

Notes for Sound

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For my dad

Sound

is

an unusual kind

of vibration.

It is

NOT

like the picture often found

in popular books

of ripples spreading out from a stone thrown in a pond. No, it is not.

Air is gas

many billions of billions of minute particles, called molecules which are

evenly

distributed in air.

Take a bicycle pump,

close the hole by holding

a piece of rubber over it,

push the plunger

in a few centimetres

and

let go.

The plunger comes back.

You have compressed the air,

pushed

molecules closer together, and when you

let go

they expand back and push the plunger out.

We can apply that
idea
to
a
sound producer,
for example,
a
drum.

We hit the stretched skin and it vibrates; we can
see
and
feel
that the skin is vibrating; always vibrating

in and out.

Sound is always produced by something vibrating.

As the skin moves
out
it pushes on the layer of air molecules immediately in contact with it.

Momentarily
it
compresses that air,
but
unlike
the air in the pump,
that air can expand straight away because it is
not confined;
it
compresses the layer of air next to it.

And that process
of compressing the next and the next layer after layer of air
goes on
as a continuous event through the air, travelling
away
from the drumskin.

It is late afternoon and Cara lets herself walk this street; this street with two offbeat galleries side by side and the second hand bookstore across the road; the galleries with small owner-made prints and drawings lost in window frontage and the second hand bookstore with the caricature of a well read and reclining ferret painted on the glass near its entrance; this street where—so often—she hears a trolley bus, the “clack, di-dum, clack, di-dum, clack” of a trolley bus, as it navigates its overhead lines.

Cara remembers telling her father that if there is a heaven, it is a second hand bookstore packed with pre-loved books, posters, CDs, and maybe even sheet music. She said that when people die, their collections might be subsumed, become part of the cloistered interior, the shut up smell of it, the co-operative silence. Now every time she goes into a bookstore she wants something for herself, something that sounds like her.

She only has one morning lecture on a Friday, ‘Musical Composition,’ so there is only one exercise book in a shoulder bag that would normally hold more, and she’s been working hard, head down in the library finishing a musical notation assignment since then. She now has a first composition exercise to attend to, but for a few moments, why not see what’s on offer?

It is Beethoven, or at least the first few bars of the first movement of his fifteenth string quartet, bringing her into the store, along and past its counter. The ‘fifteenth’ has always struck her as odd, deliberately so. She might call it “humorous,” except for the fact that it is the work of an intensely-browed nineteenth century composer now synonymous with the Romantic mode of listening to music for its depth of emotion. After all, here are the seemingly ponderous notes of the beginning, the could-be-serious introduction of a fugue begun in the bass by a cello, hastily overrun by the first violin, a fast run of semiquavers, four quick notes to each quick beat. It is a single but promising phrase, quickly taken over by the cello and a slightly uncommitted kind of all-strings march. But this rises only to another ponderous interlude, and is taken over, yet again, by the fancy finger-work of the first violin. It’s like a series of false starts that Beethoven, nevertheless, makes the object of his piece; it is his play on the unpredictable and continual process of getting started and moving on.

Whenever she hears the first sixty bars—only a minute or so of music making—she wants to bring the violins, viola and cello to a stop and get them to do it over, so she

can get a fix on what happened. Perhaps this is why she became a composer, or would-be-composer? So she could get her eye and ear closer to music, take its pulse and find its particular life, make it exist for her, because of her and despite her.

“The ‘Arts’ are over there.”

He leans on the counter, watching Cara’s distraction, or perhaps indecision. He has seen her look like this, her straight shoulder-length brown hair along the sides of an almost bony face that often looks like it’s part of a puzzle. He’s seen her in lectures. It’s a small class. She hasn’t said much, but when she does there’s a flash of something, as if, each time she speaks, she raises and closes a hatch. She’s damned smart and seems to have to keep checking herself, to make sure she still is. No-one has had to write any music yet—something they now have to do, with their first composition assignment.

“There’s music,” he says.

Cara turns towards him and listens. She recognizes him: he’s also taking ‘Musical Composition.’ Now she sees and hears him as party to a string quartet. “Yeah, still the first movement. Beethoven’s fifteenth,” she says. He laughs, a generous laugh, a laugh tickled by what she makes of his comment.

“No, sorry,” he says, “there’s music, over there, in the ‘Arts.’”

Cara looks towards the right-hand corner of the store and its music. “Oh, right.”

“Good call though—Beethoven’s fifteenth.”

“I recognized it as soon as I came in.”

“Opus 132.”

“Yeah, in A minor,” she responds while glancing above his head, as if she has just caught sight of the line of the first violin racing towards the end of the movement, fuelling and driven by the chords now struck by it and the other strings.

“It’s a CD of string quartets. Someone must have brought it in this morning.”

He looks above him to where the sound was seen by Cara. She is waiting for the beginning of the second movement.

“It’s Beethoven too, some of it. I mean the music, the sheet music. In the ‘Arts.’”

“Oh, right,” she says, making her way to the corner, trailing a finger along the wooden edge of a table laden with autobiographies.

She bends over to look at a stack of books, one on top of the other, from the floor to above her knees. They are roughly all the same size, all black and tightly bound in smooth black linen. She picks the top one up, rests her hand on its cover, opens it. It holds a collection of what look like war-time songs for piano and voice, the images of soldiers and various belles decorating the first few sheets. She thinks she belongs to a

generation that knows little of war: not “The Great War” (why is it called “great”?) and not even the Second World War. She puts the volume on the floor and kneels to get a look at the spines stacked in front of her.

She sees a few labelled ‘Beethoven’— two identified as piano sonatas. How many did Beethoven write in all, more than thirty? They can’t all be here. She eases the top-most sonata volume from the stack and is unsurprised when she turns to ‘The Moonlight,’ although she knows this is its popular name, coined by a critic after Beethoven’s death. How many times has she played this first movement of his fourteenth piano sonata over the years? Hardly, if at all, now, but when she was a teenager she had left it sitting on the music stand of the piano for weeks, she had played it so much, too much. It was the low harmony of the opening chords in the left hand, the continual movement of the right hand — 1-2-3, 1-2-3, 1-2-3, 1-2-3..., and the mellowing effect of the sustain pedal on it all — that first drew her. Then, a little later in the piece, there was the satisfaction of moving those triplets down with left-hand bass notes so low she initially couldn’t even read them, the satisfaction of softly leaning herself into notes rarely sounded with such effect and affection, notes so low she could only rely on the piano to know them. She thinks that whoever had owned these volumes was a pianist.

But it is a volume labelled ‘*Concerte*’ that she works towards, taking the overlying volumes onto the floor, making a new stack, revealing it, opening it to find that it contains all of Beethoven’s five piano concertos. Although, she remembers reading somewhere that Beethoven had in fact composed his first concerto when he was fourteen, but without parts for orchestra (at least something was beyond him at the time). And isn’t there an unfinished sixth piano concerto that was completed or ‘realised,’ as the terminology goes, by another composer? Maybe it has even been performed?

She and her father would sometimes listen to the slow movement of the fifth piano concerto (coined the “Emperor”) after she left home; it was like unashamedly letting themselves eat white chocolate or drink port after dinner, which is generally when they would listen to it, the two of them in the lounge between two speakers.

Cara turns to the fifth and flicks through the pages of the first movement, the notes moving too quickly for her eye and ear to make any music of them. She arrives at the slow movement and the first bar of the ‘Solo.’ She sees triplets moving in both the left and right hand; the right hand is up in the higher register of the piano and the left sometimes crosses into the middle register where the right hand would more normally

play; both lines of music quietly working towards each other. At first she doesn't hear it, and then it is there, the sound of the right hand's slow almost step wise descent from such high notes to the middle register, and the left hand's lower notes eventually coming up to meet them.

Each time the right hand is at its lowest, the left is at its highest, the notes especially together in their passing: the closest they come to an aural embrace. One pass through the sequence and then there is a kind of ricochet back up to almost the same height, another step-wise descent, and another heading together of notes. She thinks that her father only started listening to orchestral music, especially piano concertos, after she left. She was the one who brought 'classical' music into the house, playing the second hand piano he bought on the insistence of a family friend and music teacher: a woman Cara convinced that she wanted to play the piano.

She flicks back to the beginning of the volume, and through to its end. It feels like it might take her lifetime to read it and make the sounds something she can hear for herself.

"There's more."

She'd been sitting cross-legged facing bookshelves, the Beethoven score in her lap. She shuffles from one bone of her backside to the other. Each knee points up and out and down, as she shuffles around to look at him. He has the first sounds of the third movement around him: strings providing close harmonies that move slowly, two long notes to each bar. There is the tension of dissonant chords and the welcome sway of the chords that release them.

"There's more?" she asks. "Beethoven?"

"Probably," he says. "These volumes are only part of a much bigger collection. They belonged to the grandfather of a friend."

She nods.

"A pianist?" she asks.

"Who, not me, you?"

"Oh, no, I play, but the collector. He was a pianist?"

"Yeah, he was, although, Toni, my friend, said he didn't play a lot, later in his life."

She closes the score and lifts it in both hands to show him the label on its spine. "This one will be nice to have," she says, manages a crouch, and then stands. Quinn reckons she is easily as tall as him, or is she just long and thin?

He leans closer, mouths, ‘*Concerte.*’ He stands and slings his hands in his pockets. “I wouldn’t call myself a fan, but if Beethoven was a pianist, his works for solo piano could be worth a look?”

She nods, looking at his creases, his relaxed way of standing there. He might be half a head taller than her, if you ironed all the creases out.

He imagines her sitting at the piano, sees only her hands hovering above the keys while she leans closer in, closer to the music.

She sees him looking at her pianist’s hands. “Sorry, I didn’t catch your name in class earlier...”

“Quinn,” he replies.

She likes the way his name looks on him, the way his dark hair sits feathery around his face, even though he could have just climbed out of bed.

“Hey,” he says, “are you thinking about our first composition exercise, the one Prof Gibbs gave us this morning, for piano?”

Cara laughs and Quinn hears its unsure ring. “I was trying not to,” she says.

She crosses her arms over the score in front of her chest. “My dad used to tell me I studied too much; he would tell me to stop and smell the roses.”

“And today, Beethoven’s your rose?” Quinn asks, smiling as she nods, happy with what he has said, but not giving any more away. He doesn’t mind, but she looks like another person when she smiles.

“You going to work here all year?” she asks him, as if he shouldn’t.

She doesn’t want to work—she needs time for her study. She worked for part of last year, selling tickets for The Festival of the Arts and ushering at night-time concerts. And she has also squirreled away what she earned from teaching, from giving piano lessons to students and even a teacher in her last years of high school. There was a reasonably decent piano in one of the practice studios out the back of the music room, and she booked it most days, either for lessons or practice.

At the counter, Cara hands over a one hundred dollar bill she has had since Christmas. “Thanks,” she says as he puts the score in a brown paper bag.

She points with her chin above his head. “Well, I guess that fifteenth is making its way to its end...”

He flicks his hand towards the CD cover, turned face-down on the counter to display its details and order of play. “Not yet though, there are five movements, not the usual three.”

Cara nods once. “Breaking the rules,” she says.

Leaving the store, she tucks the paper bag and its contents under her arm. She stands on the sidewalk. Back to her bedsit? She hears the trolley bus below her: “clack, di-dum, clack, di-dum, clack.”

She heads down the street, slipping the score into her bag.

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 of the first piano concerto. Here is the *tutti*, the orchestra playing before the solo instrument, the piano, makes its entrance. Setting your feet on the ground before running, here are the four light yet emphatic chords of the opening—“Baarm, barm, barm, barm” —all sounding a bright C Major. Then, just before another set of those chords, you make out a little run of notes, lightly up the eight notes of the scale—“dididididididi.” Then you hear that whole sequence again—“Baarm, baarm, baarm, baarm, dididididididi.”

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. The pattern starts to change a little: less frequent (but still emphatic) chords are not only connected by runs (some still fast, some a little slower), but also accompanied by them. There’s a strong rhythm and pace to it, but there is no piano. You wait. And still, you wait.

Then with no chord but a single note, not even a strong downbeat (that first key beat of each bar a conductor provides with a baton), you hear the sound of the piano enter, without accompaniment. It is such a simple melody it might be played by a child: one single note leads to a straightforward alternation of notes in the right hand and a single chord in the left. If you were the pianist, the phrase would be like a simple breathing in, no effort but filling your lungs, so easily, for only a moment.

The Music:

How simply the piano makes a statement—or, a statement of a non-statement—after all that punctuated bluster from the strings.

You:

I had to wait for it—the simple-small notes of piano sound, intensely heard.

Cara gets on a trolley bus at the bottom of the hill. Part of an end-of-day queue, she hands her money over and grabs her ticket, flicks her eyes over the seats and bodies

in front of her. There are some completely empty seats at the back, but she knows she won't make it there before the bus lurches on. She swings herself into a seat nearby, next to a guy shielded by his newspaper. She sits and pulls her shoulder bag neatly into her lap.

The paper rustles and crumples and she looks over at her smart-suited ex-boyfriend, Peter. She blinks a smile, and lets words of surprise gather on her tongue.

"Fancy," he says, which she guesses is short for "fancy seeing you here." He always had a way of reducing phrases to their most evocative word. She liked that much about him.

She first met him while an usher at a Festival of the Arts concert. She crept into a seat at the end of his row after everyone was seated and the music had started. He had been a little annoyed with her at first, but then he watched her watch the performers, the energy of their movements her own, although she was almost completely still. He was intrigued, and she became the similarly intrigued younger woman a single older man likes to spend an evening with, more than once.

"Fancy," she says, looking ahead at the slow moving traffic.

She can flick his words back at him, but she has to admit, living with him—or at least, in his house—was the best time of her life. It was because of his baby grand. It was a Broadwood, with a body made of rosewood. It was antique, an 'objet d'art' with an ornate music stand and carved detail on shapely legs, but it was perfectly in tune. Even though he didn't know how to play it, he would never have let it be otherwise.

She had moved in because he was going on his summer holiday, visiting family and friends in various places. He asked her to mind the house and play the piano for him. She told herself that she was well aware of the fact that he hadn't made her a part of his itinerary. But she was also relieved not to be part of a couple on tour and on show. He never made it clear what he expected on his return.

When he got back, she could only think of the fact that she loved that Broadwood more than she ever would him. She laid a hand on its closed lid (she always played with the lid propped open to reflect and release the sound). And then, she moved out.

Peter tucks his reading glasses in his jacket pocket and looks at her, as if he wants to think about her, about her and him. "I remember what you told me about playing the piano," he says. "In one of those brief moments when you waxed lyrical." He grins at her as if he knows that she knows that, especially now, he can catch her off-guard. "The touch of finger, hammer, string, air...you at the centre of sound."

She doesn't have a piano now, not in her small bedsit. Ironically, a piano was most available when she was just learning to play. It sat in the lounge alcove, displaced her dad's stereo and their favourite records. It was always slightly out of tune. She could hear the plonk-plonk quality of an out of tune piano, even then. She started late. She was approaching her teenage years and winced at the child-like names of the first exercises she ploughed through.

Her father reckoned you could always hear a musician by the way they put their notes. She told herself that if beauty was in the eye of the beholder, then music was in the ear of the musician. If she could make these too-banal exercises sound like melodies to him, and to herself, then perhaps she could quickly go on to music composed as such. And she did go on quickly, wanting more and more notes to sound and figure. The speed with which she progressed surprised even her father, who said he should have bought a piano sooner. Perhaps they both felt she was making up for lost time.

Even without a piano of her own, she will always be a pianist. The touch-spring of the keys is almost always there, on her fingertips, each key yielding to just the right amount of pressure. The sound is almost always there: of finger on key on hammer on string on the air around her and the vibration of all that concise and minute movement through the body of the piano, her hands, and her arms and down to her foot on the pedal. There is almost always that circuit and centre of sound. How else could she explain it?

"Some things stay the same," she says, looking at his nose wrinkle as he smiles.

Every time she sees a piano she wants to hear it, feel her hand sound its sound, know its response to her fingers; she needs to invite its sung talk into her body as well as her ear.

"But late night drinks are not quite the same," he says, nudging her to show her he is not really nostalgic.

She looks away. It happened a couple of times. Once they were at a restaurant. He was paying the bill and she slipped onto the piano stool of the upright opposite what had been their table. The restaurant's music was playing. She knew that if the staff wanted the piano untouched, they would leave the music on, but if they were happy to hear her play it, they would flick it off.

She played what she always did when sounding out a new instrument, without her sheet music to direct her: a simple C major chord with her right, and then her left hand, each note played after the other, the right hand heading up and the left hand down. There was something so right about first putting her thumb to 'middle C'—that white

note in the middle of the keyboard that every child and aspiring pianist gets shown as the place to begin.

From her mid-piano C major chord she could move to other chords with notes that were already in that first chord, and then she could move to other chords that were more like possible-but-tentative friends than family. She played chords in either hand with moving notes in the other, moving up the keyboard, down the keyboard, higher still, lower still, looking for where she wanted to go. Peter later told her that he sat at the bar and was given a complimentary dram of whiskey by the maitre d', while she provided the music for that part of their evening.

"I'm doing composition now," she says. "You know, at university."

Doesn't every woman try to tell her ex- that she's moved on, that she probably never needed him in the first place, especially on the occasion of that first chance meeting? Why the fuck did she say "at university," as if she has just left high school?

"Composition," she says again, to herself.

Just that morning Gibbs said something she liked. It was a little over the top, but she liked it anyway. He said that composition is the key to musicianship. That to compose well is to synthesise all facets of music, all musical disciplines, including performance. Composition is the ultimate unity, the keystone.

She decides to get off at that next stop and walk from there.

"The keystone," she says, elbowing Peter in the arm as she gets up, making him grunt in response.

Out in the fresh air, she walks away at her brisk pace.

In her bedsit, she sits on her bed, her back against the wall. She looks across at the pile of books beside her, knowing she should make a start on her first composition exercise.

She runs her hand across wave-like lines of raised cotton tufts that cascade down the length of the faded purple bedspread she's had since childhood. It's an absent kind of gesture she has probably made hundreds of times over the years. Her father remarried when she was fifteen. Her stepmother had to designate four children to three bedrooms, and this was largely achieved through the placement of differently coloured but identically tufted bedspreads. Cara came home from high school one day to find her own bedspread in a different room along with a new white one (the room then made into the girls' room). That was until—to keep the peace—her younger brother, Andy, was given the office as a bedroom (with the re-placement of his brown bedspread), and she went back to her old room. When she left home, a few years earlier than her father

had expected her to, she took her bedspread with her, along with a few books he had given her for her birthday over the years.

Perhaps books were her first love, a love she got from her father. She had her own bookshelf in her childhood room but his had a lot to offer her. She browsed it and borrowed books even before she was really old enough to understand everything she read. Sometimes his books would sit on her shelves.

She pulls Rudyard Kipling's *Songs from Books* from the top of her book pile. It had been her dad's, tucked in with her books on her bookshelf. It went into her bag when she left. She holds it in her hands for a bit. She remembers strange poems, weird rhyming things that always involved a strange cast of characters in the telling of what seemed like a flippant yet great moral tale she could never quite fathom.

Her dad had underlined the titles of a couple of poems in the contents page. When she read them, they made her think of her mother, seemingly unable to be pleased, leaving them, her dad. She remembers a poem about a woman who refuses her lover's roses red and roses white, wants blue ones plucked for her delight. Half the world he wanders through, to return sure of flowers that never grew. All he says to end his quest is that "roses red and white are best."

She lays the book down beside her and pulls her composition exercise from her bag. The light hasn't faded yet and she can see the sea, underlined by city high-rises, underlined by a green playing field; and she can hear the humming-groan of the cable car being pulled up the hill her bedsit and its house is perched on, and the occasional call of a Tui that seamlessly and spectacularly alternates between warbling croaks, piercing remarks and high-singing.

She read somewhere that composition is first based on listening. She looks at a page of stacked music staves; twelve rows of paired five-lines to test her. Nine bars of unknown piano music have been neatly written by Gibbs. He expects each of the eight members of the class to respond to its *proposition* and fill up the remaining staves with their own piano music. By Friday. Cara should have an advantage—the piano is her instrument. But right now, those nine bars remind her of the nine bars she encountered a few years earlier in a Royal Schools of Music theory of music examination, in a silent room in which she could not hear a thing.

Going on with the *Concerte*: you hear the piano's simple tune repeat again, but higher in the right hand and lower in the left. But then, an ascending burst of notes in

the pianist's right hand, runs higher than any human voice can sing, then back to the orchestra's ground-level refrain: "Baarm, baarm, baarm, baarm." For a second you think the piano might agree to take up those opening chords, make some serious statement, but it's off again—the fancy finger-work of a descent that begins high up in the right hand and is taken down with the left. A light warming-up, while the orchestra reluctantly adds its three chord punctuation at the end of each descent: "baarm, baarm, baarm."

The Music:

The solo and *tutti* sound a way to begin.

You smile, as you catch it before it's gone: the piano almost deferring to the orchestra, with its own kind of punctuation—quick rolling notes in the left hand and only three sharp and just-decorated notes in the right: "bDip, bDip, bDip." But soon after, while the right hand continues quickly on its way, you hear the left give the tutti but a mention of its chords: "barm, barm, barm."

2

“Quinn likes sound.”

He says it aloud to himself. He laughs. How can you say you like sound? Any sound? Every sound?

He remembers when he was in primary school, maybe aged nine or ten. The teacher, Miss Patterson, had set the class an exercise to get into groups of four, choose a passage from *Fantastic Mr. Fox*, and set it to sound. They were given a tape recorder and told the only ‘instruments’ they could use were their mouth and voice. And that was it. His group chose a passage and he read it aloud. Another group had already gone out, recorded and come back. Miss Paterson played their tape to the class. Somehow those kids had made mouth noises into what seemed like unlimited sound effects: wind moving over hills, the slurring passage of streams over rocks, and the movement of undergrowth under paw—impossible. “They didn’t use their mouths!” he yelled. Miss Paterson insisted they had, the kids insisted they had, and he insisted they hadn’t. That became the end of the exercise, but Quinn kept thinking about those sounds. Imagine if they were made the way they said: sounds of lip, saliva, tongue, vocal chords and air? After all, he liked those sounds.

“Still likes those sounds.”

He puts his right arm out straight, hand flat on top of the counter and leans the rest of himself down to the CD player shelved below, pushes the button to eject the disk. He could have spent a too-intense hour or so listening to Beethoven’s string quartets. But people had been in and out, after the other composition student, Cara, had been in. And he heard snatches of sound he liked. He wasn’t one for too much frenetic bowing. But when the sounds more quietly wound around each other, or one came out at you for a while, feeling like silk (can you feel a sound, as if with your fingers?), then he too gave Beethoven the nod.

With the Beethoven CD now in the shops’ ‘B’ section, he goes through the motions of locking up. Friday night. Friday night and he will soon be out with his digital recorder, which sits in his shirt pocket. “My date,” he says, his hand over it.

Quinn imagines making recordings on each day or night of the week. Each would sound different. He hears the relative quiet of Monday: people with things to do and places to go, but with the time of the week. Then Thursday. People start to “ermfff”

while getting to things, getting some things done. Friday. The continual “kr-r”-banging of a last mad dash. Followed, inevitably by the distant “sss-bzzz” of a release of air and conversations— a winding down that is followed, just as inevitably, by the sound of the collective-holler and hey-slap of a different kind of winding up. Not caring for this week—gone—not caring for next week—not here yet.

Quinn maintains that sounds are different at different times. Not just the sounds of the city, but his own voice, for example. He has proven it, at least to himself. After hauling himself out of bed one morning he spoke into his recorder, trying to put words into waking. He downloaded the soundtrack onto his laptop and labelled it ‘morning.’ Later, he recorded himself in the university library, satisfied after a sandwich. Later still, he recorded himself back home in front of his computer, talking about the process of recording the sounds and comparing them. When he listened to the tracks, he swore they were different. The morning one was softer, the intonation slower, obviously, but it actually sounded like a slightly different Quinn. The Morning Quinn (not yet awake). The Midday Quinn (after eating). The Evening Quinn (at work).

When the university’s course adviser asked him why he wanted to study composition, he had to stop and think about what to tell her. He isn’t musical in a ‘classical’ sense. He can read and write music. If you want him to sing a tune after only one hearing, he can do it, although he may not see the point. He can play the guitar well beyond the obligatory chords. He has played the xylophone and glockenspiel with the unique hit-sound of different mallets on metal and wood. He has played all different sizes of recorder, each with their own register of sound. He can even play the piano a bit if he has to, but he is no pianist.

He isn’t a child who has done umpteen music exams as a rite of passage towards becoming a well-eared adult, or someone who is likely to write a full-on symphony any time soon. It is what he calls, the “auditory impression” of sound that interests him. For him, sound is the result of energy expended or exchanged, the effects of which are transmitted and received across distance. It is able to make a mark and change things somehow.

He told the adviser, a little loftily, that he wanted to “create his own world of sound.” She looked at him as if he was wearing a jester’s hat and wagging his head to tinkle its tiny bells. What if he told her that, *in fact*, his line of interest went back to the nineteenth century when scientific philosophers were exploring energy and sound? What if he regaled her with Hermann von Helmholtz’s theory that the mechanics and practice of music making—of musicology even—were actually the *result* of our

physiological experience of sound, the human ear the first piano, the ear canal's tiny hairs its wires, each tuned to a specific frequency? What might she say to that?

His mother is a music teacher. He wonders what it is like to sit right next to someone and hear them try to play the same bit of music over and over. How can she bear it? He wants to think that she likes the potential of each sound, as he does, that she is willing her pupils to join one successfully with the next.

He was never her pupil or interested in being much of a pianist. She said that learning can sometimes best occur with the benefit of a little distance and sent him elsewhere for piano lessons. She also refused to teach him to drive when he was fifteen and asked a friend's husband to do it. One time he wandered around behind her after her lessons, jingling the car keys and asking her to give "just one more lesson, but with me behind the wheel."

He has always wanted to explain to his mother that it is that special quality sound can have—as if you have felt the moment in which it was made, its suspension and transmission, its 'arrival,' the making of its thought—that gets him.

Leaving the shop secure, Quinn ambles down the street, hears a woman across the street, talking on her cellphone, head down, intent on confirming the reality of conversation-in-halves, a kid running past bounces his sound back to her: the echo of his deliberately flat-footed running slapping the pavement. To be perceived as an echo, a sound must be heard at least fifty milliseconds after the original sound. Quinn reaches the corner, stops for one of the city's trolley buses. It waits at the lights for a moment and then pulls away, its elevated poles clacking quietly over the connection points in overhead lines: "clack, di-dum, clack." Then crossing the road, he looks down the row of moving cars, the bus at its head: "clack, di-dum, clack, di-dum, clack."

He heads for his café, the same one as last week, and the weeks before. He orders and sits at his table, near the window, so he can just hear the sounds of the street. He turns on his recorder. He leans on the table, his chin placed on interlaced fingers supported by elbows. He looks around and listens. Like the other soundtracks on his laptop, this one will have its own particular character, which he will extract into nuggets of sound, or soundbites. There will be snatches of the café's music, the voices of the waiting staff as they move around the tables, the conversation of the couple at the table next to him, passing traffic. "*Roxanne*." "Table five?" "Not rash, spontaneous." "Di-dum, clack." Quinn doesn't know if any of this relates to 'composition.' But collecting and arranging sound seems like a form of composition to him. It is a base to work from.

“I’ll work it out,” he says, lifting his head with a cluster of fingers, smiling as he puts himself on record.

At home, Quinn plugs his digital recorder into his laptop, which sits in front of him on the desk he’s had since he started school. His dad bought it for him thinking he would grow into it. And he has, in a way, although his dad hasn’t been around to see it. He can hear his mum fiddling with the keys of the piano, as if she’s thinking of playing something but hasn’t quite made up her mind. He taps a few of his own keys then goes out to her. A soft circle of polished wood shines under the lamp she always switches on to light up a student’s music. He sits in a lounge chair to the side of her.

“I played a Beethoven CD at the Ferret today,” he says.

“Beethoven?” she echoes, lifting her hands off the keys and turning towards him. “What was it?”

“String quartets.”

She turns back to the piano, chooses a few more notes, her foot on the sustain pedal, so that they roll around inside the piano, almost merge and immerse her in the sound of part harmony, part dissonance.

“Beethoven,” she says as if reminding herself of something. “Well, hey, how about this?”

She places her hands above the keyboard and slowly brings them down to sound the beginning of a piece familiar to her students: a piece he has falteringly played, out of her earshot. There’s a low harmony in the chords of the left hand and continual movement in the right—1-2-3, 1-2-3, 1-2-3, 1-2-3.... It’s as if the right hand depends on that movement and rhythm to keep it going, while the left hand searches for the grounding of chord after chord, both hands working together so as not to stop dead from a lack of sound.

His mum keeps her foot on the piano’s sustain pedal and ever-ascending triplets and a descending bass make more of each other as the sympathetic frequencies of sound roll along strings and around the body of the piano and out.

He nods at her. Yes, ‘The Moonlight.’

“What about his concertos, know any of those?”

His mum laughs, “that is asking a lot.”

Quinn thinks of Cara with her score tucked up, under her arm. She hadn’t said much, her voice, perhaps a little lower than soprano, sometimes coming and going quickly. It seems fitting that an aspiring composer has one of the piano scores that belonged to Toni’s grandfather.

Toni's dad had asked her to off-load some of her grandfather's music, as a start to a longer process of 'sorting' through his stuff. Toni had helped him load scores into the boot of his car. "Hey Quinn," she had said, "how strong are you?" as she shoved her pile of black bound volumes towards him. Despite her joking, he had noticed that her grey eyes were the same colour as that day's non-descript sky. He loaded the black-bound volumes and grabbed one to flick through. There were so many notes piling the page, making some strange exchange that he guessed must be heard and played.

What more will you hear in this black-bound *Concerte*? What more of the *tutti* and solo?

The piano made its slight mention of the orchestra's "Baarm, baarm, baarm, baarm." But before you can figure this as some form of capitulation, the piano launches into yet another entirely new tune with an off-kilter swing to it—the off-kilter part of which is now sometimes unexpectedly and enthusiastically underlined by the strings of the orchestra. Then, reversing roles, the orchestra takes over with its own entirely new tune that is repeated almost verbatim by the piano with only the slight and rapid flourish of an ascending scale: "dididididididi."

You:

Backwards and forwards then, this play between orchestra and piano.

You hear that play for another twenty minutes or so, the orchestra never quite leaving restatement of its opening chords to the piano, the piano never quite settling in with the orchestra.

The Music:

At the beginning I gave you the small voice of the solo, but then I didn't give it to you again, now listen....

In the second movement of this first concerto: here is the piano, rather than an orchestral *Tutti*. Opening with a long chord in both hands, you figure the piano is clearly making way for a complete change of pace. The strings are only just there, in agreement, below the notes of the piano, a long and simple drawing of bows across strings. The first movement has cued you to feel this simple pianistic beginning—and the simple drawing of bows across strings—as an intake of breath, another essential, yet soft filling of the lungs.

Then you hear the piano's first chord simply step up one note to then step down three; one note at a time: a slow and quiet release of breath as one note leads to one note, leads to one note, leads to one note. But then you hear that melody, still so simply stated reach up and also linger on just one note higher than where it started—another, perhaps more marked, intake of breath—before one quicker note drops to a lower note, grounding itself before the beat of silence that allows the piano to continue, unaccompanied, with its second phrase.

Curtains closed—Saturday morning. Can he hear—the Earth hum? A hum—measured. Its vibration—measured—by geophysicists. A hum—2-7 millihertz—way too low and too quiet to hear. The Earth's mantle—vibrating—sounding—its own dense cluster of notes—the free oscillations of the Earth—perhaps—it is the atmosphere—drumming gently—like millions of air-filled hands—the free oscillations of the Earth. Air pressure—changes. Air pressure rises. The atmosphere, presses down—down on land and sea. Air pressure drops. The Earth's surface—rebounds. The Earth—humming.

Listen. Quinn Listens. Pick up, pick out, remember. Sounds. Sound for memory. Sound as memory. He rolls over. Effects. Sound effects. His dad, and him—a recording studio—his fifth birthday. The technician—sliding controls of a console. Through glass—an echo chamber—he chirrup into the mic'. His dad, sings—“happy birthday to you”—he laughs—blends laughter and song in his echo. His mum—“he should have a party. He's starting school.” The sounds of the recording studio—are better than any party.

Awake? Listen. His head, has its hollow in the pillow. No hum yet. The sound of his room. His space. Every space has its own sound. Every 'silence' has its own sound. Every space makes its own silence. Furnishings. Furniture. Windows. Inside. Outside. People. People inside? People outside? Silence on film is not a dead length of tape. Silence must be recorded—in a particular place. A human being is a being in sound. Total silence would be heard as wrong—a jarring mistake. A human being cannot bear total silence. An anechoic chamber. A chamber made by scientists to remove all sound, an echo: no echo. Quinn is their subject. Quinn, anechoic. But there is a hum. Not just a heartbeat. There is a hum. The scientists say, “the hum is normal.” The hum is the body making its own sound. The hum is the sound of his blood in his veins. His hum.

Water. The sound of water, beside his ear, in his ear. Footsteps, from under his door, glancing his pillow. Nine bars. Nine. Starting on middle C. The middle of the keyboard. C. His mother will be there, with him, beside the piano.

“Can you play this?” he will ask.

“Nine bars?” she will ask. “From what?”

“Dunno,” he will say.

Her hand grips his shoulder. She is laughing.

“Nine Bars,” she says.

Awake? Yes. Enough.

Quinn pulls himself out of bed, his hands on the edge of the bed, sliding feet and legs out first. He props himself up with his right elbow.

His mum has been up for hours, no doubt. He stands in the hallway, sees her go for the vacuum cleaner. She drags it from the cupboard by its hose. Its wheels squeak their way out onto polished wood. She plugs it in and turns it on, vacuums dust and dirt she sees ahead and behind her. The cleaner’s head makes the uncompromising sucking sound of always-inward-rushing-air, modulated only by the way it is moved backwards and forwards, her moving it backwards and forwards. And it hums.

“Did you have that going before?” he asks, leaning towards her so that she can hear him.

“No. I’m just giving it a quick flick now,” she says, her arms still moving.

She soon finishes.

“Day off?” she asks.

“Na,” he says “got some composition to think about.”

“Composition,” she says.

“Good for a Saturday, eh?” he asks.

“Have something to eat, and then have a look at it, ok?”

“It’s piano music,” he says.

“Piano?”

“Yeah, the one with the black and white keys and the C in its middle.”

The C in its middle and his thumb on middle C. For a start, he can read the music and follow the line of the right and left hands, but separately. It is written in ‘common time’: four standard beats to a bar—count to four for one bar, count to four for the next, and the next, and the next. But it’s not really like that. You don’t really know you’re counting. The beats follow the notes, and the notes the beats.

The first note is not on the first beat of the bar, as would be usual. It starts on the third beat, the middle of the bar. It's a beginning without the strength of the first beat to send it on its way. He puts his thumb, third finger, and fifth finger to the keyboard. Pianists must think of their music in many terms: one of those being which finger should play which note. First finger—the thumb, second finger—the index finger, third finger—the middle finger, fourth finger—the fourth, fifth finger—the little finger. If you get onto the wrong finger you probably won't make it to the next note in time.

He plays the opening three notes. C—E—A. Not C—E—G: the standard format for a C major chord, the sound of it seeming so natural and inevitable to the ear. C major—a chord made of white notes, spaced evenly to make a straightforward harmony: one white note, miss a white note, one white note, miss a white note, one white note. Going up one note to 'A,' instead of letting the ear hear that inevitable 'G,' that's probably important. Going one past. A proposition? His composition lecturer said to listen for “a proposition” made by the music's first nine bars. He said to look for an “opening premise.” That is the short and long of it: a proposition in nine bars and an unfolding of that proposition over however many more bars are required to fill the page.

Then the music comes down from that A. Quinn's fifth finger, moving to the fourth, to the third. Steps. The left hand? Chords, but with a bit more rhythm. Starting on the first beat of the second bar. It's an off-beat rhythm from the bottom two notes of one chord to the top two notes of another. It's the kind of rhythm integral to so much orchestral music, and made over by the jazz musician: feel the beat but then play the note, feel the beat but then play the note, feel the beat but then play the note... The right and left hands could seem to be at cross purposes. But he's felt a push and pull between right and left piano hands before. Playing the notes in one hand always triggers the other. After playing a piece with that dynamic for only a week or so, you think of it only in terms of both hands. You would struggle to play the line of just one hand, as you did when you were first learning the piece.

“What is that?” his mum asks, coming up behind him.

“Nine bars,” he says. “Well, two and a half so far.”

“Nine bars?”

“Do you want to play it?” he asks: he knows he's no pianist.

She looks down at him already getting up. She sits and leans towards the music.

“Common time. C Major,” she says. “A few unexpected sharps and flats.”

It's the kind of quick inventory taken by any musician before 'sight reading' a piece. It's a kind of checklist. Time signature—"check." Key signature—"check." Unexpected nasty notes—"check."

She lifts her hands over the middle of the keyboard, then her fingers spread to accommodate the opening notes, and she is off. There's that off-beat bass and the tune in the right hand. Then there is some variation of the opening phrase in the right hand and more of the off-beat bass. He hears that "reaching"—one past—in the music of the right hand. The left hand is the rhythm section, but it's not solely percussion, and the right hand is not wholly on the beat either.

Then it stops.

"Nine bars," she says. "Then what?"

"Then I write many more to fill that page."

His mum rests the fingernails of her right hand on her bottom lip.

"An interesting piece of music presents multiple tendencies and possibilities," he says.

"Your lecturer?" she asks.

He nods.

"So, what tendencies and possibilities do you hear?" she asks.

"Some." He says. "A few."

You are back with the *Concerte*—the slow movement of its first concerto—listening for a second phrase to answer the first. You hear the first two quiet notes of just the piano leading to a longer trilling kind of note that—being 'dotted'—steals a portion of the time that should be given to the following note; and then, a step down and up to a higher, 'dotted' and decorated note that steps down to become part of a run of the quickest notes you have heard so far—also a kind of decoration when going at this slow pace.

The Music:

Could this be a lighter comment on my opening phrase?

You:

I do hear the piano decorate its first phrase.

It seemed to be turning inward, but this opens out a little.

Then, you hear the piano opening out a little more: a third decorated phrase, starting more straightforwardly with assent from a chorus of bows simply drawn across

a single string. Then going on, you hear the piano—solo once more—exaggerating its previous play. It springboards up to the highest and clearest note you have heard so far, where it lingers, and lingers some more, before winding down, more and more quietly through quicker notes a trill and a turn to chords that sound a hopeful kind of resolution to three opening phrases.

3

Toni's tea is lukewarm, yet again. She sets it aside to better inspect another box of cassette tapes. The teacup chinks quietly into the receiving circle of its saucer. It is the teacup and saucer her granddad gave her mum, and her mum gave her when she left. She is in the 'second living room,' like those typical of old weatherboard villas that line up bedrooms and two large 'family' rooms either side of a hallway. The room and everything in it had been her Granddad's. She spends most of her time in it now.

She is sitting with her backside on the polished wooden floor, her legs out in front of her, the bottoms of her jeans and sock-bound feet on the room's central rug, her back resting against the front of a chair that is anchored in the corner. Her granddad's almost prehistoric tape-to-tape deck is at her side, its cord disappearing behind the chair. She has already sorted through a few boxes: they work their way towards her granddad's darkly stained wooden upright piano with closed lid, against the wall to her left. Opposite and to the other side of her stand bookshelves it must have taken many years to fill. His black bound volumes of sheet music and piano scores sit either side of his now-tidied desk. She thinks of him showing her volumes and books often pulled from shelves above her head, his voice lightening yet somehow weighty as he explained things she would struggle to remember. On the far side of the room is the long window seat where she sometimes saw him lie in the late afternoon sun.

Her granddad made tapes of all his records, saying they would just wear out if he kept playing them over and over. He liked to carry his tape deck around with him, so he could listen to music in the bedroom or in the kitchen. It's not as if he listened to music all of the time, but he was so often listening for the music he wanted, fetching another tape when the one he was playing wasn't quite right. She remembers being in the kitchen with him and his music. She had come inside from the garden when he was making a cup of tea and listening to Bach (which he always pronounced as "batch," so that she could tell him to say "bark"). He asked her if she thought the piano sounded well tempered. She said she thought so. He said he was probably the one out of sorts. They went together to fetch a new tape: "something for this kind of morning," he said. He chose "Beeth oven."

Her father sold all of his records to a collector soon after he died. She was always meant to help her dad sort through everything else, but they only got as far as putting tapes in boxes.

Her dad picked up more of her granddad's musical taste. He also inherited his ability to play the piano. That wasn't true in her case. She was always encouraged by her granddad and her dad to learn the piano, but it wasn't for her. She liked to sing, but she never wanted formal lessons.

She remembers her dad playing her granddad's piano even though he had his own in the next living room. "A piano needs to be played," he would say. Her granddad would place one hand across the other and keep them very still while he listened. She would look at those hands, at the tips of fingers that were being twisted out of piano-playing alignment by arthritis. She was too young to even know what arthritis was, but she always thought of his fingers as sad to be bending out of shape.

"Bonus baby," Toni says, pulling out a tape, releasing a couple of others to skid plastic across plastic. That's what granddad called her, his little bonus baby. Although, that was not really correct because she was really her mum's bonus baby. He said she was definitely his bonus, the way he said it always full of promise.

Toni's mum had been forty-two when she was born, which isn't really that old, but Will, her eldest brother was already on the verge of leaving home. That was when they lived in Christchurch, before they moved to Wellington. Her mum got a job at the Archives in Wellington and she started school. Her dad transferred to the Wellington office of the printing firm he was working for shortly after. She was twelve when her granddad died and left her dad (the only child) the house and everything in it. But now her mum and dad have moved to a furnished inner city apartment in Auckland and she is still here. She removes the tape from its case labelled 'Beethoven Sonatas (Moonlight etc.),' clicks it into the tape deck, then goes to make a hot cup of tea. Yip. She is still here.

Toni wants to listen to all of her grandfather's music: eight boxes jammed full of tapes that, when played, will sound out something of his world. She will listen to all of his music and choose what to put on a compilation disk she will make for herself. Wherever she ends up and whatever she ends up doing, she will listen to it and think of this time at the villa.

She likes to have a project of her own making, a project unlike the mostly lame projects she had to do while at high school. A secondary education was nothing more than necessary. She did pretty well most of the time, but she was always being handed

only just enough information to learn things by wrote, but not enough to keep her interested. Then she got a job at the Archives with her mum. She loved the idea of being close to so many old documents—like maps, architectural plans, and photographs—but she only got as close as entering their ‘search criteria’ for the benefit of ‘electronic visitors.’ Her mum’s replacement decided Toni’s position was superfluous. Now she is jobless. Her mum sends her a pretty meagre allowance to keep her going while she thinks (but for “not too long”) about what to do next. Quinn says she should do some study, and get a student allowance. She thought about doing Archaeology, but who wants to end up digging in dirt and sleeping in a windswept tent? Just because she wears her almost-fair hair short doesn’t mean she’s a woman to give up a good shower and a look in a mirror.

She moves the teapot with its handle, slowly left then right, the way her mum used to, “drawing the tea out.”

Toni thinks of Quinn and the way he used to come around after school. They had been in the same class at school, on and off, for most of their primary school years. He used to practice his *Learn to Play Piano* books, which spent all of their time in her dad’s piano stool. He had a piano at home but his mother was a piano teacher and it seemed easier for him to practice elsewhere. His mother didn’t teach him, he was learning from someone else. He would run through a few things, perched on a cushion. Then she would suggest a “wee break” and lead him into the garage for a game of table tennis, or into her room, or out into the garden. Then, after a while, he reckoned he was finished for the day. He would say “thanks for the practice,” and head home to his mum. It’s funny but it doesn’t seem that long ago that he shot up and started to look like he had the hands and feet of a man. Maybe it was then that she first noticed the way his dark hair sits in fine strands around his face.

With hot tea (this time), Toni pushes ‘play’ and sits in her granddad’s chair. After the customary hiss she hears a few notes played by a piano. They seem to creep in quietly, even though they start altogether. The music is hushed, but also expectant. It keeps on repeating a three-note pattern, each second and third note ascending from the anchor of the first: 1-2-3, 1-2-3, 1-2-3, 1-2-3... The rhythm of it could almost beat time to a quick waltz, but this is not music for dancing. No, this is music to make you stop and listen. There’s a “Bermmm-----” way down low, underpinning that insistent 1-2-3, 1-2-3, 1-2-3, 1-2-3..., and a slight merging of it all by the piano. It keeps going, moving lower, and then higher, and then even lower. It feels like someone has all the notes on separate, yet interwoven threads, so they can repeatedly pull them all down,

down, down. This is a pull she and the music both seem to know so well—is it down to the earth and a graveside, her with dug earth in her hand and her mum’s hand on her back? Maybe, but this is not the sum of the music, or her, although the knowledge of it is there—a sounding of it.

Toni wonders if her granddad got to know music for its sound, as if it has its own way of knowing and putting things. Could that be why he wanted to listen to different music at different times? And is that why she now finds herself facing a whole collection of music on tape and bound into black volumes? Toni stands and goes over to one of the shelves beside his desk and runs her hand along black spines, clipping each with her fingertips. Her dad wants her to go through shelves of these, cull them. Who knows how long he and her mum will be in Auckland. And the house will have to be sold, at some stage. He gave her a pile of volumes to pass on to Quinn, some war-time music that he said her granddad hadn’t looked at in decades. There were also some Beethoven piano scores that had been in a pile on her granddad’s desk—her dad said they duplicated music he already had.

If she could read music, then maybe she would sit down and read a volume or two. Maybe, like her granddad, she would trace her finger along a line of music, tap her foot, move her head, or rock from side to side. Maybe she would even sit bolt upright from time to time, like he did when particularly struck by some sound. Maybe she would also hear a world of music inside her head, like he must have while at his desk, a volume open in front of him as he wrote. She remembers once seeing the fingers of his left hand resting on a page of music while he wrote with his right, as if there was a kind of music, or knowledge of music flowing from fingers to fingers.

Here you are once more, with the *Concerte*. Do you remember: the first movement—the voice of the piano, and its play with the *tutti*? Then, in the second and slow movement: the piano’s three opening phrases. The piano has settled in lightly with a simple-small melody that opened out a little, with ornamentation, to reach a little further, to sound out a little more of itself.

And now, the slow movement continues with the *tutti* that picks up something of the piano’s opening melody. It sounds to you like a distant memory, not too close, held back. The strings pick up the piano’s rhythm—spanning what would be most of the keyboard, with the strength and volume of *forte*. Then, you hear the winds—a clarinet—clearly yet quietly echoing the strings. And then you hear it again: the strings,

and then the wind. But out of this rhythmic falling-in with the piano comes the clarinet—yes, it is there again. It has found the opening melody of the piano, for a few moments it remembers the notes, and it lingers on the highest note of its opening phrase, just as the piano did.

You:
Music for memory?

Toni is in the garden, or what now passes for the garden. A real gardener would “tsk tsk” —and, yes, she is pulling the worst of the weeds—but it feels comfortably ad hoc. Its yellow, orange and white chrysanthemum borders are blurred by the blue flowers of forget-me-nots and the lawn is a home to the white and yellow heads of hundreds of daisies.

Her granddad liked gardening or just being in the garden, and more of the latter in his later years. She remembers him telling her not to water plants in the sun, that you could burn them. Once, her mum had planted a row of chrysanthemums and gone inside. Toni walked beside the new plants with a steel watering can, starting at the gate and making her way up the steps to the beginning of the path that leads to the veranda and front door. Sometimes with two hands on the handle, she doused green leaves that looked like they needed it. The water would “sluish” satisfactorily into the spout and she would hear it pour from the holes in its head with a “fiiiits.” When she stopped watering she heard the water “swish” back to its place in the can: “sluish-fiiiits-swish,” “sluish-fiiiits-swish,” “sluish-fiiiits-swish.” Her granddad met her at the top of the steps. He lead her back to where she started by the gate. Crouching he said “look,” and pointed to the drops of water that still sat in the grooves and folds of the leaves, “each one of those is like a little magnifying glass for the heat of the sun.”

Last night was a late one. She had listened to a lot of music, probably more than she ever had in one sitting, without ear buds and iPod shuffle. Between then and now she has come upon the thought that her granddad’s music has a way of sounding like it has been around for ages, while it also sounds as it goes, seeking its fit. ‘The Moonlight’ has been in her head, her ear. She would like to put it together with other music, see how it goes when in company. It is a bit of a strange piece really, not easy to describe. It never really seems to ‘arrive’ anywhere in particular while it keeps on moving through its slightly blurred and rich kind of sound. She finds herself humming a soft “bermmm-----,” an echo of the notes she heard at its base.

She walks over to the wheelbarrow she left beside the veranda. She wheels it alongside her pile of pulled weeds, hears the mailbox's flap shut: "clut." She sees a flash of a Postie's red uniform through the trees overhanging the footpath and is about to call out "thanks," but she doesn't know who she would be thanking. She collects all of the pulled weeds and drops them into the wheelbarrow, the loose dirt quietly rattling in first. Not much to show for half an hour's work. She makes that hum again. It sits at the base of her throat and buzzes up to the back of her mouth and tongue, around her jaw and into her head. She sets the wheelbarrow down next to a patch of unweeded garden.

Her granddad would often sing; sometimes more quietly in the way of a hum, other times with a sudden clarity and force. He might be weeding and then stand straight to deliver a burst of vocal sound to his surrounds. He said that singing was a matter of vibration. This is true, as she knows from past biology classes. The lungs provide the pressure required to push air up the larynx to vibrate vocal cords, which are actually vocal folds, or valves that chop up the airflow into pulses of sound. The muscles of the folds 'tune' the sound for pitch and 'tone of voice.' The mouth, cheek, and lips filter and help make the final sound. As her granddad told her, the behaviour of all this biological apparatus in singing is not precisely known and the exact dynamics of song production are different in every person.

She once asked her granddad "why do you like to sing?" He said that singing beautifully was something they could do, not despite the intricacies of their "machinery," but because of it.

She sang in a choir for a while in both primary and secondary school. The woman who took the high school choir always said to think of the area of your head above your mouth—the area that would be outlined by masquerade ball mask, as a resonance chamber that makes the most of the vibrations of your voice. She said to think of your voice as coming from the middle of your forehead, as if you were sending out thought-notes to another person well in front of you. She also said to think of your voice as coming from your diaphragm and through the relaxed muscles of your throat. She would stand straight with one foot slightly in front of the other, shake her arms out to make sure she was relaxed, open her mouth as if about to smile and produce a note with the same clarity and force as her granddad. "This is *Bel Canto*," she would say, "it is beautifully sung."

Her granddad had been asked to sing, or 'entertain' while he was a prisoner of war, although, he said that he never thought of himself as an entertainer. He said there

were a whole lot of blokes in Stalag 383 who sang and played music to make themselves as ‘at home’ as they could possibly be. He said he played the piano solo, in a concert or two. She asked him whether he preferred singing or playing the piano and he said that both were a kind of ‘voice,’ and maybe he couldn’t have one without the other. She asked her dad about this after her granddad died: he said granddad insisted that when he played the piano, he was able to hear it as part of his own sound, his own voice. Maybe a musician could apply that idea to themselves and whatever instrument they play?

There are trees along both sides of the garden. A blackbird flies over Toni’s head, from the silver beech tree on her left to the copper beech on her right, propelled by what seems to be a single and urgent contraction of outspread wings. She hardly sees it, but hears the emphatic “Frrr” of wings closing on air just above her head and the first of a series of sharp calls that set up and trace its flight from one side of the garden to the other. She bends down to collect another pile of pulled weeds, drops them in the wheelbarrow, wheels onto the path where grass and small dandelions have taken root between the cracks of concrete pavers. To her right, another—or maybe the same—blackbird makes the clattering call and “frrr” that gets it from the copper to the silver beech. She guesses that this sounding of her garden might go on all day: clatter and “frrr”s to make its space and edges.

Here is that hum again. And here is the unexpected shake of her cellphone with a new message in the back pocket of her jeans: “Will call this arvo. Mum.” Toni remembers the “clut,” heads down the path and steps to the mailbox, flicks open its flap. It is her mother’s white envelope. She reaches in with a gloved hand. Her mum’s writing is unmistakable—the long downward stroke of the ‘T,’ as if her mum is writing an invitation on her behalf: “Toni Cross is pleased to invite you...” It will be the monthly cheque. She told her mum she should just go on the dole. She is, after all, unemployed and the family must have paid a pile of tax over the years.

She holds the envelope by its corner. Her other hand is on the gate. A young woman walks beside her on the footpath to the sound of grooved plastic wheels rolling on concrete: a toddler’s trike with its “rrrrr—rrrrr—rrrrr—rrrrr...” The toddler comes into view, head down, hands on black plastic handlebars, “rrrrr,” (push of small feet in bright blue slippers), “rrrrr,” (push of feet), “rrrrr”... “Out for a wee walk, and ride?” she calls cheerfully. Actually, no, she watches them go, listens for the increasing speed of the trike as the street slopes downwards. She hears it, a steady “rrrrrrrrrr...,” the kid with his bright blue feet off the ground, free-wheeling at the age of two. Toni walks

back towards the house, hears the woman call out. Perhaps she is running. Perhaps she runs in front of the kid, turns quickly and puts her arms out to stop him. Or maybe the kid crashes while the woman runs behind.

And then, too soon, the phone rings. Toni runs while fumbling with the removal of dirty gloves, her white envelope wedged under one arm. She reaches the front door and the phone is still calling, with that shrill and urgent sound that is always part summons (answer *now*), part question (good news or bad?), part celebration (the world wants *you* Toni Cross!). She skids in the hallway in her socks, grabs the handheld off the table.

“Toni, it’s mum. What are you doing?”

“I was gardening, down at the letterbox, had to get to the phone.”

“You got my cheque then?”

“Yeah, the white envelope.” Toni still has it clutched under one arm. She puts it face-down on the table and sees that her mum has written a return address on the back flap: the fancy-sounding name of an inner city apartment block.

“How’s the apartment?”

“You should bank the cheque as soon as you can. You will need the money.”

“Do you miss the house?”

“Well,” her mum says, “there really wasn’t any way I could turn down this opportunity in Auckland. I’ll be ‘retirement age’ in a few years, not that I’m going to retire. Opportunities like this don’t come along so often...”

“The garden’s looking good. Well, starting to look better...”

“Anyone to keep you company?” her mum asks.

“A blackbird or two.”

“What about Quinn?”

“Na. He hasn’t been around for a while, since he took granddad’s books away. I’ve been sorting through a few things. Tapes.”

“How many boxes did we end up with?”

“Eight.”

“I don’t know why he didn’t just listen to your father’s CDs, they had so much music in common.”

“He liked his tapes.”

Her mum laughs. “An ex-radio broadcasting assistant, well familiar with technology, stuck on good old low fidelity tape?”

“But he liked to carry that tape deck around...”

“Is that thing still going?”

Toni hears a tape’s hiss and the first all-together creeping-in notes of ‘The Moonlight.’ “Going strong,” she says.

“Any jobs on the horizon?”

Toni looks down the hallway, past an overturned shoe to the trees at the front of the garden, roofs beyond. “Not that I can see,” she says. “I’m sorting through granddad’s tapes.”

“Your dad probably already has most of the music...”

“I know, but this is granddad’s music, and dad took most of his CDs with him. I just want to listen to the tapes.”

“OK, well, maybe invite Quinn over for nachos, go for some walks, talk to the neighbours, or something. We’ll try and get back at some stage.”

Toni imagines a pile of steaming white corn chips covered in canned chilli beans and grated cheese, her and Quinn walking down the street, talking loudly, elderly neighbours standing at their gates waving and smiling without teeth, a mother calling out to a kid on a trike ahead of them.

She picks up the white envelope, folds it over and over on itself and shoves it in her back pocket. She turns towards a room of music and tapes, the making of memory.

“Rightio,” she says, “gotta go.”

The Music:

The piano making way for the rhythm, the clarinet making way for the piano, listen....

You hear the piano let the clarinet sound its last note as the beginning of its own return: it becomes part of the piano’s new phrase. But then the piano bounds from the anchor of the clarinet’s note up into a higher register, to explore its ornamentation with higher notes: a leap to find new territory to play in. You reckon that first leap must be a good hand stretch from the first note to a dramatic landing on the higher note: *sforzando*, suddenly loud. The second leap—even more dramatic than the first—must be more like the stretch of two hands, the highest note *sforzando*, from which the piano recedes, to make its last note the first note of the next *tutti*.

4

There is no fucking proposition in these nine bars. A proposition should be something that waves out to you and says “you could take me along here, take me this way.” She can see at least five ways she could go with these nine bars and none of them are likely to take her anywhere of any interest at all, to anyone. Cara tosses her library book to one side and pushes at the bridge of her nose. They have to hand in their “composition after nine bloody bars”—as she has un-affectionately come to call it—tomorrow.

Okay, so, she went to her first book, written in 1773 yet still able to offer the basics to any conscientious student, such as herself. She has dutifully taken notes in her exercise book expressly kept for the purpose. It’s simplistic, but there are three different ways of thinking about motion in a piece of music. There is parallel motion when two ‘voices’ ascend or descend together (of course, for this exercise she thinks of each ‘voice’ as either the right or the left hand of the piano). The higher voice will be heard as the melody while the lower voice accompanies and harmonises with it. Then there is contrary motion when, say, the right hand (the melody) ascends while the left hand descends. Thirdly, there is oblique motion when one hand holds the same sustained note while the other continues to move, allowing many different and often-beguiling combinations of notes.

She has another book, written in 1993. It follows Mr. 1773 to explain composition in terms of melody and harmony: two lines creating a unity in parallel or contrary motion. It looks like the book has hardly been read and she knows why—the paper it contains unexpectedly and distinctly smells like vomit and she has had the dreaded urge in mind all afternoon.

She understands that these books have given her the basis of composition, but it is not helping her.

She is sitting at her favourite desk. It’s down the back of the library behind the stacks of music scores. To one side of her she has music and to the other she has only windows. There is light, an often tentative warmth and the framing of a small courtyard and garden; there is no-one in front of her to distract her with their pen-tapping, nose blowing, head scratching or, worst of all, the aural fuzz from their ear buds made to

blast out some drivel about he bonks her and she bonks him and we all want to bonk each other.

Why would Gibbs set this exercise up in a way that implies something can be made of his nine bars if they take her nowhere? What about the other people in the class, what are they going to do? People always seem to have a way of doing things she struggles with: she always imagines scores of people sitting at desks nodding their heads in unison as they read their instructions and do what they are expected to do. What about the ruffled Ferret guy, Quinn, what will he make of it? Why can't she just make her own proposition in nine bars—surely that's the work of a composer?

Leaving the library, with even the sick-book in her bag, Cara heads for a practice room. Maybe she can just bang something out on the piano and write it down.

Only practice room three is free. Every now and then someone donates an old piano to the university that is not good enough to be out for general use or display: it is shut away in dark places such as the broom closet that is known as practice room three, for plonking on. She should have booked a room earlier. But she didn't want to go straight to a piano with her nine bars in hand. Use your eye and ear together, try and make some sense of what you see before your fingers search for notes: her instructions to herself. That is how she thought she must do it, without relying on the piano for her notes and the act of playing for her sense of movement.

After all, she has heard full-on orchestral music in her head, more than once in her last year of high school. She had been rehearsing for the secondary schools chamber music competition as part of a trio with an oboist and clarinetist. She can still remember the first time she heard it, standing at the top of the stairs, leaving the school hall stage where they had been rehearsing, about to descend in a rush. Hearing it, being caught by it, only music in motion. There were strings and woodwinds together. Some of the winds—was it a clarinet and an oboe?—were moving together in harmony along with a swell of bright sound from violins and violas, making a melody. The other winds—a flute and a bassoon?—were heading off somewhere else with more deeply sounding cellos and double basses. It was unexpected, completely in and of itself. But as soon as she caught its gist it ceased to sound, although she knew it was there, within and between cells of grey matter. Her fleeting thought. No, her fleeting *heard thought*.

Cara puts her sheet of music and a pencil on the piano's music stand and sits on her hands. She looks at nine bars, her lips pursed. She plays them. She plays them again. There's quite a nice 'motif' right at the beginning, in the right hand. Instead of sounding the notes of a C major chord, C—E—G, it goes C—E—A (one note past the G), but the

G sounds just before the A in the left hand: a passing clash. Then the right hand steps down while the left hand continues on. That clash is like the first two notes of chopsticks some pre-pubescent kid always has to belt out on a school piano. The notes are too close together, they are right next to each other on the keyboard, no room for harmony between them. But the tension of such a clash and its release into harmony in music captivates the ear and moves it forward. Just listen to Bach, he couldn't survive without it.

The right hand's motif gets carried slightly higher, but before it does the bass moves momentarily from an off-beat alternation of chords to a more melodic line. It's an odd little transition from one lot of accompanying chords to another. It doesn't work really. She likes to think she wouldn't have written it. And who says her lecturer can compose anything anyway? Those who can't do, teach? But she likes what he has to say, sometimes, Dr. Gibbs. The other day he was talking about "musical events," or "expressive events": they could be of any length and combine any instruments (or not) in any way to make something "happen" in the music, something the ear could identify as "having just happened."

If the worst comes to the worst (perhaps literally in this case), she can just extend that right hand motif and keep the bass accompanying it off the beat, make some variations—slightly vary the patterns made by the original set of notes and perhaps put them through a key change, from C Major to A Minor — and then bring the piece back to where it started. That might be what Gibbs expects everyone to do, as an exercise. But what might happen? What does he expect to happen? Anything or nothing?

What if she just played the nine bars and kept going, let her body do something for her? Try it. Cara closes her eyes. She's agonized over these nine bars more than enough to know them by heart by now. When she gets to the last chord, she visualises herself playing on, sees herself making music as the only thing she could possibly ever do, thinks of her mind and ear as so receptive there's a buzz of anticipation in the room and out, into and along the hallway. And now the last ring of the last chord has faded and she lets her foot fall from the sustain pedal.

"Excuse me, I had this room booked for six." Cara opens her eyes. It's over, it didn't happen. She turns to see a young woman holding the door ajar: her head and shoulders. "I did knock."

"Sorry," says Cara.

"No, no, that's OK, I know what it's like when you're playing."

Or not able to play.

“You doing composition with Gibbs?”

“Yeah.” Cara gathers up her things and slips them in her shoulder bag. With Dr. Gibbs, the man of the expressive event. “But there’s nothing happening for me,” she says.

“Don’t worry, it gets better.”

Cara looks at the woman, in the room now, with her knee-length fawn suede jacket buttoned over jeans, her brown boots. So together. Better now. Why did she say such a stupid thing? It could only elicit the standard response. “Don’t worry, things will get better.” “Things always look better in the morning”—that’s what her dad used to say if she was glum in the evening because things hadn’t worked out for her during the day.

She is taking a course for God’s sake. What does she expect? You do the exercises and you get the grade. You do the next course. And so on. Cara smiles at the suede jacket. It’s probably that strange eyes-partly-closed with crooked-smile kind of smile she has that always gets caught on camera and makes her look like a bemused lizard. She lets the other woman move forward towards the piano so she can make her exit.

The Music:

Let’s skip ahead a bit, to the next slow movement, of the second piano concerto.

You:

There’s a slowing down that lets me hear the piano’s notes come together, let’s me hear the movement within and between them. It’s the making of a melody, but also so much more....

How can I explain it?

The Music:

Listen...

Much closer to the end than the beginning, it takes itself into another phrase: the right hand plays a little more freely between rests above the now more audible left hand.

Up they go with a small trill and down they come with short and so-high notes, bit by bit, the notes of the right hand. Starting up where the right hand might normally play, moving the melody forward, go the notes of the left hand, without pause, always alternating between lower and higher notes.

You:

Two hands, making a play for more...

Cara darts through rain and between two cars going in opposite directions, their lights flicking across her legs, their spray catching her momentarily at the dividing white line, slooshing towards her knees on one side and the backs of her legs on the other. When had the weather turned? With her shoulder bag now on her head, she leaps over guttered run-off to the pavement and under the small roof of a bus stop. Across the road and along the pavement: the sounds of wet panicked footfalls. Other students run in the direction of home or just for cover. One girl half laughs and half screams as she makes the same leap Cara made, landing in front of her, bumping her roughly as she makes it to shelter. Still laughing. Cara scrapes her feet back together, stands where she was, gives her attention to the rain, continually caught in car lights.

When she gets home she'll jot some notes down. Just jot some notes down.

On the bus with its driver intent on doing sixty despite standing passengers, the rain and a barrage of home-bound traffic, Cara holds nine bars in her head the way she clutches the pole in front of her. There they are, in her head: the nine bars of Gibbs. The composition after nine bloody bars. The big composition of nine bars of Gibbs. There they are, in her head, like nonsense, in her head where her own notes should be hitting home; but there is only the belt on the forehead she receives as that exemplar of maniac drivers clomps on his brake. And there she is, in her head, minute and sodden, whimpering along with the nine bars of Gibbs: 'I quit my course dad, it wasn't for me. *You* can't believe it? *I* can't believe it. I can't believe it got the better of me, so soon.' The first exercise. The warm up gone cold.

The Music:

Sounding on its own, the right hand gestures upwards and then comes down to meet the left...

You:

They move together, almost...

The Music:

But close, densely together and often clashing...

You:

As if building towards...?

The Music:

Not quite. The right hand makes a small trill, not even a flourish, to hand over to the left...which seems to take its cue...

You:

Now. Beginning a run, straight up, fast, louder, louder...

The Music:

Taken faster and louder by the right hand, a well-made burst to a peak where the left hand comes back and up with a fast-punctuated chord...

You:

Until the right hand again takes its rush from the left, but only to hang on a trill...

Cara sits on the floor with her knees tucked under the end of her bed, leans over her manuscript paper which sits on top of the closed Beethoven score. She sits like this when she is too intent to work lying on the bed. She has abandoned the piece of paper on which she should write after the nine bars of Gibbs. She will write those nine bars on her own paper, get them into her own pencil and give herself some room to work things out. At the end of nine bars she thinks of herself with a shut-up piano that rings only with the last bar of Gibbs. No, she won't stall again. She starts to write...writes a bit more. It is nothing to be proud of, just what is to be expected.

After writing notes uncommitted to their paper, Cara sits hugging her legs in the centre of her bed. She tells herself she has done the only reasonable thing. She has reasonably done the kind of reasonable thing that reasonable people do to be reasonable. She will get her marked paper back from Gibbs. He will hand it to her without aplomb and with his scrawl along the bottom of her page he will say "a reasonable effort Cara," and between those words the girly-swot will hear a litany of her own: the best tool of a composer is her inner ear, so listen without self-deception for those poorly-made parts you have tried to hide behind the more compelling. Determine what needs to be developed, what is most urgent, most likely to benefit from its completion.

Cara lies back and closes her eyes. She hears the humming-groan of the last cable car as it is wound up the hill by its cable. Every night she listens for it the way she and her little brother Andy would listen for the five o'clock fire siren, every Saturday, sitting on the concrete steps of their hill-top childhood home. Its sound proved it was in working order and brought the fireman, as quickly as they could, to the station. There were two blasts: each would strike and hold the same high note for thirty seconds or so,

but it took forever to work itself up to it the first time, sliding through chromatics like a reluctant musical beast, and forever to bring itself down after the second. Sometimes they howled along with it, traced its sure yet slumberous ascent and descent with their voices. It would still be descending even after the last car had raced into the parking lot of the station, clearly visible from their vantage point. You could never say when the sound had faded away.

You:

The right hand continues with some fancy high notes before it comes back...

The Music:

To the left hand which rises to join it. While both hands are together the right hand doubles its notes: a depth of sound, the dense sound of descent...

You:

Louder as they now ascend together, before...

The Music:

The left hand drops out completely; the right drops to only two notes for only two fingers, pulsing...

You:

But the left hand lets us know it's still there, with its chords off the beat...

The Music:

At what sounds like the end, there is only the right hand of the piano...

You:

There is only the upper voice of the piano and notes, light, almost not together, only just a melody, little groups of notes, between them the briefest moment of silence,

light...

5

When two distinct sounds interact, when their reverberations affect each other in some way, then they are ‘coupled.’ If the coupling between two bodies or objects is strong, the vibrations of each will affect the other; energy will be fed back and forth between them. He has seen it for himself. He tuned the bottom two strings of his guitar to the same note, so they would vibrate at the same frequency. When he plucked the bottom one it would sound and start to fade, but then the string above it would start to vibrate and sound, without his touch, then it would start to fade and the bottom note would start to vibrate and sound for itself, and so it went on, for what seemed like ages. He became so sensitive to that note, sounding for itself: all the following day, he thought he heard it. It was as if that note remained resonant, in a ‘state of attraction’—as the acoustician would say—because he wanted to hear it for himself.

Quinn walks into the road and beside a beater—a car that pounds with its regular so-low beat. He stands behind the passenger door, leans towards it. There are higher beats too. They skim the depths of the bass and tumble into it before they resurface. The beater waits behind other cars beginning to move ahead. Every part of the human body, whether bone, organ or tissue, resonates at its own frequency. When a like frequency is found part of us sympathetically vibrates. This low beat: he feels it in his gut; those higher beats: he feels them move towards his chest, his ribs, his head, his eyes and down his legs until they slide and bounce back to his gut. The sound makes a map of him while he stands there in the middle of the road. A guy beats his hand on the window and mouths ‘fuck off’ as the beater begins to pull away. Quinn half runs, with sound, moving. The beater lurches, its wheels spin near Quinn’s feet: he waves it off and strides off the road.

Resonance is, first and foremost, a phenomenon of sound. When he feels it this way, he knows its force, its potential. He knows that the frequency of sound may build into something more than itself. When any material begins to vibrate at its sympathetic frequency, a kind of ‘efficiency’ builds between the sound coming in and the sound being made. As with his guitar strings, energy cycles and builds. If the cycle continues, sound can even destroy the object with which it vibrates. As early as 1896, beautifully mad scientist Nikola Tesla almost destroyed his laboratory and the building it was in, experimenting with the potential of sound. He found the built body’s sympathetic

frequency and cracked it open like it was nothing more than a plaster cast of itself, just waiting to be split. Anyway, this power of sound has been sung of— for centuries? He sang the song of it in assembly at primary school: “Joshua fit the battle of Jericho, and the walls came-a-tumbalin’ down.” How does that start? “And the soldiers did march, and the trumpets did blow, and the people did shout.”

Quinn looks up at traffic lights, hears the buzz of the cross signal and walks.

Maybe sound travels through and escapes from each human body in a particular way, depending on that body’s dimensions and density. Maybe every person has an aural signature and aura we never actually hear. If scientists could make a spectrogram of his body, coloured according to the amplitude of each frequency over time, might he and his immediate surrounds be lit up like a kaleidoscope of sound-in-colour?

Quinn opens the door to the music room. He would expect the day a composition exercise was due to be the day he was late, but he is one of the first to arrive. Sitting in front of a radiator, he slips a crumpled page of manuscript from his bag. It’s readable, just crumpled.

After his mum played him the prescribed nine bars he sat in front of the piano for a while playing a few notes. She had gone out, shopping or something, and he was free to experiment a little. He got his digital recorder from his room. He’d play a bar, have an idea or two for later bars and speak them into his recorder: make the bass percussive, off the beat; give the right hand the motif, higher, ‘one past’; put the bass on the beat, and the right hand off it; put a hint of the ‘one past’ motif in the left hand and put the right hand off the beat; return to the off-beat and on-beat play between the left and right hands.... Then he took his nine bars and his digital recorder back to his room and his computer.

He downloaded his sound files, fired up his audio software. He made multiple copies of each sounded idea and began to string them together, continually playing his voice back to himself: his succession of thoughts. Each particular string of thoughts became its own sound track, laid down for him to go back and listen for as many possibilities as he could be bothered with. He listened to the tracks a few times, fighting the urge to go in and byte it all up, play with loops of sound, turn it into something dedicated purely to the sonority of his own voice. With pencil in hand, he moved from idea to idea, followed the line of the music that came out of it, that most simply followed his idea. He likes to think that the music had a chance to make itself while he wrote it down.

Quinn eyeballs what he came up with. He quite likes it, although he hasn't heard it played unfalteringly, by a skilled pianist. He took it around to Toni's. She opened the door and led him to her father's piano in the main living room. Then she padded off in her socks to her granddad's living room, and her "listening pozzie," as she called it.

What was she listening for? He asked her. She said "something to put with 'The Moonlight.'" He stood there, leaning against the doorframe of the room she had made her own, looking down at her, imagining her to be some kind of sonic matchmaker who must find a slightly strange piece of music its partner in sound. He said the only thing he could recall of 'The Moonlight,' other than its own life-giving resonance and movement. "You know what Beethoven said about that piece?" Toni just looked at him with those grey eyes of hers. "Surely I've written better things." Even in the early nineteenth century, people played it too much. "I don't care," she said.

Cara comes into the room. She sees him and smiles as if to say "I would smile better on any other day, but this is the best I can do right now, sorry." She sits at a desk at the edge of the room, but with a view of the keyboard of the baby grand piano that sits on a dais at the front of the room. After pulling her papers out of her bag, and a pencil, and a pen, she sits looking at the keyboard. Her arms are by her sides, her hands are under the desk, her head is straight and she looks at the keyboard. She stays like that even when Gibbs finally enters, late, and makes a dandy piece of work of walking up to the side of the piano. His hand on the curve of its body, he leans slightly back on one shoe-squeaking heel and says "let's hear your compositions."

Hit by the idea, Cara seems to crumple. Gibbs never said that his student's compositions would be heard in class.

"Any volunteers?"

Quinn ran into the Professor outside a lecture room the other day and mentioned that 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.

As he explained to Gibbs, he is interested in compositions made from recorded sounds, digitally arranged to create a new kind of sound-space for composer and

listener, a new kind of world for sound as music—not that he claims to have figured any of this out yet. He told Gibbs that the only way he could approach his nine bar exercise was to use a string of digitally arranged recorded ideas to generate the more traditional ‘writing’ of his composition. Gibbs made a sweeping gesture with his hand as if nothing was new under the sun and nothing would phase him. So, Quinn figured he could just keep on with what he was doing. But, there’s no way in hell he is going first. He can avoid the eye of Gibbs as much as anyone.

“Janet.”

There are times in one’s life when it’s wonderful to hear your name spoken, but this isn’t one of them for Janet, who clears her throat and holds her paper out to Gibbs. “Do you want to play it yourself?” Gibbs asks her before taking it from her. “Oh no,” she says. She lowers her head and puts either side of her face in her hands as Gibbs heads for the piano.

Quinn leans his chair back against the radiator. It has a way of ticking every now and then, ticking.

The first nine bars are familiar to everyone, of course. Near the end of the ninth bar Janet looks up suddenly as if she’s been asked to walk to the middle of the room and pirouette. Her hands are palm down on the desk and she sits without the support of the chair back. Quinn notices that she has picked up on the slightly jazzy feel of the off-beat bass, or, perhaps it would be more correct to say that she has chosen to make it seem jazzy by writing what she has. It’s not bad really. It seems to move the rhythm and some of the ‘accidentals’ (those supposedly uncharacteristic sharps and flats) into the kind of up-beat yet languorous piano music of a late night jazz supper club in New York, not that he’s ever been to one. But if he had, he would remember sitting at a round table covered with a smooth white tablecloth. He would have a glass of some sparkling cocktail in reach of his right hand and listen to the pianist make music to casually move his fingers. Janet is sitting back in her chair, tapping her fingers on the edge of the desk, still finding her rhythm in her music.

Gibbs nods, walks back to Janet. “Are you interested in Jazz?” he asks. She gives one of those half nods every student knows to use in precisely this situation: maybe and maybe not.

“But was the music interested in Jazz?” Gibbs asks, whirling around as if in pursuit of his own question. “Was there a will for jazz, in those nine bars?”

“Any thoughts?” he asks, pausing for response. He crosses the room. “There’s time for everyone. Who’s next?”

“I’ll go,” a voice says behind Gibbs, who moves back to better appreciate his first devotee.

“Mark,” he says. “Excellent.”

“I’m not much of a pianist, sorry. But Jules played it for me the other day, maybe he wants to play it?”

Jules doesn’t want to play it and Gibbs huffs more than he sighs as he begins to play.

According to Gibbs, Mark’s composition has “something of a Schubertian sense of melody,” while it takes less interest in its bass. Other attempts make more of the bass and less of the melody. But to Quinn, all of the compositions are somehow there, in those first nine bars.

“This will interest you ‘Classical’ lot,” Gibbs says, making for him. “Quinn arranged sound files of his own voice, suggesting what the music might do, bar by bar.”

Gibbs stands behind the piano stool with Quinn’s music, about to sit. “We might say that his piece is a music of ideas. The trick, of course, is the same as always: notating ye olde idea.” He sits, lifts his hands in the manner of a concert pianist, while he breathes in through flared nostrils.

Cara looks at Quinn with her eyebrows raised. He winks at her and she almost laughs.

It is good to hear his music played without hesitation.

Cara lowers her eyes and head, her hands cross in front of her. After a few bars of Quinn’s music, she looks up, her mouth a line. She looks straight at him, but her ability to see him is overtaken by what she hears. She hears music that seems to work its way in and out of its own skin. She hears music that wants to let its right and left hand play for notes in different ways. She hears notes and rhythms that start together but that unexpectedly move apart; she hears two lines of music open out to momentarily collapse, into, onto each other, against each other, for a moment; she hears the way the left hand finds its own motif, because of the right hand, yes, but making its own way; she hears the right hand take on the rhythm of the left, beating its own time while the left goes along for the ride; she hears the right and left hands suddenly move together, sounding a mutual kind of motif, running in parallel, but then that is gone too soon to finish with a return to the motif in the right and the off-beat bass in the left, so inevitable, too final.

She stands up, with an impetus that comes from her heels, half lifting the desk with the tops of her thighs. “I’ll go,” she says.

Before Gibbs has had a chance to direct proceedings, Cara is up on the dais, Gibbs is taking the page of manuscript from Cara who says “not this” of it, and sits at the piano. Gibbs stands behind the piano stool with the manuscript away from his body in his right hand.

Cara begins to play. The nine bars just roll off her fingers. Then Quinn notices the way she picks up on what he did, but changes it, always making his ideas more complete. She moves the right and left hands apart: they have made a theme together and are ready to move contrarily to each other, to bring in the higher notes of the right hand and the lower notes of the left along with harmonies that expand on that beginning clash he is now so aware of; until they move back together, seeming to almost cross, swapping their initial characters: the motif sounding in the left and the off-beat in the right, they come so close to each other before they separate to develop the play they had at the beginning, but with more shared between them; but then, there is that sudden running together of his, but starting lower and going higher, doubling notes in both hands, a rich sounding of a run upwards, a run for an ending that Cara twists from an expected re-sounding of the theme into a short solo play in the left and a short solo play in the right; and in the last bar: a held chord in the right that the left moves against, as if it is gathering energy to move on while the right decides to close and hold it quietly, the notes ring on in sustain, just long enough to suggest more of themselves before they are gone.

Quinn thinks of silence such as this. It is the kind of silence in which nothing moves while everything seems in motion. It is the silence you hear when someone tells you something momentous: like when a parent tells you they are leaving and it’s not your fault, or when one of your classmates doesn’t arrive at school and the principal tells your class as gently as she can that he is dead, without saying why or how. It is also the kind of silence you welcome when lying naked with a woman in your arms, for the first time ever.

Gibbs clears his throat quietly and Cara, still sitting, moves the piano stool away from the piano. She looks up at him and says “That’s more of what I wanted to do...after Quinn.” She points at the manuscript still suspended in Gibbs’ hand, “not like that,” she says. “I couldn’t hear...”

Gibbs nods, “could you do that again?”

It seems a cruel question but he says it more as a gentle lament than an accusation.

Cara shakes her head, no, then shrugs. “I’d have to try and write it down.”

“Your original attempt will have to stand Cara,” Gibbs says. “But I’ll bear your performance in mind.” He steps off the dais. “For a moment there, we saw you compose.”

Cara nods, slowly rises from the stool. She goes back to where she was sitting, looks at Quinn and mouths “thank you.”

“It is strange the way things come together sometimes,” Says Gibbs. “But you can’t always repeat that combination of events, or get back that burst of energy that comes from performance. We could spend all of our time trying to recapture all that, but we have to find a way of working?”

Cara lifts her shoulders and looks above his head to the sounding of some note she might hear ringing in the distance. “But it did happen,” she says quietly.

“Oh yes,” says Quinn.

Leaving the music room Cara sees Quinn sitting at the top of the first flight of stairs. He stands and leans against the hand rail as she steps towards him, “that was pretty amazing,” he says.

“What you did was more interesting, in a way. You made something else happen.”

“I don’t know about that, you were the one to receive it, to combine it with whatever else was out there, whatever else was going on in your head, your hands...”

“Yes,” she says.

They walk up the stairs together, Cara running her hand along the handrail and Quinn trailing his hand along the wall.

“Will you be making electronic recordings this year?” Cara asks Quinn.

“Yeah,” he says, “organised sound compositions. I don’t know what I’m going to do, really.”

“I’m not sure either. I’m not even sure of what I did in there, how it came together,” Cara says pointing back towards the closed door of the music room.

“The final project.” Quinn says. “Now *that* will be the biggy.”

Outside, Quinn and Cara stand under the eaves of the Arts building. “Coffee?” Quinn asks. “I think I need a shot of something stronger,” says Cara, “but coffee will do. Now our composition ‘exercise’ is over, I remember my disaster of a morning.”

“Disaster?”

“I have to move out of my bedsit. An elderly parent is moving in, or something like that. I got the message delivered to me by my landlord in person while I was looking at my ‘composition’ and wondering what the hell I was going to do with it, whether I could throw it out and feign sickness...”

Quinn shakes his head.

“Do you know what I was thinking,” he says, “when you sat down to play?”

“Who the hell does she think she is?”

“No. That the wrist is the most resonant part of the body, that it has the greatest range of resonance?”

“How come?”

“Just the way it comes together I guess; bones, nerves, tendons, skin... music.”

The Music:

There is a trill in the upper notes of the right hand; the right hand playing alone. It hangs there for a while, makes its way lower, and then ends with a little turn upwards, unresolved.

And there is the *tutti*, bringing the movement to a close, with the flute echoing the light notes of the right hand of the piano, and three closing chords that suggest the major key in which the movement opened and into which it finally settles.

6

“Dad, you know ‘The Moonlight,’ right?” Toni asks.

“I’ve played it, often enough. *Quasi una Fantasia*”

“A Fantasy?”

“There’ll be a book on the Sonatas there somewhere. You know, Beethoven didn’t call it ‘The ‘Moonlight.’”

“But why a Fantasy?”

“‘In the *way of* a ‘Fantasy.’ Because a ‘Fantasy’ could be some kind of more free-form composition, potentially different to what other composers were writing.”

“It is kind of weird, ‘The Moonlight.’”

“That first movement especially: those tireless triplets, that descending bass. Centuries of pianists, and listeners, have been hooked.”

After a moment: “You hooked Toni?”

“Did granddad play it much?”

“I think I remember him playing it at night, when I was a kid. Your grandma would come and read to me and he would play the piano, out in the lounge.”

“Was she a pianist?”

“Did granddad say much about her?”

“She died when you were a teenager didn’t she?”

The line is quiet and Toni wishes she’d kept the subject to ‘The Moonlight.’ She wants to know what to make of it.

Her dad hands her over to her mum: the guy who had been her boss at the Archives before she left has resigned and she might be offered his job. Toni can’t believe her mum would think of changing job again so soon, even if it meant getting her a job too. Why the desperate rush to make her an employee, surely she has a few years up her sleeve? Her mum has always been in a hurry to make things happen, but, as she says, she’s not about to “do anything foolish,” like ditch the job of her career.

Beethoven subtitled ‘The Moonlight’— his fourteenth piano sonata, opus 27 number 2— *sonata quasi una fantasia*, a description he never used again. Toni has spent the morning flicking through some of her granddad’s books, picking up these kinds of facts. Her dad was right: calling the sonata a kind of fantasy made it the realm of experimentation, a kind of improvisation. Instead of writing the more typical ‘fast-

slow-fast' three movements, he wrote the slow movement first: a short bridging movement between the first and the third movement, and a third movement to compress the relentless triplets and bass of the first movement. The first movement, most often known on its own as 'The Moonlight,' is the only work Beethoven ever wrote to be wholly played with 'open' piano strings that vibrate freely, a pianist's right foot always on the sustain pedal to lift all of the dampers off the strings. Maybe Beethoven was after a particular kind of sound and wrote a now famous movement to produce it. He was the man of the sound effect written and played in notes.

She has only listened to the first of the Moonlight's three movements. Apparently, they were meant to sound like a single musical episode. But, much to Beethoven's chagrin, the first movement ended up sounding so in-and-of-itself despite its up-in-the-air kind of nature, that the other two movements couldn't be anything but determined by its character; the third movement a 'dramatic character variation' of the first. That might be why pianists often play the first movement on its own, apart from the fact that the third movement is devilishly difficult.

Toni goes back to the box she was sorting through the night she heard 'The Moonlight.' Flick/Click, Flick/Click, Flick/Click: she fingers through them. Each one is a record of a record and all of them together are a kind of catalogue of her granddad's sense of his world, a way of staking out some sort of auditory territory; and now, as she listens, as she puts sounds together, she makes her own sense too. She reckons they would both have loved that idea, although she can only now think of it this way, on her own, with his stuff. Plucking the tape out of its box, she is already straining to hear the way she did when the first notes of 'The Moonlight' crept in at a hush.

There is that hiss her granddad kept listening for, and there is the descending bass her dad spoke of, and the relentless triplets. She sits on the rug with her legs tucked under her, one hand on either side of the tape deck, watching its wheels wind the dark brown tape around itself. As the wheels move the triplets keep moving to the grounding of the bass. She heard that last time. But soon she hears another voice enter, almost in the higher notes of the triplets. The notes are only just there, but then the bass seems to hear and echo them before the triplets and bass continue. Now she hears that the triplets and bass seem to always make that third voice possible. She notices now that the third voice seems to make as much of a melody as it can out of those triplets that, in a way, seem to have no melody, or have a melody that keeps changing.

Here's a way she can think of it: the triplets have the bass but never settle, and they sometimes have the company of another voice sounding a simpler melody from

and around them, but they still never arrive at any really tuneful kind of conclusion. It is as if the two voices, and then the third, are in some sort of intimate conversation with themselves as well as each other. Sometimes they seem to settle into each other with a sound that is so round and inevitable that you think the music has resolved itself, but it never resolves itself, until it reaches three final chords so low they seem to close in on themselves.

Toni stops the tape and rewinds it back to the beginning so she can hear the first movement again, just like she did the last time.

‘The Moonlight’ is able to lure the ear in, according to a pianist she was reading earlier. It seems to constantly promise some kind of fulfilment she can’t help but listen for, that seems to almost arrive when the music—that bass—collects notes into a sonorous kind of cradle.

She thinks of her grandfather lying on a rudimentary bunk while a prisoner of war in “383”—Stalag 383. He is listening to a secret radio, wearing headphones. If he had heard ‘The Moonlight,’ it would have lured him in for sure.

Sometimes she would sit at the dinner table and listen to his stories, after her mum and dad had gone into the kitchen or their living room. She would slurp up ice cream she had made soft and creamy, like snowfreeze. He told her about “that clever Englishman” in the next bunk who made a radio, out of a crystal and bit of wire and an equally clever Canadian who was a tinsmith and made a watertight box for it. The radio spent its days hidden in that box, in a cess pool. Her granddad didn’t know where the headphones came from: it was better not to know. Every night around nine o’clock, they would listen to a news bulletin. But with such an imprecise piece of apparatus, they could never bank on hitting the frequency of the BBC. Sometimes they got the news in French, or in Spanish. But there was always some “clever bugger” who could translate it.

Sometimes they fluked upon the BBC’s musical programme: they were “keeping the side up” during the war, broadcasting live concert performances from The Royal Albert Hall. Toni imagines some clever bugger handing the ‘radio’ and headphones to her granddad, saying “listen to this, it’s Beethoven, some ‘Moonlight,’ or something.” Her granddad was known to be the musician among them. ‘The Moonlight’ would be the perfect music for him to listen to with headphones, to listen in on those intimate threads of musical conversation while his concentration and quiet breathing gave the music as much impetus as those triplets and descending bass.

Her granddad told her that he liked to think that he went into broadcasting because of those BBC concerts, and the work of Daphne Oram, even though he knew nothing of her at the time. Because men were away at war, she was the engineer at the sound controls, making sure those Royal Albert Hall concerts played without interruption. She had an ear for it. In fact, she turned down a place at The Royal College of Music to become a sound balancer for the BBC. She would listen to a live concert feed in one ear and a recording of the same piece of music in the other, while following a printed score in front of her. If a bombing raid forced the live performers and audience to take cover, she would flick the broadcast over to the same place in the recording without any known break in the programme. ‘The Moonlight’ would be able to continue, beguiling yet still unresolved.

Maybe her granddad would be less surprised by the second movement than she is. Maybe he had something of Beethoven in his fingers, and would have heard it coming. Perhaps some expectation of what the composer might do next would have been there, even then, in his blood. Her granddad said that Beethoven’s piano music played him as much as he played it: that’s what her dad told her. This second movement is light and comparatively quick. There seems to be nothing of the first movement in it, except perhaps an attempt to make up for its lack of a definite melody. Maybe Beethoven is not luring the ear anymore, but lulling it.

The third movement would surprise anyone, as perhaps it should. It takes the increased speed of the second movement and runs away with it while it takes the hope for a melody and turns it into an aural deluge of notes. She wants to laugh, shout ‘hey’ for the music and the guts on display, like the guts of the piano made to sound as a crashing of strings—those first few bars: lots of notes running together and up to their crash, and up to their crash.

She imagines the first movement straining towards the third over the almost dulcet notes of the second, offering its hushed tones and tenuous yet relentless nature to the third movement, now sounding its great “fuck you!” It won’t be outdone, this third movement. But it doesn’t abandon itself or the first movement, oh no: it always seems to sound a memory of what has been heard before while it churns up notes, delivering what now comes close to the melody of the Opus, the bass roaring along beneath a line of higher notes and, then, all notes crashing together in a line that snatches at the melody already gone, but always coming. Then it is off again with the run-for-crash of its beginning. And around and around the whole thing seems to go, as relentless as the first movement. Until it stops for what is not even a breath.

Toni is on her feet. To feel this under her fingers, to feel the muscles of shoulders and back go into it, wouldn't that be a joy of feeling, to hammer the keys that hammer the strings, to make the whole piano shake. To make the strings resonate with a sound that can only build, build in its vibration, a vibration of steel and wood and ivory and hand, and what joy that would be. She does not know if her granddad would have played this movement, it seems too much even for him and his knowing fingers. Would he, like her, want to make this sound with a "take that" and a "fuck you," as her hands are on the keys not knowing exactly where to strike but having the gist, fingers spread and her weight coming down as she stands with knees bent, lunging in time to the music, running fingers up with the natural drumming of thumb along fingers, waiting for the next run and its crash.

And what is this? Oh, delight, she misses it the first time, but here it is again, a glissando—if that is what it is called—dragging her hand up and across the keys, her way of doing it, pushing and pulling together to set as much of the keyboard and strings as she can in motion, with one drag, one prolonged swipe, and there is the melody again and she breaks away from the keyboard with its rumbling strings and throws her arms out as if she and her grandfather have known this music all along as a dance for the possible fury of its sound, its dense beauty made to go around her, with her, as she swings herself with it, around, laughing, the triplets of the first movement coming back, up and down, the whole keyboard, the keyboard to shake the piano, a run for an end, a run going down so low, so low to stop this time for breath, and she hangs her head between her arms and waits for what can only be a run, no, a charge towards an ending to rattle her bones.

"Toni?"

And then there is the rolling bass and the melody that becomes a two handed assault, oh joy...

"Toni!"

And she sweeps her arms up and around her body in grand circles, with the sound of the piano and there is the jab of a closing chord and another, jab, her jab, "ungh!" And she smiles it seems at Quinn who is standing as if he is about to catch her, or expects to catch her at any moment. Oh to fall down, down.

"Quinn."

Toni brings her feet and shoulder blades together and runs her hands down the sides of her face.

"I knocked for ages."

“I forgot you were coming.”

“The door was unlocked.”

There is the shadow of movement behind Quinn and Toni remembers: “Sorry, you were going to bring your friend, your composing friend around...”

“Cara, yeah. We weren’t sure whether we should come back or...”

“No, don’t be silly, honestly...” Toni says closing the lid on the piano.

“I’m not much of a pianist,” she says with a laugh that still carries a remnant of the furious joy of making the sound of her closing chord.

Cara comes into the room, throwing her voice out for Toni, “Beethoven!” she says. “That third movement makes you believe that he broke the hammers and strings of his pianos.”

Toni smiles, “it is fantastic, isn’t it?”

“I wouldn’t say I can play it,” says Cara, coming up beside Quinn.

“I spoke to Mum today,” Toni says to Quinn. “She’s talking about coming back already, thinks she can get me a job at The Archives.”

“That seems crazy” says Quinn, “she’s been in Auckland, what, all of three months?”

“I know. I think she is just trying to make things better for me, but—‘she’s not about to do anything foolish.’”

“Like leave the job she was gunning for after only three months,” says Quinn.

“Come on, let’s go to the kitchen and get a drink: I can offer you tea, and that’s about it,” says Toni, turning away from Quinn to see Cara now facing a wall of books, her hand resting on one and then another.

“‘The Beethoven Sonatas and the Creative Experience,’” says Cara, with her middle and index fingers pulling the book a little from its shelf.

“I was reading that this morning, or bits of it, a few of his comments on ‘The Moonlight’...”

Cara pulls the book out and opens it. She reads: “A piece of music is a meaningful construction, at once sensuous and logical, fashioned and sustained by the need of the mind to explain itself to itself.”

“Shit, that’s heavy,” says Quinn, “But, it’s not just the mind, it’s the body, and the relationship between them, and the relationship between people...”

Cara continues: “The playing of a piece presupposes, within fulfilment, the possibility of *unfulfillment*, as it was for the composer in the moment of creation...the *original insecurity of choices* made in the moment of creation.” She shuts the book with

a slap. “Well maybe I’ll be a composer yet. I know all about insecurity and unfulfillment,” she says “and the nine bars of Gibbs!” She slips the book back into place.

“Anyway, there is no single ‘moment of creation,’ there are a whole lot of sounds, decisions, events ...,” says Quinn back to Cara.

“Is that what you were playing when you were around here—those nine bars?” Toni asks Quinn, opening tall glass-paned doors and leading him into the second living room. “Was that your composition exercise?”

“Yeah, but you should have heard Cara at the keyboard in class this morning, composing.”

Cara steps up behind them and Toni asks her: “Do you need a piano to compose?”

“I shouldn’t,” she says.

“Shouldn’t?”

“Holy cow,” says Cara.

“There’s another piano in here, a baby grand.”

“My dad’s,” says Toni.

“And an upright through there,” Cara says pointing back to the room with the books.

“My granddad’s.”

“A two-piano household,” says Cara.

“And neither being played,” says Toni.

Cara lifts the lid that slides back to reveal the keys. “Is it in tune? How does it sound?” she asks.

“Try it,” says Toni.

Cara slips onto the piano stool, pulls her jacket out from under her backside and begins the first movement of ‘The Moonlight.’

“Ha! And we just keep coming back to it, eh?” says Toni.

“The lower register has a rich sound in sustain. The pedal has a nice action. It feels like it has a bit of a cold in its body, but do you hear it warming up?”

Toni watches Cara’s hands and fingers moving, the way she seems to lean towards and into the music.

“Here, open the lid and let the sound out a little more,” says Quinn, “come here by the strings, Toni, hear the way they vibrate in waves, starting with the bass.”

“Beethoven’s special effect,” says Toni.

“Yeah!” says Quinn, “where did you get that idea from?”

“A special effect of the pedal mainly,” says Cara, “from keeping the sustain pedal partly down throughout.”

“No, it’s not just the sustain, it’s also the notes that are chosen, their resonant frequencies—you know, the ‘sympathetic vibration’ between them—the way they are sounded after each other, the way they build on each other, so that they vibrate together and sound in just this way...”

“With that rich soft sound,” says Cara.

“But what to put with it, it’s not like anything...”

“The third movement!” says Cara.

“Well, how can we forget the effect of that?” asks Toni.

Cara stops and holds the chords under her fingers. “I know what you mean,” she says, “it isn’t like anything else I can think of, but maybe you could think of it as always leading to or from something...”

“You could do that Toni,” says Quinn, “you could compile something that keeps coming back to ‘The Moonlight.’”

“The restlessness, incompleteness and searching of ‘The Moonlight,’” says Toni, “I could do something with that.”

“Composition,” says Cara “eh?”

The Music:

My Beethoven’s third piano concerto, is most definitely for the piano—this
slow movement.

Opening with notes on chords that
hang: hang yet move.

You:

There, pianissimo, so quiet, that opening chord held to move up one note—and—
down one note: a small shift made to sound a world of movement—and down—only—
to open the hands to sound a fuller chord once and then four times more—but as if each
were new— moving—into a spread of notes, a more complete chord, that brings the
bass quietly one step down in a brush with an end to a first pianistic phrase.

The Music:

A few moments in which beginning and ending seem to be, bound together
in sound and touch.

You:

On we go with one finger to continue the ring of that phrase-making chord and up, up to a high chord: bright—held—to re-sound three times—for its glissando: a gentle glistening run of notes through fingers, through bass, through treble—to—bring fingers down slightly from above and up slightly from below—and into another gentle glissando that is unresolved—as is the small silence that finds just one finger to continue.

The Music:

There is so much in this for the sounding of phrases...

You

A shift upwards into the notes of a hope that lightly carried the weight laid on opening bars, bringing clear-running notes to treble and bass, weaving a memory of melody—in and out—until, the deep slow dive of cellos brings about the piano's last bars: a drawn out thread of first-heard notes, each a centre of sound, connected through silence.

7

You:

The first movement of the fourth piano concerto.

The Music:

Listen to the piano, beginning with a held chord in both hands that becomes a softly punctuated pulse of notes that are neither slow nor quick: down a little it goes, up a little...

You:

Until it holds a lower chord and gives itself the pleasure of a small glissando—still quiet, and lightly makes its way to the open sound of its highest note to more slowly step slightly away.

The Music:

And then the *tutti* enters so easily...

You:

The same melody made light on the string...

The Music:

Winds—oboe and flute, sound those pulsing notes above strings...

You:

And now it builds, strings moving in, taking the melody higher in quicker notes to reach two full-bar chords, a longer holding together of sound...

The Music:

For the slight jaunt and bounce of new melody, in strings, with oboe and flute—all kept moving.

You:

The flute again—so high—then the voices of the *tutti*, in turn: a building towards...

The Music:

The sure pulse of the piano, kept so alive all this time by the *tutti*...

8

Now that she is about to leave, leave this temporary little home, not much more than a room, she hears a piano being played within earshot of its walls; through the walls of her room notes come as if through a glass, a glass she has pressed to the wall and against her ear, to eavesdrop on the notes picked out by someone else on a piano she never knew they had; notes come to her room and its bed stripped of sheets, a blanket and a tufted purple bedspread.

They have given her some boxes—the people who apparently have a piano, and she fills them while she thinks of what she is going to: that baby grand with the sound of its struck strings, warming up.

Every piano Cara has ever played has had its own sound, different from any other. There are so many factors that affect the sound of a piano: whether it is a grand variety that lies its strings down to give its hammers the aid of gravity as they strike, or an upright that throws its hammers up and at them; the kind of wood used to make its body and the slightly curved soundboard that will reflect the vibrations of taut steel strings; the density of the soft material used on the heads of the hammers, perhaps part leather, part felt; the action of the pedals that control the way strings are struck and vibrate; and whether the age of the piano has mellowed its sound nicely, before the immense pressure its strings flattens its soundboard and kills its sound dead. She likes to think she can pick up on the idiosyncrasies of each piano and make them work for the music, and herself.

“A piano needs to be played.” That’s what Toni said. The three of them had gone into the kitchen and sat around its green formica table, mugs of hot tea in their hands. Quinn had asked Toni whether she wanted “a housemate” and that was mostly her reply, as if Cara’s possible presence fitted into the way she wanted her house to be made to sound, now she was there without her grandfather and her parents, but with their pianos. Cara had asked what would happen if Toni’s parents returned: surely they would not want an extra person in the house, making things inconvenient or more complicated. “We can cross that bridge when we come to it,” Toni said and Cara had nodded while she thought of leaving the last baby grand she fell in love with.

Quinn offered to help Cara move her things in, although she said it would only be a few boxes. Toni wanted her to have her parent’s room, which she would clear of any “personal stuff” they had left behind. It was the best room for the sun.

Cara flicks through her pile of music. There is the Chopin piano score: the score of his first piano concerto in E Minor, opus 11. She played the slow movement in her audition with the National Youth Orchestra, when she was in her last year of high school. They were looking for a small number of soloists, and not just pianists, for a special concert dedicated to the talent and unexpected competence of young performers. Everyone, including her, thought she would be selected, but she wasn't.

An old man with white hair and a white beard put her in a practice room to "warm up" while the other candidates were put through their paces by the judging panel. There was an upright piano in the room and it had the most amazing sound. It was old, but it had not suffered for it. If anything, its tone had become golden, like liquid honey, and if she lifted the long and narrow lid at its top, she could let the sound out a little to echo around a room that seemed to want it.

She loved that slow movement: the pianistic intensity of it not unlike that of the slow movement of Beethoven's fifth piano concerto. Even though Chopin was born well after Beethoven: around the time Beethoven wrote his fifth concerto in fact, it seems to her that both of them have the same intimate knowledge of how to 'voice' the piano with their notes, or the way their notes are put together. Of course, they wouldn't have been voicing a particular piano the way a piano technician does these days, needling the compacted felt on a hammer to brighten a piano's tone or hardening it to mellow it out a little. Both pianists—their music, brings out the character of the piano as an instrument, an instrument that depends on the vibration of its strings and a hand on the keyboard. If only she could get a modicum of that into her pencil. If only she could write one bar that seemed to make the piano sound its voice with her, all else be damned. And yet, there had been a moment in the room of Gibbs, when notes seemed to come together in a way that sounded 'right,' with and through her hands, her fingers on the piano.

Cara flicks to the part of the score she played alone in that resonant practice room, forgetting for a moment—unbelievably—that she was about to face a panel. She could imagine playing it with an orchestra: near the end she played little clusters of notes, sprinkled around the keyboard, as if she had just sat down and discovered them, almost in passing. She always wanted to know the gentle swell of the orchestra's strings, coming in on the last of her notes and bringing her back in to her final melody, carrying her notes in their glide. Along she would go, wishing for the cello's depth-sounding of her few final high notes: one up, one down, one up, one down, and then, only her single note: up.

The white haired man had come into the room as she sat with her finger on that last high note and exhaled the breath she held for it: he said “it doesn’t sound like you’ll have any problems.” Then he led her away to a room at the far end of a corridor lit only by practice rooms with doors left open by hopefuls such as herself.

The audition room was too bright behind its door, through which she made her entrance without any noticeable change in the gaze or attention of its judges. Her guide waved her towards the piano which was on the other side of the room from the panel, but side on to them, so they could still get a good look at her. There were soft old lino tiles on the floor as if the room had, a long time ago, been a very large kitchen, stripped out to make room...for what?...a piano?

The bright room had as much attraction as a very large stripped-out kitchen and Cara wasn’t holding out much hope for the piano: a brand new black-lacquered Yamaha upright. She had played Yamaha’s before. She knew plenty of pianists that swore by them, but she didn’t like them. A Yamaha grand might be okay but she found their uprights always as if factory-new, their keys and hammer action precisely yielding but somehow stiff, the sound more brightly closed to her than open. But it shouldn’t matter: a good pianist can work with whatever instrument they are presented with and a good musician can play musically in the most unmusical of situations.

Even the very first of her notes went wrong. An opening that should thrillingly teeter on the edge of tentative only sounded hesitant, as if she couldn’t get the intention of her being to travel through her finger, through the key to the body of the piano. That teetering beginning that opens into confident notes that sing for their life began with notes that seemed strung out like pegs on a line. What was wrong with her? The question came into her mind like her only material sense and she actually faltered at the keyboard, for a moment. She was so used to playing with the music, always with the music, not as if she was an outsider making no contact with the piano, herself, or any of her judges. They stopped her before she got anywhere near the ending, with a polite “thank you.” She was sure she would hear them remark behind her: it was ambitious to play Chopin, the virtuoso of the virtuosos.

Her dad let her tell him how badly she had played, as if he heard it every day of the week and it really meant she played well without knowing it. She told him she should have learned the flute, an instrument she could carry anywhere in its case, but she really knew it was her that had ballsed things up, Yamaha or not. When her dad handed her the phone a week later she knew it would be the white haired man informing her that she was unsuccessful but that they all appreciated her effort.

Cara puts her music in a box. Then she remembers the Beethoven score, *Concerte*. Maybe she will soon be able to play some of it on a baby grand. Of course, you can't just play anytime you like when you're sharing someone's house. Neither can you necessarily play anything you like, or as many times as you like in one sitting. Living in her ex-boyfriend's house without him: that was bliss. Not having to worry about someone not liking a piece or annoying them with your practice: that was bliss.

The black-bound *Concerte* goes into the same box as the other music and she is ready, right on time. Quinn said he'd be there at four o'clock. Cara goes over to the window and leans against the window frame. She looks at a million dollar view that cost her less than a couple of hundred a week.

Cara remembers approaching the city by ferry the very first time as a wee kid, with her parents and her two brothers and their car waiting for a start-up in the belly of the ship. It was too early for the warmth of the sun but not for the cool and smoke-like dawn that gave way to their fresh new start. She remembers trying to see the details of the city across the water, shrunken in her coat, its hood mostly covering her eyes. Holding her father's hand she wondered if "Wellington" had the sound of a place in which he and her mother would be happy.

But before they could really see the city, they were rushing down flights of metal stairs along with so many others, descending to an automobile deck. The ring of the stairs pounded by so many feet filled the stairway, along with the sound of engines working so hard to reverse the ship into its dock. Then they, like all the other families, sat in their car with the engine running, waiting for their turn to navigate the ramp that took them down onto the dock and away.

With her forehead almost against the glass Cara may be able to hear the city, or at least the cable car creaking on a humming cable that is spun around by a wheel at the top of the hill.

She knows it can only be Quinn knocking with five quick raps of his knuckles on the door, making the sound of an easy rhythm and a gesture towards some beat.

"Come in," she says "to my room of boxes, and a suitcase."

"You were right, you don't have much," he says.

It doesn't take long to load up his car and, before they leave, Cara drops her key through the mail slot in the door of the main house, now silent.

"We're just following the line of the hill down to Toni's house. It's not really that far," says Quinn.

Cara nods. "Any more from Toni about the move?"

“Na, she’s expecting you.”

“And the parents?”

“Are in Auckland.”

“Do they know?” asks Cara.

“Probably not.”

Cara echoes him while making his words a question.

“Well, Toni and her mum seem to get along fine, but I think that now she’s gone, Toni likes to think of the house as hers—and her granddad’s.”

“It was her granddad’s house wasn’t it?”

“Yip. I get the feeling Toni’s granddad raised her, or, he spent a lot of his time with her. She was kind of unexpected...”

“What the hell does that mean, ‘unexpected’?”

“Calls herself ‘The Bonus Baby,’” says Quinn pulling up to the curb.

Cara looks up to trees that shelter the house and down to a late afternoon filigree of shadows that make pale light dance on the pavement.

As they get to the top of the path, each with their arms around a box, a blackbird sounds a series of sharp clattering calls, crossing the garden and path along which they have come.

Toni opens the door and directs them to the master bedroom at the end of the hall, opposite the door to her granddad’s living room. All of the boxes fit around the far side of the already-made bed.

“You can use my granddad’s desk for writing if you need to, and there’s the piano nearby. There isn’t any room for books...”

“I don’t have many,” says Cara “and his books will be plenty for me to be going on with, if I need anything more than what I can get at the library.”

Quinn lightly kicks the side of one of the boxes the way a friend might punch the arm of a buddy.

“How about fish ‘n’ chips?” Toni asks Quinn, “we could take your car and get enough for the three of us.”

Alone, Cara wanders down the hallway. The bedroom next to hers seems to be a smaller spare room—the granddad’s room before he died? Toni’s room must be the one at the head of the hallway. The room opposite is the kitchen, through which she enters an unused dining room and the living room with the baby grand in its far corner, and the second living room with the upright—still the granddad’s room, with all his books.

Toni has left boxes of tapes, neatly placed in rows next to a chair with its back in the corner. There must be hundreds of tapes here, a real collection of them. Within reach of both the tapes and the chair sits a solid square-cornered tape deck.

The shelves either side of the desk hold a collection of black bound volumes, like the one she bought at the Ferret. Here are the volumes of Beethoven's late piano Sonatas. Nearby, look, here is Chopin: at least half a dozen volumes on one shelf. "So you thought Chopin was pretty good too," says Cara, easing one of the volumes out to hold it with an open hand, despite its weight. "Ah, the Nocturnes," she says, leafing through pages that sound cool and crisp, as they are to her touch.

Chopin made the Nocturne his own, periodically composing one or two of them throughout his life. They are short character pieces for piano, made in the name of his dusk-like melodies and the harmonies he moves with them.

In a whisper: "a piano needs to be played." Cara opens the lid of the upright and places the volume on its music stand. Its pages do not sit entirely flat and they move themselves until they do. "Nocturne, Opus 9, No. 1," she says, sitting on the piano stool to get a better look.

She is immediately taken by the first six notes of the beginning. Six high notes Chopin marked '*piano*' to make sure she plays them lightly, softly and '*espressivo*' to make sure she plays them so much more than technically correct: they are not to be taken as just any six notes. There is no pedal marking under them either, so there is no blurring to be had in sustain. All six notes must sound and fall as a single phrase of notes lightly marked for her special attention.

She can hear those six notes before she has played them. They sound before the 'down-beat' of the first bar of the piece, on the 'up-beat.' In two small but conjoined groups of three: the first leads up to its height, the second, leads not quite straight down to the first bar's first beat.

Beginning with the middle finger of her right hand, she sounds a first high 'b flat,' beyond the middle of the keyboard, an unexpected place to start. The piano has a light clear tone for what must be her light clear touch. But once the note has sounded she must commit to all six. She must commit to keeping the line of the sound going stepwise up to its peak and through its move to the first beat, the beginning of the first bar.

She hears how those six notes sound as if they were taken from within the flow of the piece, as if they were plucked from their part in its movement. And the piano

responds with its timbre and action, supple yet with enough sinew to work the six note line and what will become the long-limbed phrases of Chopin.

From the first beat of the first bar her left hand keeps movement in play. Broken bass chords continually arc through her fingers in their cycle of notes—with their sure rhythm and sound her right hand melody flows. But, only a couple of bars along, the composer has done the kind of thing that once made her think he was a lightweight that wrote difficult music just to sit at the piano: the virtuoso himself. In the right hand melody of the third bar, she must put eleven notes into the space of three beats, and then, in the next bar she must put twenty-two into six! She knows that while this stumbles the hand of her eye, this overabundance of notes will, once mastered, fall easily in and out of pace with the even notes of the bass in the left. Once she gets a little of the sense of it, she welcomes the difficulty of the music into her fingers. She hears the capricious quickening of notes lighten the melody yet provide a cluster of sound with which to enrich the colour of the bass.

“I like the sound of that,” says Toni.

Cara takes her hand off the keyboard, losing the place of the fingers of her left hand about to continue the same broken chord from one bar to the next.

“Did you find something?” asks Toni

“A Chopin Nocturne, on a shelf of music.”

Toni walks to the bookshelf where a gap appears between volumes.

“‘Nocturne,’ like ‘night’?” she asks.

“‘Nocturne’ as a short piece for piano. ‘Nocturne’ as something Chopin wanted to write, and not what was expected of composers at the time.”

“Like a fantasy?”

“*Quasi una Fantasia*?”

Toni nods, leans against the side of the piano, facing Cara.

“Maybe, but different.”

“Like Beethoven and Chopin sitting down to play the piano for themselves, and writing it down?”

“They *were* both pianists,” says Cara.

“So...”

“So, maybe there were certain things they wanted under their fingers...”

“My granddad was a pianist,” says Toni.

“I can tell,” says Cara, “from the music he has on his shelves.”

“My dad thinks he remembers him playing ‘The Moonlight’...”

“The Beethoven concertos and sonatas, the Chopin. He must have really known what it was like to play.”

“There’s so much here,” says Toni, “and I can’t read it any of it.”

“Listen to these six notes of Chopin,” says Cara: six high notes moving more than beginning—*piano, espressivo*—six high notes to give the touch of her special attention.

“And then into the Nocturne like this,”...

“Show me those six high notes again,” says Cara.

“Here, from this high ‘b flat’”: six high notes...

“There they are on the music,” says Cara pointing to the head of the page.

“Yes, they go into the first bar like this,”...

“You could write something like that.”

Cara laughs. “It looks so easy when you see and hear it this way. Maybe those six notes make the piece? You know—maybe if Chopin hadn’t found them, he wouldn’t have written it.”

Quinn comes into the room, chips in hand: “Toni, Cara bought one of your granddad’s scores.”

Toni looks at the shelves of black-bound volumes; Cara cools the undersides of her hands with the keys of the piano.

“*Concerte*,” Cara says.

“Concertos?” asks Toni.

Cara nods. “I haven’t had a chance to look at them yet, but my dad and I sometimes listen to the slow movement of the Fifth—if I go to see him and my stepmum at Christmas.”

“*Concerte*,” Toni says, “my dad gave me some scores for Quinn. I’m supposed to go through my granddad’s stuff...”

Cara remembers flicking through music at The Ferret. “There was a volume of war music. From WWII?”

“Yeah. He was a prisoner of war, in a camp in Germany,” replies Toni. “He collected music after the war, but he already played—before the war. My dad said he was always collecting, although I don’t remember that. I don’t remember hearing him play much either. He would read his scores...”

Cara fingers six high notes.

“Listen to this,” she says, “I was getting to this, in the bass.” She plays the same broken chord with her left hand, over and over, “I don’t know how many times...”

“The same thing over and over...”

“That happens a lot, there’s not a lot of variation in the notes of the bass.”

Cara plays broken chords that cycle through the same fingers and notes...

“But then, you hear this as an event—listen—the left hand tips us into a different sound by breaking into new chords, a new part of the music...”: Cara holds a suspended chord in the right hand while her left pitches and dips.

“...and sometimes it’s not just the bass. Both hands are made to sound their fancy...”

The Music:

Here again is the first movement of the fourth piano concerto and the second piano solo: the pulse of the melody, kept alive by the *tutti*. Bright short notes with attack and spring climb away with the speed of the first pulse—then they move faster—and faster until they reach a *forte* that lets the piano loose with a cascade-run of a glissando—high right hand down...left hand down... both hands up...

You:

To a held trill: making itself softer and more pensive before taking itself into a still-slow and delicate harmony in double-notes that speed to the *tutti*.

The Music:

The even pulse of the *tutti*...

You:

Made fancy by the piano: a fast rocking between notes in both hands, a beat made more minutely alive, and becoming...

The Music:

Leggieramente: light-making, in triplets of the right hand—passed into the left—passed into the right—and on to the highest notes that soar open with tips and turns while bass triplets pound below...

You:

Until another held trill sends the piano further-fancy in fast triplets: notes fast like light-spinning crystal...

9

Quinn runs his fingers down the shining glass-smooth back of his Tortoise Cowry shell. He almost expects to feel the line of where his fingers have run so many times before. The surface is always cool, like a drop of water on the tongue. His dad selected it from his own small collection of shells and gave it to him not long before he left. It always sits next to his computer on his desk. He holds it to his ear. It is an imprecise yet fascinating kind of resonator. It really is as if he can hear the trace of a rolling wave always softly brought to him by the wind of the sea, the ghost of water on air. The physicist would say that the shell's organic shape collects and amplifies the sympathetic frequencies of background sound to create a 'natural' kind of sound—a sound we can't help but relate to wind and sea.

Together, Quinn and his dad would spread precious shells out on the soft cream carpet of the lounge. There was a bright white shell with small sharp spines along its back and a rich pink inside. Another was shaped like a large spiral and seemed to be made of pearl. Yet another carried an intricate pattern of light brown and white flecks and curved around into a spine-peaked kind of fan. His dad never knew where the shells were found. He never had anything fancy, except for those shells which he bought in a plastic box.

His father told him the names of the shells but he has forgotten them all as well as the sound of his voice.

Quinn's mum asked him to convert some old video tape recordings to DVD—they were made after his dad left. He watched them with her. He was a cute kid with a button nose bent on becoming the elongated feature of his mother, who had wavy hair and open hands. Later, he went into her wardrobe and the box from which she had given him those tapes, took others marked 'family' in faded blue pen. They were made before his father left and now they are files on his computer. If he clicks the blinking blue arrow for 'play,' will he hear his father's voice?

As self-made professor von Helmholtz knew, every note played by any instrument, and every spoken word, is made up of partial tones of different frequencies—harmonics—that give it a special quality, a particular kind of sound. In fact, every human being makes at least two notes in their mouth for every vowel. Without his father even being aware of it, his tongue will be placed just so in his mouth, creating two differently-tuned resonant chambers of sound: a front chamber opening

with his lips to the outside air and a back chamber opening to his pharynx and its tube of air. Without even knowing it his father will speak with what Richard Paget heard and described as the essential treble and bass of human speech.

Imagine Paget, in 1924, no longer just physicist and composer but sound maker—keeping burgeoning audiences of budding phrenologists on the edge of their seats by blowing into his plasticine models of the vocal cavity and making each whisper its vowel. What a hush must have fallen as he proved to them that speech relies not only on the vocal chords, but also the resonances of varying pitch set up inside the mouth. His great discovery: the unvoiced musicality of every human being.

When his father speaks out loud the opening and closure of the vocal folds will add vibrating air to carry his speech, but it is his whisper on air that will carry his first thought of music in sound.

Starting. There is a close up of Quinn's toddler face, full of the freckles that still make their finest appearance in summer. The camera pulls away. He is standing on the back lawn, butt naked. He runs away from the camera and his mother's voice: "Over here little man." The camera pans right to reveal a sunburnt bare-armed woman, then left to the cherub-like backside heading away from her at a surprisingly fast wobble. There is a camera-bound laugh of appreciation for the child's chubby ass and contrary single mindedness. The camera dips towards the green grass, not so long ago mowed. A spray of water appears as if by magic, falling on Quinn's head, spraying his chest, his legs. He screams and runs towards his mum, arms flapping up and down in an attempt to move his legs faster. His mum bends forward and calls out to him, "Run!" The spray of water follows only just behind him.

The next clip: a shot of the side of an old white car with a black stripe along its body and the back of a man wearing a t shirt and shorts. Walking away from the car and the camera, the man—his father—holds a child—Quinn—who clings to him around his neck. They bump along through sand dunes and marram grass. A car door slams and the camera follows man and child to a smoother path that offers a view of the almost flat blue line of the sea and the lighter blue band of the sky. The man puts the child down on the sand and they both stand with their backs to the camera. The camera stays where it is. But then the father lifts the child under the arms and carries him to the edge-waves of the water. Their feet and ankles are wet. The father half crouches and splashes a little water on his son's legs. The boy jumps up and down on the spot. A voice calls from behind the camera "get his togs on Tom!"

Tom. Yeah, his father's name was Tom and he picks Quinn up again and walks towards the camera. There is the sound of a bag being dropped and the flick of a blanket being laid. Then the camera is on the blanket and the feet of father and mother are in view.

"He loves the water," his father says, "he'll be a bit of a fish, just like his old man."

"A fish I can handle," his mother says with only the faint touch of a smile.

The sound of the sea can still, only just, be heard.

"Let's not talk about it today eh?" says his father.

Quinn rewinds the clip with the click of his mouse.

"He loves the water..."

"Quinn, what the hell are you listening to?"

"That's your father."

His mum stands beside him and points toward the computer that keeps the sound and image of the man that held the child.

"How did you get hold of that?"

Quinn turns to look at the now straight hair of his mother and her face, which is the same but with more time and worry on her lips and around her eyes.

"I converted the old video tapes to digital files," he says.

"Did you just!"

The camera still points at his parent's feet: "You were the one who wanted to come here" (his mum); "The beach is my favourite place, you know that" (his dad); "Yes, *your* favourite place" (his mum).

Quinn 'pauses' the clip.

"You went into my wardrobe."

"Just to get the tapes from the box—you know—that held the others."

"Does that make it any better? You deliberately went behind my back."

"You're saying you don't want me to watch this."

"No I'm not"

"Yes you are. If I was going behind your back, then that ultimately means you don't want me to watch this."

"Ultimately I don't want you to go behind my back."

"By doing what?"

"Jesus Quinn, by going into my bedroom and taking my things without asking!"

Quinn sits with his finger on the mouse.

“I need to sample his voice.”

“Whose voice.”

“Dad’s!”

“Why would you want to do that?”

“To get a digital file of it...”

“I know that, but why?”

“Why?” he asks.

“Yes, why?”

“You know—I keep files of different sounds on my computer...”

“You think you can make some sort of bloody music from your father’s voice?”

“I can compose something...”

“What makes you think that man has anything of value to say?”

Quinn gets up from his desk.

“Forget it mum.”

She steps forward and grabs the back of his chair with both hands.

“I need to listen to his voice,” Quinn says.

“What you need to do is learn to write some music and stop fooling around with this, this...”

“This what mum?”

“This crap!” she says throwing her hands at the screen.

Quinn puts his hands over his ears but still hears the door slam.

His mum heads straight down to the lounge, then heads for the kitchen, stands by the jug, then heads back to the lounge.

He closes the clip and the lid of his laptop with a snap. “This crap,” he says with his hand on his digital recorder.

His mum goes to the piano and runs her fingers along the gloss of its smooth surface.

He heads out of his room, out of the house and into a gusting wind that fills his ears with the sound of a swept up barrage of air.

Along the street Quinn stops beside the fence of an old weatherboard house with a timeworn couch on its porch, a bamboo wind chime hanging above it. It is making an irregular babbling of unexpectedly gentle sound. Each chime adds its own soft note when it is struck by the central disc, or clapper, of wood: a note even softer than that of a wooden xylophone key played with a cloth-headed stick. And each note is airy around the edges, less definite than any instrument’s more regular arrangement of the harmonic

frequencies of sound. He takes his digital recorder out of his pocket. Standing at the fence he holds it out as far as he can, feeling his hand and body sway slightly with the same unpredictable rhythm of the wind chime's central disc of wood. There is the erratic buffeting of the wind that could overcome his sense of hearing, but, at its centre there is the tumbling soft sound of the almost-notes of bamboo.

Quinn likes to think that Helmholtz set out to find and feel sound the way that he does. He likes to imagine Helmholtz with his receding hairline, black tie and shirtsleeves, walking around his laboratory, nearby garden and roadside courtyard, holding one and then another of his finely-tuned resonators to his ear, sounding out the inner frequencies of each and every sound. He wants to attend to sound the way Helmholtz did to prove the presence of the partials that combine in a single note of music, word of speech and sound of the street; just as a rainbow of colours combine to make pure white light.

He can see it! A glass or perhaps even a brass resonator glints and gleams as Helmholtz moves, the small nipple in its back inserted into his ear, its round body rising to the neck through which sound and air passes, causing the air inside the vessel to vibrate at a specific frequency. Clear as the ring of a bell, the only sought sound plays on a tiny hair inside Helmholtz's ear—the one hair tuned to that single found note and able to spark its single nerve and sensation of sound. There goes Helmholtz listening for one note that can be heard in the whistling of the wind, the rattle of carriage wheels, the splashing of water. When he swaps his resonator for a larger one he hears yet another note—lower—and if he swaps that for an even smaller one he will hear yet another—much higher.

What had his dad's voice sounded like?

"Let's not talk about it today eh?" It was a gentle voice but with its edge, not a warm bass even though it seemed to have the potential to rumble way down low. But how can you characterise a voice: its combination of pitch on air with thought and intent?

The next street on: a dog howls behind a fence. He can see it through slats, sitting in front of a back door, its howl bouncing off glass and wood—always back at it. He flicks his recorder on and soon another dog from across the street responds with a series of high cries, begun with a whimper. The howling dog falls quiet and the crying dog howls once and falls quiet too. Quinn looks through the fence. The dog has given up on the back door and is sprawled out on the grass, its ears tucked in.

The wind nudges Quinn further up the street to a large flat-topped macrocarpa hedge that someone has sculpted around their letter box. He stands in the lee of it, his back against the slight prickle and spring of its dense surface, breaths in its sharp almost medicinal scent. Behind and above him the high, long and bare branches of an entirely different tree are occasionally played by sky-bound gusting. He hears a huge sigh-like sweep of limbed movement, an immense upward swirl of air and a sound like the ocean. Eyes closed, recording, he feels as if he has found new height for himself at the heart of the moving tree.

But then, Quinn hears the wisp of a sound more constant and strange. He cannot say whether it is made by an animal, a person or some sort of machine. It is a hum, but also a buzz and a whine. Crossing from one side of the street to the other, a middle aged man is delivering papers. He walks slowly for a while, like kids Quinn has seen wondering home from school as if they have as much time as they like to explore the world of each step. He makes that sound somewhere in the back of his throat and seems to set his whole head vibrating: it is a kind of personalised drone, the weird sonic baseline to his walk with his thoughts.

The man senses the fact that there is someone else on the street and the sound and his steps stop dead. Quinn pushes himself into the hedge as far as he can. The man begins again, comes closer. The drone has almost reached him, but is moving away, across the road. Quinn steps quietly away from the hedge and heads back down the road, past the wind playing its air-tune of chimes.

He could go home. He could open the front door and remove his shoes in the hall to make sure his mum knows he has returned, before going back to his room. Or, he could seek her out. She must have figured out that he has gone by now. "Run away." He thinks of little Quinn threatening her from time to time with his supposed will to "run away from home." The fantasy of it was always exactly that. There was no way to run far and nowhere to go.

"Let's not talk about it today eh?"

Quinn heads for the university campus and the sound effects that can always be heard between its buildings and in its courtyards.

He walks under a glass awning and scuffs his feet to hear his sound almost enclosed. Stepping out into the quad, his sense of movement escapes him—until he is able to bounce his rhythmic scuff off the buildings ahead. Wooden seats run under one of them and two young women sit hunched over coffee in polystyrene cups. As he walks opposite them there is a precise moment in which he can hear exactly what they

are saying, as if he were sitting right next to them. He stops short and looks over. They are as intent on their conversation as they are on their coffee: “But what of being ‘absurdly free?’”; “good old Jean-Paul”; “If only he knew what a drag it is to study the great Sartre.” They laugh through the rising steam of their drinks. One of them tips her head back as if she has just thought of something even funnier: “some people are a little *too* free with themselves”; “is he sleeping around again?”; “no doubt!” The other looks over at Quinn as if he is an offending party and whispers “well, he hasn’t hit on me yet!”

Quinn moves on as the girls cup their hands around their cups for the love of the warmth of hot coffee.

It is early evening now as Quinn heads away from the quad, down concrete steps and along a path that leads to a few practice rooms the music school has set up in a wing of the Humanities building. Lights are on and he sees his shadow fall away from him. The path leads him into a courtyard that opens onto the street. Someone is playing the piano in a nearby room. A melody spills out brightly. He hears it as a tune of farewell to—and from—the piano, given and taken after at least a good hour’s worth of practice. Lively phrases seem to propel themselves along with the rhythm of a final meeting and parting. From the street, someone calls out to someone else, raises their hand in greeting. From the piano, a small trill and a higher line of the melody calls out to every other accompanying note. Voices meet and merge for a moment and Quinn stands still, unsure of which voices come from the street and which the piano. He can still hear that new kind of sense, even after he has walked on past the building and down the hill, in the direction of Toni’s villa.

If he could go back in time, after visiting Helmholtz in his laboratory he would attend Paget’s whistle-filled presentation. He would sit back among phrenologists and watch Paget conduct a small orchestra of seven assistants. Six white-shirted male assistants and one young woman in a dark blue pinafore—his daughter—would each blow at just the right time to make the whispered line: “Oh mother, are you sure you love me.”

The Music:

Going on...the first movement of the fourth.

Perhaps unexpected: half-quick-step notes with a sound not like the piano, each main beat-note tweaked with a twist by a play for a note, along to a treble-trill with rumbling triplets in the bass...

You:

And on to the *tutti*: an under-pulse in strings overarched intently by winds, making sure for...

The Music:

Piano-quick-notes that dance-trace the melodies of the Movement in strings, until...

You:

Cascades of light-spinning piano-treble-triplets and up-and-down-keyboard triplet runs make more-sound to the approval of the *tutti*...

The Music:

And a mid-high double-note trill makes still more sound for a run on bass triplets and...

You:

A double-handed trill, makes quiet, and is held for more.

There's something quite gentle about the 'adagio cantabile'—the slow movement of Beethoven's eighth piano sonata, Opus 13. She asked Cara what it means—adagio cantabile: "slow and as if singing." And it does make her want to sing, as if the notes keep moving from her throat to tingle her tongue, where they sit waiting on its tip. 'The Moonlight' sometimes has that effect on her too, even though its melody is far less definite, she still feels like she wants to join in. She might hum, the way she did as she moved around her unkempt garden, the day after she first heard it.

She will put this "ardarjio carntarbeelay"—as Cara said it should be pronounced—with 'The Moonlight.' It will be a first piece of music to nudge it, to take her impulse to hum and turn it into an impulse to sing quietly.

Rewinding the tape and beginning again. The melody flows in the right hand above the moving notes of the left hand and its bass: it is simple but has a breadth that always reaches beyond any kind of lullaby toward the many colours of the day. Even though it feels more open to her than 'The 'Moonlight,' it also involved in some search.

Her grandfather might like the adagio too. She imagines him singing the melody to himself in the garden, in the vege patch he was so proud of. "Fresh food in season all year round!" he would tell her as he cut the latest lettuce free, unearthed potatoes or tugged carrots from the earth.

He said he discovered his green thumb in Stalag 383, when it made the difference between life and death. Him and his "mucker"—the name that was always given to the bloke you mucked in with to try and get by as best you could—were determined to supplement Jerry's mostly-rotten potatoes, dense bread and swede peelings while giving themselves something to do. The biggest enemy of 383, her granddad would say, was a caged kind of boredom: if it wasn't hunger that ate your frozen heart.

When the Red Cross parcels came in—which was pretty often in the first few years of his imprisonment—they would add cans of meat to their resources and could rustle up something like a balanced meal. They could also trade vege's for cigarettes, which were the currency of trade with the men and bribery of the guards. Neither him nor his mucker smoked and they stockpiled the cigarettes that kept them going and got them out of the odd tight little corner—like when a guard found their radio and they managed to trade two hundred cigarettes to keep it.

Near the end of 1944 the Red Cross food parcels ran out and her granddad and his mucker managed to feed themselves and the other twelve men in their hut with a few fresh potatoes and turnips kept alive in a ramshackle kind of shelter they had built out back—until the winter’s cold made even the bravest spud shrivel rather than grow. It was ironic, her granddad said, that once the allied forces started to make the impact that would end the war, their life-sustaining parcels went up in smoke.

The advancing success of the allies also panicked the Jerries into moving imprisoned men ever-westward and the camp then housed as many as six thousand men. Men took to lying on their bunks. The various bands, orchestral groups and the men’s choir were defunct and the prospect of a play or concert in one of the two theatres many of them had built became a thing of the past. Instead, there was the faint and ever-tantalising prospect of liberation to consider, if you weren’t thinking about food.

Her and her dad kept the garden going for a while after her granddad died, but after the soil was turned over one winter it was left to lie fallow and they never did get around to planting in the summer.

For her granddad, the biggest blow of the war was the death of his mucker, the Liverpudlian Jack. After months of lying inactive without food in his belly he just seemed to give up the ghost. Surprisingly, there were not many deaths in the camp. The men were more fortunate than those pushing the limits of survival in work camps. They gave Jack a proper funeral, or the closest thing they could. Her granddad arranged for a band to play a funeral march. The camp Commandant—who was more of an “old school soldier” and never sure of the Nazi regime—also seemed to see the tragedy of burying an allied soldier in German soil when liberating forces were getting closer by the day. He provided military honours and allowed a cortège of men, including her grandfather, to escort Jack’s body to the outside gate.

Come to think of it, she has heard Chopin’s funeral march on one of her granddad’s tapes. She remembers the dramatic bass line, the way it continually alternated between what sounded like just two close notes. That bass set up a heavy walk of a rhythm that the right hand could not help but fall in with. It was a melodic kind of dirge that would occasionally open out into richer harmonies that, in turn, momentarily opened to some raw force of pianistic sound. But even this would return the music to the stripped back weight of its walk.

Toni goes back to the box that holds the Chopin tapes.

This funeral march had made her think of her grandfather walking with head bowed behind Jack’s cortège. But it also made her think of the pull of ‘The Moonlight’

the first night she heard it: as if its notes were held on separate yet interwoven threads that she could pull down to the earth and a graveside where she stood with a handful of dirt and her mother's hand on her back. She was not quite a teenager when her grandfather died. She was definitely old enough to know what was lost but perhaps not old enough to be speak her grief.

Toni puts the tape into the deck and finds the music as she remembers it. But no, in the middle of the piece there is a kind of interlude that breaks the dirge. It reminds her of the Nocturne Cara played on her grandfather's piano the day she moved in, but this is simplified right down to its melodic lightness. It sounds as if it comes always from across the way, especially to be heard at a time of remembrance. Toni imagines herself in the breeze of the garden. Her grandfather is playing it on the baby grand with the lid up and the windows open. When she hears it, she wonders if he is thinking of someone else.

And then the dirge returns with its final steps towards the beginning after its end, towards some other story.

It is what she hears next that she will put right next to 'The Moonlight.' It is like an epilogue to what has come before but it draws no conclusion. Notes run and blur so fast with such turbulent yet somehow-restrained energy that they seem to be—only just—held together. It is as if the music has been allowed to run with yet away from the sound of the funeral, to make no more than the trace of lost life and life lost to grief and cast it off with an ear-banging sky-flung chord. The whole thing has come and gone in little more than a minute.

Toni swaps the Chopin for Beethoven.

'The Moonlight' sounds different for a moment. It is lighter and more delicate after Chopin's unexpected music. But then, its determined yet smooth sense of movement makes itself heard. And the pull of its bass and its perpetual triplets still make it wonderfully strange, while the faint echo of the funereal keeps it familiar.

Toni forward-winds the tape.

"Appassionata," she says reading the tape sleeve, savouring the word's explosive 'pp' and the sensuality of its 'ss.' "Piano Sonata No. 23."

Where 'The Moonlight' holds passion the 'Appassionata' lets it go. The first minute or so of the first movement is extraordinary. A melody comes in straight off: it almost has the quality of a folk tune but its beginning dips into a mysterious mode it would never otherwise be heard in, and it is decorated in its ending by the unexpected optimism of a trill. The melody is repeated, beginning on an unlikely next note that jars

her ear. It is extended with the repetition of that optimistic-sounding trill. Then, the tune is momentarily abandoned for a four note motif in the bass, low and strange, like someone knocking.

“Fate knocking at the door of our lives” Toni says. She smiles with the thought that her granddad might have said that to her, his voice feigning a particularly deep-set bass: “knocking.”

The tune comes back in, and gets only that deep knock in reply. More at home then, the knocking is repeated in higher notes that, in her mind’s ear, could be her saying it for herself: “knocking.”

But then—an outburst of chords across the keyboard—that knock is made into a shattering cacophony of notes, fast, furious, loud! And out of it a single note is pulsing at a knock—a pulse that continually fuels a tune that is so often followed by an outburst. Tune and outburst sound to-and-fro, the music a dangerous life-filled flow.

Her granddad once told her that things can come at you, out of the blue. He had a sweetheart before he went to war: a young woman whose photo graced the wall of his hut and whose letters sat at the top of his kit bag, ready to be thumbed through after many close readings. He proposed to her by letter before he was captured in Greece, and she accepted. “Four years is a long time when you’re marrying age,” her grandfather told her: too long for his fiancé to wait for a wedding. “Don’t get me wrong,” he said “there were women who lasted the distance, even if just to keep their soldier going.” He received a short letter from his beloved informing him that she had married a man with a reserved occupation. He had become a necessary part of her life. She was sure he would understand and forgive her.

Toni forward-winds the tape some more.

A continually light-lifting slow movement offers respite then tumbles into a third movement that begins with a desperate outburst that is continued in the perpetual motion of furious-running fingers, while a melody dodges in and out as if running for cover.

Her granddad took his fiancé’s letter and tore it into as many pieces as was humanly possible, right in the middle of his hut, each of his hutmates a witness. Still not satisfied, he threw every one of her letters and her photograph into the fire of the hut’s stove, which—unusually—was lit.

What happened next became the stuff of family folklore. Only a month before liberation in April 1945, the Stalag received Red Cross parcels in a series of white motor wagons her granddad referred to as “the white angels.” In a box of English

biscuits he found a “cheer up” message from another angel, who also included her London address. Her grandfather “dropped by” to see her on his way back to New Zealand and, engaged, they both arrived in Wellington three weeks later, much to the surprise of her grandfather’s parents.

Toni can’t quite put together the chain of events from what seems little more than a visit on a whim to her birth two generations later. She never knew her grandmother and can’t remember her grandfather speaking of her, other than to recount the way his luck changed with a box of biscuits.

Toni goes back to ‘The Moonlight.’ She likes the way it once more sounds calm and steady, before it gives itself up to her ear as unsettled.

What would it be like to give oneself up to romance, and if not romance, sex? When it came to sex, some of the girls at her all-girl high school had been surprisingly experienced. But for her sex and romance must go together and no ‘date’ has ever demonstrated the will or skill for her kind of romance. Not that she’s after chocolates or flowers—she doesn’t even like chocolate. Romance is the closest of conversations. She remembers making more than a fool of herself in front of her class. A guest speaker had explained the importance of marrying the man that was ‘right for you.’ One aspect of this, apparently, was ensuring sexual compatibility. Toni raised her hand with the urgency of the inevitable question: “but how do you know if you’re compatible?” Guffaws erupted behind her and scorn was poured on her with the most obvious answer: “you try him out!”

Toni hears the front door open and close. She stops the tape. Cara is back. Keys clink on the kitchen bench and footsteps sound down the hallway.

The door opens and Cara comes into the room. “How’s composition by compilation going today?” she asks.

Toni shakes her head, but then nods. “Well, there’s been a bit of nudging to and fro, between Beethoven and Chopin, a march for a funeral and a big dose of *appassionata*.”

“Wow,” Cara says.

“You know,” she adds “Beethoven didn’t come up with the title ‘*Appassionata*’—it was his publisher.”

“It seems to fit though eh?”

“Yeah, it can be one of his most tempestuous pieces of piano music.”

“The storm of love,” says Toni with feigned drama.

Cara sits on the piano stool facing Toni, with her back to the piano, she holds out her hands as if about to play some giant imaginary piano in front of her. “No,” she says “the storm of life!”

After their laughter subsides Cara says “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?”

Toni plays the tape she stopped and ‘The Moonlight’ continues. “What would you put with it?” she asks Cara.

“I don’t know. Chopin seems like a good place to start.”

“No,” says Toni, “I mean what would you put with it as a composer?”

“What would I compose to go with it?” Cara stands up and walks over to the window seat. She rests one knee on the squab and looks out the window to the tall trees that line up behind the house.

“Maybe I’d want something with quite a dramatic bass-line, for a start,” says Cara.

“And I’d like to get something of Beethoven’s special pedal-effect into it too—make the most of the resonance between the struck strings of bass and treble.

“You know there’s one bar I always used to love, somewhere near the beginning. It was the way the bass moved down more quickly, way down low. It was so satisfying to feel it move with my fingers.”

Toni stands up and goes over to Cara, who is still half-kneeling on the window seat. She puts her hands above Cara’s hips and moves her away from the seat. She puts her hand on her back and moves her forward, walks her into the next room and over to the baby grand. “Try it on this,” she says.

Cara laughs and sits at the piano: “maybe you could sound the bass first—that low C sharp for C sharp Minor.” She puts her right foot on the sustain pedal and opens her left hand to span the eight white notes of an octave and sounds a double C sharp well below middle C: “Bermm---” way down low.

Then maybe you could just sound a chord in the right hand; a C sharp minor chord with a G sharp at its bottom and the C sharp tucked up in its middle.”

Toni lifts the lid of the piano and props it open.

Cara seems to almost attack the keys as if she intends to play that C sharp minor chord suddenly and then release it, but she holds it in her fingers once it is struck, its warm yet melancholic harmony ringing with the low notes of the bass.

“Then you could move the bass down while you leave the notes in the right hand sustained for a bit”: “Bermm---” still way down low.

“And again”: “Bermm---”

“And again”: “Bermm---”

“You could keep lifting the bass to keep moving it down while you sound and hold those rich right hand chords: get a good rumble going between all of the notes.”

“You can sound out the effects of different harmonies, as if you were turning a sonic kaleidoscope, you know, bit by tiny bit? It’s like ‘The Moonlight’ but with the bass—and not the treble—providing most of the movement and more of a melody too.”

“Yeah, I can actually hear that,” says Toni.

Cara keeps playing, searching out twinges of harmonic change that resonate across the strings of the piano, and in and out of its body.

“But I guess you can’t just keep doing that forever,” she says laughing and playing on regardless.

Toni hears a knock at the door despite the music: “oops,” she says “don’t know who that could be.”

Cara plays on.

Toni comes back into the room and Quinn follows. Cara raises her eyebrows and Toni gently sweeps her hand ahead of her to usher him into the room, which is already full of the colourful resonance of C sharp minor.

Cara lifts her hands from the piano.

“Is that an ode to Mr. Beethoven?” asks Quinn.

“Something like that,” says Cara. “What to do next was the question, but it was fun while it lasted.”

“I do so love to see a piano with its lid propped,” says Quinn.

Cara’s foot is still on the sustain pedal so that the strings are free of their dampers. Quinn leans in towards the strings and sings a drawn out ‘hello.’ The strings vibrate back at him, airily sounding the frequencies they are able to find in his voice.

“Do that again,” says Cara, lifting her foot off the pedal to stop the ring of his last hello and releasing the dampers once more with her foot on the pedal.

Quinn puts his hands on the body of the piano and leans forward so that his head is under its lid. This time he starts as high as he can and goes so low with his ‘ooooo’ that it ends as little more than a croak at the back of his throat. The strings respond more fully, as if he has managed to set a few octaves in motion with only his voice.

“Let me have a go,” says Toni. She leans in, even further than Quinn, and sings one high clear note that makes some of the upper strings vibrate with that same note. Quickly she drops to a note that vibrates the strings in harmony; quickly she drops to a lower note that makes a chord chorus. “Cool,” she says.

“You know, musical notes are always made up of many partial tones, or harmonics,” says Quinn. “When a note is struck the piano doesn’t sound only a single tone, it sounds many, all with frequencies that are multiples of the fundamental tone we hear as a particular note. The fundamental tone is by far the loudest of course, and the others will be stronger or weaker depending on the soundboard of each piano.”

“I see!” says Toni, putting her hand on Quinn’s shoulder, laughing. He grins and shrugs his shoulders.

“I’ll do something like you did,” Cara says to Toni. “I’ll hold down the key of a C below middle C—gently—so that the damper is off its strings but it’s hammer doesn’t strike, and then I’ll strike a C major chord above it—sharply...”

Toni leans in below the piano’s lid. The C major chord dies away but continues to sound in the unstruck lower note’s strings. “Hey,” she says “the notes of the chord are all still there, in that C below middle C, even though you didn’t play it.”

“Yeah, because the notes of the higher C major chord are partials of that note, the C below middle C,” says Quinn.

“But do you know the funny thing about the piano?” Quinn asks Cara. “Acoustical physicists weren’t able to synthesise its sound. Eventually they found out why.”

Cara makes a show of inclining towards Quinn.

“They discovered that its harmonics are not always perfect multiples of the fundamental. As the frequency of the partials increases, or as the harmonics become higher and higher, they go more and more out of tune. The highest partial can be more than a full white note away from where it would be if it were actually a perfect multiple of the fundamental.”

“So,” says Cara, “whenever I’m playing, I’m sounding all of the harmonics as well as...”

“The inharmonics,” says Quinn. “That’s what we hear as the special warmth of the piano.”

“No wonder I love it so much,” Cara says, getting up from the piano stool and stretching her arms wide.

“The modern grand piano: what other instrument has steel wire strings under an average tension of 60,000 pounds per square inch?” asks Quinn.

Cara brings her arms into her chest, as if protecting herself from strings flung outward with the force of some stupendous weight. “Don’t worry,” says Quinn, “each string has a tensile strength of between 300 and 400,000 pounds per square inch and the inside iron frame is cast in one piece to sustain an average tension well beyond that.” Cara lets her hands fall by her sides and shrugs, smiling.

“It’s those long taut strings that give the piano its range of inharmonics,” says Quinn.

Toni moves into the next room and Cara walks behind her with her hand laid lightly on Toni’s back.

Quinn follows: “I’d like to record our voices in the strings, later.”

Toni nods with some inkling of what she might hear if her ear was directly above a taut string vibrating to the tone of her voice. She sits on the rug, not far from where she listens to her granddad’s tapes. Quinn sits on the rug too, stretching his legs out in front of him. Cara sits on the piano stool facing them.

“I got some pretty wicked recordings on the way over here—the wind bringing things to life. I was trying to sample my father’s voice but...”

“Your father’s voice?” asks Toni.

“On old video recordings I converted to digital files. I was playing one on my computer when my mum came in. She wasn’t very happy...”

“She doesn’t like the sound of your father’s voice?” asks Cara.

“Probably not, since she’s been on her own for the past fifteen years or so, since their divorce.”

“Ah, divorce,” says Cara. “My mum left my dad. He remarried.”

“I was a bonus baby,” says Toni “whatever that means.”

“You’re delightfully unexpected?” asks Cara.

“Or just unexpected,” replies Toni, banging her open hand on the rug.

“Well, *I* wasn’t expecting you,” says Cara.

“Aw shucks,” says Toni, easing herself down onto one elbow.

Cara stands and eases a small crick from her back. She turns to face the piano and puts her fingers on a mid-piano C sharp minor chord. She closes the lid over its keys. “I guess I should go and do some reading,” she says.

“Getting ideas for ‘the biggy’?” asks Quinn.

Cara screws up her face. “I wish,” she says, leaving through the door she has opened behind her.

“Did you have a fight with your mum?” Toni asks.

Quinn nods.

“She didn’t know I made those digital files. I sort of went behind her back.”

“But, you just wanted to hear his voice, right?”

“Yeah, but he’s had nothing to do with us for years. It probably seems like...”

“Like you’re letting him off the hook too easily?”

Quinn hums his agreement through closed lips, “mmhmm.”

“What’s in a voice?” Toni asks.

“Yeah, what’s in *his* voice,” Quinn says.

“A presence,” says Toni.

Quinn eases himself down onto one elbow and faces Toni. He smiles.

She says: “I remember you around here as a kid, plonking on the piano, trying to practice. Maybe it all adds up to some kind of unfinished business?”

He laughs and rolls onto his back.

“I mean, maybe nothing’s ever really settled,” Toni adds.

“And what about you Toni?”

“Everything’s open and unresolved,” she says, smiling back.

“Good,” says Quinn.

Toni rolls onto her back next to him. “You don’t have to go home yet, if you don’t want to.”

“Thanks,” replies Quinn “I think I’ll just lay here with you for a while.”

You:

Quiet now! The piano takes a first memory of the *tutti* to treble notes so high I can hear them as a clearing in air: decorative turns between most-held notes, moved by the bass and a chorus of strings...

The Music:

To arrive at a chord that sets the *tutti* pulse-bounding along, in string-wind chorus, and the instrument-voices of silver-aired flute, reed-throat bassoon, and string-drawn violin and deep cello...

You:

Notes made so new in this *pianissimo* piano solo, think-gathering notes as if without need of any key. Two lines in unison first, a sole slow-bound focus...

The Music:

That builds to its own....

You:

free-fall...of harmony-close.

The Music:

And on...to notes that play quick for sound...left-right-left-right-left-right...through strings.

11

When Cara goes into the kitchen the next morning, Quinn is there with Toni. Ever since beginning to wake, she has had a relentless bass running through her mind, a “Bermm---” sounding in her ear, moving to make a rhythm. Now she says “hi” and almost follows that with “how come you’re still here?”

Toni and Quinn move into the dining room and sit eating cornflakes as if they are the essential ingredient of any serious breakfast. Cara smiles to herself: the breakfast of champions or lovers?

“Coffee?” Cara asks from the doorway. Toni and Quinn nod and chew and crunch.

Cara checks the water level of the jug and flicks it on. She stands at the bench, watches the garden, and feels her moving bass-line as if it is under her fingers while she hears higher chords resonate in lower strings. She makes a plunger of coffee and pours a mug of it for herself.

Toni rinses two empty bowls in the sink and puts them in a dishrack to drain.

Higher chords seem about to open up to a melody found in the bass.

Toni pours herself a coffee and sips it, wishing it was tea. “Quinn had a fight with his mum,” she says.

Cara steps slightly away from the bench. “Is he okay?” she asks.

“Yeah, they’ve just never really had a showdown before. I guess he’s not used to it.”

Showdown. How Cara wishes she’d never had one herself. She had many after her father remarried and before she left home. For a while there they became an almost daily substitute for familial communication.

“What’s he going to do now?” asks Cara.

“He’s gone into the next room to ring home. He did leave a message on the phone last night.”

Cara hears another voice—Quinn talking with his mum.

Toni continues: “We talked for a while, ended up listening to ‘The Moonlight,’ and the adagio cantabile. I told him my grandfather’s story of the first Yanky jeep to arrive at 383 on ‘Liberation day’: 17 April 1945. My granddad had hidden in the camp to avoid being marched North by a twitchy Gestapo on the run. He made a false wall on the inside of a latrine and another guy nailed him in! He said he knew he could always break out if he had to. We had lots of family jokes about that... Granddad reckoned that the two men who brought the jeep into the camp were subjected to so much hand-pumping and back-slapping, not to mention the constant requests for autographs, that they probably wanted to drive right on out again.”

Cara laughs.

“Quinn went to sleep after that, right there on the rug,” says Toni. She had lain with her hand so close to his. Then she took a blanket and pillow from the spare bedroom and tiptoed back in with them. She went to him in the morning and found him stretched out on the window seat, cocooned and only just asleep.

“He’s a pretty sweet guy,” says Cara.

“Yeah,” says Toni “he is that.”

As if on cue, Quinn walks into the kitchen, swinging his arms as if in some small victory. “I think she’s a bit happier with me now,” he says.

“Why, because you stayed out all night long?” asks Cara.

“I told her I’ve been recording,” says Quinn, “yesterday, and today with you and Toni.” His hand slips over his digital recorder still in his pocket. “This crap,” she had said. But she was sorry. It was one of the first things she had said to him: “sorry about what I said.”

“So, you’ll be able to sample your father’s voice now?” asks Cara.

Quinn shrugs, “well, she doesn’t seem quite so wound up by the idea.”

Toni nods, rinsing the coffee out of her cup. “Come on then,” she says leaving the room. Quinn looks at Cara, her bare feet with her long toes, her long fingers now wrapped around her mug, and her seemingly downcast eyes and face engaged elsewhere. He follows Toni.

Cara senses music that is propelled by and follows its bass into more of a melody that remains in debt to, but is warmly coloured by a continual low-felt flow. “Bermm---” way down low. Where did it start? With a low C sharp for C sharp minor.

She must write it down quickly: a beginning for music with a will to sound out the piano's straight-strung secrets of resonance. She dumps her mug in the sink and heads for her room.

The Music:

The piano makes its run from one *tutti* to the next, and the next...until it makes more of its own run between hands left and right...

You:

As if it has been gathering notes for a making of sound...

The Music:

In moments spread across fingers and keyboard...

Quinn props the lid of the piano.

"What do you want to do?" asks Toni.

"I like the idea of coupling the notes of the human voice with those of the strings," he says. "I should be able to use my digital recorder to capture the tones that vibrate."

"You'd put something like that onto your computer?" asks Toni.

"Hell yes," replies Quinn. He can imagine it: a ghostly whisper, a word, perhaps even a sentence made out with the tones of the strings.

"What should I do?" asks Toni.

"I think I'd like to get both of our voices, separately and together," he replies.

"What I'd really like to do is get my dad's voice in here," he adds.

"How would you do that?" Toni asks.

Quinn sits on the piano stool, "well, I'd have to sample it and then play it to the piano. I'd need to amplify it somehow."

"I think my granddad's mega-brick of a tapedeck might be a bit cumbersome for that," Says Toni.

Quinn laughs. "I'll probably have to do it in the sound studio, at the varsity." What would his father say? "Let's not talk about it today eh?"

"I'll put my foot on the pedal the way that Cara did," says Toni.

Quinn puts his digital recorder just above the strings, leans into the piano and slowly says "so, can you hear me now?"; "are you in there?"; "am I in here?" There is

only the very slightest ring from the strings. He puts his recorder to his ear and plays the clip back to himself. For each spoken phrase there is at least one audible note, as if it has its own fundamental or home key. He puts the recorder to Toni's ear and plays her his first attempt at voice-music. She lowers her head and smiles. "I wonder if that last one was in C sharp minor," she says.

"Yeah," says Quinn, "I wonder if I tend toward a particular key." He laughs.

"Hey," says Toni, "what about my granddad's piano?"

Quinn looks towards the next room. The upright. "You might be onto something there," he says, clasping her forearm and taking her with him. He opens the lid of the upright. "Okay, so the body of the upright is its resonance chamber. The strings run vertically, not horizontally like they do on a grand. The good thing about the upright is that you can speak right into its resonance chamber. To access the strings on the grand, you have to have the lid up, which disperses the sound."

Toni looks into the body of the piano at the strings that line its back—the soundboard, she guesses. She expects the instrument to smell musty, but the wood actually smells slightly sweet and nutty, like walnuts in their shell. The piano also smells kind of—what?—sweaty: as if its action has kept it going all these years. The top of the strings are clearly visible but they disappear into darkness as they run to the bottom of the board.

She looks around, goes to one of her granddad's bookshelves and pulls out an Oxford Dictionary and leans it on the sustain pedal to open the piano's strings.

"Perfect!"

Quinn holds his recorder down in the body of the piano. "Your turn," he says.

Toni leans against the end of the piano, opposite Quinn. She looks into the strings. She looks up at Quinn, "I don't know what to say."

"What about something we talked about last night?"

Toni flips her eyes to the ceiling while soundbites seem to collect behind eyes and ears, easily remembered. She nods and leans over the top of the strings.

"Some kind of unfinished business," she says loudly.

The strings ring in response.

Quinn listens to what he has recorded. A note catches its pitch at the beginning of the phrase with the sharper vowel-sound in 'kind' and at its end with the more explosive 'b' of 'business.' But there is also more of an all-round pianistic blurring of sound.

"Draw it out more, you'll make more room for the notes to catch on."

Toni leans into the piano once more, slows and lengthens her first phrase. She listens to the piano's response as she goes, trying to make the most of her notes and the blurring between them. Her words start to sing a little more, in her throat and mouth, and in her ear.

"Nice one," says Quinn.

Toni leans into the piano again and sing-says "some kind of unfinished sound."

"Cool," says Quinn. "You're a natural."

"Yay!" pipes Toni as she puts her arm into the piano and runs her fingertips lightly across the strings. The piano sings out like a dark harp; so many notes merging. Toni and Quinn look at each other—wow.

"You're an inside-piano player now," says Quinn smiling.

Toni plays more surely this time. Her thumb fingernail pings the strings and her swipe is intent on making an almost-melodic ruckus.

Cara comes into the room. "Holy smoke, what are you two doing?"

"I'm playing harp-piano" says Toni with a laugh that breaks through the sombre reverberation of strings.

"A guy called Henry Cowell came up with the idea of 'string-piano' back in the 1920's," says Quinn, "he transferred harp-techniques to the piano. He started a whole new way of playing and composing. He was John Cage's teacher, actually."

"Who's John Cage?" asks Toni.

"He was a guy who wanted to play and write for the piano but didn't want to have to master traditional techniques. He's known for 'preparing' the piano—he put things into the piano to change the sound of the strings."

Cara looks from Toni to Quinn. "Harp again," she says, and Toni does.

"Okay, here's a thing to play," says Cara, knocking the dictionary off its pedal. She softly holds down the keys of an inaudible C major chord in both hands to open those strings. "Go again," she says.

The piano-harp makes its rolling string-sound to the bright notes of C major.

"Change of key," says Cara and moves her fingers only slightly to make the notes of a full C sharp minor.

The piano-harp rolls on the key of 'The Moonlight' and Cara's own composition-in-progress.

"This might actually work better on the baby grand," says Quinn, "We'll be able to access the strings more easily... And the sound will ring out."

Cara takes her seat at the larger piano, puts her foot on the middle pedal to take the dampers off specific strings and let them resonate inside the piano. Toni stands at the opposite end. Quinn stands between them, his hands on the piano's top edge of curving wood, "hello again," he whispers as he props his digital recorder up at the end of the piano's longest strings.

"So, let's start again," says Cara, silently fingering a C sharp minor chord in her right hand. "I'll make chord changes and you strum how you like."

Toni leans into the piano and carefully strums the back of her fingertips and her fingernails across the strings in front of her: a harp-like "frrraaaaaaaam." When she strums in the opposite direction she turns her hand over and uses her fingertips to make a slightly different sound: "frrroooooooooom."

Cara fingers a C sharp minor chord in both hands to bring bass and treble into play and Toni strums a resounding: "frrraaaaaaaam" "frrroooooooooom." But before the backwards strum has begun to fade, Cara strikes a single low C sharp for the note at the bottom of the harp-chord and a low G sharp for the note at its top. She lets them sound and they ring strongly with the more delicately fingered notes.

Keeping it going: Cara moves through the key centres of chords, ringing bass notes for harp-fingered sound.

But then, Cara wants to hear a melody play over the top of this bass-drawn pattern of notes, hear it played with plucked string. She stands. With her left hand she sounds a bass note and fingers a silent chord for Toni's strum. Then before it has faded she opens all of the piano's strings with the sustain pedal and leans over the front of the piano, stretching her right hand past where the strings begin. She plucks a small motif not unlike the melody that had begun to open for her that morning and which she has begun to write on no-longer-blank pages of music manuscript. It starts high and quickly dips to a lower note and then hops back to that same high note.

Quinn gives Cara a thumbs-up.

A rhythm starts to emerge: a low bass, a treble string-chord, a plucking of notes. Toni's look of concentration has softened into one of absorption and Cara's body moves purposefully, each movement of her hand to a different part of the piano making an arc in the air.

Cara sits back in front of the piano to better move the music. She quickens her sounding of the bass and moves from higher to continually lower chords. It sounds like the ending of an otherwise symphonic musical phrase, yet it continues to repeat, louder and faster. Toni moves to one-directional strumming, making strung sound come fast in

short waves. Quinn leans into the piano. Cara smiles and nods: go for it. He puts his thumb and index fingers either side of a high-note string and runs them down the length of it, with his fingers—tip and nail. Over the top of bass-note-banging and strumming comes a high “errrrrrrrr,” as if some musical muse creaks in the wind. He puts his other arm in the piano and continues his string-creaking while he flicks his fingernail back and forwards over other strings to make them tremble. Finally, Cara rushes to quickly sound her recollection of all of the chords she has heard, making of them a cluster. She sits still and the chords ring on. Toni sounds a last slow strum across so many strings of the piano. Quinn scrapes a long length of wire. They wait. As the sound is beginning the end of its fade Toni reaches in a last time and plucks a single string : “ping!”

Toni does a little dance, pumping her arms and wiggling her bum. Quinn raps a knuckle twice against the body of the piano. Cara smacks her hands on her thighs: “Ha!

“I sure hope you got that,” she says to Quinn.

He takes his digital recorder from the piano. Its little red light still glows as it records. He nods to Cara and switches it off. “From Beethoven to ‘harp-piano’?” he asks.

“Yeah,” says Cara. “Harp-piano meets Cara, Toni and Quinn.”

“And Beethoven,” says Toni.

The Music:

The *Tutti* kicks off again with its pulse, jaunt and bounce...and its pulse is lightly taken by the piano into top notes made to run in bar-long arcs, tracing the pulse-melody of strings...

You:

Spinning like light-crystal to a held double-handed treble trill...now still-held...

The Music:

To re-sound a melody-still-light...

You:

Given over...

The Music:

To the trace of the strings in grace-made runs, twists and turns...

You:

Let loose, with the pulse of the strings, to play both hands for close-sound...

The Music:

And close the first movement of the fourth concerto with spread fingers and hands.

“Is there always someone knocking on my door?” says Toni, leaving Cara and Quinn by the piano.

The door opened: “Mum...dad....”

“Well, are you going to let us in?” asks Toni’s mum.

Toni steps back and her mum walks into the hallway with a small suitcase. Her dad follows.

“Did you get my text?” asks Toni’s mum. “You didn’t reply...”

“Is everything okay, love?” asks Toni’s dad.

“I must have been busy with Quinn,” says Toni.

Toni’s mum nudges her husband’s arm. “Oh yes,” she says.

“We’ve been...recording sounds,” Toni says.

Toni’s mum picks up her suitcase and Toni puts her hand on its end. “Ah, mum, there’s someone in your room.”

“What?”

“Are you sure?” says Toni’s dad.

“It’s okay. It’s fine. She’s a friend. Her name is Cara. She’s a composition student—like Quinn. She got thrown out of her bedsit and needed a place to stay.”

“So where are we supposed to stay?” asks Toni’s mum.

“Well, you *were* in Auckland,” replies Toni.

“And now we’re here,” says Toni’s mum.

“For a visit,” says Toni’s dad.

“Yeah, cool,” says Toni “you can have the spare room. Can’t you?”

Toni’s mum heads for the spare bedroom. She throws her suitcase onto the bed. Toni’s father puts his bag on the floor at the foot of the bed.

“Cara’s a pianist,” says Toni: a piano needs to be played.

“I’ve come down to talk to the boss of my old boss,” says Toni’s mum, “at the Archives. My old boss retired and his job is all-but-mine if I want it. But we’re here to see you, see how you’re going. Auckland does seem a long way away sometimes.”

“Quinn and Cara are here,” says Toni, “in the lounge. We’ve been playing...the piano.”

Her dad laughs. “What, together?” he asks.

Toni smiles and shrugs. “Come through when you’re settled eh?” she says with a quick wave of her hand, leaving the room.

With a rush towards the piano, Toni whispers: “my parents are here.”

“What?” asks Quinn. “Are they back?”

“Oh shit,” says Cara “their room.”

“It’s okay,” says Toni, “it’s probably just a quick visit...to see how I’m doing.”

“But they’ll want their room—it is theirs after all. I should get my stuff out of there.”

“No, don’t worry, I’ve put them in the spare room,”

“Fuck,” says Cara, “they’ll want their room.”

The door from the hallway opens and Toni’s mum and dad walk in. “Hi,” they both say.

“Mum, dad, this is Cara,” says Toni—a shaking of hands.

“And you know me of course,” says Quinn.

Toni’s dad puts his hand on the edge of the exposed body of his piano.

“The piano’s sounding great,” Quinn says to him, “full of life.”

“Are you playing a bit more often these days Quinn?”

“No, just a little,” says Quinn, “maybe now and then.”

Toni’s mum sits on a couch and her dad follows. Cara unprops the piano lid and puts it down. She tucks the piano stool away.

“You don’t have to stop,” says Toni’s dad sitting back on soft cushions.

“Shall I make some tea?” asks Toni.

Her mum nods and Toni disappears to the kitchen with Quinn.

Cara escapes to her room—somewhat guiltily since it is not really hers. She pulls the black-bound Beethoven piano score out of a box that has held music and a few books in the corner. *Concerte*. She opens the front cover and almost expects to see a transcription, something in Toni’s grandfather’s hand. In the top right hand corner a small pencil-written number has been neatly crossed out: the price paid for it, probably in a second hand bookshop many years ago. Underneath, another number marks the price she paid for it at The Ferret.

Toni’s parents seem nice enough. She feels a bit sorry for them, arriving to find her in their home, and Quinn loitering as well. Toni’s dad is trying to be laid back and relaxed but her mum is a little nervous, or agitated, like she is not quite sure where to locate her thoughts. Her dad seems genuinely pleased to see his piano again, although he is unlikely to play it.

She turns to the slow movement of the fifth and lets the opening sound of strings swell quietly. She moves her head slightly from side to side: the string's slow move from note-to-note. She raises her chin as if lifting her head to light: even slower, the strings rise to piano triplets she sees on the page and feels on right and left hand fingers. But, even then, the known soft heel strike of Toni's sock-footed steps sound before she taps lightly on Cara's door. Putting her head into the room a little she says "I'm going to walk Quinn home." They both nod and Toni takes a step only to turn back: "why don't you go and 'talk piano' with my dad?"

Cara holds the score at her side. She goes out into the hallway, opens the door into the grandfather's living room. Toni's dad is in there pulling piano scores off the shelves, flicking through the odd one and making stacks on the floor. The empty space left by the books makes her imagine the silent free-fall of a stone in a deep well, not yet sounding its journey with the echo of its impact.

Toni's dad says "it's all here, I guess: Beethoven, Chopin, Debussy, Ravel..."

Cara nods.

"He liked music that was 'for the piano.'"

"He used to look over my shoulder when I was a boy, inspect the music my teacher had given me. If it was one of his chosen composers, he'd say 'Good. Music for the piano.'"

"Sometimes I played from his scores, but I liked to have my own music."

Cara nods.

Toni's father straightens up to get a look at what she has in her hands. "Another one to add to the pile?" he asks.

"It's Beethoven," says Cara. "I bought it from The Ferret, from Quinn."

"Ah," he replies. "A good choice."

"Played any of them?" he asks.

"Not yet," says Cara. "I've got a major composition assignment due at the end of the term—we call it 'the biggy.' We have to write a piece and perform it, or have it performed."

"I was playing a Chopin Nocturne the other day." She adds. "Opus 9, number 1." There were six high notes that seemed to have been written for a piece of music. She had enjoyed the prospect of the music they made.

"What's your favourite?" asks Toni's dad.

"My favourite?"

"Your favourite Nocturne."

“I don’t really know, I’d need to play them—you know—get the feel of them...”

Pulling a volume from one of his stacks, Toni’s dad flicks pages as if he has temporarily misplaced something, a bookmark or photograph that might fall from the pages at any moment.

“Here it is,” he says, holding the open book out to Cara for her inspection. “Opus 15, number 1. Know it?”

Cara shakes her head. “Would you play a bit for me? I might recognise it.”

Toni’s dad holds the book to his chest with one hand. “Well,” he says, “I haven’t played it for a long time.”

“If you don’t mind—you trying to recall it will be better than me stumbling over it,” says Cara.

As soon as Toni’s father begins to play, Cara recognises the music. It is probably one of Chopin’s most often-played Nocturnes. The gentle delicacy of its melody makes her feel as if her heart is softly beat-listening for her ears.

But, yes, here is what is obviously this pianist’s favourite part of the piece: the soothing melody almost fades completely when the bass comes in strong, throwing things around a bit, growling the music down while the treble alternates in quick chords that ride along and bring the melody back, after all.

Toni’s dad stops. He looks down at the music on the floor and says, “My father played this after I told him that my mother had died.”

Cara sits quietly in a chair near Toni’s boxes of tapes.

“Did he play very often?”

Toni’s dad moves to face her. “Not later in his life.”

Cara stands and kneels beside the nearest pile of music. Beethoven.

“What are you going to do with all of these volumes?” she asks.

“I thought of selling them—you know—maybe as a complete collection this time.”

“Keep them together,” says Cara. She picks up the top Beethoven score: his later piano sonatas. “Music for a lifetime,” she says putting it carefully back on its stack.

“Toni’s mum will need to have a talk to Toni,” says Toni’s dad getting up from the piano and closing the Chopin score.

“Oh. Well, I can make myself scarce.”

Toni’s dad shakes his head. “Do you know where Toni is?” he asks.

“Here I am,” says Toni, coming into the room through the French doors. “I walked Quinn a couple of blocks. He decided it was time to go home.”

Toni looks down at the piano scores on the floor. “Why are you doing this, dad?”
 “Just seeing what’s here,” he says.

“You’re not going to sell those off too, are you?”

“We’ve always intended to clear this room out, Toni.”

“I know, but I am still here and the scores are part of his room.”

“And they get used, sometimes,” Toni adds, looking at Cara.

Cara puts her hand on top of the Beethoven pile. If she could just take all this music as hers she would. And then she would stay in this house with Toni. She smiles and looks at Toni’s dad. He still has the Chopin piano score in his hands. She reaches out and asks him for it. She opens it to Opus 15, number 1. “I could learn this,” she says, holding it up to him.

Toni’s dad laughs a little. “You’d probably play it better than me and all,” he says.

“Come on dad,” Toni says. “It will be good.”

“Well,” says Toni’s dad, “it’s not as neat and tidy as all that. Your mother...”

Toni snorts and rolls her eyes.

“Your mother has decided to stay in Auckland.”

Toni shrugs. “So, why come down here?”

“To see how things are going. Your mother tells me that you haven’t been banking your cheques.”

“Things are going just fine,” says Toni, “so you can leave them be.” She walks to the door.

“Toni, love” says her dad, “your mum would prefer it if you were in Auckland.”

Looking down at the music, Toni leaves the room.

Cara rubs her palms on her thighs. “I’m sorry to have put you out of your room,” she says.

“We can actually see that Toni is quite settled at the moment, but she needs to make a move... Her mother wants her in Auckland, with us.”

“Did I mention the composition I am working on at the moment?” asks Cara.

“You’ve got a deadline coming up haven’t you?”

“Yes, but this is just a warm-up, I think. It’s something to get rhythm, harmony and melody going in my head.”

“Okay,” says Toni’s dad.

“It was actually Toni who gave me my start, who led me to the piano.

“She’s been listening to ‘The Moonlight.’”

“Ah, the ‘Moonlight,’” says Toni’s dad. “I thought she was hooked.”

Cara smiles. “Along with countless others,” she says.

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 a 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.

The Music:

A lunge—for the same knock of a rhythm: the unison of strings with three-same
chords for response.

You:

The piano—a short reply in only the quiet-spread opening and closing of the
chord of the strings.

The Music:

A short rhythm at a knock.

You:

And, again, the quiet opening and closing of the piano-chord.

The Music:

A knock.

Toni leans against her closed bedroom door, her head forward as if she wants to enter her room but is not yet ready. She can't exactly just kick her bloody parents out. Bloody hell. Her dad might be coming around, but what about her mum? Since when has she had the kind of maternal instinct that would compel her to come to Wellington, more or less unannounced, and try to claim her as her own?

She's twenty years old for God's sake!

Quinn told her not to worry, that her mum and dad would leave, soon enough. He said they probably just want to support her, especially since she has no job. She told him she doesn't want a job. "If you had one," he said, "they might be more inclined to think you don't need them."

Does she need them?

Everyone needs to know that they belong to somebody. There needs to be a closeness—a closeness she can hear and feel, in—say—the notes of 'The Moonlight.' 'Bermmm-----,' way down low.

There is a knock on the door. She takes its sound between her shoulder blades. "Toni, can I speak to you?" Her mum must have her face close to the wood, the clear outside of her words are skimmed away by polished wood.

Toni faces the door now and holds onto the coolness of its handle.

"Toni, I need to speak to you."

Bloody Hell.

Toni opens the door in one rapid movement that can only cause surprise. "What?" she demands.

Her mum puts her hands up in front of her. "What are you so upset about?" she asks.

"Why does everything have to be so 'sorted'?" asks Toni.

"Are you talking about the music? Your father said you were upset about the music."

"In piles all over the floor?"

"I can see it might look like we're...organising things..."

"How about *dismantling* things?"

"Look, Toni, you should come to Auckland for a while, work out what you want to do."

"Why should I?"

"You have to make a move sometime."

"Maybe what I want to do is here."

"I don't think you know what you want to do."

"I'm doing it, you just wouldn't know that, you're so..."

"So what? Intent on making a goddamned living?"

"No, you're just not interested..."

"In what?"

"In granddad!"

“What’s he got to do with this?”

“Oh forget it!” Toni swipes the close air away with one hand and makes a charge for the kitchen.

Her mum follows. “I know he’s important to you,” she says “but he’s dead.”

“No shit!” says Toni.

Toni’s father appears in the doorway to the dining room, filling its frame as if to block the sound and passage of the argument.

Toni turns to put her toes to her mum’s. For a moment she can’t remember having ever stood this close in anger. “You want to sell off his music, you think listening to his tapes is a waste of time, you probably think *he* was a waste of time.”

“Come on now, Toni,” says her dad, “that’s not fair.”

“No, let her get it out of her system,” says Toni’s mum. “You’re right,” she says to Toni, not backing away. “He wasn’t the man you thought he was.”

“Jane!” Toni’s dad says, catching his wife’s name in his throat.

“Did you ever wonder why he never talked about your grandmother?” asks Toni’s mum.

“He did,” says Toni, “or, well, maybe I’ve forgotten, but he must have...”

“Yes, he was so full of stories, but not the one about how he threw her out!”

Toni steps back.

“And then you were born and he gave all his love to you! It was so hypocritical.”

Toni’s dad steps behind Toni and puts his hand on her upper arm: “Love, there’s more...” She brushes his hand away.

“Your grandma only died twelve years ago Toni, not when your dad was a teenager,” her mum says. “You would have been about eight.”

Toni’s dad touches both hands to her shoulders. “Antonia,” he says, “I’m sorry that we didn’t tell you about your grandmother.”

“He wouldn’t even go to the funeral,” says Toni’s mum.

Her dad exhales: a held breath released fast. “But I’m sure he thought about her and what he’d done, every day, before and after.”

You:

A piano-chord simply rises, and falls just one note, to be left open to...

The Music:

That knock...

You:

To make a piano-chord rise and fall just one note then keep slow step-falling
away...to a slow-rising triplet, dropped to end-chords...

The Music:

Taken by unison strings for the quiet lilt of a knock, their last note is...

You:

Taken high by the piano and moved down the top-line of one chord to a quiet note
for the strings...

The Music

And their lilt of a knock is a note for the piano...

You:

In high chords resolving towards...

The Music:

A quiet knocking rhythm...

You:

For one piano-chord, not quite a...

The Music:

Knock, still just there.

You:

The piano climbs with just one note that moves through two held chords—high, to
fall but move with its up-making bass. A melody starts almost to twinkle...

The Music:

Glimmer-held in chord-trill for one note left to sound-shimmer...

The Music:

Yet under-run by note-slides through the tiniest of heard-cracks: chromatics that
give way to a trill...

You:

That is made to shimmer-walk ever-slower-over to a chord-made-glissando...

The Music:

And stilled by a near note and high strings—held over a bass-string knock-rhythm
that falls without sure weight to a chord...

You:

Made little more certain by the smallest of movements between two piano-chords,
but resolved to home-key by the strings.

The Music:

Up-searching, the piano's penultimate note hovers just above its home key, and then falls.

The next day Cara quits the library early. She wants to give Toni the notebook.

Quinn sat with her in class that morning and she told him what had happened. She stood by the baby grand, as if for support and couldn't help but listen. As Cara recounted the last blows that closed the argument, he just kept shaking his head. "I think her parents feel pretty bad about it," she told him, "her mum especially." "No wonder," said Quinn.

Entering the house, she clanks her keys on the bench and goes straight to the second living room. Toni is there, crouching among piles of music and books that litter the floor. The tapes are gone.

"My God," says Cara. Her and Toni's dad had put all of the music back on the shelves the night before. "I should have left everything the way it was," he said.

Toni looks up but says nothing.

"Toni," says Cara, "I'm so sorry about what happened."

"Why should you be sorry?" asks Toni.

"I think your dad just wanted you and your mum to talk about whether you might move to Auckland. I spoke to him last night. He was really upset that things got out of hand."

"Out of hand? My mum was downright cruel!"

"He probably wouldn't disagree with you," says Cara quietly, "and she probably wouldn't either."

"How do you think I feel? It's like I've really lost him this time.

"He wasn't who I thought he was."

Cara sits on the piano stool.

"You meant the world to your grandfather, even your mum said that."

"And what about what he did to my grandmother? What about the fact that she was alive and I never even got to meet her?"

"It sounds like they had some 'troubles.'"

"What kind of troubles?"

"I don't know, but I think your dad wants to talk about it."

Toni puckers her mouth as if she has just been asked to suck on a slug.

“My parents used to fight, when I was a kid,” says Cara. “I remember my mum screaming at my dad, threatening to throw a vase, locking him out of the house. Once I let him in through my bedroom window—he’d been tapping on the glass to wake me. My mum left after my family moved to Wellington and I never really heard her side of the story. I don’t think he was particularly ‘faithful.’”

“He let me down, after he remarried. It was an ugly time. He had been such a loving father. But he was so lonely. One night I woke and crept out of bed. I heard him crying in his room. I didn’t know what to do. After he remarried he seemed to feel the need to make and take sides.”

Toni makes a small noise of protest, a crushed grunt at the back of her throat.

“I can understand why you want to empty this room, but I think your dad wanted to tell you to leave it the way it was.”

“I wouldn’t let him into my room, after..., I’ve always had a lock on my door, but I’ve never actually used it.”

“Your dad asked me to give you something,” says Cara, leaving and returning with a black-bound volume, a lot like the *Concerte*.

She hands it to Toni who sits back on her heels.

“I think your dad took this with him to Auckland, but then decided it was meant for you. He said it was on your grandfather’s desk along with some of the scores he asked you to give to Quinn.” Cara watches Toni run her hand gently across the linen surface of the volume’s cover, just the way she did when she found the piano score.

“I reckon your granddad wrote to you about music,” Cara says.

Toni opens the cover. There is no inscription. She turns the page. She reads: “‘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. Here is the *tutti*, the orchestra playing before the solo instrument, the piano, makes its entrance.’” She runs her finger down the page.

Cara says “I think he wrote what he wanted *you* to hear.”

Toni turns the page again.

Cara says “he writes about all of the five piano concertos, especially the slow movements.”

“The ones in the score you bought from Quinn?”

“Yip, it’s here,” says Cara, slipping it out from between other shelved volumes, “*Concerte*.” She had placed it there the night before, after her and Toni’s dad had put all of the volumes back. She lays it on the floor beside Toni who says “I always wanted to

read music—you know—to hear it for myself. My granddad would sit and read his scores for hours, often without even playing the music or listening to his tapes.” She flicks over a few more pages.

“I think he wrote it for you, not just to *read* the music, but also to help *make* it,” Cara says.

“I guess I like that idea” says Toni, flicking pages, sometimes stopping to read silently.

Cara sits at the piano. She read the notebook the night before. She wasn’t sure whether she should, but when she realised it was about the *Concerte*, she felt she was meant to. She makes some of the keys bounce silently under her fingertips.

“Didn’t you say that you and your father would listen to the slow movement of the Fifth together?” asks Toni.

Cara bounces keys that make the slightest rattle in their action. “Yes,” she says.

“He writes about it.”

“I know, I’m guessing he loved it too.”

Toni lets the notebook rest in her lap and looks at Cara with her head tilted to one side.

“Why don’t I read what your grandfather wrote of the fifth?” Cara asks, stepping forward and quietly taking the notebook about to slip from Toni’s lap. “Listen,” she says:

“The Music:

With muted strings—*pianissimo*—a melody is made to sense all of the music they have already sounded, and will sound for the piano...

You:

As if they miss the notes they have brought together while they pour a full soft sound into each and all of these: flowing without having much to move at first, then rising one note at a time, step by step, simply making energy for notes that can then soar more quickly from low-to-high—and down—and from low-to-high—and down again.

Then three slow chords join a fuller chorus of strings; a first statement of an almost-urgent expectation for the first sounding of the dulcet notes of the piano. Then three more chords rise and gather their force to make yet another three that let those expectations rest before they are sounded again...

The Music:

And fall softly with moments of silence before higher strings arch their self-reflection over the like search of those lower-yet-close.

And then, two separate chords are simply laid out lightly for the piano.

You:

The piano's entry quietly makes more, with a spring from an F only just on the stave to one in the white space above—held aerial-still: a gentle rhythm of triplets begins in the bass, rising easily through notes of a chord. Above, higher notes-in-triplets move down to grace those that come towards them.

The Music:

In the background, the single-noted soft assent of the strings.

You:

There is a leap in the notes of the piano and another bass-triplet-rising and treble-triplet-falling, a last triplet to draw a melody most gently sure of its lyrical sense...

The Music

And the open sound of strings—a soft chorus moving always upwards, for this finding of notes.

You:

The piano-treble sounds the smooth spring-surge of only an octave and falls small to the melody of quick-passing and longer-held notes, brushed by the notes of a rising-triplet-bass.

The Music:

Mid-stave then, for the bounce and reach of an aerial-fancy—descending more quietly to a trill, landing on the first of three chords for once-again-muted strings...

You:

Made bold by three more chords for the three-octave spring-leap of the piano, and the never-forsaken possibility of a heading together of notes..."

Cara holds the notebook in her hands quietly. She looks up to pull herself from the words of the music.

"But," says Toni, "He wasn't who I thought he was."

Can she make this the beginning of her composition, ‘the biggy’: the doubled sound of a low-bass C sharp, followed by the strike of a treble C sharp minor chord? She first played it for Toni and its sound won’t let her go. She has written it across two manuscript pages she has torn from a pad that sits waiting on the wood-patterned surface of the desk of Toni’s grandfather.

She will look up from the shiny black grand piano Gibbs has wheeled onto the stage of the music hall for the end-of-term concert and she will remember the moment she sat here—at the desk of an old man, at the desk of a dead grandfather—with her music manuscript in front of her. She will remember feeling the thought of her little finger and thumb of her left hand stretched wide for a bass-octave, her long fingers, not straining; feeling the thought of the thumb, third and fifth fingers of her right hand ready to strike a treble chord.

She will lift her left hand to surely strike that doubled low C sharp in the crack between C and D, the first two sure notes of a C major scale; in the crack between the first two notes that lead any piano student into their first warm-up exercise and their discovery of the keyboard is where her C sharp will be. With it she will feel both black keys act to swing a hammer to strike a string especially wrapped in copper wire to make it vibrate slowly and sound so low: “Berrmm---”.

Yes, she already knows the touch-spring of a low C sharp and the same higher note in the next octave: only sixteen notes or so from the very bottom of the piano’s keyboard, to the same note eight white notes up. Yes, she already knows that circuit of finger on key on hammer on string and the vibration of that through the body of the piano, her hands, her arms and down to her foot on the pedal, her hand placed at a centre of sound. She knows it without even going to the piano.

Toni has been moping, or just sleeping. Quinn has phoned twice for her but, unfortunately, not when she was awake. She gets up just to use the bathroom or make toast, walks around in naked feet, her belly showing between singlet and pyjama bottoms, her hair pillow-pushed into spiky clumps.

Cara remembers the way her little brother Andy slept at will. Whenever he wore the brunt of their stepmum’s frustrations with trying to create the so-called perfect family after-the-fact, he would just crawl under his bed covers and go out like a light.

Cara marvelled at his abilities and waited for him to wake before asking him what had been said. He would never say. She imagined that sleep was a state in which he could hold unwanted words as if at the entrance of his ear, then make them fall: grey and mute. She always thought she would try this for herself, but everything always happened to her in colour and sound, even when she was asleep.

The low bass notes of her beginning move step-wise down, more quickly than they do in 'The Moonlight.' It is with their impetus that she strikes her treble chords. An emphatic exchange is made as every second descending bass-note is followed by its chord: "Berrmm-----," (treble-chord-strike)/ "Berrmm-----,"/ "Berrmm-----," (treble-chord-strike)... When the bass gets to the bottom of one descent it starts higher and descends again... It is clear that the bass drives the music. And because her bass moves down with a glancing note not held in her right hand chord, dissonance sounds as essential, if only in passing.

With her beginning she will make the notes of her chord-harmony resonate in low bass strings. She remembers the way that she, Toni and Quinn sounded out the in-string resonance of the baby grand. Her foot had been on the sustain pedal so that the piano's strings were open in the way of 'The Moonlight.' After Quinn called out to tones in the strings Toni made a chord chorus just by singing to them. Then she had made the three notes of a struck C major treble chord sound in the open and unstruck string of a lower C, of which they are a part. So, when she strikes her doubled bass note and its higher harmonious chord, she knows that the higher notes will be doubled as harmonics in the lower strings.

But she will make dissonance resonate too. Quinn said that the last of a piano string's harmonics could be at least a full white note away from a perfect multiple of its fundamental frequency. She likes to think that her passing dissonance will resonate as an off-tune partial in a low bass string already enlivened by the in-tune resonant harmonics of her held treble chords, just as they will resonate as harmonics in a nearest bass string and others beyond.

She will make the piano's harmonics ring along with the dark warmth of its inharmonics, even on the same string. She likes the idea that her music could start by sounding something of the full voice and life of the piano.

On goes her beginning, as she has already heard and written it: the bass making more of a melody, no longer moving only step-wise downward, but making some low song that begins with a higher note, quickly drops to a lower note and then hop-steps back to be held in that same higher note. Treble chords accompany the song for a

moment but move higher to claim it, beginning with a high note, quickly dropping to a lower note and hop-stepping back to be held in that same high note, dropping to a lower note once more and hop-stepping back to that same high note, while her bass resumes its regular rhythm of descent. And then her right hand takes this treble melody more fully into chords with notes still anchored by the bass. A simple melody is given a little more life for its low-made flow.

Cara sees herself sitting at the grand piano with Gibbs at her side—no—to the side of the stage: he is watching and listening and she wonders if she should play something complicated, something impressive. Then she sees herself talking with him in his office, trying to assure herself that by moving the spread little finger and thumb of her left hand onto the slim black key between two whites she was able to get her music started, to make her music go. “What could be more simple than starting a piece with one bass note doubled in an octave?” It is a question she now asks herself, but she hears the voice of Gibbs.

Toni has left the notebook—her grandfather’s writing of the *Concerte*—on the floor where her boxes of tapes used to be. It looks like she has discarded it yet laid it out for some future. Cara pushes her chair out and goes over to it. She picks it up and opens it to the first page. Toni read the first line out loud after she gave her the notebook: “What might a reader hear in this piano score, this collection of *Concerte* bound in black linen?”

The orchestra begins the first piano concerto, while the solo piano waits. But when the piano does enter, it is with an unexpectedly ‘small’ and simple tune. “It is such a simple melody it might be played by a child: one single note leads to a straightforward alternation of notes in the right hand and a single chord in the left.” What the music proposes is that not only can a simple motif generate more music, but it can also cue the player and audience to really listen and feel for its notes.

Cara closes the notebook and tucks it under one arm as she goes to the bookshelf. She pulls out the piano score, *Concerte*, and opens it to the solo piano’s first entry. She can see that it is as simple-small as it has been written in the notebook. It provides a way for the music to move without dash around a C major chord, the main key of its concerto. She steps over to the upright, puts the score on its music stand and props the notebook beside it. She puts her fingers on the keyboard. She loves the way the piano’s first phrase starts with a G on the weakest beat of the bar—the last beat—and falls so easily to the tonic, C, on the first beat of the next bar while the left does no more than play two notes to make a chord.

She plays the piano's first one and a half bar phrase again. She laughs, thinking that Beethoven would have written those bars with a wry grin, knowing full well how unspectacularly he himself would begin that solo at the keyboard, after the audience had waited so long for his entry. But it is only after three such phrases that the music breaks into fast triplets and semiquavers as if to say "well, *now*, here we go, as expected in this year of 1798...": the virtuoso at the keyboard in the years after Mozart and his concertos made the piano the instrument of the day, and before Beethoven made the concerto his own. Fortunately for her, over two hundred years later, she is in no need of classical flash.

Reading the notebook's next page: the piano simply opens the next movement of the first concerto—the slow movement. The music starts with a long held chord and unfolds gently into a melody that begins like an intake of breath, an essential yet soft filling of the lungs. Why hasn't she played it yet?

She easily finds the piano and the movement's opening chord in the score and puts her fingers on the keyboard. Both hands begin with a spread of three notes that make one long chord before the fingers of her left hand close into three closer chord-notes while her right hand steps up just one note to step slowly down four. Gentle chords are moved slowly by the melodious promise of four notes made more than the descent of a major scale. Then the little finger of her right hand reaches back up to the phrase's highest note and with third finger and thumb she plays the music's slow fall to a note that sounds to end the music's first phrase yet keep it open. She feels her breath with the movements of her body, the ebb and flow of it.

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. And if it does, then maybe Chopin had something of it in his ear and fingers when he wrote his six high notes—the six high notes that begin his Nocturne, Opus 9, No. 1. She has played them on this piano: just two small but conjoined groups of three notes, one leading step-wise up to its height, the second leading not quite straight down to the first bar's first beat. Six high notes to make music go.

Cara lays the *Concerte* on the desk alongside her pages of music manuscript and places the open notebook at their head. She looks once more at the opening of the slow movement. She sees notes for the orchestra's strings and begins to hear the way they

simply underline key notes from the piano's opening chord. Along with the piano "the strings are only just there, in agreement, below the notes of the piano, a long and single drawing of bows across stings." Over one and a half bars the strings sing-draw notes heard as a beginning: violins lower-double the piano's highest note, second violins double the last note of the piano's first phrase, Violas double the middle note of the piano's treble chord, and cellos and double basses sound the note at the middle of the piano's end-of-phrase fall. Together they make their chord for the piano's chord, across instruments, reaching for the life of the resonance of the piano.

Orchestral strings. Can she hear them as part of her music? She has heard them before. But if she is not writing solely for the piano, then what is she writing? A concerto? She laughs from her belly, hands open and down in front of her, her body full of the pulse of an insane thought. What was it her dad used to say to her: "Cara, sometimes you are your own worst enemy." She can easily hear that said in the voice of Gibbs along with his next reasonable comment: "do something manageable Cara, nobody expects a concerto from you just yet." He is right, of course, but does a concerto have to be a full-on orchestral affair? Could she not write a Cara-sized concerto for a smaller group of instruments, such as a string orchestra, and piano?

What does she hear? Cara closes her eyes and breathes, her rise and fall. She hears the piano, a double-octave low C sharp and the strike of a C sharp minor chord, and on, with notes for the colour of chords. This is her beginning, this is the grand piano: the instrument with its horizontal harp of strings ringing harmonics and inharmonics in and out of its body. There are no orchestral strings, not yet...

"Composing?"

Cara opens her eyes. "Toni," she says, "I didn't hear you get up."

Toni looks at the floor and over to Cara at her grandfather's desk where she has spread herself out, where she has started to make something for herself with her grandfather's notebook. Her grandfather used to write there, resting the fingers of his left hand on a score—which one? the *Concerte*?—while he wrote with his right—in what? the notebook?—as if there was a knowledge of music flowing from fingers to fingers. She scuffs the ball of her foot backwards and forwards across the carpet. "Well, I won't keep you," she says, leaving Cara to it.

Cara pulls the notebook toward her. For months this room has been Toni's and she has had her grandfather's music and her project to make it even more so. Now there is this notebook. She looks down at the written words of Toni's grandfather. But she hears only Toni's voice sound one word to question demarcations of space and promise:

“composing?” Even though she found the black-bound *Concerte* for herself and can hear and learn from the writing of its music, this notebook is not hers. She stands and walks from the room, trailing fingers across the spines of black volumes left by a grandfather for his granddaughter.

Cara knocks and steps into Toni’s room. She is sitting on the edge of her bed: “I should go and have a shower, it is almost midday.”

“The notebook,” says Cara “you left it on the floor.”

“I was reading it last night,” says Toni, “The light was on in your room for a while. I read it through.”

“What did you think of it?” asks Cara.

“My body clock’s probably all fucked up from sleeping during the day,” says Toni.

“Could you hear what he wrote for you?” asks Cara.

“I actually like being up in the night, you know, when the whole world’s asleep.”

“Could you hear it? Could you hear the music?”

Toni looks at Cara with grey eyes. “The music,” she says flatly.

“The Concertos,” says Cara.

Toni shrugs her shoulders, grabs a towel she has left on the back of a chair. “I need to talk to my dad,” she says as she passes.

Cara goes back to the desk of a dead grandfather, a grandfather that threw his wife out and wrote his music in a notebook. She closes the notebook and puts it back where it was on the floor. She looks at it and then puts it on the chair in the corner. She looks at it and then puts it back on the floor, on Toni’s rug. She tries to remember the sound of strings—or—what was she coming to?—the prospect of orchestral strings for piano strings, and vice versa. She waits for her beginning: the piano’s low-doubled C sharp and C sharp minor chord.

13

“It’s for you,” says Quinn, holding his digital recorder out to Toni.

She stands at the door and smiles, but doesn’t take the recorder from him. “What for?” she asks.

Quinn walks past her into the hallway and on into the kitchen. He turns to her walking slowly behind him. “I need you to do something for me.”

“It’s good to see you too,” she says.

Quinn laughs a little. “I hoped you’d be up,” he says.

“Yeah,” says Toni, “and not sleeping.”

“Cara told me what happened,” says Quinn. “I’m sorry.”

“Everyone seems to be sorry,” says Toni.

“I wondered how you were,” says Quinn. “I rang...”

Toni walks over to him and nudges him with her elbow. “Thanks,” she says.

Quinn hooks his arm around her and she briefly lays her head on his shoulder.

“So, what do you want me to record?” Toni asks.

“A hiss.”

“Eh?”

“The tape-hiss of your grandfather’s cassettes.”

“Are you nuts?”

“Don’t you know Toni?” says Quinn nudging her with his elbow, “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.”

“Here we go...,” says Toni.

“What,” laughs Quinn, “come on, I’m trying to work out my end-of-term composition—I have to be able to philosophise a bit, make it sound like I know what I’m doing.”

“What are you doing?” asks Toni.

“I’m recording sounds I will organise—somehow—in my composition,” says Quinn. “I know that I’d like the tape-hiss to be in the background, you know, as if it’s always there, just like the earth’s hum.”

“The earth hums?”

“That’s one theory I particularly like. A Japanese geophysicist reckoned that the earth’s mantle is constantly sounded by changes in atmospheric pressure. Although, it’s not a single note that’s produced, it’s a cluster of about 50 notes about 16 octaves below middle C, too low and quiet for us to hear.

“Actually, I think everything has a kind of hum, even though we may not hear it. Even the human ear emits faint pure tones as the hairs inside the ear resonate at specific frequencies. Not that we can hear it.”

“Wow,” says Toni, cupping her hand over her ear, “even our ears make music.”

Quinn laughs. “I want to explore the voice.”

“Are you going to make voice music, like we did?” asks Toni.

“Yeah” says Quinn. “I’m going into the studio now to play my father’s voice to the piano and record it in the strings.” For him, the sound of his father’s voice can only make sound as music.

“Cool,” says Toni “I’m glad you’re doing that.”

Quinn nods.

“Did you sample your father’s voice?”

“I went back to the film clips I had on my computer. I took a sound-bite of him talking to me.”

“You have a film of you and your father talking?”

“Neat eh? I’m only about four of five years old, and he’s showing me his shells, on the carpet in the lounge. My mum says I always wanted to see them.”

“You talked to her about the clips?”

“I did, but she didn’t want to tell me much. She was okay with me watching them, this time. Although, she doesn’t really want to know what I’m doing in case she reveals how stupid she really thinks it is.”

Cara comes into the kitchen from the hallway wearing her shoulder bag. “Quinn, hi.”

“I’ve asked Toni to sample the recording noise on her grandfather’s tapes.” He holds his digital recorder out to Toni, who takes it in her hand.

“Yes,” says Cara: the grandfather’s tapes that she’s stowed away somewhere and will need to drag out again. Good on you, my friend Quinn. “And what will you be doing?” she asks him. “I’ll be in the sound studio,” he says. “And I’ll be in the library,” says Cara. “I want to find out more about Henry Cowell’s music. I might drop by when I’m done.”

It amazes Quinn that he hasn't worked in the studio before. He's always done his own recording and arranged his soundbites on his computer. He remembers the studio he visited as a kid with his dad, on his fifth birthday. One of his dad's mates was a sound engineer, although his dad had nothing to do with the recording industry—he was a storeman with a wide circle of friends. His dad probably thought the control panel would impress him, which it had.

The university studio is set up with one of the most advanced consoles in the country, thanks to a bequest, and also comes with its very own sound engineer. Quinn speaks of what he wants to do—for a start—and the guy isn't fazed by it. "Call me 'Sy,'" he says, "I'll help work things out."

Sy has made small speakers and microphones perfect for "interior recording," and they talk about creating a resonance chamber within the body of the grand piano that sits in a baffled room behind glass.

It surprises Quinn when Sy says "don't go messing with the piano's strings—putting paper clips on them or screws between them." He assures him that he isn't following the prepared piano practice of John Cage—even though it introduced some fascinating piano-sound to the world of music.

"It's Gibbs that doesn't like it," says Sy, "he thinks it can damage the strings. He's not even happy with string-strumming or plucking." Quinn says that he just wants to capture voices sounding in the piano's open strings.

Sy nods as if this is the most natural thing in the world, while putting his speakers and microphones inside the piano, and a standing microphone outside it. They agree that of all musical instruments, the piano has the richest potential for sound. After all, it has not only been the powerhouse behind the writing and performance of 'classical' to 'avant-garde' music as we know it, but it has also offered the fullest aural experience of resonance—the sound of its music.

"What are we playing to the piano today, then?" Sy asks.

"My father's voice," Quinn says before thinking how best to explain away the strangeness of such an impulse and the words that will soon be spoken under a piano lid by a voice he had all-but forgotten.

Sy stands and looks at Quinn. He has a way of being still that makes Quinn wonder at a mind that takes all the show from its body. Then Sy smiles and Quinn laughs as a bit of the show lights the guy's face. "Okay," says Sy, "let's see what those strings make of your dad."

Quinn doesn't want the lid of the grand completely closed. He knows it can't be fully propped or they will lose too much of the sound, but he wants to let some of it out, and on. "That's in deference to radio pioneer Marconi," he says to Sy, "and his belief in sound that fades but never dies." "Yeah," says Sy, "did you know that he thought he would one day broadcast the words of Christ's Sermon on the Mount, as if they were circling the globe and he just needed the right apparatus to tune in?" Quinn nods and laughs, "yeah," he says, "that was at least a notion based on his understanding that sound is a resonant event: an event in which a vibrating object disturbs a surrounding medium." Quinn looks over at Sy smiling and adds "you know, there is no sound without resonance; sound continues, in some way, in some form."

Quinn hands Sy a memory stick and he opens it on the computer to reveal a list of soundbites named after their content. With each clip Quinn has slowed his father's voice without making it lower and inserted tiny slithers of space to draw the whole thing out, as if it were just molecules of word-thought in air. He wants to give it as much time as it needs to resonate with the strings, to find its sympathetic frequencies in pitch that is already there, in his father's will to speak.

"Let's not talk about it," Sy says, "that's ironic."

"Yip, we can start with that one, and record it," says Quinn.

It is weird: he can't hear anything at first while the piano strings can. Then the sound starts to come through. Quinn wonders if the strings will pick out any notes at all, but they start to sound, and as they do they sound others in a fuzzy kind of chain reaction. There is no melody, but there are particular notes that can just be heard to ring. They sound more than once as if his dad can't help but compose his speech in just his way, sending air from his lung past vocal chords, through the resonance chambers of his mouth and out to another person's ear. The microphones are sensitive enough to pick it up: a string-whispered cloud of resonant pitch that envelops the notes of his father. It bounces off the soundboard and the sides of the piano's body while it escapes; it comes back on itself while it flows away from the rapt attention coiled as copper wire inside an acoustic-to-electric transducer.

It is ironic: his father talks of not talking yet makes a kind of music. The words are still there: "Let's not talk about it today, eh?" They are words to kill closeness, to cut ties. But another intent emerges, and expands with pitch and its resonance.

Sy tilts his head, as if to direct his words into the run of his thought. "The sound that is being made belies the phrase, you know, the urge not to talk," he says.

Quinn tilts his head too. "So it becomes a part of a piece, a part of a story."

Sy nods. “What’s next? ‘Listen to this’?”

Quinn had sat next to his father on the carpet. His mostly bare young legs were easily bent either side of him to make room for the shells in front of him. He had recognised them: the spiny bright white one, the pearlescent spiral, the speckled one that curved into a fan and, best of all, his Tortoise Cowry. Quinn was putting them in a line and his father ran his fingers across the surface of each as he went. “It’s amazing to think these were just sitting on a beach somewhere and someone picked them up,” his father said, “who knows where?” The young Quinn was surprised that his dad hadn’t found them himself but asked “were they in the water too?” His father picked up the Cowry and held it to Quinn’s ear: “listen to this,” he said. And the young Quinn had and was sure he heard the sea. “Does it remember?” he asked his dad who spurted a laugh to sound his appreciation of his son’s inquiring sense.

Sy plays the soundbite to the piano. Quinn notices that as the voice music bounces and escapes, he can’t help but wait on tenterhooks for what might have been promised and carried out on a cloud-cluster of some new search. And then, without him being aware of it, Sy plays the next clip. His father’s laugh bursts out to ring a high note, descends through a series of smaller bursts, and finishes with the sound of his father’s breath drawn through a soft barrage of air-tones. It is a laugh, but it is no longer a laugh.

Sy plays the laugh-clip again. He likes it. “I reckon everyone has their own way of laughing,” he says. “My father kind of chuckles and snorts. My mum says he chortles. You can hear the way your father laughs: it’s like a sudden doubling over, as if someone hit him in his solar plexus with a delightful thought. It’s really...unbridled.”

“Uhuh,” says Quinn smiling: the guy has the makings of a poet. “But at the same time it’s something else.”

“I hear that too,” says Sy, tilting his head again. “It’s a laugh pitch-blurred with a yowl.”

Quinn laughs. What the fuck is a yowl?

Sy shakes his head as if he is not quite right. He is about to have another go when he spins his chair to meet the sound of the door opening a crack with a rap of knuckles.

“Hello?” says Cara.

Sy opens the door and Cara slips through. “I thought I’d drop by,” she says to Quinn.

Quinn half-trips over to Cara while Sy goes back to his seat, “cool, hi,” he says. Sy looks her over: she’s a bit skinny. “This is Sy,” says Quinn. Cara wonders how old

he is—maybe thirty? “How’s it been going?” she asks. Quinn and Sy nod, make small sounds of affirmation and nod some more. It’s going well.

“Listen to this,” says Sy playing the clip of Quinn’s father laughing once more. Cara listens and hears the sound of an air-pulsed voice slow-fall to gather notes in its slide and make a close-noted kind of music. “What will you do with it?” she asks. Quinn laughs and shrugs, “I’ll make it part of something bigger,” he says.

Quinn remembers listening at home to the music he made with Cara and Toni: the harping of the grand. He had heard the up-and-down cascades of notes made by fingertip and nail—they blurred while individual notes could be heard in attack, even without the benefit of the piano’s hammer. Then Cara had begun to play low bass notes and he had heard the hammer strike, the notes spread through air and wood. And then, there was the delicately sharp suggestion of a melody, plucked. Chords and bass began to rumble together and sounds blurred as actions quickened for the slow strangeness of his string-creaking. Let loose, the piano hammers had fully come to life with chords that grabbed and threw as many heard-notes as he could remember. They were all able to make sound for sound, to be part of something bigger.

“Cara,” Quinn says, “why don’t you play?” They could make more of his father’s voice. It wouldn’t be so hard. “You could respond to the inside from the outside.”

Sy grabs a pair of headphones from above the console. “Actually, you could do that. I could hook you up, Cara. You would be able to hear everything through the headphones, and play, and hear, and play...”

Cara looks doubtfully at Quinn and the piano behind glass. “I don’t want to spoil a work in progress,” she says. The voice of Quinn’s father is being heard inside that piano.

“No, I’ll come up with a sequence and give you some direction.”

“You are the composer,” says Cara, still doubtful.

“I’ll tell Sy when to play the clips. You know—we’ll give it all plenty of time to happen.”

“What would I be responding to?” asks Cara, shifting her weight from one foot to another.

“There’s the laugh,” replies Quinn, “you’ve heard that.”

Cara nods. Yes, she heard something like a slow glissando, a strange free-fall of laugh and air through air.

“We can just try something,” says Quinn. “Who knows where it will lead?”

Cara had been in the library reading about Henry Cowell's "string piano." She was excited by the fact that she and Toni had used the technique Cowell invented for himself in *The Aeolian Harp* a century before them. He had composed a piece that allowed him to strum the piano as a laid-down harp responding to open chords. He said it was his sonic exploration of wind harps made by children from silk threads stretched across bow-like twigs. She had imagined the composer one day coming across a whole collection of them hanging in an open window, a myriad of tiny sound-webs left to play.

But it was hearing Cowell's *Harp of Life* that made her feel like an explorer of piano-sound. She heard the way he was able to play on the keyboard yet make piano strings sound as if they were being strummed by some contained yet gradually released power. Sitting with headphones on, tucked in a listening booth, she heard Cowell roll the palm of his left hand along rows of keys to make dark and deep note-clusters sound under the chordal melody of his right hand. Later in the piece, he ran his forearm along lines of low keys, with an increasingly frightening force. She could see him crashing his arm downward from elbow to wrist, letting the hammers strong-harp the piano.

According to Cowell, the God of Life was strumming 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 sounded across time and space, something came to life.

"I'll give it a go," says Cara.

Quinn grabs pen and paper from Sy and sits down beside him. "I think we'll play 'Let's not talk about it' followed by 'Listen to this.' Then we'll alternate between those two, get something going between them. And then we'll go back to 'Listen to this' and launch 'The laugh.'"

Sy nods.

"How will I know what I'm supposed to do?" asks Cara.

"I'll give you some instructions," says Quinn. "In the meantime, I know you'll enjoy getting to know the piano a little. I'll bring something through."

Cara looks through glass at a piano with a soft sheen on its lid, its keyboard exposed.

"You'll know when we're recording," says Sy, "the light on the wall above the piano glows red."

Cara sits at the piano and gently runs her fingertips along its keys, forward and back. She hits middle C. She plays a chord for C major, and C sharp minor. Then she plays a melodic motif she likes to think she is coming to know: a high note dropping to a lower note and hop-stepping back to the same high note. She puts the headphones on

and her head is taken over by the sound of it resonating inside the piano, a small cycle of notes. Sy has hooked her up. She plays her motif again, slowly, and hears the way the keys softly sound to throw the hammer to strike the string that resonates not only downwards but upwards and out: the piano and her music.

Quinn taps Cara on the shoulder and hands her a small piece of paper, torn along its bottom edge. These are Quinn's "instructions" and they look to her like the briefest of lists. She slips the phones from her ears. For "Let's not talk" he has written "silence"; for "Listen to this" he has written "a single note?"; for "Let's not talk – Listen to this" he has written "single notes, backwards and forwards?"; and for "The laugh" he has written "ad lib." Cara looks up and shakes her head. "They're not very detailed instructions," she says. He laughs lightly and rests the fingers of one hand on her shoulder: "I know you can make music for the piano. I've seen you in action." Cara smiles, "as long as I've got something to respond to, to make the music go..." "You won't have a problem," says Quinn.

Cara sits and waits. She tries to imagine herself playing notes—which notes?—to the sound of Quinn's father's voice, and then it is there: "Let's not talk about it today, eh?" Quinn has slowed the words down somehow and she can hear strings start to sound as they find tones in his father's voice. She listens for notes she can play on the keyboard and at least one seems to be there, caught by consonants. She waits to try and pick this note out with some key in front of her, and the clip plays again. She waits and is surprised when the same clip comes in yet again, before the other one has finished. Quinn and Sy are obviously at the controls.

Quinn hears words and tones overlap as his voice-music expands the energy and strange hope of his father's talk of not talking. "Hey, that's great," he says, gesturing with his hand to let cloud-tones fade and escape.

Cara's finger hovers over the key she wants to sound. She waits for what she thinks of as a bar's silence, and then she hears it: "Listen to this." The father's voice seems to come in so easily now. She hears the hiss of his last 's' and sounds middle C. She hears the note softly struck and rung around the body of the piano, encircling a tone cluster while accenting notes that ring through it. The clip plays again. The father's voice catches a note in the 'i' and 'en' of "listen," one falling slightly to the next, and falling slightly again, to the pitch of the phrase-ending 'i' of "this." The clip plays again and she plays a B flat, just a crack of a note below middle C. Before the voice and her note have faded the clip plays again, and she drops to an A—the white note just below the black note of B flat.

Quinn likes the way Cara's notes seek those in his father's talk, while they both make a less known kind of music.

The next clip takes Cara back to not talking, but before that has faded, there is the urge to listen, "Listen to this." She begins to move slowly between the upper and lower fingers of her right hand, from and around middle C, as if she is sounding out the father's range with notes always only just lower or higher than the last. While two soundbites alternate and overlap, her hand moves slightly crab-wise up and down a small part of the keyboard, into a motif of minute circling movements.

Quinn smiles and nods as Cara's sound-circle of shifting notes jostle his father's shifting words.

Gaining momentum, Cara continues her circling notes, as the last clip fades. And 'The laugh' arrives with its free-fall of sound and air. A tone-cloud rings around air-accented notes with every voiced burst, and they all gather under the lid of the piano as if waiting to settle and fall.

She lets the laugh make its first pass, and then she puts her hand on the piano with fingers straight, her palm overlapping both black and white keys. When the laugh begins again, she greets it with a high palm-cluster of notes. There's no way to play notes any closer together than this, with piano hammers hitting as a confined group, a satisfying percussive attack. As the laugh descends, Cara jumps her palm clusters down the keyboard, punctuating the slow sound-fall of the father: piano and voiced notes mass-cluster around a long line of high-to-low strings.

Quinn stands and laughs. He leans forward to get a good look at Cara. Her right hand still lies flat on the keyboard and she has skewed her body to play with it near the bottom of the keyboard, where her left hand would normally play. She lets sound fall dense and away from the high bell-ring of a father's first note-burst. She doesn't move a muscle.

Quinn watches her sit with her headphones on, so still. He raises a flat hand to Sy, "let's leave that one there," he says. "But let's play one more, let's play 'Listen to this.'"

Cara's hand is still warm on the black and white keys that make the sum total of one part of the keyboard. The piano's sound has all but disappeared, and then, she hears it, "Listen to this." She smiles: she's listening. And then words and tones fall softly to silence and her smile creases at its corners. She sees herself as a teenager turning to face her father. He has come into her bedroom after they have had yet another fight. He doesn't say anything, he just stands there. She spreads her hands below her heart and

says “this could all be avoided, if we could just talk, if you would just listen!” Her father turns in half a circle; she can’t see his face. And he leaves her without a word.

The red light above the piano no longer glows. Cara curls the fingers of her right hand and runs the edge of it downward along a row of white notes, and back up again. Her hand rolls quietly up and down as she breathes in and out: her rise and fall.

“Woah!” she says as Quinn takes her shoulder in the grip of his hand. She slips her headphones off and they hug her neck. Quinn is able to pull her up by her shoulder and the back of her legs push the piano stool away. He has a hand on each shoulder and she tips forward so that her face is next to his. “That was so cool,” he says through her hair his nose has pushed behind her ear. His hands slip down her arms and he holds both of her hands. She smiles, but shakes her head. She tips forward again and rests her forehead on his chest, for a moment. Then she withdraws her hands and holds her arms, “did you get what you wanted?” she asks him. He puts his arm around her shoulders and turns her towards the door.

“I actually came by to talk to you about Toni,” Cara says to Quinn as they walk away from the recording studio and off the university campus.

Quinn holds a CD of his session in one hand and pats it against the palm of the other. He nods.

“I was pretty impressed,” says Cara, “with the way you got her to go back to the tapes.”

“Oh,” says Quinn. “Yeah, but I do want the tape-hiss for my composition.”

“I know, but it was clever of you to give her your digital recorder.”

“Yeah,” he says, “but not as clever as you, back there,” pointing his thumb behind him.

Cara stops and smiles. “I certainly didn’t think I’d be doing anything like that when I got up this morning.”

“Me neither,” says Quinn and they both stand facing each other for a moment.

Cara walks and says “I was listening to *The Harp of Life* in the library this morning, before I came to see you.”

“*The Harp of Life*,” repeats Quinn.

“It’s so amazing,” says Cara. “Cowell plays clusters to make the piano sound like it’s being harped from the inside, but he’s playing on the outside.”

“He did harp it on the inside,” says Quinn.

“Oh, I know,” says Cara, “*The Aeolian Harp* and his ‘string piano.’”

“Harp piano,” says Quinn smiling.

Cara laughs, “Yeah, that’s the one.”

Quinn stops her and takes her fingers. He lays his whole hand against hers, “haped clusters for The laugh,” he says.

It's not every day you end up sitting in front of a prehistoric tapedeck recording tape hiss for a guy who thinks of it, not as a nuisance, but as the necessary static-like baseline of his end-of-term composition. Oddly enough, its sound has captivated her enough to send her to her grandfather's bookcase. If she had asked Quinn, he would have been able to tell her all about it.

Tape hiss is the noise of analogue recording. When recording to tape, sound is transformed from dynamic pressure to electric voltage to magnetic field oscillations that are ultimately transferred to magnetic tape. The 'problem' is that the microscopic magnetic grains embedded in the tape cause fluctuations in the magnetic field and, in turn, produce tape hiss. She has the BBC's guide to recording beside her and she thinks of showing Quinn the pages on Tape hiss, pages dedicated to its evils and how to all-but get rid of it. She would crack the pages back and forth between her fingers, teasing him about his love for it.

As she now knows, she has heard and recorded not only tape hiss, but also the hiss, crackle and pop of the needle in the groove of her grandfather's original vinyl records. And she has heard and recorded tape hiss boosted by the fact that some of her grandfather's records were originally recorded to tape reel before they were put on vinyl and recorded by him to cassette tape: hiss became part of the record that played the hiss that was recorded to a tape with hiss. In fact, tape hiss has increased linearly with each of these recordings.

She is sure that Quinn would be impressed by concert pianist Benno Moiseiwitsch's recording of the 'Moonlight' Sonata, not because of his particular way of bringing Beethoven's music to life, but because of its glorious tape hiss. He might kneel on the rug beside her and lean forward on his hands as if to get as close as he can to the source of the sound. He might nod at some thought he had and sit back on his heels to look at her inquisitively. She would smile and tell him that she hears the hiss as part of the pianist's life being lived in a very particular way at a particular moment: her grandfather has marked it on the tape sleeve—"Moiseiwitsch, 1941."

Yes, she could say that hearing the hum of static crackle makes her feel as if she is right there, eavesdropping on the pianist's recording session. In fact, she feels like she could well have been there when he came into the recording studio and removed his

coat, was praised for a concert performance given the night before, shook out his hands, grimaced at the sound engineer as he confessed that he much prefers a live performance and then, at last, put his fingers on the keyboard.

According to her grandfather's books, Moiseiwitsch was considered one of the twentieth century's greatest pianists, probably because of the way in which he freely played the 'grand romantics.' He gave concerts almost religiously during World War II, playing night after night through London's Blitz, oblivious. Her grandfather would have liked that about him. She reckons that he would say that performances like his gave listeners a few untouched hours in which there was also the beautiful and tragic life of the music—the kind of music he may even have heard, thanks to some clever bugger and a fluke of radio-waves.

It's funny the way war makes heroes out of people. Every year she would get up before it was light and go to the Anzac morning service with her granddad. She would be surrounded by old men that looked like they had crossed oceans, skies and body-strewn fields to bring unparalleled knowledge of bravery and futility back with them. These old men knew how to survive and she could only guess at what that meant. It's amazing how easily her grandfather became the centre of her world.

For now, she just likes this recording of 'The Moonlight,' complete with its hiss. The pianist lets the quiet movement of the piece give him a fresh sense of the music under his fingers. There are voices and moments of conversation that come and go in those tireless triplets and the ground-searching line of an almost-growling bass. Moiseiwitsch lets the line of music slow when it comes close to resolution and pushes it forward gently as his fingers go after the next voice-lead line or special collection of notes. He has a way of giving the music all the flex it needs to flow with his full feeling for this sound-in-motion, without making it gush.

She likes to think that the pianist makes the voice of the piano echo the music he holds in his own, as if he would sing it the way he plays it, if he could. As she listens to it again, she likes to feel her voice in the notes even as she listens silently, as if her singing voice is held at bay, just under her silence. She remembers the 'Moonlight' hum she had that day in the garden, a "bermmm-----" in her throat and a buzz up to the back of her mouth and tongue, around her jaw and into her head. With this hum she held her voice close.

The digital recorder still sits in her hand, cradled at her throat as she begins to hum. She goes along with whatever the pianist lets lead her ear. She sustains high notes she finds in the tonality of the triplets and then the bass takes her down to low notes that

vibrate through her chest and up to her throat and head, as if she needs her whole body to make the sound of her 'Moonlight' hum. She starts the music again, turns the recorder on and places it back under her chin, above where her voice has its cords. She can actually feel it vibrate against her neck.

Along she goes, humming to 'The Moonlight', holding high notes with its triplets and low notes with its bass, up-and-down, high and low. She moves the recorder down to her chest and lays it where her lungs create the air pressure needed to vibrate her vocal cords. Breathing deeply, her sound is like a circuit that runs from her diaphragm, through her chest, up her larynx to her vocal chords, up into her pharynx, and into her mouth and the bones and flesh of her skull. She sits straight on her heels, making as much of the sound as she can.

She begins to make the line of a melody, with a sense of pitch that goes along with what she is given, but that wants more for itself. It is a melody that sometimes plucks out and takes over the middle or third voice she has heard in 'Moonlight' triplets and that the pianist calls out so well. It is mostly a long zig-zag of higher and lower notes, with the heart of a middle voice that drops to a grounding note of the bass, followed by a slow ascension of notes that push always upwards, until she begins with another high note.

And then, until the end of the piece she closes her eyes and holds the lowest long note of the bass with 'Moonlight' notes that move with and around her, her voice a constant for the always onward thread and pitch of the music. Her first note is low but then it is high, and then it is held low, held until she thinks she cannot sustain it any longer, and yet she holds it a little longer, she holds it, not until she hears the pianist release his chord, but until she thinks the reverberations of that chord have almost given her their last.

Toni was a chorister when she was a kid at primary school, trying to read music but relying on her ear's memory and the gesticulations of the teacher-as-conductor instead. Later, she sang in the high school choir. She thought she might start to name notes and follow them without the prompt of the piano, but this hadn't happened either. Her granddad said that, when it came to singing, some people could connect their particular bodily dots, and others didn't try. Now she hums and makes her body with its sound.

God knows what Quinn will find on his digital recorder when she gives it back to him. Maybe he will think of her 'Moonlight' hum as some sort of ode to lure him in by ear? But then, in a strange way, this body-hum is more intimate than when he stayed the

night, curled in behind her, right here on this rug, with his words against the skin of her neck. For the first time ever, she thought she might 'try him out.'

She quite likes the idea of carrying this recorder with her, throughout the rest of the day. Wherever she goes and whatever she does, she will consider what she is hearing, and what it could mean to her later. Perhaps she had a sense of this when she pulled one box of tapes from under the bed in her grandfather's old room. It was a box she hadn't sorted through, and she felt like she was about to do something new. Then the Moiseiwitsch recording had presented itself, and she had made her 'Moonlight' hum.

When her father rings to ask her to meet him in the Botanic Gardens, she wants to venture out. He is in town for a couple of days. He tells her that he wants to talk with her; she tells him that she wants to talk with him.

She takes a trolley bus over the roll of a few hills and then gets out to walk in the height of the afternoon's warmth. She had been listening to the rhythm of the clatter of overhead rails passing through the connection points in aerial lines. She thought about recording it, of holding her recorder towards the roof while others wondered what the hell she was doing. When she gets off the bus she pulls the recorder from her pocket and walks ahead of it. As the bus pulls away she flicks it on and holds it out as it rounds the corner. It makes the sound of a "clack, di-dum, clack" as it goes. She smiles at her capture and flicks the recorder off again and makes the short walk to the Gardens.

When she gets there, she still has the recorder in her hand. The sun is out and she stands to listen. It's almost as if the brightness of the light filters her world of sound to present only the warm hum of bees working while the sun shines. People are out and they are also guided by petal and scent.

She loves the way the rose garden sits on the brow of a low flat rise. Paths lead down and away and on and up towards the top of the hill that has become a look-out spot for the city. Roses burst and thorny branches sprawl across the expanse as if to weave an intricate tablecloth immaculately spread for high tea. She and her dad have come here a few times over the years. They would always wander between the rows of roses and read out names that hinted at some story-book legacy of gardening.

Her father is sitting on a white wooden seat at the head of the gardens with his legs crossed and one arm draped behind him. He hasn't seen her yet and she walks towards him wondering at the series of events that made this man her father and not just another person she might pass without paying much attention. He looks at a young woman walking toward him as many others have in the last twenty minutes and then he

realises that it is Toni. He is almost shocked to see her, suddenly part of his life for real. He uncrosses his legs and pushes himself to the front edge of his seat, “Hi, love,” he says.

Toni sits and puts the recorder in her pocket. They watch people walk to and fro.

“When do you go back to Auckland?” she asks.

“Tomorrow, I’m just down here working on some of the older presses, when it’s not too busy.”

“Cool,” says Toni.

“What have you been up to?”

Toni shuffles her feet: bugger all apart from sleeping and trying to figure out if some part of my life just fell apart at the seams. “Not a lot,” she says.

“Your mother wanted to talk with you.”

Toni rolls her eyes: what are you, a messenger?

“You know me,” her dad says, “I’m not really a phone person, so I thought we could meet...”

“I’m sorry I didn’t let you into my room, you know, after...”

“That’s okay. It was all a bit of a bull’s up really.”

Toni laughs: one hell of a bulls-up, starting with her grandfather. “Did he really throw her out?” she asks.

Her dad looks at her like she just exploded into tight-held flames and he has no extinguisher at the ready.

He shakes his head, nods, then shakes his head again. “I don’t really know what happened. I can only piece things together as best I can.”

“But weren’t you there, weren’t you part of it?” asks Toni.

“Yes. And no. I remember my mum, your grandmother, leaving. One day she was there and the next day she wasn’t. She never had very good health and I thought she was just going away, taking a break. I left home a couple of years later.

“I got the sense that your grandfather gave her an ultimatum.”

“What kind of an ultimatum?”

“To decide whether she wanted to be with him or not.”

“Why wouldn’t she want to be with him?”

“I think she was in love with someone else...”

“So much for the luck of a box of biscuits,” says Toni quietly.

“Actually, there was more to it than that. I think he desperately wanted to make her well, and that just put pressure on her. When she couldn’t live up to his expectations, she shut him out. They fell apart...”

“So, she was sick *and* he threw her out,” says Toni.

“When I was angry with him, I would think that. She left. You could say he made her do it...”

Toni shakes her head hard. “But when you love someone, surely, surely you...”

“I saw her, before she died.”

Toni sits in silence for a moment. “When was that?” she asks

“A couple of years or so after we moved to Wellington. I’d seen her before, on and off, but that time she wrote to me and asked me to come.”

“She knew she was dying?”

“Maybe. She was born with lungs unable to fully expand. She could never take a deep breath. When I last saw her it seemed like she could hardly breathe.”

Toni thinks of her digital recorder lying above her breast and imagines the sound of a lungful of air making its way to her vocal cords. She tucks her head in and crosses her arms over her chest. Her dad sits quietly.

“Why didn’t you tell me about her, that she had died?” Toni asks.

“So much water had gone under the bridge. I wanted to tell you about her so many times...”

“I wish you had,” she says and her father bows his head to nod. He looks up. “She played Chopin beautifully,” he says.

Toni unfolds herself slowly and smiles. “The Nocturnes?” she asks.

“Yes, and she loved his Piano Concerto too, although that was a little more demanding.

“Every time I went to see her, I would go home and play a Nocturne for her. When we were living with your grandfather, I would play them on his piano—the piano she played, when she could. I think he knew full well what I was doing.”

Toni remembers her grandfather sitting with his hands quietly crossed in his lap while her father played his piano because “a piano needs to be played.”

“Your grandfather played a Nocturne the night I told him that she had died,” her father says.

Toni looks between rose stems as if to see her grandfather at his piano—her piano.

“Did she end up with somebody else?” she asks.

“Yes, but she told me it wasn’t the person she had thought she was in love with.”

Toni snorts and shakes her head. Her dad smiles at her and lightly buffets her with his shoulder, “bloody relationships!” he says.

After waving goodbye to her father, she takes the digital recorder out of her pocket. She wants to walk to the top of the hill that overlooks the city. She walks, flicks the recorder on and holds it down beside her. She can hear the way her sneakers crunch the gravel and can even feel the slightest prickle of it in the soles of her feet. The still branches of various native trees shelter the path from the sun. They create leafed strokes of light and dark that stripe her as she walks.

Toni thinks of her grandfather’s room lined with books of music, his piano sitting among them. She thinks of the notebook and the soft scrape of her fingertips on the black linen of its cover. She stops briefly and looks through trees to the rose garden woven in colour and perfume below her. She thinks she may have figured something out, for once. It seems to her that he wrote to explore the dynamics of music, of life, and of people—the way they interact and relate, what they know and how they put things. For him music was a way of getting some sense of who he was and might be, of getting some sense of the way his life—or any life—was and could be. But, ultimately, it was his way of getting closer to the life in the life of the music. She flicks the recorder off and continues to walk.

At the top of the hill she flicks the recorder on again and stands with it in front of her. She doesn’t know what it will pick up, but she thinks she can hear it for sure: the hum of the city, a melange of so many sounds, the drone of a hum.

Cara is a little surprised to find that Toni is not at home: only that morning she was a sad-sack, and now she is out-and-about. “That digital recorder must have done the trick,” she says to Quinn, who was expecting to retrieve it.

Quinn had put his hand against hers, not just his fingertips or his fingers, but his whole hand. With her whole hand she had struck both black and white keys: her fingers long along a block of black keys, her line of knuckles across the knobbly ridge of black keys above white, the heel of her palm pressing down on white keys with the force of new action. And then, Quinn had laid his whole hand against hers.

She hadn’t said much to him on the walk back to the villa, even though she thought she should, at first. She had thought of Toni, sitting close to a tapedeck speaker and recording tape-hiss. But then, with the rhythm of her steps, she heard orchestral strings play her melody, a melody that begins with a higher note, quickly drops to a lower note, and hop-steps back to that same high note, drops to a lower note, and hop-steps back to that same high note. Yes, she heard what she had almost heard earlier, before she was interrupted by Toni the last time she was at this desk—the notes of an orchestra, carried on violin bows and sounded for her melody, in unison, across strings. And then, her piano melody was there in both of her hands, in unison, together, in unison with strings, piano and orchestral strings, in unison, together...until her descending bass returned to her left piano hand and kicked cellos and double basses into the life of low strikes.

Stepping out, with Quinn looking across at her and smiling, she heard notes spread like the splay of light through a prism, the quick fall of sun on their steps. There she heard it: the full-on spread of notes, across the full harmony of her melody and driving bass. And she sits at the grandfather’s desk in what could have been silence and writes it, with the help of his piano to her right: the piano with both its treble melody and descending bass in chords; the violins and violas, each with her melody in four parts; and the bass strings with layers of her descent between them. Her melody in its full low-felt flow.

Back at the villa, Quinn sat next to Toni’s box of tapes on her rug, flicking through them as if after some clue. She stood looking down at him, rubbing her chin, not knowing what to do next. “I need to write,” she said, before he could push ‘play’ on

the brick of a tapedeck. Then he had hugged her and hurried out as if with her momentum, his CD in his hand.

Earlier, she had rested her head against his chest as he held her hands. But she had been thinking of her father, her plea for him to listen: he had left her room without a word.

At the piano, Cara sweeps clustered fingers up and then down: a cluster of the four fingers of her right hand, the slight curve of a turned-over fleshed hook, a four-fingered cluster. Then she makes her melody again, its first high note this cluster. It quick-falls to a lower note under her thumb, then hop-steps up its major scale—with the odd four-fingered cluster—until her little finger hits down to hold its clear high note, falls to a lower note, and hop-steps with clusters, back to its clear high note. She is sure, each time she hits a cluster, she hears a range of open piano strings resonate, a quick-light barrage of notes. She plays her cluster-full melody again, and again, each time with clusters on different notes, decoratively bombarding her melody, collecting string sound as she goes. Her bass continues, clear. She gives it time to resonate with a plethora of notes, notes she has around her.

She isn't sure of how to write her clusters. When Cowell wrote *The Harp of Life*, he wrote the top and bottom note of a cluster and a solid or wavy line between them, to indicate a simultaneous or rolled cluster. She knows Cowell said that his clusters should be very precise and practised as a particular technique, but she wants to hear their discordant playfulness in passing: her fingers landing on a bunch of keys at a time. She draws an 'x' for the head of notes that should be played with her four-fingered cluster, and she writes a little '4' in the white space above them.

She can imagine Gibbs, holding her manuscript pages in his hands, asking her why she feels the need to add to a world of musical notation. She makes the edge of a shrug and thinks of coming onto the music hall's stage, with the bunch of her four fingers, with her clusters on her hands.

She sees her father sitting in the audience. She is at the grand piano and this is her end-of-term composition and its performance. He won't be there, but now he is, and he has heard her beginning, her opening with its descending bass, her melody played also with orchestral strings. And he hears her sudden play for groups of notes, notes played all-at-once. Does he shake his head? Does she see him smile?

She knows he loves the sound of solo violins and they play her melody now, in unison just as they did when they made their first entrance, in contrast to her impulsive

play with clusters, the melody still as the piano first made it. She writes this violin melody played straight, then she shares it with violas.

And then, her father hears the cello with the part that she writes next: her melody, deep where it began for her, in the bass. Her melody is their refrain, until she writes the notes that put her hand, once more, on the bass keys of the piano, fingers stretched to sound the upper and lower notes of an octave, little finger and thumb. Then her third finger makes the inside of the hand for a chord: the fill of her doubled notes. Cellos fall silent, and there is her bass in the piano, where her right hand plays, coming down from its usual high perch: she writes doubled chords that take both her hands down, the low blur of more sound, where it all began in the bass.

Her father sits with the student programme in his hand. He reads of her “clusters” and he hears the notes she now writes to sound her melody, with her clusters, her persistence. Does she bring her fingers down as both an attack and an artful play with their sound? In more recent years he has been the subject of her attack, before she left home with no more than a suitcase and a hug goodbye. She wasn’t always like that. “You’re supposed to cry when you leave home.” That is what he had said to her, and they had both laughed a little sadly.

Her father always admired her drive to a level of mastery beyond what even her teachers expected of her, and perhaps he smiles as he remembers the way she overwhelmed her first few. Each time she was passed on to another, in the hope they could tell her more, show her more of music under her fingers. She powered through Royal Schools of Music examinations. She would practice the prescribed pieces at the piano for a couple of months, perform them to an aged man who did little more than nod, and then she would wait for her report, folding her ambition up inside her as if she was performing some kind of origami. Her father was never surprised by her success, but she never expected it, even though she would have been shattered by anything less.

Cara gets up from her desk and goes to the piano, for the first time noticing the black-bound notebook on its lid. Toni must have put it there, for her? She picks it up and its cover is warm. She puts it back and is about to sit on the piano stool when Toni comes into the room with Quinn. “Look who I found sitting on the veranda,” she says.

“How’s the writing going?” he asks Cara who sits to tidy pages of music manuscript.

“It’s going pretty well, I think, for now,” she says with a four-fingered cluster on the tip of her pencil as well as her hand. She puts her pencil down, and picks it up again.

Why was he sitting out there on the veranda? She thought he was going to go home and work on his own composition.

Toni shows Quinn his digital recorder. "I got it," she says.

Quinn holds up his CD. "Me too."

Toni hands over the recorder and Cara almost expects him to kiss it as he takes it, before he slips it into his shirt pocket. "I need that," he says.

"There's a bit extra," says Toni.

"Extra hiss," laughs Quinn.

"Well, actually, there is...," says Toni, "there's the sound of the hiss of the original recording to reel as well as the sound of the vinyl that reproduced it, and the hiss of my grandfather's tape that recorded the vinyl. But no, I mean there's a bit more on there than you might expect."

"Sounds mysterious," says Quinn and Toni smiles, linking arms with him and leading him to kneel with her on her rug.

"Shall I introduce you to Moiseiwitsch?" she asks.

"Who?" asks Quinn.

"An Ukrainian-born pianist who won the hearts of the people of London during World War II," says Cara.

"How do you know that?" asks Toni, over her shoulder.

"One of my piano teachers had a CD of piano virtuosos and he was on it, playing Chopin among others."

"Would you like to hear him play 'The Moonlight'?" Toni asks Quinn.

"We probably shouldn't interrupt Cara's writing," Quinn says.

Cara picks up her pencil and puts it down again.

Toni sits down on her heels.

Cara can hear the bass of 'The Moonlight,' the bass that got her going with her own. She taps the tips of the four fingers of her right hand on the desk: "I've gone much further," she says over the stacked leaves of her paper. She taps her fingers on the desk with four fingers: her melody, playing for clusters. The reply of orchestral strings could be following right on its heels. "I should keep my music going," she says, turning her head to Toni who has since turned to her.

"Well," says Toni, "my granddad used to cart this tapedeck around and so can we. We'll go into my bedroom and let you get on with it."

Cara puckers her lips as if casting herself into the soft 'O' of sudden thought and taps her pencil on her two front teeth.

“Or, Cara could play us what she has written so far,” says Quinn, “that might help her get back into the flow of it.”

Cara raps her pencil on the palm of her right hand, the hand that made clusters for a father’s laugh. “Oh...,” she says, “I would have to talk you through the orchestral parts. It starts with the piano but there are the strings...” When she plays the string parts, she hears the notes of the piano drawn out by their edges: violin-high to deep in the thought of cellos and double basses.

Toni unplugs the tapedeck and holds its cord, thinking of Quinn at home later, recognising the Moiseiwitsch and discovering her voice. “And I’ve been recording stuff for you all day,” she says to him.

Quinn smiles, looks at Cara and opens his hands to feign exasperation. He reaches down to take the tapedeck’s handle from Toni who pushes him towards the door. “I rather like that digital recorder of yours,” she says.

On her way out, Toni stops her feet with a scuff, turns back quickly and says, “I saw my dad today.”

Cara sits at her desk and fans her manuscript pages out in front of her. Did Toni forget that she was about to confide when she found Quinn on the veranda, chin resting on his knees? “Oh come on,” she spurts, “it’s time for those violins,” and with the sweep of her hand in the air they scrub-strike the sudden overlap of a wide crunch of notes, double-stopping. Writing, she gives them two notes on the string—the half of a chord—and they play with and against each other, a semitone apart, with the smallest possible gap between their notes, their first dense cluster of double-drawn sound, a close sound-field of their own. And they make more of a melody with clusters, the cluster of their scrubbed-string-strike tipping them down, and just-stepping them up to a high clear note.

Clusters spread as violins are joined by violas, and they all play a cluster-full melody again, and again, moving with, for, beyond double-clusters: double-clusters in play.

Eventually, she gets it all down and smooths her palm over the round and ridge of the notes on her page.

Toni said that she has seen her father. Did he just pop in for a flying visit? What did she find out about her grandfather? What more does she know about her grandmother? She seems happy enough, so things can’t have gone badly. Perhaps she will go back to the notebook. Perhaps she will go back to ‘The Moonlight.’ Perhaps she will make something of her ‘thing’ with Quinn, whatever that is.

She can't hear anything from the bedroom, not that she would expect to. 'The Moonlight' is quiet at its loudest. She can't remember Toni ever taking her grandfather's tapedeck into her bedroom. But then, she hasn't had company in there before.

Cara remembers once secreting her first boyfriend away in her bedroom for a good part of the night, before she left home. Her room was downstairs and had its own entrance. They would both have been about seventeen and neither of them had a car. He had shared her bed before midnight and then he had sneaked out to catch the train home, figuring that the late train could be explained to his mother. But he came back, tapping softly at her door. He had missed the train and slipped with her back into bed. Then he fell asleep. He got home when his parents were having breakfast and that was almost the end of them. He had such a gentle touch, his hand was big and the skin was sometimes rough, but it was his intention that made his touch what it was. Quinn had laid his whole hand against hers.

Cara picks up her manuscript page and gives it a shake. "The violins, and the violas" she says, "have made their play." She hears them as she has written them, on their last pass of her melody, stepping up, with the odd spring of a cluster, to their highest note. And there are cellists with bows at the ready, ready to take the cluster-played melody into the bass. But she doesn't give it to them just yet. She goes to the piano and takes the melody quietly into the bass herself, with the ready weight of her right hand. Then she plays it again, but this time, as it quick-falls from its first note, she explodes a low and tight-made group of keys with the thrill of the smash of her fist. She plays it again, with her fist crashing through to her melody's end, crashing onto her next first note and on through the smash of her melody, again to its end. She jumps up with the satisfaction of it and sits at her desk to write fist-clusters, with '*' for their note-head and a capital 'F' above them: the piano and the upper hand of a fist.

Cara gets up and goes to stand with fingers on the piano. She remembers Toni bashing the piano a few months earlier, bringing the third movement of 'The Moonlight' to life for herself, almost blindly, but making her own physical sense of the music. She had stood just beyond the grandfather's room and heard her swipe, bash and jab the keyboard with aplomb—this young woman who had never had a piano lesson in her life. She had got such an intense rumble going in the strings: a rumble that Beethoven must have been after right from the first movement and fully released with the third.

And later, Toni had asked for her response to ‘The Moonlight,’ had urged her to put her hands on the piano. Later still, she had played the glorious rolling elbow-to-wrist clusters of Cowell, in the sound studio. With them she had responded to the falling laugh of Quinn’s father. And now, she thinks of sound in her future, of the piano in the full roll of a cluster, of the string orchestra scrubbing the double-stopped life out of low-to-high strings.

Sitting, she jots at the very top of her first page: “release the clusters of the first movement in the third.” She smiles as she thinks of her first movement taking her somewhere, to some sound-full release almost put off, yet fuelled, by a second movement, a second movement that will sound out the piano more gently, perhaps with fingertips across strings. She writes another note to herself: “harp it in the second?” Yes, through all three movements she will hear and make the special sound of piano strings vibrate, along with orchestral strings. She can sense the shining outline of her concerto now, the cast of her eye and ear on a web of silken threads. There is a first movement to explore the prospect of resonance, a slow movement to quietly separate, and yet bridge, two outside movements, and a third movement that lets itself go with her concerto’s main expressive event. “A Cara-sized concerto in three movements,” she says.

And then, yes, here are the cellos of her first movement, the cellos that were ready to take the strike and scrub of clusters into the bass. She made them wait while she smashed her melody with fists, and now, they play her melody straight, in a glorious solo that rolls and trembles, like a voice vibrating a long stringed throat. But then, they make their melody of double-drawn clusters: struck down, burst along, and back to the first crunch of a note. With double basses: struck down, burst along, and back to the first crunch of a note.

Then, with a first strike of her fist, Cara takes their low-clustered crash and flow for herself, onto her fists and into bass piano strings, into the left-hand melody of her bass...and on into her right-hand, this melody of fists. In her left hand: her descending bass, the hand-spread strike of the doubled-notes of low-to-lower octaves. Her bass moves her melody, calls it back, back to its beginnings. With its descent, here is her melody with clusters of fists, then with clusters of four fingers, and then, without clusters. And, returning, here are her bass octave and treble chord strikes. And here is her doubled low C sharp, in the sound of a crack between C and D, the low C Sharp with which she started, and with which she now ends.

She sits back in her chair and puts her hands on top of her head. She holds herself like that, then lets her arms fall. “A first movement that is less than five minutes in length,” she guesses. Gibbs will be pleased, her whole composition is not meant to take more than fifteen minutes in performance. She is yet to attend her “pre-performance meeting” with him, is yet to be subjected to his examination of both her project and her progress. She is writing a concerto that fits her. “Yes,” she says, “a Cara-sized concerto.”

“What’s that?” asks Quinn walking through from the living room. “Don’t tell me you just wrote a piano concerto.” He slaps his hands on his thighs and laughs.

“A first movement,” she replies.

Quinn shakes and then nods his head slowly. He walks to where she sits at her desk. He rests the back of his hand on the side of her face. “You are brave,” he says quietly.

Cara puffs out a lungful of air, just as Toni comes in looking for Quinn. She bumps his hand away with her own. “At least I’ll have something to report to Gibbs,” she says.

Quinn screws his face into the distasteful thought of his own up-coming meeting with Gibbs. He turns to Toni, and back to Cara. “Can we hear it?” he asks her.

Cara shakes her head. “No,” she replies, “not yet.”

Quinn shakes his head for himself. “No, okay,” he says. He takes his digital recorder from his pocket and waggles it at Toni. “Time to go home,” he says, slipping it back into his pocket.

Toni walks behind him, and out of the room.

When she returns, Cara is picking up her pages. “Are you interested in him?” she asks her.

“Quinn?” asks Cara.

Toni nods once.

“Yes, I would have to say that I am,” says Cara.

“Oh,” says Toni.

“But I have no interest in sleeping with him.”

“Okay,” says Toni.

“Actually, I thought you might have a few nights back.”

“I thought I might too.”

“Right,” says Cara.

“So, what are we going to do?” asks Toni.

“I’m going to write a three movement concerto,” says Cara, snapping the ends of her pages against the desk.

“Right,” says Toni.

“I’ve got to do better than I did with the nine bars of Gibbs.”

Quinn takes his shoes off inside his front door while his CD sits on the floor.

“I wondered when I’d see you,” his mum says, walking towards him. She stops to look at the CD. “Oh, you have some music?”

“Something like that,” says Quinn.

“Something like that?”

“It’s dad’s voice in the piano,” says Quinn, bending to grab the CD.

His mother coughs a little while she speaks: “in the piano?”

“It’s hard to explain,” he says, “I’ve been in the studio. The sound engineer and I recorded dad’s voice playing inside the body of the piano and activating the latent tones of the strings.”

“Wow,” she says, “why did you want to do that?”

Quinn looks towards the ceiling, trying to recall all of the events and thoughts that led him to the studio. “It’s a long story,” he says.

His mum coughs again and softly pats her chest. “It’s for your end-of-term composition?” she asks hoarsely.

“Yeah, you know that already, don’t you?”

“I guess so,” she says remembering the way she had stood with her heckles raised in his room and asked him if he thought he could make some sort of bloody music with his father’s voice. “Did it work?” she asks, “I mean, did you manage to make something of his voice?”

“Everyone’s voice is musical, mum,” Quinn says, turning towards his room.

His mum nods and pats her chest. “Drat this cold,” she whispers.

Quinn walks down the hallway and she calls out with a voice straining in her throat: “Can we listen to it?”

Quinn stops and turns back to her. “Not right now, I want to make a start.”

His mum nods quickly. “How’s Toni?” she asks.

“She’s cool,” he replies. Even though he had wanted to go home and discover what she had for him on his recorder, he had lain next to her across her bed and listened to the glorious hiss of the Moiseiwitsch recording.

“Actually,” he says, pulling his digital recorder from his pocket and showing it to his mum, “she made some recordings for me.”

His mum nods quickly, “and how’s the other girl, what’s her name?”

“Cara,” he says, “well, she was there when I recorded dad’s voice—she played the piano along with it.” And then her face had seemed to strain under the weight of some memory as she tipped forward to put her head on his chest. Her ear was beside his mouth as he spoke quickly for the brilliance of her, before she pulled away, unconvinced.

“Ah,” his mum says, “the music.”

Quinn turns and walks away from his mother and calls out in a voice that echoes around the hallway and back to her with the sound of four walls, “it was all a kind of music—voice music.” And it was wonderful. He can’t remember ever hearing anything so good.

He plugs his digital recorder into his laptop, slips on his earphones and downloads the files Toni has made. The first few are of tape hiss. The last of these must be from the Moiseiwitsch recording—it is the loudest and most interesting because of its layers of recording noise, just as Toni said. Then there is the “clack, di-dum, clack” of a trolley bus on its overhead lines, and he is back, walking away from the Ferret on a Friday night, heading for his cafe, his recorder in his shirt pocket. There he is, following a line of traffic with a trolley bus ahead, leading him through the city. He loves to walk with its sound. You can hear its travel from the inside, but it’s a more distant “clunk, ta-ta, clunk.”

He makes a looped track of the tape hiss, as well as the trolley bus. They both sound continuity, getting along, moving on. He plays them together, and closes his eyes. He feels like he has been put in motion as the possible subject of a stuttering film he once saw as a kid. It was made by flicking through picture cards, each with a scene-shot in one corner. Each sound-picture is slightly different and as the cards flick, he moves.

He plays the tape hiss again, on its own. It’s the very first thing he wants people to hear—its warm crackle. He hopes that as soon as they hear it, they will have the very real sensation they have discovered a familiar yet strange recorded object, that they are somehow simultaneously recalling and creating memories through sound.

The next soundfile gives him the crunch of Toni’s footsteps. She told him that she met her father in the Botanic Gardens, and he knows the sound that the pebble-like chip of its upper paths made under her as she walked. Her footsteps sound sheltered, even though a sound wafts up from somewhere below, as if she is climbing uphill and away

from the slight buzz of people. She stops for a moment as if something has grabbed her attention, and then she continues to walk a little while longer. He hears this, but at the same time, he is aware of the walk and its feel for himself. He excerpts the first part of the track and loops it. Then he sits back and listens to the repeated rhythm of steps with which he discovers the sound-space of an uphill path between trees, and the promise of some kind of quiet pattern to his own movement in thought.

Toni said that her grandparents had a few problems, that her grandfather didn't know how to help, or keep his wife, that her grandmother ended up with someone else. She said he must have known he was a stupid bastard, for giving her an ultimatum, for putting the resolution of their problems onto her, when she was too sick to cope. She said she reckons his life became about the life of music, and everything he could hear in it.

He is nearing the end of Toni's soundfiles and the next one is a little harder to figure. He hears her shuffle a bit, brush her hand a little clumsily against the recorder. He strains to hear beyond the closer sounds of a bird calling away from the recorder and someone's voice muffled by distance. He hears what he likes to think of as white wafts of steam coming off a warm pavement after rain. There are buildings and people all around him, and he can smell the musky tartness of tarseal. He smiles to himself. "I think that's what acousticians might call 'the urban drone,'" he says. He spoke to Toni of the world's hum, and she has given him the almost imperceptible hum of the city. "Sound giver," he says, using the term of American composer Paul Lansky. Toni is his sound giver.

He moves his cursor to open one of Toni's last soundfiles. "There's a bit extra," she had said. At first he hears the Moiseiwitsch hiss, and this only heightens his expectation. Then there are the first few notes of 'The Moonlight,' making more of each other as sound rolls along strings, gathering sympathetic frequencies in ever-ascending triplets and a descending bass. And there is the hiss.

But then, there is a woman's voice in 'The Moonlight' and he is confused. She follows the tonality of the upper triplets and the descending bass, moves from one to the other, in a hum. High to low, up and down, she holds notes for the movement of ascending triplets and a descending bass.

Surely this voice is Toni's. This is her singing voice in an 'm-hum,' enclosed yet resonant. This is the hum that has been studied by acousticians and musicologists for its pure resonance, for the way it makes the most of the voice as a bodily instrument, with

the tongue and all muscles relaxed, no need for articulation. It is the resonant hum singing teachers insist their pupils feel, before they open their mouths to sing.

Toni makes an upward sound with the slightest touch of vibration, as if the recorder has found a channel from the bottom of her chin above vocal cords and around and up to the tip of her head. Just as the sound heads out to explore her grandfather's room, it also heads down and away from the recorder to her chest. Toni's voice is enclosed in her body, yet travelling in every direction at once.

He imagines he hears what experiments with singers have revealed, right here with Toni: the making of sung sound. After her vocal chords convert her breath into tones, tonal vibrations travel up her pharynx above her vocal chords, into and past her mouth, and on into the natural resonance chambers of the nasopharynx and nasal cavities that ring around her soft and hard palates through to the tip of her nose, and up to the small resonance chambers of her sinuses—the small air cavities in her cranial bones. Tonal vibrations couple within these resonance chambers that sit behind the grey eyes, nose and mouth of her face. The sound-shake of her hum and chambered body join to find the strongest, fundamental, frequency of every note she chooses, as well as the harmonics that give each its rich dark ring. At the same time, the hard palate and the bony structures of her head vibrate to add the power and brilliance that will really carry her sound. *Chiaroscuro*, the Italians used to call it, the characteristic of the *Bel Canto* style fully reliant on the body's resonance for the light and dark of human sound.

Then the track stops.

The human voice is the only instrument that links a single sound source to multiple resonators: it is a multi-resonator system. The resonators of the throat, head and chest are all a different shape and size, but they will *all* couple with the same single initiating sound to collectively blend a tone's fundamental and harmonics to make a note's full harmonic series—the fullness of its resonance. Unrivalled, the voice can initiate fundamentals over a range of three octaves and harmonics ranging in frequency from 500 to 6,000 cycles per second. If someone was to try and replicate its fine workings, they would, somehow, have to work out the intricacies of exactly how, and where, within the body, the fullness of a note is made.

Quinn flicks back to the list of Toni's recordings, and there is still one more file to play. He opens it to hear, once more, Toni's Moonlight m-hum. But the sound has slightly changed. It is more open, further away from her face, with less soft buzz. He hears her breathe, the sound of air heading into her lungs, the soft split tones of the whistle of the sound of her 'pipes.' He smiles as he realises that she must have put the

recorder against her chest, not far below the neck of her 't' shirt, on the highest rise of her breast.

Here is Toni's m-hum. She is making an up-and-down, zig-zag of a melody, moving between notes of the Moonlight's treble and bass. And sometimes, through it, she picks out and expands on the middle voice given to her by the piano. And always, she is drawn to fall to the love of the bass, although she climbs back, up and along a line of her own notes, to begin again, higher. Her sound seems to fill her body rather than flow around it, as if each pitch is lit by a spark of breath everywhere at once to vibrate inside her body and out.

It is her last long-held notes that he loves the most, her notes for the Moonlight's last phrases and the hold of its bass. Over a sustained bass note, the pianist plays treble triplets that climb around but up the lines of the treble stave, before they fall to the last few bars, where two final sets of treble triplets fall furthest to two bass triplets chords. Toni holds the lowest held note of the bass, sung in her range. At first it is low and warm, then it sounds an octave higher, well above the piano, and then it is low again, rich with the piano's last chord.

Toni holds her last note, just as the pianist holds the notes of the chord and the resonance of the piece, for what seems like an age. Her voice is heard in its full soft vibrato, that tremor scientists now know is less the artifice of the singer, and more of the body's rhythm in the nerve pulse rate of muscles, the rhythm so necessary for the movement of life. It is the roll of a tremor that runs with the roll and rhythm of the hiss of the tape, recorded with Toni's hum.

"This is Toni's music," he says, and he makes a complete track of it, its two parts joined to give a sense of the full vibration of sound thrown out yet close to the vocal chords, and a little further away with the breath of the lungs. He puts it on a CD for Toni and imagines giving it to her and saying, "You found it, Toni. You found something to put with 'The Moonlight.'" But it is the end of Toni's music that he excerpts for his composition, for its last chord: a hum with its piano tones, the ring of the last of the hum as a chord.

Quinn pulls up a list of soundfiles. He has Toni's now, as well as his own. His are the soundbites of the walk he made in the wind after his fight with his mum, the sound of the wind bringing things to life. He has a file he has named 'notes of bamboo.' It is his record of the airy and irregular music of a wind chime hung in the porch of a comfortably worn weatherboard house. He has 'howling dogs,' in which one

neighbourly dog high-cries and howls for another. And he has a ‘sky-gusting tree,’ played by an upward swirl of air in the tall reach of its limbs above him.

The ‘notes of bamboo’ soundbite is one of his favourites. He can hear the wind as well as the erratic, soft, and upswept notes of buffeted bamboo chimes, “ka-dink-dink, k-ddddink, k-dink, ka-dink-dink”. He loves the way he has the sense of eavesdropping on the private music of the wind playing on someone’s porch, or in some special private space.

In seventeenth century Europe, travellers would visit the gardens of China and return to speak of the ‘sharawadji’ effect—the beauty that unexpectedly occurred in an environment with its own strange and captivating sense of order. Over two centuries later, acousticians applied the term to the everyday urban environment. With it they evoked the wandering of a sound-struck stroller, a walker taking complete pleasure in the unexpected beauty of some emergent sonic form—like the play of his wind chimes calling for the listener’s ear.

Quinn gets up from his computer and walks over to his bed. He sits on the end of it and puts his hands on his knees. With his composition listeners will be able to move through an environment of their own mind’s ear, completely attentive to sound. He will lead them while he explores the musical possibilities of sound and its resonance. Sounds will culminate in the voice music of his father, and trail off to where they began—with tape hiss and the world of his recorded objects.

Quinn goes back to his computer, fires up his sound editing software and starts to put it together: he must listen, not only to what he has in his mind’s ear but to the sounds he has on file. He must excerpt the relevant portion of each soundfile, manipulate and loop it as needed, and join it with others, arrange them all within the track he is composing.

He begins with his tape hiss, which he joins with the quiet sound of footsteps—he is heading along some imaginary path, away, and up, in the present yet in the past. The footsteps stop, tape hiss becomes very quiet and the erratic ring of bamboo chimes softly emerge to captivate him, moving around his listening ear so much at their centre. Then his tape hiss emerges again, and his footsteps walk him into the rhythm of a soft “clack, di-dum, clack...clack, di-dum, clack” and still quietly through the last resonant chord of the ‘Moonlight’ piano and the soft tremor of Toni’s hum vibrating with its resonant pulse. He is moved along with the promise of a hummed human voice, moved through it to the voice and word of his father: “Listen.”

He likes the way his composition is leading him along, within the realm of his mind's ear, in a world of possible sonorities. It has its own rhythm, logic and sensuality, its own way of making him move.

And there again is Toni's Moonlight hum, moving him on with its soft background hiss, the sound of footsteps, and a soft "clack, di-dum, clack". But then, his footsteps grow louder and quicken, as if to rush for the speed of a "*clack, di-dum, clack...clack, di-dum, clack*". He is moving faster now, straining to keep up.

Shaking out and resting his hands, he hears the hit of a wind chime, the gusting of the wind, and the short, human-like, high cry of a dog. These sounds come and go, circle each other in a constantly changing order, an aberrant wind-made fugue. And he is left stranded, turning on the spot.

He catches a snatch of conversation, and almost finds a way forward. And then the wind gusts to move him on, along with the known sound and fall of footsteps. A dog howls nearby. Conversations approach and swarm him. And he stands while they buzz ahead, and disappear into some focal point of sound, a pin-prick of light.

And then, he moves with a soft hiss, his footsteps, and a lighter wind. He moves through a hum and an upward-moving piano triplet, and into an upward cascade of harped piano strings—"fraaaaaam," and along the run of a strange "errrrrrrrrr" string-creaking. And then there is the definite roll of a familiar hiss, the continued sound of his footsteps, and he is moved into a full yet gentle hum, and the word of his father: "listen."

"Well, there's a lot of work still to be done," says Quinn. He notes down the sounds he has yet to excerpt, manipulate and put together. There is: the gust of the wind about to move in the heart of a tree, the dog that high-cried to another alone behind a fence, the sounds of his Friday night café, the beginning of 'The Moonlight,' the first sounds of the harp piano of Cara and Toni, and his last scraping of one of its strings. Most laboriously of all, he must build his café soundbites into layers that ultimately quicken, move forwards and suddenly merge to some minute focal point of sound: that will be an all-nighter.

"And then on to my father's voice music," he says, "and on..."

Quinn runs his fingers down the shining glass-smooth back of his Tortoise Cowry. "Sound giver," he says and he takes the CD he has made for Toni and props it against the shell. He will take it to her in the morning.

“Eight boxes,” says Toni, carrying the last one dragged from under her grandfather’s bed. Once she has all of them in her grandfather’s room, she is able to find the tapes that carry the tracks she wants for her compilation: her ‘Moonlight Compilation’ she will call it.

She wasn’t sure if she would come back to ‘The Moonlight,’ but she had been taken along with the crackled flow of tape hiss, a tireless run of ascending triplets and an ever-descending bass. Then she had made her Moonlight hum, and then she had spoken with her father. She laughs to think that just as one thing leads to another, everything comes back to the search of ‘The Moonlight,’ her kind of music creeping in at a hush. “After all,” she says standing with her hands on her hips beside boxes, as she said to Quinn, “everything’s open and unresolved.” She laughs and remembers him lying on his back next to her on her rug and hears his response: “Good.”

Quinn has called her on the phone. He has offered to take the tapes home, along with a list of the pieces she has selected for her compilation, and put them on a CD. He told her that he will play each tape on his tapedeck and, with the proper input and software, they will ‘play’ on his computer and be recorded. She had been surprised: “you have a tapedeck?” “Of course,” he said, “you never know when you’re going to come across something on tape.”

He is coming around a bit later and Cara is out, probably at the library. She will put the first movement of ‘The Moonlight’ between tracks she has already found and leave her ear open for more. Her Moonlight will always lead from and to something else, just as Quinn and Cara suggested the day they came around to find her crashing out her rapt version of the third movement. Cara had played the first movement on her dad’s baby grand, that first time they met.

After Cara moved in, she had listened to Beethoven’s Adagio Cantabile—the slow movement of Beethoven’s eighth piano sonata, ‘La Pathétique,’ Opus 13. There is something gentle yet unresolved about it. She has already put it together with ‘The Moonlight,’ in her ear and in her mind to find more of the gentleness of ‘The Moonlight.’ Referencing the book Cara read from the evening they met, she reads that ‘Pathétique’ does not translate as ‘pathetic.’ It is with a sense of relief that she finds the word can be applied to a work of art known for its “affect,” its “sense of pathos.”

Now that she thinks about it, it was on listening to the Adagio Cantabile—which means ‘slow and as if singing’—that she knew she had a sense of her sung voice in the notes of ‘The Moonlight.’ She had hummed a few of the Moonlight’s bass notes in the garden and then, later—after Quinn gave her his recorder, she had made her Moonlight hum. Her granddad had always insisted that when he played his music on the piano, he was also able to hear it with his own singing voice. She smiles to think that when she hears the Adagio Cantabile on her compilation disc, she will know it as a first piece for her Moonlight hum.

The tape of Beethoven’s earlier piano sonatas is at hand and Toni puts it in the tapedeck. She forward-winds and listens to the Adagio Cantabile again. The opening cantabile melody is a real beauty: so softly it goes with an always-moving bass. How would her grandfather write it—as the day-known lullaby that takes small steps between only three notes to open a flow that moves on, but a little, in simple song?

She thinks of her grandmother playing it on her grandfather’s piano. Perhaps it has something of her touch, on one of her better days. Perhaps she is almost content as she leans into a middle section that gives way to the small-quick upward runs of a gruff bass—and she must turn that bass back to its part in the making of her melody: a melody Toni would have her grandfather sing with the thought of a box of biscuits. For this moment, how easily the bass comes back to the music’s play for lightness.

And here are the first notes of ‘The Moonlight,’ gentle. She hears them even without putting a tape in her grandfather’s tapedeck. In C sharp minor—the key Cara played in, after she asked her to put something with ‘The Moonlight.’ Triplets climb the same three notes from their base: 1-2-3, 1-2-3, 1-2-3, 1-2-3; low-now-higher, low-now-higher, low-now-higher, low-now-higher. And with each of these first four sets of triplets, the bass steps down. Together bass and triplets make music for a process of listening and she closes her eyes for the dark-light harmonies of Beethoven, on resonant open strings.

Toni plucks the well-known tape from her box and plays ‘The Moonlight.’ She sits with her backside on the polished wooden floor, her legs out in front of her, the bottoms of her jeans and sock-bound feet on her rug, her back resting against her grandfather’s chair in the corner. She is just as she was the day she started to listen, when she only thought of her grandfather and being in his room with the world of his music. But as the music moves its search through the close and rich harmonies of its sounded space, thoughts and events flow with her sense of the music. She has hardly even left her villa in the last few months, and yet, so much has happened between her

and Cara, and Quinn, and her parents, and even, in a strange way, between her and her grandfather. And while she listens, the music makes its sound to collect and blur the sonorities of all her moments and carry them along in its own full and relentless life, even through the reverberations of its last long-held chord.

Toni stops the tape. She reaches for another Beethoven sonata—‘The Appassionata,’ heard the same day as the Adagio Cantabile, the same day that Quinn stayed the night. Where ‘The Moonlight’ holds passion within and between triplets and bass, ‘The Appassionata’ lets itself go, by all means. She still remembers the four note motif of the bass, low and strange like someone knocking. And then, a little later, there was an outburst of chords across the keyboard—a sudden fast drumming out of a barrage of notes.

She has the tape at the ready and listens to it play. Yes, and out of a storm of notes a single note pulses at a knock, fuelling a tune that is so often followed by an outburst. Tune and outburst sound to-and-fro, the music a dangerous life-filled flow.

Her grandfather once told her that things can come at you, out of the blue. She thinks of him tearing letters to pieces in his Stalag hut, of him making an unexpected wedding proposal to a girl that sent him a note with a box of biscuits, of him watching that girl as his wife walk out the door. She thinks of throwing her arms out and spinning around her grandfather’s room and Quinn calling to her, of being about to fall. She thinks of her parents arriving without warning at her door, standing there with the doorframe in her right hand: “mum...dad,” of locking her parents out of her room for dropping the failure of her grandfather on her with a shattering crash.

When she told Cara that she had listened to the Appassionata, she said that she loves the way Beethoven can make so much sound: sound for music and music for sound. His impulse is there in ‘The Moonlight’ too: the quest for a kind of sound, or a way of sounding.

And then she plays ‘The Moonlight’: hearing its quiet passion held in while it makes its sound out. She puts her hand in a steeple that she presses against her nose and mouth and lets herself rock to her left and then to her right, the way her grandfather used to as he traced a line of music with his finger.

The first time she heard it she had thought of herself standing with a clutch of graveside dirt in her hand and her mum’s hand on her back. She was sure that the music knew something about the unearthed feel and smell of that dirt. And then, later, there was Chopin’s Funeral March, an intense sonata for the clod of feet behind a casket. But

with his 'Finale: Presto' his music seemed to run with yet away from the sound of the funeral.

She finds the Chopin tape and plays the Presto now: notes that run and blur so fast, only just held together, ending with a pounded bass note and a sky-flung chord—all in little more than a minute. And she remembers the way 'The Moonlight' sounded almost delicate after the Presto, with its soft echo of sounds funereal. After the Presto, it sounds the distant memory of many deaths: the Liverpudlian Jack being followed in a cortège by her grandfather to the Stalag's outside gate, her grandfather being lowered into a hole nobody should ever be put into, her grandmother running out of her last breath.

"Was that, Chopin's Funeral March?" asks Cara, her head around the door from the hallway. Toni didn't even hear her come in. "Yeah, the Presto," she says.

"To put with 'The Moonlight'?" asks Cara.

"Yip," says Toni smiling, and Cara comes into the room.

"I guess the 'The Moonlight' could be music for remembrance."

"It does remind me of my grandfather's funeral, in a way."

"I'm sorry," says Cara.

"Don't be sorry," Toni says.

"Okay then," says Cara, "how did you get on with your father?"

"He was just in town for a couple of days and we met in the Botanical gardens," says Toni. "My grandmother had been sick for a long time, and her and my grandfather just couldn't seem to get through it. She thought she had fallen in love with someone else and he gave her an ultimatum. And she left."

"Ouch," says Cara.

"Yeah," says Toni, "and later she died without him even knowing, until my dad told him of it."

Cara is silent for a moment. She remembers the conversation she had with Toni's father, that day he and her mum turned up unannounced. "Hey," she says, "when your father was here he told me that your grandfather played a Chopin nocturne for her the day that she died."

"Which one?" asks Toni.

Cara goes to the bookshelf and pulls out a black volume: "it's in here." She leafs through the pages with the gentle life of its first notes in her ear. "Here it is," she says, "Opus 15, number 1." Toni's father had leafed through this volume himself, handling

the pages with such expectation that she had thought that a bookmark or photograph might fall from its pages at any moment.

“I have Chopin’s nocturnes here...on tape,” says Toni, bending to a box.

“Toni,” says Cara.

Toni stands with a tape in her hand. “Yes,” she says.

“Can I borrow the notebook for a while? I’m about to start writing my slow movement and your grandfather wrote really nicely about the slow movement of the fifth piano concerto, and the third.”

Toni holds the tape in her hand. “Sure,” she says, “I put it on top of the piano.”

Cara goes to the piano and takes hold of the notebook. “I’ll need the *Concerte* score too,” she says, slipping it from the bookshelf and tucking it under her arm. “It’s yours,” says Toni.

“It’s a really well known Nocturne,” says Cara. “I think it’s popular because of its delicate melody and the lilt of its bass—true cantabile in the Chopin-style.”

“I’ll listen to it,” she says, and Cara nods.

“Quinn should be here soon,” says Toni.

“And I need to press on,” says Cara.

Toni goes to the carpet and kneels to change the tape. Cara watches her put the Nocturnes in place. Without turning Toni says “I could hear it. I could hear the music he wrote for me. Not all of the notes, of course, but the sense of its sound.”

Cara runs one hand softly across the notebook’s cover, “I’m glad,” she says. Then she holds the notebook up, even though Toni still hasn’t turned from her tapedeck. It is the best evidence she can give of her need to make her music, before she leaves the room.

Toni’s father always played a Nocturne after a visit to her grandmother, sometimes playing on her grandfather’s piano. And her grandfather would sit and listen, his twisting fingers tucked within the hold of hands laid quietly one on top of the other.

She feels the sure click of the ‘play’ button under the firm tip of her finger, hears her hiss.

A treble melody makes its high way along to the melodic and rhythmic pulse and play of the bass. It makes music that strikes her as almost always posing a question, phrased and brought out lightly. It has movement and it has light while it heads for a middle section where the bass comes in strong. It growls the music down while the treble alternates in quick chords that bring its first melody back after all, in treble and bass. Toni sees her grandfather at his piano—the piano his wife played, and she hears

him play notes to lay her grandmother's head down on a coffin's satin bed, his bent fingers finding their way on the keyboard, to the music's end.

She will make this Nocturne part of her compilation and the search of her 'Moonlight.'

"It's awfully quiet in here," says Quinn.

Toni sits looking at the silent tape.

"Everything okay?" asks Quinn.

"Sure," says Toni, getting up from her rug. Quinn stands looking at her, "sure?" he asks.

"I know what my grandfather played for my grandmother when she died, and I just decided to make it part of my compilation," she says, walking over to take his hand and sit him down with her on the rug.

"It's funny isn't it?" she says, "you have a recorded voice and a hope for music, and I have all this music and a hope for a voice."

Quinn gets up on his knees and puts his arms around her. Then he sits back on his heels. "Speaking of the hope for a voice," he says, pulling a CD from his jacket pocket. "Your Moonlight hum."

Toni sniffs and breathes fiercely as if she has been weeping for a week and has only just made herself dry-eyed.

"You should hear it, Toni," Quinn says.

"I had the recorder under my chin, and then against my chest."

"I heard it."

"What my chin or my chest?" laughs Toni.

Quinn takes her arm and leads her to her father's stereo. He puts the CD in the player and she sits on the piano stool.

She hears her hiss and the first notes of 'The Moonlight' and the sound of a voice—her voice—in a hum. She is a little taken aback by how well the recorder has picked up the way she has made some of her sound in her head, as if she is filling spaces needed to make each of her notes. At times there is a slight buzz at the bottom of what she imagines to be this contained field of sound, where the sound heads up from her vocal cords as well as down and away. She remembers feeling the digital recorder vibrate against the top of her throat and the sound drop to vibrate in her chest.

Toni listens. Part way through the music there is a slight change in the nature of the sound as if its source has dropped and is not so contained. "I put your two tracks together," says Quinn.

There is a strange two-part whistle as sound is taken into her lungs and she laughs. “I didn’t expect to hear that,” she says. Quinn nods and laughs too. “The sound of your pipes,” he says.

Notes carry through ‘The Moonlight’ in the sound of Toni’s m-hum, making their soft zig-zag between notes of the treble and bass, and finding the middle voice of the piano between them. She loves the way she drops to the lowest notes of the bass and then pulls the notes back up and along some thread she has woven for herself through the music.

“That is pretty cool,” she says.

“Wait,” says Quinn, “it’s the ending I love.”

And Toni hears the last notes of her Moonlight hum, the constancy of her bass, the last vibrations of voice and piano with tape hiss. Hearing the hum of a recording’s crackle, she feels as if she is eavesdropping on herself. And she wants to hear herself do the whole thing again, with her sound thrown out, for real.

She stands: “Can you play it?”

“You want me to play it again?”

“No, can you play ‘The Moonlight,’ on the piano?”

“I tinkered with it years ago, like every piano student does. No, I wouldn’t want to...”

Toni walks to the piano.

“You need Cara,” he says.

Toni nods and runs the very tips of her fingers up the keys.

“You could ask her to play it for you?”

Toni nods and runs the very tips of her fingers down the keys. “She’s composing,” she says dropping her backside on the piano stool, her hands in her lap.

Going to the door to the hallway: “I’ll ask her if she can join us for a coffee break,” says Quinn. And before Toni can say that she only really drinks tea, he is gone and has closed the door behind him.

Toni plays her Moonlight hum on the stereo and she hums, until a final chord is made. She stands about to adopt singing stance when Cara comes into the room with Quinn.

“Actually,” says Cara, “I was thinking I need to get back to the piano, to really get my slow movement going.”

“Oh,” says Toni.

“But first,” says Cara, “Toni’s Moonlight!” Toni’s Moonlight and a chance to think about what it means to have the will and ability to sing. With the sweep of her hand Cara moves Toni to the side of the baby grand.

Quinn had tapped on Cara’s door: “Hey, Cara, it’s me.” She had the notebook and *Concerte* spread open on her bed in front of her, her legs crossed, an elbow on each knee, the weight of her head taken by loose fists of fingers. She had been thinking about the slow movement—any slow movement—and its propensity to sing. She thought that a slow movement—which is so often parenthetical—has the music’s will and ability to sing as its reason for being. She is sure that Beethoven was a composer who created particular sonorities for a reason. The lyricism of his slow movements—which have been written of as if they are legendary—gave him the opportunity to dive deep into the sonority of song, to reveal a strand of life’s sound through air.

“Expressive lyricism” she had said to herself, and remembered reading the phrase in the library that morning in relation to Beethoven. She reckoned that you could say that Beethoven could really sing: not that he stood up and sang a song with his voice, but that he sang with the voice of his inner ear translated into the voice of the piano, or whatever instrument he was writing for. In fact, he sang just as well, maybe even better, after his hearing began to fail him. Wasn’t the fifth concerto the first he didn’t dare to perform in public because of his deafness?

Toni’s grandfather has written of Beethoven’s slow movements as someone who loves to sing, who reveres the impulse and ability to sing, who loves Beethoven’s sung music. She is sure that he wrote of them as a man who would listen to the slow movement of the third or the fifth and wish they would never end, while knowing that it is because they do that each note of the music exists with the sound it has. There’s a line of the grandfather’s she likes. He is writing of the slow movement of the third, of the first piano notes in chords that make the music: “a few moments in which beginning and ending seem to be, bound together in sound and touch.”

Quinn asked her if she felt like a Beethoven song, and she was confused. He must have seen her slightly startled look. “If it’s not going to interrupt your flow, do you feel like playing a little piano for Toni? I think she is about to sing,” he said. She had looked at him and thought of Toni standing in her grandfather’s room holding in notes about to burst from her mouth. She laughed. “Sounds urgent,” she said and Quinn shrugged to a smile made coy. “I was just thinking that Beethoven likes to sing,” she said. He looked at her askance; “with his slow movements,” she added. “And with Toni and ‘The

Moonlight,”” Quinn said to her, egging her out of the room as soon as she was off the bed.

Now Cara is at the piano stool and Toni is looking at her and Quinn as if a mother of a spotlight just beamed her.

“Listen to this first,” says Quinn, turning Cara around towards the stereo and letting Toni step back and fall into a couch.

He plays Cara Toni’s Moonlight hum. Toni sits forward and then makes her way to the piano. Cara’s head remains bowed, as if to point her ears forward to the hum that picks out and moves on the notes of ‘The Moonlight.’ She looks at Toni standing in the crook of the piano and smiles with the strangely distinct feeling that she has just listened to Toni’s Moonlight hum on one of her grandfather’s records, which he recorded to tape. She can’t help thinking of what he wrote of the slow movement of the fifth. One phrase comes into her head: “to draw a melody most gently sure of its lyrical sense.”

“What do you think we should do?” asks Toni.

“Let’s use ‘The Moonlight’ as more of a guide and see where we go from there.

“I’ll begin with some quiet chords to make the tonality of the beginning, you’ll hear when it’s time to come in with your first note.”

Quinn walks quietly over to the couch, takes his digital recorder out of his shirt pocket and switches it on.

Cara plays three chords from the Moonlight’s ending as a beginning. They carry the same notes as the bass’s first pedal note and the first of the treble’s upward triplets. On the third chord, Cara begins to play the first triplets in her right hand. On the last note of the fourth triplet she raises her eyebrows to Toni, and brings her to the first note of her first bar with the nod of her head.

Toni’s voice arrives in one sudden moment, a release of air that carries her sound. It is not an m-hum but it is still quiet, the voiced vowel sound of an ‘aaa.’ The muscles are relaxed in her throat and her neck and she is looking out in front of her as if to an audience far ahead.

Quinn hears Toni’s voweled sound and thinks of her making a perfect connection between the notes given by her vocal chords and the pitch set up inside the resonance chambers of her mouth—its two notes, the treble and bass of human speech. At the same time, she is making a harmonic series within and around the resonance chambers of her throat, her head and her chest, her whole body her instrument. She makes one heard note, *Chiaroscuro*, and he can only think of it is as perfect.

For a while, Cara plays 'The Moonlight' as Beethoven wrote it and Toni makes the flow of a soft zig-zag of notes, with an 'aaa' on the upper notes and an 'ooo' on the lower. Cara is calling out the middle voice of 'The Moonlight,' and Toni takes some of its notes as her own.

Then Cara returns to the beginning and holds her bass note with what-would-be triplets held still in the notes of a chord. She nods at Toni and then pushes her chin towards her: go on. Toni hesitates for the slightest moment before she breaks free of relentless triplets, making her own Moonlight melody with the deep tonal support of the bass. At first she glides up the notes of the triplet Cara would have played, but then her notes go higher to come down and glance the would-be run of another triplet only to fall before making her own triplet to ride even higher. It is her melody for 'The Moonlight.'

Toni's melody flows with the chords of 'The Moonlight,' her voice turning a kaleidoscope of colours made from light and its dark, until she falls to a hum and stops. In and with each note, it is the music of her love for her grandfather, the loss of him and her acceptance of his failings. It is the music of the many ways life can go. And Cara responds by taking this melody into her right hand, the notes ringing clear above a bass that begins to pulse double-time to the bar, until they move together to make a quiet buzz between strings, her foot on the sustain pedal.

Quinn sits forward on the couch wondering if they are about to stop, but then Cara stands and reaches over and into the piano. Toni nods and smiles and then she is singing her melody to the harp piano. Her voice has lightened, and yet it gathers some kind of force from the strumming of strings. Her vibrato pulses strongly without weighting her notes. "The Harp of Life," Quinn says softly to himself, forgetting the live recorder he has placed on a small coffee table in front of him.

Cara thinks of words written by Toni's grandfather for the slow movement of the fifth, for its movement between two lines of music, for the sound of the "never-forsaken possibility of a heading together of notes."

Then she sits back on the piano stool and puts harped notes into arpeggiated chords with her right hand on the keyboard, each like a small glissando while she plays the pulse-pedal of the left-hand bass. Toni joins her with a voice that opens to the corners of the room: a last melody with a full sound for this coming together. And then Cara is holding her last chord and Toni her last note. Cara has her foot on the sustain pedal and Toni rides the last of the air pressure provided by her lungs to vibrate her vocal chords and resonate the thought and feel of her notes in her body and out.

Quinn reaches quietly forward and turns off his recorder. Cara is sitting with her hands just above the keyboard and Toni still stands in singing stance.

“You found it,” he says “you found something to put with ‘The Moonlight.’”

Gibbs doesn't want her to harp the piano. She had stood in front of his desk while he leaned back in his chair. "Take a seat," he had said. After composing all morning, she had just come from the library where she had listened to Cowell's 'Concerto Piccolo,' his small concerto with three movements taking a total of little over thirteen minutes to perform. She loves his slow movement in which he harps the piano.

She had been buzzing; she had almost jogged to Gibbs's office. That morning she had started to compose a slow movement that understood something of Cowell's, before she had even heard it—the way his piano-harp made a harmonic baseline for a song that played through the sonority of instrument after instrument.

"Sonority," she had read in the reference section of the library, can be defined as "the quality of being resonant." And yes, she had thought of Beethoven's quest for particular sonorities and the expressive lyricism with which his slow movements reveal a strand of life through air.

Cowell's song was light yet intense. It was a song concerned with the onward gentle pull of its rise and fall, a song full of lilting folk intentions and the lyrical grace of a century or two of concerto writing. It was first played on the bowed string of a solo violin, continued lower by a cello, carried on by the double reed of an oboe, and moved by the brass-made air flow of the French horn: on it went, each 'voice' singing to the harp.

Then, about three quarters of the way through his slow movement, Cowell had continued his melody on the piano keyboard. After hearing all of the other instruments with the piano-as-harp, the sound of the normally-hammered piano was suddenly new and wonderful to her, as if she was hearing it anew, just the way she wanted. While she listened, she could almost feel the fingers of her right hand play the melody Cowell had made high with subtly-accented notes, playing the simple song the piano had gathered with its strum.

And then, not long before the movement's end, Cowell gave her harp-like glissandos for keyboard, and a melodic string orchestra: the delicacy of the piano-harp made strong with hammer, and the flow of piano-for-orchestral string.

She told Gibbs all about Cowell's slow movement because he said nothing. "Are you also intending to harp the piano?" he had asked her. She had nodded and said that it was a way for her to delicately explore the advent of song and a slow movement's will and ability to sing. He had smiled with his head tipped back as if he was fondly catching her idea and the way she had put it.

She had read that the Greek root of lyrical is "*lyricus*," which means "of or for the lyre." "*Lyrikos*" means "singing to the lyre." She had laughed at the strange synchronicity of it all: she had been thinking about lyricism, Toni had sung while she harped the piano (some distant relation of the lyre) and she is composing a slow movement that features the harp piano as an instrument of song. When she read that "Lyricism" can be defined as the expression of spontaneous, direct feeling, she had thought of the way that her music—and Toni's song—came to be. But the word "feeling" wouldn't settle, as if it were a pebble turning over and over in the stream of her thoughts and their words.

She figures that music can make people aware of the musical nature of a whole range of feelings or almost-feelings, but it doesn't necessarily *make* us "happy" or "sad," for example. It certainly cannot be reductively described as "happy" or "sad." Composers operate with some sense of feeling, yes, but the music has its own sense of feeling and this, while direct in the music, is not simply just an expression of "joy" or "sadness." She must not simply attach emotional labels to music. Rather, she must think about what happens in a piece of music to realise its particular life.

Since she wrote her first movement, she has been thinking that there is a two-way osmosis that goes on between a composer and the music they are writing. It is as if the music co-opts the composer while the composer brings the music into being. The "feeling" of the music is a joint creation with its own sense. Perhaps all she can say is that "feeling" in music is the particular sound of the music brought to life, carried by the connections and interactions of its 'voices' (even if that is simply the bass and treble of a piece for piano).

She had been about to tell Gibbs that she had been composing that morning, strumming the grand of the music room like a harp. She was going to tell him that she had put her finger to string to find the melody of her slow movement. But her hope for those words slammed dead into the reality of his finally-evident obstruction: "I hope you aren't going to harp our music hall's Yamaha grand." And she was left only with a clueless "What?"

After repeating himself, Gibbs had smiled as if he wasn't making any problems for her. Then he said "aren't you being a little too ambitious Cara?" She had wondered if he was saying that it was ambitious of her to expect him to let her harp the piano. Then he said: "No-one expects a concerto from you just yet." She wanted to laugh because she had already heard him say those words at the grandfather's desk, and had written her music regardless.

Cara knew she had two issues to deal with: the possibility of not being allowed to harp the piano, and the possibility that Gibbs would not support her project. "You simply don't have time," said Gibbs, "you're supposed to call your first rehearsal next week." She let out a snort. "I know," she said, "I have written the score of my first movement and will write the separate instrumental parts over the next few days." Gibbs had rolled his eyes and said "but not for the harp piano."

She had played and written at the grand piano in an empty music room, on a dais she had once rushed to in an attempt to compose after the nine bars of Gibbs. She had begun the second and slow movement of her concerto with a harped C major chord, its brightness strummed for a full slow beat with the back of her fingers, with the flat of her nails: "fraaaaaam." Then she had brought her hand back the other way, the pads of her fingers sounding its "froooooom." It was a chord only a semitone away from C sharp, where she had started her first movement. There was her first chord, like the first chord of her first movement, but with the lightness of finger-on-string and without the mid-chord ring of the flattened third of a minor key.

With a "fraaaaaam" and a "froooooom" she had gone on, exploring the sound-centres of her major key, sounding out the harmonies with which she would make her song go. And then, she was plucking open strings to make a melody with her right hand and giving solo violins the soft chords she had strummed, to be plucked, "pizzicato," on each quarter-beat. She could just see violinists holding their bows straight up in the air with a right hand, an index finger in-pluck. This was their way of making their own sound for her piano-string strum. Players would pluck notes unable to resonate within the body of a harp of strings, but able to strike and fly like the rebound in the heart of the hit of many fat raindrops: a bounce of string-sound to slap and ping her melody along.

She could not say that her melody had been on the tips of her fingers when she woke up that morning. Quinn had been at the villa with Toni, listening to her "Moonlight compilation" and she seemed reluctant to let him go. Even if Cara could have taken over the second living room, she reckoned that Toni and Quinn would never

have left her to explore her harp piano. All she could do was run for the unlikely prospect of an empty music room, her wish for it pumping her lungs.

Once her fingers connected with strings, she had enough impetus to follow the strum of her harp. She recalled the melody of her first movement and decided to play it slowly, upside-down. By her hand, it sprang from a lower note to one higher, pluck-dawdled down to its lower note, and sprang higher again, only to pluck its way down again. She liked the sound of the upwards spring and the downward fall of plucked strings, but she wanted something to play itself more widely across piano strings. She wanted something to rise and fall with small conjoined arcs to keep her melody in a kind of lyrical suspension yet carry it through to its penultimate and then its ultimate note.

Plucked, her melody emerged: a lower note slow-sprang beyond the reach of her hand to a higher note, dropped to a note a little higher than where she started, slow-sprang upwards again, dropped gently, pluck-climbed to an even higher note, dropped back, pluck-climbed again, fell as the spread of a chord, reached up to descend more quickly in a half-time cascade of stepped notes, and then rose one last time with the small reach of a slow-spring—and fell to the inevitability of its landing.

Then she wrote her melody to pluck-play again, with violin strings—plucked. But then, she put the same melody on their slow bow to the harp-strummed harmonies of the piano's first chords. And while those strummed chords continued, she gave her melody to solo cellos before solo violas. And she gave her melody to an orchestral chorus of violins, violas, cellos and double basses: a string chorus of bows supported by the run of her fingers, the flung-plucked sound of piano chords. She carried and moved her melody, until everything fell so quiet—pianissimo—and cellos and violas took the pluck of her melody together, mellow yet stark after the richness of her chorus...until she had violins continue, high and clear. And then, her piano joined the violins, but dropped them for the middle of her movement and only a slow melody plucked lightly, for the finger on her piano's strings.

“Can I just show you what I've written?” she had asked Gibbs. “The issue is not your ability to write what you are describing, the issue is the harping of the grand—the damage it can do to the strings,” he had replied. “Damage?” she asked, about to splutter a laugh. “What do you have on your fingers?” asked Gibbs and Cara held up her hand to her close inspection, as if fascinated by some evil thing that, unbeknown to her, had been lurking on the tips of her fingers. “Oil,” said Gibbs, “you have oil in your skin that

gets onto the strings and degrades them over time.” Cara looked even more closely at her finger: what like over a thousand bloody years?

“Bugger him,” she had said walking away from the Arts building on feet planted with enough force to raise eyebrows. What’s he going to do, rush on stage in the middle of her performance and pull her from the piano? Not his style, for sure. She remembers her father once saying to her that whenever she was pissed off—even if with herself, she would go on and *do* something, *make* something. She thought this was an unusual observation at the time, especially since she was most pissed off by the way he pretended to play happy families and acted like they had no special history. But he was right, of course.

Now she is about to write the last half of her second movement, sitting at her favourite desk in the library, behind stacks of music scores, with a view of a small courtyard and garden. “Bugger Gibbs,” she whispers. She looks over the pages of her second movement and tries to imagine it without the sound of plucked string, without her lyre the piano-harp, the source of her song. Cowell knew. Cowell knew about the song-making potential of his harp. Cowell knew how to contrast sonorities to make his song, about how to lead the strum of the harp-string, and the ear, to the full ring made by hammer on string. It’s not as if Gibbs can just ignore the sound and music he set in motion.

Cowell played his pieces on pianos across North America and Europe and she is damned sure no-one tried to tell him not to put his finger to string.

She takes her pencil in hand and picks herself up with the sound of pizzicato strings sounding after her full string chorus: cellos and violas emerging together before they are followed by violins, and the piano. And now, her pizzicato piano solo plays, first on its own—just the pluck of her finger-on-piano for the middle of her movement—then with the harmonic and rhythmic support of her orchestra’s full yet quiet pizzicato strings, moved through a fuller range of the piano’s harp strings, louder and then falling so-quiet. And then, there is the first melody of her piano, beginning again from the keyboard, with hammer to ring strings more fully around its body and out to the orchestra, the players of which sweep up their bows for full chords for her full sung sound. And she ramps it up, to forte.

Leading on, her piano plays solo, with its melody and chords on the keyboard, the piano as it was known in the first movement, but with the breadth of its slow song...until her left hand recalls the run of the harp and takes chords into rolling glissandos. Then there are only glissandos on the keyboard and the soft pizzicato of violins as she must

stand to reach for strings to harp her chords once more. And then, at the end of her slow movement, there is the rise and fall of her melody plucked on the piano, just one light yet sure line of sound-centred notes, thrown out by the play of finger on string.

She sits and looks at her pages, the placed pencil strike of the stems of her notes.

“Excuse me miss,” a voice says behind her, “the library closed five minutes ago.”

“Oh, I’m sorry,” says Cara turning to a guy who looks young and bright enough to have skipped a few years of high school to try his hand at tertiary education. And she gathers her papers and slips them into her shoulder bag and follows him downstairs to the front entrance where a seasoned lady of the library opens the door for her. Cara half turns as she leaves, “so much work to do,” she says quickly, pulling in her shoulder bag and heading off in haste.

Out on the street, she walks in a light that fades into evening at the slow pace of her last pizzicato melody. Song runs into silence as she stops to stand before a yet-to-be-realised third movement. And then she throws herself into step with the prospect of two-armed rolling piano clusters with strings belting out their version of the same—the next climax, her concerto’s main expressive event.

When she next sees Quinn, she will tell him that Gibbs doesn’t want her to harp the piano. He might have some bright ideas. And she will warn him, about the sting that might sit in the tail of a pre-performance meeting with Gibbs.

Quinn has his ‘pre-performance’ meeting with Gibbs in the morning and he knows he is in for an all-nighter.

He spent most of the morning with Toni, after taking her the CD of her Moonlight compilation. She was so excited by being able to sit down with it that she wouldn’t let him go. He sat with her on the couch in the second living room and her arm was hooked through his. His ear was torn between being there with her and being at home with his composition. At one point, when ‘The Moonlight’ returned after a tempestuous Beethoven sonata—“The Appassionata”—she was so still that he thought she had been lulled to sleep. He had moved her gently and she had mumbled something about passion and laughed softly.

He looked down at the top of her head, the way she had pushed her short hair to the side with her fingers. He tried to think of a way to tell her that he needed to go home and get on with his work—something more subtle than Cara’s “I need to write.” He wanted to stay long enough for her to discover her compilation’s ending: the way he leaves her with her own Moonlight hum and song, nestled between, and going beyond, tracks of ‘The Moonlight.’ But he knew he couldn’t wait that long.

“Toni,” he said quietly, “I love being here, listening to this with you, but I need to get home, I need to work on my composition. The concert is less than two weeks away, and I have my ‘pre-performance meeting’ with Gibbs tomorrow morning.”

She sat up straight and nodded. “I hope I’ll be getting an invite to this concert,” she said. He smiled and told her that it wouldn’t go ahead without her. She laughed. He told her that his composition wouldn’t be on-stage, but on headphones—because of its intimate nature, and to encourage more direct auditory and physical involvement. She had looked at him with those grey eyes of hers, “okay,” she said, “I’ll be first in line.”

The different sounds of his composition have begun to take him on an auditory journey; sound is moving him through a space lofted open by his mind-and-ear. From the first, he has been set in motion, and along the way, he has been given the promise of a voice, and an exhortation to “listen.” But along the way, he has also almost been lost, sent spinning by a wind’s dark-light fugue, and swarmed by a babble of voices. But those voices merged to some point ahead, and he was moved by a lighter wind, into a Moonlight hum and the resonant strings of the piano.

He has already done a couple of all nighters. He needed one of those just to work with his café recordings. He went through over a hundred sound files and selected about twenty that gave him a range of voices and café sounds. He was able to construct a sociable buzz made manic, made overwhelming. He smiles as he thinks of all of the Friday nights he has spent out with his digital recorder, his “date.” Every Friday, an hour of his night at his favourite café table, recording. Every weekend, making soundbites from his café soundtrack, storing them away on his computer, wondering what the hell he was going to do with them. He has been like a crazed squirrel dragging in branches, in the hope of collecting nuts.

When he completed Gibbs’s first composition assignment, he translated a soundtrack of his spoken thoughts into notes on pages of music manuscript. That was a way of starting to explore his idea of digitally arranging sounds as a basis for his kind of music. Even though it involved writing notes, it would take him closer to what he really wanted to explore: the art of organising sound-based music where a sound with all its individual characteristics, and not the note, is the basic unit of composition.

And now, he has really found that soundbites can be organised into a flow for thought and sound, just like the notes that Cara might write for the voices of different instruments, with their different sounds, roles and relations. Not so far from Cara’s world of music, the sounds of tape hiss, footsteps and the rhythmic call of a trolley bus form a kind of forward-rolling background bass, over which other sounds come and go like a melody of movement. Snippets of the resonant tones of a wind chime, the last life of Toni’s Moonlight hum and the piano’s tone-filled notes and strum, have moved him closer to his father’s voice, his father’s *voice music*, a merging of voice and piano. And giving life to it all: the air of a wind, the air on which his sound depends...

And he hears it: a light wind’s touch of the strings in the body of the piano, the piano that has already sounded, on and off, the piano that will release his father’s voice music. But how can he create this? How can he create a sense of air giving life to string and voice in the body of the piano?

Quinn runs a finger along his Tortoise Cowry and thinks of soundbites he can excerpt, manipulate and arrange. He already has the sound of the light wind that moved him when he could have been lost, the light wind that moved him into the many sounds of the piano. If he puts this together with the touch of a finger on string, and the tones from the tail end of a harp-strum, he can perhaps, in an abstract way, connect the touch of air with a piano string and its resonance. And he can sound out the corporeality of the piano with the sound of key, pedal, hammer, and, most tangibly, the echo of his knuckle

knocking on the outside of the body of the piano, the curve of its wood. He just needs to excerpt and combine sounds from his file “harp piano of C, T & Q.”

After many minutes of tiny movements he has put it together, his father’s voice waiting, on the tip of his mind’s ear.

Because his kind of music separates a sound from its source, it creates a unique sense of acoustic space. Composers, like Katharine Norman, make that space dynamic, make it shift. She brings the listener in and out of some sonic landscape, moves them along, away from, or into the life of a particular sound, as if operating the pan and zoom of a sonic camera. And so with his composition, once his ear and mind have discovered the piano’s interior world, he will hear his father’s voice in the strings of the piano, slowed and full of the tones that are there, in his father’s will to speak.

With the drag of a cursor, he brings in his father’s voice, his “Listen to this.” In the body of the piano, there is his father’s voice, making its string-whispered cloud of resonant pitch bounce off the soundboard and the sides of the piano’s body and out, in the throes of some new search.

And then, he brings in his entire ‘studio_Cara’ file, and there is his father’s next phrase: “Let’s not talk about it today, eh?”—the first recorded with Cara silent and waiting at the piano. His father is making sound-clouds to just-ring and blur tones while he talks of not talking, as if he had this sound-making intent all along.

He lets it play as it was recorded in the studio: his father’s musical words of not talking, running out and over themselves, compounding their strange musical effect. And then, there is the ease of his “Listen to this,” and the note that rings from the centre of the piano, where his voice has rested with the ‘s’ of “this.” Then, as his father’s phrase sounds again, and again, piano notes drop a crack at a time, seeking tones rung by the inflection of the ‘i’ and ‘en’ in “listen,” and the phrase-ending ‘i’ of “this.”

The supposed urge to not talk returns, but it connects with an impulse to listen, “Listen to this.” The two phrases move air-tones between them, and struck piano notes are circling the shift of their words. Then, piano notes circle the fade of a voice, along and into a bright burst of sound. And his father’s laugh spurts to ring a high note, descends in a series of note-ringing bursts, and gathers tone-clouds in its slow fall. An air-made line of just-rung notes and high-to-low string clusters. A laugh that is no longer a laugh. And then, clusters of piano hammers strike the close-noted pulse of the free-fall of the laugh through air, and dense sound falls slowly around yet away from that first high burst. And after this, there is one more phrase for soft voice and string. “Listen to this.”

Quinn puts his hands over his headphones, and the last tones of his father's words fade—to what? To the sound of his own voice? He laughs. Yes, he will bring in his own voice.

He goes back to the video clip in which he sat on the carpet next to his father, lining up shells: “does it remember?” And he excerpts one word as a question: “remember?” He puts it together with the forward roll of tape hiss and footsteps, and he is moving again, moving through a soundscape that has carried the soft call of wind chimes, a hum and the voiced tones and notes of the piano, because of an exhortation to listen.

There is one word: “remember?” And he makes a walk with it, through a cloud of tone-clusters, the sound alive at the heart of the piano carried out into the space he passes through. And then, there is the closing piano-touched roll and tremor of Toni's Moonlight hum, and the words she spoke to her grandfather's piano: “some kind of unfinished business”...“some kind of unfinished sound.”

Should he leave it there? He waits, and here again are the sound-circling notes of Cara, with his father's shifting words. And here is his father's tone-full voice, with “Listen to this” and a laugh that is no longer a laugh, a glissando of close sound on air through air. And now a dog calls, with a cry that falls, and the wind picks up and whips a word away—“remember?” And his footsteps continue, through a soft hum—that fades to a hiss.

He runs his fingers along the shining glass-smooth back of his Tortoise Cowry. He is finished and the house is so quiet, as if it is holding its breath until his mum gets up early for her day.

He picks up his shell and weighs it in his hands. He passes it from one to the other.

What he has done is not entirely new, of course. American composer Paul Lansky composed works that digitally filter and present the tones of speech, as full-on musical streams of sound. But Quinn actually prefers his own more acoustic search for the musical resonance of the human voice, which he has made part of a wider and more personal story. He smiles as he thinks of Lansky's comment, made in an interview he read a few days ago, that he wished to create the special kind of environment and experience only possible with a recorded medium. Maybe all he will be able to tell Gibbs is that he has tried to do this for himself, and anyone who listens.

Lansky said that giving and receiving sounds is one of the most active parts of our daily lives.

Quinn lies down to sleep for a few hours and thinks of his mum at the end-of-term concert. “When are you on?” she will ask him and he will point to a pair of headphones and say “whenever you want to listen.”

The next day, Quinn stands at the closed door of Gibbs. He raises his hand to knock as it opens. “Right on time,” Gibbs says, leading him to a chair. “Take a seat.”

Quinn cradles his memory stick with his hand in his pocket.

“Are you ready for next week?”

Quinn nods and brings out his hand and stick to say that he is done.

“What do you have there?”

“My composition,” says Quinn, “although I haven’t titled it yet.”

“How will it be shared?”

“On headphones,” says Quinn.

“Ah,” Gibbs says, with a tone to suggest that Quinn is the round peg in the square hole of his course. He pushes his chair onto its back legs, “so there is no *performance* as such?”

Quinn nods and then shakes his head, “there is a kind of performance, you know, composers like Paul Lansky and Katharine Norman talk about it—the performance of the listener who seeks to construct their own sound world as they listen. And there is the performance that occurred in the sound studio...when part of the work was being made.”

“All of your peers will be performing on stage,” says Gibbs.

“Okay,” says Quinn. “I promise I won’t feel left out.”

Gibbs laughs. “But, how am I going to grade your work if it doesn’t actually meet the course requirements?”

Quinn sucks in his breath and a whole stream of words are held in with it: how about recognising a whole history of music that hasn’t fallen out of a mould made for staged performance?; how about taking the listener’s experience as the test of a work?; how about making your course worth the paper its goals are written on?

“There are composers who work with recorded sound on stage,” says Gibbs. “I was hoping you would do something along those lines. There have been plenty of pieces for ‘tape’ and a live instrument. And some composer’s works distribute recorded sound spatially around a concert hall, from a kind of ‘stage.’”

Quinn holds up a memory stick his hand has closed over, “this turned out to be something other than that,” he says. “You know,” he adds “it all comes down to whether things need to live in private on a recorded medium, or whether they benefit from a more public performance.”

“Okay,” says Gibbs, letting the chair drop onto its four legs.

“Yeah,” says Quinn, “Lansky talks about it. Lansky says that intimate pieces can fall absolutely flat in a large public space, although...”

“Although?”

“He also says that—in a few cases—public performance can introduce spatialisation effects to enhance the composer’s intentions and the listening experience.”

“So, what are the composer’s intentions?” asks Gibbs.

Quinn blows out and no words go with it.

“Could you produce your composition as more public? Could you arrange it for loudspeakers perhaps?”

Quinn thinks of a series of speakers circling the concert hall and his kind of journey remade to play them. “Not by next week,” he says, stuffing his memory stick back in his pocket, “and that’s not really the kind of thing I had in mind.”

“But how will people listen?”

“With headphones!”

“But what are they going to do, line up?”

“Sure, if they have to.”

Gibbs rocks back onto the two back legs of his chair. “Tell you what,” he says, “why don’t you talk to Sy?”

Quinn closes the door behind him and stands with his toes against its wood and his nose an inch from the professor’s name tag. He has hold of the handle. The composer’s intentions? The composer’s intention is to explore a personal world of sound with others, to revere the music of sounds that resonate there. Should he open the door and toss that at Gibbs?

He removes his hand and shakes it loose—yes, loose. “Okay,” he says leaning his weight over the top of the stairs, “I *will* talk to Sy.” And he leaps, a half-flight at a time, for the sound studio.

Quinn rehashes his exchange with Gibbs, gesturing broadly while Sy is impassive. “It’s the main challenge of electroacoustic music isn’t it?” the sound engineer says, “the recorded sound composition lives on a fixed medium, and not in the ritual of performance.”

After taking Quinn’s memory stick in hand, Sy listens with headphones, so quiet, his chin in his right hand. Quinn sits behind him and looks at his back and slightly bowed head for some clue of what the guy hears. Sy pulls the headphones free, turns to

face Quinn and plays the composition to the room. He and Quinn look at each other as a hiss and footsteps move along in some space between them.

“It’s a matter of space,” says Sy, “the space occupied by the composition and its listener.”

Quinn sits forward on his chair. “Yes,” he says, “I really composed it for the space between our ears, between headphones.”

Sy laughs and nods. “Highlighting the interplay of mind and ear—the sensually active world of the imagination.”

“Would it benefit from spatialisation around a concert hall?” asks Quinn.

Sy rolls his eyes as if that is the million dollar question. “I can’t help thinking of Varèse and his *Poème Électronique*,” he says, “the way it was spatialised in a building that no longer exists means we’ll *never* hear it as it was.”

“Yeah,” says Quinn, “didn’t he do that for the ’58 Brussels World’s Fair, for the Philips pavilion?”

Sy nods.

“That crazy building of Le Corbusier’s,” says Quinn, “with a rolling roof drawn up into two spiked cones.”

“That was essentially a single channel work, but it was distributed over four hundred loudspeakers.”

“And wasn’t the opening of the building delayed by a month because of it?”

“Yeah, an automated switching system distributed sound in pre-programmed horizontal and vertical routes around the audience. Trails of speakers were switched on and off like Christmas lights.”

“And people were confused as hell,” says Quinn, and they both laugh quietly.

“That was *The* spatial composition of the twentieth century,” says Sy.

“It would be great to hear it as it was intended,” says Quinn, and Sy nods slowly.

“You composed your work for headphones, right?”

Quinn nods.

“Then that’s probably how it should be heard.”

Quinn nods.

“It would be interesting to throw it out into a concert hall, but you would have to think about how it lives in that space. You would have to think about keeping its resonance alive. You would have to keep your sense of the fact that resonance moves the whole thing forward, makes it live.”

Quinn stretches his legs out in front of him and puts his hands on his head. “Not by next week,” he says.

“Hey,” says Sy. “Why don’t you put your work on headphones, but also compose something that subversively meets Gibbs’s brief? Why don’t you do something that plays with the ritual of the concert without putting a ‘performer’ on stage?”

Quinn pulls himself up in his chair.

“Why not do something that makes the piano play on stage, with its world of resonance?”

Quinn leans forward and looks past Sy. “Hmmm,” he says.

Toni looks at herself in her full-length mirror. She pulls her lace-trimmed top down as far as it will go to cover the top of jeans that sit over her hips, and she puckers lips painted with just ‘the touch of a blush.’ Her mother once told her that she should have been born in jeans. She isn’t a tomboy, but she likes her jeans.

Quinn left a message on her phone late the other night: “you are cordially invited to hear the world première of the compositions of Cara and Quinn...” She had laughed and saw herself in the audience, looking appropriately expectant. She has some inkling of what Cara will play, but she hasn’t really had much to do with Quinn over the last two weeks. She asked him if there was a “spud seat” she could keep warm, since he had dropped her like a hot potato.

Cara has been practising her harp piano and piano clusters on her father’s baby grand, on and off. She said she didn’t want to practice at the university because she didn’t want to “push things with Gibbs.” It was just the other day that she came away from a “cluster-making session” with the smear of a bruise making its way to the skin on the undersides of her forearms, and Toni couldn’t help but tell her to take it easy.

Cara has also been “going a little crazy” over the writing of her programme note. Every morning for the last two weeks, Toni has got up to find yet another book, marked by a thread of paper, pushed to the side of her grandfather’s desk. Late night or early morning books about concertos and musical conversations, about the piano, about Beethoven and other composers. They lace their way around the edges of the desk, as if words and ideas have been strung together.

She hasn’t told Cara, or Quinn, that she has been for a job interview. She went down to Radio New Zealand and talked to a guy about a job as a cataloguing and research assistant for their Sound Archives. And it had nothing to do with her mum. Nothing at all.

The guy asked her why she was applying for the job and she just started to tell him about her grandfather—his post war interest in radio broadcasting and the breadth of his collection. She told him that she had listened to eight boxes of her grandfather’s tapes, that they were some part of her history. She told him about her Moonlight compilation. Afterwards she wondered if she had told him too much, but he had a smile and nod that kept her talking.

She's not sure of the job anyway, since the Sound Archives are in Christchurch. She asked if she could work out of the Wellington office, and he said "maybe for a while." She lived in Christchurch when she was little, before she and her parents moved to Wellington to live with her grandfather in his house. She can just imagine her mum's intake of breath when she tells her that she is moving to Christchurch. But she is getting ahead of herself. How can she leave?

Quinn said that he would meet her in the foyer of the music hall before the concert and show her to her seat. She has worn a jacket that sits softly over the lace of her top and low heels that make her feel like her feet belong to someone else. She is looking at her feet when Quinn taps her on the shoulder from behind. She turns and he isn't there but grinning in front of her. "Ready?" he asks her, and she tells him that is the question she should be asking him.

Her seat is near the front and she is one of the first there. "Jeez," she says to Quinn, "can't I sit further back?"

"You do want to see don't you?" he asks her, handing her the programme.

A guy calls to Quinn from behind a speaker at the side of the hall, and he raises his hand in response: coming. "Where are the headphones?" she asks him. "Over there," he says, pointing to an alcove to the left hand side of the stage, "I figure that people will probably listen in the break, or afterwards when Gibbs puts on the drinks." She nods and tells him to go, pushing him towards the speaker guy who is waving in their direction.

She opens the programme and sees that Cara's 'Concerto for Strings' is on at the end of the first half and Quinn's 'Piano Play' is on first in the second. Surely Quinn is not going to play the piano? She looks over to him talking with the guy who has been working his way around speakers placed either side of the front, middle and back of the hall. She flicks over the next few pages to see each student's programme note. Here is Cara's, and on the next page is Quinn's. She is about to read his when he arrives with his mum and ushers her into the seat next to her. Toni smiles but his mum looks as if she is not quite ready for whatever might come next. She points out Quinn's programme note to his mother, and assures her that he has been that busy getting everything sorted, she has hardly even seen him.

Toni looks down at Quinn's page. At the bottom in italics she reads: "*With thanks to Toni Cross, a sound giver.*" She gave him the sound of tape hiss, a trolley bus, a walk on gravel, the just-heard hum of the city, and her own Moonlight hum. She has given him sound, and he has made something of it.

The hall soon starts to fill up and Cara and Quinn sit a few rows from the front, clearly in view. Quinn's mum asks her "Is that Cara with Quinn?" and Toni says yes, that Cara has written a concerto. Quinn's mum is unconvinced: "really?" she asks. Toni holds the programme out as if to hand it over, "she's written a blurb about it."

"Yes, I see," says Quinn's mum, "she lives with you doesn't she?" Toni is about to explain how Cara came to be at her grandfather's house when Quinn's mum says "Quinn said that she played the piano for him in the sound studio."

"She said she might drop by," says Toni. And she wants to tell Quinn's mum that she recorded a day's worth of soundbites for him. She wants to tell her that Quinn helped her with her Moonlight compilation, after recording her Moonlight song. She wants to tell her that Quinn has called her a *sound giver*.

Quinn's mother looks ahead of her to her son; she does not know what he has 'composed.' But surely, his lecturer would not have let him get this far, if he did not have something decent to contribute. She looks back to her programme, and finally opens it to read what he has written.

Listen to this is a digitally arranged sound-based work that combines real world sounds collected while walking with the tones of the human voice and piano. Together, these sounds form a montage that takes the composer as well as the listener on a sensorial journey of the mind's ear.

By transforming and heightening sounds within a musical kind of framework, *Listen to This* reveals not only the musical nature of the human voice, but also the musical resonance of sound that surrounds us. As British composer Katherine Norman has written in the *Contemporary Music Review* entitled "The Poetry of Reality: Composing with Recorded Sound," works such as *Listen to This* invite us through our active, imaginative engagement with sound to create the world of the music. At its heart, *Listen to This* is concerned with the sound in music and the music in sound.

Part of this work was made in collaboration with pianist Cara Fore and sound engineer Sy Sowman."

And then Quinn's mum reads another paragraph that explains why Quinn has something on the concert programme:

An intimately interactive piece, *Listen to This* is presented with headphones, to the left of the stage. During the concert *Piano Play*—a

partly improvised piece—will further explore the musical resonance of the human voice. A background soundtrack I have already composed will form a musical baseline for soundbites delivered off-stage from my computer. Some of those were already held by me or recorded over the last week as I engaged a whole range of people with a variety of questions. Others will be gathered from the concert audience.

Quinn’s mum turns to look at Toni and says “the sound in music and the music in sound.”

“Yeah,” says Toni. “Cara and I talked about that, in relation to Beethoven, actually.”

“Beethoven, eh?” Quinn’s mum says quietly, “the sound in music.”

Quinn turns to look behind him and his mum gives him a small wave. He smiles, and to Toni’s surprise he winks at her and she laughs.

Gibbs comes onto the stage and welcomes students, parents, friends and supporters to the concert that—for eight young composers—is the culmination of a term’s work and an important step towards developing ideas that will underlie the development of a personal musical practice and identity.

The first piece has been written for piano and voice. Toni expects Cara to come on stage, but it is not her that arrives to accompany the young woman who has a voice higher and more forceful than her own. The young woman is the composer herself and Toni likes to think that she is that woman for a moment, able to write and sing music like this. But, no, she was happy with the intimacy of responding to the notes of ‘The Moonlight,’ making a song for it, yet for herself.

Quinn’s mum wonders how many melodies have been spoiled by words unable to rise with them. This composer has done right by her song. She has taken words from a poem by Kapka Kassabova, “And they Were Both Right.” Near the end she sings:

What if love is made and nothing else –
 Asked Narcissus, leaning over the green iris of water.

Nothing else,
 cried Echo from the green cochlea of the woods.

And they were both right.
 And they were both lonely.

This young woman's music sounds of something that flows yet slips across her fingers, like a stream of gentle notes.

"I need to listen to his voice," that's what Quinn had said to her the day she bristled beside his computer. And then he made her ex-husband's words play inside the piano. Tom was a strong man, with a chest you could take hold of, and he loved Quinn. But after five and a half years together, she couldn't bear to have him near her anymore. A hatred for his presence began to flair, as if it had worked its way into her skin over the path of the years.

Cara sits watching and listening and thinks of the desire and loss that has circled in Kassabova's words and in the music:

Love will be made and unmade – naturally,
unnaturally. It will be invoked
like a reason, like a form of life.
It will be forgotten.

She thinks of the gentle stretch of a melody made of arcs and wonders if music is always concerned with loss and desire, because of the nature of sound itself. And yet, despite the possible weight of her thought, she can't give it enough space to settle. She was wrong to wait her turn in the audience. It would have been better to wait out back.

As soon as the song is finished, she whispers to Quinn that she is going to go and "limber up." And she tucks in her head and dashes to the side of the hall and out the side door that leads to a small flight of stairs to the back of the stage. She is part way up the stairs when Gibbs comes through the door behind her. "Alright?" he calls up softly. She turns towards him and nods. "Nerves?" he asks.

It was not even two weeks ago that Cara could have dug a hole and buried Gibbs in it. But she had spoken to Quinn, who had spoken to Sy, and she was told by Gibbs that she could harp the piano—since it was so integral to her work—as long as she carefully cleaned every string with just the right soft cloth afterwards.

Gibbs has walked up the few stairs to her.

"I'm just a bit fidgety," she says.

"Your orchestra is waiting in the music room. Go in there for a bit. I will ask someone to come and get you all when it's time for your performance."

Gibbs watches her descend the stairs to the music room. He shakes his head at this young woman who has written a bullet of a concerto. A concerto packed like explosive powder into a small casing. She was not keen for him sit in on her first rehearsal. Before she would play she handed him the score of her first and second movements (she was “still working” on the third). She said something about the generative potential of a simple melodic motif and waited, almost coldly, while he scanned pages with notes only just kept neat.

Cara enters the music room and her small group of string players greet her. They are all performance students or orchestral musicians lined up by Gibbs. She loved rehearsing with them even though at first she felt like she was too much on show. But once the music took over, she felt good to be at the centre of it. In some ways she hasn't been looking forward to this concert performance because the stakes are doubly high—she is performer and she is composer. She has twice as much to lose.

And it is no time before Gibbs's messenger arrives at the door and tells them that it's time to head for the stage.

Quinn's mum has been waiting for Cara's concerto, to see what a piano player who has helped create the 'music' of her son might write for herself. She opens her programme and re-reads Cara's lengthy note:

I have entitled my three movement concerto a *Concerto for Strings* as a play on the baroque title for a concerto for a solo string player and orchestra. Here the solo string player is playing the strings of the piano—the “string piano” as it was called by Henry Cowell (1897-1965). The piano's strings resonate with sound that is explored and expanded by a string orchestra. With *Concerto for Strings* resonance becomes not only the rich vibration of tones within and between instruments, but also the process and quality of evoking charged responses from like yet different voices. For, as Joseph Kerman has written, the concerto creates a field of mutual awareness in which sound-bodies or sound-agents act out the intricacies of their roles and relationships. It is with the concerto, in particular, that individual sonorities can be brought together to create a new and “luminous” sonority.

In my first movement a melodic motif generates an exchange between piano and orchestral strings and introduces the play of a “cluster” as a way to sound out the piano. The second and slow movement is concerned with the piano as a harp and every person's will

and ability to sing. The third movement is generated by the first two movements and ultimately releases the sound-full music that was there from the first bass and chord strike of the beginning.

This work is my homage to Beethoven whose piano music first made me consider the pianist and composer's quest for the special quality of piano-made resonance. Of course, it also celebrates the pianistic explorations of Henry Cowell that further opened the world of music to piano sound.

People applaud as the string orchestra comes onto the stage and take their seats and they applaud some more as Cara comes to the front of the stage and takes a quick bow. Stepping back from the audience, she seems to falter for a moment, her hand behind her on the edge of the piano, the length of her thin fingers pressed against black shining wood. But then she is sitting on the piano stool. She looks over to Gibbs who she is—perhaps unfortunately for her—clearly able to see. And she pulls herself in with a deep breath and her hand which moves very slightly for herself in front of her chest, beating, for a moment, the time of her first movement. Then she lifts her hands above the keyboard.

Quinn's mum is surprised by the surety with which Cara strikes bass notes on black keys. She can see her hitting a doubled low note with the stretch of little finger and thumb—a C sharp for sure, the tonic of her first movement. And then straight after, there is the almost percussive attack of the matching treble chord in her right hand: the attack of her chord is heard while notes are prolonged and ring together in sustain, until she hits the next bass note, and then the next bass note followed by the ring of its chord. And down a line of bass notes Cara goes, making treble chords after every second bass note she strikes. Then the bass begins again, higher, and makes its way lower with treble chord strikes.

Quinn's mum looks down at her hands, outside fingers spread across the programme in front of her, the pianist's reliance on the strike of an octave as a source of force.

Moving for the ring of her sound, Cara leans towards the left hand of her bass, and a melody emerges. A first note quickly falls lower, is hop-stepped back to and held. Then she leans towards her right hand and plays a first high note that quickly falls lower, is hop-stepped back to and held, quickly falls lower, is hop-stepped back to, and held. Then she makes her melody again, along with her descending bass, the bass that

started her concerto, and with it, she drives her right hand into full chords. And she leans back as piano-sound expands with both of her hands.

Bows are raised as Cara's hands fall to her lap, and the piano's melody is taken over by violins. A melody is repeated until Cara also has it under the fingers of both her left and right hands. It is a heady kind of effect, this melody sung out in unison, by piano and strings. Then, with the melody still in her right hand, Cara once more gives herself the low strike of descending notes, and they rumble down with cellos and double basses. And then, her melody is flung out wide, into the dense spread of its harmonic threads, across the piano and an orchestra's strings, along the full breadth of its span.

Playing her full harmony into the hunch of her shoulders, Cara raises her right hand, a hand swept up for the quick-crash of a finger-cupped slap. And her melody is still there, but with crunched bunches of notes, her clusters, slap-flung about, along and about.

Quinn's mum sits tall, peering ahead of her, trying to get a fix on the sudden downward bunch of Cara's fingers, the spark and glance of her harmony-and-dissonance.

But then, Cara stops for violins and violas: the dogmatic refrain of her un-clustered melody sung clear. It runs on and low, into the following flow of cellos and double basses, and Cara's low two-handed chords that roll around the piano as much as out, out as the roar of Bass Strings. And she plays for her melody of clusters, lifting hands for weight thrown back, weight thrown down. And then, she throws those hands upwards and on, to violins and the strike of bows on strings.

Violinists double-stop—strike down across a swathe of strings—an octave's spread of clashed harmonious half-chords. And Quinn's mum quick-laughs, for the hit of this strung cluster, and the almost-grin of Cara's face, the tug of her cheek. Violas join violins, and then there is also the bass of the piano, overrun by Cara's melody of clusters. And she is not done as she leans back to start the next run of her melody with a fist: a deep dynamite-spark explosion and the aural whack of a fist plumb on the chin. Her melody is a bass-made exploration of the piano's sound and Quinn leans forward in his seat, as if to happily take the blow of each cluster. Cara's eyes are drawn in his direction, but she must direct herself to her orchestra and cellists lifting their bows.

Cara's first melody is heard again, round and low in cellos, playing without clusters, they remember each note of her melodic motif, the melody that began in the piano's bass. The cellists' solo widens out and over the stage—it is almost fully unfurled when they double-cluster-strike their strings, and are joined by double basses

doing the same...until Cara bursts in and over with a fist-clustered melody in the bass, and then the treble of her right hand.

Strings sit quietly and Cara drops her shoulders, letting her melody fall back to four-fingered clusters and the descending bass of her beginning, letting it return to its former self, without clusters. And then, there is her descending bass and her treble chords as she returns to her beginning. Finally, there is just the held strike and ring of the low C sharp, only the stretch of little finger and thumb, with which she started.

Quinn's mum crosses her hands at the end of Cara's first movement, willing away any errant applause. Toni smiles at her and holds her hands for the clapping that can only just wait until the end.

Cara shifts on her piano stool and casts a glance at Gibbs, holding himself in, casts a glance at Quinn, nodding. Then she brings her right hand up in front of her chest again, her focus on her second and slow movement's beat. As Cara drops her hand, her beat makes its way through her body, and instead of lifting her hands as she did with the first movement, she stands, the piano stool just behind her knees. She leans forward and unfurls her hand over the soundboard of the piano to make the strum of her "fraaaaaam."

Toni leans towards Quinn's mum: "Harp piano," she whispers, and she looks around her for people's shrugs and smiling lips. Perhaps like her, they have never heard the piano harped in concert before. "Froooooom," Cara brings her hand back in the opposite direction, just the way she did when she was harping her dad's baby grand with Cara at the keyboard.

"Fraaaaaam," "Froooooom." Cara has her foot on the middle pedal and her left hand on keyboard chords as her right hand plays across piano strings, making the delicate sound of the shift of her harmony. Then Cara has her foot on the right hand sustain pedal and lifts her right hand ready to go at a string, and she plucks it, and she plucks another, and another: her melody that springs from a lower note to a high note, from a lower note to a high note, drops to climb slowly upwards, more than once, and then tumbles down in smaller leaps to reach up only a little and finally fall. Toni follows the soft ping of Cara's pluck as the notes of her melody rise and fall, rise and fall.

Toni turns her hands palms up, fingers open to the added pluck and uplift of the violin's strings, their mellow-round, yet sharp-edged, bounce and spread of the harmonies of Cara's melody. And she smiles as violin bows are held straight up in the air, bobbing up and down, up and down, like light dancing markers of fingered movement.

Then violinists drop bows into the curled grip of fingers and draw the sweep of Cara's melody across strings, while she goes back to harp-strumming the harmonies of her melody in chords. Through the string orchestra Cara's melody goes on bow: from violins, to cellos, to violas, to a full string orchestra complete with the deep notes of the double bass.

This bowing of Cara's melody might build to a climax, but it drops to a whisper and ends as cellos and violas pluck their notes, out from the middle of the sound of all strings. Out the plucked melody comes, to violins that take it over. And over it goes, to be also pluck-played on the piano. But then, for a while, there is only the plucked melody of the piano, a quiet string of light notes for the tip of a finger. And then, it grows, louder, along with the life of the rhythm in the pluck of orchestral strings, and it is moved, moved through more of the piano's harp strings, until—becoming quieter: *diminuendo*— piano and orchestra whisper a pluck, the notes of Cara's melody like small knots on the wisp of a thread.

Cara sits back on her piano stool and the disappointment Toni feels from losing her harped strings is overtaken by the sound of the solo melody played in one line with Cara's right hand on the keyboard—the simple touch of finger on key for the string of the piano that is also a harp. And with her left hand, Cara fills her hammer-struck melody with her movement's starting chords. Her full melody that hit-rings on the piano. And she makes it loud and she makes it rich by rolling fingers across chords in her left hand, as if she were harping the strings on the inside, from the outside.

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.

Toni breathes out as she realises she has held her breath for that last run of plucked strings. She looks at Quinn's mum who smiles.

Cara is at the beginning of her third movement already. She has been both wishing for and dreading this concert, and now it is almost over. But not quite. This is the movement that makes the concerto. She looks across at Quinn briefly while she shifts herself on the piano stool. He sees her smile, although it doesn't seem to be directed at him. Once more, her hand is in front of her chest, beating the time of her third movement: a quicker beat. Then her hand moves her beat away from her chest, out to a string orchestra, and he is about to catch the beginning she has given to them.

Strings open with a cantabile melody. It starts in violins on a sure bow and is soon carried across the orchestra, in harmony. It is a melody like a homecoming, like a breath of fresh air taken on the path to a front door and a room full of music: notes step up and back with a lilt along an arc that climbs and softly resolves itself in the nestle of a closing chord. Quinn tilts his head to one side and thinks that this is Cara at her most relaxed, if she ever is. This is the light of her second movement carried through to her third.

Her melody plays itself through, ranging across orchestral strings, making a flow and sway. And then Cara is on her feet and her foot is on the right hand sustain pedal of the piano. She reaches into the piano with a long straight arm and sweeps it widely across all-open strings. Quinn hears the way so many tones vibrate—harmonics and inharmonics, a full complement of piano sound, dark and round. A swathe of dark strung song lies under the melody of orchestral strings, merges with it as much as it can and then fades, until Cara makes her arm sweep once more. And on this goes for half a minute or so, a string melody accompanied by the dark-light sweep of the piano.

Cara sits on her stool again and Quinn sees her hold her hand out flat. Violins continue her melody, taking it higher while she slaps and holds a bunch of keys with her right hand, and then with her left, and then with her right, and then with her left: each approaching the other. Her palm-clusters punctuate the orchestral string melody above them and head towards their own centre. Then Cara doubles the speed of her clusters to a pulse that moves a string melody long and limber. But orchestral strings fall quiet and stop, while piano clusters fall to a fist: one up, one down, one up, one down. And violin strings respond with a phrase of melody, and Cara responds with fist clusters, and violin strings respond with their phrase, and Cara responds with her clusters. But then, with the sweep of her chin, she brings their play together: the melody of strings made full by the rise or fall of the notes of a fist.

And then, violinists drop their bows to their laps and Cara brings both her forearms to rest on the keyboard. With her left arm, she rolls up a line of bass notes, from elbow to wrist, and waits for a long line of clustered sound to hang dense in the body of the piano, just as it runs to escape. With her right arm, she rolls down a line of treble notes, from elbow to wrist, one line of sound to match the other, and, inevitably, merge with the other.

Then, bit by bit, she builds a new kind of melody, only with clusters. Her left forearm's rolling clusters descend the bass notes of the piano, one long line of them, one just after the other, every low note lurching into the company of every other. Yet with

her right hand, Cara makes her four-fingered clusters walk and then spring with their own three-crash beat, up-down-up, up-down-up. Still rumbled and yet relentless, her right hand becomes a fist and winds into a run from middle C up the keyboard, one scale of fists, each starting one above the other. And then, her right forearm is rolling her up or down the keyboard between four-fingered clusters, sometimes exploded with the smash of a fist.

Quinn glances at Gibbs who is leaning back as if away from all of this action, and he can't help but blurt the word "Cadenza!"

As soon as Cara crashes her last fist, orchestral strings have clusters on their bows—the double-stopped clusters of the first movement, across all strings, each player a semitone apart. They are fist-like mega-collections of notes that punch out from the stage. And just when Quinn thinks Cara has sounded the climax of her movement, she ramps it up: both of her forearms roll and crash towards each other and every string player double-stops up or down their fingerboard in the opposite direction to the player next to them. It is as if every player is launching loads of notes into an air of charged sound that arcs, bends and swells over them all.

But clusters become lighter, and Cara can be heard rolling glissandos in her left hand, rolling them until she stands to sweep the fullness of her harp. And strings recall the melody that started her movement with its flow and sway. And Cara sits on her stool and plays that melody for herself, along with the ring of chords in her left hand: chords that rise and fall with a cluster...until the third movement's melody falls to solo violin, viola, cello and double bass, and Cara simply pulses a right hand palm cluster, until quiet falls. And then, she takes her right forearm and slowly, almost gently, rolls it from the top of the keyboard to the bottom, and, with her left forearm, back to the top, from elbow to wrist, elbow to wrist. She harps her piano on the inside from the outside to sound a world of tone colour that vibrates around and out to Quinn and everyone around him, hushed.

Cara leaves her forearms on the keyboard until sound has travelled and faded, and then she lifts them and draws her arms to her sides. She stands and faces the orchestra who all nod to her as she gives them a congratulatory bow. As she turns to face the audience, the orchestra lay down their instruments and applaud her, along with the audience. Cara totters for a moment as if she has only just seen the many people in front of her, and then she recovers herself with a low-held bow. The string orchestra stamps their feet and Cara turns to them and laughs while the audience begin to stamp for themselves: a couple of hundred pairs of feet stamp to roll sound around the hall. Quinn

gets to his feet and stamps and claps, and he is surprised to see Gibbs also stand and clap—he is holding his applauding hands out to the troublesome young woman who has just exploded the life out of the piano.

Quinn's mum waits for Toni to sit after jumping to her feet with Quinn ahead of them. The applause eventually dies away and the hall lights come on strong. "I don't think I could have played that," she says to Toni, "or even thought of it."

Toni laughs, "well, it all started with 'The Moonlight' and the sound of the open strings of the piano."

Quinn's mum concentrates on something she must know: "'The Moonlight,'" she says.

Toni nods, "and then there was 'The Appassionata' and then I guess there was whatever she played for Quinn in the sound studio...She does mention Cowell in the programme."

Quinn's mum opens her programme again, "yes, Henry Cowell. Have you heard of him?"

"Not me," says Toni, "but I have played the harp piano, with Cara on the keyboard, among other things."

Quinn's mum raises her eyebrows.

Toni sits back and crosses her arms. "You know," she says, "maybe that third movement was where it all led her, where *sound* led her?"

"The sound in music," says Quinn's mum.

"Yeah, well," says Toni getting up, "there was a fair amount of that." And Quinn's mum laughs as Toni goes off to listen to Quinn's composition and her son approaches her with his digital recorder.

"What?" she asks. "You're recording even now?" Quinn laughs and tells her he is collecting soundbites for his next piece, and she nods to his programme note.

"Tell me something you've never told me," he says.

"Okay," she says dog-eared the page of her programme. "Your father always loved you."

Quinn looks down at his digital recorder and blinks as its recording light glows red. He kisses his mum softly on the cheek. But then, he leaves her to approach another person for some words to record.

His mum puts her hand where his lip-touch has been. He hasn't kissed her like that for years, not since he was a child.

Toni returns to her seat and says "you've got to go and listen."

She had put the headphones on and pushed the play button of the slim CD player mounted on the wall. She was almost enclosed in a kind of booth lined with black paper. Straight away she heard her tape hiss, the run of its crackle, the sound of recording—made before, and yet now. She heard a sound cast in some corner of her mind-and-ear while it moved her on...on into the crunch and soft rhythm of footsteps, her footsteps, her sense of walking, being lead between the rise of waiting trees. And it was as if she was back, walking up the path in the gardens, while she found herself somewhere else, somewhere almost secret. For there was the soft ring and play of some sort of wooden wind chime. It was such a beautiful sound, and it moved with and around her, as if she could be at its centre. She put her hands over the headphones to mimic the attention she could not help but give it, before she sat in the seat Quinn had provided.

She was still moving, moving with the sound of a trolley bus, the quiet surety of its “clack, di-dum, clack...clack, di-dum, clack.” And somehow, she walked with it and out, out into the call and fade of a voice in a hum, her hum. It was the last vestige of her voice with the Moonlight piano, its pulse and ring the pulse and ring of a low long-held chord. Its ring moved with her and on, on into a voice with a word clearly heard, a word for the crux and flow of her journey, a word for her need to “listen.” It was a known word and voice, in this space of her movement, the voice of Quinn’s father, brought near by its sense of closeness, of being a word shared.

But then, she was made to rush, and a wind gusted to cycle the sounds of a buffeted chime and the childlike cry of a dog around her, slow-spinning her captive. She hunched herself up and thought how strange it was that she could be affected like this, that she could have such a strong sense of herself in this space. And then, she could move, with a gust: nearby—the sounds of people, clinking talking. Gusted on, she moved, with the soft constancy of steps, until a dog growled at a swarm of voices, swelling around her, surrounding her, passing her, and disappearing into one future moment.

She could move, with a lighter wind and the quiet crackle and known flow of her movement, for the hope of her hum and its piano. And on she went, with an upward piano triplet, along the run of the harp piano and the creak of its string, and into the word of a voice, “Listen.”

And she listened with an ear and mind that put her at the heart of a piano that played with key and hammer and string, at the heart of a piano with a wooden body to enclose it. And then, after all, there was voice music—a voice with music in the strings

of her piano: “Listen to this.” In air it just-rang piano notes with the inflections of its speech, through the blurred tone-clouds of the spread of its words.

After that first full phrase, words changed, denying the will to talk. And yet, tones continued to ring and blur, as she listened. And when two full phrases rocked to and fro, piano notes circled and bump-carried them along...until there was a laugh-cascade of tone-and-voice, a slow bursting release and collection of air-filled sound. It was the strangest laugh she had ever heard: happy and sad and relaxed and anxious and all of those things, and none of them. Then there were piano hammers striking out the line of that strange laugh’s fall, and there was a full gathering and slow-falling of sound in air. Soft, on its tail: “Listen to this.”

Then there was a child’s word, yes, there was the voice of a boy: “remember?” And she put her head in her hands with her elbows on her knees. “Remember?” she whispered as she walked again through the promising tones of the piano and its hum and heard herself say what she said to the piano the day after Quinn stayed the night: “Some unfinished business...some unfinished sound.” Yes, she could remember.

Near the end, the piano’s circling notes unfurled that same strange laugh with a dog’s howl on its tail, and the wind took that word, “remember,” away, and she only just moved with the sound of a hum, that became just the crackle of a hiss.

Quinn’s mum tells Toni that she will listen after the concert—“there are a few people waiting.” And she watches those that listen. They stand and then sit with headphones cupping their heads. They are all so still, so cut off, somehow. And then they hang up the headphones and step away with a smile that doesn’t know its face, or a face that doesn’t know its smile: she can’t quite describe the looks on their faces.

After a time, Gibbs comes onto the stage and stands in front of a dark blue velvet curtain, drawn at the end of the concert’s first half. He explains that the extended break was important to allow people to listen to Quinn’s composition. Those who would like to listen can do so after the concert when the department will provide complimentary drinks. The track will also be put onto the music department’s web site so that people can listen with their own headphones at home. Gibbs also explains that Quinn has collected a few soundbites from audience members that will be heard next in his ‘Piano Play’—a sound work that explores the resonance of the piano.

People applaud as Gibbs leaves the stage and the curtain opens. Quinn’s mum expects to see her son, but there is just the black grand piano, with its lids closed, mid-stage. It sits at an angle to the audience, its covered keyboard at the front. And there are long black wires that trail out of its body—she can only really see them between the

piano and the floor. Quinn and his sound engineer are off to the right hand side of the stage, in the wings. She can see a hand in movement, and that is really all. And then, she starts to hear a sound. It is coming from the large speakers either side of the front of the stage, but she is sure it is coming from the piano.

There is a voice in the piano. It is a woman's voice, drawn out as if it is carried on air, but she can hardly hear the word she says until it becomes more distinct: "beginning." The word loops around itself, expands with a ring of piano strings, and opens into the phrase of "a play for...a beginning." She looks at Toni who smiles and whispers "voice music". Is it the inflection of the vowels in the woman's words that catch the strings like little air-hooks?

Words play over and over themselves to make small clouds of tones that shimmer and bounce, until they spread out and fade. Then there is a man's voice, "backwards," and a response from a younger voice, "forwards," and they do play together as per the sing-speak of their words, the rock of a rhythm blurred by piano tones, a slow pulse. "Rhythm," a voice now says at the end of each "backwards," and its "forwards." And the play between three words becomes a kind of continuing background bass, the run of a sound-making motif that keeps the inside of the piano just sounding.

More words play over the backward and forward rhythm of words: "of my...breath...of my...want to...agree...but linger...just in...agreement." Words-and-tones play over a sound-line of tones at a pulse. Each new word or phrase is caught by, yet beyond, its meaning in speech, always seeming to promise more sense than the one before it, and with the one after it.

There is a lower phrase now: "turning in." It repeats itself with just enough time between each play for the piano to respond with a light touch that is not really a touch. Then there is a higher phrase to softly play higher string-tones: "opening out." And then, there is a word given as an exclamation—"leap." It quick-repeats to become the stutter of an echo that stops to let a small chorus of higher reaching tones buzz. And this fades to a bass voice, "coming down." It hangs before it makes its own stutter of an echo, and a deeper string-buzz.

Quinn's mum can't see any movement from the wings as the baseline "backwards, forwards, rhythm" rolls quietly along: familiar now, it lays a sonic ground that stretches out and open. But then, there is the glimpse of a hand in the wings and a word from a child, probably a small child: "remember?" She is shocked by the familiarity of it as much as her inability to place it, and it floats off for longer and more immanent adult phrases: "got to make way for...only just towards...a hopeful

resolution...but always wanting more...yes, together...to rise to it and...join...still there and now...make light.” She notices a few heads turn and whisper to the one next to them, hears a small laugh or two: the sound of recognition, she assumes, as people around the hall hear a snippet of their words transformed, the resonant life in the piano.

“Remember?”—the young word floats through a tone haze and is followed by the sound of a breeze that overruns the rhythm of the baseline and moves out into the hall. Quinn’s mum turns her head to look behind her, as do many other people, including Toni. There is a speaker on a stand behind them, and, she is sure, it sounds along with the front speakers to expand the sound of a breeze, a breeze that becomes a wind. And the wind moves into the piano as words light upon low-to-high strings: “make more...beginning and ending...drawing in...out...connected...kept alive...open...no, twist...make more...held...for more...make it new...in just moments...sense held...my own.” And her son loops those words around and over themselves so that they change from word-sound-music into only-sound-music. They become louder and build to a tone-filled hum that is carried across front, middle and back speakers. She turns to see other heads turn as if to watch sound filling the hall.

And the hum continues, like the life-buzz of the piano that stands mid-stage, a centre of sound and its music.

But then, the piano’s hum falls quiet to the sound of a breeze carried throughout the hall. And there are words that are swept lightly along—“tracing the life of...still light...left open...to give way...and then fall.” Then there is just a wind that plays the hall until the very first words return and are continued: “a play for...beginning...a play for...remember?” And a young voice repeats itself “remember?” And there is a wind and there is a voice, “always loved you.” It is her voice. “Always loved you.” And she tries a smile, but it doesn’t know its face. And then, there is a string of words: “tracing the life...still light...given over...give way...in...some moments, together.”

Sound recedes from back to front speakers with “beginning...a play for...beginning...a play for more...together...end.” And then there is the sound of a woman and the crackle of the last-of-breath vibrato of her hum, the tones of the piano and “a play for more.”

The Music:

A reader will come to the third and last movement of my Beethoven's last piano concerto and find the piano making its beginning with six beats in a bar, felt as the quick walk of two.

The left hand bass is playing in two upward groups of three while the right hand makes the dance of a melody in bounding ascent: four quick-joined note-chords spin into like notes above, just-held with the punch of an accent, and the light finger-flick of two small note-groups—dd di, dd di—flitting along to a trill—drrrrrr—and another run of four quick-joined notes.

You:

A melodic motif is made, and repeated: a melody's theme.

The Music:

And the *tutti* respond with the same finger-flick of notes—dd di, dd di—before sounding out the piano's full theme that is...

You:

quick-played through to the lift of two chords for the piano that rides its light-fingered run to the stretch of a new *dolce* theme...

The Music:

With the flow of a soft-toned touch, this second theme also has a bass that rises in two groups of three notes and runs closer to a right hand treble that begins with a turn on the reach of a hand and swing-falls to the run of the just-touch of a grace note that leaps, and leaps, and leaps.

You:

And the *tutti* returns with a short sounding of the rhythm of the theme.

The Music:

And the piano plays higher to continue its *dolce* melody. In the bass: the run of two groups of six quick notes to each quick beat. In the treble: a grace note leaps an octave to swing-fall to a slower leap, and another, until both left and right hands fall into the quick pulse-sprinkle of twelve notes per bar, until...

You:

those notes spread to ripple descending right-hand octave leaps and left-hand octave drops, plumbing the keyboard and rising again for the theme.

Toni left with only one suitcase and walked down the path to the street as a blackbird flew over her head and off. Cara and Quinn stood at the gate at the bottom of the villa's path to the street where her taxi waited. None of them said very much.

She opened the taxi door and thought that she could leave because of the prospect that she may come back to Wellington as a radio programming assistant, although she could also end up in Auckland. But then, she turned to look at them and thought that she could leave because she knows something, something about sound.

"Don't worry about staying in the house—it's all sorted," she said to Cara.

"The money your parents will get from you renting it out won't be too bad," said Quinn.

"Yeah, just find me a couple of decent renters," she said to Cara who nodded and said, "students that won't compete with me for the piano."

"Ha!" said Quinn, "two pianos to yourself."

"And a room full of sheet music and books," said Cara. "Heaven."

The night before Toni left she had stayed at Quinn's. They lay together on his bed with mingled feet and she talked about everything and nothing. "I wish I wasn't going," she had finally said and he made a quiet hum and held her hand at the base of his chin at the top of his throat.

She didn't try and explain a full chain of events to her father or her mother—not yet. As far as they are concerned she is making a move, she is moving on. She told her mum that she may get into programming, and could even end up in Auckland. She told her dad that the notebook he gave her helped Cara compose her music. She also told her dad that Cara has talked to Gibbs and—if she doesn't return to Wellington—she has promised to arrange the gifting of her grandad's music and books to the music department's library. "Who knows," she said, "grandad's notebook, and his piano music, could end up making even more music." And he had actually seemed quite pleased by that.

As she is driven beside the sea in her taxi she thinks that she will never again be on her way to the airport, leaving Wellington, at least for a time, and going to Christchurch. She will never again sit looking at the wind scuff more-green-than-blue

water while she thinks of her Moonlight song on the compilation CD she has given to Cara and Quinn. She left one for Quinn on his desk, next to a brown and white speckled shell. She left Cara's on top of her father's upright piano. They will listen to theirs and she will listen to hers and, across time and distance, the notes of 'The Moonlight' will—as they do so well—flow with the fullness of present memory and the gift of sound.

The Music:

Here it is again in the piano: the dance of a melody in bounding ascent, with those four quick-joined note-chords that spin into like notes above for the punch of an accent and the light finger-flick of grouped notes—dd di, dd di, dd di, dd di...

You:

And into a quick two bar *tutti* for the dance of a rhythm. And straight into the two-handed run of six-and-six quick piano notes: the up-light notes of the piano's run. And on with only the right hand lunging for the bass, and into the left hand that is crossed by the right climbing high, and into the left hand that is crossed by the right flung higher, until both hands run—straight down for the sway-dance of the *tutti*.

The Music:

And on with the piano—after a bar of the dance—into twelve-note runs of stacked notes thrown upwards in threes. They go fast downwards to the rumble of the bass—until each upwards treble-play is partnered with a downwards bass-play: releasing the spin-dance with a keyboard to sound.

You:

Then, once more—the theme in the piano, but with the lift of high-play for a dance kept spinning...

Quinn has his digital recorder in his hand as he walks and he thinks of the way many small sounds combine to make his auditory history. Every day he goes out to walk and each day there is something to record.

He is creating a series of 'Walk Pieces' to mark his days until the end of the year. Each piece will be an auditory snapshot of a special encounter with sound, and he knows that they will combine to form something bigger. While walking he has also decided that he wants to compose a series of pieces for recorded real-world sound and piano. These pieces could be an unusual kind of duet in which music is created for and by the potential of sound.

Today might seem like any other day, but there will be some sound event for him to record—and his day will become the day for that sound. Sometimes he finds a sound effect after he has downloaded his file and sometimes it is something he has fully witnessed with his two eyes and ears. Yesterday he was waiting for a bus and a young mother crossed the road towards him with a young girl trailing her hand. The girl crossed with her little face set, but once her feet hit the pavement she broke into this self-contained kind of stomp-dance with the slap of her feet as her rhythm while her voice called out gibberish words to ride it. The kid was a world of sound, right there, right then. And he will never forget being there to record it.

Now he is walking in the Botanic Gardens towards the top of the hill where an observatory looks for the stars. He is walking with the crunch of the path and remembers the end-of-term concert.

When you compose something you really have no idea of how people will respond to it. You follow what you think is in your sonic material and the flow of its moments, and you trust in people's ears, minds and hearts. Part way up his path he stops and looks down to the rose garden below.

A couple of weeks ago he wouldn't have believed that his mum would suggest and provide after-concert glasses of wine at the villa. But she had met them there with two bottles of red and two bottles of white tucked into a brown paper bag under each arm. "To celebrate," she said. And the four of them had talked into the early morning and Cara played the piano and Toni played 'The Moonlight' and her "Moonlight song" on her father's stereo.

After he and his mum had sobered up, they had gone and stood in the cold morning by his car, and she said "I didn't know that you missed your father so much...it was silly of me to think that what was good for me was good for you."

He told her it was okay while the light made shadows on her face.

She said that she was sorry that his father had given up trying to contact them and he had put his arm around her shoulders. He noticed how frail she felt in the crisp air that seemed to brittle her bones. And he told her it was okay.

As she turned towards her car she turned back to him and said, "Oh, I've been meaning to tell you something I remembered: when you were not even a toddler your dad would hold you over the open upright piano while I played."

"Yeah?" says Quinn, "and what did I do?"

"The very first time you *threw* yourself at the piano and your dad nearly dropped you. After that, he leant you down so you could peer right in there and listen. Your little

head must have been abuzz, but you just stared down into the piano...and he would just hold you there.”

Quinn continues his walk with his recorder. “Yip,” he says, “for the resonance of a world of sound.”

The Music:

The *tutti* returns with its dance-rhythm—this time touched by a flourish—and the piano continues to sound out its theme. It starts with two bars of the dance and then breaks into the fast finger-flow of arched groups of six notes that each play with the strike of three ranging notes in the bass...

You:

and it runs into the higher spin of the dance in the left hand, the right, the left and the right—followed by a short *tutti* for the piano...

The Music:

that drops its pitch and breaks its pattern to churn the theme through identical bass and treble notes two octaves apart...

You:

with a force able to throw around strong sound...

The Music:

until the piano makes a clearer high run for the hold of a ten bar trill, while the *tutti* softly sounds the lift of the dance...

Cara has been talking with Gibbs—he wants her to record her ‘Concerto for Strings.’ She was in his office talking about her next year’s course of study and he had asked her if she was happy for her work to be presented on a showcase CD. She had joined her hands in surprise and Gibbs said “I know I wasn’t keen on your string piano, but your music made my concerns seem small.” She nodded her thanks and he said “I hope you haven’t thrown everything you have into your first composition.” He said: “Keep working.”

She smiles to herself as she stands waiting to cross the road that runs through the middle of campus. Working is the one thing she will always do. And she has already started to think about composing a suite of piano miniatures. She has the idea of the piano talking with her about its own intimate life. This next composition will be one that turns quietly inward while its resonance—the life of music—always sends it

outward. She sat at the grandfather's piano the night before and started to pick out a melodic motif that seemed to be there, after her concerto and after Toni and Quinn left her to it. As she sat at the piano she said to herself that this melody could only be one of loss and desire, of tracing the essence of life—the lives of those who touch us and the life of the music that will always sound as something in and of itself.

Quinn wants to work on a joint composition for recorded sound and piano. He says that if it's good enough, it might make it onto Gibbs's CD. She asked him what he wanted to play with the piano and he had just said "we'll see." She had shrugged and repeated his phrase right back to him: "we'll see." She walks into the road between cars and stands at the dividing white line waiting for the oncoming traffic to pass.

The traffic clears for a moment and Cara pulls in her shoulder bag and runs for the other side of the road as sun lights its curb. She makes a leap to the footpath and walks on with the prospect of a piano's music in mind. When she gets back to the villa, she will start work on her miniatures. They will be about binding her voice to the piano's. But she will tell Quinn that they should meet in a few week's time. She will play something of what she has created and he will play his soundbites and they will let them sound together, and go from there.

She can understand Quinn's interest in the correspondences between her form of composition and his organisation of sound-based music. How could he not want to continue his discovery of the sound in music and the music in sound? And how can she not think of sound as the life of music?

Quinn has sound-full sensibilities she loves, although she doesn't want any more distractions. But then, would she have written her 'Concerto for Strings' without him? He was the one whose idea-led composition made her charge for the piano, after the nine bars of Gibbs. He was the one who talked about the harmonics and inharmonics of the piano—its rich resonant life. He was the one who mentioned Henry Cowell and put her in the sound studio with a piano and the cluster-fall of his father's laugh. In some way he was party to her concerto, and so was Toni.

But now there is the prospect of a room full of music and time to herself. She might just put her bed right in there and let her housemates have the run of the house.

And she must remember to take Toni's notebook from her grandfather's shelf. It will sit with her until Toni returns to the villa. She will hand it to her and say: "it has a life to keep close."

The Music:

And the piano moves along with the theme and run of its rhythm:

dd di, dd di, dd di...

You:

and the *tutti* responds with the full play of the same.

The Music:

And then, the piano runs into its *dolce* theme with the flow of soft-toned touch to the three-note ascent of the bass. The right hand leads skywards through grace note leaps to a two-handed glissando.

You:

And there it is again in the piano: the dance of a melody in bounding ascent and the pulse-sprinkle of twelve notes in treble and bass—rumbling down to climb high for the quick sounding of the dance in the piano...

The Music:

and in the *tutti*, and in the piano, and in the *tutti*, until...

You:

the piano makes for a four bar treble trill while the left hand runs for twelve bass notes that move it into the sound of the dance...

The Music:

that is just-suspended by a two bar treble trill...

You:

while the left hand runs and the right joins it for the spin of twelve notes through identical notes two octaves apart...

The Music:

Until they end on a note that is taken by the *tutti* for a short sounding of the rhythm of the dance.

You:

And before an ever-faster piano rush for the last *tutti* and their final chord...

The Music:

the piano's music falls gently as timpani beat a pulse for sound, always travelling away from the drumskin...