

Track titles and rationale by Lee Tsang (November 2020)

The following relates to:

Development Phase 4: *Twisting Ways* [poet's cut] (master tracks 23.11.2020)

Winnipeg Jazz Orchestra, Sarah Slean (voice), David Braid (piano), Philippe Côté (conductor)

Audio editors: Paul Johnson and Philippe Côté

Mastered by Guy Hébert of Karisma Audio

As we approached the mastering stage of the recording, we began to reflect on the matter of how the music might be divided into tracks. The original score identified five sections with working titles: 'The Hand', 'Conversation', 'Hope Shadow', 'Twisting Ways', 'Hope Shadow (Reprise)'. However, given how the materials had grown and transitions were developed, we began to explore the possibility of articulating the work across seven tracks.

These seven sections were identified in the score by Braid and Côté as follows:

1. beginning to G
2. G to M
3. M to b.367
4. b.368 "Piano Improvisation"
5. Q to b.418
6. bb.419 to 578
7. bb.578 to the end

The composers requested that I as poet identify some possible titles in the first instance; thus this seven-track version became known as the 'poet's cut'. Initially the process was challenging because within individual tracks there were a number of distinctive events. Ultimately, I selected titles that connected to specific moments in each track and which to my mind resonated outwards to encapsulate something of the whole track. As a means of setting out the work's complexity, I considered the possibility of signalling key influences with the intention that a certain logic would run through all of the tracks while enabling a simultaneous branching out and drawing in of the influences.

1. Oscar's Rose [beginning to G]
2. The Flight [G to M]
3. Dialogues [M to b.367]
4. Confucian Drift (or Daoist Drift) [b.368 "Piano Improvisation"]
5. Light Giver [Q to b.418]
6. Jungian Twists [bb.419 to 578]
7. Hope's Shadow [bb.578 to the end]

Key influences for my texts were Wilde (in turn biblical references), the Confucian/Wuwei/Yin-Yang, and Jungian psychoanalysis.

The rationales I gave for each track were as follows:

1. 'Oscar's Rose' is a nod to story of *The Rose and the Nightingale*, which is a story by Oscar Wilde. It provides a kind of analogy to Christ and the idea of sacrifice being necessary for love; indeed it is how I arrived at 'the way'. This was an influence on my text, and I was to some extent imagining what it was to be the nightingale – or if not necessarily Wilde's nightingale in his exact story, then an equivalent nightingale on a comparable journey in another dimension. I wanted to add complexity to the character, addressing the motivations of the one that seeks the 'rose'. The journey for our nightingale is a more tortured and indeed tortuous one than Wilde's.
2. 'The Flight' conveys the most important i.e. revelatory part of the flight for the nightingale. While it begins in a gentle, reflective and vulnerable way, what we hear is an interesting part of the 'flight', plus the image or notion of flight carries through all the way to the final verse, its climax and beyond. I also considered 'Revelation' for this track because musically there is such a significant change and the most important moments occur here – a discovery, a direct appeal to the Hand, a realisation of Self's *raison d'etre*. While in terms of the text, 'Revelation' could work fine, I think Revelation does not work in the context of the music as effectively as 'The Flight'.
3. 'Dialogues'. Basically this is like 'Conversation' (which sounds fitting when I hear the music) but I suggest 'dialogues' probably defines the terms of the type of conversation as the most constructive, co-operative form, so I tend to lean towards that. It feels a little weightier than conversation, has a little more gravitas.
4. 'Confucian Drift' or 'Daoist Drift'. I hear some pentatonicism in Braid's playing which I have every time perceived as subtle traces or hints of the Chinese connection / the yin-yang influence to which I have been building into my text, but I also consider Braid's playing and approach a kind of embodiment of the juncture between Catholicism and the Wuwei - some sort of common path between the two; this is of course me reflecting that into the music, whereas Braid's own motivations here could be something else. As reader I do not have a problem in doing so, because it is my own consciousness that is doing that drifting. Also, I view Braid's music as a bridge to the next sections, and I think the expressive idea of drift helps to pave the way for the concepts that those sections convey.
5. Rationale for 'Light Giver'. This track is all from the perspective of the Hand which is the giver of the light, plus the directness of introducing this 'character' helps balance with the last section 'Hope's Shadow'.
6. Rationale for 'Jungian Twists'. Rather than calling it 'Twisting Ways' (which maybe causes confusion with piece and album, though I understand the rationale for having a track of that name too), I think it is worth developing this a little further. First the musical twists are there of course, and there is a nod to the idea of expressing twists as part of process. But what does it mean if they are Jungian? Well I think the idea of playing with light and shadow reflects that idea, and of course the Jungian concept of the shadow in psychoanalysis is a big influence on the idea of 'Hope's Shadow'. Therefore it seems only appropriate and natural for Jungian twists to take us there, to link the 'Light Giver' and 'Hope's Shadow'.

7. Rationale for 'Hope's Shadow'. Hope's rather than just Hope. As we have already heard the text 'Hope Shadow' once through and we have already had the reveal of the final line 'Hope's Shadow', it seems appropriate to signal this principal, that is consummatory, image at this point.

Of these seven titles, the favourites were 'The Flight', 'Dialogues' and 'Hope's Shadow'. By contrast, 'Confucian Drift' and 'Jungian Twists' were the least preferred as they were considered to move too far beyond the 'shapes/colours/feeling/jazz-tradition-ness' of jazz big band. Listeners who are not cognizant of Confucius or Jung may experience confusion not least because it is 'too far a stretch from expectation'. Such careful balancing of what jazz audiences might accept is consistent with the signalling in the programme for the *Alliance* premiere. These exchanges also revealed a prioritisation of sung words as colour.

It is no surprise that we decided not to pursue the 'poet's cut' tracks on the grounds that the titles and divisions add levels of complexity that are too uncommercial. The 7-track model also presented challenges in terms of continuity of experience, and so we settled on a simplified 4-track division. This would show 'The Hand' and 'Hope Shadow' as the two outer pillars, with 'Dialogue' from the 'poet's cut' replacing 'Conversation' of the score version, and a new, more neutral title of 'Opening Glimmers' highlighting the role of Braid's improvisation. The track divisions served the purpose also of simplifying how to communicate the creative process of each composer commenting on the work of the collaborator.

The Poet's Cut exercise provides listeners with a number of useful insights and functions, which include: a) showing how and why we arrived at the track names that we ultimately arrived at; b) offering an alternative way of experiencing the work that can open up new connections; c) providing a comparative example by which listeners may experience how structural signalling through tracks may foreground or conceal latent poetic-philosophic readings; and d) highlighting a distinction between approaches to titling that emerge from different priorities of global surface musical shapes versus literary networks.