PORTFOLIO OF COMPOSITIONS
VOLUME I

Adelaide Coles

A portfolio submitted in partial fulfilment of requirements for the degree of Master of Music (Composition)

Sydney Conservatorium of Music
University of Sydney
2015
I declare that the compositions presented here are my own original work and have not been submitted to any other institution for the award of a degree.

Signed: …………………………………………………………………………………..

Date: …………………………………………………………………………………..
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**Oil, Steam, and Steel** [tracks 5-7]  
(c. 25 minutes)  
I. Awaken [track 5]  
II. Breathe [track 6]  
III. Run [track 7]  

*Oil, Steam, and Steel - a mechanistic concerto for alto saxophone and strings* was composed between December 2013 and May 2015. It is the major work of this portfolio. This work is intended to function both as absolute music and as a programmatic piece, simultaneously exploring sonic combinations of saxophone and strings in abstract forms alongside a concurrently-developing image of a *Great Machine* coming to life. The accompanying recording is of the work’s premiere on April 24, 2015, performed by saxophonist Mary Osborn and a chamber orchestra of Sydney Conservatorium musicians conducted by Simone Zuccatti. This recording does not match the score in several places, following rewrites made after the first performance. The most notable of these are the relationship between the violin and saxophone multiphonics at m28-36 and changes to the saxophone part at m563-569.

**Quartet for December** [tracks 8-10]  
(c. 18-20 minutes)  

The first two movements of *Quartet for December* were composed between March - November 2013, before beginning work on the concerto. Apart from a few preexisting melodic fragments, the third movement was primarily written after the concerto, in May - June 2015. The piece was written to commemorate a December wedding of an American friend and composer. The first movement is a rustic dance in 7/8, an homage to the dedicatee’s propensity for composing in asymmetrical meters. The tense harmonies in the second movement reflect the biting cold of winter melting into the warmth of a smoldering fire. The smoke escapes into the sky, where the particles crystalize. The third movement observes the first snowflakes of the season and watches as blustery winds threaten to engulf everything. The difference in writing technique between the first two movements and the finale reflects the experience gained from working with string players on *Oil, Steam, and Steel* and *Winds of Eerie Change*. The recording of Movement I is a performance by the Hillel Quartet on May 16, 2014. The other two movements are MIDI versions.
Winds of Eerie Change [track 11]
(c. 7 minutes)

Winds of Eerie Change was composed over a 12-week period between September-November 2013 as part of an extended workshop for performers and composers. It was my first time working with performers right from the beginning of the compositional process. As a wind player without much experience with strings, writing effectively for this ensemble was a challenge; however, it was critical to learn how to utilize the instruments before I could pursue the envisioned concerto for saxophone and string orchestra. I treated the workshop as an opportunity to gain practical knowledge about writing for strings and explore many musical ideas with the benefit of direct performer feedback. The piecemeal writing method for the work accounts for its resultant structure as a series of tableaux following the evolution of a single melodic idea through several iterations over approximately seven minutes. The accompanying recording is of its premiere on November 12, 2013 by Conservatorium students Lidia Bara, violin, Kay-Yin Teoh, violin, Nathan Greentree, viola, Bethan Lillicrap, cello, and Diletta Bredow, piano.
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Oil, Steam, and Steel - a mechanistic concerto for alto saxophone and strings

2013-2015
Oil, Steam, and Steel

I. Awaken
II. Breathe
III. Run

SCORING:

solo alto saxophone

4 violin 1s
3 violin 2s
3 violas
2 cellos
2 double basses with C extension

Transposing score

Duration: c. 25 minutes

This piece was premiered by the Sydney Conservatorium Chamber Orchestra under Simone Zuccatti with Mary Osborn as soloist on April 24, 2015 in Music Workshop, Sydney Conservatorium of Music, Australia.

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Oil, Steam, and Steel
a mechanistic concerto for alto saxophone and strings

I. Awaken

Alto Saxophone

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Violoncello

Double Bass

Adelaide Coles
b. 1991

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growl

Alto Sax.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Db.

unis.
II. Breathe

\( \text{ord. soloist A} \)

\( \text{ord. soloist B} \)

\( \text{ord. solo} \)

\( \text{arco solo} \)

\( \text{Q} \)

\( \text{slow to fast} \)

\( \text{natural} \)

\( \text{tutti} \)

\( \text{tutti} \)
Thundering!

Alto Sax.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Db.

mp

fp

ff

Arco

mp

fp

ff

Arco

Piano

Piano

Piano
III. Run

Fast $\frac{d}{4} = 195$
($\frac{d}{4} = 130$)

Alto Sax.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Db.

ff
Alto Sax.

Vla.

Vc.

a tempo

ritenuto

A tempo

full of emotion

= 130

G1

two players

two players

solo

tutti

arco

tutti

arco
Piu Mosso

\( \cdot = 150 \)
\( \cdot \cdot = 225 \)

581

\( \text{accel.} \)

Alto Sax.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Db.

586

Alto Sax.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Db.

(still pizz.)
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Quartet for December

2013-2015
Quartet for December

Violin 1
Violin 2
Viola
Cello

Duration: c. 18-20 minutes

Composed between March 2013-June 2015.

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Quartet for December
Dedicated to the union of Morgan and Katharine

I.

Poco Adagio (\( \frac{\text{j}}{\text{e}} = 69-72 \))

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Viola

Violoncello

6

dolce

Più mosso (\( \frac{\text{j}}{\text{e}} = 168 \))

tutti

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Allegro ($ \dot{\text{=} 236} $)
Adagio

II.
Andante

\( q = 84 \)

\[ \begin{align*}
\text{III.} \\
\end{align*} \]
Poco più mosso

\[ \frac{\text{mf}}{\text{fp}} \text{ pizz.} \]

\[ \frac{\text{f}}{\text{mf}} \text{ arco} \]

\[ \frac{\text{f}}{\text{p}} \text{ mp} \]
Winds of Eerie Change

Violin 1
Violin 2
Viola
Cello
Piano

Program Notes
The piece begins with an innocuous theme on the white keys of the piano, soon joined by pizzicato strings. This leads into the first transformation to a gentle waltz. A few accidentals freely join the musical language and then dissipate, as they are merely temporary in this peaceful world. But more and more accidentals linger...and soon the piano and cello are at odds against the rest of the ensemble. Their chromatic infestations infect the other instruments one by one. Before it completely takes over, the original white key theme makes another appearance before getting swept away by the pizzicato strings, rattling like tree branches in the wind. The piano then interjects with the second transformation: a jazz-inflected alteration of the first theme, to which the strings cannot help but follow along while attempting to retain their pure white-key tonality.

The first violin jumps in with a gypsy-like solo, accompanied by the other strings imitating guitars with pizzicato. The piano counters with a solo of its own, back in the jazz style. Then the two styles are combined in a dense and dissonant fugal texture. When the tension reaches exploding point, the original piano and pizzicato themes suddenly appear in a new key, but are easily engulfed by the grotesqueness surrounding them. Once again the piece builds to a frenzy, with elements of all the prior sections returning.

This leads to another transformation of the theme in the piano featuring metric irregularities and an altered scale in one hand and an inversion in the other hand, while the strings begin an incessant sort of death toll beneath it. Finally the drama abates into the next transformation to ghoulish sparsity, where harmonies from before are dissected and reconstructed obliquely. Eventually the movement picks up, and we are dragged into a spirit world of ghosts and skeletons, depicted by shrieking harmonics and col legno clicking and knocking. In the afterlife, snippets from the prior transformation make phantasmal apparitions.

The waltz theme makes a final reprise in the first violin, with the other strings echoing it in an out-of-tune canon. This leads to a final raucous and vulgar statement of the original motif with obnoxious trills in the piano. The strings then screech up to wraith-like harmonics and disintegrate as dust into the wind.

Duration: c. 7 minutes

Composed between September-November 2013. Premiered by Lidia Bara, violin, Kay-Yin Teoh, violin, Nathan Greentree, viola, Bethan Lillicrap, cello, and Diletta Bredow, piano on November 12, 2013 at Sydney Conservatorium of Music, Australia.

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Winds of Eerie Change

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\[ \frac{\text{\textcopyright 2013}}{\text{Adelaide Coles}} \]
\[ \text{Vln. I} \]
\[ \text{Vln. II} \]
\[ \text{Vla.} \]
\[ \text{Vc.} \]
\[ \text{Pno.} \]

\[ \text{p} \]
\[ \text{f} \]
\[ \text{mf} \]

\[ \text{col legno} \]

\[ \text{S} \]

\[ \text{arco} \]

\[ \text{mf} \]

\[ \text{p} \]

\[ \text{ff} \]