

REF Report and Summary

Colin Riley, *Roads Shining Like River Up Hill after Rain*

Author: Colin Riley

Output Title: Roads Shining Like River Up Hill after Rain

Brief description: A musical composition

Type of Output: Composition

Venues: New College Oxford Chapel; Stratford Artshouse, Stratford-upon-Avon; St George's Church, London; All Saints Church, Marlow; St Mary's Church Twickenham

Media of output: Recording mp3 file and PDF of score (items 1-2)

Contextual information: Evidence of premiere (item 3)

Index of information available for assessment on this site

Output

	Item/Link	Description	Additional information
1	Full version of recording	mp3 (running length 27mins 20sec)	Copy of the recording element of the output Performed by Gabriella Swallow and Pegasus conducted by Matthew Altham Downloaded from the publicly available source Roads Shining Like River Up Hill After Rain by squeaky kate music Free Listening on SoundCloud
2	Score	PDF (55 pages)	Copy of the score element of the output.

Contextual information

	Item/Link	Description	Additional information
3	Screenshot from Projects — Colin Riley	PDF (1 page)	Evidence of research process. Riley discussing inspiration and development of this piece

4	Screenshot from Walking Into The Piece Riley Notes (colin-riley.blogspot.com)	PDF (1 page)	Evidence of research process. Blog discussing inspiration and development of this piece
5	Screenshot of website for premiere at New College Chapel	PDF (1 page)	Evidence of dissemination

Copy of 300-word statement

In conducting this research, I wanted to explore a new form for a choral work. The research questions evolved around how a series of fragments by the poet Edward Thomas might be fashioned into a narrative which provides a quasi-dramatic arch, and how a solo 'cello can be integrated into the fabric of choral music as a) an obbligato line, b) an additional 'voice-without-words' and c) as an accompaniment instrument. I had previously set Thomas's poem 'Snow' for choir, where I had found that the images and sense of place in his words evoke strong musical responses.

The research process included consultations with writer Robert Macfarlane exploring possibilities for fragmentary texts. Macfarlane wrote the libretto of the piece and during the first stage of the creative process, I cut the pages of the libretto into small fragments, so I could shuffle them at random. The libretto was formed into five sections each of which returned to one of the verses from Thomas's poem 'Roads.' I set each of the five stanzas from 'Roads', with the lines of the poem being passed around between soloists. In order to create space around the poem fragments, I decided to have one instrument only and also to not have the entire choir singing all the time. I chose the cello during the research process because it mostly plays a single line and as such acts as an additional voice, a song without words.

The research findings demonstrated that the cello has the ability to provide simultaneously three modes of operation (outlined above) in terms of integrating with a choir. They show how Thomas's poetry which encompasses an 'intensity of seeing,' can be translated into music and thus an intensity of listening. The work premiered in Oxford on 15 April 2017 with solo cellist Gabriella Swallow.

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