

Patrick Zuk

Raymond Deane

This study of the career and creative achievement of Raymond Deane (b. 1953) is the first comprehensive study of an Irish composer to appear in print in his lifetime. Illustrated with musical examples, it combines a lucid survey of Deane's principal compositions with a highly informative commentary on technical features of his work.

Patrick Zuk is Lecturer in Music at the University of Durham, England. He is completing a new history of the Irish art-music tradition.

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Preface

This book surveys the career and creative achievement of Raymond Deane, one of the most prominent figures in contemporary Irish composition. Given the paucity of secondary literature dealing with any aspect of Deane's output, I was almost completely reliant on the composer to furnish detailed information about the course of his career and about his compositions. Deane assisted me to an extent that surpassed any reasonable expectations. In addition to allowing me to interview him on over a dozen occasions, he responded (sometimes at great length) to some three hundred communications and offered detailed comments on the drafts of each chapter as they were written, often supplying corrections or drawing attention to oversights. I would like to take this opportunity to express my appreciation of his help, since the book would undoubtedly have been much the poorer had I not enjoyed the benefit of his active cooperation.

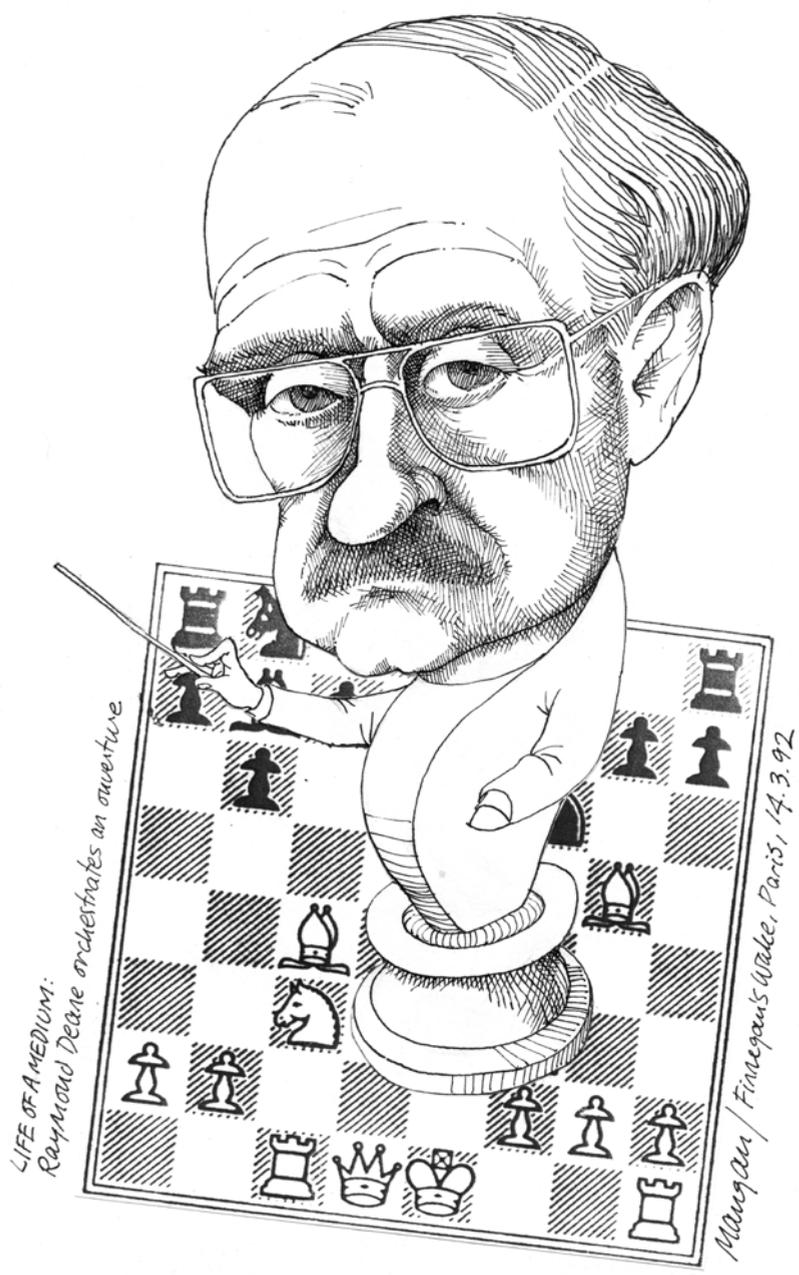
I have not attempted a critical evaluation of Deane's work and have viewed my primary task as providing a sympathetic introduction that reflects as closely as possible the composer's own understanding of his creative enterprise. My discussion of his compositions inevitably had to be selective and it was clearly impossible to consider every work in the same depth; nonetheless, the selection is a representative one. Although the accounts of individual works are sometimes quite involved, I have consciously sought to keep technical language to a minimum and have largely refrained from providing detailed structural analyses in the hope that the book might prove more accessible to a non-specialist readership.

Patrick Zuk
Durham, July 2006

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Finally, I would like to express my particular gratitude to Séamas de Barra, not only for his unfailing personal support, but also for reading the manuscript in draft and offering constructive criticisms. His meticulous scholarship and his enthusiasm for research on the Irish art-music tradition have been an inspiration.



LIFE OF A MEDIUM:
Raymond Deane orchestrates an overture

Mauger / Finspau's Wake, Paris, 14.3.92

Introduction

Raymond Deane was born in 1953 in Tuam, County Galway. For much of his childhood, his family lived in Bunacurry, a small village on Achill Island off the coast of County Mayo, where his mother taught in a girls' primary school and his father worked as manager of the local Labour Exchange. His mother began to instruct him in the rudiments of music when he was about six years of age (meeting initially, he recalls, with a considerable degree of resistance on his part) and he subsequently took piano lessons in a local convent. Musical life in this remote place during the early 1950s was very restricted in scope and whatever exposure Deane had to classical music came solely from listening to the few gramophone records his parents possessed.

In 1963, when he was ten, the family moved to Dublin, a change that proved propitious for his future musical development. Deane enrolled as a student at the Dublin College of Music, where he was assigned to Fionn Ó Lochlainn, a piano teacher whom he found very sympathetic and remembers as exerting a beneficial influence. Ó Lochlainn was a musician of quite broad culture who encouraged Deane to listen widely and deepen his knowledge of the musical literature. Somewhat unusually, he had a keen interest in modern music, readily entering into protracted discussions with his pupil about the Second Viennese School, Bartók and Stravinsky. As a teenager, Deane started to pay frequent visits to his local music library and attend concerts, eager to broaden his musical knowledge. He made rapid progress in his studies and became a proficient pianist, winning prizes in national competitions.

In his mid-teens, Deane's parents withdrew him from secondary school to educate him privately at home, a decision prompted by a combination of health problems and by his resistance to the regimentation of his school environment. Withdrawal from school allowed him to devote himself more fully to his musical studies. His adolescence was a fairly solitary one; Deane occupied himself reading, playing the piano or listening to music. As a child he had tried his hand at writing short pieces and he continued to compose steadily through his teens, producing a large quantity of music, most of which he later destroyed. His earliest efforts reflected heterogeneous influences. Subsequently, his interest in contemporary music intensified steadily and he began to experiment with a wide variety of avant-garde compositional approaches including serialism and minimalism with which he had become familiar through his voracious listening. Looking back, Deane describes himself wryly as having turned into 'a total freak' by the time he was seventeen, wholly obsessed with the 'most *outré*

kinds of *avant-garde* music'.¹

European art music occupied a rather marginalized place in the cultural life of Dublin; the capital of a small, poor country could scarcely offer the rich diversity of musical fare available in major metropolitan centres such as London or Paris, particularly as far as new music was concerned. Nonetheless, opportunities to hear this repertoire in live or broadcast performances were not completely lacking and Radio Telefís Éireann, the Irish national broadcasting station, displayed considerable enterprise in programming, despite its fairly limited resources. There was also a small, but significant group of musicians who had an enthusiastic interest in modern music and made considerable efforts to enliven the Dublin musical scene by putting on concerts featuring a modern repertoire, many of them organized in conjunction with the Music Association of Ireland. Deane first came to wider public attention in the context of one of the most important of these ventures, the first Dublin Festival of Twentieth Century Music, which was held in January 1969. Although this initiative was comparatively short-lived, it introduced the work of a cross-spectrum of living composers to Irish audiences. Amongst younger musicians, it generated considerable excitement, particularly when eminent composers with international reputations such as Olivier Messaien, Peter Maxwell Davies and Witold Lutoslawski came to the festival to attend performances of their work. In addition to the major events, the festival organized concerts to showcase the work of younger composers and Deane appeared in the very first of these, playing a piano piece entitled 'Format 1'. The work of the fifteen-year-old composer aroused considerable interest. At the next festival, he played one of the piano pieces from his *Orphica* cycle, the first of his early compositions to feature in his catalogue of works.

This festival, and those of subsequent years, not only allowed Deane to perform his own work and to hear live performances of music that interested him, but also brought him into contact with other young composers and performers who shared his enthusiasms. In summer 1969, he attended the Internationale Ferienkurse für Neue Musik (International Holiday Courses for New Music) in Darmstadt in Germany. This annual course, which was first held in 1946, is an important international forum for the performance and discussion of new music. Here, Deane heard works by composers such as Stockhausen, Maderna and Ligeti (all of whom were present that year) and attended a number of lectures and workshops — experiences that were invaluable in broadening his intellectual and artistic horizons.

In autumn 1970, he enrolled as a student of music in University College, Dublin, taking his BMus degree four years later. According to his own account, he initially found this return to an institutional environment difficult, largely because of his intense shyness. He overcame this difficulty, however, forming close friendships with several fellow students, including the composer Gerald Barry. In his recollection, the music department of UCD was a rather stultifying environment and, for the most part, he found the courses uninteresting. An exception was a course on twentieth-century music given by the composer Seóirse Bodley (b. 1933), who had a keen interest in the continental *avant-garde* and devoted a considerable amount of time to it in his lectures. Bodley was one of the very few Irish composers of an older generation with whom Deane felt any affinity. As a younger man, Deane was to dismiss such work of theirs as he knew as stylistically anachronistic and largely uninteresting. In particular, he had little sympathy with attempts to forge personal styles based on Irish folk music, an enterprise that seemed to him to be the product of a deeply ingrained conservatism and intellectual insularity. This viewpoint, at least in part, reflected his determination to confront prevalent notions concerning the sort of music that Irish composers should write and in particular the notion that 'Irishness' had to be discernible in

1 Deane quoted in Michael Dungan, 'An Interview with Raymond Deane', website of the Contemporary Music Centre, Dublin, www.cmc.ie/articles/article634.html (accessed 20 May 2006)

their work. Deane wished to write music that would express a very different sensibility, evincing a firm commitment to the avant-garde in its style and technical means. A number of Bodley's scores, such as his orchestral work *Configurations* (1967), which explored integral serial techniques, seemed to come close to embodying this ideal.

During his time at UCD, Deane completed a number of keyboard and chamber works that he regards, together with the set of piano pieces *Orphica*, as his first mature compositions. In these works, discussed in some detail in the following two chapters, he experimented with a very personal adaptation of minimalist compositional procedures, structuring the works around gradual transformations of basic materials but within a much more contracted time span than would usually be the case in classic Minimalist compositions. Deane's incorporation of quasi-tonal materials into his freely chromatic harmonic language, from which he derives a number of striking and individual effects, is a key feature of these early works. The style, though consistent, is difficult to categorize, however, and even at this early stage of the composer's career reveals a distinctive creative voice that owes very little, if anything, to the music of his contemporaries, either in Ireland or abroad.

To organize performances of these works, Deane was largely dependent on his own initiatives. Although he had ceased taking piano lessons, he continued to make fairly regular appearances as a performer, winning a competition at Feis Ceoil in 1972 for his performance of Skryabin's taxing Tenth Piano Sonata. He was consequently in a position to give the premieres of his piano works himself. Arranging performances of the chamber works presented a greater problem, given how few ensembles of a high quality there were in Dublin, but he did manage to secure the services of a few professional and student performers. He also had the valuable experience of hearing his first orchestral work *Sphinxes*, which was written in 1972, performed by the amateur Dublin Symphony Orchestra. Since there was no organization in existence at the time that could represent the interests of young Irish composers and assist them to promote their work, Deane and a number of his close contemporaries took the practical initiative of setting up the Association of Young Irish Composers in the same year. This organization subsequently expanded into a larger body, the Association of Irish Composers, to represent composers of all age groups.

On graduation from UCD in 1974, Deane was awarded a scholarship to study in Switzerland for a year with the American composer Gerald Bennett (b. 1942) at the Musikakademie in Basle. This was his first formal course of study in composition. Bennett had studied composition with Klaus Huber and conducting with Boulez, of whose music he was an enthusiastic advocate. In addition to offering constructive comment on his students' work in progress, he used to set them various tasks centring on particular compositional problems, such as writing a piece for a given combination of instruments, which would employ a certain technical procedure. During his period of study in Basle, Deane wrote a substantial chamber work, *Amalgam*, which he later withdrew, as well as a piano sonata making use of proto-serial techniques. In 1976, he enrolled in Stockhausen's composition seminar at the Cologne Musikhochschule, subsequently moving to Berlin two years later in 1978, where he studied with Isang Yun (1917–95), a Korean composer who had secured political asylum in Germany.

Looking back on these periods of study, Deane is inclined to think that they were of limited benefit to his development as a composer. He readily acknowledges that Bennett and Yun helped him to acquire a greater measure of self-discipline and provided certain valuable technical insights, but since their creative orientation was so different to his, he felt they could only be of limited assistance to him. He also acknowledges that he was not necessarily the easiest student to teach, as there was a strong streak of stubbornness in his own make-up, which led him to resist any perceived threat to his creative individuality, a tendency that sometimes took rather exaggerated forms. Stockhausen did not teach composition in any conventional understanding of the word; instead, he held a series of seminars

at which he mostly discussed his own work. Although Deane found these seminars absorbing — he greatly admired Stockhausen's early music — his own creative preoccupations were comparatively remote from Stockhausen's, and he was reluctant to imitate the German composer's very distinctive compositional procedures.

During these years of study abroad, Deane composed comparatively little. Nonetheless, he completed two significant scores, his first concertante work *Compact* (1975) for piano and small orchestra, and *Triarchia* for solo piano (1978), as well as a number of short chamber pieces. The style of these compositions betrays little of his various teachers' influences. The sound-world of *Compact*, however, undoubtedly owes something to Luciano Berio (a composer whom Deane still admires), particularly in the writing for the solo instrument. On the other hand, *Triarchia*, in which Deane employed various serial techniques, may owe something to the sonorities of Stockhausen's *Mantra*.²

This period was a very difficult one in Deane's personal life. His intense shyness had not diminished since his time at UCD. While living abroad, he found himself having increasing recourse to alcohol to cope with social situations and to escape from an oppressive sense of acute personal isolation — a tendency that developed rapidly into a pattern of heavy drinking that bore all the hallmarks of alcoholic dependency. Yet he remained productive, writing music of a consistently high quality.

These years also brought rewards, as his reputation began to grow steadily in Ireland. He was the recipient of two prestigious prizes (the Varming Composition Prize in 1978 and the Macaulay Fellowship in 1980) and was increasingly invited to undertake high-profile commissions. On completion of his studies with Yun, he returned to Ireland, where he remained for almost four years and completed a number of important projects. In 1980, he finished one of the most powerful of his earlier works, the song cycle *Tristia* for soprano and seven players, in which he set texts by Emily Dickinson, Paul C elan and Thomas Hardy. In the same year, he was commissioned to write a work for the Irish pianist John O'Conor, which featured in a recital inaugurating a piano recently acquired for the new National Concert Hall in Dublin. In 1981, he embarked on a substantial orchestral score, *Enchaînement* which, like his next keyboard work *Avatars* (also completed in 1982), continued his exploration of serial techniques. The following year he was largely occupied with the composition of *Krespel*, a set of four 'radiophonic tableaux' for soprano, actors and symphony orchestra based on his adaptation of the famous short story of that name by E. T. A. Hoffmann, which had been commissioned by RT  as an entry for the Prix Italia, a prestigious international competition for distinguished productions in the field of music and the performing arts jointly organized by radio and television companies. This score marked something of a new creative departure in Deane's output, in which his gifts for humorous characterization and parody came strongly to the fore.

Despite growing recognition, Deane found it difficult to remain sanguine about his future prospects, particularly as far as his material circumstances were concerned. The position of the freelance composer in Ireland was a rather precarious one. The number of professional performing groups in Ireland was small and almost all of them were maintained by the Radio Telef s  ireann, the national broadcasting station.³ The RT  Symphony Orchestra and the smaller Concert Orchestra were the only ensembles capable of giving an adequate performance of new orchestral works by Irish composers since, by their very nature, these were almost wholly beyond the capacities of the various amateur orchestras in provincial towns and cities. RT  maintained a string quartet and a radio choir, the RT  Singers, but such other professional ensembles as there were operated on a part-time basis. Hence,

2 Deane to author, 1 July 2006

3 For an overview of the development of RT 's various performing groups and their activities, see Maurice Gorham, *Forty Years of Irish Broadcasting* (Dublin, 1967); Pat O'Kelly, *The National Symphony Orchestra of Ireland: 1948–1998* (Dublin, 1998); and Richard Pine's books, *2RN and the Origins of Irish Radio* (Dublin, 2002), and *Music and Broadcasting in Ireland* (Dublin, 2005).

opportunities to obtain commissions were few and no matter how productive individual composers might be, it was not possible for them to earn a living solely through their work. Most composers of an earlier generation, unless they had independent means, were forced to support themselves in other ways. Some, like Aloys Fleischmann (1910–92) and Brian Boydell (1917–2000) held academic posts; others, like A. J. Potter (1918–80) or Éamonn Ó Gallchobhair (1900–82), supplemented their income by making arrangements of Irish folk music for amateur performing groups and the Radio Éireann Light Orchestra (which later became the RTÉ Concert Orchestra). By the time Deane grew to adulthood, this demand for arrangements had dried up, but such activity would have been deeply repugnant to him in any case. Not feeling that he had any vocation as a teacher or an academic, there were few options open to him. The composer-in-residence schemes, which are now common, whereby a university music department or regional municipal body employs composers on short-term contracts to teach composition and compose a number of specially commissioned works, were as yet unknown in Ireland.

There were other frustrations. Although the personnel of the Music Department in RTÉ did support new music, there were limits to the volume of work by any one individual that could be performed. In consequence, composers sometimes experienced lengthy delays before premieres could be arranged. In many cases, the piece in question would only be done once and the composer might never hear it again. There was no Irish music publisher with the resources to bring out scores of new works and Irish composers generally found it next to impossible to secure publication abroad. This represented a considerable handicap, since large music publishers can do a great deal to promote a composer's work. They also often negotiate on the composer's behalf to secure further performances and new commissions, which not only provide additional sources of income but also can assist in establishing a reputation. Similarly, there were very few opportunities to have works recorded for commercial release. As a result, music by Irish composers was largely inaccessible, and those who might have been interested in studying it more closely had little choice but to approach the composer in person to borrow scores and recordings. All in all, these dispiriting circumstances militated against the possibility of work by Irish composers coming to wider attention even within their own country, let alone outside it.

If the audience for classical music in Ireland was small, the number of people with an active interest in new music was smaller still. There was little intellectual discussion of music outside the confines of the various university music departments, none of which had a very large student body. In consequence, there was a dearth of suitably equipped commentators who could engage with new Irish composition. Although the Irish music journal *Soundpost* (to which Deane regularly contributed in 1982–84) and a number of other publications occasionally carried valuable articles on Irish composers, such attention as their music otherwise received largely took the form of perfunctory concert reviews in the newspapers, for the most part consisting of trite commonplaces. Serious studies of new Irish work, in the form of academic publications, were almost wholly lacking. Deane and his contemporaries felt that they were working in a vacuum, being accorded the dubious 'honour of non-existence', as he expressed it ironically in a forceful article in 1995.

In the short term, Deane supplemented his income by writing theatre criticism for *In Dublin* magazine and by taking various odd jobs. In 1983, he moved back to Germany, as he had a German partner at the time. He settled in Oldenburg, where he supported himself by teaching piano at the local Musikschule. Given his firmly secularist cast of mind, he found life in Germany more congenial to his temperament, affording him a welcome relief from aspects of living in Ireland that he had come to find irksome and intellectually oppressive. He had been strongly attracted to German culture since his teens, subsequently learning to speak the language fluently and reading widely in German literature and philosophy. These years saw the production of several substantial works, including *de/montage* (1984), a commission from

the London Sinfonietta (the premiere of which was scheduled for the aborted 1986 Dublin Festival of Twentieth Century Music), a *Chamber Concertino* (1985) written for the Dublin Sinfonia, and what is perhaps one of the most remarkable of his chamber works, *Écartés* (1986), for string trio.

In 1986, Deane was elected to Aosdána, an affiliation of creative artists set up by the Irish Arts Council in 1981 to honour artists who have made an outstanding contribution to the country's cultural life. In addition to representing the interests of Irish artists, Aosdána provides some of its members with a *cnuas* or stipend. Apart from the prestige of this honour, which clearly marked a further stage in the consolidation of his professional reputation in Ireland, on a purely practical level the grant of a *cnuas* assisted considerably in the alleviation of Deane's financial difficulties. At the end of that year, he returned to Ireland. By his own account, his dependence on alcohol had become more or less uncontrollable, but he managed to complete several important projects over the next eighteen months, including the song cycle *Achair*, a setting of poems by the Irish poet Máirtín Ó Direáin for soprano and chamber ensemble, a commissioned work for the Seminar on Contemporary Music held as part of the Cork International Choral Festival entitled ... *e mi sovvien l'eterno* and an orchestral work *Thresholds*, commissioned by RTÉ for the Dublin Millennium celebrations in 1988. That summer, Deane, his health now rapidly deteriorating, finally sought treatment for his addiction, and successfully underwent a course of rehabilitation.

Facing up to his drink problem not only marked a turning point in his personal life, but also inaugurated a creative phase which was accompanied by quite pronounced stylistic changes. From 1988 onwards, his productivity grew steadily and he increasingly undertook projects that were more ambitious in scope than many of his earlier compositions. He has since completed a succession of large-scale orchestral and concertante works, two operas (one of them full-length) and a considerable quantity of instrumental and vocal music. Many of these scores represent some of the most distinguished achievements in modern Irish composition and deserve wider international attention.

Deane's music defies easy categorization, since it bears comparatively little resemblance to the work of most other contemporary composers. Even at first hearing, it is evident that his work is the product of a highly reflective mind, being for the most part intensely serious in tone, though shot through at times with an idiosyncratic humour and on other occasions pervaded by a distinct spirit of playfulness. His style is rooted in a complex sensibility that is passionately concerned with a variety of important social and political issues and his work reflects considered, highly ambivalent responses to contemporary life. Although his sincerely held intellectual and political convictions seldom find overt expression in his work — he is too subtle an artist for that, too alert to the artistic pitfalls attendant on such an enterprise — they nonetheless inform it in less obvious ways. Central to Deane's later work is the exploration of experiences of conflict, a theme engaged with unusual explicitness in *Passage Work* (2001), a composition for soprano, tape and chamber ensemble evoking the plight of victims of violence, oppression and political injustice. This is a key piece of recent years. Although this score is by no means typical, many of Deane's compositions, most of his important instrumental works included, are so pointedly structured around the enactment of conflict that they readily invite the listener to speculate as to how far they might constitute symbolic representations of fundamental existential tensions. This is particularly evident in the concertante works that Deane composed between 1988 and 2004, in which he explores a variety of uneasy relationships between the soloist (or soloists, in the case of *Concursus*) and the orchestral mass. In *Quaternion*, soloist and orchestra enact various rituals of mutual exclusion, in the course of which each in turn falls silent. Much of the drama of the Oboe Concerto hinges around the efforts of the solo instrument to assert itself against a large orchestra that frequently threatens to overwhelm it while simultaneously contending with another instrumental antagonist, a soprano saxophone, which has usurped its role in the orchestral ensemble. The Violin

Concerto appears to dramatize the conflict between the soloist's desire for individualistic expression (which is progressively given more scope in the unaccompanied cadenzas) and the necessary compromises required by the presence of the orchestra. Similarly fraught or fractious relationships frequently prevail between the members of the instrumental ensembles in Deane's chamber works and his orchestral scores.

Conflicts pervade these scores on other levels too, in many cases arising from the very nature of the musical material. One of Deane's most characteristic procedures is to devise material in which a central pitch or harmonic constellation is endowed with prominence. This is then brought into collision with radically negating material against which it must struggle for dominance. The struggle, as often as not, results in the destabilization of the pitch or constellation, or its transformation into something radically different. These conflicts are often dramatized further through the employment of sharply contrasted instrumental sonorities. Dualistic oppositions generating the interplay of dynamism and stasis featured prominently in Deane's early work *Embers* for string quartet — a score that the composer regards as an important point of departure for many of his subsequent technical and stylistic explorations.

The possibility of transcending or resolving these conflicts in the course of the work is nearly always emphatically rejected; the opera *The Wall of Cloud* presents an exception, though here too, the closing bars of the score suggest ambivalence. In some cases, contention persists to the end; in other cases it is simply abandoned. Only rarely is there a sense of a clearly defined outcome: many of Deane's scores end in a completely unexpected manner, often without any reference to preceding material and introducing new ideas that suggest a fresh point of departure. As the composer remarks, 'My work embodies contradictions that I don't attempt to overcome: indeed, its character is probably defined by the productive friction of contradictions.'⁴ This refusal of transcendence or resolution naturally has a symbolic resonance, seeming to imply a reluctant acknowledgement that satisfactory solutions of many conflicts, particularly serious ones, can seldom be attained. The conclusions of Deane's compositions are consequently often imbued with a sense of pathos or frustration. It should be emphasized, however, that the conflicts are not always of a violent nature, in some instances being much less fraught, but in several of his major orchestral and chamber works (such as the second and third string quartets) they are particularly intense.

In a recent lecture, Deane has described how he is concerned with exploring what he describes as 'collisions' arising from the interplay of very disparate materials.⁵ Consequently, his concept of musical structure is inherently dramatic. Although his music undoubtedly exhibits some minimalist influences, it does not present the listener with what he characterizes as the 'flat surface' typical of some contemporary compositional styles, in which, as he sees it, depth, perspective and dialectic are eschewed in favour of a supposedly 'neutral' unfolding of the material that proceeds in a wholly impassive manner. In styles of this kind, dynamic inflexions such as *crecendi* and *diminuendi* are absent, and any sense of progression towards focal points of culmination is studiously denied to the listener. Dynamic markings, when they occur, serve solely to articulate the musical structure and have no expressive function. For Deane, this approach to organizing musical time holds few attractions. Indeed, he contends that one of the most interesting features of his music resides precisely in a very different management of time-flow, in which 'the juxtaposition of musical objects becomes friction' as material of a predominantly static character is progressively endowed with a dynamic character in a dialectical process that intensifies towards points of culmination — a procedure that Deane is

4 Quotation from Deane prefacing catalogue of his works available on website of the Contemporary Music Centre, Dublin, www.cmc.ie/composers/pdfs/30.pdf (accessed 30 June 2006)

5 This phrase is taken from Deane's notes for a lecture on his music delivered in the Music Department at the National University of Ireland, Maynooth, 7 Oct. 2005; hereafter cited as NML.

very careful to distinguish from traditional ‘developmental’ processes.⁶ Extending his original spatial metaphor, he imagines his scores as multidimensional artefacts, presenting ‘different types of surface as well as different surfaces’.⁷

Deane is reluctant to enter into discussions about the putative expressive import of his scores and views attempts to interpret his compositions in a simplistic, programmatic fashion with distaste. He is also dubious about conventional notions of ‘expressivity’ and their applicability to his work, emphasizing that while his music does undoubtedly ‘express’ something, on the whole, concepts of expression are ‘under erasure’ in his work and expression itself, as he puts it, is ‘problematized’.⁸ In consequence, it is particularly difficult, if not impossible, for the listener to extrapolate unambiguous musical meanings from his compositions and they are consciously fashioned in such a way as to resist any attempts to do so. This is perhaps most apparent when one turns to consider some of the ways in which Deane habitually employs quasi-tonal symbolism. He has been preoccupied throughout his career with reclaiming tonal entities, incorporating them into his freely chromatic harmonic vocabulary. These are never employed in a conventional manner and frequently appear in contexts where they are stripped of their traditional expressive associations, functioning, as Deane remarks, somewhat after the manner of *objets trouvés* in surrealist painting and inducing an analogous response of surprise and distantiation in the listener. Although their presence in the musical fabric is sometimes brought into particular prominence, Deane insists that they should not be regarded as wholly alien intrusions into his harmonic language, which, he maintains, transcends any simplistic tonal/atonal dichotomies. Like his Dutch contemporary Cornelis de Bondt (b. 1953), whose music exhibits certain similarities with his own, Deane sees no reason why composers should not have recourse to tonal materials, provided they employ them in full awareness of the inescapably ironic effect that they will produce at this juncture of musical history, when they have become debased into mere tropes or figures from styles that no longer enjoy currency and have been voided of their original expressive content. In any case, he argues that it is virtually impossible to compose music that avoids tonal references completely, a point made by de Bondt some years ago in an interview:

I find diatonicism — the hierarchical difference between notes, for example the effect of a leading note that is resolved — very hard to deny. Even in the work of composers who do deny this or try to deny it, consciously or subconsciously, I always hear it. Even in serial pieces I still hear the leading note being resolved or I hear V-I-like progressions, though they are explicitly avoided and not intended. Avoiding diatonicism is problematical, because when I hear the progression, I am surely not the only person to do so. I have a problem when composers deny this. Diatonicism is in fact something that our ears are used to. You have to live with it; that is the way music works and by denying this, you deny history.⁹

As Deane sees it, rather than engage in the futile exercise of denying history, the composer can engage in the more productive task of finding imaginative ways to deploy tonal references to his own creative ends. He summarizes his attitude as follows:

6 Deane to author, 30 June 2006

7 Deane to author, 30 June 2006, emphasis in original

8 Deane to author, 20 June 2006

9 De Bondt quoted in Leontien van der Vliet, ‘Operatie Het Gebroken Oor: de gemanipuleerde tonaliteit van Cornelis de Bondt’ [Operation The Broken Ear: The Manipulated Tonality of Cornelis de Bondt], *Mens en Melodie*, 53 (1998), 213; the original text was translated from the Dutch by Joris de Henau and the author.

I strive at all costs to avoid neutrality, a 'flat surface' ... If tonality is a system of hierarchies ... then in the absence of tonality, and indeed in the absence of a simple opting for the horizon of atonality, I choose to invent new hierarchies, valid for the given work, so that many of the musical experiences characteristic of tonality still remain available. Or are they simply being parodied?! This entails establishing from the start a series of relationships, allowing the ear to become accustomed to them and proceeding from there according to the needs of the composition in question.¹⁰

The relationships that arise from the presence of quasi-tonal materials in Deane's scores, however, are often far from easy to interpret or describe. In some cases, they are employed in a manner that seems parodistic (the opera *The Poet and His Double* furnishes a number of striking instances in point); elsewhere, such as in the Violin Concerto, they may be intended to evoke at least some of their traditional expressive associations. However, there is no question of any nostalgia for the tonal tradition: these materials always appear, as Deane puts it, 'in quotation marks', functioning in an ironical relationship to their compositional context and creating an impression of complex equivocation and sometimes, almost in spite of themselves, of deep poignancy. Their presence results in a sound-world that is at once intriguing, yet highly elusive. For much of the time, the listener remains uncertain as to the degree of irony that is intended, given the constantly shifting perspectives on these materials that operate throughout individual compositions. To extend Deane's metaphor, sometimes the quotation marks are gradually introduced or, conversely, they progressively disappear — a procedure he likens to devices that feature in the work of one of his favourite writers, Alain Robbe-Grillet, who introduces narrative segments into his novels within quotation marks, but leaves the reader unsure of where they end.¹¹ The treatment of the quasi-tonal materials in the Violin Concerto richly exemplifies this practice, establishing from the outset a mood of unsettling equivocation. This effect is heightened further in some of Deane's scores by analogous references to the gestural language or sonorities of music from earlier historical periods (*Catacombs*, the second part of his *Macabre Trilogy*, being a good example), which are ironized in a similar manner.

A resolute avoidance of applying any particular compositional technique or procedure in a rigid or mechanical fashion also characterizes Deane's work. He has at various times made use of minimalist and serial procedures, in addition to such devices as organizing harmonic aggregates or rhythmic durations on the basis of abstract patterns such as the Fibonacci series. However, they are never used in a completely thoroughgoing way as Deane regards the composer's creative freedom to be a factor of paramount importance in the compositional process. His music reveals a palpable concern with achieving high standards of craftsmanship, being wholly free of gimmickry or reliance on purely external effects. This concern is particularly noticeable in the careful structural organization of his scores and the inventiveness of his manipulation of the musical material. The orchestral scores reveal a keen ear for instrumental colour and his writing for the medium is unfailingly resourceful, most impressively so, perhaps, in *Ripieno* (1999), a work that probably represents one of his most significant achievements.

If a new creative vigour has shaped Deane's output since 1988, the compositions of the 1990s evince at once an increasing refinement of workmanship and a fresh spontaneity of manner. In recent years in particular, he has retreated from the intense abstraction characteristic of many works from the later 1970s and the 1980s, with dramatic and lyrical qualities now coming to the fore. These scores display a surprising diversity of tone and compositional approach, making wide-ranging references to literature,

¹⁰ NML

¹¹ Deane to author, 30 June 2006

philosophy and the visual arts, as well as to music of previous historical periods. *Quaternion* (1988) for piano and orchestra marked the beginning of a perceptible stylistic shift. Over the next two years Deane completed a number of works in which this shift became increasingly evident, such as *After-Pieces* for solo piano in 1989 and a cycle of Patrick Kavanagh settings *November Songs* in 1990.

Between 1990 and 1994, Deane based himself for part of each year in Paris, returning at intervals to Dublin or to County Sligo, where he bought a small cottage on the coast. In addition to fulfilling various commissions, he occupied himself with the completion of a novel, *Death of a Medium*, the publication of which in 1991 represented the fulfilment of a long-standing ambition. In Deane's words, *Death of a Medium* is

a mock-Gothic tale of a Dublin medium who dies during a seance, 'giving birth' to a monstrous French aristocrat who proceeds to wreak all kinds of nasty havoc. The book is written in a florid, deadpan pastiche of the style of 19th century 'horrid' fiction and is cobbled together from elements of that tradition in the way that Frankenstein's monster is formed from the remains of dead bodies.¹²

The same year saw the completion of two major compositional projects, *Catænae*, a commission from Nua Nós, a recently established new music ensemble based in Dublin, and a short chamber opera, *The Poet and His Double*, commissioned by Opera Theatre Company. The latter, the composer's first stage work, was performed in Dublin in October 1991 and again in London two years later. The libretto, which Deane devised himself, explores one of the central themes of his work, the predicament of the marginalized individual in conflict with society. Here, the individuals in question are the English poet Percy Bysshe Shelley and the French surrealist Antonin Artaud, both of whom visited Dublin with unfortunate personal consequences. Deane conflates various events during these visits to surreal effect, creating a theatre-piece that is a blend of tragicomedy, melodrama and farce.

Deane also travelled widely in these years. In spring 1993, he undertook an extended journey to the Middle East, visiting Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories. He arrived in Palestine just before the end of the first *intifada*, or uprising against Israeli occupation. The seemingly hopeless plight of the Palestinians and the distressing treatment to which they were subjected by the occupying Israeli forces kindled a deep sense of outrage and weighed heavily on his imagination. This experience was one of the principal stimuli for the composition of what is arguably his finest concertante work, the *Concerto for Oboe and Large Orchestra*, a darkly brooding score that dramatizes the conflict between soloist and orchestra on a momentous scale. It was also ultimately responsible for his subsequent involvement with the Ireland Palestine Solidarity Campaign, an organization founded in 2001 by Irish human rights and community activists, academics and journalists who wished to raise awareness of conditions in the Occupied Territories.

Later in 1993, Deane travelled to Mexico as the Irish delegate at the World Music Days hosted by the International Society for Contemporary Music (ISCM), during which he made a speech urging a more equitable representation of composers from countries which had tended not to feature prominently at these events. This proposal met with widespread support. In subsequent years, he represented Ireland in the same capacity at ISCM festivals in Sweden and Germany. The landscape and folk music of Mexico provided imaginative stimuli of a very different kind earlier in the year, inspiring the first part of what became a trilogy of chamber works, the *Macabre Trilogy*, which explored the subject of death from a variety of perspectives, sombre and ironical.

¹² Deane to author, 30 July 2006

Deane's reputation continued to grow during the 1990s and his work was performed at festivals both in Ireland and abroad. In 1991, he was a featured composer, together with György Kurtág, at the second Accents Festival held in Dublin. In 1994, his work was featured again in the *Mostly Modern* concert series held at the National Concert Hall, Dublin. The programme of events included a solo piano recital at which he performed his own compositions and Skryabin's Ninth Piano Sonata, 'The Black Mass'. This growth of his reputation led to a number of further significant commissions in the latter part of the decade. In 1997, he completed a full-length chamber opera, *The Wall of Cloud*, based on an adaptation of a fourteenth-century Chinese play *The Soul of Ch'ien-nü Leaves Her Body* by Chêng Teh-hui. The commissioning of this score represented something of a landmark event in the history of Irish opera, since opportunities for Irish composers to write full-length stage works present themselves so rarely. *The Wall of Cloud* was mounted by Opera Theatre Company two years later in 1999 and taken on national tour. Shortly after completing it, Deane composed *Brown Studies*, a commission from the RTÉ Vanbrugh String Quartet that received its first performance during the course of the West Cork Chamber Music Festival in July 1998. Much of the following year was taken up with the composition of the large-scale orchestral work *Ripieno* for the National Symphony Orchestra of Ireland.

This period of Deane's career coincided with a transformation of Irish musical infrastructures and with a considerable growth in support for new music. In 1985, the Irish Arts Council established the Contemporary Music Centre (CMC) to represent the interests of composers and to assist in the promotion of their work. The CMC houses a large repository of scores and recordings of Irish music, making them available to interested parties on request. The late 1980s and 1990s also saw the formation of several enterprising ensembles specializing in the performance of new music. In addition, younger musicians were increasingly exposed to this repertoire as a result of the steady introduction of dedicated courses in university music departments.

And yet, although circumstances were not as bleak as they had been twenty or thirty years earlier, many of the more long-standing frustrations remained. For Deane and his contemporaries, it is a source of particular irritation that the achievements of Irish composers are still widely ignored. Most general surveys of Irish cultural life pass over Irish art music in silence, seemingly unaware of the existence of a body of work of considerable significance.¹³ Although the discussion of a new novel by a major Irish writer will be accorded many columns of *The Irish Times*, the premiere of a new composition will usually receive little more than a perfunctory mention in a music critic's review. These circumstances have a pronounced impact on perceptions of the significance and merit of Irish composition, as well as perpetuating its comparative neglect.¹⁴ Deane has articulated these discontents in a forceful manner in two articles published in the 1990s.¹⁵

13 Brian Fallon is of the few cultural historians to deal with the subject of Irish art music. However, most of the section on music in his book, *An Age of Innocence: Irish Culture 1930–1960* (Dublin, 1998) is taken up with discussing Arnold Bax and E. J. Moeran, both of whom spent intermittent periods in Ireland but can hardly be considered Irish composers. Fallon's account of native compositional activity is decidedly perfunctory and passes over the work of significant figures such as Aloys Fleischmann (1910–92).

14 For a general discussion of the relative paucity of critical discourse on the Irish art-music tradition, see Patrick Zuk, 'Words for Music, Perhaps? — Irishness, Criticism and the Art Tradition', *Irish Studies Review*, 12, 1 (2004), 11–27. Séamas de Barra's study, *Aloys Fleischmann* (Dublin, 2006), contains much interesting material on the subject of Fleischmann's pronounced reservations concerning the quality of Irish music criticism.

15 The articles referred to here are 'The Honour of Non-Existence — Classical Composers in Irish Society', in Gerard Gillen and Harry White, eds., *Irish Musical Studies 3: Music and Irish Cultural History* (Dublin, 1995), 199–211, and 'In Praise of Begrudgery', in *The Boydell Papers* (Dublin, 1997), 26–32. Since 2001, Deane has published a number of articles on related themes in *Journal of Music in Ireland*.

Still, there have been some compensations in recent years for this critical neglect. In the late 1990s, three commercial recordings of his work were released on the Black Box and Marco Polo labels and, at the time of writing, another recording of his orchestral works is about to be released. He is beginning to interest prominent international performers, evidenced by recent commissions from the Arditti Quartet, the Danish violinist Christine Pryn and the English pianist Ian Pace, as well as the inclusion of his work in festivals in Canada and Hong Kong. In recent years, he himself has demonstrated a staunch practical commitment to changing the climate for the reception of new music in Ireland through his own interventions in cultural debates and his involvements in enterprises such as the RTÉ Festival of Living Music, of which he was the Artistic Director in 2003 and 2004.

1 Keyboard Works

From the beginning of his career, Raymond Deane has been a steadily productive composer of keyboard music. His catalogue lists no fewer than sixteen compositions for solo piano, harpsichord and organ, as well as one for two pianos. Many of these works are quite substantial (most of them are at least ten minutes long and a few of them last twenty or twenty-five minutes) and represent notable contributions to the modern Irish keyboard repertoire. The discussion here is confined to a selection of pieces that Deane himself regards as particularly important in the context of his overall output; a number of the earlier works are examined particularly closely, as many striking characteristics of his later style are present here in embryonic form.

The very first composition listed in Deane's catalogue is a set of four piano pieces collectively entitled *Orphica*, which were completed in 1969–70 when he was between sixteen and seventeen years of age. He premiered some of the pieces separately at concerts held during the Dublin Festival of Twentieth Century Music in 1970 and 1971. The first performance of the entire set was given in 1973 at a concert in Trinity College, Dublin, organized by the Association of Young Irish Composers. The work met with a very favourable reception and helped consolidate his reputation as a promising young composer. It was subsequently extensively revised in 1981 and again in 1996, the latter version being regarded by the composer as definitive. In this final form, the cycle lasts about twenty-five minutes. The idea for the work was prompted by the strange myth of Zagreus, the central god of Greek Orphism. Zagreus, who was the son of Zeus and Persephone, was abducted as a child by the Titans. In his efforts to escape, he transformed himself into a bull, but was recaptured by the Titans, who cut him to pieces and devoured him, half raw and half cooked. His heart was rescued by Athena and Apollo, enabling Zeus to regenerate the child within his own body. In Greek religion, he later became confused with the god Dionysus and figured in the mysteries of Eleusis as a symbol of rebirth and immortality. As we shall see, this theme of regeneration and rebirth has a clearly discernible relevance to Deane's creative preoccupations at the period, particularly his concern to discover ways in which he could fruitfully engage with musical styles of the past.

This youthful composition is the first work in which his own musical personality was fully in evidence. Together with the chamber works *Aliens* and *Equivoke*, it forms part of a group of pieces that he describes as seminal 'in the most literal sense of the word', adding 'There is very little in my later works, either by way of stylistic tendencies or specific modes of organisation, that isn't prefigured in them, in

however rudimentary a way.¹ In particular, *Orphica* adumbrates some of the most characteristic features of Deane's harmonic language, most notably, perhaps in the employment of what he has termed 'fetish chords' — harmonic entities that play a central role in the overall musical design and which constantly recur, becoming imbued in the process with what the composer describes as a 'static, totemic' quality by dint of their invariance upon repetition.² The first of the *Orphica*, for example, employs a dyad of A sharp and B natural (sounded for the most part in the octave below middle C) which is emphasized throughout at important junctures — an idea suggested to Deane by Berio's *Sequenza VII* for solo oboe, which makes use of non-transposing pitches (especially the note B). *Orphic Piece II* makes use of this technique in a manner that is more consistent with Deane's later practice: the fetish chord here is an entity deriving from tonal harmony — a triad of F major, which, in the composer's words, 'is subjected to violent assaults' from surrounding atonal material, 'only to emerge unscathed'.³

This employment of quasi-tonal harmonic aggregates has been a consistent stylistic feature of Deane's music from the very earliest stages of his career. The music of Ligeti provided an important imaginative stimulus in this regard. In *Orphica*, he began to experiment with what he describes as a kind of aural surrealism, introducing 'tonal' entities into an atonal context in a manner analogous to the Surrealist painters' depiction of familiar objects in incongruous settings, a strategy intended to induce a sense of estrangement. By means of a similar technique of distantiation, Deane forces the listener to perceive these familiar musical objects in fresh and unexpected ways, freed from the historical accretions of traditional expressive associations and from conventional expectations concerning their harmonic function. While writing *Orphica*, he sensed that this approach might open up new creative possibilities. He came to regard these pieces as 'purification rituals' for tonal harmonies which emerged 'somehow "cleansed" by their contact with the alien sound-world' and were thus made available for legitimate employment in future work.⁴ He likens their startling effect in the context of this score to the magical effect produced by the incorporation of the sonority of the boy's voice into *Gesang der Jünglinge*, recalling Stockhausen's aphoristic explanation of his intentions: 'Imagine finding an apple, perhaps even an ash tray on a distant star. Here it would be so banal: there a marvel of magic.'⁵

The harmonic language of *Orphica* should not be analysed in terms of a straightforward dichotomy between 'tonal' and 'atonal' materials, however, as Deane explains:

I didn't notice [at the time] that I was doing something much more complex. From *Orphic Piece III* onwards the musical language can't be framed in these simple dualistic terms, and in *IV* 'atonal' sounds disappear almost completely, without the musical language being essentially different to that of *I/II*.⁶

In *Orphica*, as in *Aliens*, the quasi-tonal materials are for the most part handled in such a way as to suggest calculated banality or heavy irony; the succession of 'bland' tonal harmonies that are introduced towards the close of *Orphic Piece I* or the thunderous protracted repetitions of an F major chord at the close of *II* (which are supplied with the indication 'ecstatically', in inverted commas) provide excellent illustrations in point.⁷ In Deane's later works their expressive functions become considerably more

1 Deane to author, 15 Apr. 2006

2 Deane to author, 13 Feb. 2006

3 The quotation is from Deane's programme note prefacing a broadcast performance of *Orphica* on RTÉ radio, undated recording in archive of the Contemporary Music Centre, Dublin.

4 Deane to author, 15 Apr. 2006

5 Deane to author, 15 Apr. 2006

6 Deane to author, 15 Apr. 2006

7 Deane, programme note for RTÉ broadcast of *Orphica*

sophisticated and complex.

Other compositional procedures employed in these pieces owe something to the music of Terry Riley and Steve Reich, particularly in the repetitions of short passages or fragments that explore a narrow band of material. Deane compares these repetitions in *Orphica* to ‘those “more real than real” objects that loom in the paintings of Max Ernst or Magritte’.⁸ Nevertheless, they cannot be described as minimalist in style without a number of important qualifications. In contrast to many minimalist compositions, particularly those by Riley, Deane employs these repetitions in the context of a fairly clearly defined form. In addition, particularly in the last piece of the set, they produce a dynamic, cumulative effect through being played *crescendo* or *accelerando*, which once again represents a clear departure from minimalist stylistic conventions. Deane remarks in this connection:

I was worried about this at the time, because it seemed inconsistent. I now see this inconsistency as absolutely central to all my music — the transformation of a musical object’s function (in this case the surreally obsessive transformed into the climactically cumulative) rather than (or as well as) that of the object itself.⁹

Surrealist techniques influenced the musical language of *Orphica* in other ways. All four pieces end in a manner that is completely unpredictable and is generally at variance with what the listener has been led to anticipate. Thus, one might have expected that the A sharp/B natural dyad in Orphic Piece I or the F major ‘fetish chord’ in Orphic Piece II would conclude these pieces, since they recur so persistently. Yet, in both cases, this possibility is pointedly rejected at the last moment in endings that sound final and inevitable, but at the same time paradoxically indeterminate. These ‘false endings’, as Deane describes them, are a recurrent feature of the later work and can best be understood as the application of a technique through which the sense of an overall structural organization is estranged.

Deane’s management of texture and pianistic sonority in *Orphica* adumbrates his style in subsequent works for the keyboard. All of its characteristic features are present: the extended trills, the chordal tremolos, repeated notes and the employment of widely separated registers. It also displays his fondness for extreme gestural contrasts, ranging from moments of the utmost delicacy to highly charged, often violent, rhetorical outbursts. Although the sound-world of these pieces is generally far removed from the sonorities of late-Romantic or impressionist piano writing, the writing occasionally suggests ironic references to traditional virtuoso gestures, particularly in III, with its brilliant scale passages, or IV, with its rippling *arpeggio* figurations and sonorous left-hand octaves. This clearly anticipates Deane’s practice in later works, such as *Quaternion*, the Violin Concerto or the second and third of the *After-Pieces* for solo piano.

Deane’s next keyboard work, *Idols*, for organ, is dedicated to the Irish organist Gerard Gillen and was first performed by him in the German city of Lüneburg in 1971. The title refers to a term coined by the seventeenth-century English philosopher Francis Bacon to describe misleading prejudices or notions which hinder a clear perception of reality. In his *Novum Organum* Bacon distinguished four kinds of ‘Idols’ (*idola*): ‘Idols of the Tribe’ (*idola tribus*), which arise from the imperfections of human nature; ‘Idols of the Cave’ (*idola specus*), which are peculiar to the individual; ‘Idols of the Marketplace’ (*idola fori*), ‘numberless empty controversies and idle fancies’ arising from the misuse of language; and ‘Idols of the Theatre’ (*idola theatri*), ‘which have immigrated into men’s minds from the various dogmas of philosophies, and also from wrong laws of demonstration’ and persist on account of ‘tradition,

8 Deane to author, 15 Apr. 2006

9 Deane to author, 15 Apr. 2006

credulity, and negligence.’ Deane chose this title largely on account of its verbal euphony, but remarks that he derived considerable amusement from the thought that an organ piece with this name would be performed in a church. It is tempting to assume, however, that it may also have been chosen for other reasons, given the fact that this piece continues his project of challenging what he would regard as ‘idols’ — in the sense of misplaced assumptions — concerning tonality.

Idols is even more radical than *Orphica* in its attempt to distance listeners from conventional perceptions of tonal materials by acts of subversion involving both the form and the content of the musical text. Since quasi-tonal materials are employed to a much greater extent in *Idols*, Deane has to adopt rather different techniques to achieve this distantiation, such as sustaining individual aggregates at very great length and juxtaposing them in a manner that attenuates any sense of their traditional harmonic functions. These procedures clearly have considerable structural implications, obviating any traditional sense of teleological progression towards climaxes, either at local levels or over the course of the entire piece. Instead, the listener hears a series of slow transformations of simple materials (stated mostly in *piano* and without dynamic inflexions of any kind) that are presented ‘impassively’, as if ‘upon a dissecting table’ — a strategy that serves to heighten the sense of surreal effect.¹⁰

Ex. 1 *Idols*, opening

The piece opens with a quiet, slowly unfolding prose melody that mostly employs pitches deriving from a white-note scale (Ex. 1). It features a prominent triplet motif (marked x) that recurs at irregular intervals and assumes greater importance later. After 16 bars, a long pedal C is sounded; other pitches are successively introduced to form a static accompaniment of slow-moving chords. Although some of these aggregates could readily be described in terms of tonal harmony, there is no sense of a tonal centre. In a central section, diminutions of x in successively smaller note values form the basis of flowing right-hand figurations that are eventually liquidated into a protracted trill. This procedure clearly recalls minimalist techniques, but the progressive transformations of the right-hand figuration, although gradual, occur at a considerably quicker rate than would usually be the case in minimalist compositions. The final section commences with another series of soft, slowly mutating chords that gradually build up to a dense chromatic cluster, which is subsequently played *crescendo possibile*. This prepares for what one might describe as the ‘climax’ of the piece, which Deane significantly supplies with a ‘*fortississimo*’ dynamic marking. Against the cluster, which is sustained for thirty-six bars, a diatonic *ostinato* based on motif x is heard on the pedals, together with quasi-tonal material in the right hand that pivots on a G major dominant seventh chord. Here, as Deane puts it, the previous impassivity ‘is itself transformed by dint of quantity turning into quality: there is a kind of climax, and the ending is

¹⁰ This phrase recalls the French writer Lautréamont’s celebrated simile about the chance meeting on a dissecting-table of a sewing-machine and an umbrella [la rencontre fortuite sur une table de dissection d’une machine à coudre et d’un parapluie], which was adopted as a slogan by the French surrealists.

definitely a culmination'.¹¹ In the concluding bars, this G major dominant seventh chord is reasserted before a final unison G.

The *Four Inscriptions* (1973) for harpsichord illustrate another mode of harmonic organization, which can be observed in quite a number of Deane's compositions, namely structuring aggregates according to fairly rigid segmentations of the notes of the chromatic scale. In these brief miniatures, the segmentation is based on a division of the white and black notes, the former being mostly assigned to the left hand and the latter to the right. The first piece of the set features alternations of closely juxtaposed white and black note clusters, commencing in long note values which are gradually reduced until the clusters fuse into a brilliant chordal *tremolo*, one of Deane's favourite keyboard sonorities. As the durations of the chords steadily diminish, they ascend in a trajectory from deepest bass to highest treble. In the second part of the piece, this process is reversed, and it concludes with a series of forceful chords in which the prevailing segmentation is abandoned. The intimate second piece is subdued in character, featuring a gently undulating white-note *ostinato* in quaver rhythm in the left hand. The assignment of black and white notes to the different hands is maintained to some extent, although not as consistently as in the first piece. For a few bars, the texture becomes more animated and flowing, but the rhythmic impetus is not maintained and quickly ebbs away, leading to a brief reprise of the opening material. In the third of the *Inscriptions*, the black-note/white-note segmentation is applied with greater strictness. This piece has a capricious, *scherzo*-like character, with textures that alternate briskly strummed chords with brilliant trill and *arpeggio* figurations which look forward to the phantasmagorical sound-world of *Fügung*, a work for bass clarinet and harpsichord composed over twenty years later. The concluding piece of the set reviews material from the previous three: it opens in a similar manner to the first before introducing fragments of material from the second and third. In the closing bars, a rapid chordal *tremolando* in clusters is reduced by rhythmic diminution to static chords in long note values, in mirror symmetry to the opening of the first piece.

Later in 1973, Deane composed a set of two solo piano pieces entitled *Linoi*, in which he continued his exploration of modes of static harmonic organization that featured in the *Four Inscriptions*, carrying these procedures to greater extremes. The title of the set refers to Linos, a shadowy figure in Greek mythology, who in some literary sources is described variously as the son of Apollo or one of the nine muses. Like Orpheus, Linos was a musician of exceptional accomplishment, a master singer and kithara player whose talents provoked the envy of Apollo. Some accounts allude to his flute playing and the sonority of this instrument is evoked in the closing bars of the first of Deane's pieces. In Greek religion, Linos was associated in particular with the composition of *thr noi* or funeral laments which came to be known as *linoi*, taking their name from the ritual cry *ailinoi*, the refrain of a dirge. As is the case with the titles of several other works which Deane composed around this time (such as *Epilogue*, *Embers* and perhaps the *Four Inscriptions*), this title seems to reflect his ongoing concern with the creative repercussions of what he, like many other composers, regards as the demise of tonality.¹²

Deane subjected these pieces to revision in 1984, reversing their order and altering the rhythmic notation. This version should be regarded as definitive. Like *Embers*, a work for string quartet which was also composed in 1973, *Linoi* reduces the elements of the musical language which Deane had evolved over the previous four years to their essentials. Both pieces are texturally very sparse and predominantly static, subjecting materials of a quasi-tonal nature to a slow process of transformation and deformation. Their construction also features mirror symmetries of a kind similar to those previously described in the *Four Inscriptions*. The first piece opens with a succession of sonorous chords built from notes of

¹¹ Deane to author, 15 Apr. 2006

¹² See the discussion of *Epilogue* and *Embers* in the next chapter.

the C major triad but also incorporating chromatic neighbour notes adjacent to those pitches. These chords move for a time into an ethereal treble register before reverting to the bass. As in *Idols* or *Embers*, this material unfolds in an apparently impassive manner, conjuring up an atmosphere of remoteness and intense stillness. This mood is broken briefly by a contrasting, but very brief, declamatory section, in which *fortissimo* chords in the bass alternate with hard-edged scalic figurations in the treble. The opening chordal material returns, accompanying a ghostly melody marked *lento* which mostly proceeds in gentle conjunct motion. Towards the close, the chords in the bass gradually lose their original character, slowly thickening out into clusters.

The second piece opens in a similar manner with a series of very slow chords. As these become more chromatic, they are subjected to gradual rhythmic diminution and the hands move further and further apart into the outer reaches of the keyboard. The composer expressly instructs the performer that this passage must be played without any hint of a *crescendo*, thereby counteracting any sense of heightened tension that these harmonic and tonal modifications might engender. The next phase of the piece opens with frenzied reiterated chords which are transformed into swirling triplet figurations. This intensity ebbs away as the note values become progressively longer. In the last section, the opening material returns and is presented once more in rhythmic diminution, eventually dissolving into a *tremolo* of alternating black- and white-note chords in what is perhaps a conscious echo of the *Four Inscriptions*. The brief coda leaves the contradictions between the two contrasting planes of static and dynamic musical material unresolved, pursuing a seemingly unrelated line of musical thought.

After 1974, Deane's creativity entered a new phase in which he explored ways of combining the personal adaptations of minimalist procedures utilized in the preceding scores with an equally personal employment of serial techniques. Although Deane has never used serialism in a thoroughgoing manner in any of his works, it has nonetheless exercised a marked influence on his style: many of his later scores are notable for the intense concentration of their motivic working, with much of the material being generated from a small handful of motivic shapes, characteristics which reveal the influence of the dodecaphonic tradition and its concern with intellectual rigour. Deane experimented with these creative possibilities in several important works, initially employing what one might describe as proto-serial techniques of musical organization. His *Piano Sonata of 1974* (revised in 1980), which was composed during his period of study with Gerald Bennett in Basle, marks the beginning of this tendency. As in the case of the *Second Piano Sonata of 1981*, the sonata's generic title should not lead the listener to assume that the work displays continuities with eighteenth- or nineteenth-century precedents; Deane simply employs it as a neutral designation for an extended multifaceted instrumental composition in order to emphasize its predominantly abstract character.

Piano Sonata No. 1 is cast in one continuous movement lasting approximately fifteen minutes. It comprises three sections of which the second and third (and part of the short coda) are structured according to a five-element rhythmic cell. The opening of the work (Ex. 2) presents a constellation of pitches containing all twelve notes of the chromatic scale, each of which is sounded only in a particular register. In the course of the work this complex slowly disintegrates, its constituent pitches acquiring increasing motility and making appearances in registers other than the one to which they were initially confined. Although obvious tonal references are absent, it is nonetheless interesting to note that the initial constellation is constructed in such a way that certain sub-aggregates of adjacent notes suggest at least some residual sense of tonal references: thus, the opening four notes contain the pitches of an incomplete diatonic seventh on A and the major third E-G sharp. In many respects, this sonata maintains a clear stylistic continuity with earlier works. For one thing, its proto-serial mode of pitch organization inevitably results, at least in the first phase of the score, in a harmonic stasis comparable to that prevailing in certain passages in the earlier compositions. In its protracted

Ex. 2 Piano Sonata No. 1, opening

♩ = 72

The musical score consists of three systems of piano and bass staves. The first system has a tempo marking of ♩ = 72. The piano part begins with a half note G4 (marked *mp*), followed by a half note A4 (marked *mp*), then a half note B4 (marked *pp*), and finally a half note C5 (marked *p*). The bass part is mostly rests. The second system continues the piano part with a half note D5 (marked *mp*), a half note E5 (marked *f*), a half note F5 (marked *pp*), and a half note G5 (marked *p*). The bass part has rests. The third system continues with a half note A5 (marked *pp*), a half note B5 (marked *ff*), and a half note C6 (marked *p*). The bass part has rests. Time signatures change from 4/4 to 3/4, 5/4, 4/4, 3/4, 4/4, 9/8, 7/4, and 4/4.

dismantling of the initial material over a long time span, however, this sonata also looks forward to the sophisticated constructive and deconstructive procedures that operate in many of his later works.

Three years later, in 1977, Deane commenced work on a score in which serial techniques were used much more rigorously. *Triarchia*, for solo piano, which was completed the following year and revised extensively in 1981, is based on no fewer than three twelve-note series (hence the title), some or all of which were subsequently utilized in other compositions, including two discussed later in this chapter.¹³ This procedure was prompted by the triptychs of the artist Francis Bacon, which often portray three markedly different types of activity or relationships between the figures in each of their panels.¹⁴ In its final form, *Triarchia* is cast in two contrasting but continuous sections, each of which comprises a number of tautly organized subsections, and a short coda. Each of the three rows is deployed in different ways: firstly, to generate various strands of melodic material featuring an identical rhythmic organization and identical dynamic inflexions; secondly, to order the succession of pitches in accordance with conventional modes of serial organization; and finally, to determine the proportions of various events occurring at micro- and macro-structural levels in a manner corresponding to the relative durations of the rhythms employed on their first presentation.

As may be imagined, the resulting structure achieves a formidable level of complexity. To simplify somewhat, the first phase of the piece predominantly features vertical aggregates derived from the three note rows. It opens with a majestic series of forceful rhetorical gestures, presenting an emphatic melodic line in the tenor register, to the accompaniment of resounding chords in the bass and a

¹³ One of the note rows (D – C – B – D# – E – F# – A – F – Bb – G – C# – G#) is also employed in the orchestral work *Enchaînement*.

¹⁴ As John Russell remarks: 'In [Bacon's] triptychs, as in life, there are those who do (or are done to), there are those who look on, and there are those who pass by in the street below, or on the far side of the open window'. See John Russell, *Francis Bacon*, Revised edition (New York, 1979), 114.

high-lying counterpoint in the extreme treble, which is approached by wide skips from below. This is followed by four subsections, the first three of which afford pronounced contrasts in texture and dynamic level. The fourth, which is the longest and most elaborate, is very rich in sonority, with the score expanding to a five-stave layout as it proceeds. It commences with a gently undulating quintuplet figure, which yields to an imposing idea intoned in bass octaves and accompanied by rather more agitated material proceeding seemingly independently of it in treble, its halting progress interrupted by explosive outbursts of widely ranging figurations.

Ex. 3 *Triarchia*, bars 65–67

The musical score for Ex. 3, *Triarchia*, bars 65–67, is presented in two systems. The first system consists of two staves (treble and bass clef). The tempo is marked as quarter note = 54. The music begins with a dynamic of *f* (forte) and *p* (piano). It features complex rhythmic patterns, including triplets and quintuplets, and dynamic markings such as *f*, *p*, and *mf* (mezzo-forte). The second system consists of four staves (two treble and two bass clefs). It continues the complex rhythmic patterns and dynamic markings, including *f*, *p*, and *mf*. The score is highly detailed, with many notes and rests, and is a good example of complex polyrhythmic superimpositions.

During the second phase of *Triarchia*, the various series are employed mostly in a linear way, with some use of canonic techniques and close imitation, as can be seen from Ex. 3. In contrast to the first section, in which there is very little exact repetition of material, this section preserves the integrity of motivic shapes in quite a strict manner, introducing comparatively little extraneous material in the earlier stages. As the working out of these ideas proceeds, they appear in augmented forms, leading to increasingly complex polyrhythmic superimpositions of the constituent contrapuntal lines. This constructive process is only allowed to progress up to a certain point (bar 85 or so), after which heterogeneous chordal material begins to make its appearance, leading to the disintegration of the contrapuntal texture. After a violently compressed, furious outburst in bars 120–24, there follows a recitative-like passage, in which the left-hand intones an outline derived from motifs prominent in the preceding counterpoint against a tremolo accompaniment. The contrapuntal texture resumes briefly, but clearly cannot recapture the momentum it had previously generated, subsiding in an exhausted *rallentando* into the coda, which presents fragmentary echoes of earlier material. Hence, *Triarchia* is

a curiously paradoxical score in its seemingly contradictory employment of strict serial constructive techniques to generate material that is resistant beyond a certain point to further constructive processes and which ultimately disintegrates under the strain when this is attempted. In the light of this, one wonders if Deane may have come to share Adorno's reservations about the inflexible application of serial technique on ideological as well as musical grounds.

Triarchia is undoubtedly one of the most 'extreme' of Deane's early scores, not least in its formidable technical demands on the performer, despite the avoidance of obvious bravura gestures. Deane's Piano Sonata No. 2, which was written in 1980–81 for the Irish pianist John O'Connor, also shares this quality of extremity, although in a very different way, being perhaps one of the most austere of all his compositions. Like the first piano sonata, it comprises several sections — five, to be precise, plus a brief coda — which form a continuous musical design lasting over twenty minutes. It too utilizes a form of proto-serial organization, employing four pitch-cells of varying lengths which pervade the entire musical fabric. In addition to this material, all five sections feature a rippling semiquaver idea (based on a four-note pitch-cell D, E, F and G), which makes its first appearance soon after the opening. This sonata makes consistent use of another technique to which Deane has fairly frequent recourse in his later works (the first movements of *Inter Pares* and *Pentacle* are striking examples): that of endowing a certain pitch with particular significance in the harmonic organization, and later proceeding to destabilize it. Here, each of the five sections makes use of one such pitch (D in the first, then F, C, E flat and C sharp respectively in the others). In the intense fourth section, for example, the note E flat, which has sounded insistently throughout, is finally dislodged from its position of dominance during a cataclysmic passage occurring towards the end (Ex. 4). As in the earlier sonata, Deane's handling of these harmonic resources maintains clear points of contact with the style of the earlier, 'minimalist' works, particularly in his extensive use of *ostinato* figurations that circle persistently around the same pitches and also in the reintroduction of quasi-tonal material, which makes fleeting appearances about two-thirds of the way through the work. The Second Piano Sonata, however, like *Triarchia*, breaks new ground primarily in the manifest intensification of Deane's concern with achieving a greater degree of underlying motivic unity.

Deane's next piano work *Avatars*, which was completed the following year in 1982, dramatizes the progressive transformation and dissolution of its musical material over a more extended musical span. 'Avatar' is a Sanskrit word connoting the descent of a deity to earth in incarnate form, but in this context the composer has indicated that the derivative meaning of 'a variant phase or version of a continuing basic entity' (a definition provided by Webster's Dictionary) is relevant, rather than the primary meaning. The 'continuing basic entity' here consists of the three note-rows previously used in *Triarchia*. Each of these is a so-called all-interval series, containing every interval ranging in size from a semitone to a major seventh. Any such series will span a total of sixty-six semitones, outlining what the composer has described as a 'vastly expanded tritone'.¹⁵ The piece begins with *arpeggio*-like aggregates, which are permutations of the eleven intervals of one of the series involved, rhythmic aspects of the aggregates being defined by the other two series. In the earlier stages of the piece, each of these aggregates commences on a low D in the bass, G sharp in *alt*. This texture continues for over thirty bars, presenting various permutations of the intervening pitches between the two outer notes. Towards the end of this phase, chordal aggregates gradually come to prominence in the arpeggiated figurations, forming a link to the texture of the second phase of the piece. Before this gets underway, a brief episode of some ten bars supervenes, presenting contrasting material in the form of terse staccato

¹⁵ From the composer's programme note prefacing the score of the work published in 1991 by the Contemporary Music Centre, Dublin.

chords, many of which bear a clear resemblance to tonal entities. The roots of these chords, though absent, are again derived from the basic series. The second phase of the work incorporates these into the musical discourse around reiterations of the low D and the high G sharp. In the third phase, these fundamental pitches form the starting points for demisemiquaver figurations in contrary motion, while in the fourth, the G sharp is displaced to a lower register, forming part of a sustained three-part chord with the additional notes D and F, which forms a background to delicate staccato chords presented first in the treble and then in the bass.

In the final phase of the work, the primacy of these pitches is gradually eroded: the arpeggiated figurations of the opening return, but this time mostly employing other notes at the outer ends. Their initial tones still follow the contours of the various series, so a tritonal relationship with the top note is retained: the first contour rises from F to B, the second from A sharp to E, and so on. As this section proceeds, a number of striking quasi-tonal references are introduced, most notably an emphatic series of C major triads, which ring out strangely in their atonal context, but arise nonetheless from serial permutations. The piece concludes with a quotation from the famous Hugo Wolf lied 'Alles endet, was entstehet', the second of his *Drei Lieder nach Gedichten von Michelangelo* of 1897. This is a setting of a German translation of a Michelangelo sonnet beginning *Chiunque nasce a morte arriva*, by Walter Heinrich Robert-Tornow (1852–95), which starts thus:

<i>Alles endet, was entstehet.</i>	Everything ends which comes to be.
<i>Alles, alles rings vergehet,</i>	All, all things around us pass away,
<i>Denn die Zeit flieht, und die Sonne</i>	For time hastens past, and the sun
<i>Sieht, daß alles rings vergehet,</i>	Sees that all things around us pass away,
<i>Denken, Reden, Schmerz, und Wonne ...</i>	Thought, speech, pain and bliss ...

While Deane's allusion to the opening line of this poem obviously refers on one level to the ultimate dissolution of the musical material in his score, one is naturally led to suppose that the philosophical reflections embodied in the poem may also be relevant to an understanding of the work's wider symbolic resonances. Although the 'basic entity' — the combination of the three series — 'passes away' at the close, a fragment of it persists stubbornly to the last, since Deane alters the intervallic construction of the final chord in the Wolf quotation so that its outer voices are a tritone rather than a perfect fifth apart.

As argued in the opening chapter, Deane's style underwent significant change in the late 1980s. The most striking difference in the later works, perhaps, is Deane's exploration of new and radically different approaches to keyboard writing. On the whole, the sound-world of the earlier keyboard works, though not by any means devoid of sensuousness, is quite austere, frequently employing intricate linear writing or multilayered chordal textures; and while these works are by no means easy to play, their technical challenges are of a somewhat less obvious kind, in particular demanding of the pianist a fine control of tone-colour and pedalling to ensure satisfactory levels of clarity in the rendition of their frequently complex textures. With the exception of the fourth piece of *Orphica*, the keyboard writing in these works is also notable in general for its studied avoidance of conventional pianistic rhetoric, in particular anything that might sound reminiscent of virtuoso piano music from the Romantic or Late Romantic periods. In the works written after 1988, on the other hand, Deane's writing for the instrument tends to be noticeably more flamboyant, revealing a newfound delight in highly colourful

keyboard sonorities. This sound-world also allows him to introduce on occasion playfully ironic, but nonetheless affectionate references to the gestural language of earlier keyboard traditions, which often produce expressive and dramatic effects analogous to those produced by his habitual incorporation of quasi-tonal sonorities into the harmonic fabric of his scores. As is always the case in Deane's work, these references result in an elusiveness and ambiguity of tone, which is sometimes unsettling for the listener, but which also adds an expressive dimension of rewarding richness and complexity.

Contretemps, an elegant tripartite work for two pianos written in 1989, reveals the composer at his most relaxed, the outer movements being pervaded throughout by Deane's quirky and rather boisterous sense of humour. As the title suggests, much of the drama of work derives from the witty interplay between the two instrumental protagonists who often find themselves embarrassingly at odds with one another, seemingly unable to agree on ways of presenting the material. In some cases, the divergences of opinion are comparatively slight, amounting to a dispute over a note or two, or perhaps comparatively minor rhythmic subtleties, but at times their confrontations assume rather more menacing proportions. On the whole, however, their persistent contradictions of each other take a playful form except in the slow movement, which is more serious in tone and features a somewhat greater degree of unanimity between the pianists. The opening section of the work is a kind of brilliant toccata, opening with statements and counterstatements of a capricious figure, which is tossed back and forth in imitation. Since the two players are often in dispute over the 'correctness' of notes or chords that are often a semitone apart, the resulting harmonic aggregates have a clashing pungency of sonority, particularly when they appear, as they often do, massed high in the treble. A short passage of four bars occurring about two-thirds of the way through the movement (quoted in Ex. 5) shows some of the different levels on which these contradictions occur. In the first place, the two instruments play similar material in a kind of canon at a quaver's distance, obscuring the location of the downbeat. The right-hand figurations suggest an apparent uncertainty as to whether their top note should be a D, a D sharp/E flat or an E, while the quintuplet figures played by the pianists' left hands display a similar uncertainty about their precise intervallic constitution. In the closing section of the movement, the two pianists finally enter into open conflict, each choosing to play quite different material to the other, and in a final symbolic gesture, they ultimately pursue different trajectories of pitch in the closing bars, one descending from the treble into the bass, the other ascending from bass to treble (a chiasmic organization which is expanded to form the basis of the entire last movement of *Quaternion*). The second and third movements explore similar kinds of conflict, which are also a feature of Deane's concertante works. The final section of the work culminates in a coda of riotous exuberance, bringing this attractive work to an arresting close in which the pianists persist in mutual contradiction up to the very end.

The four *After-Pieces* for solo piano of 1989–90 continue this tread of exploring a more obviously virtuosic manner of keyboard writing, applying, as the composer remarks in a programme note, 'Lisztian bravura and transformative techniques remotely derived from serialism ... to materials of deceptive simplicity'.¹⁶ This cycle, recorded for commercial release in a fine performance by the Irish pianist Hugh Tinney, is amongst the most immediately attractive of Deane's piano works. 'After-pieces' in eighteenth-century theatrical parlance denoted farces or smaller entertainments performed after the main play of the evening; here, the word is presumably used to denote a set of pieces representing the antithesis of preludes. This title, like those of *Epilogue*, *Après-lude* and other works, probably also alludes to their incorporation of ironic references to the tonal language of nineteenth-century music, as well as indicating their similar relationship to the Romantic keyboard miniature.

¹⁶ From the liner notes written by the composer for the commercial recording of the work released in 2000 by Black Box Music on the disc *Seachanges: Raymond Deane Solo and Chamber Works* (BBM1014).

Ex. 5 Contretemps, I, bars 74-77

The musical score is presented in four systems, each consisting of two staves. The first system is in G major (one sharp) and the second system is in B-flat major (two flats). The time signature is 8/8. Dynamics are indicated by *mf* and *ff* with hairpins. Slurs and accents are used throughout. Fingering numbers '5' are placed above certain notes. A circled '8' is present in the second system, likely indicating a measure repeat or a specific performance instruction. The notation includes various rhythmic values and articulation marks.

The image shows a musical score for a piano piece, consisting of two systems of staves. Each system has a treble and bass staff. The first system begins with a circled '8' and a '1' at the top, indicating a measure rest. Dynamics are marked as *mf*, *ff*, *mf*, and *ff*. The second system also starts with a circled '8' and a '1'. Dynamics here are *ff*, *mf*, *ff*, and *mf*. Both systems feature slurs and accents. A circled '5' in the bass staff of both systems indicates a quintuplet. A dashed line with a circled '8' and a '1' is at the top of the first system.

The musical material for the first piece is based on a French folksong familiar to Deane since his childhood, *À la claire fontaine*. Its title, *By the Clear Dark Fountain*, deliberately negates one of the meanings of the French adjective *clair*, which can mean 'bright' or 'clear', depending on the context. Deane employs a distorted variant of the opening phrase of the folksong (which is a simple melody moving mostly within the span of a major third), which, in his words, is then 'blown up out of all proportion', forming the basis for a figure reminiscent of that archetypal Romantic musical gesture, the horn call, as well as a persistent double-note accompaniment pattern in flowing semiquavers derived from the same contour (Ex. 6).¹⁷ The harmonic language of this piece is based almost entirely on tonal derivatives, ranging through a variety of 'keys' (often via the cycle of fifths) and featuring 'bitonal' oppositions between the two hands. These materials are progressively transformed in flowing semiquavers, becoming more fragmented in the process, with erratic, brusque alterations of dynamics and register. Towards the end, the semiquaver *ostinato* is elaborated into a brief 'cadenza' that culminates on a sonorous 'dominant seventh chord'. This leads to a teasing coda featuring a series of progressions that could almost have been taken from a Schumann miniature, were it not for a number of small, but telling ironic modifications.

The title of the second piece, *The Amorous Sphinx*, is largely based on a 'sphinx' of the kind employed by Schumann in *Carnival* — a recurrent seven-note figure, the constituent pitches of which, according to the composer's programme note, derive from an encoded version of someone's name. The ambiguous expression marking at the head of the score ('*quasi amoroso*') sets the tone for the drama in miniature that follows, which unfolds through a series of contrasting musical gestures that are generously supplied with further expressive indications ('pensive', 'surlly', 'ominous', 'petulant', 'persistent'), culminating in a radiant climax marked 'ecstatic' and, subsequently, 'tumultuous'. Once again, although the music does not convey irony in any crude sense (quite the contrary, in fact; there is certainly not a hint of obvious parody), given the persistently problematic expressive world of all of Deane's scores and particularly of his later works, one should nonetheless be wary of drawing simplistic inferences from these markings or from the fact that they are present at all.

The sonorities heard at the climax of *The Amorous Sphinx*, essentially a series of D major triads (with various chromatic neighbour notes) articulated in forceful chordal tremolos that are decidedly evocative

¹⁷ Deane, *Seachanges* CD, liner notes

Ex. 6 After-Pieces, 'By the clear dark fountain', opening

$\text{♩} = 52$

pp legatissimo, ma articolato

pochiss. ped., una corda

(15)

(*pp*)

mf — *f*

(15)

ppp *pp* *mp*

of 'Lisztian bravura', generate much of the harmonic material for the remaining pieces of the cycle. The third piece, *Passades*, is described by the composer as 'a kind of passacaglia', a 'passade' being a technical term in dressage which the *Oxford English Dictionary* defines as 'the action or an act of riding a horse back and forth over the same short stretch of ground'.¹⁸ It opens with a transformation of the tremolo material into a still chordal texture with occasional hints of imitation between the two hands. In the next phase, a derivative of this idea is sounded in the bass against a flowing figure in the right hand based on a white-note Phrygian pattern that seems related to the 'sphinx' motif of the previous piece. This gradually quickens into shorter note values, culminating in a brilliant series of cascades of a cadenza-like nature. The third phase presents a further transformation of the opening material in majestic block chords that are interspersed with echoes of these cascading figures. This intense passage subsides, leading to a muted final section that is similar in character to the first, but which ends inconclusively on an unrelated harmony.

The last piece of the set, 'The Sphinx Unleashed' (the quotation marks are Deane's), is described by the composer as 'a savage toccata with echoes of Prokofiev'. The sonorities here anticipate the steely brilliance of Rahu's Rounds, in Deane's employment of driving motoric rhythms and relentless reiterated chords, which present a testing challenge of the pianist's dexterity and elasticity of wrist in a manner somewhat reminiscent of the finale of Prokofiev's Seventh Piano Sonata. The material here is based on further transformations of ideas from the second and third pieces, with white-note Phrygian chordal

¹⁸ Deane, *Seachanges* CD, liner notes

aggregates featuring especially prominently in one passage about one-third of the way through. The headlong momentum is abruptly cut short by a contrasting idea featuring dramatic arpeggiated figures, after which it resumes with even greater impetuosity in the exhilarating final section.

Deane's next major piano work *Rahu's Rounds*, which was completed eight years later in 1998, makes still more formidable demands on the virtuosity of the pianist. The title of this score refers to a demon in Hindu mythology, a voracious monster that is held responsible for causing eclipses. According to a legend of Brahmin origin, Rahu succeeded in stealing some *amrita*, the liquor which assures the immortality of the gods. He was caught in the act by the Sun and the Moon, who informed against him to the god Vishnu. The enraged god decapitated the thief by hurling his discus at him, severing his body into two parts. These parts, being immortal by virtue of the *amrita*, roam in perpetuity across the heavens, unable to reunite. If one of them happens to encounter the sun or the moon in its path, it attempts to take revenge by devouring them, but is always compelled to regurgitate them once more when the Buddha inevitably intervenes and puts the monster to flight.¹⁹ Although Deane emphasizes that his score does not attempt to depict these events in a crudely illustrative fashion, he concedes that the legend influenced the violent nature of its musical imagery at least to some extent.

Rahu's Rounds has an episodic structure, comprising a number of linked sections which are melded into one continuous span of music. As is almost always the case in Deane's more extended scores, each section leads seamlessly into the next and the structural joins are not immediately apparent. The opening section begins with toccata-like figurations of rapidly repeated chords in irregular groupings, all of which are based on the concluding harp chord of *The Wall of Cloud* (see Ex. 7a and 7b). In the opera, this entity is 'something completely foreign to the network of pitch-relationships that has been

Ex. 7a Concluding chord from *The Wall of Cloud*



Ex. 7b *Rahu's Rounds*, opening

19 This description is indebted to the account of Rahu in J. Haskin et al., *Asiatic Mythology* (New York, 1932), 198–99.

established', a kind of 'counter-fetish' that negates the score's concluding gestures of affirmation and closure.²⁰ Its employment here probably signifies that *Rahu's Rounds*, like the string quartet *Brown Studies*, should be understood as a constituting a counterbalance to the opera as a whole. As can be seen in Ex. 7b, the hexachord from *The Wall of Cloud* is sounded on the downbeat of the first bar and is then reiterated with semitonal alterations of its constituent pitches. Interestingly, these derivatives suggest 'bitonal' combinations of chords relating to the regions of B and B flat, something that is emphasized by the persistent reiteration of the 'dominant' note in both of those keys in the outer parts. This sonority generates much of the subsequent harmonic material throughout the work, although as the composer remarks, 'the harmonic derivations are probably difficult to trace, because often the constituents of a derivation are "pulled apart" bit by bit, thus generating new harmonies which then provide the basis for further "secondary" or "tertiary" derivations' — a technique which Deane employs extensively throughout his work.²¹ On the whole, the harmonic language of *Rahu's Rounds* is much more chromatically saturated than that of *After-Pieces*, and such tonal references as occur in this work do so in the context of 'bitonal' superimpositions similar to that previously described. Another example of

Ex. 8 *Rahu's Rounds*, bar 58

a passage employing this procedure is shown in Ex. 8. Here, the figurations in the right hand suggest a polymodal D major/minor, while the aggregates in the left hand consist of a succession of seventh chords and augmented triads.

For much of *Rahu's Rounds*, the music is notated in bars of unequal length without time signatures, a comparatively rare practice in Deane's work, but one that considerably simplifies the appearance of the score on the page and draws attention to its nervous rhythmic volatility. In the flamboyance of its gestural language, this work exhibits certain similarities with the composer's more 'extreme' scores, drawing freely on a wide range of virtuosic techniques — brilliant figurations, rapidly reiterated chords and wide leaps in particular. The hectic opening section, which is extensively transformed on each of its reappearances, announces most of the motivic shapes that feature in the subsequent sections. This material is interspersed with three contrasting ideas (two of which recur), all of them in a somewhat slower tempo than the opening. The first is constructed around rapid, slashing *gruppetto* figures, the second features flowing double-note passage work and the third elaborates a motif from the opening section in a section that is described in the score as having the character of 'a slowly swaying dance'. These ideas afford a measure of effective tonal and textural contrast to the savagely percussive material of the first section, which is elaborated to a pitch of delirious frenzy in the thunderous closing pages.

²⁰ Deane to author, 13 Feb. 2006

²¹ Deane to author, 25 June 2006

Deane's most recent work for piano, *Siris*, which was commissioned by the English pianist Ian Pace, was completed in April 2006. The title here alludes to a philosophical treatise by Bishop Berkeley (1685–1753), *Siris: A Golden Chain from Tar-Water to the Trinity, With Thoughts Relating to Philosophy, Christian Theology, and the Universe Generally* (1744). This proceeds from a consideration of the medicinal benefits of tar water (which Berkeley extolled as a cheap and efficacious remedy for many ailments afflicting the poor) to a complex epistemological enquiry on the distinction between ideas and notions, marking the starting point of the subsequent development of Berkeley's thought along Neoplatonist lines. While the subject matter of Berkeley's treatise is of no relevance whatsoever to Deane's score, the composer was very taken by the first word of its title, a neologism coined by Berkeley from the Greek word *seira* (which he had probably encountered in his reading of the *Iliad*), meaning a chain or a cord. Subsequently, he also discovered that 'Siris' was an old name for the Nile. This word thus seemed an apt title for his new cycle, which consists of four pieces that can be played separately but function as members of a linked set, flowing together to form one continuous whole. As Deane points out, these images of a chain and a river conjure up rather paradoxical associations: things that have the freedom to move but are also linked, 'chained' or perhaps even 'enchained'; entities that can merge and be united, which are yet disparate and separate from one another.

This introduction of an element of formal variability into a score represents a new departure in Deane's work and it is likely to feature prominently in a projected cycle of compositions entitled *Landscapes of Exile*, of which the first part, *Passage Work*, was completed in 2001. Deane envisages that the second work of this cycle, *Siberia*, for which he is currently making sketches, will contain what he describes as 'openings' between its constituent sections into which other, shorter works in the series could be inserted; these might alternatively be played consecutively or even independently of one another.

The title of *Siris* also links suggestively with that of Deane's orchestral work *Enchaînement*, which elaborates a twelve-note series into a 'chain' of seven melodic ideas that constitute the score's principal musical material. A further connection with *Enchaînement* is established by Deane's use in *Siris* of the three note rows he had employed in *Triarchia*, one of which forms the basis for the orchestral work. Unlike *Triarchia*, however, in *Siris* these rows are used in what the composer describes as a 'very relaxed' way. As far as the constructive procedures employed are concerned, he remarks:

[The] opening gesture [of the first section of *Siris*] is derived from segments of all three rows in a completely unorthodox and probably 'illegitimate' way. I also use a method used previously in *Concursus* — isolating segments of a row and then transposing them in sequence, while permutating their constituents (or not). The important thing for me was merely the process of re-visiting after 20 years or so. It's an entirely 'abstract' piece, but one that doesn't feel 'abstract', particularly not the third section which joins my roster of laments (for nothing in particular, and everything in general). The second section ... nods towards the opening of Berg's Violin Concerto.²²

The harmonic language of *Siris* has certain points of contact with *Rahu's Rounds*, particularly in the appearance of diatonic material in densely chromatic contexts, but in other respects its sound-world is radically different. Although it is still technically very demanding, the keyboard writing is on the whole leaner and sparer, being much more contrapuntal in nature and largely dispensing with the massed chordal effects that predominated in many of the earlier scores. Still, it is a work wholly characteristic of the composer in its juxtapositions of rhetorical outbursts of explosive violence with passages of the utmost intimacy and delicacy.

22 Deane to author, 25 June 2006

2 Chamber Works

Raymond Deane's chamber works comprise a large proportion of his output. His catalogue lists some thirty items (a few of which exist in alternative versions) composed at fairly regular intervals throughout his career. While some of these compositions are of lesser importance, others are undoubtedly major works and represent achievements comparable to the finest of his large-scale orchestral scores. Again, the concern here is with a selection of works that the composer himself regards as especially significant and which might also serve to illustrate the striking diversity of his contributions to the genre.

As argued above, 1969–74 was a highly experimental period in Deane's development, during which he was attempting to discover his individual compositional voice and achieve a satisfactory synthesis of various stylistic affiliations which, on the face of it, might have seemed initially irreconcilable. On the one hand, he felt a deep affinity with serialism. This style, which evolved from the Austro-German tradition of instrumental music, was predicated on a view of music as dynamic process. In serial works, the expressive potential of the material was realized through close motivic development within the framework of hierarchical formal structures that were organized to suggest progression towards high points of emotional tension. Deane found this compositional approach deeply satisfying in its intellectual rigour (even if the rigorous use of serial techniques in his own music is comparatively infrequent) and he was understandably reluctant to abandon the expressive and dramatic effects which, it seemed, could only be achieved by such means. On the other hand, he was also intrigued by the expressive possibilities afforded by a style that in many respects seemed to represent its exact antithesis, namely minimalism, which, in its employment of deliberately 'primitive' musical materials that were subjected to extensive repetition, largely eschewed these modes of organization, deployed radically different means of shaping the listener's experience of musical time and aimed at an effect of greater expressive neutrality. One of Deane's overriding preoccupations at this stage was to combine these two very different ways of organizing musical time — to generalize broadly, one static, the other dynamic — in one and the same work.

The title of Deane's first chamber work, *Aliens*, which was composed 1971–72, wittily conveys his underlying concern with achieving harmonic and stylistic renewal through processes of distantiation. Like all of his early chamber works, it was composed for an ad hoc ensemble whose members had comparatively little experience of playing new music, rather than a specialist new music group, and, from a purely technical point of view, much of its interest resides in the manner in which Deane

turned what might have been an irksome limitation to creative advantage. While hitch-hiking around Switzerland in 1971, he had the idea of writing a kind of *jeu d'esprit* based on the fantastic notion of describing what might occur if a group of extraterrestrial beings happened to come to Earth, encounter Western music and, their curiosity having been aroused, try to compose something resembling it and then perform the result.

Deane's 'aliens' alighted on a decidedly odd assortment of instruments: clarinet, trombone, viola, organ and harpsichord, as well as a few percussion instruments. The music to which they have been exposed spans a variety of historical periods from the Baroque to the present; they have also evidently heard some jazz, attended a *célib* or two and overheard a student practising technical exercises. Not being burdened with a Western historical consciousness, and wholly innocent of conventional notions of stylistic appropriateness or good taste, they cheerfully combine evocations of these various musics into an exuberant, if chaotic medley of heterogeneous sounds. Their 'composition' is an anarchic postmodern romp in which Deane probably intended to offer playful comment on the bewildering range of possibilities open to the contemporary composer for whom the styles of all previous historical periods are potentially available — once refracted through the prism of an ironizing creative intellect — as a starting point for devising musical material.

Although *Aliens*, like the early piano pieces, is clearly indebted to minimalist techniques, Deane is aiming at something rather different to many classic minimalist compositions. Most minimalist composers (and, indeed, many contemporary composers working outside the tonal tradition who are influenced to some extent by minimalism) would probably spin out the presentation of such material at much greater length than he has done: in his words, 'the materials would be laid out, moved around on a flat surface, and eventually the music would stop'.¹ Instead, Deane was concerned to develop a new means of deploying these procedures in conjunction with their opposite, using material with an innate dynamism, which is presented in such a manner as to create a sense of momentum, to produce what he has described as 'musical form as drama, as dialectic, as irony', arising from the 'collisions' between these two sound-worlds, each representing the antithesis and negation of the other.²

This concept of form, which the composer terms 'structural dialectic', furnishes an excellent description of the musical organization of *Aliens*. Lasting just over a quarter of an hour, the piece presents a succession of short sections, each lasting two to three minutes. Much of the material presented in each of these is decidedly 'minimalist' in character — long-held chords, protracted invariant *tremolos* and trills, pedal notes, insistently repeated *ostinato* figures — but these ideas are persistently juxtaposed with others that are more active in nature and create a sense of forward movement seemingly at variance with the harmonically and rhythmically static background against which they are presented. This contrasting material, although it undoubtedly undergoes transformation, is never 'developed' in a traditional sense — it merely seems to parody processes of development — and, crucially, it never progresses to a point of culmination as the listener might naively have been led to expect. Whatever momentum it generates is ultimately impeded and each section ends in a curiously indeterminate manner, sometimes fading away inconclusively, at other times breaking off abruptly into lengthy silences. Furthermore, these sections are, for the most part, not obviously related, nor is there any apparent attempt to integrate them into anything resembling a conventionally balanced formal structure: the last section makes a few fleeting references to material heard previously, but that is all.

The harmonic language of *Aliens* consistently employs a variety of tonal materials in a freely chromatic context. On two occasions, a chord of C major is introduced on the organ which becomes

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progressively compromised by a variety of extraneous added notes in a manner suggesting heavy irony. (This technique of setting up two sharply differentiated planes of harmonic sonority, one of which progressively ‘invades’ and compromises the other, is a feature of Deane’s later music (the first movement of his piano concertante work *Quaternion* is a particularly striking example). In other cases, melodies of a fairly straightforward tonal character are presented against atonal backgrounds to humorously incongruous effect. This effect of distantiating and surface incongruity also extends to Deane’s management of musical gesture, intensifying the listener’s sense of disorientation. Rhapsodic viola solos featuring high *tremolandi* and slow *glissandi* are heard against dry punctuating chords and ominous rumblings in the harpsichord; a raucous, frenzied trombone figure marked ‘as loud as possible and with complete abandon’, “crazily” (note the inverted commas!) disrupts a parody of a Baroque trio sonata; a static organ chord provides a surreal accompaniment to a passage evoking a jazz improvisation complete with sleazy clarinet solos and trombone lip-trills. By such means, Deane creates a kaleidoscopic succession of fantastic aural images, evoking a welter of heterogeneous styles past and present.

By its very nature, *Aliens* was the sort of experimental piece that might be best attempted once, and in his next chamber work, *Equivoque*, which was written in the latter part of 1972, Deane employed similar procedures to very different expressive ends. This work is also scored for an unusual combination of five instruments — flute, horn, piano, organ and cello. Its title has the complex punning allusiveness characteristic of many of his compositions. An ‘equivoke’ (or ‘equivoque’) is an archaic noun which the *Oxford English Dictionary* defines as ‘an expression capable of more than one meaning’; ‘a play upon words, often of a humorous nature’; ‘ambiguity of speech’; ‘double meaning in words or phrases used’. In view of the ironic equivocations which are a constant in Deane’s work, these meanings are all relevant. However, to a musician, a further pun on the Latin roots of this word might also bring to mind the ‘equal voices’ of the participants in a chamber work, a meaning which, even if based on a dubious etymology, is nonetheless pertinent. From this, we form the idea of a musical text which is not just ‘polyphonic’ in the literal sense, but also in the Bakhtinian sense, seeming to embody a plurality of standpoints and inviting multiple interpretations of its highly ‘equivocal’ musical material.

Equivoque differs radically from its predecessor in mood. In certain passages, the piece has a rather remote, ritualistic atmosphere, close to that of the organ piece *Idols* or the *Linoi* for solo piano, though it is disrupted later by the introduction of very different material. There also seems to be a greater concern with a taut sense of formal unity than in *Aliens*, yet the manner in which this is achieved appears to owe comparatively little to established precedents. Like *Aliens*, it has a sectional construction, though the boundaries between the sections are far more fluid than the previous work. The linkages between them are also considerably more pronounced, as the implications of material presented in the earlier stages are explored more fully subsequently.

The work opens with a recurrent chordal gesture in the piano featuring a triplet figuration. The various statements of this idea are sometimes separated by lengthy silences and are punctuated by enigmatic *col legno* interjections from the cello, later varied to a *tremolando sul ponticello* figure. After this muted opening, the organ introduces material suggesting a modal E major, leading to comparatively ‘tonal’, chorale-like material on the flute and horn against a simple chordal accompaniment in the piano. This passage provides an excellent example of Deane’s rather unorthodox use of minimalist techniques. In this section, the material is repeated extensively without any sense of dynamism or forward movement, being ‘blown up to unnatural proportions’, as the composer puts it, in a seemingly orthodox minimalist fashion.³ However, as he goes on to remark, ‘the fact that this passage is then

3 Deane to author, 19 June 2006

“integrated” (or “dis-integrated”) into an overall “form” that isn’t merely repetitive is essential to what makes the piece distinctive’.⁴ In contrast to *Aliens*, in which the different instruments seem to inhabit wholly separate expressive realms, the ‘equal voices’ of the ensemble elaborate this material in dialogue, introducing ‘wrong notes’ which increasingly assimilate it to an atonal harmonic background.

So far, the piece has proceeded in a fairly tranquil, understated fashion; in the next section, the accord between the ‘equal voices’ splinters dramatically, as various sharply contrasted planes of sonority start to interact in a violent fashion. Against a slower-moving chordal texture in the organ, surging horn figures rising repeatedly to an abrupt culmination in *fortississimo*; opaque clusters in the piano vie with cello *tremolandi* and *glissandi*. The material in the organ becomes increasingly repetitive, forming an accompaniment to a grotesque trombone and flute duet, a lyrical cello cantilena and piano figurations of high-lying *tremolo* minor ninths in the right hand and staccato major sevenths deep in the bass. This remarkable counterpoint of musical gestures, at once suggesting intense lyricism, sardonic humour, aggression and serene detachment, creates an effect of dramatic ‘equivocation’ in every sense suggested by the work’s title and offers a particularly extreme example of the fierce tensions with which the score is imbued.

The accumulated tension is finally dissipated by means of a series of quizzical chords, leading into the final section of the piece, which opens with a flowing flute solo that unfolds over a three-note organ cluster to the accompaniment of fragmentary piano, horn and cello counterpoints. The cluster in the organ becomes denser and this static component of the texture is slowly transformed into something more dynamic. As the level of rhythmic activity increases, a dialogue develops between flute and horn, against a background of two contrasting ‘tonal’ entities — an F major diatonic seventh articulated in repeated quavers in organ and sextuplet figurations emphasizing D flat in piano. The intensity generated by this polyphony is abruptly cut short, leading to a brief reprise of the piano and cello ideas heard at the very opening. After a dramatically charged general pause, the organ takes up its pulsating F major diatonic sevenths once more against low chords again suggesting D flat in the piano before fading enigmatically into silence.

The two chamber works Deane completed the following year, in 1973, are very different to either of the preceding works, having the chiselled simplicity of a *style dépouillé*. Once again, the titles of both pieces, *Epilogue* and *Embers*, have a certain resonance, reflecting Deane’s continuing attempts to come to terms intellectually with the implications of what he perceived as the demise of the tonal tradition, as well as alluding to the postmodern condition of what he conceives as a sense of ‘afterness’. *Epilogue*, which lasts approximately eight minutes, exists in three versions — one for flute and piano and the others for flute or oboe with guitar — the first of which is considered here. In contrast to the multi-sectional structure of the works previously discussed, *Epilogue* has a fairly straightforward tripartite form. The piece provides yet another example of Deane’s transformation of what appears on first hearing to be static material through a slow process of elaboration on repetition. The opening section features a long-breathed flute cantilena accompanied by a simple chordal figure in the treble of the piano, which is firmly anchored around the notes D and A; it has a serenity of mood unprecedented in his work to that date. It rises to a local culmination with energetic trills in both instruments, leading seamlessly to a middle section that is much more agitated in character. Here, Deane displays a concern with achieving a considerably more unified level of formal integration than in previous works, as much of the material derives from transformations of motivic shapes from the first section, resulting in a tautness of motivic working that anticipates his later practice. The dynamic potential of this material is now fully released, surging in waves towards a brilliant climax with trills and florid demisemiquaver

4 Deane to author, 19 June 2006

figurations in the piano. At this point, however, this sense of excitement is dramatically brought to a halt to usher in an impassioned flute recitative over dense low-lying chords in the piano. The final section returns to the opening material, subjecting it to further harmonic elaboration, but ends in a completely unexpectedly dramatic manner, with a series of striking gestures in the piano and plangent passages of flute recitative — an early instance of Deane's proclivity for surprise endings.

Despite its brevity, Deane regards *Embers* as a piece of crucial importance in his early work. It is of particular interest from the point of view of its harmonic language, as it continues the quest of the early piano pieces and chamber works to reclaim tonal materials for use in ways that afford novel effects. As we have seen, the status of these incorporated tonal materials in Deane's personal harmonic vocabulary is highly ambiguous. In works such as *Aliens* or the second piece of *Orphica*, they are employed in a manner suggesting parody or heavy irony; in *Equivoke* and *Epilogue*, on the other hand, they appear to convey 'musical experiences characteristic of tonality', in Deane's words. In *Embers*, his employment of these materials acquires a greater sophistication and emotional depth. Here (and in many subsequent works), they exude 'an overwhelmingly elegiac connotation', to borrow a phrase employed by Elmer Schoenberger to describe the expressive effect of quasi-tonal sonorities in the work of Cornelis de Bondt, being permeated with a sense of fateful historical rupture and irrecoverable loss.⁵ In Deane's complex dialectical treatment, these materials are poignantly meaningless and meaningful at the same time, being simultaneously divested of and re-endowed with meaning through their deployment in their new compositional context.

Deane himself regards *Embers* as marking an important stage in his attempts to realize the concept of 'musical form as drama, as dialectic' towards which he had been feeling his way in previous works. Curiously, the composer recalls that at the time of writing it he did not fully grasp the significance of what he had managed to accomplish, because 'it didn't fit in with my interpretation of what I was trying to do in [my] early works'.⁶ Initially he rejected the piece and it was only some years later, when he had the opportunity to hear it performed by the Duke Quartet, that his opinion of it changed. He has since come to regard it as his 'most nearly perfect' composition and subsequently made a highly effective transcription of it for solo violin and string orchestra, which though very different in sonority, manages to preserve the intimacy and fragile lyricism of the original.⁷

The title of the work was suggested by Samuel Beckett's radio play of the same name, which was written in 1959. Although Deane emphasizes that there is no direct relationship between his composition and the play, it is tempting to assume that Beckett's 'skullscape' (as Linda Ben Zvi has evocatively described it) may have influenced the atmosphere of his score.⁸ Certainly its extreme understatement and reserve seems to belong to a similar spectral, emotionally depleted world and its evocation of musical gestures from earlier periods creates an effect similar to that produced by the narrator's flashbacks of memory in the play, conveying a sense of poignancy and loss. Although this resemblance may be purely fortuitous, both works share a pronounced similarity in their structural organization and in their paradoxical fusion of dramatic dynamism and agonized stasis. In a recent consideration of Beckett's radio and television plays, Jonathan Kalb describes *Embers* as having 'no surface narrative other than that of a haunted man talking about talking to himself, telling stories that he never finishes, and sometimes experiencing (along with us) the ghostly people and things in his

5 Schoenberger's liner notes to the Donemus recording of de Bondt's *Het Gebroken Oor* [The Broken Ear], *Composers' Voice Highlights CV 70/71*

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7 Deane to author, 15 Apr. 2006

8 Ben-Zvi employed this designation during the recorded discussion that followed the production of *Embers* for the Beckett Festival of Radio Plays, recorded at the BBC Studios, London, in January 1988.

story'.⁹ Deane's score, with its broken phrases that mostly peter out inconsequentially into protracted silence, its paragraphs that are repeatedly frustrated in their progress towards any dramatic issue, its attempts to recapture the sound-world of an irretrievable musical past, would appear to offer a number of striking parallels.

Apart from this literary reference, the literal and figurative meanings of the word 'ember' — a small piece of live coal or wood in a half-extinguished fire, the fading remains of a strong emotion — are all directly relevant; in a recent lecture, Deane made the suggestive remark apropos the title that the 'fire' here 'is perhaps the Western [musical] tradition'. He has also indicated that the notion of 'a repeating circuit' comes within the locus of intended associations (in allusion to the repeating circuit of days of fasting and prayer appointed by the Church in the Middle Ages that came to be known as 'ember days').¹⁰

The musical language of *Embers* is of startling simplicity in comparison to the works previously discussed, but nonetheless allows Deane ample scope for his continued structural experimentation. The result is a piece that he describes as 'a miniature that isn't Minimalist with a capital M, involving different ways of structuring musical time — both static and dynamic — and refusing to stay imprisoned within the parameters that are established at the beginning, either in terms of pitch or time-flow'.¹¹ Deane has described the opening section as

presenting three main elements: melodic fragments in the first violin that give the impression that they are trying to become a 'whole' melody but not quite making it [the first two of these fragments are shown in Ex. 9], and occasionally veering off into an 'emotional' cadenza; a two-note ascending figure over descending chords that give the impression they're seeking a cadence, a closure [Ex. 10] — but when the cadences come (they have a 'medieval' flavour!) they really don't seem to make much difference: the music starts again as though nothing had happened; thirdly, long silences.

Ex. 9 *Embers*, opening

As can be seen from the musical examples, the material has been pared down to the utmost, with its poignant first violin phrases (that hover around a handful of pitches suggesting a modal E minor) sounding against a highly static accompaniment. This texture continues for some seventy bars. Deane comments: 'Now this is truly a music that eschews "depth, perspective, dialectic"'. It is an essentially

9 Jonathan Kalb, 'The Mediated Quixote: The Radio and Television Plays, and Film', in John Pilling, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Beckett* (Cambridge, 1994), 129

10 Deane to author, 19 June 2006

11 NML

Ex. 10 Embers, bars 22–27

“static” music in that it is without any development: the main musical elements are exposed, they circle around each other, but go nowhere.¹²

The inverted commas that Deane places around the word ‘static’ point to misgivings about its appropriateness as a descriptive label. To quote him once more:

What does ‘static’ music mean? How can music, which evolves in time, be ‘static’? The answer is: it can’t. Such ‘stasis’ gives an illusion of ‘timelessness’, whereas it is simply one mode of letting musical time pass. In this context, reference is often made to *Farben*, the third of Schoenberg’s *Five Pieces for Orchestra*, Op. 16. Here the music supposedly evokes a lake, the surface of which is in constant motion, but which, unlike a river, never moves from the spot. To call this piece ‘static’, however, overlooks the fact that there is a ‘dynamic’ central episode. Furthermore, in the real world are there not rivers as well as lakes?¹³

As in *Farben*, a dramatic enantiodromia takes place in the next section of *Embers*, as this ‘stasis’ gives rise to its negation, dynamism. Deane describes this phase of the work as follows:

[The] short second phase ... begins with the first element, the melodic one, somewhat speeded up, accelerating, and — yes — *crescendo!* The second element ensues much as before, but after a shorter pause than usual, and with three cello pizzicati, the only pizzicati in the piece. This second, cadential element throughout has the function of negating the pretensions of whatever has preceded it. However, the surface of the lake has been disturbed and refuses to come to rest. The piece’s first tremoli are introduced, and there is — I have to confess it — a real old climax!

So is this a ‘development’ after the ‘exposition’? Well, in sonata form the development leads to a recapitulation, asserting the unambiguous prerogatives of the materials as originally exposed. This doesn’t happen here. Instead, after a lengthy pause, the music seems to be aiming for some sort of recapitulation but unable to achieve it. This phase lasts for about twenty bars, after which something quite unexpected happens: The music settles into E minor for a modal tune on the first violin. Is this the ‘whole’ melody that the first violin had been striving to put together from the start? Are we dealing after all with a reassuring kind of ‘sublation’ or ‘synthesis’? Well, after a mere

¹² NML

¹³ NML

ten bars the second, cadential element interrupts *fortissimo*, performing its old task of negation and rejection.

The last nine bars of the piece set out from the cadential figure, but again something unpredictable happens ... the piece ends on, in effect, a dominant seventh in the key of B flat major, a chord that has never been heard in the earlier course of the work [Ex. 11].¹⁴

Ex. 11 Embers, conclusion

The musical score for 'Embers, conclusion' is presented in two systems, each with four staves. The first system begins with a piano introduction marked *pp*. The dynamics transition to *p, dim.* in the final bars of the system. The second system concludes the piece with a dominant seventh chord in B-flat major, marked *pppp*. The notation includes various rhythmic values, rests, and dynamic markings throughout.

This descriptive commentary provides illuminating insight into Deane's concept of form as involving the operation of a complex ironical dialectic both in its organization of musical time and its management of gesture. As in most of Deane's work, the dialectical tensions generated throughout *Embers* are never 'resolved' or 'transcended'; the concluding dominant seventh, in the composer's words, creates the impression of ending with a question mark, rather than a full stop (or even an exclamation mark), leaving the listener in a state of suspense. (Some twenty-two years later, Deane finally allowed this chord, if not to 'resolve', then to act as a fresh point of departure for a new work for string orchestra, *Dekatriad*, which is related to *Embers* through its employment of a 'fetish tonality'

of B flat.) The harmonic language of the score contributes strongly to this atmosphere of ambiguity and equivocation, the simple modal melodic material in the prevailing ‘fetish tonality’ of E minor creating an impression of poignant distance comparable to that produced by looking at faded sepia photographs. Indeed, much of Deane’s later work can be understood as a continued exploration of the expressive possibilities that had been opened up in this score.

After this point, Deane’s output of chamber music decreased somewhat as he turned his attention to other media and completed a number of large-scale keyboard, vocal and orchestral works. In 1974–75, he wrote *Amalgam*, a substantial composition lasting over a quarter of an hour, scored for an ensemble of solo violin, flute, trombone, piano, organ, three percussionists and double bass, which he subsequently withdrew from his catalogue. He composed three further chamber works in the late 1970s, all of which are comparatively slight. *Parallels*, a short piece for alto saxophone and piano, also dates from 1975. The other works were both composed in 1979: a highly elusive miniature *Lichtzwang* for cello and piano (a title taken from a collection of poems by Paul Celan); and *Après-lude*, for flute, clarinet, percussion, harp, viola and cello. During the 1980s, Deane wrote only four chamber pieces: *Silhouettes* (1981) for string quartet, *Écarts* (1986) for string trio, the miniatures *Two Silhouettes* (1988) for woodwind quartet, and *Contretemps* (1989) for two pianos, discussed in the previous chapter. Of these, *Écarts* is undoubtedly the most important and deserves consideration.

Écarts, which lasts just over ten minutes, was commissioned by the English ensemble Lontano for performance during an Irish tour in early spring 1987. The multiple meanings of the French word *écart* are difficult to render exactly in English: it conveys the idea of separation in time or space, as well as the notion of deviation or divergence. On one level, the title refers to the ambiguous nature of the relationships between the three players in the ensemble, each of whom, at various points, enacts a ritualistic drama in the course of which they are set apart (or even alienated altogether) from the group as a whole. The title also makes a more specifically personal allusion to the death of Deane’s mother in 1986, an event that occurred while he was at work on the piece and which made the word’s connotations of absence and separation seem especially apposite.

Deane describes this work ‘as representing perhaps the most extreme journey I’ve taken in terms of instrumental timbre’ on account of its extensive recourse to a variety of unusual effects.¹⁵ The score is notable for its meticulous concern with minutiae of tone colour, providing, for example, precise directives to the players about how much and what kind of vibrato they should use at any given point. The cellist is instructed to adopt a tuning of all four strings, which is a tone lower than usual, and all three parts employ quarter tones, pizzicati and harmonics produced in non-standard ways, as well as *glissandi*, playing *col legno* and with mutes, and a variety of effects that create sounds bordering on noise, such as notes bowed on the bridge and played percussively by the fingers of the left hand tapping firmly on the fingerboard. Through these sonorities, Deane conjures up an eerie, spectral sound-world which is without precedent in his oeuvre.

The opening bars of the work, shown in Ex. 12, should provide some sense of its uncanny atmosphere of suppressed intensity. Shortly afterwards, Deane introduces a quotation from the slow movement of Beethoven’s piano sonata ‘Les Adieux’, entitled ‘Die Abwesenheit’ or ‘Absence’, which, as the composer remarks, has a ‘straightforwardly emblematic’ significance here. He also points out that this motif is “negated” at certain points by being played by the fingers without either bow or *pizz.*, and he comments that ‘the negation of the negation here definitely makes [a double] negation, and not a positive’.¹⁶ Some of the motivic fragments and harmonic aggregates are constructed from the musical

¹⁵ Deane to author, 11 Feb. 2006

¹⁶ Deane to author, 18 June 2006

Ex. 12 Écarts, opening

♩ = 56, with slight deviations (poco rubato)
 con sord., sul tasto

♩ = 56, with slight deviations (poco rubato)
 con sord., sul tasto

ppp < mp > ppp

ppp

15^{ma}

sul tasto

f < pp

ppp

ppp (molto) < ffp > < p > pp

f sub. p

fp

p < ppp

letters of Deane's surname (D, E, A — a constellation that had also been employed in *Epilogue*) and at one point, a cryptic reference is made to his mother's initials (J. D.) as the viola *glissandos* from the upper note of a double-stopped octave C to a D a tone higher. The piece unfolds initially as a succession of fragile fragments that convey a sense of latent violence, which at times erupts in searing crescendi and extreme, stabbing *sforzandi*. Towards the close, all three players in turn stand up to play fairly lengthy unaccompanied cadenzas, as if establishing 'his or her corporeal individuality [in a manner] rather out of character with the rest of the piece, before discarding it again'.¹⁷ After these structural *écarts*, the texture of the very opening returns, only to dematerialize progressively into pitchless sounds — a memorable conclusion to one of Deane's most deeply felt compositions.

Since the early 1990s, Deane's body of chamber music has grown considerably and some of his most important scores of recent years have been written for chamber media. In 1993, he embarked on the composition of a large-scale triptych of works, the *Macabre Trilogy*, the combined duration of which is about forty minutes. In an interview with Michael Dungan in February 2003, he gave the following account of the genesis of the cycle:

¹⁷ Deane to author, 18 June 2006

For whatever reason, I've always been a pretty morbid person. At a certain age in my life I thought I might like to write a series of pieces — it turned into three chamber pieces — that would take death as the subject. But without any great, heavy pessimistic interpretation of the subject, much in the tradition of — particularly in *Seachanges (with danse macabre)* — the medieval 'dance of death', which comes from a time of particular horror with the Plague, the great poverty and great oppression. People were dying like flies, and how did they cope with it? They went out and they danced. The whole aspect of things — the slightly grotesque, the confrontation of death as a kind of 'Mr Bones', a slightly ridiculous, jangling figure — that was the kind of thing that I wanted to confront in these pieces.¹⁸

As mentioned previously, the first piece to be written, *Seachanges (with danse macabre)*, was inspired by a visit to Mexico that Deane undertook in 1993 as the Irish delegate at the World Music Days festival organized by the International Society for Contemporary Music, which was held that year in Mexico City. Before his departure, he had received a commission from the Irish new music ensemble Concorde to write a chamber work that would feature the marimba prominently. In the course of his visit, he had opportunities to hear the sonorities of traditional mariachi music, with its array of exotic percussion instruments, and these suggested various textural possibilities. He also had a musical experience of a different kind: while looking for a suitable present for his niece, he chanced on a tiny toy violin and was 'so entranced by the hideous sounds that I could produce from it ... I subsequently put some of those sounds into the piece'. A further imaginative stimulus came from the harsh Mexican sun, which prompted the fanciful mental image of 'my bones being bleached on [an] obscure strand somewhere', which 'put all the other ideas into my head bit by bit'.¹⁹ Most of the piece was written during an extended stay in Paris and was completed later that year on his return to Ireland.

Seachanges (with danse macabre) is scored for an ensemble of five players comprising piccolo (doubling alto flute), piano, percussion, violin and cello. The scoring for percussion also features a number of ethnic instruments, including the guiro (a kind of gourd) and the rain-stick, and at various points in the work, all of the players (and not just the percussionist proper) are asked to play maracas. In view of the prominence of percussion instruments, it is worth noting that Deane consistently blurs the distinction between pitched and unpitched sounds throughout the score; at times, the string players are required to make a variety of percussive sounds employing various extended techniques, while at other times purely rhythmic figurations come to be endowed with precise pitches. At the very end, when all five members of the ensemble take up the maracas, pitched sonorities are abandoned altogether.

If second part of the title *Seachanges (with danse macabre)* was intended to evoke the medieval Dance of Death, the first part derives from Ariel's song in Shakespeare's play *The Tempest*, in which he describes how the corpse of Ferdinand's father, who had supposedly been drowned, has suffered 'a sea-change / Into something rich and strange'. As Arthur Sealy remarks, 'This transformation of something negative (death and the disintegration of the body) into something positive ('Of his bones are coral made; those are pearls that were his eyes') becomes a metaphor for Deane's compositional approach throughout *Seachanges (with danse macabre)* as well as the other two parts of the *Macabre Trilogy*'.²⁰ The formal procedures in the score are in fact wholly typical of Deane's later work, in which a remarkably

18 Michael Dungan, 'An Interview with Raymond Deane', reproduced on the website of the Contemporary Music Centre, Dublin, www.cmc.ie/articles/article634.html

19 Dungan, 'An Interview with Raymond Deane'

20 In the commentary that follows, I am considerably indebted to the account of *Seachanges (with danse macabre)* in Arthur Sealy's forthcoming book *Soundscapes: The Prescribed Works Group B (A Coursebook for Leaving Certificate Music)*, which he kindly allowed me to consult in manuscript.

personal stylistic synthesis has been achieved, which fuses minimalist techniques of repetition (of a kind that we have already encountered in the earlier chamber works) with the dynamism released by motivic working out of a particularly close and concentrated kind.

Most of its musical material is derived from a three-note cell heard at the very opening, which consists of the notes G, A and C presented within the span of an ascending perfect fourth. Deane had employed an identical motif in a miniature entitled *The Seagull Dreams of Its Shadow*, the third of *Birds and Beasts*, a set of violin and piano pieces written for children in 1992–93. This similarity struck him as highly significant, as did the ‘sea-change’ that occurred when this idea, which came to him while walking along the Atlantic coast, represented itself to him again on the very different Pacific coastline of Mexico. The motif permeates the score on all levels and is employed with great consistency. By itself, and in its inverted and retrograde forms, it generates a considerable proportion of the melodic material; in superimpositions of various kinds, it also determines the intervallic constitution of many harmonic aggregates. On its first appearance, as it is presented in the extreme treble on the piano, the crotales, string harmonics and the piccolo (Ex. 13) as a set of striking sonorities that memorably evokes the atmosphere of some imaginary religious ritual from remote antiquity. In the course of the introduction, this idea is elaborated into a white-note pentatonic aggregate centring on the note G — a

Ex. 13 *Seachanges* (with *danse macabre*), opening

♩ = c. 80

Crotales

Piano

Picc.

Crot.

Pno.

Vln.

key sonority in the work as a whole. Much of the musical drama of the piece derives from the dynamic conflict between this 'quasi-tonal' sound-world and another highly chromatic one that constantly seeks to undermine it and negate it. Seventeen bars into the introduction, alien A flats intrude into the texture; this prompts the introduction of florid chromatic arabesques in the alto flute and marimba that establish a sharply contrasted plane of sonority, which is much more rhythmically active than the pentatonic material sounded simultaneously with it. Deane's procedure of setting up powerful binary oppositions of this kind is, in this score, employed with considerable sophistication.

As Sealy has noted, these contrasting sound-complexes are subjected to highly elaborate transformations that largely hinge on processes of construction and subsequent deconstruction. A close inspection of the score reveals Deane to have made extensive use of what he describes as techniques of addition and subtraction, whereby ideas are slowly extended (most usually) a note or duration at a time, or the reverse, in which notes or durations are gradually omitted on subsequent repetitions. A very straightforward example of this can be observed in bars 27–34, where a six-note shape in the violin and cello is progressively shortened to two notes — an event, interestingly, that prompts the immediate introduction of a succession of chromatic progressions that assert themselves once the preceding pentatonic idea has been destabilized (see Ex. 14).

Deane has described the work as having a kind of rondo structure, following a scheme: Introduction – A – B – A¹ – C – A² – Coda. However, the boundaries between these sections are fluid and further obscured by tempo changes which do not necessarily coincide with the commencement of a new section. The first A section, for example, emerges without any obvious sense of discontinuity out of the slow introductory bars; and the transition to the B section commencing at bar 46, which is in a faster tempo, is also effected seamlessly on account of the progressively intensified rhythmic activity that precedes it. The complex thematic cross references between the various sections also blur the outlines of this large-scale formal design still further. The B section, which features an idea in seven-four time with an emphatic rhythmic character, is dance-like in nature, the prominent use of double-stops in fifths in the stringed instruments being a subtle allusion to medieval iconographic representations of the *Danse Macabre* in which Death, portrayed as a dancing skeleton, plays a fiddle.²¹ This passage reaches a strenuous culmination in bars 56–63, with all the instruments playing high in the treble. The central A¹ section opens with a violent conflict between the contending pentatonic and chromatic materials, featuring skirling flute arabesques, bass clusters in the piano and strummed chords in the strings. The intensity abates for a short time, but the conflict breaks out again in bars 88–91, as a derivative of the initial three-note motif sounded in stentorian octaves by the piano is surrounded with string tremolos and swooping flutter-tongued descents in the alto flute.

The C section commences in bar 93 with a transformation of the latter shape into a quaver idea in seven-eight time that is based on an inversion of the famous plainchant melody of the *Dies Irae* from the Latin Requiem Mass. This melody is subsequently quoted in rasping double-stopped fifths on the cello in bar 99, forming part of an animated contrapuntal texture making prominent use of canon. Deane intended this section to be an act of homage to Conlon Nancarrow (1912–97), an American composer for whom he had considerable admiration, and who is principally famous for his intricate canons for player-piano. (Nancarrow lived in exile in Mexico after fighting on the Republican side in the Spanish Civil War; he was guest of honour at the 1993 World Music Days festival). The final return of the A section in bar 128 opens in a more subdued mood, seeming to establish a quasi-tonal region of E flat. Shortly thereafter, emphatic C major chords are introduced in string double-stopping, and they struggle to retain their primacy against atonal material presented on the piano, flute and

21 In the manuscript, Deane had originally entitled this section 'Totentanz', but dropped this designation in the published score.

The image displays a page of a musical score for a chamber ensemble. The score is arranged in six staves, each labeled with an instrument: A. Fl., Mrcs., Mar., Pno., Vln., and Vc. The notation includes various rhythmic figures, dynamic markings (such as *sf*, *p*, *ff*, *f*, *mf*, and *pizz.*), and articulation marks. The A. Fl. part features rapid sixteenth-note passages with dynamic shifts. The Mrcs. part has a steady rhythmic accompaniment. The Mar. part includes complex rhythmic patterns with dynamic changes. The Pno. part has a more melodic and harmonic role. The Vln. and Vc. parts feature sustained notes with dynamic markings and pizzicato indications.

marimba. During this section, Deane's quirky humour comes increasingly to the fore in the resulting harmonic rough-and-tumble. C major is decisively dispelled in a brilliant concluding peroration and in the last bars the boisterous atonal material dematerializes: precise pitches disappear altogether as all five players gradually take up the maracas and reduce it to a rhythmic *ostinato*. Finally, this disappears too, reduced further to a long-sustained unison roll.

The second part of the triptych, *Catacombs*, was completed in 1994. This score is of particular interest, since it is one of the very few works in Deane's output that is extensively based on borrowed musical material. In this case, the material in question comes from two consecutive movements of the nineteenth-century Russian composer Modest Mussorgsky's piano work *Pictures at an Exhibition*, namely, *Catacombae (Sepulcrum Romanum)* and *Cum mortuis in lingua mortua*, the titles of which allude in a very obvious way to human mortality. In an interview with Arthur Sealy, Deane offered the following comment on his reworking of Mussorgsky's thematic ideas:

In ... *Catacombs*, I use Mussorgsky's theme [from *Catacombae (Sepulcrum Romanum)*] almost as if it were a twelve-tone row. I use it almost as a kind of basic serial format that I treat in a very cerebral way. But the result of that is an almost humorous one because what you're dealing with is not an abstract set of notes but a piece of music that is some kind of icon, everyone knows it, everyone is familiar with it, and you get that slightly surreal effect. It's like doing an abstract painting using little bits of [Da Vinci's] *Mona Lisa* that are chopped up. But it's not done in any kind of destructive spirit. I love the music in question; but the result does seem to be a process of 'dismantling' ...²²

22 Deane quoted in Arthur Sealy, *Soundscape*s

In certain respects, *Catacombs* reveals a vein of anarchic black humour reminiscent of earlier works such as *Aliens*, in its exuberant postmodern fusion of parody, convoluted irony and high camp. In view of Deane's highly ambivalent responses to the Western musical heritage and conventional notions of canonicity, it is tempting to suggest parallels here between his treatment of Mussorgsky's score (which has pronounced ludic features) and what the novelist and critic Raymond Federman has termed 'pla(y)giarism' in referring to postmodern artists' ironic appropriation of other styles, past and present, for their own playful and subversive expressive ends. As Federman points out at the opening of his influential essay 'Critifiction: Imagination as Plagiarism', 'We are surrounded by discourses: historical, social, political, economic, medical, judicial, and of course literary' — a list to which musical discourse could be added. He goes on to point out that the creative imagination plays a crucial role in the formulation of any given discourse and insists that the practice of plagiarism is firmly embedded within the creative process since 'the writing of a discourse always implies bringing together other pieces of discourse'.²³ The relevance of this concept to the present score seems particularly pertinent, as, indeed, to many aspects of Deane's later creative practice.

Catacombs is scored for an ensemble of clarinet, violin, cello and piano and lasts almost fifteen minutes. Formally, it is divided into nine linked sections, some of which are provided with descriptive titles. The work opens in a mood of mock-solemnity, with the various constituent notes and chords of a thematic idea from Mussorgsky's *Catacombae* intoned in a deadpan manner by various groupings of instruments in turn; this atmosphere is abruptly dispelled in the faster section that follows, which commences with a pert clarinet solo over jazzy syncopated rhythms in the piano. The elements of a melodic contour from *Cum mortuis in lingua mortua* are reassembled in new melodic and harmonic configurations in an energetic contrapuntal texture, which is suddenly interrupted to usher in a third, slower section more obviously based on *Catacombae*. The pitch F sharp, which is very prominent in the second Mussorgsky movement (and which is in the key of B major), is emphasized in the fast fourth section, the highly virtuosic piano part taking it up in vigorous broken and repeated octaves to an accompaniment of syncopated string chords and flutter-tonguing in the clarinet. A *Berceuse funèbre* in the appropriate fetish tonality of B major ensues, which proceeds in a lopsided seven-eight time. These musical gestures here seem to parody those of nineteenth-century Romanticism, making witty play with grandiloquent violin and cello cantilenas replete with soulful appoggiaturas. The sixth section, entitled *The Catacombs Fugue*, ironically deflates this exaggerated emotionality with a brisk parody of academic counterpoint, featuring a fugal subject and a countersubject adorned with mock-Baroque trills based on a transformation of material from the second section. This reaches a stormy climax, complete with close strettis of motifs from the countersubject in diminution, retrograde and inversion.

The fugal momentum continues into the seventh section, in which it is employed as a textural background to a portentous statement of a quotation from *Catacombae*. A furious cadenza-like passage for the piano (concluding with a dramatic flurry of semiquavers that suggest a parody of nineteenth-century pianistic rhetoric) breaks in abruptly on this mood, quoting once more from *Pictures at an Exhibition*. The brief eighth section features sustained melodic and chordal writing based on elements again derived from *Catacombae*. This is interrupted towards the end by another stentorian interjection from the pianist, who seems reluctant to accept that the previous cadenza must necessarily come to an end. In the concluding section, the fetish tonality of B major is firmly established and this highly theatrical score comes to a paradoxically discomfiting close with an assemblage of inverted quotations from the serene conclusion of *Cum mortuis in lingua mortua*.

23 Raymond Federman, 'Critifiction: Imagination as Plagiarism', in *Critifiction: Postmodern Essays* (New York, 1993), 49

The triptych's final part, *Marche Oubliée*, which was completed in 1996, offers a piquant contrast to its predecessor, being far more serious in tone. Its title alludes to a set of curious piano pieces by Liszt written between 1881 and 1884, entitled *Valses Oubliées*. It is scored for a trio of violin, cello and piano and lasts just over ten minutes. In this score, Deane engages once more in an act of creative reinterpretation, this time not of a specific musical work, but of a traditional genre, that of the *Marcia funebre*, for which Beethoven provided the Romantics with several highly influential precedents. As might be expected, however, this reinterpretation is shot through with irony. The composer has emphasized how one of his primary concerns in this score has been to induce a sense of distantiation in the listener, estranging them from preconceptions with which they might approach the work:

In ... *Marche Oubliée*, you have this idea of a funeral march. But instead of writing a funeral march in 4/4 time, you may have a 4/4 bar with an added quaver at the end. Or a 4/4 bar followed by a 7/8 bar. So again, you have that idea of a very familiar, very fixed, very regular thing that is taken, but instead of writing 'within' that, you write 'upon' that, using it as an idea for material that you then, kind of pull apart. In that piece, *Marche Oubliée*, it sounds to the ear as one of the most traditional pieces I've ever written. It sounds almost like Bartók in places. But the basic principle is the same, that of 'dismantling' and 'putting back together' in new shapes.²⁴

The idea for the work in part was prompted by a novel by the Albanian writer Ismail Kadaré, *Gjenerali i ushtrisë së vdekur* [The General of the Dead Army] (1963). This relates the story of an Italian general sent on an absurd and gruesome mission to Albania to oversee the exhumation and repatriation of the bodies of Italian soldiers who died there in the course of the Second World War. The general is depicted as utterly unimaginative, wholly preoccupied with the punctilious fulfilment of his duties and without any sense of the human tragedy which has occasioned his task. It is a moving commentary on the destruction and loss resulting from war, a theme relating closely to that underlying the Oboe Concerto and *Passage Work*.

From a formal point of view, *Marche Oubliée* is a tightly structured work, in which the motivic working out is particularly close. It opens in sombre fashion with an unaccompanied statement of a three-note motif in the piano (constructed from a similar group of pitches to the opening motif of *Seachanges* (with *danse macabre*), but arranged to provide a different intervallic structure) featuring the intervals of a minor third and minor seventh. Initially, this functions as an *ostinato* bass to the texture and a derivative of it forms the basis of a companion idea first heard on the cello (Ex. 15). As in *Seachanges* (with *danse macabre*), this motif generates a very considerable proportion of the material for the piece both horizontally, in the formation of melodic ideas, and vertically, in the constitution of harmonic aggregates. To give some idea of just how consistently it is used, a four-bar passage (chosen more or less at random) occurring later in the piece, bars 92–96 (Ex. 16), illustrates the extent to which it permeates the entire texture.

The opening section elaborates this idea in a dialogue between the three instruments, reaching a highly dramatic culmination after some twenty-five bars, which gives some hint of the violence to be unleashed later in the piece. Although the basic metre of the piece is 4/4, this regular metrical organization is intermittently disturbed by expansions and contractions of the bar. A further passage of intense contrapuntal working dies away into an eerie series of widely spaced static chords in the piano, sounding like the pealing of distant bells, rising slowly to a strident *fortississimo* climax in the treble of the instrument, introducing a new rhythmic figure of a Scotch snap. This rhythm forms the

24 Deane quoted in Arthur Sealy, *Soundscapes*

Ex. 15 Marche Oubliée, opening

♩ = 80

Violoncello

Piano

pp, legato

pp (*secco*)

una corda

Vc.

pp *p* *pp* *p* *mf*

Pno.

mp *pp*

p *legato*

(8) *p*

tre corde una corda

basis of a nervous accompaniment pattern in harsh double-stops on the strings at the opening of the next section, which is of a more agitated character. Most of it proceeds in a relentless *fortissimo*, featuring hurtling demisiquaver figurations in all the instruments. From time to time, the piano takes over the accompaniment pattern first heard on the strings, aggressively marking the rhythm in dense chordal clusters. The harmonic organization of this section of the score frequently approaches complete chromatic saturation and the music throughout is characterized by a wild extremity of gesture. The section that follows, by contrast, affords a measure of textural and emotional relief, as the basic motif is elaborated into delicate contrapuntal textures in which the sonorous lower strings of the cello are contrasted with delicate *pizzicati* in the violin and ethereal two-part writing in the upper reaches of the piano's compass. This respite is only temporary, however; the material of the second section returns with its jagged contours transformed into ever-more frenzied shapes, culminating in a highly rhetorical climax during which the first violin intones a distorted variant of the opening motif to the accompaniment of a ferocious chordal *tremolando* in the piano. In the concluding section, over a dotted-rhythm *ostinato* in dense chords in the bass of the piano, the violin and cello intone searing melodic lines based on fresh derivatives of the opening motif. Little by little, this tumult subsides as these lines gradually fragment and the *ostinato* accompaniment in the piano thins out to a single staccato low A in the extreme bass. For a moment, it seems as if a fresh eruption of violence is imminent, but after a brief, explosive crescendo the piano suddenly falls silent, leaving the strings to present a series of fragments based on the contours of the opening motif in *glissandi* and harmonics, which finally peter out, leaving the conclusion of the piece hanging in mid-air.

Ex. 16 Marche Oubliée, bars 92–96

The musical score is arranged in three systems. The first system includes Violin, Violoncello, and Piano. The Violin part begins with a pizzicato instruction and features a triplet of eighth notes. The Violoncello part has a triplet of eighth notes and a sextuplet of eighth notes. The Piano part includes a 'senza cresc.' instruction and a triplet of eighth notes. The second system includes Violin, Violoncello, and Piano. The Violin part has a triplet of eighth notes and a 'poco arco' instruction. The Violoncello part has a triplet of eighth notes and a 'poco espress.' instruction. The Piano part features a dynamic change to *ff* and a 'p' instruction. The third system includes Violin, Violoncello, and Piano. The Violin part has a 'pizz.' instruction and a 'cresc.' instruction. The Violoncello part has a 'p' instruction and a 'cresc.' instruction. The Piano part includes a dynamic change to *p*, a 'cresc.' instruction, and a 'una corda' instruction that changes to 'tre corde'.

Between the composition of *Catacombs* and *Marche Oubliée*, Deane completed a short work for bass clarinet and harpsichord, *Fügung*, which was commissioned by the Dutch performers Harry Spaarnay and Annelie de Man and first performed by them in the Hugh Lane Municipal Gallery of Art in Dublin in March 1999. This unusual combination of instruments undoubtedly seems to have fired Deane's imagination, leading him to devise a succession of striking textures and some piquantly telling effects. The literal meaning of the German noun *Fügung* is 'chance', 'a stroke of fate' (the phrase *eine glückliche Fügung* means 'a stroke of good fortune') or even 'fatality' and it is also used as a technical term by linguists in the sense of 'construction' — a connotation that is perhaps especially relevant here. To musicians, of course, the word will also evoke associations with the German word for 'fugue' — *Fuge* — and suggest a playful neologism, which could be translated as 'fugue-ing'. This meaning is probably also pertinent, given the piece's closely worked contrapuntal textures. Deane describes the work as one of his more 'extreme' pieces, on account of the particularly adventurous nature of his writing for the two instruments.²⁵ Both parts are formidably difficult, especially the bass clarinet part, which ranges over a four octave compass and ascends to a sounding B flat almost two octaves above middle C, a perilously high note. The harpsichord part is at times dazzlingly ornate, making extensive use of brilliant shimmering *tremolos*, one of Deane's favourite keyboard sonorities. The work is also notable for the intricacy of its rhythmic organization, at times employing polyrhythmic constructions that are almost reminiscent of *New Complexity*. Within this rhythmic framework, the two instruments weave an iridescent tapestry of darting, extravagantly virtuosic figurations that conjure up a surreal, almost phantasmagorical atmosphere. These lines and, indeed, many of harmonic aggregates used in the score are derived from the writhing chromatic motifs announced at the very opening (Ex. 17), which coil sinuously within the confines of a perfect fourth. A central episode, which features vaulting leaps in the bass clarinet and is rather more static in character, provides effective tonal and textural contrast. The opening material returns and is elaborated into a brilliant climax, featuring a succession of technical fireworks that bring the score to a flamboyant and exhilarating close.

In 1997, Deane returned to the medium of the string quartet after an interval of sixteen years, composing in fairly rapid succession three quartets that rank amongst the most important of his creative achievements in recent years. Apart from *Embers*, he had previously composed one other work for the medium, *Silhouettes*, in 1981. This score, which also exists in an effective transcription for wind quintet, is cast in five short movements, two of which employ ironic references to Baroque music. The opening *Prelude* features a twelve-note theme and is monophonic in texture throughout. The following "*Pavane/Sarabande*" (again, note the inverted commas) makes witty play with juxtapositions of the characteristic rhythmic patterns of both of these dances (with occasional disconcerting additions or subtractions of a beat), as well as with a variety of non-functional 'tonal' harmonies. After this, there are two movements entitled *Aphorism I* and *Aphorism II*, both of them brief and based on an energetic chromatic *ostinato* figure. The work ends with a fairly lengthy *Passacaglia*, which is much more serious in tone than one might have been led to expect from the preceding movements. It proceeds in a slow tempo over a five-note chromatic ground bass and, for the most part, in a hushed *pianissimo* with only occasional dynamic inflexions. The principal melodic interest is carried by the first violinist, who in contrast to the rest of the quartet, plays without a mute and is assigned a widely ranging cantilena marked (again in inverted commas) "*pochiss[imo] rubato, appassionato*", with the supplementary direction 'as if trying to "dislodge" the three other players'. In this movement, Deane is exploring a type of strained relationship between the members of an ensemble, which, as we shall see, becomes a marked feature of several of his concertante works. Ultimately, in the ethereal closing bars, the first violin is displaced by the second,

25 Deane to author, 11 Feb. 2006

Ex. 17 Fügung, opening

Agitato ♩ = c. 56

The musical score is written for a single instrument, likely a cello or double bass, in 4/4 time. It begins with a tempo marking of 'Agitato' and a note value of '♩ = c. 56'. The first system is in 4/4 time and features a complex rhythmic pattern with triplets and 5:4 ratios. The second system changes to 2/4 time and includes dynamic markings like *p*, *mf*, *sf*, and *mp*. The third system continues in 2/4 time with further rhythmic complexity. The score includes various dynamic markings (*ppp*, *p*, *pp*, *mp*, *f*, *sfz*, *sfz*, *pp*) and articulation marks like accents and slurs. There are also markings for '8vb' and 'FULL' in the piano part.

muted violin, which repeats in high-lying artificial harmonics a dotted-rhythm motif that has been a consistent component of its individual line until it fades into silence.

Silhouettes and the three quartets that Deane completed subsequently are supplied with the subtitles of String Quartets I–IV, which, given the composer's customary reluctance to have recourse to generic titles of this nature, suggests that he wishes them to be regarded as part of a quartet cycle. Although Deane's relationship with the mainstream quartet tradition, like most of his work, is shot through with ambivalence and strain, these compositions are imbued with a seriousness of intent and a sense of emotional weight that seem directly aligned with the traditional view of the string quartet as a medium for highly serious discourse. They appear to inhabit an intensely private, almost hermetic emotional world and, of all Deane's works, probably make the most intense demands on the listener's powers of intellectual assimilation and capacity for imaginative empathy.

These quartets are, nonetheless, strikingly different in character. The compositional procedures, and to some extent, the gestural language of the second quartet, *Brown Studies*, suggest a conscious alignment with the mainstream quartet tradition, something that is emphasized by its references to Beethovenian precedents, particularly in the employment of fugal writing. As always, however, when Deane engages with the music of the past, these references are made in a spirit of self-conscious irony: he views himself as writing 'upon' the tradition rather than 'within' it, regarding the latter as being no longer possible. The third quartet, *Inter Pares*, is of an altogether different cast, the extremity of its musical language standing in a clear relationship to what the composer terms 'an internal tradition'

of avant-garde works within his output as a whole.²⁶ Similarities can readily be discerned between *Inter Pares* and scores such as *Amalgam*, *Écarts* and the *Chamber Concertino*, for example, as well as works such as *Fügung* and *Compact*, which display stylistic traits reminiscent of New Complexity. In the case of *Inter Pares*, the nature of its musical language was also determined to some extent by the fact that it was written for the Arditti Quartet. *Equali*, the fourth quartet, is very different again, having almost the character of a divertimento.

Brown Studies, was composed in 1997–98 and was commissioned by the RTÉ Vanbrugh Quartet. As usual, the title of the work has a polysemic suggestiveness. The locution ‘a brown study’ means ‘a state of mental abstraction or musing’ or ‘thoughtful reverie’. These meanings aptly characterize the very inward nature of the individual movements of this quartet. In his programme note for the work, the composer remarks that its title ‘was also suggested by the dominant colour of the instruments comprising a string quartet — a characteristic metaphorically transferred to their tone-colour’.²⁷ Deane made the first sketches for the quartet while still working on his opera *The Wall of Cloud* and writes that he regarded it as ‘something of a counterweight to the opera’s gestures of affirmation and closure’. Consequently, while he does not regard the quartet as ‘a pessimistic piece’, he suggests that ‘it balances positive assertions with negation and ambiguity in a manner more typical of my work as a whole’.²⁸ The fundamental principle informing the structure of the work, he remarks, ‘is the encounter of a discourse with its utter negation’.²⁹

The quartet is cast in four movements. The first of these is largely preoccupied with an exploration of the fierce dialectical tensions embedded in a single musical idea which employs a variety of tonal contrasts and is heard at the very opening (Ex. 18). In the first eight bars, the first violin and cello, which

Ex. 18 *Brown Studies*, I, opening

The musical score for the opening of *Brown Studies*, I, consists of four staves. The tempo is marked as quarter note = 69. The first staff (Violin I) starts with a half note G4 (marked *f*) and a half note B4 (marked *p*), both with a *non vibr.* instruction. The second staff (Violin II) is silent for the first two bars, then plays a half note G4 (marked *pp*, *vibr.*) and a half note B4 (marked *pp*). The third staff (Cello) is silent for the first two bars, then plays a half note G2 (marked *pp*, *vibr.*) and a half note B2 (marked *pp*). The fourth staff (Bass) starts with a half note G2 (marked *f*) and a half note B2 (marked *p*), both with a *non vibr.* instruction. The score is divided into four measures with time signatures 3/4, 4/4, 4/4, and 6/8. Dynamics include *f*, *p*, *pp*, and *con sord.* (con sordina). Articulations include *vibr.* (vibrato) and *sim.* (simile). The first measure has a slur over the notes. The second measure has a slur over the notes. The third measure has a slur over the notes. The fourth measure has a slur over the notes.

26 Deane to author, 19 June 2006

27 From the liner notes written by the composer for *Seachanges: Raymond Deane Solo and Chamber Works* (BBM1014).

28 Deane, *Seachanges* CD, liner notes

29 Deane to author, 19 June 2006

play without mutes, enunciate a motif played *non vibrato* and in *forte*. This is answered by another figure in the second violin and viola, which play with mutes, *vibrato* and in *pianissimo*. This dramatic duality of sonorities continues throughout the movement, with the two pairs of instruments seemingly pursuing wholly separate planes of music argument. The tension between these planes intensifies steadily, as the first violin and cello parts become more animated and rhythmically active, featuring emphatic accented offbeat quavers and harsh double-stopping. This culminates in a passage of intense gestural violence, with the first and second violins sustaining a *fortissimo* major seventh in *tremolo*, while the viola and cello interject with a forceful figure played in parallel minor ninths, also mostly in *tremolo*. As the composer remarks, ‘this episode ... is violently at odds with what comes before, and the latter cannot survive such a cataclysm’.³⁰ After this encounter of the initial material with its negation, the passage breaks off abruptly, and in the eight-bar coda, the opening material fragments, as if oppositions inherent in it were too intense to permit of any decisive transcendence of the conflict.

The second movement, entitled *Scattering*, is predominantly concerned with similar processes. It opens with the presentation of a fleet semiquaver motif spanning the compass of a fifth with two neighbouring chromatic notes, which is arranged in configurations emphasizing the open strings of the various instruments (Ex. 19). Later, an emphatic idea employing strenuous leaps is introduced. And as so often in Deane’s music, the subsequent progress of the movement is ambiguously poised between dynamism and stasis. Sometimes these ideas freeze into apparent immobility, with the momentum of the musical argument interrupted by unexpected sustained *pianissimo* chords. As the movement proceeds, this material begins increasingly to fragment, on occasion splintering into short semiquaver bursts, and ultimately, its distinctive contours begin to dissolve as they are liquidated into simpler figures employing longer note values. The semiquaver idea struggles to reassert itself, but never succeeds in doing so: after a final furious paroxysm, the movement comes to a shuddering halt.

Ex. 19 *Brown Studies*, II, opening

Con brio ♩ = 120

The musical score for the opening of 'Brown Studies, II' is presented in four staves. The top staff is for Violin I, the second for Violin II/Viola, the third for Cello, and the bottom for Double Bass. The time signature is 4/4, and the tempo is marked 'Con brio' with a quarter note equal to 120 beats per minute. The key signature has one flat. The music begins with a semiquaver motif in the lower strings (Cello and Double Bass) and a chromatic semiquaver motif in the upper strings (Violin I and Violin II/Viola). Dynamics include *fff*, *f*, *p*, and *(meno)*.

30 Deane to author, 19 June 2006

The third movement is prefaced by a brief interlude, the first of three such interludes to feature in the score, which features halting statements of a semitonal motif from the first movement. The main body of the movement is cast as an elaborate fugue, a ‘centri-fugue’ to employ Deane’s subtitle, a designation by which he once more emphasizes a musical design involving processes of progressive disintegration, rather than culmination in a focal point of climax. The composer has also indicated that he intends this designation to convey the idea of ‘a flight from a fugue’ and avers that his procedures display certain points of contact with the more unorthodox features of Beethoven’s fugal writing in late works such as the *Grosse Fuge*.³¹ The fugal subject, which employs all twelve notes of the chromatic scale, opens with a rising major sixth, an allusion to the opening section of the slow movement of Beethoven’s String Quartet in A minor, Op. 132. It is first heard on the viola (Ex. 20). A comparatively orthodox fugal exposition ensues (save for the fact that all the voices enter at the same pitch), but as in the previous movement, the momentum that this generates is frustrated by the interruption of very different material, an impassioned declamatory idea in the first violin and cello with emphatic chordal interjections from the viola. The fugue resumes its course, in an episode employing the inversion of the theme and close strettii. No sooner is this underway, than the contours of the fugal subject disappear, ultimately dissolving into multilayered trills, which derive from one of the countersubjects that initially accompanied it. The fugal subject attempts to reassert itself once more, in an impassioned *fortissimo* and in very close strettii at a quaver’s distance, but this too dissolves into a series of frantic quaver figurations that culminate in a serried *fortissimo tremolo* chord.

Ex. 20 *Brown Studies*, III, bars 8–11

Grave

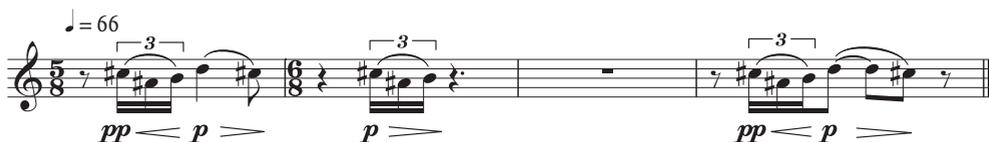
After these conflicts of musical discourse, the fugue subject slowly disappears altogether from the texture. The next paragraph opens with a simultaneous presentation of the various countersubjects, the opening three notes of the fugal theme making only sporadic appearances. This fragment is marked to be played *molto sul ponticello*, ensuring that the original pitches are somewhat obscured with an admixture of contact noise from the bow and contending harmonics. This section peters out into a succession of unaccompanied motivic fragments played in extreme *pianissimo*, the fugal subject eventually dematerializing after its final restatement by the second violinist, who taps out its contour on the fingerboard with the fingers of the left hand, rendering it almost pitchless. In an ambiguous gesture, the movement ends with a series of softly strummed *pizzicato* chords, which seem like a faint echo of the emphatic viola chords heard earlier, when the fugal exposition was interrupted in its course. The dénouement of this fugue is clearly determined by similar processes to those observed in the first movement.

The final movement of the work is the longest and the most complex movement of the four. It is prefaced by a second interlude that reviews material from the second movement, which rises once more to a strenuous climax, but as before, one that appears to have no decisive issue. This passage leads seamlessly into the final movement, which is entitled ‘Closing’, a title that refers back to the first

31 Deane to author, 19 June 2006

movement, 'Opening', but seems rather paradoxical in context, as becomes evident later. It features two principal ideas. The first of these is a fragment of a melody in the first violin — a quotation from *The Wall of Cloud* — which is later elaborated into longer cantilenas that exude a wan lyricism (Ex. 21). This alternates with a contrasting chorale-like idea deriving from the opening idea of the first movement, but in a manner reminiscent of the opening section of *Embers*, the musical argument circles around these ideas, but fails to achieve any clear outcome. According to the composer, the cello's intermittent interruptions (or, to use his word, 'negations') of this musical discourse 'have something of the character of "reminders of fate"'.³² Contrary to the expectations aroused by its title, the movement does not close, but leads to a further section entitled 'Interlude III' in which this material is abandoned altogether in favour of a new idea featuring superimposed polytonal chords sounded in *arpeggios* across all four strings. These chordal formations are presented in strummed *pizzicato* chords and *glissandi* in natural harmonics before coming to rest on a *pianissimo* four-note sustained chord which recalls the final chord of the 'centri-fugue', an enigmatic close to a work in which any possibility of transcending the conflicts of musical discourse seems to be vehemently abjured.

Ex. 21 *Brown Studies*, IV, bars 24–25



Similar conflicts pervade *Inter Pares*. In terms of technical difficulty, this work is probably one of the most uncompromising of all Deane's scores in its relentless demands on the stamina and virtuosity of the performers, all of whose abilities, as the title indicates, are tested equally. Like its predecessor, the quartet is cast in four movements and lasts just under half an hour in performance. Interestingly, the material for the work is derived from a number of musical ideas employing four notes: *cambiata* figures of various kinds (which feature prominently at the opening of the third movement), the plainchant setting of the *Dies Irae* (in which four adjacent pitches predominate) and a number of other motifs including BACH and Shostakovich's DSCH motto, which is incorporated into the grace note figures occurring at the very close of the work.

The first movement provides a striking example of one of Deane's favourite structural procedures of establishing the dominance of a single pitch — in this case, a C three octaves above middle C — and constructing a musical drama in the course of which this dominance is steadily undermined. This pitch is sounded prominently at the very opening of the movement by the first violin, approached from below by means of an explosive demisemiquaver compound upbeat. Shortly thereafter, the second violin presents a similar figure culminating in the rival pitch of B, sounding a semitone lower, a note also emphasized by the viola, after some initial hesitation in which it also alights on the notes A and B flat, which assume greater prominence later (Ex. 22). (These four pitches, of course, derive from the BACH motif). This conflict forms the substance of the opening paragraphs, as this material is elaborated into a brilliant string texture featuring headlong demisemiquaver figurations that career impetuously over a wide compass. Later, the subsidiary pitches of B flat and A come more to the fore and are frequently sounded together with the original C and B in static chords that momentarily interrupt the headlong momentum of the musical argument. A second idea, a scalic descent in emphatic double stops, brings

32 Deane to author, 2 July 2006

Ex. 22 Inter Pares, I, opening

this first section to a vigorous culmination. A contrasting episode commences in bar 51, employing an inverted variant of the opening motifs over a double pedal point on the notes C and B in the cello which maintains the conflict between them. This dies away and, after a bar's silence, the conflict between the four pitches breaks out again in a texture employing searing slow *glissandi*. This reaches its height in a furious contest between the first and second violins in bars 79–80, in which the high C and B vie for dominance. Unexpectedly, the C in the first violin is displaced and moves down to a B in a weary *pianissimo* reformulation of its opening idea. This event is followed by a further contrapuntal working out of the scalic double-stop figure in strident *fortissimo*. Out of this texture a new writhing demisemiquaver motif emerges, based on a portion of the notes of the chromatic scale from G to C. In the closing bar (Ex. 23), the G and the A flat are eliminated, leaving only the four pitches A, B flat, B and C, which are arranged contrapuntally so that all of them sound simultaneously in the same register, an effect reminiscent of a texture from *Aphorism II* from *Silhouettes*. This ambiguous gesture suggests either a resolution of preceding conflict or a failure to do so, depending on the listener's interpretation.

Ex. 23 *Inter Pares*, I, concluding bar

The opening section of the second movement, like the third movement of *Brown Studies*, employs material elaborated in closely imitative textures, based on a motif of a rising fourth that is slowly extended into a longer melodic contour. This set of sonorities alternates with an emphatic chordal idea sounded for the most part in acrid double-stops and with abrupt dynamic contrasts linked by surging *crescendi* and *diminuendi*. These materials are developed in alternation, with both assuming more intense forms as the movement proceeds. The initial idea is extended considerably and evolves into complex contrapuntal textures, which employ it in inverted and retrograde forms, as well as in augmentation and diminution. The movement ends in a wholly unexpected fashion: the chordal idea is suddenly dispersed by a new, spiky demisemiquaver figure that is taken up by all four instruments, which breaks off abruptly after only four bars. Deane remarks that this conclusion is ‘similar to that of *Embers*, unlikely though that may seem. Instead of a closure of some kind, you have a completely new musical idea; whereas in *Embers* that idea was “in character” with the rest of the piece, here it’s a foreign body.’³³

The hectic third movement has a manic, ‘scherzoid’ character. Although the boundaries between its constituent sections are difficult to determine precisely, a broad tripartite structure is discernible. The opening section, which for the most part proceeds in a relentless *fortissimo*, is largely based on an impetuous rushing figure announced at the outset by the viola (Ex. 24) and a slurred figure presented in rhythmic unison employing additive rhythms and forceful cross-accents. In the central section, the inverted retrograde of the opening three notes of Ex. 24 gradually evolves into a pentatonic triplet idea that subsequently undergoes a surreal metamorphosis to emerge as something sounding like what the composer describes as ‘an utterly demented rendition’ of an Irish jig (Ex. 25).³⁴ Deane has suggested cryptically that this passage might be construed as an ironical, if not openly hostile comment on the economic phenomenon of the ‘Celtic Tiger’.³⁵ The material of the opening section returns in bar 104 and in the breathless closing bars, the contour of the initial idea is liquidated into a series of polyrhythmic scalic uprushes that rise into the highest treble.

The finale reverts to the tempo of the first movement and establishes a direct connection with it by opening with an ethereal chord built from the pitches A, B flat, B and C, which is sustained at great

33 Deane to author, 19 June 2006

34 Deane to author, 19 June 2006

35 Deane to author, 19 June 2006

Ex. 24 *Inter Pares*, III, opening

The musical score for the opening of *Inter Pares*, III, consists of four staves. The tempo is marked as quarter note = 128. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The score is divided into two measures by a bar line. The first measure is in 3/4 time, and the second measure is in 7/4 time. The first violin part starts with a rest, followed by a pizzicato (pizz.) chord marked *f*. The second violin part starts with a rest, followed by a sextuplet (6) marked *f*. The cello part starts with a triplet (3) marked *fff*, followed by a quintuplet (5) marked *fff*, and then a sextuplet (6) marked *ppp*. The double bass part starts with a rest, followed by a pizzicato (pizz.) chord marked *f*. The score includes various dynamic markings and articulations, such as accents and slurs.

length. Against this static background, the viola, and subsequently, the cello present material of an impassioned, recitative-like character. Interestingly, the first violin is assigned a B in alt, and not a C. The stability of the sustained chord is slowly undermined by violent rhetorical interjections from the viola and cello, in which the second violin later joins, and one by one, its constituent pitches are abandoned, leading to violent polyrhythmic outburst in which all four players appear at odds with one another. After a lengthy silence, there is a brief interlude in which definite pitch of any kind seems to come under attack, as the players tap out rhythmic patterns *col legno* and with their knuckles on the body of their instruments. The next phase of the movement opens with a series of slow-moving chords in harmonics, in which the individual voices all progress in semitones. This semitonal motif produces a series of disconnected fragments that gradually coalesce into more extended contours, their hesitant flow continuously broken by halting rests. Eventually, these figures evolve by diminution into a shape reminiscent of the writhing demisemiquaver motif with which the first movement ended, and as if to confirm this connection, the notes A, B flat, B and C reassert themselves once more as pitches of importance in the texture. The concluding pages of the score break down the primacy of these pitches, reintegrating them so that they function on a level of equality — *inter pares* — with the remaining notes of the chromatic scale. This section introduces completely new material in a manner that recalls the ending of the second movement, in particular a striking idea with the grace notes, which was alluded to earlier. It is unclear, however, whether this passage represents a transcendence of harmonic conflict or simply its postponement, given the work's highly forceful, yet curiously indeterminate close.

Exploring the implications of latent tensions between different planes of harmonic sonority is also a central concern of Deane's fourth string quartet *Equali*, which was written in 2001 for the Callino Quartet. The title, apart from emphasizing the parity of relationships prevailing between the members of a string quartet, also alludes to Beethoven, who composed a set of pieces entitled *Equali* for trombone quartet in 1812, which were performed at his funeral. *Equali* returns to the five movement design of *Silhouettes* and also resembles the earlier work in the comparative compression and brevity of these movements. Much of the musical material throughout the work is derived fairly rigorously from the pitches F, A, C and E, notes occupying the spaces on the treble staff.

The aphoristic opening movement, which fills a mere two pages of score, is primarily concerned with destabilizing a quasi-tonal 'fetish chord', a diatonic major seventh on F formed by the superimposition

Ex. 25 Inter Pares, III, bars 95–98

The musical score for Ex. 25, Inter Pares, III, bars 95–98, is presented in two systems. The first system (bars 95–98) is in 4/4 time. The top staff (treble clef) features a melodic line with triplets of eighth notes. The middle staff (treble clef) begins with a forte (*ff*) dynamic and a *sul ponticello* instruction, followed by a trill. The bottom staff (bass clef) starts with a forte (*ff*) dynamic and a crescendo leading to a forte (*f*) dynamic, then returns to *ff* and ends with a *pizzicato* section. The second system (bars 99–102) is in 5/4 time. The top staff continues with triplets and a trill, ending with a *sfz* dynamic. The middle staff features a five-note arpeggio (*ord.*) with a *ff* dynamic, followed by a forte (*f*) dynamic and a *sfz* dynamic. The bottom staff starts with a *ff* dynamic and a *pizzicato* section, then moves to an *arco* section with a *ff* dynamic, followed by a forte (*f*) dynamic and a *sfz* dynamic.

of the pitches just alluded to, which is presented in various contrasting guises and is eventually distorted almost beyond recognition by the progressive substitution of ‘alien’ notes for those that originally constituted it, a technique in operation in earlier works. In the agitated second movement, a ‘fetish pitch’ of D above middle C struggles to assert itself against a turbulent, highly chromatic background, as the predominant semiquaver movement assumes progressively more active forms and lines centring on one pitch splinter into wildly ranging, jagged contours. A tranquil chord of C major obtrudes unexpectedly into the texture, pointedly set off by being played *pianissimo*, but this is heatedly dismissed after a series of frenzied interjections. It makes a second set of appearances towards the close of the movement, only to be summarily dismissed once more.

The third movement returns to the problematic F major diatonic seventh of the first movement, once again effecting a series of metamorphoses of its constituent notes. As can be seen from Ex. 26, the opening build-up of this sonority is interrupted by a violent *sforzando* chord built from contradictory pitches and which disrupts the even quaver flow. After this, one of the notes of the F major seventh is

Ex. 26 Equali, III, opening

The musical score for Ex. 26 Equali, III, opening, consists of four systems of four staves each. The first system begins in 7/8 time, with the top staff marked *pp* (no nuances). The second system continues with 3/4, 2/4, 3/8, and 3/8 time signatures, with the bottom staff marked *pp* (no nuances). The third system continues with 3/4, 2/4, 1/16, and 2/4 time signatures, with the bottom staff marked *pp* (no nuances). The fourth system continues with 3/4, 4/4, 2/4, 1/16, and 2/4 time signatures, with the bottom staff marked *p pp*.

substituted by another, B flat. One by one, all of the initial pitches are replaced, although this process happens irregularly and unpredictably. Still, none of these transformations of the original material proves any more stable than the original chord, and the movement closes on a kind of compromise chord, with the three of the original pitches retained, one of them replaced by B flat. These procedures of construction and deconstruction recall techniques employed in *Seachanges* (with *danse macabre*) and other scores. The fourth movement has a comparatively straightforward five-part structure. Its first section opens with a striking motif of a trill followed by an arabesque, which is taken up by all the instruments in close imitation, with prominent use of rhythmic diminutions. It is extended into longer lines, only to fragment once more, and some of its most prominent pitches are used to construct an energetic rising figure prominent in the next section, which is marked *poco più mosso* and is in 7/16 time. These ideas alternate in the next two sections, and the movement closed with a much-curtailed reference to the opening idea.

The final movement opens with a covert reference to the third, presenting series of pulsating repeated chords, interspersed with a more lyrical, but angular figure employing wide leaps, which is initially presented in rather fragmentary form, but is constructed into longer lines as the movement proceeds. In a later episode, the pitches of the F major diatonic seventh that has been employed throughout the work are given prominence in one of its restatements, being emphasized as points of melodic departure, arrival or culmination. This leads to an explicit, highly emphatic restatement of the chord, in the pulsating quaver rhythm of the third movement. As before, its component pitches are gradually replaced, and as the pulsations become quicker, it transforms itself into an unambiguous C major

triad in the closing bars, recalling the appearance of this sonority in the second movement. This is not allowed to sound final, however, as it is dismissed by a harsh chromatic chord, as before.

The last work to be discussed here, *Pentacle*, for violin and cello, was completed the year before *Equali*, in 2000. It was written for the performers Gillian Williams and Arun Rao and received its first performance in the Hugh Lane Municipal Gallery of Art, Dublin, in September 2001. It is a substantial work in five movements that have a combined duration of approximately 25 minutes. The opening movement features a contest for primacy amongst different types of pitch materials similar to that in the string quartets and elsewhere. In this case, the contenders are a set of Cs, respectively two octaves above and two octaves below middle C, which are stated emphatically at the outset (Ex. 27). Deane initially extends the opening contour by his customary additive technique. A contrasting idea in forceful double-stops, enunciated in a jerky, syncopated rhythm, interrupts this process of construction, and as this too unfolds in a succession of turbulent chromatic figures, these Cs are progressively relinquished

Ex. 27 *Pentacle*, opening

The image displays two systems of musical notation for the opening of the piece *Pentacle*. Each system consists of a violin staff (top) and a cello staff (bottom). The first system begins with a tempo marking of quarter note = 72. The music is written in 7/8 time, which changes to 5/4 time in the second measure of each system. Dynamics are indicated as *fp* (fortissimo piano) at the start, *mf* (mezzo-forte) in the second measure, and *ppp* (pianissimo) in the third measure. The notation features long, sweeping lines connecting notes across measures, suggesting a continuous melodic or harmonic contour. The second system continues this material, with dynamics *mf* and *ppp*.

by the two instruments, which are forced to sound them in different tessiture. The movement closes with an enigmatic gesture, in which Cs from various registers become embedded in chromatic chords. The second movement is for cello alone. It opens with a succession of six, quasi-tonal chords, which are stated either over a pedal C or a pedal G and which form the basis for much of the musical argument that follows. This material is gradually dissolved in a series of brilliant rapid figurations before being restated more explicitly at the close.

The rhapsodic third movement alternates a slow-moving chordal texture, the pitches of which have been partially abstracted from the harmonies stated at the opening of the preceding movement, with swirling figurations reminiscent in contour to some of those occurring in the first movement, in a characteristic opposition of stasis and violence. It is the cello's turn to fall silent in the fourth movement, as the violin avails of the opportunity to assert its individual instrumental virtuosity. Its

material is notable for its marked gestural flamboyance, featuring capricious alternations of texture and mood. Once again, a variety of quasi-tonal sonorities make their appearance, mostly based on triads with an alien 'wrong note'.

As happens often in Deane's work, the emotional world of the final movement differs radically from what has gone before. It opens with an elegiac violin cantilena, which has the quality of an extended prose melody, intoned over a slowly shifting series of widely spaced double-stopped composite pedal points in the cello. The bottom note, the open C string, remains invariant, while the upper note falls in a chromatic descent from F sharp to D flat. Just at the point where this might have been expected to close onto an octave C, as the violin part reaches its impassioned culmination, the texture changes abruptly and the harmonies are diverted onto an incomplete diatonic seventh chord in E. This is the signal for the irruption of more turbulent, chromatic material, partially derived from similar material in the first movement. In the hectic closing pages, the inward mood of the opening is rapidly dispelled and the work comes to a quizzical close with a succession of emphatic chords, constructed from a simultaneous 'polytonal' employment of 'quasi-tonal' chords heard in the second, third and fourth movements, a conclusion that bears a marked similarity to that of the second or fourth movements of *Inter Pares*.

3 Works for Chamber and Symphony Orchestra

Raymond Deane has made distinguished contributions to a wide variety of media, yet many admirers of his work contend that the scope of his talents is only fully revealed in his orchestral scores and concertante works. Certainly, for a listener approaching Deane's music for the first time, these provide an excellent starting point for further exploration, since several of them, such as *Ripieno* and the Concerto for Oboe and Large Orchestra, undoubtedly contain some of the most vivid and memorable music he has composed.

Deane's first orchestral work, *Sphinxes*, was written in 1972 (when the composer was only nineteen years of age) as an entry for a composition competition organized by the amateur Dublin Symphony Orchestra. It lasts about seven minutes and is scored for a symphony orchestra of somewhat reduced proportions, with a single trombone as the sole representative of the heavy brass. The work's title was suggested by the four-note mottos in the score of Schumann's *Carnival*, which are not intended to be played and were inserted into the score as cryptic allusions to events in the composer's personal life. There are no 'Sphinxes' in Schumann's sense in this particular score, although these are to be found in the chamber works *Epilogue* and *Écartés*. Furthermore, two of the four *After-Pieces* for solo piano (1989–90) have titles which make explicit allusion to the Sphinx, namely *The Amorous Sphinx* and *The Sphinx Unleashed*, suggesting that the word is employed by Deane as a coded reference of some kind. Whatever the private resonances of its title may be, *Sphinxes* has the character of a *jeu d'esprit*. It is an early manifestation of Deane's quirky musical humour, making much play with elaborate mystification and teasingly arousing expectations on the part of the listener that are, for the most part, pointedly frustrated.

The work's introduction presents a puzzling and apparently disconnected succession of portentous gestures. We first hear a unison F enunciated by all the woodwinds in a long, slow crescendo to *fortissimo* before being cut short at its culmination by rasping stopped notes on the horns. This is followed by a second crescendo on a closely packed five-note chromatic cluster sounded on combined woodwinds, brass and strings, which similarly culminates in an explosive staccato-accented chord. These gestures create an atmosphere of tense anticipation, which is heightened further by an ensuing lengthy dramatic silence. After a series of clangorous chords in the piano, shrill ululations in the woodwind and rasping flutter-tonguing in the brass, the note F is asserted prominently once more, ushering in an unaccompanied passage of plaintive oboe recitative. The prevailing mood of mock-pathos is dispelled abruptly at the oboe's next entry, as its previous phrase is transformed into a skittish repeated note

figure in staccato semiquavers. This idea is taken up by the other woodwinds and is surrounded by a soft halo of string *tremolandi* over a persistent F pedal in the bass sounded in gently pulsating crotchets. Gradually, the harmonies in the strings and the brass converge on a chord of a dominant seventh in the key of F major sounded over a tonic pedal. These sonorities are summarily dismissed by a thunderous outburst in *martellato* semiquavers deep in the bass of the piano, reinforced by emphatic figurations in the timpani. The chattering semiquaver figuration is now transformed, heard in harshly scored dense chromatic clusters and passed from one section of the orchestra to the other, to the accompaniment of sinister whooping *glissandi* on the trombone.

At this point, the piece is a dialectical working out of the tensions implicit between the two gestures heard at the opening: the unison F implying a quasi-tonal harmonic region of F major and the five-note cluster representing its atonal negation. The harmonic aggregate of a dominant seventh on C over an F pedal is a typical instance of what Deane refers to as a ‘fetish’ chord. Here, as in several early piano works, this quasi-tonal material is treated in a distinctly parodistic manner. (F major is used elsewhere by Deane in contexts suggesting a calculated banality, such as in the last movement of *Quaternion*, a work for piano and orchestra discussed below.) The fetish chord now accompanies a further transformation of the previously heard oboe phrase, one which evokes the saccharine melodies of popular American light music from the 1950s. Although no literal quotations are employed, according to Deane, the tone of this passage was suggested to him by recordings of Frank Sinatra songs played by Frankie Byrne, a popular Irish agony aunt, in her weekly radio programme, which he heard regularly as a teenager. The contour of the woodwind phrase distantly recalls that of a song with lyrics that struck him at the time as being particularly inane, while a prominent trombone solo in the course of another inspired the sleazy muted trombone figures in the accompaniment.¹ The reiterations of the melody eventually peter out, and the piece closes with a repetition of the gestures with which it opened, the unison F and the chromatic cluster being presented this time in repeated semiquavers.

Ten years were to elapse before Deane completed another purely orchestral work. *Enchaînement*, which was composed between August 1981 and February 1982, received its first performance in Dublin on 19 July 1985 by the RTÉ Symphony Orchestra, with Colman Pearce conducting. This piece represented the fulfilment of Deane’s long-standing ambition to write a work for an orchestra of Mahlerian proportions (consisting in this case of quadruple woodwind, 6 horns, 4 trumpets, 4 trombones, 2 tubas, 7 percussionists, keyboards, harp and strings), which would allow him to exploit textural possibilities ranging from ‘chamber music-like delicacy to massive tutti, without succumbing to the right-wing mode of Neo-romanticism.’² Its French title, which reflects the pronounced attraction to French culture (though not necessarily French music) that Deane experienced at the time, has the literal meanings of ‘placing in chains’, ‘linking’ or ‘binding’, but is more commonly used in the sense of ‘sequence’ or ‘series’. The word aptly describes the structural organization of the work, which comprises four linked movements with a combined duration of just under twenty minutes, all of them based on a sequence of short melodies presented in the first movement, and it emphasizes its particularly intimate levels of motivic ‘linkages’.

Enchaînement is one of a number of compositions from this phase of Deane’s creative development in which he was concerned to explore the expressive possibilities afforded by a highly personal adaptation of serial procedures. The work is based on a note row that he had first used in *Triarchia* and has subsequently employed in a number of other works, the basic form of which is D – C – B – D# – E – F# – A – F – Bb – G – C# – G#. In the present work, Deane derives from this series a set of seven thematic

1 Deane to author, 23 Feb. 2006

2 The quotation is from Deane’s programme note prefacing broadcast performance of *Enchaînement* on RTÉ radio (undated recording in archive of the Contemporary Music Centre, Dublin).

ideas employing different permutations of its constituent pitches, which are heard in close succession at the very opening of the piece. Although serial techniques inform the structural organization of the piece in a variety of ways (being applied in certain passages to rhythm as well as pitch, for example), the composer adapts and modifies these procedures, rather than employing them in a strictly consistent manner. Their single most important function in this score has been to generate the thematic material, which is then used as the basis for freely developing variations. Deane describes his working method as follows:

Rather than using the traditional transpositions, inversions, etc. [of the note row], I segment the melodies (rather than the rows) and compose successive variations on the segments. It's important that the 'second-order' materials are the basis for the piece, rather than the abstract 'first-order' rows — this is typical of all my structural procedures, whether serial or not: certain principles are used to generate materials, and those materials form the basis for further elaboration.³

Despite its surface complexity, the large-scale organization of *Enchaînement* is strikingly simple, revealing a concern on Deane's part with clarity and intelligibility in writing for the large forces at his disposal. The score is notable for its persistent employment of melody as the principal agent of continuity to an extent unprecedented in the composer's previous compositions. On the whole, the writing for the orchestra is more sophisticated than that of *Sphinxes* or *Compact*, revealing a greater assurance in the medium. Many of the most characteristic features of Deane's orchestration are fully in evidence for the first time in this score: his proclivity for rich, complex textures, his lavish use of percussion and, at times, a rhetorical employment of the brass. Despite the size of the forces employed, however, little use is made of doublings. In its meticulous concern with the minute refinements of orchestral colour, its sound-world suggests an indebtedness to Schoenberg's orchestration in the works of his Expressionist period, as well as certain compositions of Varèse and Boulez, although these influences have been thoroughly assimilated.

The first section of *Enchaînement* is entitled *Dévoilement*, a word that has the literal sense of 'unveiling', but can also be translated as 'disclosure' (one speaks of *le dévoilement d'un mystère*, for example) or even 'revelation', and it references the progressive 'unveiling' of the thematic material, which takes up a considerable proportion of this movement. In the first of two clearly defined parts, the seven melodic fragments on which the entire work is based are presented one at a time on solo wind instruments, which mostly play in medium or low-lying registers. The opening idea is heard on bassoon and double-bassoon, followed by the others on horn, bass clarinet, cor anglais, trombone, tuba and trumpet respectively (Ex. 28). Each of these statements is accompanied by rhythmic patterns (which are organized serially) on a different percussion instrument. This opening paragraph unfolds over a static string texture of sustained notes that grow from a single pedal point in the double basses, a new note being introduced on the appearance of every new thematic idea. When the statement of the seventh idea is completed, this chordal aggregate assumes a foreground prominence. The remaining course of the movement provides an excellent illustration of Deane's individual fusion of minimalist and serial techniques in some of his scores. So far, the movement has proceeded as a serial exposition of the material; from this point it is concerned with the transformation of the chordal aggregate through progressive semitonal alterations. Various instrumental groupings present successions of seven-note chords, swelling slowly from *pianississimo* to *fortissimo*, the next group of instruments entering imperceptibly during the crescendo. This texture continues for fourteen bars, forming a link

3 Deane to author, 23 Feb. 2006

Ex. 28 Enchaînement, I, bars 3–10

♩ = 54

bsn.

mf

f

d. bsn.

p

f *p* *mf* *pp*

into the second part, in which the seven ideas are heard once more, in a much fuller scoring and with more complex orchestral accompaniments. The music slowly rises to a climax in the richly elaborated contrapuntal treatments of the last three of these themes, leading to a brief, but forceful coda, which has a completely unexpected character, consisting of a succession of explosive emphatic chords.

The second section, *Bricolages*, as its title suggests, ‘tinkers about’ with various *bricoles* or ‘bits and pieces’ of motivic fragments from this material. In contrast to the leisurely, seamless unfolding of *Dévoilement*, it falls into eight episodes, which are very sharply contrasted in character and in texture, creating an impression of calculated discontinuity. The first episode compresses the minor third outlined in the opening bar of the first theme to form the basis of hectic, scurrying figurations that pervade the wind and string parts. The second episode, stridently scored for high winds, brass and strings, is based on the contour of two linked thirds together outlining a descent of a ninth, which occurs later in the same theme. The third is much more subdued in character and employs the opening notes of the last theme which outline a minor seventh. The fourth features the second theme on the horns, surrounded by a dense, slowly shifting halo of widely spaced string chords. The fifth employs a motif from the sixth theme, presented in a diaphanous string texture against delicate arabesques in the wind and percussion. The sixth episode consists of pointillistic presentations of a motivic fragment from the third theme, dispersed amongst divided strings playing *col legno*. The seventh is based on superimpositions of the opening four notes of the fifth theme to form sonorous wind and brass chords. The concluding episode presents simultaneous polyrhythmic variants of a motif from the fourth theme that build up to a complex orchestral texture, the voluptuous wash of sound being interrupted several times towards the close by the enigmatic tolling of a gong.

In the third section, *Collages*, Deane presents these thematic ideas simultaneously rather than in succession. According to the composer, this movement was inspired by his experience of the celebrated Basel carnival or *Fasnacht*, which takes place every year shortly after Ash Wednesday and is one of the largest and most elaborate events of its kind in the German-speaking world. A particularly prominent part in the festivities is played by marching bands, some using various regional instruments. One such type of band comprises groups of piccolo players who play a traditional instrument with six holes and six keys to the accompaniment of the Basel drum, a deep-toned instrument without snares. The local drumming style features elaborate embellishments, and requires considerable technical skill. Also participating in the parades are brass ensembles accompanied by a wide selection of percussion instruments, which play what is known as *Guggenmusik*, a riotous, frequently deafening cacophony of discordant tunes. These sonorities are immediately recognizable in Deane’s score. The first thematic idea is presented on two piccolos in a new march-like transformation that functions as an *ostinato*

throughout the movement. Against it, we hear transformations of the other thematic ideas, which are superimposed in an increasingly dense collage. As one might expect, the accompaniment texture is dominated by the percussionists, who play virtuosic drum tattoos punctuated by vigorous gong strokes and cymbal clashes. This ebullient march is broken off unexpectedly and a brief series of piano chords on the brass provides a link into the last section of the score. This has the strangely paradoxical title of *Déchaînement*, which is the antonym of *enchaînement* and has the literal meaning of ‘unchaining’, ‘letting loose’. As a descriptive title, its literal application is apparent, since the movement juxtaposes series of brief gestures which frequently appear to have only the most tenuous of connections, being highly disparate in timbre, register and often in mood. There is no longer any attempt to explore fresh combinations of the thematic material and it is instead subjected to increasing fragmentation to the point where it loses its distinctive contours and individual character, ultimately dissolving into a series of isolated chords, a deconstructive process found elsewhere in Deane’s oeuvre. The movement mostly proceeds in a hushed *pianissimo* and is very delicately scored. It finally dies away into silence, concluding with the tritone A flat — D on the vibraphone, flutes and alto flute — the final note D, according to the composer, representing a musical signature deriving from his forename and surname (Raymond Deane).

In 1984 and 1985, Deane completed in close succession two works for chamber orchestra, *de/montage* and a *Chamber Concertino*. They are very different in nature to *Enchaînement*, belonging to a group of compositions that the composer regards as his more ‘extreme’, and which includes works such as *Inter Pares* and *Fügung*. Here, our concern is with the *Chamber Concertino*. In contrast to *de/montage*, which was based quite strictly on one of the note rows employed in *Triarchia*, the *Chamber Concertino* is considerably freer in its structural organization, being, in the composer’s words, a paradoxical fusion of ‘rigour and mayhem’.⁴ It comprises six linked sections that are played without a break. Considerable emphasis is placed on the exploitation of individual virtuosity throughout: at various junctures, individual players or groups of players are assigned passages of a cadenza-like nature that lend the score a distinctly theatrical quality. Unusually in Deane’s work, the instrumental writing makes much use of extended playing techniques. The first section opens with a *Klangfarbenmelodie* that fans out from the close interval of a semitone to more widely separated pitches. This material is used elsewhere in the work, most prominently in the “*Passacaglia*” fourth movement (the inverted commas are Deane’s). Here, it is slowly transformed into a companion idea that partially outlines a major triad, which is then elaborated into a contrapuntal texture. As this acquires greater dynamism, it is interrupted by a brilliant cadenza-like passage for the woodwinds, in which other members of the ensemble gradually join. The second section elaborates an undulating semitonal motif into a variety of extremely dense polyrhythmic build-ups, with a cadenza for four tuned percussion instruments occurring about two-thirds of the way through. The third section links with the fifth section, being described as ‘IIIa’ and ‘IIIb’ respectively. These are rather more sparsely scored, featuring repeated note ideas that in IIIb form the basis of a brass cadenza employing rapid double-tongued reiterations of the same pitch. An additional link is formed between the two sections through the employment in both of a variety of sounds of indeterminate pitch (such as string pizzicati played above the bridge) or rapidly fluctuating pitch contours (such as horn and trombone *glissandi*). The “*Passacaglia*” movement that comes in between these sections is also partially based on repeated note figures, as is the last movement. In the case of the latter, this material comes into conflict with an emphatic rising motif, which increasingly dominates the texture, building up into a cadenza for harp and strings. In the closing bars, another culmination based on this idea gets underway, but as is so often the case in Deane’s scores, this constructive process is brought to a halt in

4 Deane to author, 13 Apr. 2006

a dramatic dialectical reversal: the repeated note figures introduce themselves insistently once more, forcing the disintegration of this material.

Over the next decade, Deane completed three concertante works (for piano, violin and oboe, respectively). These are his most substantial compositions involving the orchestra during this period and are described in the next section.⁵ His next purely orchestral score was *Dekatriad* for small string orchestra, written in 1995. This came to be written as a result of a commission from the Irish Chamber Orchestra and received its first performance in Limerick the following year under the direction of Fionnuala Hunt. The composer commenced work on it in the autumn of 1995 at the Tyrone Guthrie Centre in Annaghmakerrig, County Monaghan, and completed it in Corfu at an artists' retreat established by Iordanis Arzoglou, I Kourti.

Dekatriad is a piece for which the composer has a special affection, and it undoubtedly represents one of the finest achievements in this phase of his career. It is one continuous movement comprising several linked sections and lasts just under ten minutes. Its title puns on the Greek word for the number 13, the piece being a composition for an ensemble of thirteen solo strings. In this score, we see Deane continuing to explore a vein of playfulness apparent in certain works of the late 1980s such as *Quaternion*. The sound-world of *Dekatriad* has a bright, sunlit quality (adumbrating that of *Concursus*, Deane's most recent concertante work for violin and viola soli and string orchestra) and a decidedly sensuous appeal. Deane displays considerable ingenuity and imaginative flair in his handling of the medium, exploring a wide variety of colourful textual possibilities, from writing in thirteen real parts to combining subsidiary groupings in various ways.

Dekatriad is a rather unusual score in the context of Deane's output as far as the nature of its basic materials is concerned. In his programme note, the composer describes how the work is built from six different types of scale patterns — diatonic major and minor, pentatonic, whole tone, octatonic (alternating tones and semitones) and chromatic. These materials are largely, but not exclusively, presented in a verticalized manner. The atmospheric opening provides a straightforward illustration of this procedure: over seven slow bars, the thirteen string players build up a widely spaced chord containing all the notes of the B flat major scale sounded simultaneously. Elsewhere, however, the nature of the aggregates that Deane derives from this set of scales becomes more complex. The triad of B flat major has a crucial structural significance throughout the work, providing another example of the 'fetish chord' discussed earlier. As we shall see presently, much of the musical drama of the piece centres on the persistent attempts of this sonority to establish its primacy over contending harmonic complexes — a foreshadowing of the considerably more intense harmonic conflicts that dominate the later *Concursus*. This fetish chord of B flat major also establishes a connection with his string quartet work *Embers* written twenty-two years earlier, to which *Dekatriad* in some respects represents a sequel. The former work ends indeterminately on a chord that could be interpreted as a dominant seventh in the key of B flat. According to Deane, the B flat major triads in *Dekatriad* constitute a long-postponed resolution of this chord and he emphasizes that 'the two pieces are closely related, although this may not be immediately obvious'.⁶

Dekatriad falls broadly into three sections, demarcated from one another in the score with double bar lines. It would seem sensible, however, not to attach too much importance to these double bar lines, since the constituent sections are not as self-contained as these typographical divisions might suggest and a listener following the work without a score would not be aware of obvious caesurae. The first

5 He also composed a number of short orchestral works, such as *Alembic* (1992) for wind orchestra and *Epitomes* (1994), a score written for the amateur Dublin Orchestras for Young Players, but since these are essentially occasional pieces, for reasons of space I have not dealt with them here, interesting though they are.

6 Deane to author, 27 Mar. 2006

section, after the opening described above, introduces a buoyant semiquaver idea presented in multiple doublings at other intervals, which, in various transformations, pervades the musical argument of the entire work (see Ex. 29). Initially, this semiquaver idea insistently emphasizes the fetish tonality of B flat, but very soon the primacy of this fetish-chord comes under threat. Subsequent statements of it gravitate towards terminations on other pitches, such as A or A flat, and seem increasingly reluctant to return to B flat. The intrusion of these alien pitches is dramatized by changes in dynamic level or alterations in the texture — a procedure that we will also observe in works such as *Quaternion* and *Concursus*. After oscillating indecisively between A and A flat, a much compromised G minor is established. The music becomes increasingly restless, culminating in a seething *fortissimo* demisemiquaver texture after a series of serried *tremolando* build-ups. After a tense silence, the dramatic tension briefly abates with the introduction of a diaphanously scored pentatonic sonority (having F as bass and containing B flat as a constituent pitch) which is sounded in *pianissimo*. Against this, delicate fragments of the principal theme are heard, which fade slowly into silence.

Ex. 29 Dekatriad, bars 10–13

♩ = 84

The musical score for Ex. 29, Dekatriad, bars 10–13, is presented in two systems. The first system covers bars 10 and 11, and the second system covers bars 12 and 13. The tempo is marked as ♩ = 84. The score is for Violin I, Violin II, Viola, Violoncello, and Double Bass. The key signature is B-flat major (two flats). The time signature changes from 4/4 in bar 10 to 3/4 in bar 11. Dynamics include *sfpp*, *p*, *fpp*, *mp*, and *pp*. The music features a complex texture with multiple doublings of a semiquaver idea.

The second section opens in an agitated mood, introducing new transformations of this idea in a succession of brilliant and energetic textures. The impetuous semiquaver figurations break off briefly during a passage featuring a broad impassioned melody that the composer has described as being ‘almost Bergian’ in character. This passage culminates in an ecstatic fortississimo B flat major six-four chord (with an added C), which is swept aside by the reintroduction of semiquaver movement. The music reaches a climax rather more frenzied in nature than the one that occurred at the end of the first section; this breaks off in a similar rhetorical gesture, introducing another soft, widely spaced chord, this time containing all the pitches of the B flat major scale. This event marks the beginning of the third section, in which the region of B flat begins to assert itself once more. Initially, the textures of this section recall those heard at the opening of the work, but the mood is considerably more relaxed and playful. After some boisterous antiphonal exchanges between the various string sections, a brief lyrical episode featuring expressive viola and violin solos leads to a meditative coda. In this episode, fragments of the principal theme are heard against sustained B flat major triads, which alternate with an A major six-four chord containing an added B, a sonority that also features in the Oboe Concerto. Despite the intermittent intrusion of harsh *sul ponticello* chords into the texture, the stability of the fetish chord seems finally assured until the very last bars, when the B flat in the top voice moves to a B natural that is unexpectedly harmonized with a sonorous G major triad, furnishing a dramatic surprise ending. In Deane’s words, this final chord ‘stands apart from what went before — not a summation as in “proper” tonal music, [but] a dismissal’.⁷ It will be interesting to see if this ambiguous conclusion will provide the starting point for another new work, as the final chord of *Embers* had done.

Ripieno, which was written in 1998–99, is one of the most significant recent contributions by an Irish composer to the national orchestral literature. This work was first performed in the National Concert Hall, Dublin, on 14 April 2000, by the National Symphony Orchestra of Ireland under the baton of Colman Pearce, to whom the work is dedicated. It is scored for a large symphony orchestra and is in four movements, which have a combined duration of approximately thirty minutes. The score attests to Deane’s continuing fascination with the expressive possibilities afforded by a large symphony orchestra, a medium to which his talents seem particularly well suited in view of his love of rich instrumental timbres and the dramatic qualities that have come increasingly to the fore in his scores since the late 1980s onwards.

As is nearly always the case with Deane’s works, the title was chosen for its suggestiveness. The term *ripieno* was used to denote the *tutti* (or *concerto grosso*) in orchestral music of the Baroque period, particularly in the concerto repertory. In view of the fact that the work makes considerable demands on the collective virtuosity of the players, Deane wanted to avoid calling it ‘Concerto for Orchestra’, however, and eventually settled on *Ripieno* because, in his words, it ‘suggested a concerto without the concertante, so to speak’.⁸ The title thus draws attention to the handling of the orchestra in *Ripieno*, which frequently highlights sections of players and represents a further exploration of what Deane has called the ‘individual/collective dialectic’ embodied in his concertante works.

The more literal significance of the Italian word is also relevant. *Ripieno*, which in everyday speech simply means ‘filled’, calls to mind its cognates *pieno* (‘full’) and *pienezza* (‘fullness’). A quest for creative ‘fullness’, what he himself has termed ‘plenitude’, has become increasingly important for Deane. As he sees it, one of the most important tasks for a composer of his temperament and philosophical orientation in the uncertain spiritual condition of postmodernity is to discover whether it is possible to reclaim ‘an

7 From the liner notes written by the composer for the commercial recording of the work released in 1998 by Black Box Music on the disc *Strings A-stray: Contemporary Works for Strings* (BBM1013). There is a misprint in this sentence as it appears in the note: the second ‘not’ should read ‘but’.

8 Deane to author, 4 Apr. 2006

aesthetic of plenitude rather than poverty, “maximalism” rather than minimalism, without falling into nostalgia and reaction’.⁹ In its sensuousness and exuberant vitality, *Ripieno* may represent a response to a fundamental dilemma memorably articulated by Adorno, namely, whether it is still possible at this historical juncture to compose music which conveys a sense of inner plenitude and well-being, which exults in beauty of sound and which, by implication, embodies at least a partially affirmative response to existence, even if, as is the case here and with most of Deane’s other work, that response is often highly ambiguous and seems fraught with risk.¹⁰ Deane’s reformulation of this dilemma implicitly challenges interpretations of Adorno’s writings, which might be regarded as excessively proscriptive of artistic freedoms. *Ripieno* should therefore be regarded as a courageous attempt to compose out of this spirit of aesthetic ‘maximalism’ and offers important clues to understanding aesthetic preoccupations that inform the most recent stages of Deane’s creative enterprise.

In view of the fact that *Ripieno* is an extended four-movement structure, the question naturally arises whether it is in fact a symphony in all but name; Deane has categorically rejected this view of the work, however.¹¹ In the first place, he was anxious to avoid the complex of historical associations that the designation ‘symphony’ evokes, together with certain expectations that the term might arouse in the listener. (He also dislikes the employment of the word ‘movement’ to describe the discrete sections of *Ripieno*, though it is used here for want of any more convenient term.) Like many other contemporary composers, Deane prefers to draw attention to his continued search for new means of expression by choosing titles that emphasize the novelty and singularity of these means, a preference that tends to preclude the employment of conventional generic descriptions. He harbours misgivings about the utility and relevance of the term ‘symphony’ — a compositional construct that was intimately bound up with tonality — when composers have not only abandoned tonality and the forms to which it gave rise, but have also been forced to question an entire world view based on notions of teleology, progress and stability, which the symphony was perceived to embody. Several eminent composers writing in recent decades have continued to write symphonies in spite of such widely expressed reservations — Lutoslawski, Henze, Maxwell Davies, Panufnik and Robert Simpson amongst them — but Deane evidently does not see any compelling reason to employ the term himself. At the same time, *Ripieno* evinces indebtedness to the Austro-German symphonic tradition, particularly in Deane’s techniques of developing variation and his evident concern with motivic and thematic integration. A closer examination of the work also suggests that at certain points Deane makes ironic, subversive references to traditional symphonic conventions.

An interesting illustration of this is afforded by the opening of the first movement, which Deane describes as a ‘false introduction’, comparable to the unsettling ‘false endings’ frequently encountered in his work. This quiet, brooding opening, replete with various pregnant gestures that recall the slow introductions to the first movements of various late-nineteenth and twentieth century symphonies (he conceives the dark, slow-moving cello and double bass counterpoints to be ‘almost Shostakovichian’), serves, in Deane’s words, ‘to lure the unwary listener into a world from which he or she might normally feel excluded’.¹² As the movement unfolds, it becomes clear that it has in fact commenced with a direct statement of one of its principal thematic ideas, without a preamble of any kind. This theme, first heard on two flutes and alto flute, is shown in Ex. 30. The distinctive chordal structures that occur in the course of its presentation are as important as the motivic contours of the top line, both elements being used extensively throughout the movement. As can be seen from Ex. 30, this material employs

9 Deane to author, 5 Mar. 2006

10 See T. W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor (Chicago, 1998).

11 Deane to author, 11 Feb. 2006

12 Deane to author, 5 Mar. 2006

Ex. 30 Ripieno, I, opening

Flute

Alto Flute

$\text{♩} = 69$

pp *mp* *pp* *mf*

pp *mp* *pp* *mf*

pp *f* *pp* *mp* *p* *pp* *mp* *pp*

pp *f* *pp* *mp* *p* *pp* *mp* *pp*

all twelve notes of the chromatic scale in fairly close succession, establishing the dense harmonic language that is an integral part of Ripieno's sound-world. It is promptly restated at the same pitch in richer scoring. Next, over a low E in the bass, several prominent three-note chords contained in this idea are progressively superimposed to form a new twelve-note chromatic chord, presented in a sumptuous orchestration. This harmonic entity, which the composer refers to as the 'golden chord' on account of its distinctive sonority, recurs at structurally important junctures throughout the work and furnishes a further example of Deane's characteristic 'fetish chords'. On its first appearance here, its sonority intensifies in a surging crescendo, before breaking off to allow a new motif *x* to make its entrance in the bass under high-lying *tremolando* strings (see Ex. 31). The character of this figure, with its forceful scoring and pounding rhythms, offers a dramatic contrast to the lyrical, intimate material heard previously. The opening 'chorale' idea is restated once more in imitative counterpoint, to the accompaniment of polyrhythmic violin *tremolandi*. The mood of the music becomes more animated, and after a seamless transition to a more rapid tempo, assumes the character of a *moto perpetuo* with the introduction of a semiquaver idea first heard in a vigorous *détaché* in the strings. This *moto perpetuo* turns out to be formed from a horizontal redistribution of the constituent notes of the first two chords of the chorale theme, structured according to a rhythmic pattern initially derived from a magic square.

Over the next sixty bars, it is developed with great brilliance and energy, creating a vivid sense of impetuous forward momentum. After a feverish paragraph featuring an elaborate contrapuntal development of motif *x*, a climax is reached with the reintroduction of the 'golden chord'. As the bass falls in semitones from E to D, this yields to burnished pandiatonic sonority formed from all the pitches of the C major scale, with radiant high trumpets and brilliant woodwind trills. This climax, incidentally, occurs roughly at a juncture corresponding with the larger component of a golden section. It quickly subsides and the remainder of the movement is given over to a highly condensed restatement of the opening chorale (heard, after the preceding tumult, on celesta and solo strings) followed by a further boisterous development of the semiquaver *ostinato* figure, bringing the movement to a breathless conclusion.

Ex. 31 Ripieno, I, bars 22–24

Deane has described the second movement as a kind of intermezzo, which is undoubtedly an apt description of its character. For the most part, it proceeds at a subdued dynamic level, rising briefly on two occasions to *forte* climaxes, which quickly subside. The scoring throughout is of an exquisite refinement and delicacy, being often pointillistic in nature. It presents considerable challenges to the conductor and performers, requiring the utmost sensitivity to balance, tone colour and phrasing. The structure of the movement is simple in outline, though highly subtle in detail. In the opening paragraph, wind instruments present a series of plaintive melodic fragments against varied accompaniments on divided strings slowly coalescing into longer phrases. This material, which bears some resemblance to the principal theme of the first movement of the Concerto for Oboe and Orchestra, generates harmonic aggregates through superimposition of its constituent pitches, the intervallic construction largely determining the harmonic organization of much of what follows. Flowing demisemiquaver figures slowly insinuate themselves into the texture, which presently come to constitute important thematic material in their own right. These two ideas undergo simultaneous contrapuntal development, giving rise to textures of considerable complexity; but these never become turbid, since the composer takes the utmost care to ensure clarity through scrupulous attention to details of scoring and orchestral balance. After this, the two ideas are once more presented separately and the demisemiquaver figure is allowed to unfold more fully into extended wind and percussion arabesques. A climax is reached, marked by the recurrence of variants of the ‘golden chord’, with E once again in the bass. The final third of the movement follows the structure of the opening paragraphs, presenting the material against somewhat more activated accompaniments, which feature repeated-note figures. The music rises to an emphatic statement of one of the principal motifs featuring the note E. This intensity is quickly dissipated and the movement closes enigmatically, with short fragments of motifs from a figure used to accompany the opening idea petering out into silence.

The third movement has the character of a demonic scherzo not found elsewhere in Deane’s work, memorable for the arresting brilliance of its scoring and for its implacable driving momentum. This has a five-part structure, though as always with Deane, the boundaries between the various sections are fluid. It opens with dramatic flourishes employing rapid swirling wind and string figurations, followed by a series of explosive, irregularly spaced chords. A closer examination of the score reveals that these ideas are constructed fairly consistently out of juxtaposed major and minor thirds — a feature that prefigures similar procedures in Deane’s next orchestral work, *Samara*. A subsidiary idea in fourths of a radically different character is fleetingly introduced by the piano and pitched percussion (here, marimba, vibraphone and tubular bells), which form a distinctive composite sonority within the orchestral texture that the composer has humorously described as sounding like an ‘infernal gamelan’. This group features prominently in a contrasting section (in a somewhat slower tempo) in which it presents a new idea in peeling consecutive fourths. At this point, the material of the A section recurs,

but the restatement has a freely developmental character, incorporating motifs from the B section. The second B section culminates in a powerful climax featuring another pandiatonic variant of the golden chord, this time featuring all the notes of the Phrygian mode from E to E. The final return of the A section rises to an impressive pitch of delirious frenzy, concluding with a furious outburst from the ‘infernally gamelan’ of piano and the tuned percussion.

The last movement of *Ripieno*, which lasts almost thirteen minutes, undoubtedly constitutes the work’s emotional core. The composer has described it as a ‘kind of passacaglia’, which is based on a sequence of fourteen pitches announced by the harp and celesta at the very outset. These pitches are derived from the opening of the first movement.¹³ The passacaglia itself comprises fourteen variations, each of which uses one of these pitches (in order of appearance) as a fulcrum. The movement is predominantly sombre and intense in mood, rising at times to impressive rhetorical heights. The variations are organized in an arc of surging textural and emotional intensity. Those at the opening are lightly scored and generally muted in character. Later variations introduce more flowing movement and have a sense of greater urgency. As the movement proceeds, the music acquires a sinister, brooding quality that has led the composer to remark,

Overall the piece strongly suggests some kind of narrative. (However, the narrative is non-specific and anti-realistic!) When I hear it now I think of Yeats’s line about the beast slouching towards Bethlehem to be born — although in this case it slouches only to vanish into the ether (perhaps among the stars as a constellation). It has a ‘Leviathanic’ quality, I believe.¹⁴

And yet the radiant final pages of the score seem to suggest a transcendence of the intense conflicts that preceded them, as the searing harmonies of the last climax close at last onto a shimmering final chord in trills containing the notes C, D and A – a sonority that explicitly recalls a passage in the first movement. At the close, this chord seems to evaporate: the instruments drop out one by one, leaving at last only the scarcely audible tintinnabulation of the celesta which in turn dies away into silence, a wholly unexpected conclusion to a deeply elusive and intriguing movement.

Deane’s most recent orchestral work, *Samara*, is strikingly different in character to its predecessor and suggests that his style may be undergoing further change. This score, composed between April and July 2005, is dedicated to the conductor Gerhard Markson and the members of the National Symphony Orchestra of Ireland. A ‘samara’ is a botanical term, used to describe the dry winged seeds of certain trees such as the ash, the elm and the maple, which can become airborne and are easily disseminated by the wind. According to the composer, samara suggested ‘certain musical figures evoking a seed’s flight’, but as he worked on the score, the title acquired a wider range of symbolic references for him, most importantly ‘to the transmission and transformation of generative musical ideas through history, through my own output (there are references to a number of earlier works), and through the piece itself’. From this account, it seems clear that the composer came to see his score (which evolves ‘organically’ from a single ‘seed’, the interval of a third) as a metaphorical representation of the creative process. When composers set to work on a new piece, the nature of their initial idea for it, the ‘seed’ out of which the work grows, determines the ultimate character of the score, but a variety of intangible factors also play an equally important role in shaping the finished score. Its exact nature will always be unpredictable and one can no more infer from a composer’s first ideas what form a work will take anymore than one can foretell how exactly a tree will grow to maturity from a seed. Moreover, a

¹³ Deane to author, 5 Mar. 2006

¹⁴ Deane to author, 5 Mar. 2006

composer may find that a completed work carries within it the seeds of new works — in Deane’s case, for example, *Dekatriad* evolved from *Embers* — or that a nexus of related thematic ideas proves capable of generating a number of different works over a period of time. Deane symbolizes these processes in *Samara* through conscious cross references to previous compositions (the Oboe Concerto and his Violin Concerto amongst them). In a very literal sense then, *Samara* is a self-reflexive score, pointedly drawing attention to its *facture*.

Another important imaginative stimulus to the composition of *Samara* was provided by the piano music of one of Deane’s favourite composers, Aleksandr Skryabin. Deane has a particular fondness for Skryabin’s tenth piano sonata, which he used to play in his youth and still regards as one of the most original and inventive of the Russian composer’s works. When he started to compose *Samara*, Deane recalled Skryabin’s celebrated remarks about this work to his friend Leonid Sabaneev in the course of a conversation on the subject of his responses to nature:

Insects, butterflies, moths — of course, these are revived flowers. They are the most subtle caresses ... one scarcely feels their touch ... They were all born in the sun. And the sun feeds them. This caress of the sun — it is the dearest thing of all to me — hence, my tenth sonata ... it is an entire sonata of insects ... they are the kisses of the sun.¹⁵

This description evokes the airy, luminous textures of the work, pervaded by shimmering trills and arabesques that seem like an impressionistic depiction of these delicate insects in flight. The sonorities of *Samara*, which are of a kind unique in Deane’s compositions, undoubtedly seem to owe something to the sensuous sound-world of this Skryabin sonata. Its strenuous climax also prompted the idea that the delicate opening material of *Samara* would be transformed in the course of the work to culminate dramatically in what Deane has described as ‘an explosion of fanfares’.¹⁶ In his programme note, he explains that the thematic ideas for the work evolved from his conscious intention ‘to foreground major and minor thirds (exploring both the consonant and dissonant possibilities of their combination)’ — sonorities with which he had previously experimented in the third movement of *Ripieno*. ‘Other musical ideas’, he writes, ‘accrued in the process of composition: the opening linear music which recurs like a refrain, a repeated chord in the brass, repetitive drum rhythms derived from Arabic music, and an extrovert melody employing all twelve notes of the [chromatic] scale.’¹⁷

Samara opens in a mood of rapt serenity with the leisurely unfolding in *pianissimo* of an ethereal contrapuntal texture scored for muted strings and winds (see Ex. 32). Initially, this is essentially in two parts, but the texture is enriched by other voices, which sustain notes that occur in the course of the various lines. A closer examination reveals that each strand of the counterpoint tends to employ distinct sets of intervallic patterns and rhythmic durations confined to that voice alone. Thus, in the first few bars, the first violin part (which is partially doubled on celesta, harp, flute, vibraphone, oboe and clarinet) is constructed exclusively from the intervals of a major second, major third and perfect fourth and durations of one, three and six quavers; the second violin part, on the other hand, features semitones, minor thirds and tritones and uses rhythmic values of two, four and five quavers. (Characteristically, Deane’s employment of this technique is not systematic, however.) This material

15 Leonid Leonidovich Sabaneev, *Vospominaniya o Skryabinye* (Moscow, 2003), 271, translation by the author from the original: Насекомые, бабочки, мотыльки – ведь это ожившие цветы. Это тончайшие ласки. Почти без прикосновения ... Они все родились в солнце. И солнце их питает. Эта солнечная ласка, – самая близкая мне – вот, в Десятой сонате ... Это вся соната из насекомых ...

16 Deane’s programme note written for the first performance of the work by the National Symphony of Ireland, 18 Nov. 2005

17 Deane, *Samara* programme note

Ex. 32 Samara, opening

[vln1 + other instruments]

[vln2 + other instruments] *pp*

recurs throughout *Samara* and functions as a kind of ritornello. On its subsequent reappearances, it is extensively recast: its constituent motifs are presented in inverted or retrograde form (see, for example, the passage beginning in bar 152) and are often radically reordered. Two other important ideas are introduced after this opening statement: a six-note chord played by the brass, which is repeated in diminishing note values in a surging crescendo, and a woodwind arabesque, one of the musical figures depicting the samara in flight. The next paragraph restates this material in a much expanded form, subjecting it to the sort of constructive processes characteristic of his work as a whole. It is worth noting in passing that the pitch E flat, the importance of which becomes more apparent later, is emphasized prominently in the restatement of the contrapuntal idea. The restatements of the rhythmic figure in the brass become more agitated and the passage culminates in an elaboration of the woodwind arabesques into a diaphanous orchestral texture, which might evoke a warm Mediterranean breeze. This dies away, merging into a very brief restatement of the opening material, which acts as a link to a contrasting new section. Oboes and clarinets break in with an exotic, sinuous melody played in strident unison that suggests a stylized evocation of Middle Eastern folk music and features alternating time signatures of two-four and five-eight. This theme has markedly similar contours to the woodwind arabesque heard previously. Although the melody itself is entirely Deane's invention, the accompanying figurations in the percussion employ one of the traditional drumming patterns (*iqā'at*) of Arab music, the so-called *aqsaaq al-ifraanjii*. (This thematic idea, incidentally, sounds all twelve pitches of the chromatic scale, and a modified form of it is later used to generate a note row, which serves as a partial harmonic basis for a passage occurring during the main climax of the piece.) The new theme is promptly restated and a freely developmental episode ensues during which it is juxtaposed with earlier material. This rises to an energetic climax culminating on a forceful unison G that subsides in a rapid *diminuendo* and serves as a point of melodic departure for what follows.

The next section (running from rehearsal letters H to J in the score) presents a highly modified restatement of the initial contrapuntal material, combining it with new variants of the woodwind arabesques and the repeated chordal figures in orchestral textures of considerable complexity. The reintroduction of the 'Arab' melody prompts a feeling of mounting excitement and animation. Its undulating ornaments are echoed in diminution and form the basis of hectic, baying fanfares in the brass, which come to dominate the orchestral texture. This passage rises to a frenzied climax of great brilliance and urgency, which collapses abruptly and unexpectedly. In the final section of the work, which has the character of a lengthy epilogue, motifs from the principal thematic ideas are reviewed once more against a soft, static accompaniment. Gently pulsating rhythmic figures in the brass

culminate in a fleeting moment of intensity, sounding against a widely spaced chord in divided strings containing all twelve notes of the chromatic scale. The closing bars of the score create a curious feeling of timelessness, as the alto flute and cor anglais repeatedly intone plaintive melodic fragments. These eventually fade into silence against a quiet rising violin cantilena quoting the opening material, which closes onto a perfect fifth containing the notes E flat and B flat on which there had been much emphasis earlier in the work. It too dies away, leaving only a mysterious sound evocative of the wind, which is produced by the flute players, who are directed to blow across the mouthpiece of their instruments without producing a precise pitch. In the composer's words, 'finally, all seeds dispersed, only the wind remains'.

4 Concertante Works

To date, Raymond Deane has composed six concertante works. The earliest of these, *Compact*, for piano and orchestra, was written in 1975, during a comparatively early phase in his career. The second, *Quaternion*, also for piano and orchestra, was composed in 1988, by which time Deane's idiom had changed considerably, though maintaining clear continuities with his previous work. In particular, one has the impression of a retreat from the intense abstraction of some of the works written during the 1970s and early 1980s in favour of direct expression, in which lyrical, sensuous and dramatic (if not overtly theatrical) elements increasingly come to the fore. This stylistic shift can perhaps best be understood as a transition to a more hybrid postmodernist manner, which retains pronounced modernist traits but draws inspiration from a rich plurality of styles both past and present. In this respect, *Quaternion* represents a significant transitional work in the context of Deane's output as a whole.

The Concerto for Oboe and Orchestra, completed in 1994, belongs to a group of major works written in the mid- to late 1990s that includes the opera *The Wall of Cloud* and the orchestral *Ripieno*, which undoubtedly represent a creative high point in Deane's career. These compositions evince a renewed creative vigour, a fresh authoritativeness of personal voice arising from his stylistic self-renewal during the late 1980s and early 1990s. They are notable, above all, for their spontaneity and imaginative exuberance, as well as their evident concern with achieving an increased refinement of craftsmanship. The Oboe Concerto and the two concertos written subsequently constitute a striking study in contrasting approaches. If one's predominant impression of the Oboe Concerto, despite its not infrequent moments of chamber-like intimacy, is one of concentrated dramatic intensity and powerful rhetorical sweep, the Violin Concerto (2003) reveals a more playful side to Deane's creative personality, exploring a vein of elegant irony in its flamboyant instrumental virtuosity. *Concursus* (2004), a concertante work for violin, viola, double string ensemble and double bass, which would seem to owe something to eighteenth-century models such as the concerto grosso, makes a wholly different effect again in its brusque alternations of searing lyricism and daemonic rhythmic energy.

Compact, for piano and small orchestra, was composed between March and September of 1975 and was first heard in a broadcast performance on RTÉ radio in which the soloist was the Irish pianist Anthony Byrne. This score was a remarkable achievement for a twenty-two-year-old and represents a striking technical advance in almost every respect on his earlier compositions. The piano writing is thoroughly expert, demanding a sustained level of virtuosity, which is no doubt a reflection of the

composer's own considerable pianistic abilities. Even more impressive, however, in view of his youth and inexperience, is the assurance of Deane's handling of the orchestra. Considered from a stylistic and technical vantage point, the score achieves an unprecedented consistency of harmonic language and sound-world, opening up new and highly fruitful creative possibilities, which the composer was to explore over the next decade. It is perhaps the first orchestral work in which all the distinctive characteristics of Deane's musical personality are fully in evidence, particularly his fondness for pronounced gestural contrasts and his ear for instrumental colour. Like many of his early scores, it is often highly complex in detail, but one's predominant impression, notwithstanding the work's challenging musical language, is of an overriding concern with dramatic immediacy rather than with abstract, purely technical considerations.

Compact, one continuous movement lasting about ten minutes, can thus be understood as referring to the highly compact nature of the work's design and also to the musical 'compact' (in the archaic sense of an agreement or contract) into which the soloist and the orchestra enter. The work falls into three linked sections, followed by a brief epilogue or coda. While there is no literal repetition of material at any point, the outer sections are clearly related in tempo and employ variants of the same musical ideas. A contrasting slower middle section is quite different in character and mood, introducing a new figure, which is taken up once more in the coda. The first of these sections opens with a lyrical motif in closely intertwined two-part counterpoint featuring supple polyrhythms, first heard on the flute and alto flute (see Ex. 33). This idea makes use of eleven of the twelve notes of the chromatic scale (with the omission of C sharp) sounded in very close succession, introducing the characteristically dense harmonic sound-world, which is to be a constant throughout the score. The two voices begin a semitone apart and, after pursuing a common rising trajectory, close onto a sustained major seventh — an interval which comes to assume great textural prominence and is pointed on its first appearance by the accompaniment of a soft *tremolo* on the vibraphone. The opening melody is now restated, at first on oboe and clarinet (commencing on the previously omitted C sharp) and subsequently on alto flute and clarinet and a pair of muted trumpets. These are interrupted by fragmentary, but violent injections from the solo piano, featuring swirling *arpeggio* figurations and far-flung emphatic leaps. The presentations of these ideas continue to employ most or all of the twelve notes of the chromatic scale, but make consistent use of these in fixed registers, so that they do not occur in octave transpositions, a principle of cardinal importance in the work's underlying harmonic organization.

Ex. 33 *Compact*, opening

The musical score for the opening of 'Compact' is presented in two staves: Flute and Alto Flute. The tempo is indicated as quarter note = 54. The Flute part begins with a triplet of eighth notes, followed by a series of eighth notes with a '5' marking, and ends with a triplet. The Alto Flute part starts with a triplet of eighth notes, followed by a series of eighth notes with a '3' marking, and ends with a triplet. Both parts are marked 'p' (piano). The Flute part also includes the instruction '(non cresc.)' and the Alto Flute part includes '[at pitch]'.

The spare textures of this understated opening provide little hint of what is to come. The orchestra unexpectedly erupts into feverish activity with hectic repeated-note figures pulsating irregularly in the brass and strings, this activity breaking off as unexpectedly as it began to make way for a cadenza in the

solo piano. This opens with impetuous abandon, featuring explosive successions of chords in widely separated registers and arpeggiated figures ranging over the entire compass (see Ex. 34). Deane's writing for the instrument at this point may owe something to the example of Berio's *Sequenza IV*, although some of the sonorities — such as the flammiferous trills — and the mood of nervous volatility are almost reminiscent of the late piano works of Scriabin. These spasmodic gestures are interrupted at various points by lengthily sustained augmented triads played *pianissimo* in contrasting registers, a completely unexpected sonority that obtrudes in the present context with weirdly disconcerting effect.¹ Their sonority is abruptly dispelled by a final ferocious outburst that signals the re-entrance of the orchestra.

Ex. 34 Compact, bar 22

The scoring of the next paragraph has a curiously hallucinatory quality. It opens with mysterious figurations in the cellos, double basses, bass clarinet and bassoon, which scurry past in a frenetic *pianissimo* underneath high-pitched clashing inverted pedals and brilliant skirling figurations in the upper woodwinds and strings. Although some of these new ideas clearly derive from the opening lyrical motif, the progress of the musical argument becomes quite elusive from this point onwards. The listener's attention is now increasingly drawn to a series of complex musical gestures, which

¹ This succession of chords forms the entire harmonic basis for Deane's recent *Marthiya* for string trio.

succeed one another in a seemingly surreal fashion with a dream-like logic of their own, rather than to individual lines. In this process, a concern with texture and instrumental colour comes to predominate over that of contriving readily discernible motivic or thematic connections. Such connections as there are appear to be generated by a process of what one might term motivic free association, in which each contour evolves spontaneously either in response or reaction to its predecessor.

The impetus of this paragraph is interrupted briefly once more by a succession of static augmented triads in the orchestra (such as were previously heard in the piano cadenza) before it resumes its headlong course. The centre of gravity of the orchestral texture shifts suddenly to highest treble. For the next ten bars, the piano presents a glittering succession of roulades and *glissandi*, which career vertiginously across the instrument's upper compass. Additional complex tracery is contributed by the celesta and xylophone, while the winds and brass articulate short melodic fragments in explosive *crescendi*. The upper strings provide a shimmering accompaniment of superimposed augmented triads, at first played in harmonics and later in massed trills, integrating this previously alien element into the texture. The mood throughout is a heady fusion of voluptuous eroticism and latent violence — a mounting frenzy of delirium. In a dramatic gesture, the piano plunges abruptly into the bass only to recommence an ascent into the treble, rising in a slow crescendo of writhing figurations against frantic diminutions of the opening motif in the strings. The passage culminates in a furious sustained chordal *tremolando* for the pianist, who goes on to present a further dramatically intensified statement of the same motif before a sudden silence that signals the commencement of the slower middle section of the piece, which affords a measure of dramatic and textural relief. Two new ideas are introduced, one featuring hypnotic repetitions of a single pitch and a two-note figure, which crescendos from *pianissimo* to an abrupt *sforzando* termination. They are first presented on harp and solo woodwinds, before being passed over to the brass choir. The solo piano enters about halfway through, presenting material reminiscent of that heard in its opening cadenza. It fails to galvanize the orchestra into renewed activity, however, and the passage closes with a wan restatement of the earlier ideas by the percussion section. In one of the swift changes of mood so characteristic of this score, the brass unexpectedly breaks in on this reverie with energetic syncopated figures, once more rousing the music to life. The last section of the score presents a varied reprise of material heard in the first section, the scoring heightened to a new brilliance with energetic brass fanfares and the evocative tolling of tubular bells. The vaulting leaps and forceful chordal writing in the piano culminate in a chordal *tremolo* before narrowing into to a single repeated treble G sharp. Two strident flutter-tongued chords in the winds mount to an explosive crescendo, ushering in a second piano cadenza. This recasts many of the gestures heard in the first cadenza, but with the significant alteration that it is only once interrupted by a dissonant superimposition of two augmented triads, suggesting that this material has now been assimilated thoroughly and has lost its quality of otherness. With the re-entry of the orchestra, the score becomes a swirling tumult of rapid scales in the upper winds and exuberant *glissandi* in the harp and violins. A series of stuttering fanfares in the brass rises to an ecstatic ten-note chord sustained by the entire orchestra, coinciding with the crashing stroke of a tam-tam. As this wash of sound dies away, ethereal pulsating chords on the piano, celesta, harp and vibraphone become audible in faintest *pianissimo* and quickly die away in enigmatic silence — a completely unexpected denouement to the concentrated drama of the preceding ten minutes.

Despite being composed for similar forces as *Compact*, with a solo piano part pitted once more against a slightly reduced standard symphony orchestra, Deane's next concertante work, *Quaternion*, differs radically in almost every other respect from its predecessor. The word 'quaternion' is a mathematical term (coined by Sir William Rowan Hamilton (1805–65), an Irish mathematician who devoted much of his later career to the study of quaternions), which the *Oxford English Dictionary* defines as meaning

‘a set of four’ or ‘an operator that changes one vector into another and depends on four geometrical elements’. While this unusual title was undoubtedly chosen partially on account of its verbal euphony and partially as a conveniently apt, yet novel designation for a concertante work in four movements that would enable Deane to avoid the historical associations of the word ‘concerto’, it also calls attention to abstract, purely musical concerns that inform the score’s overall design. In each of the movements of *Quaternion*, Deane explores a different type of relationship between keyboard and orchestra, all of which emphasize their apparent mutual disparity, if not outright incompatibility. In the first movement, the pianist and the orchestra alternate statements and developments of shared musical material, but maintain a strict separateness, never playing together at any point. The sonority of the piano is absent altogether from the intimate, lyrical slow movement, which is dominated largely by the orchestra; the pianist relinquishes his instrument to play an elaborate celesta part, which is introduced during the closing section (a strategy of displacement that anticipates the usurpation of the soloist’s role in the Oboe Concerto by a soprano saxophone). In the third movement, it is the orchestra’s turn to fall silent after the soloist returns to the piano. The material here presents a pointedly contrasted sound-world characterized by driving motoric rhythms, abrupt changes of dynamics and brittle textures. On one level, the enigmatic finale brings about a dramatic dialectical reversal of the antagonistic relationships that have prevailed heretofore, moving to the opposite extreme in which soloist and orchestra simultaneously play a succession of slow chords that mostly proceed in exact rhythmic unison (apart from a few bars during the brief central climax). This reconciliation is only apparent, however, and at another level separateness is still rigidly maintained, as the successions of chords allotted to soloist and orchestra pursue opposite trajectories of pitch: the chords in the piano move from an extremely low to an extremely high register while the chords in the orchestra proceed in the reverse direction, forming an overall chiasmic design.

From a stylistic point of view, the chiselled simplicity of *Quaternion*’s musical language offers an arresting contrast to that of its predecessor. The piano writing, though still quite taxing, largely eschews the extravagant pyrotechnics and glittering colouristic effects of the earlier score in favour of simpler linear or contrapuntal writing. The orchestral scoring is similarly notable for its chamber-like delicacy and transparency, employing for the most part spare textures and unblended instrumental colours rather than the complex pointillistic and post-Impressionist effects of *Compact*. Deane’s deployment of the orchestral forces is in fact characterized by an exceptional restraint, since only two brief *tutti* passages occur in the course of the entire work. As can be imagined, it is consequently very different in sonority to the unabashedly sensuous, almost hedonistic sound-world of the earlier score. A similar restraint is evident with regard to the work’s rhythmic language: the exuberant polyrhythmic writing of *Compact*, which at times approaches the intricacy of rhythmic construction characteristic of New Complexity, is replaced here by simpler metrical organizations tending on the whole towards greater regularity. Within these self-imposed creative parameters, Deane nonetheless manages to achieve a remarkably variety of mood, with each of the differing relationships between keyboard and orchestra described above resulting in a distinctive sound-world for each movement.

The musical argument of the first movement is a taut working out of two contrasting ideas shown in Ex. 35 — a brief *nota cambiata* motif *x* announced at the very opening by the piano; and the interval of a major second, marked *y*, which is introduced prominently as an isolated entity a few bars later in bar 6. During the opening antiphonal exchanges between piano and orchestra, a rigid segmentation of pitch is observed in the presentation of these materials; the *cambiata* idea is stated with an exclusive employment of the pitches C, D, E, F sharp, G, A, B flat and B natural, while the major second recurs consistently on the pitches D flat and E flat. (It should be noted in passing that the two pitches of the chromatic scale that do not form part of these sets — F natural and G sharp — are employed much less

Ex. 35 Quaternalion, I, opening

♩ = 64

mp, legato, sec.

obs.

bsns.

mp

vib.

ppp

hp.

pp

8va

prominently throughout the movement. Although the *cambiata* set later expands to take in the latter pitch, F natural, for reasons that will be explained later, is scarcely featured at all.)

The contrast between these two ideas is further dramatized by means of instrumental timbre. In its orchestral presentations, the D flat/E flat major second is always scored in a manner that emphasizes its unexpected intrusion into the texture, leading the listener to experience it as something alien to its immediate surroundings. In the opening paragraph, it makes its first appearance on the harp and vibraphone, next as a widely spaced diaphanous chord played *piano* by muted strings and is finally sounded as a pungently scored *fortissimo* chord featuring woodwind flutter-tonguing and *tremolandi* in the strings and xylophone. At first, this idea is absent from the initial statements assigned to the piano, which confine themselves to presenting the *cambiata* material; but after this *fortissimo* orchestral outburst, it slowly begins to insinuate itself into the piano textures as well, where it continues to function as an agent of disruption. Its quality of ‘otherness’ is preserved, as it is first sounded in the extreme bass and treble registers of the instrument, before developing into a darting semiquaver figuration which cuts across the legato presentations of the *cambiata* figure and its derivatives.

This marks the beginning of a conflict in which the two ideas compete for primacy. The next orchestral statement culminates in an eight-note chord containing all the pitches sounded during the original statement of the *cambiata* motif. The piano counters by presenting a spiky *fortissimo* version of the same material in hectic diminutions in which the destabilization caused by the alien pitches becomes more extreme. These scurrying figurations are taken over by the orchestra, before being brought abruptly to a halt by a stentorian interjection from the piano, consisting of the first three pitches of the *cambiata* motif sounded in slow note values in a sonorous bass register. Significantly, it is unable to complete the statement, the last note being assigned to the orchestra. The next statement of the motif on the piano is calmer, but is still disturbed by the incursion of the D flat/E flat major second. After a brief series of *tutti fortissimo* chords, the piano, in a dramatic rhetorical flourish, attempts to reassert the pitches of the *cambiata* material in unadulterated form in brilliant cascades of simultaneous double-note figurations progressing in opposite directions. After a tense silence, a final cadence follows in the harp and tubular bells, which concludes in another major second, C and D natural — an ambiguous gesture, since the distinctive sonority of the major second is retained, but it is formed from notes of the *cambiata* pitch set, so that outcome of the preceding conflict remains uncertain.

The next movement is an essay in serene diatonic lyricism of a kind unique in Deane's output. Opening in a hushed *piano*, wind and strings introduce motivic fragments of material generated from the pitches of an A flat major scale against the mysterious tolling of six tuned gongs (the rhythmic organization of which displays features of serial organization). These fragments slowly coalesce into a long-breathed melody given to the glockenspiel and piccolo against an accompaniment of widely spaced held A flats in the strings and delicate, fleeting interjections from the harp, tuba and double bassoon. From this point onwards, the movement acquires the character of a set of developing variations. The melody is restated on solo trumpet and marimba before being presented shortly afterwards in two simultaneous canonic treatments: one close canon at a beat intoned by a quartet of wind instruments, saxophone, bass clarinet, bassoon and double bassoon, another at four beats' distance on muted cellos and double basses. In the background, multi-divided violins and violas provide a shimmering accompaniment of soft chords played in trills. The music remains limpidly diatonic throughout, though the aggregates of pitches at times become quite complex. This section reaches a climax that prepares for the entry of the solo celesta, which presents a further variation of the melody. It is interesting to note that the celesta part shares the same pitch material as the orchestra and is incorporated without any sense of strain into the ensemble — a significant fact in view of the antagonistic relationships that predominated in the previous movement. This harmonious relationship is achieved, however, through an implied negation of the sonority of the piano: it is as if the soloist can only be permitted to participate on equal terms with the orchestra by relinquishing his instrument in favour of another. As the celesta continues to elaborate fresh variants of the melody's constituent motivic shapes, over a persistent A flat pedal in the double bass the winds and solo strings introduce ascending and descending scale figurations, which evolve into an iridescent web of complex polyphony. This dies away, merging into a curtailed reprise of the melody in the piccolo. In the hushed concluding bars, a series of evanescent diatonic clusters fade into inaudibility under an inverted pedal G sharp (alias A flat) in *alt* played as a harmonic by the first violins, which shortly afterwards dies away in its turn.

In the third movement, which has the character of a headlong toccata, the banished instrumental 'Other' vehemently reasserts its presence once the orchestra has fallen silent. Marked '*Con fuoco*', and shortly thereafter with the indication 'deliriously', it opens with what the composer has described as 'a kind of dysfunctional canon'² presented initially in barnstorming *martellato* octaves, frenzied *tremolos*

2 Deane to author, 10 Feb. 2006

and scale figurations. Canonic imitation remains a consistent feature of the movement throughout its course, the two hands sometimes drawing further apart, sometimes closer together. Interestingly, it appears to review material from the first movement of the work: the opening four bars are confined to the pitches of the *cambiata* set and the interval of a major second is repeatedly emphasized in the textures, often featuring in the kind of nervous leaping figures in which it was presented earlier. With the exception of a few brief quieter episodes when the general tumult subsides, it proceeds mostly in a stentorian *fortissimo*, with the pianist's hands being frequently engaged at the registral extremes of the instrument. The piano writing bears many of the hallmarks of Deane's earlier pianistic style, particularly in its recourse to *tremolos* and insistent repeated chords, its brittle textures and tendency to aggressive stridency. The movement terminates as abruptly as it opened with a paroxysmal final phrase pounded out in a furious *crescendo*.

The finale follows without a break after this furious onslaught. The fundamental design of this movement has already been described, but a number of observations should be made. It opens in a state of indeterminacy with *pianissimo* tam-tam strokes that establish the slow pulsating rhythm of the chord progressions to come. Discernible pitches begin to emerge with the introduction of extremely high-lying harmonics in the upper strings and muddy intervals in the deepest bass of the piano. As the pitches move out of these extreme registers, a succession of major and minor triads and seventh chords becomes audible, which are for the most part juxtaposed in remote relationships. These move towards a climax, which occurs when the descending succession of chords in the orchestra and the ascending chords in the piano coincide in register. At this juncture, an F major six-four chord is sustained for twelve bars, growing in intensity towards a triple-*forte* to which all the orchestral players contribute, before subsiding into *piano*. The soloist points this climax by playing a sonorous succession of emphatic F major chords ranging over the entire compass of the instrument, a gesture which is surely intended to parody the *tutti* six-four chord that conventionally signals the commencement of the soloist's *cadenza* in the first movement of an eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century concerto. The significance of the pointed withholding of the pitch F natural in the first movement is now revealed, as it has been held in dramatic reserve until this moment. Then, soloist and orchestra once more proceed on their separate ways, the piano chords moving steadily into the extreme upper register of the instrument while the chords in the orchestra descend into the Cimmerian depths. In the closing bars, the indeterminacy of pitch that prevailed at the opening returns, as half the double basses slacken the bottom string of their instrument in a slow, scarcely audible *glissando* while the keyboard player reaches inside the piano to pluck the uppermost strings, a somewhat disconcerting ending, which is surely a characteristic expression of Deane's idiosyncratic sense of humour.

The genesis of Deane's third concertante work, *Krespel's Concerto*, was somewhat unusual. In 1983, he had been commissioned by RTÉ to compose what he describes as 'a kind of radiophonic opera'. This work, *Krespel*, for speakers, vocal soloists, chorus and orchestra was based on the short story *Rat Krespel* by the Romantic German writer, composer and artist E. T. A. Hoffmann, whom Freud described as the 'unrivalled master of the uncanny in literature'. This strange tale relates various episodes in the life of a violinist and violinmaker Krespel, who lives with his daughter Antonia in a small German town — his wife, a celebrated Italian prima donna, having died some years previously. Antonia has inherited her mother's remarkable vocal talent, but her father will not permit her to sing as she is in delicate health. In his zeal to prolong his daughter's life, Krespel tyrannically forces her to break an attachment that she has formed to a young composer B——, who he fears will induce her to sing once more. Curiously, a violin in Krespel's possession becomes endowed with a preternaturally beautiful tone which sounds uncannily like Antonia's singing voice and affords her some consolation. Time passes and the narrator returns to the town, having been absent for some years, to find a funeral in progress. He is deeply

distressed to discover that Antonia has died, and when he later encounters Krespel in the street, the old man seems on the verge of losing his reason. The circumstances surrounding Antonia's demise seem distinctly mysterious and it is some time before Krespel can bring himself to tell the narrator what actually transpired: One night, he had woken to hear Antonia singing a composition by B—— in the next room, apparently to B——'s piano accompaniment. In a kind of waking vision, he saw the lovers in a rapturous embrace, bathed in a radiant light. The sound of her singing and the piano accompaniment continued, although Antonia clearly was not singing and B—— was not seated at his instrument. Overcome with a mixture of terror at this supernatural apparition and bliss on hearing the ravishing music, Krespel fell into a profound swoon. When he regained consciousness, he found Antonia lying on the couch in her room with an expression of beatific happiness on her face — dead.

Although Deane's libretto (which he fashioned himself) follows the events of Hoffmann's tale quite closely, his adaptation is a rather anarchic postmodern romp in which the perspectives on these events and on the protagonists who participate in them are highly ambiguous. Deane engages sympathetically with his characters, yet he also takes evident delight in exaggerating the more lurid and fantastic Gothic elements of the tale to the point of near-absurdity, creating a dramatic extravaganza that incorporates elements of high camp, melodrama and farce in a manner reminiscent of his novel *Death of a Medium*. This atmosphere permeates the musical setting, which makes extensive use of quotation, pastiche and parody in an ironic evocation of the musical gestures of nineteenth-century grand opera and operetta. In 1990, he adapted the score for solo violin and orchestra, giving it the title *Krespel's Concerto: Fantasia after E. T. A. Hoffmann*. The new version received its premiere in Dublin on 4 April 1997, on which occasion Alan Smale played the solo part and Colman Pearce conducted the National Symphony Orchestra of Ireland. The score proved highly amenable to being recast as a concertante work, in view of the prominent solo violin part in the original opera which portrays Krespel's playing of the instrument. But although the solo part in the new version presents considerable technical challenges, on the whole Deane's writing for the violin emphasizes the instrument's lyrical capabilities rather than featuring elaborate virtuosic displays, unlike his later *Violin Concerto* of 2003. This led the composer to describe the work as 'less a concerto than a symphonic poem with soloist, in the tradition of Strauss's *Ein Heldenleben* or *Don Quixote*.'

Krespel's Concerto is cast in four movements and lasts approximately twenty-five minutes. The opening movement, entitled *Dramatis Personae*, presents musical ideas associated with the principal protagonists — the enigmatic Krespel, who is portrayed by brooding violin solos, and Antonia, who is represented by the literal quotation of phrases from the aria 'Elle a fui, la tourterelle', which is sung by the character of Antonia in Offenbach's *Les Contes d'Hoffmann*. The latter melody features prominently throughout Deane's score and he has remarked that the entire work might be regarded as a set of variations on it. It is initially presented here in its original form and in the key of B flat, a region that functions as a consistently invoked 'fetish tonality'; later in the movement, it is subjected to considerable deformation and intertwined with strangely incongruous violin counterpoints, symbolizing perhaps the highly unhealthy (and possibly incestuous) nature of Krespel's relationship with his daughter at which Hoffmann hints in his story. This movement has a curiously nightmarish quality, effectively heightened by small touches such as the use of the piano — the instrument par excellence of bourgeois domestic music-making — to provide conventional accompaniments, which obtrude weirdly into the orchestral texture, clashing against simultaneously presented atonal material in a manner that suggests the emotional and psychological disturbance under the conventional surface of this father-daughter relationship.

Burial Scene depicts the events that take place at Antonia's funeral. It opens with a lugubrious funeral march based on a stylized plainchant melody to which the solo violin supplies fantastic, exaggerated

counterpoints, portraying Krespel's incipient madness. A faster section follows, based on the banal tune that Krespel starts to sing during a manic outburst after the funeral, which is itself based on an inversion of the 'plainchant' melody and prominently features the Jew's harp in the orchestra. Later, after a poignant soliloquy from the solo violin, Antonia's melody appears once more, becoming quickly submerged in a threatening orchestral tutti. It reaches a convulsive climax and rapidly subsides; the movement fades into silence after a few fragmentary reminiscences of the opening funeral march.

The third movement, *Carnivals*, was inspired by a passage in the Hoffmann story during which the narrator discusses with Krespel the tastelessness and vapidity of much contemporary Italian music:

„Was ist unsinniger“, rief ich, vom Stuhle aufspringend, hin zum Pianoforte laufend und es schnell öffnend, „was ist unsinniger als solche vertrackte Manieren, welche, statt Musik zu sein, dem Tone über den Boden hingeschütteter Erbsen gleichen.“ Ich sang manche der modernen Fermaten, die hin und her laufen und schnurren wie ein tüchtig losgeschnürter Kreisel, einzelne schlechte Akkorde dazu anschlagend. Übermäßig lachte Krespel und schrie: „Haha! mich dünkt, ich höre unsere deutschen Italiener oder unsere italienischen Deutschen, wie sie sich in einer Arie von Pucitta oder Portogallo oder sonst einem Maestro di Capella oder vielmehr Schiavo d'un primo uomo übernehmen.“

'What can be more preposterous,' I cried, jumping up from my seat, hastening to the piano and quickly opening it, 'than an execrable style like this, more like the noise of peas clattering on the floor than music?' I went on to sing a number of those modern cadenza passages which rush up and down whirring like a well-spun top and I struck a few incongruous chords by way of accompaniment. Krespel laughed immoderately, and screamed 'Ha ha! I could fancy I was listening to some of our German Italians, or our Italian Germans, struggling through some aria of Pucitta or Portogallo, or some other such *maestro di capella*, or rather *schiaivo d'un primo uomo* [slave of a leading man].'

This passage prompts Deane to compose an exuberant parody of the Italian *bel canto* style at its most inane, when it seems to serve merely as a vehicle for empty vocal display, the sort of music that Krespel's wife, the prima donna Angela, might have sung during her performances at the annual Venice carnival. The movement opens with *einzelne schlechte Akkorde* in rippling piano arpeggios, followed by a trite melody that forms the basis for a set of variations. In due course, this is combined with other melodies reminiscent of sentimental male-voice choruses sung by German *Männergesangsvereine*. These materials are then superimposed in a passage that builds up to a grotesque climax (in the course of which other quotations from Schumann's *Carnival* and Beethoven's Ninth Symphony are woven into the dense, polyrhythmic orchestral texture), through which the sounds of Krespel's frenetic violin figurations are intermittently audible. This breaks off abruptly and tonal 'normality' is fleetingly restored by an elaborate perfect cadence in B flat (complete with trills) only to be summarily dismissed by the raucous gesture that closes the movement.

The concluding movement, entitled *Liebestod*, portrays Antonia's musical apotheosis and death in a manner suggesting an ironic appropriation of the musical gestures used to portray the death of another Romantic operatic heroine, Wagner's *Isolde*. The luminous opening bars evoke the *blendende Klarheit* or 'dazzling brightness' in which she appears to Krespel, featuring a widely arching expressive trumpet melody that shines through the ethereal orchestral textures and presumably depicts the 'deeply affecting' solemn melody that he imagines he hears her singing. Its contours, with their yearning appoggiaturas and large upward leaps, are subsequently taken up by the violin soloist in an impassioned duet. The supporting harmonies come more and more clearly to suggest the fetish tonality of B flat major, and in the lyrical concluding bars culminate in a B flat major triad with added ninth, a tonal cadential gesture

that is generally untypical of Deane's music, but may be explained here by the work's extra-musical references. The tone of the movement remains ambiguous to the end: the listener is left uncertain whether this final cadence merely underlies the delusory nature of Krespel's perceptions of events or whether it hints that Antonia may have experienced genuine emotional fulfilment before death through being released from Krespel's subjection. These finely balanced ambiguities, which engender conflicting ironic perspectives, are typical of much of Deane's later work, most notably the opera *The Poet and His Double* and the Violin Concerto.

The Concerto for Oboe and Orchestra was commissioned by RTÉ for the principal oboist of the National Symphony Orchestra of Ireland, Matthew Manning, to whom the score is dedicated. It received its first performance in April 1995 in the National Concert Hall in Dublin under the baton of Reinhard Seifried. The composer recounts how two very different imaginative stimuli informed the work. The first was an extended journey to the Middle East undertaken in April and May 2003, in the course of which he visited Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories. The Palestinian refugee camps made a particularly disturbing impression on him, as did the general plight of the Palestinian people, who, as Deane puts it, 'seemed constantly fated to approach liberation and then be thrust back into subjection'.³ This Sisyphean predicament struck him as having a wider significance that far transcended the immediate circumstances and prompted him to think about a work that would present a symbolic enactment of these existential conflicts. The medium of the concerto, which pits the soloist against the mass of orchestral players, seemed ideally suited to the sort of work which he had in mind. His conception of the relationship between the protagonists in this drama subsequently crystallized as a complex dialectical oscillation between oppression and liberation, inclusion and exclusion, in which no satisfactory resolution seemed possible. Consequently, the soloist is characterized not as a hero who can confidently assert his dominance over the orchestra, as is customary in the nineteenth-century concerto, but rather as an exile, an excluded Other, who has been deprived of his rightful place in the ensemble where his role has been usurped by a soprano saxophone. The predicament of the soloist is dramatically heightened by Deane's deliberate choice to pit him against a rather large orchestra, which includes triple woodwind, a sizeable percussion section, piano and organ, in addition to the usual complements of brass and strings. This body represents a potentially formidable antagonistic mass, capable of overpowering him completely and rendering him inaudible, despite his most strenuous efforts. But the relationship between the two is not by any means a straightforward affair of dominance and submission. As Hegel emphasized in his celebrated explication of the relationship between master and slave in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, the oppressor is psychologically dependent on his subordinate because he only achieves self-definition in relation to him, a relationship of dependency that has a far-reaching and subtle influence on his mentality. Paradoxically, he is in one sense a slave to his subordinate, who exerts power of a kind over him. These ideas find a musical embodiment in the last movement of the concerto. The orchestra is portrayed initially as being enslaved by its own oppressiveness, chained down, as it were, in a state of impotent writhing fury to a low register. The soloist suggests the possibility of liberation, his part slowing ascending out of the bottom register of his instrument. The orchestra eagerly follows his lead, as if mutual liberation from this double bind were a possibility that could be attained. The movement rises to an exultant climax which collapses suddenly and catastrophically, as if the orchestra has realized that the transcendence of the previous relationship would entail the relinquishment of its superiority, a prospect which clearly cannot be countenanced. This sombre denouement is the central dramatic crisis in a work, which, in its inability to achieve a satisfactory resolution, can be understood at one

3 Deane to author, 30 Jan. 2006

level as a symbolic representation of impotence in the face of perennial conflicts inherent to the human condition. It is important to emphasize, however, that Deane insists that although Palestine informed the composition of the score, the concerto should be encountered solely on its own terms and that any attempts to construe it as having a covert programmatic basis would be completely misguided.

In spite of the work's evident seriousness, a listener approaching Deane's music for the first time might well find it to be an immediately rewarding composition, not least due to its intensely dramatic qualities. These qualities are allied to a directness of expression that is perhaps without precedent in Deane's earlier scores. In this instance, however, one has the impression of an underlying urgency of creative intent that is concerned to communicate itself as straightforwardly as possible, without equivocation or ambiguity. A comparable concern with lucidity is evident in the underlying musical organization of the score, whose structures, though frequently complex in surface detail, are completely intelligible at a first hearing.

The concerto is cast in three parts. The first movement opens with a statement of one of the principal thematic ideas by the soloist, shown in Ex. 36. This grows out of single note, B, and by means of the progressive introduction of other pitches extends into a sinuous phrase, which outlines a contour of a descent followed by a balancing ascent. It is then presented in elaborated variants of increasing complexity. Initially, the pitch of B is strongly emphasized both in the soloist's part and also by means of insistent staccato reiterations of the same note by the harp, xylophone and *pizzicato* strings, which provide the sole accompaniment. These distinctive sonorities, which continue to be associated specifically with the same pitch later in the score, serve an important function of reinforcing its structural and gestural importance on a larger scale. The oboe's opening figure is next taken up by multi-divided violins in close imitative counterpoint and slowly comes to pervade the entire string section, growing to a complex fourteen-part texture, which creates the impression of freewheeling heterophony. At the same time, the staccato notes of the accompaniment are transferred to shrill woodwind, high muted trumpets and stopped horns, while the arabesques of the solo part evolve into a variety of running scale figures that feature prominently in the next section of the movement. As the paragraph rises to its climax, the counterpoint becomes increasingly frenzied, with the result that the soloist is progressively overwhelmed by a tumult of contending voices. With a sense of mounting struggle, his part eventually rises to a top E, which is sustained doggedly over twelve bars in the midst of the surrounding chaos until the orchestra eventually takes cognisance of it and comes to a halt on a bare fifth consisting of the notes E and B.

Ex. 36 Oboe Concerto, I, opening [solo part only]

♩ = 72

sfz *f* > *mp* *f* > *mp* *p* *sf*

mf *f* > *mp* *p* *f* > *mp* *p* < *mp* *pp* *mf*

This climactic chord subsides rapidly and, having managed to subdue the orchestra, the soloist succeeds in becoming audible once more, presenting a series of dramatic scalic uprushes that continue to culminate insistently on a top E, which is asserted as if it represented a stable pitch capable of holding fast against the threat of disintegration. It is answered with a mocking, distorted echo of its phrases by its orchestral surrogate, the soprano saxophone, whose scale rises instead to a contradictory D sharp. This results in a dramatic undermining of the oboe's confident self-assertion. Its ascending scales are immediately abandoned, becoming transformed into a sequence of descending patterns and agitated staccato figures. As it struggles to reassert the pitch E, the orchestra enters with a new menacing figure articulated in dense chords. It becomes more mechanical and insistent, climbing steadily in pitch and dynamic level until it reaches a shrill *fortissimo*. A reprise of the dense polyphonic paragraph heard earlier follows, the counterpoint now assigned to strident woodwinds, accompanied by clangorous interjections from the piano and hectic figurations in the strings and brass. This time, however, the soloist is silent, waiting until after the climax to enter on a sustained *pianissimo* low C sharp, before presenting a listless series of slow scalic fragments that seem drained of any sense of impetus or urgency. In the background, the presence of the solo saxophone insinuates itself once more, with ironic echoes of the oboe's previous energetic rising scales. The soloist's line continues to rise wearily, surrounded by a halo of chords in the woodwinds and divided strings. These eventually die away onto a unison D over a pedal C sharp, leaving the soloist free to reassert the note E in solitude.

Two additional technical points are perhaps worth mentioning in connection with this movement. The 'fetish' note E is also emphasized at various climatic point throughout the movement by the timpani, an instrument which Deane used very rarely, as it 'evokes the nineteenth century orchestra unduly'. Here, a large timpano tuned to a low E is employed, which Deane describes as functioning 'as a kind of intruder, and indeed a kind of "fetish"'.⁴ Secondly, it is interesting to note that this movement is largely constructed over a series of extended pedal points (which are not always sounded in the bass). These are, in order, the notes B, F, E, D sharp/E flat, D and C sharp. The composer likens the effect of their presence in the orchestral texture to a 'huge mass slowly sinking yet maintaining its momentum until near the close'.⁵

The quick central movement has a straightforward tripartite structure and affords some dramatic relief from the high tensions of the weighty first movement. It opens with a striking series of chords given to the piano, harp, double basses and percussion, which are interspersed with a series of brilliant rising scales from the soloist, who commences by asserting the pitch, E. These gestures set in motion a deft fast section in six-eight time in which fleet ascending scale patterns permeate the orchestral textures. The oboe introduces a perky melody, marked *con bravura*, which is succeeded by a subsidiary idea featuring wide virtuosic skips between low and high registers. This is provided with an energetic accompaniment in shifting additive rhythms that unsettle the regularity of the prevailing metre. The mood of this section is buoyant, even exuberant, and the orchestra accompanies the soloist with marked restraint, seeming content for the while to enter into a collaborative partnership. In a contrasting central section, the soloist plays a sinuous melody in slower note values set in the very highest register of his compass, which conjures up the sound of some exotic wind instrument. It too has a gently pulsating accompaniment in additive rhythms, largely assigned to multi-divided violins organized in closely packed chromatic clusters. As the section moves to its climax, the soloist's melody becomes more animated and intricate, coiling vertiginously around on itself in a luxuriant profusion of chromatic ornamentation. A modified and considerably curtailed reprise of the opening section

4 Deane to author, 21 Feb. 2006

5 Deane to author, 21 Feb. 2006

follows, concluding with a series of scalic flourishes from the soloist which culminate confidently on the high E that was sounded at the outset.

The finale opens convulsively with what the composer describes as a ‘cataclysm’, reminding us that the apparent reconciliation achieved between soloist and orchestra in the preceding movement was inherently unstable and that the tensions of the first movement still remain unresolved.⁶ As mentioned, the instruments of the orchestra are confined to dark lower registers, rising no higher in pitch than D above middle C, in the sullen opening tutti. The solo oboe intones a series of low Bs which are scarcely audible until the orchestra’s harsh *fortissimo* subsides. It thereupon presents a solemn plaintive melody, rising and falling through the compass of a fourth. Initially, this is interrupted by brusque interjections from the orchestra, but slowly the glowering atmosphere of the opening yields to a mood of muted melancholy. The oboe continues to elaborate its melody into more lyrical variants, which begin to rise in pitch, at first hesitantly, but then with greater assurance. Over a long sustained pedal F in the cellos and basses, the harmonies gradually come to suggest a prevailing tonal centre of B flat. The mood grows more animated with the introduction of flowing counterpoints into the predominantly static textures and the increasingly impassioned ornamentation of the soloist’s part. Slowly but inexorably, the latter rises in pitch to a high E and the general mood turns to jubilation, culminating in a radiant *fortissimo* statement of the oboe’s opening melody in the full orchestra, which rises to a colossal and imposing climax on an A major ninth chord as the bass pointedly falls to E, reinforced by sonorous timpani rolls, a gesture which recalls the opening of the work. Suddenly and seemingly inexplicably, this climax becomes convulsed and anguished: a moment later, it is abruptly cut short and fades rapidly into silence. In a brief but poignant epilogue, the oboe, while meditating on the broken fragments of its melody, is finally and decisively supplanted by the solo saxophone and the movement ends with a repetition of the same gesture that we heard at the very opening of the work, a sharp staccato B, implying that the cycle of conflicts that have been enacted are fated to be re-enacted once more.

The Violin Concerto was commissioned by RTÉ for the Danish violinist Christine Pryn, to whom it is dedicated. The score was completed in what the composer has described as ‘four intense bouts’ of work between April 2002 and May 2003, and it received its first performance in the National Concert Hall, Dublin, on 24 October 2003, when Gerhard Markson conducted the National Symphony Orchestra of Ireland.⁷ As is the case with all of Deane’s concertante works, the Violin Concerto reflects his preoccupation with exploring different varieties of relationship between the soloist and the orchestra. In a programme note, Deane mentions that in this respect there are important points of contact with the Oboe Concerto composed almost ten years previously. Specifically, of his six works for instrumental soloist and orchestra, only these two scores bear the traditional generic designation ‘concerto’, which flags its employment in an ironic and critical sense, given Deane’s studied avoidance of such titles in general. The two works, he tells us, ‘are both linked and opposed’: whereas the orchestra in the earlier work ‘functioned as oppressor and finally “crushed” the exiled soloist, collective and individual here have attained a less fractious co-existence’, not least as the orchestra is considerably smaller and the soloist does not have to contend with such overwhelmingly large forces.⁸ Nonetheless, the relationship between soloist and orchestra remains a rather uneasy one: Deane’s writing for the medium suggests that the soloist aspires to a condition of liberation from this relationship, symbolized by the assertion of its individuality (in the form of virtuosic self-expression) being realized most fully in the unaccompanied cadenzas that feature prominently in all four movements. The last movement closes with what the composer has described as a ‘slightly demented’ cadenza in which this goal finally

6 Deane to author, 3 July 2006

7 Deane’s programme note written for the premiere of the work, 24 Oct. 2003

8 Deane, Violin Concerto programme note

seems to be attained.

Although both works employ musical imagery that seems to enact a dialectical oscillation between states of oppression and liberation, the drama enacted in the Violin Concerto is of a very different kind. In the Violin Concerto, the interplay between the soloist and the orchestra is frequently playful, even if it sometimes assumes a more confrontational character. The flamboyant solo part draws heavily on the sort of string writing that formed the stock-in-trade of the nineteenth-century virtuoso — brilliant scale and *arpeggio* passages, soulful double-stopped melodies, forceful chordal writing, harmonics and so forth. These dazzling pyrotechnical displays lend the part a glittering allure, seducing the listener into identification with the 'heroic' soloist of the nineteenth-century concerto. As in other works of Deane's that make reference to the Romantic tradition of instrumental virtuosity (such as *After-Pieces*), these gestures are consistently ironized. Yet in this concerto, perhaps to a greater extent than in previous scores, the perspectives that Deane establishes on this tradition are ambiguous in the extreme. The listener is constantly uncertain as to how the soloist's gestures (and the quasi-tonal language in which they are sometimes couched) are to be heard or, to employ Deane's metaphor, the extent to which the musical material is presented within quotation marks is difficult to determine. At times, these gestures seem wholly 'sincere' and deeply felt; at other times, they appear somewhat theatrical and perhaps a trifle self-indulgent. As a result of these complex equivocations, the work is decidedly elusive in tone.

Other musical material employed in the work presents the listener with similar difficulties of interpretation, in particular a quotation by *Der Leiermann*, the concluding song of *Winterreise*. In this work, Schubert sets a cycle of poems by Wilhelm Müller, which depicts the progressive mental disintegration of a young man in the wake of an unhappy love affair. He leaves the town in which his sweetheart lives and sets out on a solitary journey through a desolate winter landscape in a mood of deep dejection. Towards the end of the cycle, he approaches insanity and considers the possibility of ending his life. *Der Leiermann* depicts his encounter with the pitiful figure of an elderly tramp, reduced through poverty and hardship to a state of despairing apathy. The old man stands in the icy street, trying to earn a few coppers by playing the hurdy-gurdy, but is completely ignored by the passers-by. The last stanza of the poem hints that the protagonist might in fact be a poet: he wonders whether he should accompany the tramp on his travels into the unknown, since the old man could accompany his songs. Thus the cycle concludes in unsettling indeterminacy, offering no hope that the hero might escape from this wretched existence. The poem runs:

Drüben hinter'm Dorfe
Steht ein Leiermann,
Und mit starren Fingern
Dreht er was er kann.

Over there, beyond the village,
Stands an organ-grinder;
And with numb fingers
He plays as best he can.

Barfuß auf dem Eise
Schwankt er hin und her;
Und sein kleiner Teller
Bleibt ihm immer leer.

Barefoot on the ice
He totters to and fro,
And his little plate
Remains forever empty.

Keiner mag ihn hören,
Keiner sieht ihn an;
Und die Hunde knurren
Um den alten Mann.

No-one wants to listen to him,
No-one looks at him,
And the dogs snarl
Around the old man.

Und er läßt es gehen
 Alles, wie es will,
 Dreht, und seine Leier
 Steht ihm nimmer still.

And he lets everything
 Go on as it will;
 He plays, and his hurdy-gurdy
 Never stops going.

Wunderlicher Alter,
 Soll ich mit dir gehn?
 Willst zu meinen Liedern
 Deine Leier drehn?

Strange old man,
 Shall I go with you?
 Will you grind your hurdy-gurdy
 To accompany my songs?

Schubert's cycle has often been interpreted as a Romantic parable about the alienation of the artist from a bourgeois society that perceives little value in his art, an understanding of the work of which Deane would certainly have been aware, and which seems immediately relevant in view of the theme of conflict between the individual and the collective, which is sounded elsewhere in his work. But how exactly he wishes this reference to be understood in his Violin Concerto is not clear: the finely balanced ambiguities of its treatment make it impossible to tell whether it is intended to create a serious or an ironic impression. Deane refuses to be drawn on its precise significance and confines himself to remarking that the melodic construction of the song, with its prominent minor thirds, suggested various creative possibilities to him from a purely musical point of view.

Deane has described the first two movements of the concerto as having the character of preludes, presumably because of their comparative brevity. The first movement opens with an ingratiating lyrical idea announced by woodwinds and the solo violin in double-stopped major sixths (see Ex. 37), which Deane hears as having a rather 'soupy' quality. This develops in conjunction with a more agitated motif in minor thirds derived from a diminution of a figure featuring in the accompaniment of the Schubert song. As the orchestral texture grows richer, the solo violin part becomes increasingly elaborate, featuring brilliant demisemiquaver figurations. The mood of the music grows agitated and the paragraph culminates on a climactic A minor triad, a sonority that functions as a fetish chord throughout the work. This sets the scene for the introduction of the *Leiermann* quotation, which is followed by what Deane describes as 'two hallucinatory variations' on this material. The first of these has an intense, brooding character, with the thirds of *Leiermann* motif being distended into sequences of widely ranging tenths. The soloist seems unable to resist the temptation to revert to more traditional kinds of virtuosic display and begins to alter the style of instrumental writing to include brilliant *arpeggio* passagework and rhetorical double stopping, seeking to establish the fetish 'pseudo-tonality' of A minor. The orchestra responds in glowering mood in the second variation, a relentlessly savage outburst from which the violin is excluded altogether. As this variation reaches a pitch of fury, the soloist enters in a wild cadenza, featuring far-flung leaps and frenetic runs that strain repeatedly towards the highest compass of the instrument. A brief coda ensues, in which soloist and orchestra establish an uneasy truce.

Ex. 37 Violin Concerto, I, bars 4–8

♩ = 64

pppp < *pp* < *p*

Similar conflicts prevail in the second movement, which has a clear five-part structure. The opening section brings into greater prominence material heard briefly during the first movement, in particular a sequence of tenuously related major and minor triads, which are introduced in the strings as an accompaniment to a recitative-like passage in the violin. The nature of the writing and the scoring here clearly recall the slow movements of various nineteenth-century violin concerti and this passage is a good instance of the presentation of such material from shifting perspectives. Against this idea, the wind and percussion instruments introduce a separate strand of musical discourse, which counterpoints the material in the solo violin and the orchestral strings. The orchestra drops out to allow the soloist to present an unaccompanied cadenza, in which its previous melodic material is presented in a somewhat playful manner in an elaborate virtuoso guise. After a series of highly rhetorical passages in double-stopped thirds, the soloist attempts to force the orchestra to come in on an A minor triad, which is sounded briefly before being dismissed. The soloist and orchestral strings remain silent while the woodwinds and brass develop 'their' material, rising quickly to a searing climax. This is followed by a restatement by the solo violin of the thematic idea stated at the opening, to the accompaniment of a similar string texture. The soloist attempts once more to bring the orchestra with it into the key of A minor, only to provoke an anarchic 'polytonal' outburst. The soloist is forced to concede defeat and returns to musing on motifs from the opening theme. Unexpectedly, the mood changes to one of deep tranquillity as soloist and orchestra come to rest on a soft D major triad, leading to a serene close.

The scoring of the third movement, which dispenses with strings and harp, pursues the logic of the partition of the orchestral forces in the previous movement. Here, the woodwind, brass and percussion have an opportunity to establish more fully a contrasting, pointedly anti-Romantic sound-world characterized by an abrasive harmonic language, nervous driving rhythms and hard-edged instrumental sonorities. This movement is shot through with Deane's mordant satirical wit. It incorporates a humorous reference to the fact that he celebrated his fiftieth birthday while working on the score: much of its material derives from the numerical sequence 2, 7, 1, 5, 3, referring to his date of birth, 27 January 1953. This sequence determines the intervallic structure of certain chords and melodic lines, as well as rhythmic durations. Throughout the movement, soloist and orchestra seem to pursue divergent courses. The violin part has a manic quality, with its writhing semiquaver figurations and harsh chordal writing that hover obsessively around the same pitches — often the note A, representing the fetish tonality of the work. The persistent employment of double-stops that use open strings and the extensive repetition of short motivic fragments featuring only a few notes may be stylized references to central European folk music. The orchestra proceeds to present quite different material, occasionally incorporating parodistic echoes of the solo part into a texture featuring jazzy rhythms and 'walking' scalar bass lines that evokes a somewhat anarchic jam session. The soloist breaks free from the orchestra about two-thirds of the way through the movement, presenting a cadenza replete with virtuoso rhetoric. In the closing bars, the solo part tries vainly to assert itself against the relentless motor rhythms and snarling, explosive *crescendi* in the orchestra, culminating in a series of high-lying *tremolandi*, which are brutally cut short by a series of emphatic gestures in the percussion.

The finale is the longest and most elaborate movement of the concerto; the composer has described it as 'drawing together all the strands of the work without being either a "synthesis" or "compendium" of preceding material'.⁹ It is also probably one of the most enigmatic pieces that Deane has composed. The opening section reviews the melodic fragment presented at the start of the first movement, accompanied by a series of remotely related triads similar to those in the second movement. This idea is presented by the soloist, accompanied by the orchestral pianist, who seems to provide a far more

9 Deane, Violin Concerto programme note

congenial musical partner. (In his programme note, Deane mentions that this coupling was inspired by Schnittke's *Concerto Grosso No 5*, the work with which Christine Pryn made her *début*, commenting that 'a double homage is implied here'.) As in the other movements, Deane establishes two conflicting sound-worlds, interrupting the presentation of this quasi-tonal idea with atonal material in the orchestra. The composer remarks that 'the whole opening interplay of violin/piano versus orchestra has a very narrative feel — the orchestra a slumbering giant resenting the attempts of these two upstarts to hold a dialogue'.¹⁰ Eventually, the orchestra altogether disrupts the dialogue with a furious cacophony that ushers in a fast section based on transformations of a theme that recalls nineteenth-century musical gestures and which is 'progressively dismantled', in the composer's phrase.¹¹ At the climax, the fetish chord of A minor is introduced and, from here until the end of the movement, the solo part reverts increasingly to traditional virtuoso rhetoric, becoming more and more frenzied. Eventually, it succeeds in leaving the orchestra behind, launching itself on a final strenuous cadenza in which it is initially partnered once more by the piano. Deane supplies its concluding passage work with markings such as 'with increasing delirium', '*delirioso*' and finally 'possessed'. The movement ends, as it were, in mid-air, with the flight and disappearance of the soloist, who abandons the orchestra altogether in a highly theatrical *dénouement*.

Concursus, the most recent of the compositions considered in this section, was completed within between July and December of 2004. It was commissioned by the Irish Chamber Orchestra and is collectively dedicated to the members of this ensemble. *Concursus* is unique amongst the composer's concertante works in two respects: first, in its employment of a pair of soloists, playing violin and viola, rather than a single instrumentalist; and, second, in accompanying the soloists with a body of strings instead of a standard symphony orchestra. This string ensemble is somewhat unusual in its composition, consisting of two equally sized antiphonal groups of first and second violins, violas and cellos, which are underpinned by a single double bass. As the different sections in these groups are sometimes required to play *divisi*, a minimum of seventeen players is required, and that number might be augmented to advantage in view of the score's dramatic character.

The title of the work reflects Deane's continuing preoccupation with exploring relationships between the soloist (or in this case, the soloists) and the orchestra. The Latin *conkursus* is an intriguingly polysemic word with two sets of distinctly antonymous meanings. In certain contexts, it can mean 'running together', 'concourse' or 'union'; in others, it conveys the diametrically opposed sense of 'conflict', 'clashing' or 'hostile encounter'. Its use in the latter sense in English is extremely rare, occurring only as a recondite technical term in Catholic theology. However, the modern French '*concoure*', which can be translated as both 'cooperation' and 'competition', depending once more on the context, comes close to retaining most of the differing shades of meaning of the Latin word from which it derives. Deane confirms that the title was chosen on account of its suggestive ambiguity, but remarks that although it 'implies both competition and confluence, the latter predominates here.' He adds by way of explanation: 'Unlike my Violin Concerto, in which the soloist sometimes gets carried away by individualistic virtuosity, the soloists avoid unseemly gymnastics and are intent on cooperating with one another and with the string orchestra. Although the latter is divided into two identical groups, with the double bass acting as fulcrum, there is again very little competition: the groups present subtly differentiated versions of the same material and occasionally play in unison.'¹² These qualifications notwithstanding, much of the dramatic tension of the score, as we shall see, arises precisely from the persistent juxtaposition and interaction of these thematic variants, which, despite being only 'subtly

¹⁰ Deane to author, 7 Mar. 2006

¹¹ Deane to author, 3 July 2006

¹² Deane's programme note written for the premiere of the work, 14 Apr. 2005

differentiated', nonetheless prove capable of engendering a succession of surprisingly powerful binary oppositions within which the constituent elements contend for dominance, sometimes in a decidedly strenuous fashion.

Concursus is a substantial piece lasting about twenty minutes and is designed as one continuous movement. Apart from *Compact*, it is the only score that deviates from the three or four movement plan which Deane has habitually adopted in his concertante works and represents the longest of the purely instrumental single-movement works that he has composed to date. (In this respect, perhaps, its formal organization reflects his growing interest in multi-sectional structures in recent years.) This formal approach presents a number of challenges, not least of which is the problem of assuring the overall coherence of such an extended structure while maintaining interest and variety throughout its span. Intriguingly, Deane manages to achieve a feeling of generous spaciousness without ever slackening the tautness of his argument, which evolves, as has become customary in his later work, from a small handful of germinal ideas. The working out of these ideas, however, proceeds at a comparatively leisurely pace rather than in the urgent, highly concentrated manner characteristic of, say, the Oboe Concerto. This undoubtedly accounts in part for the work's relaxed, sunny mood, which the composer has described as being predominantly 'joyous', since its expansive lyrical ideas are allowed to unfold and develop in an appropriately unhurried manner as befits their nature. From the vantage point of purely sensuous enjoyment, *Concursus* is notable for its qualities of Mediterranean warmth and its pellucid Apollonian clarity of texture, which make it one of the most beguiling of Deane's recent scores and suggest that it may yet prove to have inaugurated a new phase in the composer's creative development.

Notwithstanding the work's scale, its compositional kernel is a work of much more modest dimensions that had been completed only a year previously. This was a piece for solo viola entitled *brève*, which was written for Deane's friend the Italian violist Maurizio Barbetti as a contribution to his repertory of contemporary miniatures. Deane evidently felt that he had not exhausted all of the possibilities of the piece's material, and when he was commissioned to write *Concursus*, he seized the opportunity to explore them more fully. Its thematic ideas are employed extensively in the new score and the original piece is in fact quoted in its entirety during one of the central sections, arranged for both soloists as a kind of cadenza. One of its principal ideas, a motif outlining the pitches D, E, B and F sharp, is stated at the very opening of *Concursus* and forms the basis for much of the work's musical argument. Its first section subjects the motif to a slow process of expansion and development which recalls the unfolding of the opening idea in the first movement of the Oboe Concerto, except that here it takes place over a much longer span. This motif (marked *a* in Ex. 38) establishes a constellation of pitches that relate to D, which is itself a pitch of central importance in the structural organization of the piece. Initially, it is stated and restated in fragmentary form with subtle rhythmic variations, distributed

Ex. 38 *Concursus*, opening

♩ = 64

vln. & vla. soli

a

pp

ppp ————— *mf* ————— *ppp*

string ensemble [voices omitted]

between the soloists and the various sections of the string ensemble. These various presentations are initially confined to the same register, employing colouristic changes (harmonics, *pizzicato*, *tremolandi*, *sul tasto* and so on) to bring one or the other of its constituent pitches into momentarily greater prominence. Very soon, other pitches assert themselves which undermine the stability of the prevailing harmonic organization. F sharp is contradicted by being sounded against a clashing F natural, B natural by B flat and so on. The new pitches establish a tense polarity between the opening set of pitches centred on D and a rival one which emphasizes B flat, a centre that will also assume importance later. Gradually other contradictory pitches insinuate themselves into the musical fabric — C natural contending with C sharp, E flat with E natural. In this way, a series of dyads is generated, both pitches of which vie for primacy in a *concurus* at a local level of organization. As the harmonic tension rises, the music becomes progressively more animated, with increasingly elaborate presentations of the opening motif that finally dissolve into brilliant demisemiquaver runs and effervescent trills. Finally, the trills pervade the entire ensemble and a persistent pedal F in the bass surges upwards as a climax is achieved on a resounding unison A.

Suddenly, the treble and bass are wrenched up a semitone to B flat as a new, dance-like idea breaks out boisterously for a few moments. Deane regards this material as ‘a disruptive, Dionysian element’ that is pointedly contrasted with everything around it.¹³ This event appears to mark a new section, although the musical organization of *Concurus* is so fluid that it is sometimes difficult to detect clear points of demarcation between one section and another. Fragments of the opening motif reassert themselves, with the first three notes assigned to the string ensemble, leaving the soloists to contend strenuously whether the last note should be F natural or F sharp. The string orchestra unexpectedly diverts the motif to finish on B flat. The soloists respond by reintroducing the new dance-like melody, which is punctuated by restatements of motif *a* in the orchestra that continue to emphasize the region of B flat. This pitch is eventually harmonized with the notes C sharp and G, an aggregate which is first heard as a mysterious chord played *senza vibrato* by the ensemble and subsequently by the soloists, introducing a new sonority that assumes a heightened significance towards the end of the piece.

At this point, a third section commences which emphasizes the pitch centres of G and B flat. It features a broad cantilena with large impassioned leaps given to the solo viola, set against a soft accompaniment of chords in trills. This melody is then taken over by the solo violin, which carries it into a soaring high register, leaving the viola to supply an expressive counterpoint. As the passage rises to a searing climax, their lyrical flight is broken off abruptly and both instruments plunge rapidly to a low *tremolando* A, which is taken up in unison by the ensemble, growing in intensity through a forceful crescendo. As before, this gesture signals the reintroduction of the boisterous dance melody, which is now developed extensively in an exuberant fourth section. Soloists and ensemble present this idea in sonorously scored antiphonal exchanges featuring rasping double stops and strident open strings. The theme burgeons into longer phrases employing constantly shifting time signatures, producing a mounting sense of kinaesthetic abandon. The melodic outlines become liquidated into a torrent of rushing semiquavers and swirling figurations, rising to an ecstatic climax on a radiant D major chord with an added ninth. The dance figure erupts once more, only to be unexpectedly curtailed.

The fifth section commences after a tense silence and returns to a more introverted mood. This is largely taken up with a new development of motif *a*, which is extended into sinuous arching lines in the solo parts. Underneath this, the constituent groups of the string ensemble enter into strenuous conflict over two clashing seventh chords, one formed on G and the other on F sharp, arising from a harmonic expansion of a semitonal dyad. This texture is anchored over a long pedal C in the double bass. The

13 Deane to author, 26 Feb. 2006

sixth section opens with the cadenza-like section for the two soloists. During this section, the orchestra is initially silent and is later largely confined to occasional interjections of sparse punctuating chords, thus providing a measure of tonal contrast. Towards the close, the solo violin ascends to a high G sharp and begins to articulate this note in a tremolo with a dramatic crescendo. This note is quickly taken up by the orchestra, leading seamlessly into the seventh section, one of the most complex in the entire work and containing the largest expanse of continuously fast music. It elaborates material heard in all the previous sections, including the dance melody and the cantilena from the third section. For the most part, the solo parts are accompanied by rushing semiquaver counterpoints, which create an impression of inexorable forward movement. Later in its course, soloists and orchestra contend over the primacy of various pitches in a succession of semitonal dyads. This provides a logical link to the eighth section, which is largely taken up with a heightened re-enactment of the conflict between two seventh chords a semitone apart; this was left unresolved during the fifth section. The tension generated by this *concurus* finds an exhilarating release in a recurrence of the radiant D major ninth, which formed the climax of the fourth section. The soaring top As of the solo violin move once more to B flat, bringing a short-lived reprise of the dance melody.

The ninth and final section follows after a brief pause and serves as an epilogue. It returns to a consideration of the opening motif in a more restrained mood, with a noticeable relaxation of the preceding harmonic tensions. The various dyadic conflicts of the opening are reviewed in turn, against accompanying harmonies in the string ensemble that accommodate them for the first time without any sense of strain. Later, the music assumes the character of a dialogue between soloists and orchestra in which various possible concluding pitches of the opening motif are essayed in response to its opening three notes, stated at their original pitch. Finally, the soloists settle on the mysterious three-note chord heard in the second section, with B flat in the top voice. This solution meets with approval. The string ensemble surrounds the soloists with a dissonant halo of conflicting pitches. In the luminous final cadence, the violins and violas move to a widely spaced high-lying chord of A flat, while the soloists sustain a ninth chord consisting of C, C sharp (alias D flat), G and B flat. The orchestra crescendos momentarily to an intense triple-*forte*, as the sustained texture in the upper parts is punctuated by dense low clusters in the cellos and basses. This fades to silence, exposing the ninth chord sustained in double-stops by the soloists, which dies away in its turn forming one of the most memorable of Deane's unpredictable endings.

5 Vocal and Dramatic Works

In view of the dramatic qualities that are such a striking feature of much of Deane's mature work, it is perhaps not surprising that he has been drawn to the medium of opera. To date, he has composed two works for the stage. The first, *The Poet and His Double* (1991), is a comparatively short work for six singers and actors with chamber ensemble lasting about twenty minutes. His second operatic score, *The Wall of Cloud*, is much more ambitious in scope, being a full-length chamber opera lasting approximately an hour and a half, which was completed in 1997 and represents one of Deane's most important achievements. The fact that Deane has not subsequently devoted more of his energies to writing operas may be attributed at least in part to the restricted musical infrastructures in Ireland. At present, there is no opera company in the country operating on a full-time basis. This is frustrating for the Irish composer wishing to write for the stage, since it is very difficult, if not virtually impossible, to secure the production of full-length operas requiring a large cast, a chorus and full symphony orchestra. There is little incentive for composers to undertake the very considerable labour of writing such scores if the prospect of a performance is so slight. In consequence, several prominent composers have, in recent years, increasingly turned their attention to chamber opera. This development has largely been made possible by the enterprise of Opera Theatre Company, a company based in Dublin that has concentrated on producing works that have either been written or adapted for chamber forces and are feasible for production in small theatres around the country. In Deane's case, writing for small forces has proved to be an imaginative stimulus rather than an irksome restriction, presenting him with a set of technical challenges that he has taken evident pleasure in surmounting. Nonetheless, it would be intriguing to see what kind of full-scale opera he might compose in time if the opportunity presented itself.

Given Deane's ambivalent responses to tradition and the music of the past — which have been marked by sympathetic reinterpretation and ironized negation — his engagement with the highly problematic medium of opera, which is convention-bound to an extent far greater than any other, is intriguing. Characteristically, the two operas he has composed so far differ strikingly in their approaches to the medium. They are also notable for their highly individual choice of subject matter.

The Poet and His Double was commissioned by Opera Theatre Company for inclusion in a bill of short operas by Irish composers and received its first performance in Dublin in 1991. Subtitled 'A Confrontation in Four Scenes with Prologue and Epilogue', its score is undoubtedly one of the most idiosyncratic of Deane's works, being a mixture of serious social commentary and satirical burlesque. For the plot,

Deane took as a starting point the visits to Dublin by the English poet Shelley and the French surrealist playwright Antonin Artaud in 1812 and 1937, respectively. Both men came to Ireland with the aim of accomplishing a specific task. The young Shelley's imagination had been deeply stirred by the plight of the Irish, most especially Irish Catholics, after the failure of the 1798 Rising and the subsequent passing of the Act of Union in 1800. He was filled with indignation at the repressive measures adopted by a succession of British governments towards the Catholic population and decided to travel to the country in order to foment radical political activity with the aim of achieving Catholic emancipation. He arrived in Dublin on 12 February 1812 and promptly threw himself into a feverish round of activities. Having made contact with various Irish political leaders, he addressed a public meeting on 28 February at which he received a very mixed reaction from his audience, which approved of his criticisms of the English administration but was openly hostile to his plea for religious toleration. Over the following weeks, he became rapidly discouraged by the public response to his polemics and eventually returned to England on 4 April, convinced that the situation was hopeless.

Artaud visited Ireland during a sombre transition in his career. After the failure of his play, *The Cenci*, in 1936 (which, incidentally, was based on an adaptation of a drama by Shelley), Artaud left Paris and set out on a journey to Mexico in a rather precarious mental state. On his return, he immersed himself in a study of the Tarot and developed the conviction that some world catastrophe on an apocalyptic scale was close at hand. Having acquired a walking stick that he imagined was endowed with magical properties he came to believe that it had once belonged to St. Patrick. On the strength of this, he set out for Ireland on what he regarded as a kind of spiritual mission to the Irish people, with the aim of restoring the cane to them and bringing about their spiritual renewal. The farcical, yet deeply tragic events that followed are as bizarre as any found in a surrealist play. After spending some time on the Aran Islands and in Galway, he travelled to Dublin. On a number of occasions, he started to preach animatedly in the street, attracting the attentions of curious, but uncomprehending crowds of onlookers. He was eventually arrested for vagrancy in the Phoenix Park on 23 September 1937, imprisoned for several days in Mountjoy Jail and subsequently deported to France. By this point, he had clearly been suffering from distressing paranoid delusions and he was committed to an insane asylum on the outskirts of Rouen. During the years of the German Occupation, he was transferred around the country from one asylum to another in which he was placed on starvation rations and sometimes savagely beaten in communal wards, being all the while constantly at risk of deportation to a concentration camp. This miserable existence was eventually brought to an end by his death from intestinal cancer in March 1948.

In his libretto, Deane conflates some of these events, dramatizing the confrontation between the two men and the citizens of Dublin in a series of short tableaux, which culminate in a depiction of Artaud's arrest. These juxtapositions succeed one another with an almost cinematographic swiftness, resulting in a concentrated dramatic intensity. Deane's depictions of the various events create a highly surreal atmosphere, in which the action appears to advance with the headlong momentum and elusive, yet inexorable inner logic of a vivid nightmare. This nightmarish quality extends to the musical means by which he characterizes the principal protagonists, making extensive use of parody and various exaggerated vocal effects to evoke the strange circumstances in which they find themselves.

In view of his evident indebtedness to surrealist techniques in constructing this libretto, Deane may have been influenced by Artaud's own theories of drama in his underlying conception of the piece. Although the title of the work, *The Poet and His Double*, obviously refers to the pairing and juxtaposition of the central protagonists whose predicaments mirror one another, it also alludes to the title of Artaud's seminal work, *The Theatre and Its Double*, the manifesto for his Theatre of Cruelty. One of the fundamental tenets of Artaud's radical aesthetic was that the dramatist should have a far more exalted aim than the purveyance of mere entertainment. He conceived dramatic spectacle as a form of ritual, during which

the members of the audience should be forced to confront the more disturbing aspects of existence in order to jolt them out of their unthinking and unquestioning acceptance of the world around them. He placed particular emphasis on the role that representation on stage of the grotesque and ugly elements of human life might play in assisting such a psychic transformation. This was the dimension of 'cruelty' that Artaud believed should constitute an essential part of the theatrical experience, a dramatic strategy, as one commentator has put it, by which the spectator is 'shocked bodily into an awareness of the undomesticated or the uncanny'.¹ Paradoxically, Artaud imagined his audience could be awakened to the possibility of alternative, more authentic ways of living through experiencing an unsettling counter-reality, or 'double', conjured up by the theatrical artifice of the dramatist, which by means of illusion sought to shatter the illusory shared 'reality' of everyday existence. Artaud himself makes this aim explicit: 'By this double I mean the great magical agent of which the theatre, through its forms, is only the figuration on its way to becoming the transfiguration. ... And the double of the Theatre is reality untouched by the men of today.'²

These theoretical ideas appear to have informed *The Poet and His Double* in several distinct ways. For a start, the work stages two events that might be described as spectacles of 'cruelty' in Artaud's meaning of the term; the public appearances of both Shelley and Artaud before the Dublin public constitute a kind of theatre in their own right. Shelley conjures up a counter-reality that his bourgeois audience finds deeply objectionable, if not grotesque — an Ireland in which religious tolerance and peaceful coexistence might be not only an attainable, but also a desirable possibility. Artaud, the prophet of sexual liberation and spiritual renewal, attempts to preach a message that his hearers, given the prevailing contemporary political and religious climate, would inevitably reject, if they had understood it at all. By means of these dramatic representations, each of which could legitimately be described as grotesque, Deane creates a spectacle of cruelty that forces the audience to confront a number of uncomfortable issues in a manner analogous to the action on stage, conjuring up for us thereby his own unnerving theatrical 'double'. Hence, the audience is first witnesses to the painful spectacle of Artaud's insanity. As it reflects on the subsequent train of events, which resulted in his incarceration in a series of asylums, it cannot but question the legitimacy of social constructions of madness and sanity that resulted in Artaud being deprived of his personal liberties. His fate appears to the audience as an undeserved and deeply tragic one. Shelley and Artaud, through their idealistic efforts to change the world, are confronted in the most ignominious fashion with their own impotence, as well as being forced to endure misprision and personal isolation. The Dublin crowd reject both men as cranks or crackpots, yet it is surely a moot point as to which of the conflicting understandings of the world advanced by the various protagonists should be construed as crazier — those of Shelley and Artaud, on the one hand, or the narrow-minded bigotry of the crowd.

Shelley and Artaud, of course, are part of a larger constellation of creative artists and thinkers (that includes, for example, Paul Celan and Walter Benjamin) whose presences are invoked in Deane's work and whose careers, however different they may be in other respects, are also paradigmatic of perennial conflicts between the artist and society. Deane's work suggests that this theme is a resonant one for him. It seems reasonable to propose that in aligning himself with these writers, he shares their conviction that art must of necessity be informed by a moral perspective. It would also seem clear that their uncompromising commitment to a difficult, complex art that resists easy assimilation and is antagonistic at least to some extent to various aspects of an existing social order has a considerable significance for him. It is tempting, therefore, to view *The Poet and His Double* as a meditation on the

1 Susie J. Tharu, *The Sense of Performance: Post-Artaud Theatre* (New Delhi, 1984), 57

2 Letter of 25 Jan. 1936 from Artaud to Jean Paulhan, quoted in Claude Schumacher with Brian Singleton, eds., *Artaud on Theatre* (London, 1989), 87–88

risks that are attendant on embracing such a commitment — particularly as Deane has described so eloquently the predicament of the Irish composer attempting to work in a country where the European art-music tradition has occupied such a marginal place in cultural life and where the risks for the modernist artist are perhaps correspondingly more acute. To the extent that he himself, in his double role of composer and librettist, is a further double of the artists represented on stage, engaged in a similar creative confrontation with his public, his opera raises the unsettling question of the extent to which an artist of this cast still runs a similar risk of marginalization.

Significantly, the opera also confronts the audience with a number of unsettling images of Ireland and the Irish. The Dublin crowds encountered by Shelley and Artaud are portrayed by Deane in a light that is decidedly unflattering, suggesting that they are not only intolerant, but also uncouth and even boorish. These scenes evoke the oppressive nature of Irish Catholicism, especially between the 1930s and the 1960s, when it was at its most triumphal — the Catholic Church dominated public life, making ostentatious public shows of piety and concerted attempts to suppress intellectual activity that challenged Catholic orthodoxy. These associations are explicitly evoked in the final jarring couplet of Deane's libretto, in which he reminds us that Artaud's incarceration occurred in the same year (1937) as the ratification of *Bunreacht na hÉireann*, the constitution drafted by Éamon de Valera, which, whatever its ostensible republican aspirations, also constituted an attempt to enshrine a Catholic worldview at the heart of Irish social and political life. This juxtaposition foregrounds questions about intellectual dissidence.

Although there can be little doubt as to Deane's position with regard to the issues the opera addresses, neither does he seek to minimize the grotesque, even inescapably farcical nature of the events that inspired it, which is perhaps the most discomfiting aspect of this score. Both of the central protagonists were sincere in their reforming zeal. But Shelley was only nineteen when he came to Dublin to make his first foray into politics. His project, given the circumstances of Irish life at the time, was unrealistically ambitious. Likewise the chaotic circumstances of Artaud's personal life scarcely boded well for his bizarre mission. This awareness informs Deane's characterization of both figures, which is shot through with ambiguities and heavy ironies, engendering a fierce dialectical tension between affirmation and negation in his portrayals. Shelley's shapely vocal lines at once portray him as a well-intentioned, rational child of the Enlightenment and an impractical dreamer. Artaud's music suggests both the ecstatic vehemence of the visionary and incoherent rant.

As a result, audience reactions to both characters remain in a state of tense, unresolved ambivalence, as Deane frustrates any straightforward response to the events on stage. Most disturbingly, perhaps, Deane makes it possible for the audience to laugh at these events, a response which, though justified to some extent, also threatens to imply complicity with the Dublin crowd's trivialization of sincerity; he thus dispels any illusions the audience may entertain of its own liberalism. In provoking this disquieting realization, Deane's spectacle of cruelty evokes a disturbing counter-reality, a perspective from which the artistic enterprise is viewed ambiguously: in part heroic, in part self-defeating.

Characteristically, when Deane came to compose his second operatic score six years later, he set himself the challenge of attempting something very different in nature, rather than producing a work in a similar vein. Like its predecessor, *The Wall of Cloud* was commissioned by Opera Theatre Company. After considering and rejecting a number of possible subjects as the basis of a libretto, Deane hit upon the idea of adapting a Chinese play dating from the early fourteenth century. This work, *The Soul of Ch'ien-nü Leaves Her Body*, by Chêng Teh-hui, is one of the finest plays of its period.³ It concerns the

3 A fascinating discussion of the circumstances that gave rise to the remarkable flowering of the drama in China at this period can be found in the Introduction to *Six Yüan Plays*, by Liu Jung-En (London, 1972).

tribulations experienced by a pair of young lovers. Ch'ien-nü, a young girl from a noble family, has been betrothed since childhood to Wang Wên-chü, whom she has never seen. When the pair finally meet, they fall deeply in love. However, Ch'ien-nü's mother insists that they cannot get married until her daughter's suitor passes the imperial examination, which will enable him to rise to the respected rank of scholar-official. The young couple reluctantly accept this condition and Wang Wên-chü leaves to commence his studies, promising to return when he has successfully completed them. Ch'ien-nü is disconsolate on account of the impassable 'wall of cloud' that her mother has placed between them and is also racked with anxiety that Wang Wên-chü will be unfaithful and quickly forget her. She falls ill with a mysterious illness which puzzles her doctors and stubbornly resists attempts at treatment, much to her mother's distress. In her ardent desire to be reunited with her lover, Ch'ien-nü's soul departs from her body and pursues Wang Wên-chü on his journey, catching up with him by a riverbank where he has halted for the night to rest. This lifelike apparition pleads with him to allow her accompany him; Wang Wên-chü is at first deeply reluctant to flout social conventions of respectability, but eventually yields to her passionate entreaties and agrees to elope with her, never suspecting for a moment that he has encountered a supernatural double of his betrothed, rather than Ch'ien-nü in the flesh. They move to the capital and marry, hoping to effect a reconciliation with Ch'ien-nü's mother when Wang Wên-chü passes his examination.

Time passes, during which the 'real' Ch'ien-nü continues to languish in her love-sickness, unaware of the miraculous event that has occurred. Since no word has come from Wang Wên-chü, she becomes convinced that he has betrayed her and will never return, morbidly dwelling on this possibility in her imagination. Eventually a letter from him addressed to Ch'ien-nü's mother arrives, informing her that he has now passed the examination and intends to return home with his bride. Ch'ien-nü believes her worst suspicions to have been confirmed and she is moved to furious indignation at what appears to be gratuitously humiliating treatment. Shortly thereafter, Wang Wên-chü and his wife arrive at the house. Ch'ien-nü's mother comes out to meet them and is astounded to see a woman exactly resembling her daughter standing at the threshold. She tells Wang Wên-chü that it must be a demon, explaining that her daughter has never left the house since his departure. Her son-in-law is deeply alarmed and draws his sword, threatening to slay his 'wife' if she does not reveal her true identity. Ch'ien-nü is summoned from her bedroom and at her appearance, her soul re-enters her body, restoring her to her former self. She explains to her bewildered mother and spouse the strange events that have occurred. The mystery is solved to general rejoicing and the curtain comes down as Ch'ien-nü's mother commands her servants to commence preparations for a magnificent wedding feast.

In his libretto, Deane follows this sequence of events very closely, but expunges all Chinese references, transposing the action to a fairytale-like setting that is not specifically evocative of any particular time or place. Nothing of significance is lost in this transposition and it was undoubtedly sensible to avert any sense of incongruity that might potentially arise from performances of the piece by a non-Chinese cast had the original setting been retained. The actual text of the original play, however, only serves him as a starting point and he refashions it completely for the purposes of his operatic adaptation. Certain passages are radically curtailed to eliminate possible *longeurs* in a musical setting; others are expanded to allow him greater scope to create telling emotional high points in musical terms. On the whole, however, the language of his libretto is faithful to the tone of the original and he has clearly been concerned to preserve its qualities of lyrical simplicity and directness. The only significant alteration in the characterization of the protagonists concerns the mother, who is a rather subordinate figure in Chêng Teh-hui's play. Deane rounds out the portrayal of this character considerably, endowing her with a greater depth of psychological complexity and consequently enabling her to constitute a more effective foil to the pair of young lovers. In Deane's adaptation, the mother's ostensible concern

for her daughter's future material well-being is a transparent rationalization of her real motivation in postponing the marriage — a deep-seated lingering resentment at the destruction of her own happiness resulting from her own husband's premature death and her scarcely repressed envy of the young couple's prospects. When her daughter subsequently falls ill, she is stricken with remorse, undergoing an arduous inner transformation in which her bitterness and cruelty yield to feelings of genuine empathy, compassion and warm maternal tenderness. Deane depicts this process of psychic growth with considerable skill, creating a resonant character that engages our imaginative sympathy to the point where her experiences almost come to constitute the opera's central dramatic focus.

Clearly, this second opera engages with a very different theme than *The Poet and His Double*, although there are obvious points of contact between the two works, particularly in their exploration of extreme emotional states and the 'doubling' of a central character (a device that also features in Deane's novel *Death of a Medium*). Nonetheless, the libretto of *The Wall of Cloud* is of a more traditional nature in its exploration of an archetypal operatic subject. Perhaps Deane, after composing a highly experimental work which either parodies or studiously ignores traditional operatic conventions, set himself a radically different compositional challenge, deliberately choosing a subject that would compel him to work within precisely the conventions he had previously rejected. Still, his second opera is paradoxically as experimental as his first, if in a far less immediately obvious way. One of the greatest difficulties inherent in setting a libretto of this nature is to find viable musical means to portray emotions of love and affection without sentimentality. This is particularly problematic for a composer working in a firmly contemporary idiom. On the one hand, a highly 'dissonant' setting of texts evoking such sentiments runs the risk of striking the listener as at best incongruous and at worst as unintentionally parodistic. On the other hand, a composer of this kind will understandably resist compromising his stylistic language by having recourse to nineteenth-century musical gestures, which are not only clichéd but also very difficult, if not impossible, to reconstitute convincingly at this remove without sounding like pastiche. A further difficulty is presented by the nature of the opera's plot, which ends in a clear resolution and transcendence of the preceding emotional conflicts. This sense of resolution must be conveyed in musical terms, yet the technical means through which this can be accomplished are far from obvious, particularly if a composer is reluctant to employ tonal symbolism in traditional ways.

An additional test of Deane's resourcefulness was presented by the comparatively restricted forces at his disposal, since *The Wall of Cloud* has a very modest cast of only four singers (two sopranos, a mezzo-soprano and a tenor), who are accompanied by a small chamber ensemble. The latter consists of six instrumentalists who play flute (doubling on piccolo, alto flute, descant recorder and ocarina), clarinet (doubling on bass clarinet), harp, violin, cello, double bass and percussion, the contribution of the percussionist being supplemented by intermittent interventions by other members of the ensemble who play various simple percussion instruments at a few points in the score. Although it is indeed possible, given sufficient ingenuity, to maintain continuous textural interest and variety over the course of an extended work using such small forces, as Britten demonstrated in his remarkable series of Church Parables (works, incidentally, for which Deane has a keen admiration), it is a feat that tests the composer's inventiveness to the utmost.

Deane's engagement with these technical and imaginative challenges stimulated him to evolve a new sound-world for this opera that marks a significant stylistic departure in his *oeuvre*, though it grows naturally out of his previous work and maintains an immediately recognizable continuity with it. Of particular note is his attempt to formulate a harmonic language that will not only afford him scope for lyrical expression appropriate to certain dramatic situations, but also allow him to create a web of long-range musical tensions symbolizing the progressive intensification and ultimate resolution of the highly charged emotional states experienced by the protagonists. While there is no question

at any point in the score of recourse to a traditional tonal procedures, Deane, by means of a carefully considered deployment of harmonic resources, organizes the elements of his musical language to obtain dramatic effects of tension and release comparable at least to some extent with those that can be achieved within tonality. In practice, this involves a finely graded stratification of the levels of harmonic intensity employed from scene to scene.

In this regard, the construction of the instrumental Prelude with which the opera opens deserves further attention. In the context of the opera as a whole, this Prelude serves a number of important functions. From a dramatic point of view, it establishes a mood of gentle melancholy and muted lyricism, which evokes both the tender affection between the young lovers as well as the troubled circumstances in which they find themselves, containing the merest hint of disruptive elements that are to become much more prominent as Act I proceeds. It is based almost entirely on a pregnant motif (marked *x* in Ex. 39 below) of two slowly rising semitones and a falling fifth, which functions as a leitmotif throughout the opera, constantly appearing in transformed guises and finally presented in a radiant apotheosis at the end of the work that expressly recalls the music of the very opening. The Prelude thus has the purely musical function of establishing the parameters of a distinctive complex of sonorities, comprising melodic, rhythmic, harmonic and textural elements, which is of prime importance in the overall musical argument of the work.

Ex. 39 *The Wall of Cloud*, Prelude to Act I, opening

The musical score for Ex. 39, *The Wall of Cloud*, Prelude to Act I, opening, is presented for six instruments: Flute, Clarinet in B \flat , 4 Bongos, Harp, Violin, and Violoncello. The tempo is marked as quarter note = 72. The score is in 4/4 time, with changes to 3/2 and 3/4. Dynamics range from *pp* to *ppp*. A motif 'x' is marked in the Clarinet part. The Flute, Clarinet, Violin, and Violoncello parts feature a melodic line with dynamics *pp*, *mf*, and *pp*. The Harp part features a harmonic accompaniment with dynamics *p* and *mp*. The 4 Bongos part features a rhythmic accompaniment with dynamics *pp, delicato* and *pp ppp*.

The harmonic organization of this complex is important. As Ex. 39 shows, the Prelude opens with varied statements of motif *x* in the combined strings and winds (its constituent notes sometimes

crossing between parts, *Klangfarbenmelodie* fashion), alternating antiphonally with a contrasting, gently undulating semitonal motif given to the harp and another instrument from the ensemble (at first the cello, later the clarinet and violin). Although the exact contour of *x* is not always maintained, its restatements emphasize the pitches sounded at its first appearance, namely A, B flat, B natural and E. The harmonizations of this motif during these opening statements have two additional significant features. Firstly, the last two notes are nearly always supported by chords that relate very clearly to a G major triad, either in its simplest form or else with added seconds, sixths or sevenths. Secondly, a closer examination of the harmony of the opening phrases reveals that the pitches for all of the chords could be interpreted as deriving from the simultaneous employment of various modally inflected forms of a white-note scale ascending from G to G, with the alternatively raised and lowered second, third and seventh degrees (or their enharmonic equivalents) being used especially prominently. From this set of pitches Deane generates harmonic entities that are not functional in any traditional sense, but project nonetheless a clear sense of G as the defining pitch around which the resultant polymodal harmonic complex is organized. The chords in the harp in bars 3–4 provide a good instance in point. Two of these chords could be classified as incomplete diatonic sevenths on E, comprising the notes E, B and D, with an additional note (A and A sharp, respectively); the fourth chord in bar 3 forms an incomplete diatonic seventh on G with an added C to yield G–B–C–F; the chord in bar 4, G–C–F–Bb, could be understood as relating to a seventh with either C or G as root; and so on. All of these chords can easily be related to G. The aural impression of G as a central pitch is further strengthened by the fact that only the G major triad is sounded in its unalloyed form; all the other chords, though many of them could be understood as deriving from tonal entities, are more ambiguous, thus throwing this chord into particularly emphatic relief.

An examination of the remainder of the Prelude reveals that the entire piece could be understood to constitute an extended prolongation of this harmonic region. The first section of the Prelude rises swiftly to a climax in bars 24–25, which is abruptly cut short to expose the pitch D in bar 26 (with a chromatic neighbour note C sharp sounded fleetingly in the harp) in the double bass. This pitch is then sustained for some time as a pedal, anchoring the opening of the new section firmly to G. Over it, to the accompaniment of more energetic quaver figuration in the harp, the flute, clarinet, violin and cello intone a flowing crotchet variant of motif *x* in imitative counterpoint, the same pitches, A, B flat, B natural and E, being emphasized in the upper part as insistently as before, as well as the additional note D, which has recently been brought into prominence. The paragraph rises to a second, more intense climax, featuring diminutions of the motif in various contrapuntal combinations, which become increasingly agitated. This passage also terminates abruptly at its culmination. A serene coda follows after a lengthy pause, when the thematic material is presented once more in a fragmented form, in slower rhythmic values and at a very soft dynamic level, but still continuing to hover around the same pitches before moving fleetingly to a sudden *fortissimo* A major triad, which signals the commencement of a transition to the prologue to Act I. Interestingly, in the closing ensemble of Act III, motif *x* is presented at the same pitches and with similar harmonies as in the Prelude, establishing a clear aural connection. This suggests that the original form of the motif, together with the harmonies that it generates, have a special significance in the work as a whole, since they eventually reassert their primacy at this key moment of dramatic and musical resolution. Hence, Deane's strategy has been to define a region of comparative harmonic stability in the Prelude, which serves as central point of musical organization in the opera as a whole.

Deane generates musical tensions in relation to this central pitch complex by a variety of means. Although the harmonic language of the later scenes displays a pronounced tendency to chromatic saturation as well as recourse to astringent chord formations markedly different in character to the

mellifluous harmonies of the Prelude, heightening of tension is not achieved solely by these devices; it is equally generated through contrasting levels of rhythmic intensity and textural activation, as well as through careful gradations of sonority, timbre and vocal tessitura. Indeed, its harmonic construction is determined to a considerable extent by transformations of material presented during the Prelude, lending *The Wall of Cloud* a closely worked structural unity.

When the three principal protagonists make their first appearance during the Prologue to Act I (which serves both to introduce the dramatis personae and to set the scene for the events that follow), each of them is associated with motifs and sonorities that clearly derive from material already heard. The youth's vocal lines are dominated by the interval of a minor third and often outline diatonic minor sevenths, a chord formation much in evidence during the Prelude. The instrumental accompaniment similarly features these patterns prominently, but now in rather more chromatic juxtapositions, furnishing an excellent example of how Deane imbues his original material with an intensified harmonic charge. The daughter's vocal lines feature consecutive rising semitonal ascents within the span of a tone, often followed by a descending leap, a contour clearly derived from the germinal motif^x; this motif also figures prominently in the accompaniment textures, embedded in harmonies featuring closely packed clusters of major and minor seconds, which derive from the vertical superimposition of the opening pitches of the same motif. (Later, however, when the daughter's spirit takes leave of her body, two different intervallic characterizations are employed, the vocal lines of her supernatural double continuing to feature whole tones, those of her earthly self semitones.)

The sonorities associated with the mother are characterized by an extensive use of unpitched percussion — here, the log drum and the Irish *bodhrán* — an element in the texture that was discreetly prefigured by the delicate bongo figurations in the Prelude. At the mother's appearance, these instruments intrude emphatically into the musical fabric with brusque rhythmic patterns hammered out in explosive crescendi, underlining the imperious, unyielding quality of the mother's personality. Her angular vocal lines — often commencing with a large intervallic ascent before descending swiftly into a stentorian chest register — are dominated by fourths, fifths and tritones. The contrast between her musical material and the more lyrical music associated with each of the lovers is further heightened by the rhythmic feature of very abrupt Scotch snaps, which suggest a highly strung emotional volatility underneath her formidably aloof exterior. The accompanying textures at this point are also very different in nature, introducing a set of highly charged sonorities that differ markedly from anything we have heard so far. In addition to the contributions of the unpitched percussion, the other instruments of the ensemble dwell obstinately on an abrasive seven-note chord, which is sounded on *tremolando* strings with snarling flutter-tonguing on the winds. This is interspersed with fragments of headlong semiquaver figurations deriving from diminutions of the mother's vocal contours, which frequently span a wide compass and are enunciated in a strident *fortissimo*. In this way, Deane introduces a variety of disruptive elements, which subvert the equilibrium established in the Prelude and prepare for an even greater intensification of the dramatic and musical tensions later in the score.

The opera as a whole is largely constructed as a set of developing variations on material deriving very closely from the Prelude, during which similar disruptive elements come into ever-greater prominence at moments of high tension. The opening of Act I, for example, in which the mother insists on a postponement of the marriage, features a deformation of the germinal motif, which moves in halting, soft staccato crotchets, scored for groups of instruments in widely separated registers — low-pitched contributions from the cello and double bass contrasting with high lying lines given to the piccolo, violin, harp and glockenspiel, the distance in pitch between the two groupings providing a potent aural image of the impending physical separation of the lovers. The daughter's lament at the end of the act employs an inverted variant of the rising semitonal motif heard at her first entrance, now extended

into longer sinuous lines, which descend through her entire vocal compass, suggesting anxiety and a struggle to retain a sense of hope. At two prominent points, as she reproaches her mother ('If you only wished to part us / You should never have left me see him'), semiquaver wind figurations obtrude that distinctly recall the textures of the mother's music during the Prologue. The daughter's music moves even further away from its 'normalized' form during her madness in Act III, when she has become convinced of her lover's infidelity. In her vocal line, the characteristic semitonal ascents succeed each other in increasingly intense fashion and the wide leaps become more pronounced and exaggerated. As she begins to dance, the semiquaver figurations in the winds appear once more, but this time in manic skirling triplets that outline a variant of her semitone motif, which is later sounded raucously on the clarinet. If the daughter's music increasingly suggests a disturbance of mental equilibrium, the mother's vocal lines steadily lose their angular quality and become much more lyrical, as her feelings of remorse and concern grow in intensity.

Many other aspects of the opera deserve close study. Deane's vocal writing is unfailingly sympathetic, and though it presents abundant challenges to the singer, its technical difficulties are rewarding to master. His scoring for the chamber ensemble is notable for its inventive resourcefulness, especially in its skilful deployment of percussion instruments. Apart from the role of the unpitched percussion in portraying the character of the mother, he employs a variety of pitched percussion together with cymbals and gong to evoke a sense of the numinous in a number of memorable passages, particularly the atmospheric *Nachtmusik* in Act II, when the daughter's supernatural double appears to her suitor by the river bank in the dead of night. This scene is one of the most texturally inventive in the entire score, combining delicate percussion tracery with an iridescent gossamer texture of harp chords and *glissandi*, harmonics and *tremolandi* in the strings to accompany the disembodied interjections of the ocarina, which evokes the plaintive cry of some mysterious nightbird. Together with the reconciliation scene with which the opera closes, it represents a high point in a score notable not only for its technical finesse, but also for its expressive lyricism and the warm humanity of its subject matter.

In addition to the two operas, Deane has also composed five significant works for voice and chamber ensemble that need to be considered in some detail here. The first of these, *Tristia*, for soprano and seven players (flute, doubling alto flute; piccolo clarinet, doubling bass clarinet; percussion; violin; viola; cello; and piano), was written in 1980. It consists of settings of three brief poems by different poets, all of them exploring desolate states of mind resulting from experiences of loss and of profound emotional injury. The first poem is Emily Dickinson's 'My Life Closed Twice Before Its Close', first published in the posthumous collection *Poems by Emily Dickinson, Third Series* in 1896 (sometimes printed in anthologies under the title 'Parting'). Like many of Dickinson's greatest poems, it is at once intensely private and universal. It alludes to two extremely painful losses that the narrator has personally experienced — bereavements, perhaps, or terminations of close relationships. Deane responds to the austere understatement and suppressed emotional intensity of the poem with a spare setting that proceeds mostly in *piano* and *pianissimo*. The solo soprano line is mostly confined to a low to medium register, as if in pointed avoidance of any overt rhetorical gestures. The instrumental textures are predominantly contrapuntal in nature, with the constituent lines appearing in very widely separated instrumental registers, creating an intense, yet highly remote atmosphere. While there is little exact repetition of material, the interval of a tritone, sounded prominently in the soprano's first phrase, features prominently in many of the contours. As the movement dies away into silence, with smouldering dense chords in the extreme bass of the piano and icy open fifths in the flute, clarinet and vibraphone, this mood of gloomy reverie is abruptly dispelled by an interlude of considerable violence, featuring rasping flutter-tonguing from the bass clarinet and *tremolos* from the piano, cello and percussion, which leads into the next section.

This is a setting of a highly compressed lyric by Paul Celan from the collection *Lichtzwang*, 'Ich kann dich noch sehen', in an English translation by Michael Hamburger, which lasts a mere thirty bars.⁴ The theme of this poem links up very neatly with the preceding one, as it conveys the difficulty of accepting an enforced separation from a beloved person and the sense of overwhelming loss attendant on it. The sonorities of this movement prefigure those of the opening of Deane's string trio, *Écart*, and they make extensive use of chords in high-lying artificial harmonics in the strings which are often constructed around tritones or adjacent chromatic notes (Ex. 40). These are combined with a fragmentary vibraphone counterpoint, doubled two or more octaves higher in the extreme treble of the piano. This exploitation of extremes of range has a symbolic appropriateness, supplying an aural correlative to the evocation of physical separation in the poem. The overall sense of harmonic movement is very slow, with the chordal aggregates being sustained at considerable length and activated texturally in various ways simultaneously. The soprano part in this movement involves a formidable level of technical difficulty on account of the high sustained lines which are required to be sung mostly in softer dynamics, conveying a sense of intense strain appropriate to the text.

Ex. 40 *Tristia*, bars 49–53

♩ = 54

Vibraphone *pp*, vibrando molto

Piano *ff* *ppp* *15^{va}*

Soprano *ppp* *f* *pp subito* *ppp* *mp* *p*
I can still see you

Violin *pp* *ff* *pp* *ff* *pp* *f*
con sord.

Viola *mf* *ppp* *ff* *pp subito*

Violoncello *p* *ff* *pp*

4 Paul Celan, *Poems of Paul Celan: A Bilingual German/English Edition*, trans. Michael Hamburger (New York, 2001), 306

A second eight-bar interlude, of an even greater violence than the first, intervenes, this time featuring the shrill, edgy sonority of the piccolo in a high register. After a very brief silence, the third song follows on directly. Here, Deane sets five stanzas of a Thomas Hardy poem from the collection *Poems of the Past and Present*, which is entitled 'De Profundis I' and prefaced with a motto from Psalm 102, 'Percussus sum sicut foenum, et aruit cor meum' ('my heart is smitten, and withered like grass', in the King James translation). It opens with the lines 'Wintertime nighs; / But my bereavement-pain / It cannot bring again' and proceeds to explore a central theme of Hardy's later poetry, the difficulty of coming to terms with the transience of human existence. Like the Dickinson poem, it intimates that the poet's harrowing experiences of loss have caused him to retreat into an attitude of stoical resignation, taking a grim comfort from the thought that 'Twice no one dies' — a line that establishes a satisfying symmetry with 'My Life Closed Twice'. The last stanza of the poem registers another similarity in theme to the Dickinson lyric: 'Black is night's cope; / But death will not appal / One who, past doubtings all, / Waits in unhope'.

Deane's setting is one of extreme economy. The accompaniment texture is underpinned almost until the very end by low-pitched, surging timpani rolls, over which the violin, the bass clarinet and the viola in turn supply angular counterpoints. As in the Dickinson setting, the vocal line mostly abstains from venturing above the *passaggio*, employing a highly flexible syllabic declamation. As can be seen in Ex. 41, its contours feature the tritone prominently, establishing a sense of formal linkage with the musical material of the preceding Celan setting. A number of other shapes, most notably a motif of an undulating third, are reminiscent of material from the first song. Towards the close, as the texture becomes fuller, the notes of an E flat triad are unobtrusively emphasized in the piano part, surrounded by a halo of natural harmonics in the strings. This quasi-tonal reference is particularly striking, since it occurs in the context of a score in which such references are otherwise absent. Deane has commented,

clearly the overall feel of the work is one of unremitting desolation and the Hardy text leaves no room for light, yet this purely instrumental ending seems, I believe, to be a reminder that light exists — you just can't always see it. Cutting across the text can be an important aspect of 'setting' it — perhaps 'setting' it in context.⁵

These remarks suggest that the conclusion of the work, as in many of Deane's scores, constitutes a fresh point of departure, rather than conveying a definite sense of finality, as one might expect from the Hardy poem.

Deane's next song cycle, *Achair*, for soprano and nine players, was composed in 1987. This work is of particular interest, as it is one of the very few compositions in which Deane sets texts in the Irish language or attempts to evoke an Irish setting. Previously, he had set an Irish text only once, in a short unaccompanied choral piece entitled *Slán le Suirí*, written in 1974.⁶ In *Achair* Deane chose to set poems by Máirtín Ó Direáin (1910–88), one of the most prominent Irish language poets of his generation. The subject matter of these is clearly linked with the emotional world of *Tristia*, a fact underscored by the title, which can be translated as 'journeys', but which also conveys the notion of physical separateness and temporal distance. Two of the four lyrics deal explicitly with the loss of a lover; a third explores feelings of intense personal isolation, while the remaining poem considers the destructive effect of lies and petty quarrels on human relationships.

⁵ Deane to author, 20 June 2006

⁶ Only a year after completing *Achair*, however, Deane composed a colourful score for a documentary film, *Mórchuid Cloch is Gannchuid Cré* [Much Stone and Little Soil], made by the director Muiris Mac Conghail.

Ex. 41 *Tristia*, bars 87–97

♩ = 54
con sord.

Timpani

Soprano

Violin

Win - ter time nighs;—

Timpani

S.

Vln.

But my be-leave - ment-

Deane's settings are organized into one continuous musical design lasting almost twenty minutes, with the individual songs linked by short interludes. Although the score is serious in mood throughout, it inhabits a sound-world of far greater warmth and sensuousness than *Tristia*, the inventive writing for the chamber ensemble lending it a more immediate surface appeal. The work is scored for an ensemble of flute (doubling recorder), oboe, clarinet (doubling bass clarinet), percussion, harp and string quartet. Its harmonic language, although still freely chromatic, is very noticeably different from that of the previous work, incorporating a greater variety of diatonic or quasi-tonal materials. Deane does not attempt to incorporate Irish folk music into his score either directly or in a stylized evocation of it, as Irish composers of an earlier generation might have done. To have done so would have introduced an element into the score's sound-world incongruous with the urbane sophistication of Ó Direáin's poems; also, for a composer such as Deane, the employment of such materials in a manner quite devoid of irony would have been decidedly problematic. Apart from his score written in 1988 for the documentary film *Mórchuid Cloch is Gannchuid Cré*, a biographical sketch of the writer and activist Máirtín Ó Cadhain, which represents something of a special case on account of its subject matter, explicit references to Irish folk music are few in Deane's work.

The first poem, 'Faoiseamh a Gheobhadsa' [I Will Have Respite], portrays the narrator's feelings of relief at returning home to the Aran Islands and being able to escape, at least for a time, from uncongenial surroundings and company. The second stanza offers some clues as to the reasons for his dejected state of mind and hints at his feelings of isolation:

Faoiseamh a gheobhadsa	I will have respite
Seal beag gairid	For a short while
I measc mo dhaoine	Amongst my people
Ó chrá croí,	From heartache,
Ó buairt aigne,	From anxiety of mind,
Ó uaigneas duairc,	From morose loneliness,
Ó chaint ghontach,	From wounding talk,
Thiar ag baile.	Back at home in the west.

Deane remarks that these lines had a personal resonance for him, since he began to write the work shortly after he returned from Germany to live in Ireland.⁷ He responds with a very simple setting, in which warmly expansive vocal lines alternate with passages of *Sprechstimme* to convey these contrasting emotions. In the first stanza, they unfold over sustained clusters in the strings that alternate with dark, low-lying figures in the harp (Ex. 42). The harmonic aggregates are at times fairly diatonic in nature, the string chord in bars 1–3, for example, containing all the notes of an F major scale. As is almost always the case in Deane's work, these sonorities are never employed in a manner that might suggest orthodox tonal functions, however, and are utilized in a wider chromatic context. The second stanza is accompanied by a contrasting texture, with delicate harp *glissandi* and violin arabesques, which breaks off for the concluding five lines, which are set in an understated *parlando*. As in *Tristia*, Deane refrains from setting highly charged lines such as these in an overtly dramatic fashion, allowing the first instrumental interlude to portray the 'anxiety of mind' more indirectly.

The second poem, 'Reilig' [Graveyard], is elusive, having the quality of a mysterious incantation. It opens with an evocation of the atmosphere of a moonlit graveyard, which, one infers from the cryptic concluding lines, forms part of a symbolic landscape of the mind, a place where a close relationship, which came to an end through deception, has been interred. Deane's setting is reminiscent of the Celan setting in *Tristia* and of certain passages in *Écart* in the prominent employment of long sustained chords in string harmonics and its general atmosphere of icy remoteness. The interlude that follows provides emotional relief, reverting to a daylight sound-world that evokes the bleak landscape of the west of Ireland. It is largely scored for a trio of wind instruments, accompanied by the faint chiming of tubular bells and cowbells.

As it proceeds, the music becomes more agitated, leading into the declamatory opening of the third song, 'Fuaire' [Coldness]. The subject matter is once more closely related to the texts of *Tristia* in its depiction of the pain of separation from a lover, her physical absence from her familiar place in the narrator's bed being a persistent reminder of her loss. Once again, Deane chooses to set this poem in a simple manner, the soprano's flexible *arioso* being accompanied by long, static chords built mostly from adjacent notes of the chromatic scale. The interlude linking the third and fourth songs alternates unaccompanied, widely ranging lines shared between several instruments, a texture that emphasizes the prevailing atmosphere of desolation, interrupted at two points by dense string clusters that have been heard previously in the first song. This bleak mood prevails in the setting of the fourth poem,

⁷ Deane to author, 3 July 2006

Ex. 42 Achair, opening

The musical score for 'Achair, opening' is written for seven instruments and a soprano voice. The tempo is marked as ♩ = 54. The score begins with a key signature of one flat and a 4/4 time signature, which changes to 5/4 and then 3/4. The instruments are: Antique Cymbals, Harp, Soprano, Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Violoncello. The Soprano part includes the lyrics: 'con sord., sul tasto Faoi-seamh a gheo-bhad-sa seal beag gair id'. The Harp part includes the instruction '(lasciare vibrare tutte le note)'. The string parts (Violin I, Violin II, Viola, Violoncello) are marked 'con sord., sul tasto' and play a similar melodic line. The dynamic markings range from *ppp* to *mp*. The score includes various performance markings such as 'l. v.', 'Maracas', and '(pedal gliss.)'.

which is similar in theme to the third. The narrator muses on his inability to forget the lover he has lost, struck by the contrast between his mental turmoil and the calm of his natural surroundings. Like the preceding song, the accompaniment textures are predominantly static, only the contours of the vocal line suggesting a state of inner agitation. As if making explicit reference to the Hardy setting in *Tristia*, the closing bars feature a widely spaced triad — this time a chord of A flat — in the strings against conflicting chromatic harmonies in the harp and winds.

November Songs, a cycle comprising settings of six poems by Patrick Kavanagh (1904–67) for tenor and five instruments (oboe, bass clarinet, piano, violin and cello), was composed three years later in 1990. Deane deliberately avoided setting any poems that are particularly well-known, choosing instead early impressionistic lyrics uncharacteristic of the mature Kavanagh.⁸ If the preceding poems explore the traumatic emotional effects of loss, the Kavanagh poems mourn lost opportunities to enter into close

8 Deane to author, 23 June 2006

personal relationships. These lyrics have a marked similarity of theme to *The Great Hunger*, Kavanagh's well-known long poem evoking emotional and sexual frustration, handling the subject with remarkable sensitivity and tact. Through his poetic persona, Kavanagh conveys an anguished awareness of the inexorable passage of time, as he attempts to reconcile himself to the fact that emotional fulfilment may forever elude him. This inner struggle is memorably captured in the lyric, 'Tragic Autumn', which, in Deane's setting, constitutes what is perhaps the emotional centre of gravity of *November Songs*:

Autumn I'd welcome had I
 Known love in summer days
 I would not weep for flowers that die
 If once they'd bloomed for praise.
 I would not cry to any tree
 Leaf lost, a word of misery.
 I would not make lament although
 My harvest were a beggar's woe.

Deane is very careful to avert any danger of lapsing into sentimentality, responding with spare musical imagery that is aptly suited to the understated, rugged lyricism of the poems. He also includes a poem, 'Matthew Meers', that treats this central theme in an ironic, deflating manner, allowing him to explore it from another, very different perspective.

The sound-world of this score differs notably from the preceding cycles, in part because its harmonic language draws more consistently on quasi-tonal and diatonic material than does that of *Tristia* or *Achair*, seeming in some respects to anticipate the sonorities of *The Wall of Cloud*. The opening song, for example, makes consistent use of aggregates of notes derived from various modal complexes, initially of A and E minor, a procedure reminiscent of the Prelude to the latter work. As can be observed from Ex. 43, the opening bars of the first song, 'November Song', are all based on an aggregate of the pitches A, B, C, D, E, F, G and G sharp, a white note Aeolian scale with a variable seventh degree. When the tenor enters in bar 9, this complex changes to E, F sharp, G, A, B, C, D and D sharp, an identical structure transposed up a perfect fifth. Any sense of harmonic function or of a prevailing tonal centre, however, is offset by the 'unorthodox' voice leading and the distribution of the pitches when they appear in vertical formations such as in bar 6.

The management of the instrumental textures is also rather different; static textures feature prominently in the earlier works, whereas here Deane tends to employ consistent figures with distinctive motivic contours throughout each song. On the whole, the textures of *November Songs* are much more rhythmically active and occasionally become quite full in sonority, the intense fifth song, 'Innocence' providing a good instance in point. They are also very sharply contrasted in character from song to song. The textures of the first song, for example, are comparatively sparse and linear; while those of the second (in which the winds are omitted), make prominent use of the violin — prompted by an explicit reference to this instrument in the poem — and chordal patterns and *arpeggio* figurations situated high in the treble of the piano. The third song is accompanied by the piano alone, while the fourth, the setting of 'Matthew Meers', points the sardonic humour of the text by setting much of it as a rapid patter to the accompaniment of quirky woodwind runs and breathless syncopated chords, a texture reminiscent of certain passages in *The Poet and His Double*. The last song, 'Wet Evening in April', opens with an unaccompanied setting of the entire lyric. The contours of this vocal line are then taken up and elaborated at some length by the chamber ensemble. In a characteristically unexpected final gesture, the tenor enters once more with a reprise of his closing phrase (heard against the fading

Ex. 43 November Songs, opening

$\text{♩} = 52$

Oboe
sfp *mf* *p* *mf* *p*

Bass Clarinet in Bb
sfp *mf* *pizz.* *p* *mf* *p*

Violin
pizz. *mf*

Violoncello
pizz. *mf*

Pno.
f

Vln.
arco *pp, senza vibrato* *ppp* *pp* *sf*
arco *ppp* *pp* *sf*
Red. *poco vibrato*

Vc.
pp, senza vibrato *ppp* *pp* *sf*

Pno.
f, secco *mp* *p*

T.
pp, senza vibrato *p*
He is training his colt_

Vln.
pp, senza vibrato

Vc.
pp, senza vibrato

sounds of the last chord of the previous section, which is sustained by the pianist), leaving the final word of the poem, ‘melancholy’, firmly imprinted on the listener’s mind.

For his next cycle, *Una musica riposa* [A music reposes] of 1996, Deane turned to the poet Mario Luzi (1914–2005), a close friend of Eugenio Montale and, like him, widely considered to be one of the most significant Italian writers of his generation. Luzi first came to prominence in the early 1930s as a member of the ‘hermetic school’ that emerged in Florence with Carlo Bo as its principal theorist. He had pronounced Francophile sympathies (he spoke French fluently and produced distinguished translations of Racine) and his early work in particular clearly reveals the influence of Mallarmé. Much of his poetry explores the individual’s quest for fulfilment and the transient nature of human existence, being notable for its technical sophistication and highly inventive imagery. The four lyrics selected by Deane come from collections written between 1942 and 1956, and are all rather elusive in nature, presenting considerable interpretative difficulties. The first three are love poems, but of a rather unusual kind, invoking the beloved’s presence indirectly through sensuous nature imagery. The middle stanzas of the third poem, ‘Oscillano le fronde’ [The fronds sway] should serve to convey something of their highly charged atmosphere:

*Un respiro sensibile fra gli alberi
è passato, una vaga essenza esplosa,
volge intorno ai capelli carezzevole,
nel portico una musica riposa.
Ah questa oscura gioia t’è dovuta,
il segreto ti fa più viva, il vento
desto nel rovo sei, sei tu venuta
sull’erba in questo lucido fermento.*

A perceptible breath has passed
amongst the trees, a vague essence explodes,
swirls around the head like a caress,
under the porch a music reposes.
Ah, you are the cause of this obscure joy,
the secret makes you more alive, you are
the wind that awakens the thorn bush,
it is you who appeared on the grass in this
lucid ferment.

The cycle closes with a setting of a highly enigmatic poem, which is much darker in subject matter, presenting a series of images that hint at a sombre vision of the human condition:

*La notte lava la mente.
Poco dopo si è qui come sai bene,
fila d’anime lungo la cornice,
chi pronto al balzo, chi quasi in catene.
Qualcuno sulla pagina del mare
Traccia un segno di vita, figge un punto.
Raramente qualche gabbiano appare.*

The night washes the mind.
Soon after, we are here, as you know well,
a line of souls along the ledge,
Some ready to jump, some as if in chains.
Somebody on the page of the sea
Draws a sign of life, fixes a point.
Rarely a gull appears.

Deane’s decision to conclude the cycle with this lyric, which serves as a counterweight to the radiantly affirmative first and third poems, is an interesting one, as it suggests a thematic link with the previous song cycles.

These Italian texts prompted Deane to experiment with a rather more florid style of word-setting than in the previous cycles, or, for that matter, in his Leopardi setting *... e mi sovviene l’eterno* (... and I remember the eternal) of 1987, commissioned for the Seminar on Contemporary Choral Music at the Cork International Choral Festival. In the latter work, the words are set for the most part in a very restrained, syllabic manner that seems designed to offset the lyricism of the poem, making much use of rhythmic speech and on occasion fragmenting individual words into their constituent phonemes.

In *Una musica riposa*, by contrast, the word-setting is much more flamboyant and features abundant melismata, the opening of ‘Oscillano le fronde’, which is shown in Ex. 44, being a good example. The harmonic language of the score reverts to a more chromatic idiom than *November Songs*; tonal references are conspicuously absent and the harmonic aggregates employed are derived fairly consistently from gapped scales with irregular juxtapositions of tones and semitones. The instrumental writing displays Deane’s customary resourcefulness and skill in devising appropriate musical imagery to amplify the verbal imagery of the text.

Ex. 44 *Una musica riposa*, ‘Oscillano le fronde’, bars 2–8

Mezzo-soprano
[instruments omitted]

$\text{♩} = 72$ *mp*

O - - - scil-la-no le fron de, il cie lo in vo-ca la lu - na.

f *p* *mp* *mf* *f*

Un - de - si - de - ri - o vi - vo - - - - - dall' om - bra cos-tel - la - ta,

p *mf* *f*

l'a - - - ri - a giuo-casul pra-to. Qua-le-pre-sen-za s'ag-gi - ra?

One important score remains to be considered in this chapter, which, although Deane does not regard it as a ‘vocal work’ in any conventional sense, is included here for the sake of convenience. This is *Passage Work*, a work for tape, soprano and chamber ensemble lasting approximately ten minutes, which was composed in 2001. For a number of years, Deane has been planning to write a series of works collectively entitled *Landscapes of Exile*, of which *Passage Work* is the first score to have been completed. To judge from the text of *Passage Work* and the text collage that Deane is in the process of assembling for a projected second work entitled *Siberia*, it seems that these compositions will deal with the theme of exile, both in a literal sense as well as in the more metaphorical sense of spiritual exile, exploring the experiences of those who are alienated from the society in which they live on account of social or political injustice. In its engagement with the themes of marginalization, exclusion, oppression and conflict, these works touch on some of Deane’s most fundamental concerns. He has recounted how he began to write it during the earliest phase of the second Palestinian intifada against Israeli occupation in 2000.⁹ As mentioned above, Deane composed his Oboe Concerto, which dramatizes the experience of exile and oppression, shortly after his return from the Occupied Palestinian Territories during the first intifada. As the new work started to take shape in his mind, it crystallized around a similar theme. Although its subject matter was influenced to some extent by Deane’s responses to events in the Middle East, his score, like the Oboe Concerto, emphasizes the universality of these experiences, not least by including quotations from the Jewish writers Paul Celan and Walter Benjamin.

9 Raymond Deane, ‘Passage Work: Preview’, *Journal of Music in Ireland*, 2, 1 (2001), 30

Celan and Benjamin, as we have seen, are writers for whom Deane has unbounded admiration and who have exercised an important influence on his own work. Earlier in 2000, he had visited the Spanish Catalan village of Portbou, where Benjamin, believing he was about to be deported back to France and sent to a Nazi concentration camp, had committed suicide in 1940. Deane has described how he began to finalize his choice of quotations for the text collage during this visit and subsequent travels:

[In Portbou] I ... was deeply moved by Israeli sculptor Dani Karavan's memorial to Benjamin, entitled *Passages*, the foundation stone of which was laid in 1990, the fiftieth anniversary of his death. This monument consists of some 85 steps descending steeply within rust-coloured walls towards the sea, but stopping halfway at a sheet of glass [that, as Konrad Scheurmann remarks,] 'may provide assurance against falling without, however, alleviating the feeling of insecurity.' Nearby is the cemetery where the local community has erected a simple memorial to Benjamin. Both monuments bear inscriptions taken from Benjamin's own works. The former: 'It is more difficult to honour the memory of the nameless than that of the celebrated'; the latter: 'There never exists a document of culture that is not simultaneously a document of barbarism.' Both of these citations are used in my *Passage Work's* text-collage.

After my Portbou visit I fetched up in the spectacularly beautiful French Catalan town of Collioure. Being a fanatical visitor of cemeteries, I soon found the grave of Antonio Machado, who had fled here from fascist Spain with his family in 1939; worn-out and grief-stricken, he survived for only a month, dying in the same room as his mother (who died three days later). I was familiar with Machado's work through settings by Dallapiccola and Nono, and was struck with his use of the imagery of paths and steps and the strange link between this and Karavan's monument to Benjamin ('*Caminantes, son tus huellas / el camino, y nada más; / caminante, no hay camino, / ... Sino estelas en la mar.*' [Traveller, your footsteps / are the path, and nothing more; / traveller, there is no path, / ... only tracks in the ocean]).¹⁰

The title of Karavan's monument makes allusion to Benjamin's posthumously published *Passagenwerk* (generally referred to in English-speaking countries as *The Arcades Project*), an encyclopaedic assemblage of extracts from contemporary accounts of nineteenth-century Parisian social, cultural and political life interspersed with aphorisms and passages of commentary in which Benjamin attempted to analyse the forces shaping the values and attitudes prevalent in a modern industrial society, and in particular, the ways in which these exerted a sinister, brutalizing influence on human interaction. Benjamin's working title *Passagenwerk* refers to the very emblem of this emergent consumer society, the nineteenth-century shopping arcades with their maze-like construction of interconnected passages. It translates literally as 'Passage Work', a compound word that Deane adopted in turn as the title for his score because it is also a technical musical term.

To the previous Benjamin quotations, Deane adds a fragment from *The Arcades Project*: 'to identify the sea upon which we are voyaging, and the shore from which we set out'.¹¹ Celan is represented by

10 Deane, 'Passage Work: Preview', 30. For the sources of the Benjamin quotations, see n. 113 below. The Machado quotation comes from No. 29 of 'Proverbs and Songs' from the collection *Fields of Castille* and the complete poem can be found in Antonio Machado, *Campos de Castilla*, ed. José Luis Cano (Madrid, 1974), 146. The citation from Konrad Scheurmann is from 'Borders, Thresholds, Passages', in Ingrid and Konrad Scheurmann, eds., *For Walter Benjamin: Documentation, Essays and a Sketch*, trans. Timothy Nevill (Frankfurt am Main, 1993), 250.

11 The first quotation ('*Schwerer ist es, das Gedächtnis der Namenlosen zu ehren als das Berühmten. Dem Gedächtnis der Namenlosen ist die historische Konstruktion geweiht*') comes from Benjamin's notes for his *Über den Begriff der Geschichte* [Theses on the Philosophy of History] and can be found in Walter Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften*, herausgegeben von Rolf Tiedemann und Hermann Schweppenhäuser, I.3 (Frankfurt am Main, 1973), 1241. The second quotation ('*Es ist niemals ein Dokument der Kultur, ohne zugleich*

a line from his poem 'Es war Erde in ihnen' [There was Earth Inside Them] from the collection *Die Niemandrose*: 'Where did the way lead when it led nowhere?'¹² The text collage is completed by two further quotations from a pair of writers who were also exiles, the Chilean poet Pablo Neruda ('where the militant sea / dashes its blue waves beneath the angry foam') and the Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish ('Where should we go after the last frontier, / where should the birds fly after the last sky?').¹³ According to the composer, the selection of texts was to some extent prompted by the writers having pronounced left-wing sympathies. *Passage Work* is a richly allusive score in the density of its references and the fragmentary text is clearly very apposite in view of its subject matter. Although it has a perceptible coherence of design, it is nonetheless highly resistant to paraphrase, and like the music, requires a considerable effort on the part of the listener to tease out possible meanings. Ultimately, these interpretative difficulties reflect the difficulty encountered by most of us in understanding the suffering of victims of violence or oppression experience, since these experiences are so remote from our own: no matter how sincere our efforts, our comprehension will inevitably be very incomplete. This raises the question of the extent to which it is possible for the artist to engage successfully with such extreme experiences in his or her work. Deane's reflections on this subject are of considerable interest:

Whatever about the thematic links between these excerpts [from which the text collage is assembled], there are those who will probably find their juxtaposition provocative; I make no apology for this, but would nonetheless stress that a juxtaposition is not an equation. ...

Passage Work bears the dedication '... *das Gedächtnis der Namenlosen zu ehren*' ('to honour the memory of the nameless'), quoting the Benjamin inscription from Dani Karavan's haunting memorial. As I write this account, the numbers of the slaughtered nameless are being swelled by yet another monstrous assault on the Middle East by the 'crusading' West. Let me finish by quoting Karavan himself: 'I think it is very dangerous to work on such a subject because you usually feel forced to do things very expressively — as a kind of loud scream ... I would never be able to work in such a way. I believe in the power of stillness and a degree of reserve to awaken emotions. It's impossible to represent aggression by aggression. The artistic means would never be capable of competing with the terrible reality ...' ... Perhaps, unlike sculpture or architecture, and with no thought of 'competing', music may allow itself the occasional loud scream; although the many strands of *Passage Work* do ultimately converge on 'the power of stillness and a degree of reserve', there are times when such a scream is the only articulate response to the injustices of our world.¹⁴

Passage Work commences with what the composer describes as a 'cataclysmic tutti', which suggests a symbolic evocation of precisely such a scream, protracted to considerable length. The material for this opening section echoes the soloist's patterns of ascending and descending figurations in a section of the first movement of the Oboe Concerto, underlining the close connections between the

ein solches der Barbarei zu sein') from Thesis VII of *Über den Begriff der Geschichte* and the German original can be found in Walter Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften*, I,1, 696.

12 'Wohin gings, da's nirgendhin ging?'; see *Poems of Paul Celan*, 156.

13 The Neruda quotation is from the poem 'Canto en la muerte y resurrección de Luis Companys', from the third part of *Residencia en la tierra*. The Spanish original runs '... donde el mar combatido/deshace sus azules bajo la espuma brava.' An English translation of the complete poem can be found in Pablo Neruda, *Residencia en la tierra*, trans. Donald D. Walsh (New York, 1973). The Darwish quotation comes from a poem entitled 'The Earth presses against us' in the collection *Unfortunately, It was Paradise: Selected Poems* (Berkeley, 2003).

14 Deane, 'Passage Work (Preview)', 30. The interview with Karavan to which Deane refers is 'Dani Karavan on the "Passages" Memorial to Walter Benjamin', in Ingrid and Konrad Scheurmann, *For Walter Benjamin*, 255–63.

two works. Deane draws a parallel between Benjamin's deliberate concentration on the minutiae of everyday Parisian life in *Passagenwerk* and the compositional process in his own score by which this oboe 'passage work' from the concerto is imbued with unexpected significance:

In the classical/romantic concerto [the term 'passage work'] denotes a mere occasion of virtuosic display, but here such 'display' forms an intrinsic part of the musical argument. The process whereby details hitherto considered trivial are brought to the foreground of our attention typifies the thought of Walter Benjamin, [who] towards the end of his life, ... sought to encapsulate such an approach to historiography in his unfinished *Passagen-Werk*.¹⁵

These rising and falling figures permeate the instrumental and tape parts of *Passage Work* with great consistency, creating an impression of constant turbulent movement in its more hectic sections.

Here, it is only possible to make a number of general observations about the musical language and structural organization of this work, which, although comparatively brief, is highly complex in nature, even by the standards of Deane's other, more intricate scores. According to the composer, it was the first work in which he employed a technique of constructing harmonic aggregates with an intervallic constitution loosely based on the Fibonacci series. Tonal references seem more or less absent and the pitch organization maintains a consistently high level of chromatic saturation. The rhythmic organization of the score, like a few of the works previously discussed, is reminiscent of New Complexity in its constant recourse to densely layered polyrhythms. One of the most notable features of the score, certainly on initial hearings, is the relentless gestural violence of much of the vocal and instrumental writing in its spiky angularity and its persistent recourse to louder dynamic registers. The soprano part is conceived as another strand in the texture, on a par with all the others, rather than automatically assuming prominence in the foreground. This calls for a range of colouristic effects apart from conventional singing, including spoken declamation, whispering and *Sprechstimme*. In places, phrases from the collage text are fragmented further into their constituent phonemes — a technique that was also employed in the writing for the two additional vocalists on the prerecorded tape, whose lines are synchronized with the live soloist in such a way as to suggest a distorted hallucinatory echo of her part. The employment of electronic media in this score represents another important creative departure in Deane's work, since he had previously used them only once before, in his incidental music to *Vampirella and the Company of Wolves*, a dramatized version of two stories by Angela Carter, which was performed in the Project Arts Centre, Dublin, in 1995. The tape for *Passage Work*, which was realized with the assistance of Jürgen Simpson, also makes use of electronically manipulated sounds of footsteps on iron and asphalt, in allusion to the Machado quotation in the text collage. In view of the effectiveness with which these sonorities are integrated into the sound-world of this score, it will be interesting to see whether Deane might attempt to explore the possibilities of electronic media more fully in future works.

The music of Deane, like that of virtually every other Irish composer, has largely been subject to a critical neglect that is wholly unmerited and arises from the somewhat impoverished state of Irish musical life that has prevailed until comparatively recently. As should be clear from the foregoing account, his creative achievement is a rich and distinctive one and it undoubtedly deserves to come to wider international attention. If this book serves to stimulate wider interest in Deane's work, it will have amply served its purpose.

¹⁵ Deane, 'Passage Work (Preview)', 30

Appendices

I. Catalogue of Compositions

The information presented here is based on the catalogue of Raymond Deane's compositions on the website of the Contemporary Music Centre, Dublin (www.cmc.ie). A number of works that the composer has subsequently withdrawn have not been included. Scores and archival recordings of Deane's music can be consulted in the Contemporary Music Centre, which also issues performance materials and makes copies of works available on request for private study purposes. A list of Deane's compositions that have been recorded for commercial release is given in Appendix II.

A. Operas and Other Dramatic Works

Krespel: Four Radiophonic Tableaux (1983)

S-solo / 3 speaker / satb / vn-solo / 3232 / 3331 / 2 perc / pf / hp / str [30']

The Poet and his Double [chamber opera] (1991)

Mez-solo / T-solo / Bar-solo / 3 actors / cl / hn / perc / pf / vn / vc [22']

The Wall of Cloud [chamber opera] (1997)

2 S-solo / Mez-solo / T-solo / fl [=fl in G, picc, ocarina or srec] / cl [=bcl] / perc / hp / vn / vc / db [85']

B. Works for Symphony, Chamber and String Orchestra

Sphinxes (1972): 2222 / 4231 / timp / perc / pf / str [7']

Embers (1973, rev. 1981): str [8']

Enchaînement (1981–82): 4444 / 6442 / 7 perc / pf [=cel] / hp / str [17']

dé/montage (1984): 1111 / 1110 / perc / pf [=cel] / str [1.1.1.1.1] [18']

Chamber Concertino (1985): 1111 / 1110 / 2 perc / hp / pf [=cel] / str [1.1.1.1.1] [18']

Mórchuid Cloch is Gannchuid Cré (1987): 1100 / 0100 / concertina / uilpipes / perc / 2 hp / gui / mand / str [25']

Thresholds (1987, rev. 1991): 3[=2 trec]333 / 4331 / uilpipes / 3 perc / cel / hp / mand / str [19']
 Catenae (1991): 1111 / 0100 / perc / str [1.1.1.1.1] [23']
 Epitomes (1993–94): 2222 / 4231 / perc / str [8']
 Dekatriad (1995): 8 vn / 2 va / 2 vc / db [8']
 Ripieno (1998–99): 4333 / 4331 / 4 perc / pf [=cel] / hp / str [30']
 ... a fire was in my head ... (2002): str [3.3.2.2.1] [3']
 Samara (2005): 3333 / 4231 / 4–5 perc / pf [=cel] / hp / str [11']

C. Concertante Works

Compact (1976): pf-solo / 2121 / 2221 / 5 perc / hp / cel / str [10']
 Quaternion (1988): pf-solo / 2222 / 2221 / cel / 2 perc / hp / str [15']
 Krespe's Concerto (1990): vn-solo / 3333 / 4331 / 2 perc / hp / pf / str [23']
 Concerto for Oboe and Large Orchestra (1993–94): ob-solo / 3233 / 4331 / ssax [= asax] / 4 perc / pf / org
 [ad lib.] / hp / str [22']
 Violin Concerto (2003): vn-solo / 3232 / 2221 / pf / 3 perc / hp / str [15']
 Concursum (2004): vn-solo / va-solo / str [20']

D. Works for Band

Alembic (1992): picc 2 fl / 2 ob ca / 4 cl bcl / 2 bn / asax tsax barsax / 3 tpt / 4 hn / 3 trb / euph / tuba /
 4 perc [10']

E. Works for Chamber Ensemble

Aliens (1971–72): cl / trb / va / org / hpd [18']
 Equivoque (1972): fl / hn / org / pf / vc [8']
 Embers (1973): 2 vn / va / vc [8']
 Epilogueⁱ (1973, rev. 1994): fl / pf [8']
 Parallels (1975): asax / pf [8']
 Lichtzwang (1979): vc / pf [8']
 Après-lude (1979): fl / cl / perc / hp / va / vc [10']
 Silhouettes (1981): 2 vn va vc [17']
 Silhouettes (1981, rev. 1995) fl [= fl in G, picc] / ob [= ca] / cl / bn / hn [17']
 Two Silhouettes (1988, rev. 1993): ca / bcl / asax / bn [7']
 Contretemps (1989): 2 pf [12']
 Birds and Beasts (1992–93): vn / pf [10']
 Seachanges (with danse macabre) (1993): picc [= fl in G] / pf / perc / vn / vc [13']
 Catacombs (1994, rev. 2004): cl / vn / vc / pf [12']
 Fügung (1995): bcl / hpd [10']
 Moresque (1996): ob / perc [10']

ⁱ The composer has also transcribed this work for fl / gui (2006) and ob / gui (1994).

Marche Oubliée (1996, rev. 2004): vn / vc / pf [9']
 Brown Studies (1997–98): 2 vn / va / vc [20']
 Spring Leaves (1998): fl / pf [15']
 Parthenia Violata (1998): vn / pf [11']
 Pentacle (2000): vn / vc [26']
 Inter Pares (2000): 2 vn / va / vc [24']
 Equali (2001): 2 vn / va / vc [15']
 Bagatelle for L. B. (2002): 2 vn / va / vc [3']
 Ice Flowers (2004): cl / pf / vn / vc [6']
 Marthiya (2004): vn / va / vc [14']
 Loquela (2006); 2 vn / va / vc [8']

F. Keyboard Works

Orphica (1969–70, rev. 1981, 1996): pf [25']
 Idols (1971, rev. 1996): org [10']
 Four Inscriptions (1973); hpd [8']
 Linoi (1973, rev. 1984): pf [7']
 Piano Sonata No. 1 (1974, rev. 1980): pf [13']
 Triarchia (1977–78, rev. 1981): pf [9']
 Agalma (1978): org [9']
 Avatars (1982): pf [9']
 Piano Sonata No. 2 (1981); pf [21']
 Two Silhouettes (1988): org [7']
 After-Pieces (1989–90): pf [17']
 Nouvelles Équivoques (1990): hpd [10']
 Apostille (1993): org [8']
 Chorale (1995–96): pf [5']
 Rahu's Rounds (1998): pf [12']
 Siris (2006): pf [20']

G. Other Solo Instrumental Works

Ein Blatt Baumlos (1977, rev. 1990): vl [= perc] [5']
 Mutatis Mutandis (1978–79): fl [= picc, fl in G] [6']
 Excursus (1996): ssax [7']
 Excursus (1996): cl [7']
 Brève (2003): va [1']

H. Vocal Works

Tristia (1980): S-solo / fl / cl / perc / pf / vn / va / vc [11']
 Achair (1987): S-solo / fl [= rec] / ob / cl / perc / hp / 2 vn / va / vc [17']

November Songs (1990): Mez-solo / ob / bcl / pf / vn / vc [23']

... Una Musica Riposa (1993): Mez-solo / ob / vc / pf [16']

So quiet now ... (1996): S-solo / va / pf [2']

I. Choral Works

Slán le Suirí (1974): satb [div.] [4']

... e mi souvien l'eterno (1987): satb [div.] [7']

J. Mixed Media

Vampirella / Company of Wolves (1994): ssax / gui / pf / org / vc / perc / tape [25']

Passage Work (2001): S-solo / fl [=picc] / cl / 2 perc / pf / vn / vc / db / tape [10']

II. Discography

New Piano Music from Ireland, Goasco Music Ltd., GXX 003-4 (1985) [audio cassette]

Avatars, Jimmy Vaughan (pf)

Strings A-stray: Contemporary Works for Strings, Black Box Music Ltd., BBM1013 (1998)

Dekatriad, Irish Chamber Orchestra (dir. Fionnuala Hunt)

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Quaternion, Krespel's Concerto, Concerto for Oboe and Orchestra, Anthony Byrne (pf), Alan Smale (vn), Matthew Manning (ob), National Symphony Orchestra of Ireland (cond. Colman Pearce)

Seachanges: Raymond Deane Solo and Chamber Works, Black Box Music Ltd., BBM1014 (2000)

Brown Studies, After-Pieces, Marche Oubliée, Catacombs, Seachanges (with danse macabre), Vanbrugh String Quartet, Hugh Tinney (pf), The Schubert Ensemble of London, Reservoir (cond. Mikel Toms)

Where the Wind Blows, Irish Youth Wind Ensemble, IYWE01 (2001)

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III. Published Writings

A. Writings on Music

'Diabolus in Natura: The "Nature" of New Music', *Maynooth Review*, 4, 2 (1978), 22-30

'Brendan Behan's Eunuchs', *Soundpost*, Aug.-Sept. 1982, 10-11

'Founding Father: Raymond Deane reflects on John Cage at 70', *Soundpost*, Oct.-Nov. 1982, 12

'Shostakovitch and Mahler', *Soundpost*, Dec. 1982-Jan. 1983, 27-28

'Tailpiece', *Soundpost*, Apr.-May 1983, 40

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'Tailpiece', *Soundpost*, Aug.-Sept. 1983, 40

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'Tailpiece', *Soundpost*, Dec. 1983-Jan. 1984, 52

- ‘Caterer and Comforter? The Composer in Modern Ireland’, *The Irish Review*, 8 (1990), 1–4
- ‘In Search of Consumerist Sponges’, *Music Ireland*, 5, 5 (1990), 11
- ‘The Honour of Non-Existence — Classical Composers in Irish Society’, in Gerard Gillen and Harry White, eds., *Irish Musical Studies 3: Music and Irish Cultural History* (Dublin, 1995), 199–211
- ‘In Praise of Begrudgery’, in *The Boydell Papers* (Dublin, 1997), 26–32
- ‘I Was a Teenage Unionist’, *Graph: Irish Cultural Review*, 3, 2 (1998), 6–9
- ‘Ó Riada is Dead — Long Live Ó Riada’, *Journal of Music in Ireland*, 1, 2 (2001), 5–7
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- ‘Another Partial Portrait’, *Journal of Music in Ireland*, 2, 2 (2002), 16
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