

3 Pieces: Piano / Horn / Violin (2006-2007)

3 Pieces were written as part of a collaborative creative event focusing around a horn trio. Originally conceived as 'electroacoustic interludes', 3 Pieces evolved into something much larger, taking in a research project exploring the nature of free play and improvisation within fixed medium works (3 Pieces exists in 5.1 surround sound format). Each piece worked upon a very small number of sources / themes and developed material through experimentation using traditional electroacoustic techniques. However, for some time now, I have been concerned with the sequential nature of such transpositions and the problem of cataloguing and choosing from such a vast array of results. This technique, matured over some 60 years by composers around the world and heavily influenced by technological change, has proven to be to be far more than mere bricolage. However, it remains difficult to describe and justify the decision making process through anything other than the medium itself.

As part of the process of thinking about a solution to my problem, I created an instrument that would afford a variety of (limited) effects but allow free play across a number of dimensions with a set number of initial sounds. My aim was to generate new material with a sense of 'performance' even within the fixed medium. As laptop computers have become more powerful, concerts featuring 'live electroacoustic music' have increased. When successful, this music has an increased sense of creative activity and (perhaps) a greater level of composer/performer/listener communication. However, this live presentation fails to offer the chance to correct, enhance, reflect and return. Perhaps a middle-ground could be found where live passages are recorded, edited and composed into a larger fixed structure. (And of course, the opposite is equally exciting - working live with 'composed' sections of music.) Using some very simple controllers (a fader box and a graphics tablet) under the control of Max/MSP, I was able to improvise within pre-defined boundaries. These 'performances' have subsequently been integrated into the 3 Pieces (and, as it happens, edited quite extensively).

3 Pieces: Piano. This piece draws upon a recursive chord sequence from my earlier piano piece and relies heavily upon regular repetition and drone.

3 Pieces: Horn. Each piece has a number of highly dense textures which open up in the 5.1 space and the textures here result from both extended techniques and, more 'orchestral' moments. I would like to thank Tom James for some excellent horn samples.

3 Pieces: Violin. This piece tries to be somewhat more subdued (though very reluctantly). I would like to thank Peter Cropper for supplying initial sources - though I think recognition of the sound of a 1714 Stradivarius is out of the question.

3 Pieces can be played in any order, separately or together. In addition, 3 Pieces:violin appears in two formats 5 minutes or 10 minutes. In past performances, pieces were interlaced into the concert programme in the following order (piano, horn, violin-short version). Whilst each piece is focused upon one instrument, the spectre of the 'horn trio' remains. 3 Pieces were realized in 2007 in the composer's studio and premiered in April 2007 at the University of Western Australia, Perth.