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Culminating Experience Final Paper

Soundcloud Playlist for Musical Examples –

<https://soundcloud.com/mchalestephen/sets/ce-soundcloud>

1 – INTRODUCTION

1.1 – Musical Beginnings

My name is Stephen McHale, I am a guitarist and composer from Ireland. I have previously studied for a National Diploma in Popular Music at Ballyfermot College of Further Education, receiving a Distinction grade, as well as a Bachelor of Arts in Jazz Performance from Newpark Music Centre, where I graduated with First Class Honours.

Despite having spent four years studying for a degree in Jazz Performance, and therefore having the bulk of my practice and learning time for many years devoted to jazz, I still feel a disconnect from jazz music as it was something I came to later in my development as a musician. The sounds that initially piqued my musical interests are the contemporary music of my younger years, as well as the older rock and pop music that was played in my house growing up. The explosion of Britpop when I was very young was the starting point for the

development of my interest in music, as I obsessively listened to the bands of the time, Oasis, Blur, Pulp, The Stone Roses, and then sought out all the influences they spoke of in interviews, Led Zeppelin, The Beatles, Jimi Hendrix, etc. This process of searching through older recordings continued and eventually led me to the jazz fusion styles of The Mahavishnu Orchestra, Jeff Beck, Weather Report, Jaco Pastorius, etc. It wasn't until I began my Bachelor in Jazz Performance that I really began to listen to the older jazz masters, Miles Davis, Wes Montgomery, Thelonious Monk, Wayne Shorter.

The result of growing up in an environment where music was ubiquitous, as many members of my family work in the Irish music industry, as well as having studied music in the popular and jazz idioms, coupled with the fact I have a personal interest in a very broad range of musical styles, has meant that I have found myself working professionally as a sideman in a broad variety of genres, having to be competent, knowledgeable, and comfortable in all of these scenarios.

1.2 – Focused Eclecticism

Since arriving in Valencia, I have fully realised the benefit of these experiences, as it has meant I have been able to continue broadening my musical horizons while also delighting in the fact that I can partake in a huge volume of performances/recordings with a varied collection of my classmates and professors. The continuous flow of visiting artists to Berklee Valencia has also been enlightening in terms of this project, the knowledge that versatility creates more opportunities for me to play with, and as a consequence, learn from, the visiting artists drives me to work harder at ensuring I can fit into as many

musical scenarios as possible. Of course this approach will have the knock-on effect of developing my professional skills with a view to a successful life as a musician once my time at Berklee Valencia has ended.

While I have benefitted from and enjoyed these opportunities enormously, I have also come to realise the importance of performing and recording my own compositions, in terms of finding my own voice as an instrumentalist, the continuation of the development of my own particular style, as well as maintaining a working life as an original artist, so that I may enjoy the benefits of being in a position to perform the music of other people, as well as working on my own material, while being musically challenged in a varied enough fashion that I don't grow jaded with either.

2 - PROJECT

2.1 - Project

In this sense, there is a conflict between the music that I first loved and the music I study. This is a common theme among contemporary jazz musicians, as unlike the masters of the genre which we study, i.e., Charlie Parker, John Coltrane, Herbie Hancock, etc., most of us did not grow up with jazz music as a regular fixture in our lives, it was something we were exposed to after years spent learning to play the music that surrounded us in our early years, be it rock, pop, funk, hip-hop, blues, and so on.

My intention for this project is to compose, record, and release an EP of original compositions that combine my initial musical influences with the music I have been studying both as a student at Berklee Valencia and at my previous

educational institutes. This will be combined with a written document to analyse and justify the reasons for working towards this goal, also containing an analysis of the compositions themselves.

2.2 – Compositional Process

The compositional process I employed in the writing of the material for this EP varied slightly from piece to piece, and the method shall be gone into in more depth later in this document, but the general system remained the same each time. I would specifically set aside a time slot several days in advance of when I planned to compose, this would mean that I would have time to think about what my intention was going to be for the piece, I could listen to music and consider whether or not there would be a particular piece of music, or many different pieces, that were going to influence this composition. I would also make short recordings of any ideas that came to me in the days leading up to my composition time. This mental and musical preparation with composition in mind meant that I never had to approach a blank page and begin to write without any direction or guidance, it made the process quicker and helped me hit the ground running each time.

Once I had composed all the parts for the members of the band and entered them to Finale, I would organise a rehearsal and play what I had written with the musicians in my group. Invariably, the first playing of the piece would bring issues to my attention, especially in terms of the length of sections, orchestration, and dynamics. I would decide on these changes in the rehearsal, make the

adjustments to the musicians' parts, and then hope that by the end I would have an arrangement that was effective.

After making a recording of this arrangement, using either my iPhone or MBox, I would bring the recording to Perico Sambeat during his scheduled office hours, play the composition for him and ask for his opinion on all aspects of the piece. Perico is a compositional master, particularly of the contemporary jazz genre, and his observations and comments were invaluable in terms of working to ensure the composition be of the highest quality possible. I would take notes at these sessions and then, if necessary, make changes to the arrangement and send the finished parts to the musicians before what would usually be a second rehearsal, but occasionally, due to time constraints and lack of availability, would be a recording session.

Due to the fact that many of my compositions take their roots from a wide variety of musical influences, the harmony employed could occasionally be an extreme departure from the style of chordal progressions I am familiar with soloing over. For this reason I would use my private lesson with Israel Sandoval to ask for advice on how to approach soloing over the more unusual chords and chord changes. This led to an accumulation of knowledge regarding artificial scales, and soloing with an approach that incorporated some elements of traditional jazz (bebop scales etc.), as well as the more unusual sounds and theory of the artificially constructed scales, limited transposition scales, etc. This information helped me hugely as it provided me with a new arsenal of sounds in my improvisational repertoire, as well as helping me to be comfortable when asked to solo over more complex harmony.

2.3 – Compositional Aspirations

The aspirations I have in terms of these compositions are to maintain the listenability and occasionally simplistic melodicism of contemporary popular music, while also incorporating the improvisational jazz elements that provide an opportunity for me to showcase the skills I have been working on for the past number of years, and particularly the skills I have learned during my time at Berklee Valencia.

In order to create this style of composition, I will sometimes specifically reference material from some of the contemporary composers that have influenced me, using stylistically similar chord progressions and guitar sounds, while also allowing the information I have learned while studying jazz to be prominent throughout, all the time striving to ensure the influence of non-jazz and jazz music remain noticeable throughout.

2.3 –Why This Approach?

As previously mentioned, the idea of having a conflict between the music that initially sparked our interest and the music we study is a common theme among contemporary jazz performers. One way in which this can be demonstrated is by the large number of successful contemporary jazz composers that include their own arrangements of rock/pop/electronic music in their releases. Some examples of jazz musicians of today covering other artists include;

- Robert Glasper – Smells Like Teen Spirit (Nirvana)
- The Bad Plus – Flim (Aphex Twin)
- Brad Mehldau – Paranoid Android (Radiohead)
- Christian Scott – The Eraser (Thom Yorke)
- Vijay Iyer – MmmHmm (Flying Lotus)
- Dave Douglas – Unison (Bjork)

Similarly to me, I believe these artists have a desire to explore contemporary music they enjoy and can relate to, while also using these familiar melodies and chord progressions as a vehicle for demonstrating their improvisational abilities. There is also a recognition and respect from these artists for the difficult nature of writing high quality, yet accessible music. The difference is that I plan to keep this ideal prominent but through original compositions.

Another reason this approach to composing and performing contemporary jazz music appeals to people is that it creates the possibility for a wider audience. The general public can easily be turned off by the prospect of listening to (and especially paying for) jazz music, as the typical association is with dense, complicated harmony and melody, combined with long solos that can be difficult to comprehend without some kind of musical training. Writing and performing with more accessibility in mind, while still maintaining artistic integrity, is beneficial for everyone as the combination of high level musicianship with more easy to digest chords and melodies, will create the likelihood of a wider interest in live performance of the music, as well as more potential for sales/downloads of the EP.

2.4 - Expected Outcomes

The main expected outcome from this project is to develop my skills and knowledge as a composer, as well as become more aware of what it is that appeals to me as a writer, and the most effective ways to impart my musical tastes into a body of work that can have all the qualities I previously spoke of, artistic integrity, musical accessibility, and a successful combination of the improvisational elements of jazz with the influences of other musical genres.

A second outcome from this project is to have an EP that will be available for release before the end of the summer 2014 semester at Berklee Valencia. This proposed outcome has been aided enormously by the fact that I was signed as an artist by Disrupción Records, the student-run, Berklee Valencia record label. This development means that I will have a team of people to help with choosing platforms to release the EP, as well as in promotion, artwork, and creating as much interest in the project as is possible.

Compositional Analysis

1 - "*Lark*"

1.1 - Initial Intention

For this piece, my presence at Berklee Valencia was a huge factor in influencing my compositional process. The diversity of the student body at this campus means that musical traditions and influences are plentiful and wide-ranging. Many of the students here display the influences of the

traditional music of their country quite prominently in their work, or at least have a strong awareness and knowledge of these musical roots.

Despite the fact that members of my family work specifically with traditional Irish music, and the fact that I grew up in an area where live traditional Irish music can be heard in many venues on a daily basis, I have rarely, in fact almost never, played traditional Irish music and only possess the most basic knowledge of the genre.

While studying at Berklee Valencia, my fellow students made me feel like I should make an effort to be much more aware of the musical heritage of my country, and therefore, for this composition I decided I would search for some elements of traditional Irish music that I could incorporate into my own compositions, both in order to provide myself with a fresh approach to composing, as well as increasing my own knowledge of the genre.

1.2 - Search and Solidification of Ideas

Once the decision was made to incorporate traditional Irish melodies with this composition, specific recordings were chosen as a starting point. I listened to albums by "*The Bothy Band*", as well as "*Planxty*", and many other classic recordings of Irish traditional music. While these recordings were exquisite in terms of their music, I found it difficult to translate the information into something I could use in one of my own compositions. Because of this I chose to delve into a slightly more modern sound and began listening to, and transcribing sections of, an album titled "*The Storm*" by

Irish traditional/fusion band "***Moving Hearts***". I instantly found that while melodically, the information was sometimes the exact same as in the previous recordings I had listened to, I felt more connected to the music, most likely because the instrumentation is closer to what I intended to use, ie electric instruments, drum set, etc., but possibly also because I have a personal connection to the group as one of my former teachers is the drummer.

I was instantly astounded at the melodic wealth on offer in these recordings, as I often struggle to write clear, concise, and catchy melodies, to be confronted with this constantly changing yet memorable melodic style made quite an impression on me. Also, the fact that they achieve a high level of sophistication with their melodies while never straying from diatonic notes played over very simple harmony was a lesson to me in the fact that complexity is not necessary to create interest. Here are some short examples of melodic ideas contained within one track.

- ***Soundcloud Playlist Track 1 Lark – Melodic Wealth***

Because of the enormous volume of material on offer in this recording, it was apparent that the scope would have to be narrowed to just focusing on one track, and even then on a very small portion of this one track. The composition that seemed most suitable is titled "***The Lark***", the first track taken from the album "***The Storm***".

1.3 – The Writing Process

As previously stated I decided that in order to begin composing with the influence of this track in mind, I would need to focus on a very small amount of

the information contained within it. The process of choosing which parts to use was quite simple, two very small melodic ideas that had a very strong appeal on first listen were chosen, and working with these ideas in order to create an A and B section melody for the piece was the beginning process of the composition.

Here are the two melodic ideas chosen as the starting point for the composition.

- ***Soundcloud Playlist Track 2 Lark – Original A and B Section***

After transcribing and then playing the first example a few times on my instrument, I stopped playing the melody exactly as it was on the recording and let myself play it in a manner that felt more natural. I then recorded myself playing this new version of the melody and transcribed what I was playing. The result was that there was a time signature change from 4/4 to 5/4 in bar two of the melody, and also some notes were removed from the end of the original motif because it seemed that playing the motif in it's entirety sounded too specifically like Irish traditional music and was too far a departure from the contemporary jazz style that was desired. As well as this, the tempo was reduced to make the melody more playable and also let the tension be created by the chord/melody combination, as well as the stop-time hits, rather than by the high tempo of the composition.



On listening to the original track I noticed that there was a section where this melody was played with stop-time hits, and decided that using this idea might be a very effective way to create interesting parts for the band to perform while the melody was being played. In order to decide which chords to use, effective moments to place the hits were chosen, then different chord voicings were tried, placing the melody note on top. Aside from the first hit on beat one of the first bar, all the hits are placed on the last note of each short melodic phrase. The chords that were most effective to be placed on these hits were Lydian and Altered voicings, as these choices kept the contemporary jazz feel prominent, even though the melody itself was quite simple.

A♭MAJ7#11 B7#9 A♭MAJ7#11 B7#9 E♭7#11 A♭MAJ7#11 B7#9 E♭7#11 G♭MAJ7#11

In order to move from the A section to the B, the melody needed some kind of tag, or repeated figure, to make it seem more obviously like the end of a phrase. It seemed the best way to do this would be to sequence the last small motif of the melodic phrase and then repeat it down a tone, before repeating it down a tone again, finishing with a rest of six beats before changing to the B section. The rest lasting six beats was again decided by listening back to a recording of myself playing the change between the sections, playing what came naturally and then

writing it down after the fact. Again, Lydian chords were the most effective for each hit as they gave me the modern, open feel appropriate to the piece.

The image shows two staves of musical notation. The top staff is a melody in 7/8 time, featuring a chromatic sequence of notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4. There are three triplet markings over the first, third, and fifth notes. The bottom staff shows a chord progression: A^bMAJ7#11, GMAJ7#11, FMAJ7#11, and E^bMAJ7#11. The bass notes of these chords are G3, F3, E3, and D3, which ascend chromatically.

Here is an audio sample that contains the melodic idea from the original recording, followed by the A section of my composition.

- ***Soundcloud Playlist Track 3 Lark – A Section Melody***

For the B section of the piece, the original melody was used almost exactly as on the original recording, the only difference being that the original phrase is four bars long, whereas in the composition only the first two bars of the melody are repeated rather than playing the third and fourth bars, thereby creating an effect closer to an ostinato than what would be strictly considered a melody. The reason this was done was that the two bar phrase was powerful enough by itself to warrant being repeated without variation. To complement this it seemed a rising chromatic chord sequence played underneath it would add to the drama and tension. This technique of combining a simple melodic idea with a chromatically moving chord sequence is something used to great effect by Kurt Rosenwinkel, particularly on his composition *“Zhivago”*. Similarly to Kurt’s approach, in this case the voicing is kept the same and the bass note ascends chromatically, and due to the repetition of notes within each chord, the sound

remains aurally cohesive. Because this type of approach is very guitar driven the melody was switched to the piano, which also helped create a new atmosphere for the new section. A crescendo spread over the course of the entire B section seemed an effective method to capture the repetitive, cyclic feel of this melody, while also maintaining the interest of the audience.

B E_M11 F_{MAJ}7#11 F#_M11B13 G_{MAJ}13 E_M11 F_{MAJ}7#11 F#_M11B13 G_{MAJ}13

PLAY IN OCTAVES

Here is an audio sample of the original melody, followed by an excerpt of the B section from my composition.

- ***Soundcloud Playlist track 4 – Lark – B Section Melody***

After the B Section the piece returns back to a shortened version of the A Section, this time playing the same melody but going straight to the second time ending. The melody is written for the piano part to add some extra force and also create a different texture to the first A section, as the audience has already heard this material. From here there is a transition to the first solo, and in order to create an interesting transition to the solo form, the first note of the solo is the last note in the melodic sequence the audience had previously heard. This is an effective way of showing the same, or at least similar, information while also surprising the listener with a new development.

As there had been a lot of tension built in each section of the composition so far, the beginning of the guitar solo needed a slightly more relaxed feel than the previous sections. The method for achieving this was to begin the solo with the same chords as the B section but this time, play each chord for an entire bar, rather than just two beats. This achieved the necessary effect of having more space, while still retaining the mood created in the previous sections.

The next section of the solo then repeats the same chords, but this time just for two beats each. After this the solo form then changes to chords based on the A section, before returning to the chromatically moving chords, this time transposed a minor 3rd up from where they originally were, once again with the intention presenting similar information from a new angle in order to maintain the listener's interest. This desire to keep the listener's focus, through transposition and compositional surprises, is something that I was very aware of in terms of my initial intention of keeping the contemporary jazz feel of the piece while still having the listenability of which I spoke earlier.

To end the guitar solo there is the subtle introduction of a short melodic idea, played just once by the guitar, then repeated by the piano as part of the accompaniment. This melodic phrase is then played very loudly, and powerfully,

by the entire band before everyone dropping out abruptly to begin the piano solo.



The piano solo begins with the piano playing this melodic phrase alone, before then playing over a variation on the A section chord sequence. I purposely wrote this as part of the arrangement as I knew the part was going to be played by Piotr Orzechowski, a pianist that has a huge amount of experience and skill in the discipline of solo piano. After sixteen bars the band re-enters. The final section of the piano solo is played over the B section chords, with the guitar playing the B section melody while the piano continues to solo. This again is a repetition of previously heard material but in a different context; melody that was previously played by piano is now played by guitar. Similarly to the end of the guitar solo, piano solo ends with the entire band playing a melodic motif with a crescendo.

Here is an audio sample containing the beginning of the guitar solo, transition to the piano solo, and ending of the piano solo.

- ***Soundcloud Playlist – Track 5 – Solo Transitions***

After the piano solo there is an entirely new section that ends the composition. For the section I very much displayed the influence of rock music on my compositional approach, the hits played by piano and drums take their influence from the ***Led Zeppelin*** composition "***Immigrant Song***", while the guitar part, which appears after four bars, takes it's influence from the extended techniques

used by Tom Morello of the group, *Rage Against The Machine*. While this section is very different from what preceded it, I kept some reference to the previous written sections by having the bass play a repeated figure that is actually the first five notes of the A section melody. Despite the rock influence present on what each instrument is playing, I maintained the contemporary jazz feel by having the piano play a D7#9b13, which keeps a harmonic density more commonly found in contemporary jazz than rock.

Here is a short excerpt of the final section of the composition.

- *Soundcloud Playlist - Track 6 - Lark - End Section*

1.4 - Rehearsal and Adjustments

As mentioned earlier, the first rehearsal of each composition usually highlighted the areas that needed adjustment in terms of arrangement, orchestration etc.

The first issue that arose was that the drummer had initially been instructed to play through the hits in the C Section of the melody, while the rest of the band continued to play the melody in the same manner as the A section. It was quickly apparent that this idea didn't really work, as the rhythmic complexity of what was written for the guitar, bass, and piano, did not lend itself to having a more open drum feel underneath it. The support provided by the drums playing the same rhythm as the rest of the ensemble meant there was a much more stable and coherent feel to the section. Also, during the rehearsal the drummer was asked to play a constant quarter note on each beat in order to help the rest of us

to play our parts, but this would not be necessary in the recording session, as we would be playing to a click track.

After listening back to the recording the decision was taken to change the introduction of the composition completely. Initially it was written that the guitar would begin the piece by itself, playing the first phrase of the A section melody, before being joined by the band for the melody. However, this introduction was too brief, and also it meant the melody was being played too many times at the beginning of the piece. It seemed a longer introduction was necessary, something that would ease the listener into the composition. In order to achieve this a variation on the B Section chords was played, with a long crescendo over a period of sixteen bars. The first three chords of the pattern were used rather than all four because it gave the section more space, and helped create an ethereal yet mildly anxious mood, which is what was appropriate to the piece.

The image shows a musical staff in 4/4 time with a treble clef. Above the staff, the following chords are written: Em11, FMAJ7#11, F#M11B13, Em11, FMAJ7#11, and F#M11B13. Below the staff, the instruction "PLAY SPARSELY, FILL SPACE" is written. The staff itself contains rhythmic notation consisting of diagonal slashes in each of the four measures, indicating a sparse, rhythmic accompaniment.

Here is an audio sample of the introduction and A section of the rehearsal recording.

- ***Soundcloud Playlist - Track 7 - Lark Rehearsal Intro and A Section***

After listening to the final section of the piece it seemed that while the guitar part using extended techniques, (playing behind the nut, artificial harmonics, lots of distortion) was interesting, after hearing it repeated so many times it became mundane. In order to fix this, the part was changed to have four bars of just rhythm section before entering with the guitar part. This had the effect of easing

the listener in to the new atmosphere created by this section, as well as meaning that the guitar part would not be repeated so many times that it lost it's effectiveness.

Another change that I felt was necessary from playing the composition at the first rehearsal was to change the piano part to be played on keyboard. The sound of the piano didn't really complement the modern, distorted guitar sound, and it seemed that an electric piano, possibly a Fender Rhodes sound, would be more appropriate. Also, using keyboard over piano also has the added benefit of being much faster and easier to set up in the recording session. As our recording sessions were just three hours long, every opportunity to save time was welcome.

1.5 – Collaborative Advice

As mentioned previously, after doing a rehearsal and a recording I would usually take the recording and Finale score of the piece to Perico Sambeat during his office hours taking notes and what opinions he had on the composition, being sure to consider and possibly implement them before the next rehearsal, or in this case, the recording session.

The first thing Perico noticed was that I was not rhythmically solid when playing the A section melody, I was tending to drag slightly and not be tight with what the rhythm section was playing. This was a problem that was easily solved by making sure I took the time to work on the melody with a metronome before going to the recording session.

Secondly, a suggestion was made regarding the beginning of the guitar solo. As mentioned, there needed to be a release from all the tension built up during the

melody, and to achieve this I began the guitar solo with the B section chords, but this time played for a bar each rather than two beats. While Perico agreed with the intent behind this, he suggested that playing these chord changes for just eight bars was not sufficient for creating the atmosphere intended. As a result of this advice for the recording the beginning of the guitar solo was changed to have sixteen bars of these chord changes before reverting to eight bars of the B section changes. He also suggested that the rhythm section should play with a more open feel at the beginning of the guitar solo, in order to aid the creation of the specific atmosphere that was planned for. Here is an audio sample of the beginning of the guitar solo taken from the rehearsal recording.

- ***Soundcloud Playlist - Track 8 - Lark Rehearsal - Beginning of Guitar Solo***

Another suggestion made was that the drums could play more busily and with more fills for the final section of the piece. However, we tried this quickly before the recording session began and found that it was not very effective, as there was enough interesting information happening to mean that the most effective method for the drums to complement the other instruments was to play a very straightforward backbeat, providing support for the more complex parts happening elsewhere. It was also suggested that a rall leading to the last hit would be worth trying, but again, this was tried and it was decided that keeping everything tight and cohesive was the most effective way to end the piece. Here is an audio sample, taken from the rehearsal recording, of the final section of the composition.

- ***Soundcloud Playlist - Track 9 - Lark Rehearsal - End Section***

As well as seeking compositional advice from Perico, advice was also sought on soloing over the changes of the tune from my private lesson instructor, Israel Sandoval. From listening to the recording he could tell I was struggling with soloing over the B section chords, particularly when they were being played for just two bars each. In order to help with this we talked about picking exact ideas to work on for this section to ensure the solo sounded coherent and not just the fast, random jumble of notes played on the rehearsal recording. We concluded that the sound I was aiming for was best achieved by superimposing pentatonic scales over each of the chords, so for Em and Fmaj7#11 I would play Em pentatonic, for F#m11b13 and Gmaj13 I would play F#m pentatonic. These scale choices would also be combined with the addition of an extra note or two in selected places. For example for the Fmaj7#11 chord I could add a b9 to Em pentatonic, for the F#m11b13 I added a b13 to F#m pentatonic, and for the Gmaj13 I once again added a b9 to the F#m pentatonic.

1.6 – Recording

The recording session for this composition was from 20.00 – 23.00 on the 13th February 2014 at the Ann Kreis Scoring Stage, Berklee Valencia. The engineer for the session was Nick Zeigler, and the band consisted of Daniel Toledo on bass, Piotr Orzechowski on piano, Joshua Wheatley on drums, as well as myself on electric guitar.

The session schedule was planned to be;

- 20.00-21.00 – Setup.
- 21.00-22.00 – Record multiple takes of piece.
- 22.00-22.30 – Record guitar overdubs.

- 22.30-23.00 – Tear down equipment.

The overdubs in question were necessary because I had found in rehearsal that going from the C Section melody to the guitar solo was very difficult to achieve with accuracy in terms of switching on and off pedals. To ensure I got a neat and accurate transition between sections I decided to not play the C Section melody during the take with the full band, and just enter with the first note of the solo, overdubbing the melodic part later.

The microphones to be used for the session were decided in advance by Nick and I and consisted of;

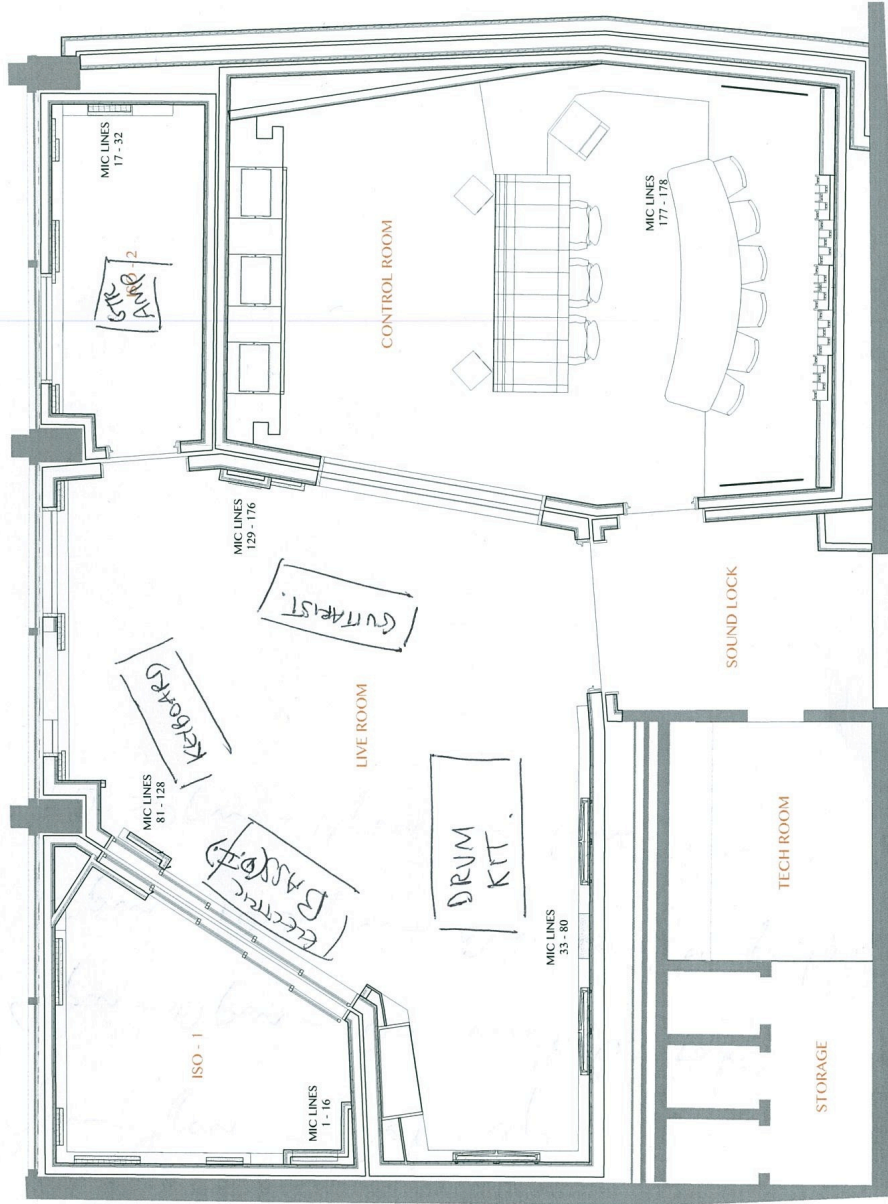
- Guitar – SM57 + Reyer 121
- Bass – D.I.
- Keyboards – D.I.
- Drums – Kick - AKG D112, Snare - SM57, Toms - Sennheiser 421

Overheads – KM 184

All of these microphones were ones I had used in previous sessions that I had achieved a sound I was happy with. Particularly the combination of both the SM57 and Reyer 121 on the guitar is something I have found to be very effective in terms of capturing the sound I desired.

Below is a picture of the floor plan drawn up before the session. Due to the fact that the keyboards and bass were being recorded through a D.I. the set up was relatively fast, and this also meant that we could all record in the same room because the guitar amp would be placed in the isolation booth, therefore eliminating any possibility for sound bleeding into the drum microphones.

ANN KREIS
SCORING STAGE
"A.K.S.S."
BERKLEE, VALENCIA



SESSION TITLE:
Stephen + Nick

SESSION DATE:
13/2/14

Due to the fastidiousness of Nick and I's pre-production organisational efforts, the plan and agenda for the recording was extremely clear and therefore went very smoothly. The schedule was maintained and we had ample time to record several takes of the track, as well as do the guitar overdub of which I previously spoke. The only aspect of the recording I was unhappy with was the guitar part over the end section of the composition. I felt that I hadn't played to the part with a level of accuracy I was happy with, so to fix this I booked a slot in studio A and overdubbed this section, using the same microphones.

In post-production, I did the edits of the takes using Pro Tools, the track was mixed by Ryan Renteria, and mastered by Alan Tishk. The only issue that arose in the post production process was that the intent of having the keyboard melody at section B begin very quietly and increase in volume over the course of the section was not very effective, as it created a sense of uncertainty as to what was happening at the start of the section. This problem was easily solved by simply raising the volume of the keyboard in the mix, thereby creating a more purposeful feel to the beginning of the B section.

Here is the audio for the final product of my composition "*Lark*".

- *Soundcloud Playlist - Track 10 - Lark*

1.7 – Lessons Learned

The main area in which I increased my knowledge over the course of writing, rehearsing, and recording this piece was in the field of traditional Irish music. Studying and listening to the recordings before I began to write was extremely enlightening, reinforcing my initial feeling that it is important for me to make more of an effort to increase my knowledge in terms of the traditional music of

my country. The main area that impressed me the most was the seemingly inexhaustible supply of melodic material contained within each track. To be able to continually have memorable, interesting, technically demanding melodies, while never really straying from diatonic note choices and harmony, is something I could benefit from studying more of, as I have a tendency to overcomplicate melodies and therefore dilute their effectiveness. The time I spent researching this music has definitely ensured that in the future I will spend time working on traditional Irish music, both in order to have a better understanding of the musical heritage of my country, as well as to reap the benefits of absorbing some of it's musical characteristics.

Another area in which I increased my knowledge was in terms of the use of minor pentatonic scales with added altered notes. Using minor pentatonics over major chords is an approach I regularly employ in both composition and improvising, but the simple idea of just adding one or two notes contained within the chord of the moment to the minor pentatonic scale had never really occurred to me. This new skill has given me a new sound and colour to use for both my compositions and solos. Whereas previously my use of minor pentatonics, while being a sound I enjoy, may have become slightly predictable and overused, now I have been provided with a way to keep the sound and feel that I enjoy while adding a new dimension to keep both the listener, and myself, interested.

A third area in which I could say I increased my learning was in the compositional approach of the piece. While I regularly use very specific references and influences when I compose, I had never specifically focused on an existing melody and then altered it to fit my compositional needs. This is

something I would definitely consider doing in future compositions, as it was a great way to provide myself with a starting point for ideas, although I would have to be careful about how I do this with other compositions. Using traditional melodies is perfectly acceptable because they are all in the public domain and not under copyright, if I were to do the same approach for copyrighted material I would be at risk of entering morally dubious territory, as I would not be comfortable with the idea of directly copying from another person's melodic work. I also feel that this approach of looking at a previously unfamiliar style of music in order to gain compositional ideas is a great way to introduce oneself to new music, instantly applying the benefits of some new knowledge to your own playing.

2 - *"Umbra"*

2.1 - Initial Intention

For this piece, I employed the musical influence of one of my former classmates on my own playing. While studying for my undergraduate degree, I spent four years in the same class as fellow Irish guitarist, Chris Guilfoyle. Chris is an extremely skilled composer and guitarist, in both the jazz and electronic music idioms. I had always been a fan of his compositional style, and spending such a long time studying in the same composition class, I am quite familiar with his approach. I decided that rather than be envious of his work, I would be better off learning from his style and applying it to my own writing.

I decided straight away that although I wanted Chris' music to be the main influence for this piece, I did not want to directly use any of his written material as a reference, as this would be more like copying rather than being influenced

by. Instead, I just tried to think about some of the characteristics of his work and then apply it to the piece I wished to write. The main characteristics were;

- Dense sounding, unusual chords.
- Complex melodies.
- Use of guitar effects pedals.
- The influence of electronic music.

With these influences in mind I set out to write a piece that had some of the characteristics of Chris' work, but that would still fit with my own musical style.

2.2 – The Writing Process

Before beginning the piece I knew that I wanted to write this composition with a groove based on the drum and bass style of electronic music. This is an influence taken from the music of Chris Guilfoyle, but as well as that it is a style that I have also admired many times in the work of Erik Truffaz, Jojo Mayer, and Aphex Twin. Knowing the rhythmic style of the piece before beginning meant that the rest of the material could be written using what is commonly found in this style; relatively slow harmonic rhythm, chromatically moving basslines, tension created by the busyness of the drum feel, etc.

The first part of the composition that I began working on was the chords for the A section. I had been experimenting with the idea of constant structures in guitar voicings, and felt this was the perfect opportunity to use them. The idea in question was to begin with an Fmaj13 voicing and then shift it downward by a tone each time, this had the effect of having an initially aurally pleasant chord

that became darker and more dissonant each time it moved. The resulting chords were; Fmaj13, Ebmaj13b9, Db69(addb9).

Initially it seemed that having a three chord sequence would be an interesting way of creating a cyclic feel to the A section, but after playing through it a few times it became apparent that the density of the chords combined with this cyclic feel actually made the sequence quite unpleasant to listen to. To fix this one extra chord was added, keeping the same structure and once again moving down a tone, this time producing a Bm11 chord. The effect of having an aurally pleasant chord at the beginning and end of the sequence gave it a sense of overall balance and relief once the sequence reached the fourth chord.

Here is an audio sample of the A section chords, as played at the introduction of the piece.

- ***Soundcloud Playlist - Track 11 - Umbra A Section Chords***

It had been decided that complex melodies were one of the influences that should be channeled so a technique was employed described to us in a composition masterclass by Berklee Valencia faculty member, Polo Ortí. Polo told us his method of coming up with melodies was to solo over the changes and then pick out the parts he liked and use them as a melody. This is an effective method for creating a complex melody so I looped the chord progression on a sequencer and then recorded myself soloing over the changes. I then would listen back to what I played, choose some appropriate and effective parts, then solo again, this time keeping whatever I liked from the previous take, repeating this process until there was a full A Section melody written down.

Here is an audio sample of the A section melody.

- ***Soundcloud Playlist - Track 12 - Umbra - A Section***

For the B Section, in order to provide contrast, as well as a relief from the busyness of the A Section, I decided that I would reverse the roles of the harmonic and melodic instruments, this time making the melody extremely simple and increasing the amount of movement in the chord sequence.

This section seemed appropriate to introduce chromatic movement in the bass line. Slash chords were used to achieve this movement while tensions were added to the voicings to create the necessary harmonic flavour. An Eb note was kept as the top note of each voicing, so that although the chords are very different and not necessarily belonging to the same harmonic universe, there is a consistency between the changes as the top note keeps all the chords connected.

C7#9/G A^bM6 Gm7B13 BMAJ⁷/F#

The plan was to keep the B Section melody extremely simple, in order to this I decided on just a two note motif with a harmony part underneath repeating the Eb note common to all the chords. The simplicity of the melody of this section is a welcome respite from the freneticism of the previous section, and also the space created by having a static melody also gives the rhythm section a chance to play more busily and create new ideas of interest within their parts.

Here is an audio sample of the B Section of the piece.

- ***Souncloud Playlist Track 13 - Umbra - B Section***

After repeating the A and B sections, it seemed that there needed to be a new segment of melodic information before going to solos. In keeping with the overall compositional aspiration of maintaining the listenability and accessibility of the piece, it appeared that a minor pentatonic based melody would be appropriate as it would be a familiar sound to the listeners ear, as well as being a middle ground between the extreme busyness of the A Section and the melodic simplicity of the B Section.

With this in mind the chords were worked on first, choosing to maintain the chromatic bass movement of the B Section, this time with slightly different chord tensions.

CMAJ7#9/G BMAJ#5/F# CMAJ7#9/G BMAJ#5/F#

The structure of these chords once again take their influence from the playing of Kurt Rosenwinkel. The chord is constructed by playing a root, third, and an open G string, then playing a bass note a fourth down from the root note. All the notes aside from the open G are then moved down a semitone for the second chord. The interval of a fourth at the bottom of the chord, combined with the interval of a major seventh contained within the rest of the chord, creates a very dark and relatively dissonant sound. In order to once again keep coherence between the chords, Eb was added as the top note of the chord, this being the #9 of the C major 7th chord and the major 3rd of the Bmaj chord.

Then begins the first solo, which is played by guitar. The structure of this is that the guitar plays over the first sixteen bars of the A Section, which is repeated, then followed by the next part of the A section, played for sixteen bars. As a written section between the first and second solo, the third melodic section is repeated, played by both piano and guitar, this time with the guitar playing the part a fifth above the piano.

Here is an audio sample of the end of the guitar solo, going into the melodic section before the piano solo.

- ***Soundcloud Playlist - Track 14 - Umbra - End of Solo***

For the beginning of the piano solo, it seemed that it would be effective to have a break from the aggressiveness of the rhythms of the composition up to this point, so the guitar and bass drop out while the drums were instructed to play a less busy figure than in the previous section. The piano and drums play together for 16 bars before being rejoined by the bass and returning to the drum and bass influenced groove of the previous sections. The chords for the beginning of the piano solo are taken from the B Section of the piece, then after thirty-two bars of these chords the guitar re-enters with a melodic line while the piano continues to solo, this time over the A section chords. The purpose of the guitar melody line is once again to provide a variation on material that has already been heard, while also surprising the listener with something unexpected.

Here is an audio extract of the beginning of the piano solo, rejoining of the band, and introduction of guitar.

- ***Souncloud Playlist - Track 15 - Umbra Piano Solo***

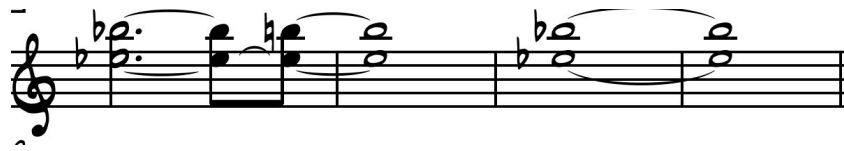
In order to end the piece, a drum solo seemed appropriate. To provide an ostinato for the drums to solo over, a repeated melodic figure was developed over the chords of the B Section. Similarly to the B Section of the melody the scale used to create the melody was Eb minor pentatonic, thereby retaining a similar flavour to the previously heard material but still providing the listener with something new. This figure is repeated until a cue from the drummer, with everybody playing a hit on the last melody note of the phrase.

The image shows two staves of musical notation. The top staff is a treble clef with a key signature of one flat (Bb). It contains a melodic phrase consisting of four measures. Below the staff, the chords for each measure are written: C7#9/G, A♭m6, Gm7B13, and BMAJ7/F#. The bottom staff is also a treble clef and contains a rhythmic accompaniment for the same four measures. It features a series of slanted lines representing a drum pattern, with a single eighth note in the second and fourth measures.

2.3 - Rehearsal and Adjustments

The first rehearsal of this piece immediately brought about one extreme change to the composition. The melody was initially written to be doubled by saxophone for the A Section, and then the melody was to be divided between guitar and saxophone for the B Section. As it turned out, the saxophonist didn't show up for the rehearsal. While this seemed to be a problem at first, it turned out to be quite convenient as after some quick adjustments it was decided that saxophone was not necessary for the composition. Firstly it was decided that the melody at A could stand by itself without needing to be doubled by piano, then for the B section it was possible for the guitar to play both the parts that were written for saxophone and guitar. This turned out to function quite well as for

the first eight bars the guitar plays the two note melody, before adding the lower Eb drone that was intended for saxophone. Here is the resulting melody for the B Section, With the guitar playing both the parts written for guitar and saxophone.



Another adjustment to be made involved the melodic section leading in to the guitar solo.



Initially this phrase was to be played for eight bars by just saxophone, with the keyboards joining for the repetition of these eight bars, while guitar played the chords. In the rehearsal, the piano took the first eight bars of the melody while the guitar played chords for the first eight, beginning to play melody for the second eight. On listening back to the rehearsal recording, it was apparent that while the dense and dark mood created by these specific chord voicings was very effective when played by just guitar, in the context of the piece it didn't really work as they created an excess of information in the low register, cluttering the overall sound. To amend this, the solution was to have the piano play the melody for the first eight bars with no chords behind it and the guitar would then join playing the melody for the next eight bars.

Here is an audio sample of this section from the rehearsal recording, then from the final product.

- ***Soundcloud Playlist - Track 16 - Umbra - C Section Changes***

The final aspect of the piece that needed to be changed due to the lack of a saxophone was the end section. The written part indicated that the saxophone should play a harmonization a fourth above the melodic line written for guitar, instead of having the keyboard play this, the use of a guitar effects pedal was employed, specifically a Digitech Whammy, as this can be programmed to harmonise a fourth above.

The final change that came about specifically as a result of the rehearsal was regarding the drum part. The score had indicated that for the first sixteen bars of the introduction the drums should fill space, mostly using cymbals, playing freely without regard to the tempo. However, while following these instructions in the rehearsal, the drummer played a short phrase of rhythms in tempo on the closed hi-hat, momentarily creating a very effective accompaniment for the guitar part. Similarly, for the first sixteen bars of the piano solo, the score indicated that the drums should play very busily, responding to what the piano played, almost in the form of a dual solo. However, upon hearing this small section of the drums playing this closed hi-hat rhythm for the introduction, it was instantly apparent that this idea, employed for the entirety of each of those separate sections, would be much more effective than what had originally been written for the drummer to play.

Here is an audio extract of the beginning of the piece from the rehearsal recording, followed by the beginning of the piece from the final product.

- *Soundcloud Playlist - Umbra - Intro Changes*

2.4 – Collaborative Advice

Upon listening to the rehearsal recording with Perico Sambeat, he remarked that the chords when played by the keyboards over the A Section clashed with some of the melody notes. This appeared to be true, but upon investigation it seemed more likely that the instructions given to the piano at this part were at the root of the issue. As the chords for the A section are the same for the introduction, they are of course based on a specific guitar voicing making up a sequence of;

| Fmaj13 | Ebmaj13b9 | Db69(addb9)| Bm11 |

The specific guitar voicings were written in the piano part as sample voicings to help with constructing these unusual chords, also with the instructions to omit the 5th during any comping.



While these voicings are very effective on guitar, this information is probably far too specific and limiting to give to a pianist. In order to fix the problem I then studied the notes contained within the melody and realised that they were almost entirely contained within the Lydian Augmented scale of each chord they

were being played over. This meant that while the chords for the introduction could stay as specifically intended for guitar, for the melody the chords for piano could be written as;

|Fmaj13#5 | Ebmaj13#5 | Dbmaj7#5 | Bm11 |

This eradicated the problem that was noticed regarding the clash of melody and chord, as well as having the added bonus of allowing the pianist much more freedom of expression, as indicated in the following recorded material. The first excerpt is from the rehearsal followed by the finished product.

- ***Soundcloud Playlist - Track 18 - Umbra - Voicing Changes***

A second point that was raised in this meeting was there was possibly too much contrast between the A and B Section melody, Perico suggesting that perhaps the A Section melody could benefit from being less busy and the B Section could have more movement melodically. This was a suggestion that made sense and was worth considering, but due to time constraints before the recording, was not possible to investigate fully. However, having completed the recording with the melodies in this manner, it seems that the melodic contrast between the sections is very effective, as it also allows room for more contrast between what the rhythm section is playing between the A and B Sections, which was an effective way of both maintaining the interest of the listener, as well as keeping the musicians themselves engaged.

Having gained some advice on the compositional aspect of the piece I also met with Israel Sandoval to discuss the scale options available for soloing over the tune, particularly over the A section chords. As has been previously mentioned, the chords for this section of the piece are unusual and as a consequence, were

quite difficult to solo comfortably over. Together, Israel and I investigated what would be possible options for each chord, also with the aim of discovering which options blended the changes together with most cohesion, while also being aware of what would be a logical mental process for changing between chords.

The resulting scale chord relationships were;

- Fmaj13 – D Minor (all variations of, Melodic, Harmonic, Natural Minor)
- Ebmaj13b9 – D, Eb, E, A, Bb, B – Limited Transposition Scale
- Db69(addb9) – D, E, F, Gb, G – Limited Transposition Scale
- Bm11 – Bb Augmented Scale

The term “Limited Transposition Scale,” implies a scale that fulfills specific criteria with regards to their symmetry and their interval groups. This was a concept previously unfamiliar to me, and was very effective in terms of creating new ideas for soloing over these chords, and for soloing in general.

As it turned out, because of the changes to the chordal information given to the keyboards, these scales were not strictly necessary for soloing over this section, as Lydian Augmented would now fit each chord. However, the use of these scales did provide an extra ingredient to employ during the solo which, when combined with the Lydian Augmented scales, created a sound that was very specific to this piece and therefore very effective.

2.5 – Recording

The recording session for *“Umbra”* was 20.00-23.00, on the 9th April 2014 at the Ann Kreis Scroing Stage, Berklee Valencia. The engineer for the session was Alayna Hughes, and the band consisted of Daniel Toledo on electric bass, Piotr Orzechowski on keyboards, Joshua Wheatley on drums, as well as myself on electric guitar.

The session schedule was planned to be;

- 20.00-21.00 – Setup.
- 21.00-22.30 – Record multiple takes of piece.
- 22.30-23.00 – Tear down equipment.

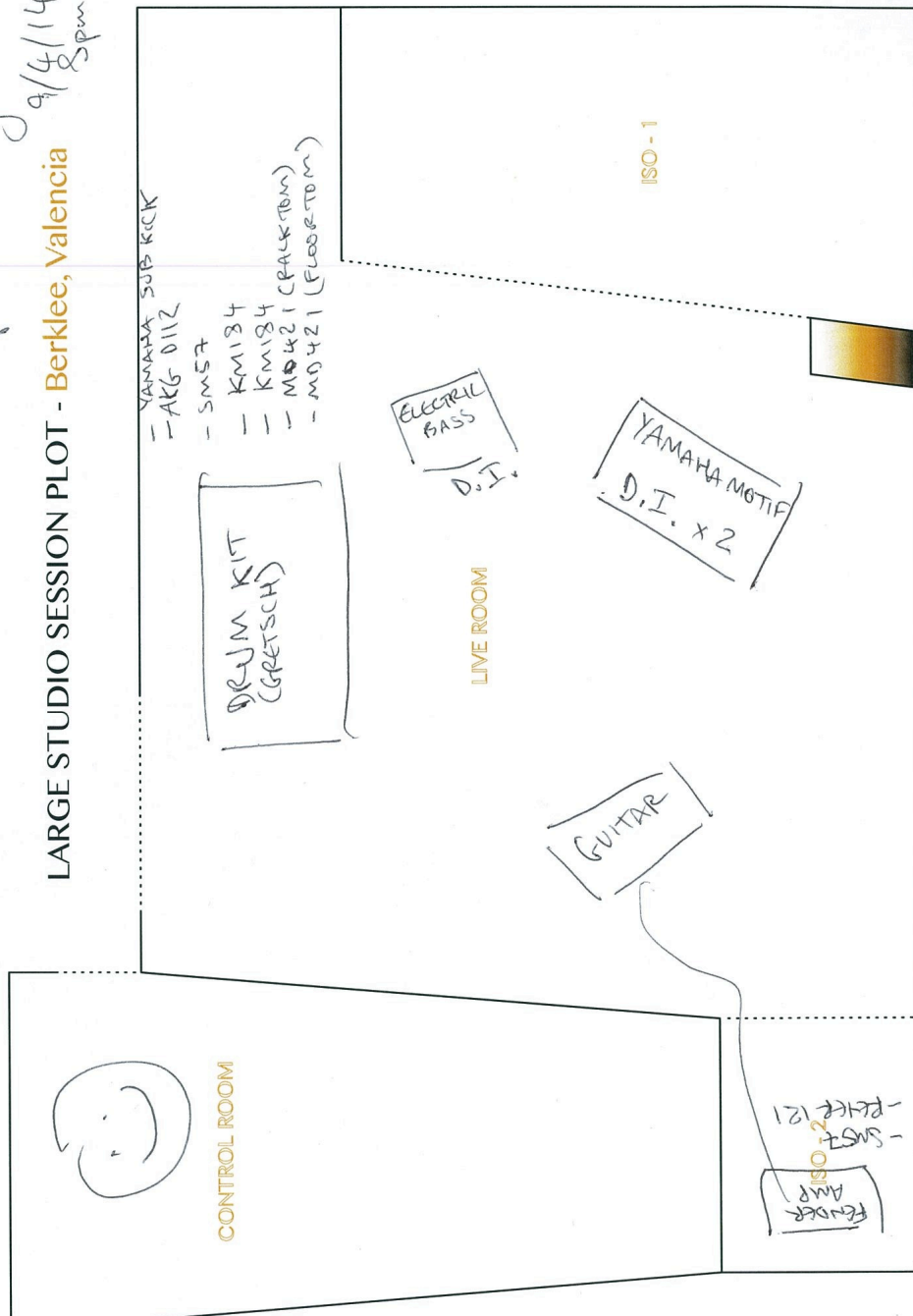
The microphones to be used for the session were decided in advance by Alayna and I and consisted of;

- Guitar – SM57 + Reyer 121
 - Bass – D.I.
 - Keyboards – D.I.
 - Drums – Kick - AKG D112, Snare - SM57, Toms - Sennheiser 421
- Overheads – KM 184

Below is a picture of the floor plan for the session.

Stephen + Alayna Session
9/4/14
8pm-11pm

LARGE STUDIO SESSION PLOT - Berklee, Valencia



As in the recording session written about in the previous chapter, the effort that went into the pre-production and organisation process meant that everything ran smoothly for the session, ensuring ample time was available for recording enough takes until a satisfactory product was a certainty.

In post-production, I completed the edits using Pro Tools, the mix was done by Ryan Renteria, and mastering by Alan Tishk.

As the recording session went very smoothly and the arrangement was well prepared, no problems arose in post production, the only difficulty lay in choosing from the many takes, as each had it's own appeal.

Here is the final product of the composition "*Umbra*".

- ***Soundcloud Playlist - Track 19 - Umbra***

2.6 - Lessons Learned

The main area I increased my knowledge over the course of writing and arranging this piece was in the field of chord-scale relationships. Learning about Limited Transposition scales has provided an area for intensive further study in the future, while also immediately granting me some new sounds and ideas for my improvisational repertoire.

The second area in which I could say I learned, was with regard the last minute changing of the ensemble line up. While initially the fact that the saxophonist failed to show up for a rehearsal was a great source of irritation to me, in the end the composition ended up being much more effective in the quartet format. This was a good lesson in terms of not assuming the worst when

presented with an obstacle, as well as how to change arrangements quickly and intuitively.

Also, I learned that the original intent for the composition does not have to be maintained in order to end with a satisfactory product. After having decided that the main influence for the piece was going to be the work of a certain composer, the more time spent on the composition, the less this seemed relevant. However, starting with an obvious intent was extremely helpful in terms of speeding up the composing process, as it gave the beginning stages some guidelines to follow and an immediate focus, which was helpful in terms of speeding up the decision making process.

3 - “Dip”

3.1 - Initial Intention

The initial intention for this composition was to build a piece around a main idea that employed the use of extended guitar techniques. The approach of using unusual noises and textures on guitar is a technique that takes its influence from guitarists such as Tom Morello and Jeff Beck. The use of harmonics, bending of notes behind the nut of the guitar, as well as playing notes behind the nut, are all approaches that I regularly apply to my playing, especially when performing in the hip-hop genre, as the guitar can sometimes be in the position of replicating a DJ/turntablist. It seemed that incorporating these techniques into an original composition would be an effective way of developing my own voice both as an instrumentalist and as a composer.

3.2 – The Writing Process

The first step in this composition was to come up with the extended technique idea that would be the main hook, or focus, of the piece. This was an extremely quick process because, as mentioned before, this is an approach I regularly take in my playing, and therefore have an accumulation of ideas to draw from. Also, this approach to guitar playing is not very common and as a result it isn't necessary to be painstaking in terms of attempting not to sound too derivative, most of the sounds attempted have a character that is particular to the composer. After a short time trying some ideas, the phrase was finalised. It employs the three techniques spoken of earlier, harmonics, bending behind the nut, and playing behind the nut, as well as guitar effects pedals in the form of distortion and digital delay.

Here is an audio example of the phrase in question.

- ***Soundcloud Playlist – Track 20 – Dip – Extended Techniques***

Once the motif was finalised, the next step was to find chords to complement it. Melodic Minor harmony is an area that was being explored at that time in my private lesson and therefore was a sound that was very present in my playing at the time. It seemed that the dark character of a major7#5 chord would be the perfect choice to complement this motif and because the motif is basically atonal, any combination of maj7#5 chords was possible. After many varied attempts at different combinations and durations of time for each chord. The most effective

solution was to play Cmaj7#5 and Ebmaj7#5 for one bar each.

CMAJ7#5 EbMAJ7#5 CMAJ7#5 EbMAJ7#5



Here is an audio example of the guitar motif played with the harmony.

- **Soundcloud Playlist - Track 21 - Dip - Motif with Chords**

In order to maintain a similar atmosphere for the introduction and the melody, it seemed that it would be effective to use the same chords, but change the harmonic rhythm in order to provide a slight difference to what had previously been heard. Therefore the chord qualities remained the same, Cmaj7#5 and Ebmaj7#5, but this time they are played for two bars each.

The melody itself begins with a four bar phrase;



The last bar of this phrase is then sequenced, and repeated four times with small ornamentations.



To end the phrase the first two bars of the of the melody are repeated, then only the first two notes of the third bar are repeated, allowing some space before the introductory motif returns.



The intent behind the construction of this melody was, in order to contrast with what had preceded it, to keep it simple and aurally accessible, while the fact that the repetition of the first phrase is not concluded in the same fashion as the first time it is heard may be an effective way of surprising the listener. Also, the melody itself is not necessarily played strictly as written, artistic license is granted in terms of string bends and articulation.

Here is an audio extract of the A Section melody.

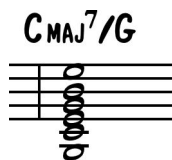
- ***Soundcloud Playlist - Track 22 - Dip - A Section Melody***

Following the melody is a repetition of the extended techniques of the introduction, this time with second half of the phrase played first, once again the intent behind this was written with the intent of repeating previously heard material, but with a slight change to hold the listener's interest. While writing, it seemed that simply repeating the information heard in the A Section melody needed to be heard again before any new material was introduced. However, simply repeating the melody seemed too predictable, so the most effective choice was to repeat the melody except play a segment of it, a few variations were attempted, eventually the most effective method seemed to be to play bar five-twelve of the previously heard section.





For the B Section, the chords were the first element of the section to be written. The sound of a Cmaj7/G chord when played on guitar using of the open G, B, and E strings, creates a light, yet unsettling atmosphere that fitted the composition well.



In order to work this voicing into the composition, semi-tonal bass movement was employed, once again with the influence of Kurt Rosenwinkel's compositions in mind. The bottom three notes of the chord can be moved while the open strings are kept the same for each voicing, resulting in a progression of;



After experimenting with different places on the fretboard this voicing would work, using a similar pattern starting with Bb as the bass note proved to be very effective. However, the structure of the chord couldn't remain the same for each voicing as it became extremely dissonant. To remedy this while still maintaining the chromatic movement, the structure of the voicing was changed slightly in order to accommodate the use of open strings. The resulting progression was;



At the time of writing this section, the actual chordal values were not of prime importance, as the main objective was to create the necessary atmosphere and mood. Considering the harmonic content of these voicings only became a concern when writing the changes for solo sections. After playing the progression a few times, it seemed that a more aurally satisfying way for it to be played would be to begin with the section starting on Bb, playing the Cmaj7/G chord on what would be bar five of an eight bar sequence.

Melodically, what it seemed this section needed was a repetitive melodic figure that provided contrast with all the chordal movement. After exploring different options, what was very effective was maintaining the same top note of the motif throughout the entire progression, while having any movement kept to the lower register of the melody. Despite the unusual harmony this provided a sense of connectedness throughout the section. After deciding on an initial motif to complement the first chord, motivic transformation was applied, keeping the rhythm the same but changing the melody notes according to the chord of the moment.



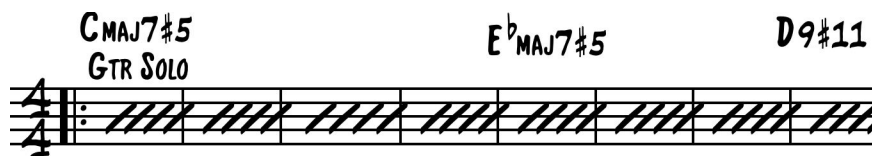
The most effective way to play this six bar phrase seemed to be to play with just guitar and piano, then repeat it with bass and drums, playing a crescendo over the six bars before resting on a Fmaj7#11 chord. A repetition of the initial guitar introduction seemed appropriate at this point, but in order not to present

the same material in exactly the same fashion, beat four was removed from the second bar of the phrase, meaning the band would play the first beat of the solo section earlier than the listener would expect.

Here is an audio sample of the B Section, moving into the first solo of the piece.

- **Soundcloud Playlist - Track 22 - Dip - B Section**

For the guitar solo, the first section uses the chords found in the A Section melody, with the simple addition of a D9#11 chord to provide a brief change of colour from the constant major7#5 voicings.



Musical notation for a guitar solo section. It consists of a single staff with a 4/4 time signature. The staff is filled with diagonal lines representing a continuous solo. Above the staff, the chords are labeled: C MAJ7#5, GTR SOLO, E^b MAJ7#5, and D9#11.

The next section of the solo uses chords from the B Section, and therefore required some consideration as to their theoretical makeup, in order to provide information for the soloist. Rather than just use the B Section in it's entirety for the solo, what seemed to be more effective was to do a slight variation on the first half of this section, turning it into a four bar phrase rather than three, partially to create interest for the listener, but also to alleviate some pressure on the soloist, as the chords themselves are quite complicated without having to consider unusual form lengths too.



Musical notation for a guitar solo section. It consists of a single staff with a 4/4 time signature. The staff is filled with diagonal lines representing a continuous solo. Above the staff, the chords are labeled: E^b#5/B^b, E^M/B, F MAJ9#11/C, and F#M11B9/D^b.

The above chords are the four bar sequence that were chosen as a variation on the B Section to play during the guitar solo. After the guitar solo there is an interlude, which shall be described in detail later, before the beginning of the piano solo, which plays over the same chords as the guitar solo, but with the order reversed, the piano beginning with the chromatically moving chords based on the B section melody, then moving onto the chords based on the A Section.

After the piano solo there is a drum feature spread over a twenty-two bar section. The musical content of this section is based on the B Section of the melody, using the same chords but introducing a new, extremely simple motif on the keyboard. The section begins dynamically low, at piano, gradually increasing in volume as the keyboard's written part becomes busier in tandem with the drums. For the end of the section the B section melody is re-introduced while the drums continue to solo. Everybody ends the solo with an Fmaj7#11 chord, held for two bars, before the guitar plays the phrase from the introduction, this time with the entire band catching the last hit of the motif.

Here is an audio sample of the section incorporating the drum solo and end of the piece.

- ***Soundcloud Playlist - Track 23 - Dip - End Section***

3.3 - Rehearsal and Adjustments

Rehearsal of this piece brought about a dramatic change in terms of the instrumentation as the original line-up was to include cajón and tabla rather than drum set. However, upon rehearsing the piece it became apparent that

the larger orchestrational palate and dynamic capabilities of the drum set would be more beneficial to the piece.

Also, an issue that I hadn't considered before the rehearsal was that the fact that the tabla is a pitched instrument created an issue because of the harmonic density of the piece. The fact that there was such a high volume of chord changes, as well as the fact none of these chords belonged to the same key center or harmonic universe, meant that several tabla drums would have to be set up to keep up with the harmony. This was problematic because it meant the piece was quite physically uncomfortable to play for the musician, while also meaning that as the specific drum was constantly changing to accommodate the chords, it was impossible to build a sense of continuity within the tabla part itself. The constant changing of the pattern and tone was unfortunately unavoidable, quite distracting, and not in keeping with what was intended for the piece. Also, without the tabla, the cajón did not have the ability to create the necessary ethereal atmosphere required for the B Section melody and interlude between solos. After listening back to the recording it was quite clear that a drum set would be far more appropriate to the piece.

3.4 - Collaborative Advice

As mentioned earlier, the interlude between the guitar and piano solo was something that would be talked about later in the paper. The reason for this is that in the initial writing stages, this interlude was simply a repetition of the B Section melody. However, upon listening to the rehearsal recording, Perico suggested that perhaps it would be more effective to compose something new here rather than just repeat previously heard material. This

line of thought is very much in keeping with what I usually work towards in a composition and therefore I tended to agree with him.

The intent in writing this section was to create something new, but still relevant to what had preceded it. To achieve this, voicings from the B section were used, but with a different harmonic rhythm, as well as in a different order. The process for choosing what chords, and what order, was simply done through trial and error, mixing and matching the different options until a selection was found. The resulting progression was;

The image shows two staves of musical notation. The first staff is in treble clef and contains two chords: Em7 and FMAJ9#11/C. The second staff is in bass clef and contains three chords: CMAJ7/G, Em/B, and F#M11B9/B. Each chord is represented by a diamond-shaped symbol on a five-line staff, with a slash and a diamond symbol below it indicating a specific voicing or fingering.

Melodically, the approach was similar to the B Section of the piece, using a repeated rhythm while changing the melody notes.

The image shows a single staff of musical notation in treble clef. It features a melodic phrase with a repeated rhythm. The rhythm consists of a quarter note followed by an eighth note, then a quarter note, and finally a dotted quarter note. The melody starts on a G4, moves to A4, then B4, and then C5, with various intervals and accidentals.

The phrase is initially played by the keyboard only, before being joined by the bass, which plays the same figure. In the case the rhythm played by the guitar was dictated by the rhythm of the melodic figure, the chord changing to match the melodic note on the second eighth note of beat two.

Here is an audio sample of the interlude section.

- ***Soundcloud Playlist - Track 24 - Dip - Interlude***

3.5 - Recording

The recording session for "*Dip*" was 14.00-17.00, on the 9th April 2014 at the Ann Kreis Scroing Stage, Berklee Valencia. The engineer for the session was Matthew Mazzone, and the band consisted of Daniel Toledo on electric bass, Ricardo Curto on keyboards, Mariano Steimberg on drums, as well as myself on electric guitar.

The session schedule was planned to be;

- 14.00-15.00 – Setup.
- 15.00-16.30 – Record multiple takes of piece.
- 16.30-17.00 – Tear down equipment.

The microphones to be used for the session were decided in advance by Matthew and I and consisted of;

- Guitar – SM57 + Reyer 121
 - Bass – D.I.
 - Keyboards – D.I.
 - Drums – Kick - AKG D112, Snare - SM57, Toms - Sennheiser 421
- Overheads – KM 184

Due to time constraints and the decision to change from using tabla and cajón to using drumset, the recording session was the first time all members of the group had played the composition together. This meant that the first couple of recorded takes of the piece were used more for everyone to get comfortable with their parts and with each. This situation was not ideal and quite stressful,

however, the playing of the piece came together quite quickly and in the end the recording was deemed a success.

After the recording session on the Scoring Stage, I decided that I wanted to use this piece as an opportunity to experiment with some unusual recording techniques. Studio A was booked for a recording session, and in this session several guitar takes were recorded of mostly high pitched feedback and effect pedal laden, non-diatonic noise. After recording all these different sounds, a lot of time was spent in Pro Tools, cutting different segments of these recordings and matching them together to create atmospheric sounds to complement the sparseness of the B Section melody, the interlude, to add to the tension created during the drum solo, and also the very last note of the piece. This technique of using guitar to create sounds and atmospheric effects not usually associated with the instrument is an influence taken very much from the music of Radiohead, and guitarist Jeff Beck.

Here is an audio sample of some of the use of atmospheric noise in the track.

- ***Soundcloud Playlist - Track 25 - Dip - Sound Effects***

3.6 – Lessons Learned

Making a conscious decision to incorporate information from my private lesson to a composition was extremely beneficial. Deciding to use melodic minor harmony as the basis for the main melody and solo section meant that I while composing and practicing the piece, I was also preparing myself for material specific to my lesson. Aside from the fact that this had the benefit of aiding the progress of my classwork, it also meant that I was continually challenging myself by incorporating what was, at that time, unfamiliar material into a creation that

was my own. Thereby increasing the sonic range of what usually comes naturally to me as a composer.

Another area in which learning was achieved during this process was in the field of recording techniques. As the session for overdubbing the guitar effects was after the main session on the scoring stage, I engineered the overdubs myself. This put me in the position of having complete control over the recording techniques employed, and forced me to confront some areas of my expertise which were weak. Increasing skill levels in this area will be extremely advantageous for the future as it will enable me to both record myself, and also increase my understanding of what engineers do, with the additional benefit of being better able to articulate my needs in recording situations.

Connecting the Compositions

1.1- Musical Connections

While writing and recording the above pieces, there were some aspects of the compositions that were approached similarly during each. During the above analysis it was regularly demonstrated that there was intent to never repeat the same material in exactly the same way. If a section was to be repeated, methods of achieving this included; changing the instrument playing the melody, adding an instrument to double the melody or repeated part, starting the repeated part from somewhere other than what was previously the beginning, changing the role of an instrument from melody to harmony or vice versa. The intent behind this was to keep the attention of the listener by circumventing their expectations, and is keeping with the initial aspiration of engaging an audience with influences of pop/rock/funk music in mind.

Another method employed in the construction of each composition was the reversal of the solo forms. In each case, no instrument solos over exactly the same form, it was always a reversal of the structure the previous instrument had used to solo over. This was as a result of always including a written section between the solos, usually based on a section of the melody, thereby allowing the next solo form to begin from the subsequent section of the melody while still maintaining aural cohesion.

The use of pentatonics for constructing melodies was also an element connecting each composition, particularly the combination of minor pentatonic scales played beginning from the major 7th of a major chord. This chord/scale combination results in the inclusion of a #11, which creates an open, Lydian sound while still retaining the accessible melodicism of a minor pentatonic scale. This approach for creating melodies is an influence directly taken from the music of Wayne Shorter, particularly the albums, *"Jujū"*, and *"Speak No Evil"*.

Another method that was employed in each composition was the use of a top note connecting a series of quite harmonically complex chords. As mentioned previously many of the more unusual chord structures took their influence from the music of Kurt Rosenwinkel. The use of slash chords with unusual tensions, b9 played on major chords etc, needed to be offset by the coherence of keeping a constant element throughout, the use of a static top note throughout complex harmonic movement was extremely effective in each case and therefore was employed each time this situation arose.

As well as keeping static notes on top of moving harmony, another technique employed in each composition that takes its influence from the music of Kurt Rosenwinkel, is the use of chromatic bass movement. This is an excellent

technique for any situation where the creation of tension is required and was used extensively in each composition.

Although there were many elements that were consciously chosen as compositional techniques prior to the writing of each piece, there were also some that were not previously planned, but became apparent after the analysis. One very obvious example of this was the fact that in each piece the A section provides the main melodic content, while the B section melody is closer to an ostinato than an actual melody per se. This is demonstrable in all three of the pieces analysed here, and while it was not a technique that had been consciously adapted, it was extremely effective in each piece and something that will certainly be consciously explored, put into use, and adapted for future compositions.

A non-compositional element that connects each of these pieces is the sound of the electric guitar. This is something that was consciously worked on and tweaked before each recording. The equipment used to achieve the sound for the chordal, or non-lead, parts is an MXR Distrtion+ pedal, combined with a Boss DD6 Digital delay. The lead sound again used the Boss DD6, this time combined with a RAT distortion and occasionally a Digitech Whammy pedal. A Fender Hot Rod Deluxe was the amplifier used in each case. While not a compositional element itself, the guitar sound is almost the most important aspect of their connection. The sound of the instrument is the voice of the composer and should be recognisable and distinctive throughout.

2.1 – Aspirations achieved?

As mentioned at the beginning of the text, there were a number of aspirations for these compositions prior to actually writing them, including creating a listenability and melodic accessibility in keeping with influences from the pop/rock/funk world, while still incorporating the improvisational elements of jazz music.

As the composer and performer of these pieces it is difficult to be objective in judging whether or not these aspirations were achieved. However, after repeated listening it does seem that each track has enough elements associated with other forms of music to hold the attention of listeners that are not fans of jazz. These elements include many of the compositional approaches previously spoken of, as well as an overall sound that has more in common with rock music than jazz.

One aspect of the pieces that may not fit with the intended aesthetic is the length of the compositions themselves. The shortest track is just under five minutes, the longest is closer to eight. While this is not in keeping with the influence of contemporary popular music, it may not necessarily be considered a negative outcome. It seems that while it is important to consider the listener in these cases, it is also important to allow the musicians time and opportunity to express themselves during solos. Also, an awareness of keeping the potential reach of the piece as strong as possible should not be executed at the expense of the musical quality.

While all the elements stated in this paper were considered while writing each piece, the deciding factor was always the musical quality. If a section

seemed like it needed to be long, or if unusual, dissonant harmony was the most effective option, this was the option that was chosen. Whether or not this approach was the correct one will become more apparent once the EP is released, and direct feedback can be received from listeners and colleagues.

Final Conclusions

1.1 - Lessons Learned

During the process of writing and recording these pieces my knowledge increased in numerous areas, all of which have been previously discussed in the conclusion of each chapter. The areas in which I have learned extensively included; chord/scale relationships, different approaches to beginning a composition, recording techniques, time management with regards the writing and arrangement of charts, etc. However, the most valuable lesson I gained from this experience was the realisation of how important writing, composing, and performing my own work is to me.

Having previously spent many years working as a sideman, as well as working as a collaborative writer in band situations, it had been several years since I had the time to work on material that was entirely self-composed. The realisation of how much I enjoy the process and satisfaction of this work has been a revelation, and means I will ensure to prioritise this in the future. As mentioned earlier in this document, the ability to combine a working life that

incorporates both the playing of other people's material as well as my own will ensure that I stay challenged and engaged as a professional musician.

Also, time spent working on my own compositions is invaluable to the expedient growth of my own voice as an instrumentalist. While this is enormously beneficial to me in terms of nurturing my growth as a composer, it also has the added benefit of making my approach to the composed music of others more recognisably my own, which may make it easier to find work as a sideman if potential employers wish to have this particular sound on their recorded work.

Another element that changed as a result of working on these pieces was the realisation of how important it is to incorporate as many disciplines as possible into your practice routine. This came about mostly because of using elements from my private lesson in the compositions, which made me realise the time-saving and accelerated learning benefits of this technique. Doing this meant that I was incorporating sounds that were new to me into my compositions, as well as working on soloing over this new material, all while working on getting a composition written. I noticed the speed at which I became familiar with new material greatly increased when I used it in a composition rather than just practicing separately from the writing process, and this is definitely a new aspect to my practicing technique that I will continue to employ in the future.

1.2 – Planning Ahead

The next step for my original music is to make it available to the public. As I have signed as an artist to Disrupción Records, the Berklee Valencia record label,

this means I will have substantial help with this process. The plan is to have a digital release of the EP on many platforms in summer 2014, the label will help in terms of marketing, promotion, artwork, etc., and discussions and meetings regarding this process are ongoing.

Upon completing the Contemporary Performance program at Berklee Valencia, I will be embarking on a tour of the west coast of the United States, followed by other short tours in Scotland, Ireland, Italy, and Spain, this time working as a sideman. Following the completion of these travels I will be scheduling a physical release of an album version of the EP in November 2014, in Dublin, Ireland. Following the physical release of this album, booking agents for festivals in every possible area of the globe will be approached with a view to securing dates for summer 2015. During this time I will be working as a sideman in various projects mostly based in Ireland, while also beginning work on composing for the follow up to the EP.

Link to free download of EP;

- ***<http://stephenmchale.bandcamp.com/releases>***