narrative. The table below describes the combination of harmonic language and the story arc.
Table 2.3: Combination of harmonic language, specific motifs and the story arc.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Worlds</th>
<th>Song No.</th>
<th>Tone Row Use</th>
<th>Specific features</th>
<th>Specific motifs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tonal (Ordinary World)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Incomplete linear</td>
<td>Eb set up as tonal centre</td>
<td>Eb rhythmic, returns in Song 7; hear a small section of Prince’s song (Song 9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to Dissonant (Special World)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Linear</td>
<td>More notes of the row added</td>
<td>Peddler motif, returns in Song 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Linear and chordal</td>
<td>Waltz style</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Chordal</td>
<td>Clustered, short and detached</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Linear and chordal</td>
<td>Tango style, clustered</td>
<td>Queen’s lament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Blended</td>
<td>Use of a waltz from an unrelated composition with tone row harmony</td>
<td>“Ah Beauty” theme returns in Song 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to Tonal (Return to Ordinary World)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Chordal</td>
<td>Arpeggio clustered</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Chordal</td>
<td>Jazz/pop influences</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Chordal</td>
<td>References Song 6 and 8</td>
<td>Prince’s song</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Chordal</td>
<td>Large vocal leaps, ends on chord I</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Summary

In summary, the musical scaffolding of the song cycle is built on the twelve-tone row. Secondary to this is choosing harmony that promotes dissonance or tonality with a pre-determined style which allows the performer to drives the story forward and express the narrative arc. In Chapter 3, the compositional outcome of using the criteria outlined in chapter 2 are examined in detail.
Chapter 3: Songs of Snow White’s Other Journey

Song 1. Ordinary World

As the title suggests, Song 1. Ordinary World, establishes the ordinary world of Snow White (Volger, 2007). Snow White is a lonely 17 year old girl who wanders into the forest. She is caught by brigands who intend to rape her, and is rescued by a mysterious man. The overall structure is described in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1: Song 1 structure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part</th>
<th>Bars</th>
<th>Description or Text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>1-14</td>
<td>Rhythmic motif, Chord I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>15-28</td>
<td>Use 5 first pitches of harmonic row</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A¹</td>
<td>29-36</td>
<td>Huh! Tiny lamb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>37-50</td>
<td>Pitches from chords I, II, III, and IV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B¹</td>
<td>51-59</td>
<td>Won’t you tell me mother, please</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>60-69</td>
<td>Recitative style and fragment from Song 10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As illustrated in Figure 3.1, to capture a quiet and still mood, Song 1 opens with a single note, Eb, repeated on a rhythmic motif. The rhythmic motif is repeated within this song, at first subtly (e.g. bar 22) and soon more overtly (e.g. bars 28-29), as well as in songs further into the song cycle (e.g. Song 7, bars 1-9).
Eb is the first note of the twelve-tone row and is repeated to make apparent the
tonal centre of the entire work. As illustrated in Figure 3.1, the mood is sustained with the
introduction of quiet high pitches in right-hand piano part, made up of chord I and played
as if ‘in the distance’. The spaciousness and quietness of the quintuplets is meant to
represent Snow’s day-dreaming.

The second note of the row, Bb, is ignored as it set up too much of an expectation
that the piece may be in Eb. Therefore, the opening mood is resolved in bar 13 with a
strong chord on the word, *Snow*, comprising the next notes from the row, B and F, together
with the Eb, D and C (see Figure 3.2).
The dramatic shift on the word, ‘Snow’, which is repeated on the word, ‘Tiger’ in bar 35, highlights these two words in particular. The tiger represents the character of Lily Rivers, the Queen and Snow’s stepmother. The imagery of the tiger returns several times over the cycle. In this opening piece, Snow plays at being the ‘tiger’ and free from her naivety.

The vertical harmonic structure based on the row is employed at bar 15 (‘Narrow place’). Chords I, II and III in bars 15-17 are contrasted with chords IV and V in bars 18-19. The rhythm and pitch selection in the accompaniment is designed to be jagged and disjunct in opposition to the melodic vocal line. The harmony returns to chords I, II and III for bars 20-25 with subtle repeats of the Eb rhythm in the left-hand piano accompaniment, finishing on chord II in bar 27.

The world ‘Realm’ in bar 25 is given a different harmonic flavour with the emphasis on D rather than the Eb. This is different to the harmony given at ‘fears’ in bar 57 which darkens the words ‘fears’ rather than the bright ‘realms’.
Figure 3.3: Song 1, Bars 21-28

Figure 3.4: Song 1, Bars 56-60
The opening mood is recaptured in bar 29-36, changing in bar 37 to allow the story of the brigands attacking Snow to be told in the vocal line. Abandoning her senses, Snow detaches from the experience and describes the attack as ‘beasts’ and ‘graves’ preferring to notice the hills and trees instead of the trouble before her. Snow chooses a ‘beautiful dissolve’ (bar 45) to disassociate with the rape and despairs for her lack of knowledge and abandonment by her parents (bars 51-59).

Snow’s withdrawn state is depicted in bar 60 and she is rescued by ‘vague hands’ (bar 63).

The musical style changes abruptly in bar 64 as the character of Prince Hunt is introduced. He tells Snow to ‘strip off all your clothes’. The fragment in bars 64-65 foreshadows the musical idea from Song 10, “Triumph”; this is the Prince suggesting to Snow that she will have to reveal her true self if she is to survive in this world and leave her naivety behind, which she achieves by the final song.

Whilst the piano features the rhythmic motif, the vocal line finishes on an ambiguous D rather than a strong Eb tonal centre to provide suspense for the next part of the story.

**Song 2. The Guardian**

The second song introduces the character of the exiled Prince in disguise, Peddler. As illustrated in Figure 3.3, the harmony is made up of a linear approach to the row, opening with the first 6 tones between bars 1-5; Eb, Bb, C, D, B, F and G.
As shown in Figure 3.3, the tonality of the opening harmony is enriched in bar 6 with the introduction the seventh note of the row; E. The tonal centre becomes ambiguous in bars 6-15 with the left-hand accompaniment alternating between an E and B chord and an Eb and Bb chord. This pattern repeats for much of this very short piece. It musically interprets the dual purpose of the Peddler’s friendship with Snow and the fact he is never
honest about his past. This motto-theme is repeated in Song 6 to illustrate Peddler’s advice given to Snow (which she ignores to her detriment).

**Song 3. The New Queen was so Special and Song 4. Snow Accepts the Call**

Song 3 and 4 can be performed as two individual songs or, when performing the entire song cycle, as a combined piece. In this section, the songs are discussed as the two songs combined.

In Song 3, Snow’s father has married Lily Rivers and Snow finds out about her voided claim to the throne. Lily’s moods are beginning to take their toll on the stepdaughter. Despite Lily’s disagreeable nature, Snow avoids actions; ‘blind shadows fall’ and overhears Lily wishing she were ‘King’. The overall structure is described in Table 3.2.

In Song 4, (bars 94-153), the King has been killed. Snow surmises that Lily is responsible for her father’s death even though he died on a distant battlefield. Believing that the kingdom is now at risk from the ‘evil’ Lily, and because Snow thinks her love for her father ‘faltered’, she ‘accepts the call’ to retake the throne.

Song 3 introduces a higher level of musical complexity and performance difficulty into the song cycle. The vocal line is written to heighten the emotional level. Different elements of the story are presented in contrasting ways to assist moving the narrative forward. The difficulty in this part of the story is to avoid over-dramatising aspects of the story as more interesting character development comes later in the narrative. Therefore, the wedding, King’s death and Snow’s decision are illustrated in short expositions.
**Table 3.2: Structure of Songs 3 and 4.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part</th>
<th>Bars</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Song 3. The New Queen was so Special</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>48-76</td>
<td>Snow spies on Lily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A¹</td>
<td>77-89</td>
<td>Lily is frustrated; Snow overhears and misinterprets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Song 4. Snow Accepts the Call</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>90-117</td>
<td>Short and detached – news of the King’s death</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B¹</td>
<td>118-134</td>
<td>Snow’s realises she must change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>135-end</td>
<td>Snow’s accepts the call</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Section A and A¹ are inspired by a mazurka dance style but the lively 3/4 dance of a true mazurka rhythm is avoided by introducing the extra beat of a 4/4 rhythm to create an awkward mood. This suggests that everything is not ‘right’ with the Snow’s world and impending disaster looms. This rhythmic ambiguity is illustrated in Figure 3.5; in bar 1-2 the right-hand has a 3/4 rhythm, while the left-hand is in 4/4. In bar 3, the left-hand skips a beat by moving directly from the Gb to the C rather than Gb to the Bb/Ab.
Figure 3.5: Song 3, Bars 1-12

Voice

\[ \text{Because she was so special} \]

\[ \text{all our lives were altered} \]

\[ \text{From where the rivers run} \]

Piano

\[ \text{Chord X} \]

\[ \text{Chord XII} \]

\[ \text{Chord IX + F} \]

\[ \text{Chord XI} \]
Also illustrated in Figure 3.5, the harmony in Section A and A1 of the song is built from chords X (Gb) and VIII (D). The harmony takes advantage of the diminished 5th between the Gb and the C to suggest a distracted mood.

The melodic and harmonic tension in Section B is given importance over the syllabic stress of the text. For example, as shown in Figure 3.6, the text, ‘Diminished’, the first syllable is on the first beat of the bar, rather than the stronger syllable, ‘dim-IN-ished’ in bar 62, and similarly for the text ‘From grad-u-al’ in bar 66. It is the singer’s subtle expressions in delivering the narrative that must tell the story rather than relying on beat placements for text.

**Figure 3.6: Song 3, Bars 62-70**
In Section A, Snow overhears the Queen’s frustrations. The opening theme from Section A is repeated until a key change occurs in bar 84 (see Figure 3.7). The Queen’s lament ‘If I were King…’ is musically highlighted through the less dissonant harmony. This text is highlighted as Snow misinterprets the Queen and later draws conclusions that the Queen had plotted to kill the King. What the Queen actually longs for is to be in control of her own destiny and out of the shadow of a patriarchal society.
Figure 3.7: Song 3, Bars 81-89

V

Glo - rious noon how quick - ly

Pno.

past. If I were
dim mp

V

King. but,

Pno.
Song 4 (section C) suggests a sharp change of mood with the news of the King’s death. Short and detached chords selected for their dissonant nature (a I – IX – II – XII progression) provide the accompaniment. As shown in Figure 3.8, at bar 103, the return of the theme from Section B in the vocal line, now evoking more passion and desperation as Snow changes from passive observer to accepting the hero’s call.

*Figure 3.8: Song 4, Bars 102-107*

Section D references themes from the final song in the song cycle, *Triumph*. The harmony in this section is relatively ‘tonal’ with a transposition of chord X, one of the less dissonant chords of the harmonic structure, while the vocal line is written in a ‘white-note’ diatonic mode.
In bar 137, the harmony returns to chord I, again referencing the themes of the final song of the song cycle. As Figure 3.10 shows, even though the text states, ‘triumphant be’, it is set reservedly as Snow prepares to enter the ‘special world’ of the mythic story arc.
SET CRITERIA IN COMPOSING TWO CONTRASTING SONG CYCLES.

Figure 3.10: Song 4, Bars 134-end

\( V \)
\( \text{she,} \quad \text{Ere, I shake,} \quad \text{ere, I shake,} \quad \text{triumphant,} \quad \text{triumphant,} \quad \text{triumphant be,} \quad \text{triumphant be,} \)

\( \text{Pno.} \)
Song 5. In the Bar with the Peddler

Writers often set the Hero’s new encounters with the Special World in public places such as bars or on the road (Volger, 2007, p.128). In this song, Snow and the Peddler listen in to a secret meeting between the Queen and her associates at a bar. Peddler has convinced Snow to ‘hit back’ in regards to the King’s death and her voided claim. The overall structure is described in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3: Song 5 structure.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part</th>
<th>Bars</th>
<th>Description or Text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>1-25</td>
<td>Tango</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>26-48</td>
<td>Queen’s lament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A₁</td>
<td>48-55</td>
<td>Tango</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>55-62</td>
<td>Queen’s plot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A₂</td>
<td>62-67</td>
<td>Queen’s plot continued</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>68-69</td>
<td>Devil’s Waltz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A₃</td>
<td>70-73</td>
<td>Tango deconstructed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The opening theme in Section A is a heavy tango which is repeated several times in the song and forms a unifying feature. Figure 3.11 shows the right hand chords that mimic a brass section in a jazz band style played with close harmony and staccato triplets. The inspiration for using a tango is reminiscent of Samuel Barber’s use of a tango rhythm in Solitary Hotel from his 1968 song cycle for soprano and piano, Despite and Still Op.41. In the Barber song, the right hand mimics a bandoneón.
The vocal line combines conjunct and disjunct leaps with rapid passages applying a syllable for each note to create a percussive vocal sound. The technical nature of the vocal line in Section A creates tension.

The tone row is used both linearly from the Eb as well as vertically, emphasising the major 2nds of Chord I.

The abrupt change of style in Section B signals the Queen’s lament. This section is a-systematic providing tonal isolation to clearly indicate the storyline that Lily is a victim of her circumstances.
The song returns to the tango of Section A as Lily reveals her plot to betray Snow, (although Snow and the Peddler do not hear the plot). As shown in Figure 3.13, ‘Play the Devil’s Waltz’ in bars 68-69 refers to the waltz in the next song, where Hunt is to seduce Snow. Hearing the theme in the following song signals a critical point in the narrative; the Prince’s seduction.
In the final bars, Hunt’s identity is revealed and the singer delivers the line ‘somewhat freely’ to reveal that the rescuer has become the pursuer. Here, Act I of the narrative arc closes.

Song 6. Snow’s Coming of Age Ball (Devil’s Waltz)

This song opens Act II of the narrative arc. There is much complex action that occurs in the text which is reflected in how the song is constructed. The overall structure is described in Table 3.4.
Table 3.4: Song 6 structure.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part</th>
<th>Bars</th>
<th>Description or Text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>1-32</td>
<td>Opening theme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>32-74</td>
<td>Waltz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B₁</td>
<td>74-82</td>
<td>Transition from the Waltz to the Guardian’s (Peddler’s) theme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>83-85</td>
<td>Guardian theme reprised from Song 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B³</td>
<td>86-89</td>
<td>Transition into the return of the opening theme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A₁</td>
<td>90-105</td>
<td>Opening theme in a minor treatment with the return of the alternating between an E and B and Eb and Bb chord from Song 2.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B⁴</td>
<td>106-122</td>
<td>Waltz returns</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The opening of the song is celebratory and light in style. The piano and vocal lines make use of the first 3 notes of the row, Eb, Bb and C, with an added Db in bars 1-9 and then the introduction of the Gb in bar 10. As shown in Figure 3.14, the high repeated scale in the right-hand mimics violins, harp and flutes movement patterns in an orchestra depicting energy, excitement and anticipation. The time signatures circle between a 2/4 – 5/8 – 3/4 – 5/8 pattern. The left hand accompaniment takes advantage of the ‘extra’ beat in the 5/8 bars to create a syncopated rhythmic feel that would be played by the brass section and double basses. The figure in the right-hand is gradually transposed down to the left-hand allowing a smooth transition into the low-pitched open fifths that feature in the waltz.
The waltz begins in earnest in bar 35 with a tempo change. The principal idea for the waltz comes from an earlier piece written in 2012 called *Ekphrasis Waltz*, as shown in Figure 3.15. The harmonic system is loosened once again to incorporate this waltz, while the rest of the song is written within the harmonic language of the song cycle.
The pattern of 5/8 – 6/8 time signature enhances the uncertain mood. The ‘cutting short’ of the dotted crotchet to a crotchet at the beginning of the 5/8 bar, where a waltz would expect the dotted crotchet, suggests a stumbling and awkward dance.

The harmonic and melodic treatment of the text in bar 47 highlights this important narrative moment; “Ah Beauty, my rescuer!” Snow recognises the Prince as her rescuer. The 7/8 time signature is employed to lift and brighten the phrase from the 6/8 – 5/8 mood.

In bar 65, the waltz theme is developed with arpeggio figures. This textural development of the material creates Snow’s dreamy mood where she believes the next logical step is a sexual union with the Prince. This dream is interrupted by the ‘tolling
bells’ in the right-hand piano using a G – D 5th above the flats of the Db major tonality, as shown in Figure 3.16. This device signals that the dream is about to end for Snow as disaster looms. The Guardian’s theme at the end of bar 78 is where the Peddler provides his warning to Snow.

*Figure 3.16: Song 6, Bars 75-79*

![Figure 3.16: Song 6, Bars 75-79](image)

The song ends with a return to the waltz. Whilst the musical material remains the same, the narrative and vocal expression depict the change in Snow’s circumstance. She has been abandoned by the Prince. The Queen has been successful in alienating Snow, but not in the manner expected.
Volger (2007, p.155) states, Heroes must die so that they may be reborn. In Snow’s First Ordeal, Snow retreats to her chambers; her “Empty cave.” The first ordeal, after deep consideration of her position, is Snow’s decision to overcome her romantic setback and childish notions. She recommits to the hero’s journey, shrugs off her naivety and transforms.

The song opens with the repetitive Eb from the opening song of the cycle with the accompaniment pitched two octaves higher and an ‘almost whispered’ vocal line. The left-hand reprises the quintuplets and supports the vocal line. The reprise allows comparison of Snow’s world when the song cycle began to the point of her journey now. Snow’s demeanour, and thus the vocal line and accompaniment change dramatically on the word, “losses” in bar 10 from quiet, reflective music to dissonant and fierce.

The song is relatively short and maintains a driving pulse throughout despite some tempo changes.

In Section A, the harmony is built using the XI – VIII chord pattern. In the XI chord, the C is risen a semitone to the Db to create a minor 2nd with the D of chord VIII and so it sits better underneath the pianist’s hand (see Figure 3.17). The left-hand descends into the low pitches of the piano via the chromatic transposition of each chord. The vocal line follows the use of this harmony and is performed with short and detached notes followed by rapid scales.
Figure 3.17: Song 7, Bars 10-13

Song 8. Snow’s Second Ordeal (Nobody Knows)

Snow faces her shadow side in Song 8; her naivety. This song was written in a jazz-pop idiom, with verses and a bridge, to create a marked change in the harmonic landscape of the song cycle. This idiom was used to signify the gradual return to the ordinary world with new knowledge as per the narrative arc.

Chords that promote tonal qualities of the harmonic system were intentionally used to emphasise the clarity which Snow experiences and her quiet resolution to her chosen fate. The accompaniment provides a rhythmic chordal accompaniment in 5/4 with a bass line that mimics a double-bass in a small jazz trio. The vocal line is reminiscent of a jazz-pop melody (see Figure 3.18).
As shown in Figure 3.19, a stanza of text is repeated from Song 4; “Winter eve, clear and chill. World of sun, folded still… Day of death, dark and cold.” Comparing the two settings of these words provides clues as to how far Snow has journeyed from her perceived abandonment and betrayal to someone who is more sure of her place.
Figure 3.19: (i) Song 8, Bars 28-30 compared with (ii) Song 4, Bars 98-101

(i) Song 8

(ii) Song 4
**Song 9. The Prince’s Sword**

Many of the themes heard previously are presented in this penultimate song. For example, musical material from Song 6 features in this song to resolve the narrative of the spurned lover, Snow, being reunited with her love interest, the Prince. The overall structure is described in Table 3.5.

**Table 3.5: Song 9 structure.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part</th>
<th>Bars</th>
<th>Description or Text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>1-7</td>
<td>‘Ah Beauty’ theme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transition</td>
<td>8-10</td>
<td>Two ideas from previous songs interwoven</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>11-27</td>
<td>Prince’s song, development of fragment as above</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A¹</td>
<td>28-38</td>
<td>‘Ah Beauty’ theme returns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>39-52</td>
<td>Devil’s Waltz reprise from Song 6.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>53-63</td>
<td>Prince’s song reprise</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The opening of the song, Section A, features a transposition of the ‘Ah Beauty’ theme. As shown in Figure 3.20, it is not a literal transposition, rather a re-interpretation evoking the melodic shape but with sharper pitches. It evokes Snow’s mixed feelings on seeing the Prince after having overcome her betrayal and naivety.
The song is built from chords from the harmonic system that, like Song 8, emphasises tonal relationships as Snow moves back towards the ordinary world. A fragment of Song 8 is repeated in bar 17 using chord I. This chord pattern, which is repeated throughout the section with the transposed ‘Ah Beauty’ theme, which is repeated a number of times in Section A₁, signifies Snow’s thinking through the Prince’s offer and coming to a resolution in her mind to accept an alliance with the Prince.
The Devil’s Waltz from Song 6 returns in Section C. Instead of the dreamy vocal delivery of Song 6, the narrative is delivered assuredly. Snow is depicted as stronger and more in control of her destiny.

The song finishes with the vocal line ending on the note F#, which introduces the new ‘key’ for the final song.

**Song 10. Snow’s Triumph**

In the final song in the song cycle, Snow faces Lily and casts her out of the kingdom thereby reclaiming the crown. The song evokes hope and optimism from Snow by using chords that are less dissonant and emphasising the tonal nature of the harmonic system.

The harmony predominately alternates between chord X and chord I. The arpeggio figure in the left-hand piano represents the string and woodwind sections of an orchestra while the block chords in the right-hand piano represent a brass fanfare. As shown in Figure 3.21, this is juxtaposed by the long notes and large intervallic leaps in the vocal line that conjure up the excitement that Snow experiences facing her enemy.
Whereas many songs in the cycle are depicting complex events in the narrative, this song presents a single idea of triumphant. This affected the musical approach to keep the structure and musical ideas comparatively uncomplicated in order to complete the musical and emotional arc.

As shown in Figure, 3.22, the song finishes on Chord I. In contrast to the quiet and deconstructed presentation of the chord in the opening song where the atonal aspects of the chord are highlighted, it is presented as in a tonal and resolved context; final and resolute.
Figure 3.22: Song 10, Bars 83-end
Chapter 4. Overview of Songs of Amy Song Cycle

Introduction

As part of this research into song cycles, it was my objective to compose a second song cycle to explore alternative approaches to the criteria describe defined in Compositional Process and Objectives (Chapter 1). Therefore, in contrast to composition 1, I selected previously published poetry of a single author and composed a song cycle for a different ensemble. The result is Songs of Amy, written for four female voices and consists of four poems written by Amy Levy (1861-1889).

This chapter begins with a brief history of the author, describing how the text was selected, and how the text and author’s life directed the choice of ensemble. Next, a broad overview of the musical construction is described. Chapter 5 looks in detail at each piece of the song cycle.

About the poet, Amy Levy (1861-1889)

Amy Levy was born in England in 1861 into a middle-class Jewish family. Not only did her identity suffer from being part of a minority class (Jewish) in Victorian London; Levy was attracted to women and suffered unrequited love for most of her short life (Pullen, 2010). Levy committed suicide on September 10, 1889 two months before her 28th birthday. There is conjecture regarding her motives. Levy suffered a number of ailments including abscesses, eye infections, painful neuralgia and worsening deafness, and preceding her death, had been told she may suffer from a genetic madness (Beckman, 2009). However, Levy’s life always seemed marred by depression and self-loathing (Misloff, 2007) and an inability to ‘fit in’ (Pullen, 2010).

Levy published a number of popular novels and publications, including A Minor Poet and Other Verses which was published in 1884, and contained sad and melancholic
SET CRITERIA IN COMPOSING TWO CONTRASTING SONG CYCLES.

poetry, mostly upon the subject of death and suicide. The fourth song in Songs of Amy was taken from this collection. Poems from her second volume of poetry, A London Plane-Tree and Other Verse (1889) are marked by “emotional integrity and condensed power” (Beckman, 2009, online). Three poems were taken from this collection; Song 1: New Love New Life, Song 2. The Lost Friend and Song 3. Borderland.

Text Selection

Australian composer, Elliott Gyger, stated that he seeks text that can “speak directly enough to have music survive alongside it,” (Ford, 2014, online). Gyger prefers using poetry that contains very clear images and has found that convoluted sentences and “complicated grammar doesn’t work,” (Ford, 2014, online). Gyger was the winner of the 2013 Paul Lowin prize for his composition, giving voice (2012), a cycle of eight songs for mezzo-soprano and ensemble, based on Australian female poets’ words about early childhood and parenthood (Australian Music Centre, 2013, online). Like Gyger’s selection of text, Levy’s poetry not only survives being set to music; it is enhanced. Levy’s poetic imagery is rich, nuanced, and complex yet the language is not complicated.

As a composer, my attraction to Levy’s poetry first came in 1995 with a setting of New Love, New Life for a mixed-media composition, Power Station (Leslie, 1995). The setting for four female voices provided a timbral contrast to a complex soundscape of machine sounds and computer-generated tones. It was not until I revisited the poetry of Levy in 2014 that the connection between setting for female voices and the context of Levy’s life was realised. Thus, Levy’s poetry was researched and chosen as the text for the second song cycle.

The four poems were selected because of their brevity and strict syllabic structure. In each poem, the inner struggle of Levy and her constant challenge to herself that she will
remain resilient, despite illness or unrequited love, is apparent. The strict structural elements that Levy employs, such as using the same syllabic structure on each line, meant that Levy is disciplined in conveying the imagery within set rules. The result is an economy of words that clearly describes the image, emotion or state of mind.

**Musical construction**

**Ensemble**

In setting music to words, Gyger states that he starts with the performer’s voice; his *giving voice* song cycle was written with the voice of mezzo-soprano, Jenny Duck-Chong in mind (Ford, 2014, online). Similarly, the choice of four female voices greatly influenced the sonic landscape of *Songs of Amy*, which significantly utilises the unique harmonic colour of a cappella vocal harmony. The tessitura is limited to a two-octave range; from F below middle C to high F. The soprano line is mostly written in the range from A above middle C to high D whilst the Alto II part is written in the same range one octave below. Therefore, there is much close-part singing with movements in each part of primarily tones and semitones rather than large intervallic leaps.

The piece could be performed by a female choir as opposed to a single female voice per line. It is not recommended for children’s choirs because of the melancholic subject matter and not intended for male choirs.

**Harmony and colour**

The song cycle is not based in any particular ‘key’. Rather, modes are used and harmony is constructed through the use of 2nds and 4ths, and their inversions, minors and augments. The voices are mostly used in a homophonic texture although moving parts within the chord design are apparent as well as descants. Straightforward meters are
employed where possible to give emphasis to the correct poetic syllabic stress whilst allowing the unaccompanied voices to remain on strong beats of the bar.

**Story arc**

In contrast to Snow White’s Other Journey, there is no narrative that ties the poems together. However, there is a conscious choice in the ordering of the poems; they are ordered to resemble my interpretation of Levy’s life from optimistic youth to realising sadness due to unrequited physical and spiritual love. The first poem, *New Love, New Life*, is full of optimism for love and life while the last poem, *A Cross-Road Epitaph*, ends in what appears to be a prophecy of death. Poem 2, *The Lost Friend* is, full of forced optimism while being pursued by an unseen sorrow. Poem 3, *Borderland*, is about unrequited love.

**Summary**

In summary, the musical scaffolding of the entire song cycle is built on colour and intervals rather than the narrative approach of *Snow White’s Other Journey*. Each poem and its musical setting will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 5.
Chapter 5. Songs of *Song of Amy*

**Song 1. New Love, New Life**

The opening song of the cycle is written in four verses which correspond with Levy’s stanzas. The melodic organisation does not, however, promote Levy’s metre. Levy’s metre, which is six syllables per line, is blurred so that the rhyming words are not emphasised when sung. The constant beat of Levy’s poem is converted to interplays between 3/4, 4/4 and 5/4 time, as shown in the opening passage in Figure 5.1. Levy’s metre and rhymes are disguised to create a freer approach to word-painting.

The homophonic texture is integral to the composition. The unique colour of vocal harmony is explored by avoiding the classical period’s preferred intervals of thirds and sixths, instead emphasising seconds and fourths. These demands are required from the piece’s outset with the opening imitative counterpoint, as shown in Figure 5.1.

The opening bars are written in D-Dorian mode. The tonality, however, becomes increasingly ambiguous moving to Ab-Ionian in bar 12, resolving to a Bb-Ionian in bar 16. The sudden turn of harmonic centre continues to be a feature of the song cycle to create interest and highlight the optimism of the text, as Levy celebrates finding love once again (see Figure 5.1).
Figure 5.1: Song 1, Bars 1-22

She who so long has lain

She who so long has lain

Stone-stiff with folded wings, Within my

Long has lain folded wings, Within

Heart a gain The brown bird wakes and sings

Heart a gain The brown bird wakes and sings

Heart a gain The brown bird wakes and sings

Heart a gain The brown bird wakes and sings
The opening of the second stanza plays on the word ‘nightingale’. The nightingale has a powerful and beautiful song yet is quite plain in looks. For poets, over the centuries the symbolism of the nightingale has changed. Dogget (1974) states that, during the Romantic era, the nightingale was viewed as a muse while earlier periods viewed its song as a lament. It could be argued that the nightingale represents Levy who recognises the power and beauty in her writing but regarded herself as unattractive, thus she laments. In response, the section here is written with a mix of open chords with clusters. For example, in bars 23-25, the alto line is written in C-Aeolian while the rest of the voices are written in Ab-Mixolydian which paints the text in diminished 5ths, major 3rds, and minor 2nds and major 2nds. All voices sing in C-Aeolian in bar 30, whole-tone scale in bar 31 and resolving to an Ab-Mixolydian in bar 32 (see Figure 5.2)
Figure 5.2: Song 1, Bars 23-40

The final stanza repeats the opening material very briefly in the bar 68-69. This is to set the final line of the poem up which repeats the opening theme completely giving resolution to the song.

As shown in Figures 5.1-5.3, the range between voices primarily sits in an octave range. The harmony contracts and expands outside the octave parameter to give the harmony a musical shape and enhance the colour. This gradual expansion and retraction of the harmony can be charted through the first and last chords of each stanza as shown in Table 5.1.
Table 5.1: Song 1 ranges

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stanza</th>
<th>Range First Chord</th>
<th>Text</th>
<th>Range Last Chord</th>
<th>Text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>2&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>She who so long…</td>
<td>5&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Sings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Aug 4&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Brown night…</td>
<td>8&lt;sup&gt;ve&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>[de]-light</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>8&lt;sup&gt;ve&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Tis</td>
<td>8&lt;sup&gt;ve&lt;/sup&gt; + 3&lt;sup&gt;rd&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>[be]-fore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>5&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Love</td>
<td>2&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>last</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Song 2. The Lost Friend**

Text and melody is given more prominence in the second song. The entire movement is written in 4/4 to allow the poetic beat of Levy’s writing to emerge and the three-stanza poetic structure is highlighted in a corresponding ABA musical structure. As with Song 1, the intervals of 2<sup>nd</sup>s are important in the harmony. Whereas 4<sup>th</sup>s were integral to Song 1, 5<sup>th</sup>s are given more priority in Song 2. This gives the overall colour a more open presentation than the close harmonies of Song 1. The different intervals allow for easier setting of moving parts.

In the opening stanza, the soprano holds the melody. The song opens in C-Aeolian until the harmony suddenly moves to a cluster in bar 4 resolving to an A<sup>+</sup>4 in bar 5. The second part of stanza 1 repeats the harmonic sequence. The method is reminiscent of Debussy’s compositional technique in which he used frequent parallel chords which have been described as “chordal melodies and unprepared modulations without any harmonic bridge” (Reti, 1958, online).

A G-Phrygian mode is used in the Alto-II vocal line to underpin the D-Phrygian modal harmony of the other three voices on the word ‘Joy’ in bars 19-25 (see Figure 5.3). This relates to Levy’s alleged constant struggle with attaining joy; it could be argued that Levy is trying to convince herself that ‘joy is my friend, not sorrow,’ yet we know that joy
was a constant struggle for the young Levy that ended with suicide. Again, the combination of modes creates the particular homophonic harmony of the song cycle using 2nds, 4ths and 5ths.

Figure 5.3: Song 2, Bars 19-26
Contrast is achieved with the poetic line resolving on a B-Dorian for the text, “by strange seas,” (see Figure 5.4, bar 25-26), as it is imagined that Levy is referring to an infatuation she held for another female author, Violet Page (who wrote under the name, Vernon Lee) whom she met whilst staying in France (Beckman, 2009).

Stanza 3 opens with the return of musical devices and harmony used in the opening stanza, thereby realising the ABA musical structure. The piece concludes with a coda of 6 bars that emphasises the opening musical device and ends on an ambiguous whole tone chord.

**Song 3. Borderland**

I imagined that this poem was written about a dream that Levy had about her infatuation with Violet Page.

The text is rich in sensuality. It is written as a single stanza of rhyming prose with 14 lines and eight syllables per line. The lines are grouped 2-4-4-4. However, my musical structure breaks the prose into 5-3-3-2-1. Similar to the first song, this avoids highlighting Levy’s rhyming words and syllabic metre and allows for a compositional approach that better describes the moods Levy evokes in her poem through the harmonic structure. The overall structure is described in Table 5.1.
Table 5.2: Song 3 musical structure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part</th>
<th>Bars</th>
<th>Description or Text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| A    | 1-13 | Am I waking, am I sleeping?  
As the first faint dawn comes creeping  
Thro' the pane, I am aware  
Of an unseen presence hovering,  
Round, above, in the dusky air: |
| B    | 14-25| A downy bird, with an odorous wing,  
That fans my forehead, and sheds perfume,  
As sweet as love, as soft as death, |
| A₁   | 26-32| Drowsy-slow through the summer-gloom.  
My heart in some dream-rapture saith,  
It is she. Half in a swoon, |
| B₁   | 33-39| I spread my arms in slow delight.--  
O prolong, prolong the night, |
| A₂   | 40-42| For the nights are short in June! |

There are two approaches to harmonic structure. The first, labelled ‘A’ in Table 5.1, creates tension and ambiguity through the use of chromatic modes in the vocal lines. In bars 1-13, the first five lines of the poem, harmonic shapes are built which create tension from resolving augmented 4ths to perfect 5ths. From B-natural, the mode is constructed semitone – tone – semitone – tone – semitone – tone + semitone – tone, highlighting the augmented 4ths and major and minor 2nds in the harmony (see Figure 5.4).
In contrast, the harmonic structure labelled ‘B’ in Table 5.1, highlights perfect 5th's without abandoning the harmonic scaffolding of the augmented 4th's and 2nd's. The harmony is constructed from alternating between a similar chromatic mode used in the opening bars to a B-Locrian mode.

Similar to Song 2, the compositional method reminiscent of Debussy's “unprepared modulations without any harmonic bridge” (Reti, 1958, online) is featured in bars 22-25 as a whole-tone scale in the Soprano and Mezzo-Soprano vocal line are harmonised with chromatic descending harmony in the Alto parts (see Figure 5.5).
A similar device is used in bars 26-28 that was first used in bars 36-37 in Song 2.

*The Lost Friend.* This is where the melody is begun in all parts but is sustained by lower parts as the melody progresses; see Figure 5.6a and 5.6b.
The chromatic movement in bars 29-30 on the text, ‘dream rapture saith’, from a D-Dorian to a C- Locrian is to suggest that Levy’s dream of love may have contributed to her ultimate self-harm (see Figure 5.7a).
In bars 33-39, the harmonic colour of section B is developed by introducing semi-quavers and triplets in the mezzo-soprano and alto parts with a descant in the soprano. This approach paints a suggestion of freedom that Levy’s dream encourages. The dream is short-lived, however, as the song finishes in bars 40-42 using the opening chromatic mode.

**Song 4. Cross-Road Epitaph**

Song 4 is the shortest song in the song cycle at only around 1 minute duration with a 30 second epilogue. Even though the poem was written earlier than the preceding three songs, it was chosen as the final song as it is somewhat prophetic. In the poem, Levy appears to foresee her ensuing life and early death.

With the sombre subject matter, the song is set in a reflective fashion through the use of unison singing and long rests between poetic lines compared with the previous three songs. The melody is mostly featured in the mezzo-soprano and alto I part while the soprano provides a descant.

The song is set in an A-Aeolian mode in reference to the hymnal nature of the poem. However, the final phrase finishes on a B with an E to create an ambiguity of the central tone. As typical of the entire song cycle, the song uses intervals of 2nd, 4th and 5th from which to build the harmony and colour.

Bars 21-28 is an Epilogue that provides a harmonic and structural completion to the song cycle. The words and harmony reference Song 1. *New Love, New Life* and the use of the line, “She who so long has lain,” refers to the rediscovery of Levy’s work and story in the late 20th century.
Chapter 6: Research Findings

The current study sought to define a set of criteria that would inform my compositional process based on previous research of the song cycle in the European tradition. These criteria included textual, musical, timbral and hermeneutic elements (defined in Chapter 1). The second objective was to explore the application of the criteria as a creative response through two compositions.

The results demonstrate that having a clear and well-defined set of criteria from which to compose a song cycle supports the textual and musical unification of the composition yet does not hinder a creative approach to harmony and musical structure. Despite weighting different musical elements in the selection of text, musical construction, ensemble and the influence of deviations, the use of the same criteria has resulted in two compositions that are regarded as compositions in the song cycle tradition.

Limitations

This research into song cycles represents a small aspect of the field. It is important to note that, while the initial findings of this study may provide future composers with guidelines for composing song cycles, the scope of this study is limited. Not tested as part of this research is exploring the notion that other composers may be reluctant to impose a criteria of compositional behaviours into their approach to composing a song cycles.

Further testing of the criteria through other composers’ compositional activity would alleviate another limitation of this research, being the application of the guidelines by a single composer. A more definitive set of criteria may be established for song cycles if other composers use the criteria in this research as part of their compositional approach allowing a comprehensive understanding of the criteria’s impact on compositional process through a larger body of work.
Conclusion

Being a long work, the guidelines assisted my compositional process in Composition 1, *Snow White’s Other Journey*, by providing a unifying harmonic framework for each song. Although each song is distinct in mood and style, the ability to compose from an established set of criteria meant that I avoided working from a ‘blank canvas’ for each song. As I continued through the compositional process, my fluency and confidence with the harmonic elements improved. What was difficult, however, was composing so each piece did not sound harmonically similar. This was avoided through emphasising dissonant and tonal aspects of the harmonic criteria through the cycle’s macro-structure as well as pre-determining the style of the song beforehand (refer to Table 2.6).

Where I felt the harmonic criteria hindered creativity, I was able to justify loosening the compositional approach as hermeneutic elements allowed me to deviate in an intentional and informed manner. Where deviations do occur, it does not interfere with the song cycle’s musical structure as a whole.

The criteria also assisted in setting textual standards for *Snow White’s Other Journey*. As per the criteria, it was important that the text was of high quality and reflected a journey. Because of the difficulty I had finding suitable text, the criteria motivated me to continue to seek an informed process that would deliver the desired standard of text as well as adequately describe the hero’s journey.

As stated in the introduction, study through the creative art of music composition is regarded as practice research. The creative process led to a revelation about my compositional voice. Present is a dualistic tension between nineteenth century harmony contrasted with approaches to contemporary construction. My approach to harmony is sometimes serial, sometimes modal, sometimes dissonant and sometimes tonal. The
subconscious attachment to the nineteenth century is realised in the selection of musical structures, for example in expressing my compositional voice through song cycles. Lastly, the influence of the nineteenth century tradition of program music on the compositional voice which is driven by clear narratives. With this now cognisant, I will have the confidence to expand my compositional writing to encompass more modern approaches (for example, instrument building, extended techniques and using alternate performance spaces to the concert hall).

Forward work on *Snow White’s Other Journey* may include scoring the piece for a larger ensemble and creating a larger musical theatre or operatic work. Although I discovered writing for piano competently is challenging, I appreciate good technique in piano composition will enhance my compositional process for larger ensembles. This is important as I move from ‘student’ composer to a composer working professionally.

*Songs of Amy* presented different challenges in which the criteria assisted. Compared with a single voice with piano accompaniment used in Composition 1 which has a wide pitch range, four female voices is limited with a much smaller range. Further, while in the first composition I used different legato, staccato and other expressive effects to draw contrasting tone-colours and word-painting, in the second I used the same tone-colour throughout (e.g. no percussive vocal effects) utilising the unique harmonic colour of a cappella vocal harmony. However, because of the creative use of modes and with a compositional approach reminiscent of Debussy using chordal melodies and unprepared modulations without any harmonic bridge, each song emerged with a mood that suited the text.

As with Composition 1, the criteria assisted in setting textual standards in Composition 2. Significant consideration was given to using a single poet’s work, and Amy Levy’s poetic imagery was found to be rich and complex yet uncomplicated and very
well suited to a vocal setting. Levy’s status in the literary field satisfied the criteria that the text be a selection of high-quality poetry that is linked through the theme of unrequited love.

While each song in *Songs of Amy* employs a distinct compositional approach, I found that a straightforward approach to setting voice parts may work best when using modal harmony. The last song in the song cycle, *Cross-Road Epitaph*, appears a simple composition, yet I believe is the most atmospheric and captures the essence of Levy’s poetry poignantly. A straightforward approach assists choirs who are practiced in diatonic harmony but not necessarily with intervals of 2nds and 4ths as some of the intervals written are difficult to sing without accompaniment.

Forward work on *Songs of Amy* may include scoring an accompaniment to assist vocalists, such as a harp or string quartet. The performance of this song cycle was a key part of the learning process in my choral writing, especially in creating unique harmony through difficult-to-sing intervals. This is important as I compose further works that may be performed by ‘community’ choirs that have limited intervallic training.

For future composers, understanding the history of the song cycle in the European tradition greatly assists in defining one’s own criteria in crafting a song cycle. Approaching song cycles with predetermined and informed criteria enhances compositional approaches allowing the composition of song cycles to be musically unified. As a result, song cycles can continue to be elevated in importance as part of a composer’s output.
SET CRITERIA IN COMPOSING TWO CONTRASTING SONG CYCLES.

References


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SET CRITERIA IN COMPOSING TWO CONTRASTING SONG CYCLES.


