

Jodie Dagleish

Notes for Sound, 2011

Faculty of Applied Humanities.

Primary supervisor: Mike Johnson.

A thesis submitted to Auckland University of Technology in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Creative Writing.

Table of Contents

Novel:

Notes for Sound.....	7
Chapter 1.....	10
Chapter 2.....	21
Chapter 3.....	31
Chapter 4.....	40
Chapter 5.....	47
Chapter 6.....	55
Chapter 7.....	64
Chapter 8.....	65
Chapter 9.....	74
Chapter 10.....	82
Chapter 11.....	93
Chapter 12.....	113
Chapter 13.....	119
Chapter 14.....	130
Chapter 15.....	137
Chapter 16.....	146
Chapter 17.....	153
Chapter 18.....	164
Chapter 19.....	170
Chapter 20.....	178
Chapter 21.....	195

Author's Note.....202

Exegesis:

Notes for Notes for Sound..... 203

Figure One.....224

Attestation of Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

Signed by:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'B. J. Plus', written in a cursive style.

Date: 17 July 2011

Notes for Notes for Sound

Abstract

The novel *Notes for Sound* is a literary work of musical fiction, or ‘literary music,’ that explores the material and mythological being of music as a phenomenon of sound. Drawing on the proven tendency for listeners to identify ‘person-like’ qualities in the note-play and expressive events of music, as well as the mythological status often given to sound, *Notes* is dedicated to searching for music’s real-life existence and affective power. In particular, a Beethoven piano score has its own independent identity while it follows and affects the lives of a small cast of human characters and shapes the novel. Concepts of resonance, and the loss and desire inherent in the very nature of sound, are of key importance in realising a story in which Cara, Toni and Quinn make their own music together because of yet despite the failings and loss of important familial relationships. Depending on the loss of, and desire for, sound and its music, *Notes* enables the reader’s phenomenological experience of music in the mind’s ear, or ‘auditory imagination.’ A kind of composer, the reader is involved in a personal form of music making and performance: a *musica practica* specific to the novel. As a novel of ideas, *Notes for Sound* explores the life-making nature and potential of sound as a product of its resonance. Fundamentally concerned with the internal fusion of listening and imagination, it brings the normally disparate realms of art music and electroacoustic music together in a philosophical field concerned with the sound in music and the music in sound. In particular, it creates a ‘resonance chamber of history’ in which the music of Beethoven, Henry Cowell, Cara and Quinn can be related in a world of sound centred on the special resonance of the piano. Ultimately, music is given its own particular life: a life that is both familiar and strange.

The novel *Notes for Sound* fundamentally relies on the idea that music is written. For, whenever a writer seeks to write something of music, they both instantiate and expand that music’s means and mode of existence. In *Notes for Sound* music has its own real-life existence and an affective power that acts in the present and resonates over time while it is also an intimate part and product of the creative life of people. The nature of this novel and its music will be explored under a number of headings including: the writing of music, challenges and opportunities, what fiction can do—blurring boundaries and creating worlds, character and story, and the creative process.

The Writing of Music

Over the last decade or so, I have read a number of works of fiction particularly concerned with music, which may now be classified as ‘musical fiction’ by New Zealand libraries.¹ Although I enjoyed the opportunity to read music in fiction, I was sometimes disappointed by the ‘story’ which, to my mind, was overtaken by a plot that did not allow a search for the music that was being written about. Other times, such as with Winterson’s *Art and Lies*, I found the book too abstract in the way it tried to play with musical ideas. And sometimes, as a previously professional musician and music teacher, I felt that writers were limited by their lack of first-hand experience and made numerous errors in their use of terms and concepts. (Surely a novel should exist on a number of levels to satisfy people with different levels of knowledge and experience?)

Eventually, I wanted to write the kind of book I wanted to read. I wanted to write a book where a ‘story’ was made not only for music, but also *by* music. After finding the *Concerte* score in the local university library, and once my initial ideas came together, I wanted to write *Notes for Sound* in which the Beethoven score has a voice and agency alongside ‘real life’ characters to explore the relationship and interplay between music and the people that play it, listen to it, and write it. In doing so, I wanted to give readers a chance to make music as part of a process of reading.

After starting to write *Notes for Sound* in 2010, I discovered Stephen Benson’s *Literary Music: Writing Music in Contemporary Fiction*, and I realised that I wished to write my own version of “literary music.” In line with Benson’s description of the project of other fiction writers such as Kazuo Ishiguro, Milan Kundera, Bernard MacLaverly, Ian McEwan, Vikram Seth and Jeanette Winterson, I wished to make music known and reveal its singular value in the performance of its narrative.² I wanted to bring my own understanding of, and relationship with, music closer to myself and others. Ultimately, I wanted to write, and have written, for the love of music.

¹ These have included: Anthony Burgess, *Mozart and the Wolf Gang* (Vintage, 1992); Geoff Dyer, *But Beautiful: A Book about Jazz* (London: Abacus, 1998); Janice Galloway, *Clara* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2002); Kazuo Ishiguro, *Nocturnes: Five Stories of Music and Nightfall* (Knopf, 2009); Nathaniel Mackey, *Bass Cathedral: A Book about Jazz* (London: Abacus, 1998); Bernard MacLaverly, *Grace Notes* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1997); Ian McEwan, *Amsterdam* (London: Vintage, 1999); Richard Powers, *The Time of our Singing* (New York: Farrar, Strauss & Giroux, 2003); Vikram Seth, *An Equal Music* (London: Phoenix House, 1999); Jeanette Winterson, *Art & Lies: A Piece for three Voices and a Bawd* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1994).

² Stephen Benson, *Literary Music: Writing Music in Contemporary Fiction* (Aldershot, Hampshire, England; Burlington, VT, USA: Ashgate Pub., 2006), 1-11.

Challenges and Opportunities

The writing of music presents a number of challenges and opportunities. The key challenges relate to people's expectations of literature concerned with music and the fact that music is not actually heard when a text is read.

When a reader or critic encounters a work of musical fiction it may be natural for them to expect it to *model* itself after music or musical properties, since, as Benson states early in his book's introduction, this has been the preoccupation of musico-literary studies.³ Perhaps still persistent is the tendency to expect "a transmutation of musical rhetoric, principles and structure to literature" as the basis of a 'musical novel,' as stated by William Freedman in his paradigmatic treatise *Laurence Sterne and the Origins of the Musical Novel*.⁴ Benson states that this view of the writing of music is not the subject of his book. This is also true of *Notes for Sound*, which is not to belittle the influence of music on it.

To remove any initial presumption that I have sought to 'transmute' the musical to my novel, I have not directly situated the first movement, second movement, and third movement etc. of the score within the potentially corresponding parts of the novel. The novel is presented in, but not explicitly identified as having, three main parts and a Coda: Beginnings are made in chapters 1 – 6; Exploration and discovery occurs in chapters 7 -11; Composition and performance is the subject of chapters 12 - 20; and chapter 21 is the Coda.

An example of the way in which a text's structure is provided by the music it writes is given by Eric Soblin in *The Cello Suites* in which each chapter is named in sequence after a cello suite and each part of the chapter after each movement of its suite.⁵ Another, admittedly exaggerated, example of a tendency to assume a writer's intention to model a written text after music is given by Bookmarks Magazine's description of Kazuo Ishiguro's *Nocturnes: Five Stories of Music* which is said to have "the ephemeral quality of a song cycle with recurring themes and motifs developed in

³ Benson, 5.

⁴ William Freedman, *Laurence Sterne and the origins of the Musical Novel* (University of Georgia Press, 1978), 6.

⁵ Although Soblin's book is non-fiction, it is a kind of literary mystery that stretches the genre and, as such, it provides a clear example of the way in which the writing of music might be most obviously approached. Soblin makes his structure work for him, but there is a tendency for his 'musical' categorisation to provide little more than a heading. That said, I do appreciate the book's commitment to try and capture something of the writer's profound experience of the Bach suites and his journey of discovery to research and write them. Soblin, *The Cello Suites* (Atlantic Monthly Press, 2009).

different prose keys.”⁶ Such a description limits our understanding of Kazuo’s writing, and it doesn’t do music any favours either.

Also pushing against an expectation for text-as-music, I *loosely* relate the nature and activity of music with human nature: the life of music and people are clearly *related* but *not necessarily equivalent*. I have tried to create a story in which music contains the fullness of what it means to be human while it has its own life, a story in which music is both *familiar* and *strange*.

Also concerned with text-as-music, is the expectation that the writing of music will necessarily be focused on the poetics of ‘musical language.’ This is a little tricky to discuss because surely language is musical in many different ways and—perhaps in the writing of music in particular—it is always concerned with a poetics that involves a search for words or word combinations nearest to its subject. Beguiling yet ultimately limiting, however, is the notion of a musical novel that is defined by the music of its poetry. Even though *Notes* would never deny the musicality of language, I certainly have not attempted to write a book defined by its ‘musical language.’

In *Notes for Sound* I have employed a more exploratory language in the text of the Beethoven score, but this more creative language creates a sense of what the music is doing in recognition of the fact that precise description is impossible and undesirable (who could wade their way through it?). At the same time, the writing of music in *Notes* is notable for the way it embodies the materiality of the music without full reliance on image, metaphor, allusion and emotive language. The kind of description that *Notes* seeks to avoid can be found in Siblin’s *Cello Suites*:

“After a pause that contemplates the future, the cello resumes with aching soulfulness. Things will not come easily. The notes are murmured, stated with courtly purpose, and blasted through with rapture. We Peak higher. A new vista opens up, rhapsodic resolution, the descent a soft landing.”⁷

Notes is concerned, not with writing emotion in music, but with “thinking about and discussing what happens in music to realise its particular life” (Cara).⁸ By doing so, it creates a language of music that does not deny its affective power, but that can be conceptually understood and ‘heard’ in terms of the kinds of note-made play, movement, events, roles and relationships that characterise the music, as illustrated with

⁶ Kazuo Ishiguro, *Nocturnes: Five Stories of Music and Nightfall* (Knopf, 2009). See Bookmarks Magazine’s review at: <http://www.amazon.com> (accessed 16 February 2011).

⁷ Siblin, 3.

⁸ Dagleish, *Notes for Sound*, unpublished, 162.

this description of the slow movement of Beethoven's fourth piano concerto that pre-empted the argument between Toni and her father:

"The Music:

A short—sharp—single unison chord is like a sudden lunge—on strings across three octaves.

And on—a rap of unison-notes for the jilting knock of a rhythm—that drops-hard to a single chord for response.

You:

The piano—sings quietly back—no flash under its fingers, just small movements for find-feeling the merest of melodies—its reach and fall.

The Music:

A lunge—for the same knock of a rhythm: the unison of strings with its chord for response.

You:

*The piano—small-moves the slight arc of two phrases: rise and fall, rise and fall."*⁹

The other key challenge facing the writer of literary music is the fact that the text does not physically sound the music it describes. This is also underlined by Benson who states that such writing is founded on an empirical impossibility: writers seek to bring music closer while they draw attention to what is missing. As Benson suggests, this is to some extent unavoidable because music is given a status that makes it otherworldly. But this does not remove the opportunity to explore both the loss and presence of the sound of music. Benson states: "The door is left open to the possibility of a language suitably attuned to that which it is not, or even just to the grasp, in phenomenological terms, of what happens in listening."¹⁰

Notes for Sound responds to the paradox of writing music by making the *loss* of the physical presence of sound along with the *desire* for it fundamental to its 'story' and the way it is experienced. The loss and desire of the characters is echoed in the experience of the reader and the nature of sound itself. The characters are each dealing with their own sense of loss for particular human relationships that they sound with music (Toni and Quinn more deliberately so than Cara). At the same time, the reader is reading and making a music that they cannot *physically* hear, which echoes the

⁹ Dagleish, 105.

¹⁰ Benson, 141-142.

characters' experience of loss and the sense of pathos that sound generates as the novel's subject.

When I am reading the end of Cara's performance of the second and slow movement of her *Concerto for Strings*, I have a strong sense of loss and desire, informed by my feeling for Cara as a character:

*"The music falls back to this keyboard version of the piano-harp and the rolling fingers of Cara's left hand sound alone until violins softly pluck her melody with her. And then she stands again for the strum of strings that lead her to her final slow melody, with each note plucked by the lift of her hand."*¹¹

Notes explicitly relates the nature of sound to an idea of loss and desire: sound creates resonance that, by definition, continues and prolongs sound in some way, and yet, the actual physical sensation of sound fades away. Cara alludes to this when she ruminates on the nature of music: She "wonders if music is always concerned with loss and desire, because of the nature of sound itself."¹²

This is also highlighted by the symbolic nature of the story's recorded objects—the records and tapes of Toni's grandfather and the recorded soundbites and soundtracks of Quinn. Recorded objects, as it has been said by sonic theorist and composer David Toop, are always haunted by themes of absence and loss.¹³ This is inherent to our understanding of Quinn's composition, which builds on Quinn's comment in chapter 13 that "the sound of recording makes us more aware of the fact that we are listening to something made in the past, an object of memory."¹⁴ It is also inherent to Toni's compilation project in which she thinks she can make "a kind of catalogue of her grandad's sense of his world..."¹⁵ Toni hits the nail on the head of their respective projects when she says to Quinn: "you have a recorded voice and a hope for music and I have all this music and a hope for a voice."¹⁶

At the same time, recorded objects infer a presence that is 'in there,' in the way a needle rides the groove of a record to release a voice, which is something Nathaniel Mackey imaginatively plays with in his novel *Bass Cathedral*. In his book speech bubbles appear to provide a related yet abstract commentary, or a kind of 'riff,' on life

¹¹ Dagleish, 187.

¹² Dagleish, 182.

¹³ David Toop, *Haunted Weather: Music, Silence, and Memory* (London Serpents Tail, 2004), 168.

¹⁴ Dagleish, 119.

¹⁵ Dagleish, 56.

¹⁶ Dagleish, 158.

and music—and perhaps even loss and desire—as a jazz record plays.¹⁷ In *Notes for Sound* the resonant trace of human relationships are, in some way, alive in music that has sounded in the past and sounds in the present while new music is made by both the characters and the reader.

Music can be made because the loss of the physical object of sound and music in *Notes for Sound* creates *another object* or artefact as a result of the act of reading. For, as a reader reads they ‘sound’ words in their own mind while they create both visual *and sonic* images, effects and entities—they operate not only with a *mind’s eye*, but also a *mind’s ear*, which leads us into the way in which *Notes* responds to Benson’s stated opportunity to explore the phenomenology of sound.

Notes for Sound is essentially concerned with the phenomenology of sound and music as it relates to the written text. Specifically, it is *enabled by* what sonic researchers Jean-François Augoyard and Henry Torgue have termed ‘phonomnesis,’ and what professor of philosophy Don Ihde has termed the ‘auditory imagination.’ Phonomnesis defines the human state in which a sound is imagined but not actually heard: it is a mental activity that involves internal listening. Phonomnesis is a state in which the timbre, texture and relation of sounds are not only recalled but composed.¹⁸ Augoyard and Torgue claim that the act of reading is enough to evoke an ensemble of sounds necessary for the veracity of a story, and such a claim is taken for granted in *Notes for Sound*.

Don Ihde’s discussion of the auditory imagination presents it as the conceptual and sensual space of imagined sound, or a sound field, that surrounds and “invades” the imagining subject and places them at the centre of their own auditory space. Linking it with a process of reading, Ihde states that:

*“Inner speech, then, is a very important facet of the thinking process and probably the central form of that process, displays the features of an auditory imagination. It is a free variation that presents itself as my activity in the form of language.”*¹⁹

According to Ihde, an imagined sound can be associated with a known source and visual imagery, and it can even be imagined as in-and-of itself, which provides plenty of scope for sound to be perceived by the reader as not only an event, but also a character in the form of the score. An exploration of the ‘auditory imagination,’ as argued by

¹⁷ Nathaniel Mackey, *Bass Cathedral* (New Direction Publishing, 2007).

¹⁸ Jean-Francois Augoyard and Henry Torgue, Trans. Andra McCartney and David Paquette, *Sonic Experience: A Guide to Everyday Sounds* (McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2005), 85.

¹⁹ Don Ihde, *Listening and Voice: Phenomenologies of Sound*, 2nd ed. (SUNY Press, 2007), 214.

Ihde, is not only essential to an appreciation of the wealth and complexity of human experience, but also a constant dimension of that experience.²⁰ (Quinn already knows this: “a human being is a being in sound.”)²¹ In line with Ihde’s views, I am particularly interested in the way the auditory imagination enables a richly-inner, multi-faceted and highly sensual experience of a text, such as *Notes for Sound*.

What Fiction can do: Blurring Boundaries and Creating Worlds

It is my belief that as a reader reads a text, they construct the world of that text—a world not only of sensation, but also a world of knowledge, or seeking to know. This is described as part of a process of reading by writer and teacher Philip Gerard who says that a novel comes to take on an accrued reality so that its “fully realised world” is “one big undeniable fact operating in the reader’s mind.”²² And therein lies the opportunity for *Notes for Sound* to create a world of sensation and thought regarding the sound in music and the music in sound, primarily as a bringing together of art and electroacoustic music.²³

Typically, musicology analyses and describes music in relation to its form, ‘musical’ gestures, and characteristics without discussing the importance, nature and experience of its sound. Electroacoustic music, on the other hand, is often overlooked by listeners and critics committed to art music, while its ‘composers,’ who work with ‘sound,’ are sometimes well aware of and work with the more ‘traditional’ elements of music, as seen in the edition of the *Contemporary Music Review* edited by composer

²⁰ Ihde, *Listening and Voice: Phenomenologies of Sound*, 2nd ed. (SUNY Press, 2007), 203-215.

²¹ Dagleish, 26.

²² Philip Gerard, “An Architecture of Light: Structuring the Novel and Story Collection,” in Julie Checkoway (ed.), *Creating Fiction: Instruction and Insights from Teachers of the Associated Writing Programs* (Ohio: Story Press, 1991), 160.

²³ Quinn provides a definition of his particular version of electroacoustic music (which is a problematically vague label) on page 42. He specifically associates it with researcher and composer Leigh Landy’s term “sound-based music.” Quinn says: “he mentioned he was really interested in the art of organising ‘sound-based music,’ a term that he has been considering for the last few weeks after reading a treatise on the history and future of the art of sound organisation by a guy who runs a full-on research centre in electroacoustics in America, Leigh Landy. Like Landy, he likes to reach back to Edgard Varèse’s ‘organised sound’ compositions. But he is less interested in synthesised sounds and more interested in the compositional process and its music as some kind of sensorial journey of discovery with the sounds of the real world, perhaps like British composer Katharine Norman and New Zealand composer Denis Smalley.” Dagleish, 49. Landy himself uses the term ‘electroacoustic’ in naming his research centre, presumably because of its familiarity (which is why I also use it). But he argues for the label of “sound-based music.” For further clarification in the context of this essay, electroacoustic music is defined, most broadly, by Landy as: the use of electricity for conception, ideation, creation, storage, production, interpretation, distribution, reproduction, perception, cognition, visualisation, analysis, comprehension and/or conceptualisation of sound. Leigh Landy, *Understanding the Art of Sound Organization* (Cambridge, Mass.; London: MIT Press, 2007), 14-17.

and writer Katharine Norman.²⁴ As presented by *Notes*, there is a common world that allows us to explore both together—a world that is open to the musicality of a range of sounds and the way they are put together; a world that is centred on listening and resonance and creates a locus for a philosophy of sound.

Beethoven is a particularly interesting composer in this context. Firstly, most readers will know that Beethoven was more or less deaf at some stage in his life, and this tacit fact is able to emphasise the role and experience of the auditory imagination that is also key to the act of composition (as borne out by Cara). And secondly, his ‘Moonlight Sonata’ leads the reader and the novel’s characters more fully into an exploration of sound and music. This sonata will be known to many readers given that it probably is, as pianist Charles Rosen claims, a candidate for the most famous piece of “art music” ever written.²⁵

As it is described in *Notes*, the ‘Moonlight Sonata’ is, even today, exceptional for the way it is played with the piano’s sustain pedal always depressed to achieve what Rosen describes as its unprecedented “atmospheric sonority”.²⁶ To play ‘The Moonlight’ is—as Rosen describes the privilege of the pianist such as Cara—to engage body and mind in a special world of sound.²⁷ It is through ‘The Moonlight’ and the encouragement of Toni that Cara becomes more aware of this connection, which allows her to compose with the piano. (Cara: “It was actually Toni who gave me my start, who led me to the piano.”)²⁸

Notes for Sound is notable for the way it links Beethoven with a world of sound centred on the resonance of the piano. This can actually be linked to academic sources, although this is not necessarily required in the writing of fiction. For example, according to the in-depth research of George Thomas Ealy, Beethoven could hear the piano long after he was less able to hear anything else, especially with the assistance of ear trumpets a resonance plate and an especially loud instrument.²⁹ Also, his music is—within more ‘expected’ analyses of his music—often said to be concerned with ‘sound,’

²⁴ Katharine Norman, “Real-World Music as Composed Listening,” in Katharine Norman (ed.), *A Poetry of Reality: Composing with Recorded Sound*, *Contemporary Music Review*, vol. 15, no. 1-2 (London: Harwood Academic, 1996), 1-27.

²⁵ Charles Rosen, *Beethoven’s Piano Sonatas: A Short Companion* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 108.

²⁶ Rosen, 108, 156. Dagleish, 19, 55-56.

²⁷ Charles Rosen, *Piano Notes: The Hidden World of the Pianist* (Penguin Books, 2004), 1-31.

²⁸ Dagleish, 104.

²⁹ George Thomas Ealy, “Of Ear Trumpets and a Resonance Plate: Early Hearing Aids and Beethoven’s Hearing Perception,” *19th-Century Music*, vol. 17, no. 3, (Spring 1994), 262-273.

as seen in the comments of conductor Leon Botstein and professor of piano Kenneth Drake, for example.

Writing of Beethoven's orchestral music, Leon Botstein states that the composer introduced a world of music in which an *increased spectrum of possible sonorities* could be welcomed (my emphasis).³⁰ Kenneth Drake describes Beethoven's 'Sonata Pathétique' (the 'Adagio Cantabile' of which Toni listens to in chapters 10 and 17 of *Notes*) as associating the emotional force released in exploiting *raw sound* with the intellectual intensity of a network of motivic relationships (my emphasis).³¹ It is when talking about the 'Appassionata,' which—like the 'Pathétique—can be one of Beethoven's most sound-full pieces of piano music, that Toni and Cara make the explicit link between Beethoven and the sound world of *Notes*:

(Cara) *You know, I love the fact that Beethoven could write something like that for the piano. It makes so much sound.*

(Toni) *Sound for Music?*

(Cara) *Music for Sound?*³²

In writing fiction I am not bogged down with trying to explicate and argue for this line of thought in an academically watertight way. With the reader, I can place Beethoven in a resonant world of sound. But more than that: with the reader, I can create a world in which sound is central to the music of Beethoven, Cara, and Quinn. And, going further: I can create a trajectory of thought that allows me to connect Beethoven with Henry Cowell—something that would probably be dismissed, or, at least, highly difficult to substantiate in an academic context. The novel becomes, for a time, the resonance chamber of history (to borrow an idea from artist and writer Brandon Labelle) in which the 'sound' of Beethoven and Cowell, among others, bounce around together.³³

Also significant is the way in which fiction allows me to create a world of thought that is necessarily interdisciplinary, or perhaps simply outside the constraints of academic disciplines. *Notes* has drawn on, or simply resonates with, particular aspects

³⁰ Leon Botstein, "Sound and Structure in Beethoven's Orchestral Music," in Glen Stanley (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Beethoven* (Cambridge University Press, 1999), 182.

³¹ Kenneth Drake, *The Beethoven Sonatas and the Creative Experience* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), 77.

³² Dagleish, 87.

³³ Brandon LaBelle, "The Sound of Music: Contemporary Sound-Art and the Phenomenal World", *Art Papers*, vol. 23, no. 2 (March/April 1999), 36. LaBelle makes a passing reference to his idea in the opening paragraph of his article. He states: "History is a kind of resonant chamber, one which is far from dead—its reverberation is ceaseless, carrying through time and place to arrive again and again onto the plateau of hearing."

of texts from numerous fields of thought including musicology, music history and criticism, musico-literary studies, art history and theory, physics, physiology, acoustics, philosophy, psychology, and cultural studies. Providing evidence of this, a number of texts were considered.³⁴

Although I have concerned myself with a broad field of thought regarding sound, my writing of *Notes* was intuitive, in the sense that I allowed myself to sit down and just ‘write’ based on my own experience and my understanding of the experience of others. It was also organic, in the sense that I learned along with my characters, or, rather, to keep up with them.

In addition to researching and writing Quinn’s notes about the science of music, my experience was one in which phrases from various more theoretical texts ‘attached’ themselves to the writing that was already complete or in progress. These ‘soundbites’ (as I came to think of them) sometimes made themselves known in the text in some way, or they just helped me develop the story. I came across the term “resonance chamber of history,” for example, when well into writing the book, and it just ‘fitted’ with and helped me intensify my exploration of the life and potentiality of sound and music. The idea is specifically given to the reader by Cara in chapter 12.³⁵

Similarly, the concept of the ‘auditory imagination’ was discovered once well into the book, but it provided an ‘aha’ moment as I came to better understand what I was reliant on and hoping to achieve with the reader. The related phrase ‘mind’s ear’ is first

³⁴More theoretical and philosophical texts supplementary to those already footnoted include: Mark Bain, “The Live Room: Transducing Resonant Architectures,” *Organised Sound*, vol. 8, no. 2 (2003), 163-170; Andreas Broeckmann, “Reseau/Resonance: Connective Processes and Artistic Practice,” *Leonardo*, vol. 37, no. 4 (2004), 281-284; Peter Kivy, *New Essays on Musical Understanding* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2001); Paul Lansky and Jeffrey Perry, “The Inner Voices of Simple Things: a Conversation with Paul Lansky,” *Perspectives in New Music*, vol. 34, no. 2 (Summer 1996), 40-60; Raymond A.R. MacDonald, David J. Hargreaves and Dorothy Miell (eds.), *Musical Identities* (Oxford: New York; Oxford University Press, 2002); Wayne C. Petty, “Chopin and the Ghost of Beethoven,” *19th Century Music*, vol. xxii, no. 3 (Spring, 1999) 281-299; Thomas Wyndham (ed.), *Composition, Performance, Reception: Studies in the Creative Process in Music* (Aldershot, Hants, England; Brookfield, Vt.: Ashgate, 1998).

More scientific texts that were important in exploring sound, particularly through the ‘notes’ of Quinn that appear in the novel’s earlier chapters include: Murray Campbell and Clive Greated, *The Musician’s Guide to Acoustics* (London: Dent, 1987); Hermann von Helmholtz, *On the Sensations of Tone as a Physiological Basis for the Theory of Music* (London, New York, Longmans Green, 1912); Carleen Maley Hutchins (ed.), *The Physics of Music: Readings from Scientific American* (San Francisco: W.H. Freeman, 1978); Elster Kay, *Bel Canto and the Sixth Sense* (London: Dennis Dobson, 1963); Richard A. S. Paget, “The Musical Nature of Speech and Song,” *Proceedings of the Musical Association, 50th Sess.* (1923-1924), 67-82; John R. Pierce, *The Science of Musical Sound* (New York: Scientific American Library: W. H. Freeman, 1983); Kenneth N. Westerman, *Emergent Voice* (Ann Arbor, Mich., C.F. Westerman, 1955).

³⁵ Cara says: “In a long-distant way the simplicity of Beethoven’s beginnings echo in her own melody, although she would never seek to copy him or consider herself some kind of protégé. But his concertos have resounded with their musical life long after him and long before her. Maybe it is not surprising that she has written with something of them in her own music. Maybe it is not surprising that music makes music.” Dalglish, 116.

introduced by Toni when she imagines the voice of her grandfather and is used extensively by Quinn as he composes. It also makes its way into his programme note.³⁶

After much following of the pen as well as much thought, *Notes* creates a field for the coalescence and convergence of theory while it intuitively explores a particular world of sound. The downside of an academic essay such as this exegesis is that it makes the novel seem to be *solely* a product of its academic ‘content’ and context (which is not to deny its existence as a ‘novel of ideas’). It also makes it seem as if the novel was fully conceived and then written—which undermines the process of discovery that made and makes it what it is. Fortunately, however, the world the reader creates while reading the novel will never be able to be reduced to, or explained by, the content of an essay such as this.

Character and Story

Notes for Sound can be loosely described as a ‘novel of ideas,’ even though this is a vague and probably unfashionable label.

In *The Art of the Novel* the philosophically-oriented writer Milan Kundera, who wrote one of the most well known works of philosophical fiction entitled *The Unbearable Likeness of Being*, defines the novel as “the great prose form in which an author thoroughly explores, by means of experimental selves (characters) some great themes of existence.”³⁷ If I think of ‘great’ in terms of world-creation, then I do think *Notes* explores such themes. Its meta-theme, for example, concerns the life-making nature and potential of sound as a product of its resonance. Other themes appear more as questions that are able to raise ideas, such as: what is sound? What is music as sound (and vice versa)? How does sound and music shape our lives and our selves, if at all? Why and how might music represent our humanness while it goes beyond it? How does music make us and how do we make music? In what ways can and must we live with sound and music?

Notes for Sound also demonstrates the philosophical approach to ‘character’ that is typified by Kundera’s statement and that opens philosophical writing to the criticism that ideas are used in default of characterisation and other qualities of the traditional narrative, as stated by Frederick J. Hoffman in his discussion of Aldous Huxley’s oeuvre. As Hoffman states, even though ideas have dramatic potential that leads to

³⁶ Dalgleish, 85, 151-152, 172, 180.

³⁷ Milan Kundera, *The Art of the Novel* (Faber and Faber, 2005), 143.

action, they tend to create typical or characteristic action, not so much of the adventure, but of an idea in its contemporary world.³⁸ Such a criticism can be seen, to some extent, to hold true in the characters of Cara, Toni and Quinn.

Even though these characters have personas that evolved, in and of themselves, during the process of writing, there is a sense in which they are symbols of relevant modes of existence or sides of the self. Simplistically speaking, Cara is the character who is musically enabled and most representative of a Western mode of art-music-making that is expanded and questioned yet ultimately valued by the novel. Quinn is the man of sound and the soundbite—he is the story’s essential creator of real world music well described by Katharine Norman as fundamentally concerned with the internal fusion of listening and imagination and the application of natural listening “strategies” to an expanded field of music.³⁹ Toni is the more ‘natural’ catalyst of Cara and Quinn and a bridge between them while she is most actively trying to instantiate a ‘lost’ relationship through sound and music.

The characters of Cara, Toni and Quinn allow me, as the writer, to create substantive connections between sound, music and history. They also allow me to demonstrate a creative process of composition that goes beyond strictly musicological norms, the apotheosis of which is Toni’s “composition by compilation” (Cara).⁴⁰ The upside of this is that ‘great’ themes can be explored. The downside is that the novel is likely to be criticised for the fact that its characters are less of themselves and more of the writer than they might otherwise be in other forms of fiction. Each character, as Hoffman says, could (most harshly) be said to be dominated by the intellectual character of its author.⁴¹

Being aware of this, however, I have sought to strike a balance between idea and character to develop an adequate sense of ‘story,’ in a more typical sense. This is borne out by the way the novel rises from its beginning in which characters seek to understand

³⁸ Frederick J. Hoffman, “Aldous Huxley and the Novel of Ideas,” *College English*, vol. 8, no. 3, (December 1946), 129-131. It is interesting to note that Hoffman was writing in the first half of the twentieth century regarding the novel of ideas, which was, even then, considered problematic. Today, the qualities of ‘the fictional narrative’ are still considered to be important, as evidenced by a whole slew of ‘books for writers’ that seek to unravel the workings of fiction, and are often influenced by, or particularly concerned with, screenwriting, such as Robert McKee’s *Story: Substance, Structure, Style, and the Principles of Screenwriting* (Methuen, 1999) which was presented as instructive during the masterclasses of AUT’s 2010 MCW course.

³⁹ Norman, 2.

⁴⁰ Dalglish, 86.

⁴¹ Hoffman, 131.

and make their music and an end in which it is made by them—without the promise of ‘healing’ or ultimate ‘redemption,’ yet not without hope.⁴²

Understated yet perhaps subtly heroic is each character’s finding of the resonant potential of sound to emerge, themselves, as a resonator that makes music, despite the messy dynamics of their ‘collaboration’ and a process of trying to emerge from twenty or so years of seemingly inevitable familial failure.⁴³ The journey of the characters can be loosely described in line with Christopher Vogler’s concept of the hero as it is described in *The Writer’s Journey* (even though it was not determined by it). Central to each character’s journey is the idea of “serving” a greater theme of sound and its resonance and the dedication to a “quest” to explore the way in which their beings are made more “complete” by their will and ability to sound.⁴⁴

Also subtly epic is the way in which sound, and in turn music, is—as promised in the novel’s opening poem—able to continue as both an independent and life-affective force. This is captured in the novel’s last line as timpani roll “a pulse for sound, always travelling away from the drumskin...”⁴⁵

Continuing this defence of *Notes*, I point to the mythological nature of sound and the ways it subtly underlies and enables the novel’s story and its language. Over my year of writing I was continually struck by the extent to which sound is given a mythological kind of status by theoretical writers regardless of discipline. Ihde provides a striking example of this:

“As our souls, being air, hold us together, so breath and air embrace the entire universe. But the air that is breathed is not neutral or lifeless, for it has its life in sound and voice...for there is word in the wind.”

As I think can be seen in this quote, sound is often perceived as having had, and continuing to have, a creative role. Perhaps this is not surprising if we consider the role sound plays in the creation myths of numerous cultures. For example, Australian

⁴² In this way, I push against the cliché of inevitably good-making music, of music as an ultimately healing and redemptive force. In particular, the ‘coda’ allows me to go past an ending marked by the successful performance of a composer’s music, such as that of Bernard MacLaverly’s novel *Grace Notes* in which the composition of music has moved the central character and composer out of a period of post-natal depression. (In saying this I am not denying that MacLaverly’s novel is undeniably affective or noteworthy for the fact that it gives readers access to the internal world of a composer.)

⁴³ A resonator, in the words of Augoyard and Torgue, is a person who amplifies sensations, ideas or theories. *Sonic Experience*, 109.

⁴⁴ Christopher Vogler, *The Writer’s Journey: Mythic Structure for Writers*, 3rd ed. (Michael Wiese Productions, 2007), 29-30. This is not language I would typically be comfortable using, but there is a resonance with a mythological view of ‘story’ that is worth pointing out in this discussion of *Notes* and my writing of it.

⁴⁵ Dalglish, 201.

aborigines believe the world is continually sung into existence, native American Hopi Indians believe Palongawhoya made the world with the vibrations of an instrument of sound that left the earth quivering in tone, Western culture has its ‘big bang’ theory and the bible states that “in the beginning was the word.”⁴⁶ And, as mentioned in the novel in relation to Cowell’s *Harp of Life*, the Celtic God of life strummed a harp with a sound-post that reached above the ridge of heaven and a pedal-stool that sat beneath the gates of hell. Every time strings were struck across time and space, something came to life.⁴⁷

The inevitably mythological being of sound and its music in *Notes for Sound* makes it “part of something bigger”—just as Quinn says of his process of composition.⁴⁸ And, as such, its formative journeys do not seem philosophically removed from Vogler, who says of his own writing of *The Writer’s Journey*:

*“I saw that it’s all...just echoes and counter-echoes of the original cosmic sound, not like the Big Bang, that’s the wrong sound effect. It was more like a gong, that’s it, the Great Gong, the original creative vibration that rolled out from a single pinpoint of concentration and unravelled and echoed and collided to create everything that is, and the Hero’s Journey is part of that.”*⁴⁹

It is perhaps also in this context that *Notes for Sound* presents and explores the special character of the Beethoven score of his five piano concertos, *Concerte*. The score is, of course, not a ‘character’ in the traditional sense, but it acts like a character. It has its own independent existence, and it follows, reflects on, affects and shapes the story based on its own will and ability to act as sound. As a ‘being’ of sound and its music, the score has the will—as Quinn says in chapter two—to be “heard and played.”⁵⁰

As a reader reads *Notes for Sound* they will be aware of the fact that the score is ‘making things happen’ more or less, at different times and that it physically moves to demarcate the text in line with the nature of its role at that time. The score can be reflective or more active depending on what is happening with the novel’s ‘real life’ characters, and, generally speaking, it becomes more engaged over time. Figure One,

⁴⁶ (Regarding Australian Aborigines) Tim Ingold, *Lines: A Brief History* (Routledge 2007), 80; (Regarding the Hopi Indians) Bill Viola, “David Tudor: The Delicate Art of Falling,” *Leonardo Music Journal*, vol. 14, (2004), 49; Jn 1:1 (King James)

⁴⁷ Dagleish, 125. David Nicholls, *The Whole World of Music: A Henry Cowell Symposium* (Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1997), 22-23.

⁴⁸ Dagleish, 124.

⁴⁹ Christopher Vogler, *The Writer’s Journey: Mythic Structure for Writers*, 3rd ed. (Michael Wiese Productions, 2007), xii.

⁵⁰ Dagleish, 25.

of Appendix One, provides an analysis of the role of the score. Although the reader has the chance to form their own ‘story’ of the score as they read, this represents the *writer’s* ‘reading’ of it, as more of a diagrammatic view.

In ‘Beginnings’ the score is defined by its own note-play and expressive events while it is also subtly reflective and pre-emptive. It is set up as independent, and then it becomes engaged with the process of Cara’s composition, her response to Quinn, and the connection of all three characters. In ‘Exploration and Discovery’ it sounds the acoustic life of the collective and the chain of events that end their ‘ideal’ life. In ‘Composition and Performance’ the read score is brought into the character’s lives and texts as both generative and instructive, perhaps allowing their compositions to come into their fullness. In the ‘Coda’ it returns to sound the ‘up’ of the novel’s ending and move itself and the characters on, so that music continues to sound. In ‘Beginnings’ the score is first given over to the reader and expressed from a second-person point of view. This gives it a metaphysical yet claimable kind of presence that is continued even after the reader becomes aware that it was written by Toni’s grandfather.

The character and coincident role of the score is possible, not only because of the way the score is written into the novel, but because of what Eric F. Clarke states as the research-backed fact that listeners identify ‘person-like’ qualities in music. According to him, music takes on the persona of a “virtual person.” As Clarke states, listeners perceive the corporeal, proprioceptive, and motional qualities of music as human qualities. At the same time, the ‘virtual’ persona of music provides “a limitless variety of subjective experiences of motion and embodiment” that give music its coincident strangeness.⁵¹

Music is also shaped by the complexity of the relationships and events that occur between what musicologist Joseph Kerman calls its “sound bodies” or “sound agents,” which is central to the concerto form and the way the score works within the novel. Kerman states that concertos enact scenes of human activity—hence the common tendency to personify the solo and orchestra in concertos as conversationalists, as debaters, as antagonists, as collaborators: as human agents.⁵²

Music, then, has distinctive person-like characteristics as an entity, while its component voices also play out their own kind of narrative. In *Notes* the score’s human kind of dynamics relate to the kinds of interchanges and exchanges that occur

⁵¹ Eric F. Clarke, *Ways of Listening: An Ecological Approach to the Perception of Musical Meaning* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 89-90.

⁵² Joseph Kerman, *Concerto Conversations* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999), 3, 21.

in what Toni's father lightheartedly describes as "bloody relationships."⁵³ As Cara finds and writes of her own concerto in her programme note of chapter 20 (quoting Kerman): "the concerto creates a field of mutual awareness in which sound-bodies or sound-agents act out the intricacies of their roles and relationships."⁵⁴ At the same time, however, the score is always more than this—which is something that intrigued Toni's grandfather. He kept searching for his life, or the inevitable nature of any life: its dark and light, its harmonics and inharmonics, the chiaroscuro of the human voice, while, ultimately, he was engaged with "the life in the life of the music."⁵⁵

Also according to Kerman, concertos are notable for the way a single sonority can be created between different sound bodies.⁵⁶ This is something that occurs within the novel as the sensorial and thoughtful life of each character resonates with the other, and it is something Cara finds in, and writes of, her concerto: the way "that 'individual sonorities' can be brought together to create a new and 'luminous' sonority." At its fullest, resonance is defined by her concept of response-and-meaning:

*"...resonance becomes not only the rich vibration of tones within and between instruments, but also the process and quality of evoking responses charged with meaning from like yet different voices."*⁵⁷

While *Notes for Sound* is formed by the interplay of different voices, it does depart from other works of fiction in the way that characters are explored for their commonalities, or connections, rather than their contradictions. There is a kind of intermingling that occurs as sound and its resonance permeates the book. This can be considered in relation to the concept of Polyphony as a compositional practice in the writing of fiction.

The way I have arranged the book around the voices of Cara, Quinn, Toni and the score loosely suggests a polyphonic approach as it is described by Benson in *Literary Music* in relation to Kundera and Dostoevsky. Certainly, my way of writing and moving the story forward from voice to voice does suggest a polyphonic concern with the way voices are juxtaposed. And, to borrow Benson's turn of phrase, I am concerned with musicality that signifies the eventful encounter of elements.⁵⁸

⁵³ Dalgleish, 136.

⁵⁴ Dalgleish, 180.

⁵⁵ Dalgleish, 136.

⁵⁶ Kerman, 44.

⁵⁷ Dalgleish, 183.

⁵⁸ Benson, 78-79.

However, unlike Dostoevsky, I am not trying to create coexistent *contradictions* in characters that are untied at a higher-level, as Mikhail Bakhtin has described his project.⁵⁹ Rather, I am—simplistically speaking—juxtaposing characters with a like philosophy that find what they do, not only because of their own need and commitment, but also because of what they provide *to each other* (even though this is not a straightforward process). Even though Cara and Quinn particularly represent different spheres of music they are not contradictory characters. And yet, my project does seem to relate to Benson’s description of Dostoevsky’s in at least one particular way: as with his novels, what happens *between* voices in *Notes* is formally productive.⁶⁰ For, what happens between the voices of the characters of *Notes for Sound*, or what happens to allow their ideas to somehow accumulate from voice to voice and chapter to chapter, is—in a word—resonance.

The Creative Process

In closing, it is important to specifically consider the role of the reader and their enaction of the character’s and the writer’s creative process, which gives rise to the novel’s story.

In *Literary Music* Benson states that “the music of the novel is in each case a music made.” For him, the narrative performs the music, or makes it present.⁶¹ But I go further than this to make the reader a kind of private performer. I am interested in empowering and enabling the reader by allowing them to read, imagine and embody the music of the score (firstly) and then the music discovered and made by the characters (subsequently).

In the early chapters of *Notes* the reader is able to ‘warm up’ their ear, to get used to the workings of the music and its language, its way of doing and putting things. In the first chapter, the reader is given the chance to hear the score when they read “What might a reader hear in this piano score, this collection of *Concerte* bound in black linen? For a start *you* might, as may seem right, turn to the first page....” (emphasis added).⁶² It is as if the reader has special access to the score Cara has just slipped into her bag for later. The reader can read the score, *as writing*, without having to understand its particular notation.

⁵⁹ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, trans. R.W. Rotsel (Michigan: Ardis, 1973), 30.

⁶⁰ Benson, 77.

⁶¹ Benson, 10.

⁶² Dalglish, 15.

Also enabling the reader early on, the first entries of the score are written in more ‘concrete’ terms: “you may well think those chords will mark the entry of the piano that might, just as emphatically, repeat them. But there is no piano yet...”⁶³ And these early entries always ‘place’ the reader back in the world of their reading of the score: “Going on with the Concerte...”; “What more will you hear...”; “You are back with the Concerte...”; “Here you are once more...”⁶⁴

Then, gradually, the writing of the score changes to become more of an unannounced and direct interchange between “The Music” and “You.” This interchange is first introduced in the first chapter and becomes the body of the score from chapter four onwards. It allows the ‘voice’ of the score to talk directly to the reader and for the reader to help make the music, just as Cara says to Toni after she gives her her grandfather’s notebook: “...he [or in this context-the writer] wrote it for you, not just to *read* the music, but also to help *make* it.”⁶⁵ The reader is put ahead of the characters in the beginning to ‘release’ the score, and by the time they get to the character’s compositions they have created a comparable conceptual world and language. In a sense, the reader is made a kind of *composer*.

The way of writing ‘the score’ could only really be worked out in the process of writing. But, a month or so after beginning to write *Notes* I read Roland Barthes’s discussion of a *Musica Practica* in his *Image, Music, Text*. Although I did not agree with all of Barthes’ argument, I was struck by his idea that the reader of Beethoven writes it anew, or gives it a fresh inscription.⁶⁶ (Coincidentally, Barthes provides Beethoven as his composer-to-read.)

Significantly, Barthes says that “reading this Beethoven is to *operate* his music, to draw it (it is willing to be drawn) into an unknown *praxis*.” He says that to compose “is to give to do,” and that is why music can trigger a special kind of read-practice.⁶⁷ Barthes, erroneously I think, dismisses the role of hearing in this as he focuses solely on ‘writing.’ For, the *musica practica* of *Notes* is one that amalgamates reading, writing anew (composing), hearing (with the auditory imagination) and performing (with bodily awareness). The reader, when reading, can engage in their own kind of private performance with their own ‘voice,’ as Toni does when she makes her Moonlight song in Chapter 17.

⁶³ Dalglish, 15.

⁶⁴ Dalglish, 19, 25, 29, 34.

⁶⁵ Dalglish, 111.

⁶⁶ Roland Barthes, *Image, Music, Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (London: Fofana, 1977), 153.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

Although Barthes states that the amateur pianist is a person of the past, and despite the fact that the reading of a score is beyond the abilities of most people, at the heart of *Notes for Sound* is the reader's written-ability to *hear* and *make* music.

Appendix One: The Role of the Score in *Notes for Sound*

Beginnings: Chs 1-6			
Bridging & Closing	Chs 1-3: Establishing a play of 'sound-agents' as a beginning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Independent identity •Subtly reflective as well as pre-emptive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •The score unread by the characters •The reader ahead
Interspersed	Ch 4: Egging Cara on? Knows of ways to make music: the interplay between two hands, or voices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Becoming more active as Cara struggles 	.
Closing	Ch 5: Rounding off Cara's performance and connection with Quinn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Actively reflective 	.
Closing	Ch 6: Making music "for the sounding of phrases." Signalling that the necessary connections have been made between characters in and with the piano?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Actively reflective 	.
Exploration and Discovery: Chs 7-11			
Own chapter	Ch 7: Sound door: marks entry to the acoustic life of the collective (C, Q, T & score)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Actively pre-emptive 	.
Closing	Chs 8-10: Sounding with and for the collective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Actively reflective 	.
Interspersed then in-text	Ch 11: Triggering a chain reaction of events. Ending the 'ideal' life of the collective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Actively pre-emptive •Comes into text 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Score finally read
Composition: Chs 12-20			
In-text	Chs 12-20: In-text as part of the process of composition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Generative & instructive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Score shelved for performance
Coda: Ch 21			
Beginning, Bridging & Closing	Ch 21: Returns to move itself and characters on. Provides the 'up' of the novel's ending	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Actively pre-emptive and reflective. •Independent (sounding on) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Score Continues