

**Convergence and Divergence in Opera and Music Theatre:
Supporting Thesis for a Folio of Work**

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**Abstract Supporting Doctoral Thesis for a Portfolio of Work by Paul Barker
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This appraisal presents various musico-dramatic works through the elucidation of source impulse and places them alongside other works in the genre, and related works by the composer. Four of the works are operatic, in a hybrid form, which is both typical of and central to the author's creative output. The author postulates an analytical theory that transcends the historical limitations of traditional musical, literary or dramatic presentation. For this reason the author adopts a comparative generic and historical analysis, which exposes both their debts to and departures from traditional operatic forms and structures.

Several arguments are postulated to evidence the originality of the works: the use of found or specially constructed instruments; the effect of these instruments on voices through the use of relative pitch; the absence of a traditional orchestra as the basis for an opera; the use of a vocal chorus to provide the role of an orchestra; the use of obscure languages; the use of several languages simultaneously; the symbiotic nature of music and text; the influence of the sound of the languages on the music itself; the ensuing dichotomy between meaning in music and meaning in text and the consequences for the dramatic presentation of the works. Evidence is provided from each of the works to point to originality of compositional style and idiosyncrasy of word setting, and the affects of these issues on contemporary audiences and performers. One research outcome suggests that responsibility for meaning in opera lies ultimately with the performer, rather than with the creator or the score. Such an argument could hardly be more forcibly made than when, as is the case here, both author and composer are one and the same.

The works which constitute the portfolio have been performed widely, internationally, commercially recorded, broadcast on radio and some televised.

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Preface

This thesis examines some of my chamber operas and music-theatre works within the context of opera and music-theatre developments with a view to contextualising them within the current state of the genre. The works offer two perspectives, in that they echo certain historical compositional models while simultaneously challenging several generic assumptions. It is suggested that the current distinction between *opera* and *music-theatre* suggests a greater generic diversity than previous historical sub-genres such as *opera seria* and *singspiel*:

“When the term music-theater was introduced in the 1960's, it sounded like a translation from the German, which it was, and in many parts of Europe it still suggests 60's-style avant-garde experimentation...

Music-theater is sometimes exclusionary (not-opera, not-Broadway) and sometimes a catchall for everything, operas and musicals included. At one end of this complex new-work spectrum, is experimental opera; at another is the serious, contemporary musical as practiced by composers like Michael John LaChiusa... In between is a large and growing third stream -- music-theater in the exclusive, narrow sense -- that has grown out of performance art and live multimedia.” (Salzman)

Musical theatre or *musicals* add to the profusion of terminology, and opera houses themselves increasingly include the whole gamut of possibilities in their repertoire. This document distinguishes contemporary and original trends, and points to the nature of opera as ever reinventing itself.

The works discussed evince some original aspects, especially in relation to the juxtaposition of words with music, and in particular to the vexed question of meaning. One important aspect is the use of multi-lingual texts which include languages deliberately inaccessible to most audiences. Intelligibility in terms of language used, textual setting in the music and the performers responsibility are central to this discussion. These developments present new problems, which require clarification and resolution for performance. The subsequent hierarchical relationships between the composer, the writer, the production team, the performers

and the audience through the work are reassessed, and the traditional reliance on the score as the ultimate source of meaning is at least brought into question.

The music itself is examined in several ways:

- the unusual use of voices and instruments;
- found or specially constructed instruments evoking other cultures and tuning systems, requiring some adjustment by singers long accustomed to tempered tuning;
- the definition of what may be termed an orchestra in the western operatic sense is expanded to involve voices themselves or a collection of untraditional instruments;
- the orchestra pit is suggested as something anti-dramatic in function, whereas the assimilation of an orchestra playing from memory on stage is suggested as a more holistic alternative, rather than an occasional novelty, as they appear for instance in *Don Giovanni* and *Aida*.

Finally, the compositional style itself is elucidated, in terms of its debt to traditions of counterpoint and structure, and in terms of its innovations in rhythm and tuning. Critics have often commented on the forward-moving nature of my work, and its aptness for theatre (see Appendix), and a suggestion is made of how this is achieved.

1) Genesis of *Prologue and La Malinche*:

Prologue

My libretto for *Prologue* is original, not consciously derived from other sources. It is set in the ancient, quasi-mythical time of the Toltec civilisation, in the mystical city of Tula. Because the story is derived from the history of Mexico where it was to be performed, I wrote the libretto to be understood by the audience in their native Spanish. I researched many books and treatises on the subject of the demi-god, Quetzalcoátl. There are many versions of the ancient myth across Central America, but one important recurring theme was that after being disgraced and banished from ancient Mexico by the jealous governors, the demi-god vowed he would return to punish them. The predicted date occurred when the Aztec cyclical calendar coincided at the very time Hernán Cortés was first seen and reported to the Emperor Moctezuma. Therein lies the important link between *Prologue* and *La Malinche*.

The Quetzalcoátl does not appear in person in *Prologue*, and neither does Moctezuma in *La Malinche*. In *Prologue*, the story of the demi-god's banishment is told by the prostitute who is tricked into humiliating him, just as in *La Malinche* the fact of Moctezuma's systematic oppression of the Tlaxcalans will be related by Malinche herself. The prostitute is the scapegoat for the Supreme Court, themselves responsible for drugging and disgracing the Quetzalcoátl. They are about to sentence her to death by fire when she relates the true story of their deceit. Her story ends with the last words of the Quetzalcoátl, as he perishes in flames, just as she is about to do. His last words of prophecy become hers as she promises, "I will return!"

Instruments and Voices

The instrumentation of *La Malinche* obviously influenced the choices made for *Prologue*. However, since it was written after, I was given the opportunity to enlarge the forces and the single percussionist in *La Malinche* became a quartet, each with three floor toms. The players are placed in each corner of the auditorium, and uniquely in *Prologue*, their music is written spatially. *Time and the Bell*, the first movement from *Four Quartets in Three Movements*, further expands this sound-world utilising 19 drums between four players, although spatial composition proved impractical in concert performance. It is interesting to note the increased flexibility

of performance that theatrical performances offer over the concert, in this context.

The Chorus of Villagers from *La Malinche* play multiple parts in *Prologue*, beginning and ending as the Supreme Judiciary, while also adopting other roles during the story of The Woman. Unlike *La Malinche*, the Chorus in *Prologue* use language semantically. The Woman is the only extra singer required for *Prologue*.

La Malinche

The genesis of the libretto began with a chance encounter of a book entitled *The Marvellous Adventures of Cabeza de Vaca* by Haniel Long. In fact it contains two novelettes, both post-Freudian interpretations of historically significant people at the time of the Conquest of Mexico. Cabeza de Vaca was a young and idealistic Conquistador when he was shipwrecked on the shores of what is now Central America. His story is the basis for several books, films (e.g. Nicolás Echevarría, Mexico, 1990, with music by Mario Lavista) and at least one opera, by the British composer Colin Matthew's, called *The Great Journey* (1997). The second story was entitled *La Malinche* and sought to peer into the mind of the Indian woman who aided Cortés' defeat of the Aztecs and is abhorred today as traitor to and yet mother of modern México; her son with Cortés became symbolically the first modern Mexican mestizo, a child of mixed blood. Haniel Long's words created a hunger in me to discover more about the Old World, which quickly became an obsession about Mexico itself. It has since become my second home. I avidly collected books and articles about every aspect of Mexico. I met a few Mexicans living in London who could approximate some words of the Aztec classical language of Nahuátl and introduce me to its extraordinary cultural legacy: modern Nahuátl is still spoken by about one million Indians in Mexico today. I researched Spain at the time when Cortés was a young man to try to find what music he might have heard. As to Aztec music, although much now is recorded, most is created by supposition and hypothesis from the few meagre details left. This historical lack left me free to invent musically, guided only by imagination working with the sounds of their strongest cultural legacy, the language of the time. Only later did I discover how deeply the story of *La Malinche* is etched into the consciousness of modern Mexico, something that has become clearer to me since writing this thesis while living in Mexico. I originally approached the subject with the same freshness as Haniel Long, as a

vehicle to understand and define the New World in which I lived, through reaching out into an unfathomable past.

Prescott's *Conquest of Mexico*, in a three-volume edition dating from 1856 became invaluable. He himself was blind and never left New England; his wealth provided the means by which he acquired many rare and precious documents endowing his original work with copious references and annotations. He relates how Cortés was given the Indian woman, aged about 14, later called Malinche, in 1519. She began as his possession: a slave given as gift from an envoy of Moctezuma, and progressed as translator, official spokeswoman and finally his mistress. Her speedy acquisition of Spanish is testimony to her intelligence, and she soon made her gifts invaluable to him. The order of events reflects Cortés own dedication to his goal of power and riches. His first instinct when he saw how beautiful she was, was to pass her immediately to his next in command; through such acts he maintained the command of his men. He learnt that all of what is now known as Central America struggled under the rule of the Aztecs, and word of the fabled capital Tenochtitlán (where now stands Mexico City) and its riches drove him forward. One city remained an island inside the vast Empire of the Aztecs. Tlaxcala, today an industrial centre between Vera Cruz, where Cortés landed, and Mexico City, was a city containing fearless armies whom the Aztecs kept enclosed but deliberately unconquered. Cortés found his way there and after a bloody confrontation, with Malinche's help, met and spoke with Xicotencatl the Elder, a priestly leader, and Xicotencatl the Younger, the general of their army. The army of many thousands of Tlaxcalans joined Cortés and his 500 conquistadors in their march towards Tenochtitlán, a city some say then of half a million inhabitants - the largest in the world – under the rule of the Aztec Emperor.

These epic events eventually leading to the confrontation of Cortés with Moctezuma are compressed into a 45-minute opera in one continuous act, thus observing the precepts of classical Greek drama of unity of time, space and action. Malinche, suffering with her Villagers under the Aztecs, dreams of the return of the Quetzalcoátl – a white-skinned, bearded God, amongst the dark, almost beardless Indians. Cortés appears but his Conquistadors remain unseen. She understands his strange language and tells her people he has come to lead them against the Aztecs. Xicotencatl is called for (the Elder and the Younger fused) to decide. If he defeats

Xicotencatl, he is a God and they should follow him. If Xicotencatl defeats him, he is just a man, and they should forget him. The centrepiece is the fight to the death between Cortés and Xicotencatl. Although only two outcomes seemed possible, a third becomes evident. Both Cortés and Xicotencatl survive, but the future seems unclear and uncertain to all.

The inconclusive nature of the story was crucial to my understanding then of modern Mexico, which precariously maintains two cultures alongside each other. Genocide became a common model in many other countries and the indigenous Mexican Indians continue to pay a price for their survival. A pernicious caste system originally identified those with different racial origins, and many centuries passed before Benito Juárez, became their first indigenous President. After the Spanish superseded the Aztecs the majority of Indians simply exchanged one set of tyrants for another, as they had done before when the Aztecs superseded the Chichimecas who themselves superseded the Toltecs. The Indians were told the names of the new Christian Gods they should worship. Those who refused perished; those who obeyed perhaps changed the names of their Gods for outward convenience while continuing with their belief in their hearts. Religious syncretism remains a defining factor of Mexican Catholicism to this day. Although the Spanish zealots tried to destroy every vestige of the Aztecs idols, they found their temples often too well built to destroy. Many cathedrals today exhibit a foundation out of style with the colonial architecture above, as the Spanish built directly onto the base of a temple, reshaping the stone above. In the early 1990's, one side of the National Cathedral in the centre of Mexico began to sink. After some months, archaeologists discovered an Aztec altar thrusting its way up through the foundations, itself refusing to sink, even against the weight of the massive cathedral. Such symbolism hardly goes unnoticed in Mexico today, and in a unique way, the history of the Conquest of Mexico continues to exert a lasting influence on its future which may often seem negative, especially in relation to Malinche herself. Octavio Paz elaborated this point famously, in his classic book *The Labyrinth of Solitude*.

The words of the libretto were assembled by myself rather than composed in a literary sense, as a result of the quantity of texts, fictional and historical, which I researched. The invented phrases of which I did not consciously know the origin

were probably the result of a sub-conscious recollection. The process of digesting a wealth of often-conflicting material in order to create something original rather than factual, owes more to fictional rather than historical or academic research. The texts in Nahuátl and Latin were contemporary with the historical events, and exploited for their sub-musical content as much as their meaning. This dual role of language is central to *La Malinche*, and many others of my works, and shall be elucidated later.

Instruments and Voices

My objective was not to write a historically correct opera, neither was it to recreate pre-Hispanic music. Mythology and history provides a wealth of contradictory evidence as well as many glaring absences. The conquest of Mexico was written by the conquerors, since the Aztecs and their subjects relied on pictographic codices and oral traditions to tell their story, and untold numbers did not survive. Classical Nahuátl itself has survived in written form thanks to the diligence and perseverance of a very few early Spanish scholars, and many documents come to us already sifted through the eyes of the Spanish invaders. I aimed to create a unique sound world, but at the same time I sought to refer it to a distant and dim past, yet anchor it to today. The voice alone or in chorus provided me with the most crucial link, but I did not consider a purely *a cappella* opera viable here. Drums played a crucial part in Aztec ceremony and ritual, sometimes made with the skins from human sacrifice. Contemporary Spanish documents spoke of the fear that the sound of large drums created for the Spaniards. A drum I found in London was a unique instrument standing about six feet high. When correctly tuned, it became evident that the slightest touch on the skin produced a long, deep, non-directional murmur, and a crescendo, when controlled, could produce spectacular effects. It became *the* instrument for *La Malinche*, providing a perfect counterpart to the voices. The same instrument appeared later with a pivotal part in my *Concerto for Violin & Orchestra* (Tasmin Little, London Mozart Players, 1996). It also became the instrument shared between the four players of *Towards the Beginning*, the final movement of *Four Quartets in Three Movements*.

Additionally, a pair of small drums suggesting a tense, military presence was required for Cortés' music. In the planning stage, all three instrumentalists would be on stage with the singers, knowing their parts from memory, and therefore the look

of the instruments was as important as their sound. A pair of portable Darabuka drums provided the best sound, tense and precise, in contrast to the unworldly bass drum. Darabuka drums are constructed over a metal frame, a substance unknown to the Aztecs, which historically endowed the Spanish trumpets with an other-worldly awe to the Aztecs.

Conch shells provided the Aztecs, as well as many other ancient civilisations, with musical sounds. I had never heard a conch shell, and set about collecting some alongside other shells that might produce sounds. I created a unique set of conch shells, each with a different, untempered pitch, and added a rarer Tiger shell, which produced the lowest pitch of all and a pair of very thin shells whose variety I never discovered, for higher pitches. Together the nine shells provided me with the sole tuning references for the singers as well as the set of tonal centres for the works structure. The music was written around them rather than trying to find shells of specific pitch. Carving a hole at the small end of the shell was laborious, and producing the sound was painful to the lips. I employed a brass instrument repairer to permanently fix bugle mouthpieces in each one, and they became accessible to trumpeters who could produce both fundamentals and the first harmonic with relative ease (13-28). This led to the idea of using modern trumpets for the Spanish, the Old World meeting the New in related musical instruments.

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Fig.1: Analysis of Deployment of Shells in Prologue and Opera

In the *Prologue*, each player has a single shell and can be placed either side of the stage. The whole range of nine shells is demonstrated in *La Malinche*, and must be shared between the players. D# is duplicated for the unisons at the end of the work, and became the tonal centre: an enharmonic Eb ends Malinche's aria (537-580), and the climactic a cappella trio of La Malinche (1104-1113, Fig. 12). The glissando from G to G# is effected with lip pressure only. Nature does not tune her shells in any temperament and all pitches are approximate, although they are within less than a quartertone. The tuning of *La Malinche* is largely serendipitous rather than absolute, the voices taking their cue from nature's artefacts.

Each member of the Chorus of Villagers was always considered as a soloist, with independent parts and individual names. The music they sang and the selection

of voices was a conscious development from my previous opera, *The Pillow Song*, written for a solo soprano and a chorus of four sopranos. For *La Malinche*, I wrote for six sopranos and four baritones, expanding and elaborating the sounds of Malinche and Cortés, and allowing maximum use of male and female unison, as a structural pin. The movement from and to these unisons gives the music a recurring large-scale structural basis, through rising tension to climax, allowing a necessary sense of dramatic flow, or forward motion. The other solo voice in *La Malinche* is the counter-tenor of Xicotencatl, which reflects both female and male aspects.

The decision to use so many languages came about in part to help define where for the listener in the multilinear, vocal texture, linguistic attention should be placed; with so few instruments, the chorus also had to serve as an orchestra. The Nahuátl language, so musical in itself, has left its imprint on the themes sung by the Villagers. Contrary to current operatic trends, it must never be sung in translation: the meaning of the text must come from the music. All of Cortés' words excluding his Latin prayers, in the original production, were sung in Castilian Spanish and translated subsequently by Malinche. The multi-lingual libretto has the effect in this work of bringing into question the traditional role of language, as the arbiter of meaning. The words may not be understood because of the obscurity of the language, and their setting often denies linguistic recognition, as in the choral writing. Meaning, however difficult to define globally, must be a prerequisite of any informed performance, must be sought elsewhere. It may be necessary first to summarise certain trends in the history of meaning in opera.

2) Meaning & Language

Meaning in Opera

The intellectual play of sound at the expense of syntax in the Netherlands school led Claudio Monteverdi to reassert the fundamental importance of text over compositional or vocal ostentation. It provided one stimulus for the creation of opera by the Florentine Camerata: it was their belief that vocal music had become shallow and technical, with no deeper sense of meaning, which was a text-related issue. It was thought that there had been a vocal music that imbued this desired quality of meaning at the time of the Ancient Greeks, whose very language refused to separate music from dance and poetry, through the muse. In defence of his brother, Giulio Cesare Monteverdi “adopted Plato’s threefold definition of *melodia* as harmonic relation, rhythm, and text; that is that *melodia* signifies the totality of a composition (as it did from ancient music).” (Strunk, 535)

The history of opera reform for the last five centuries has been constantly vexed by differences of emphasis and importance on the constituent parts and definitions of drama, poetry, voices and instruments, dance, spectacle and virtuosity. However, an inherent meaning is not always distinguishable from an act of interpretation:

“Monteverdi...activated the musical composition in an attempt to imitate the supposed inherent meaning in the text. However, rather than imitate he interpreted - which consequently created its own meaning. One of the greatest ironies of this time is that it set off a competition surrounding the residence of meaning.” (Bryon, 33)

A 16th century letter by Girolamo Mei to Vincenzo Galilei (father of the astronomer) suggested quality of voice to have an inherent meaning:

“... it is logical that, the various qualities of the voice being distinct, each should be appropriate for expressing the affection of certain determinate states, and each, furthermore, should express easily its own affection but not that of another. Thus the high-pitched voice could not suitably express the affections of the intermediate and far less those of the low, nor the intermediate any of those of the high or the low. Rather, the quality of one

ought necessarily to impede the operation of the other, the two being opposites.” (Palisca, 57)

It seems that it was the quality of the voice that provided the expression, not the singer’s act of performance; just as it was the words that held the meaning and not necessarily what was done with those words. That opera was defined as *drama per musica* is due largely to Monteverdi’s challenge to the strict primacy of poetry over music. The monopoly of definition was short-lived when the succeeding generation of Italian composers such as Rossi and Cavalli reverted to supremacy of musical structures over libretti. By the time Metastasio fomented Opera Seria, the poetic text had exercised itself into absurdity, the music into repetition and excessive ornamentation, and performers relied heavily on vocal virtuosity. Gluck’s reforms largely reverted to drama as the meaning, through text. The text was to indicate performance practice as well as all dramatic meaning; the assumption was that if the text indicated or imitated, in just the right manner, an intended meaning would be rendered in performance. Gluck’s production of *Alceste* (1767) planted the seed of integrated music-drama, later codified by Wagner. In the dedication of the score Gluck makes his intentions clear:

“I have striven to restrict music to its true office of serving poetry by means of expression and by following the situations of the story, without interrupting the action or stifling it with a useless superfluity of ornaments; and I believed that it should do this in the same way as telling colours affect a correct and well-ordered drawing, by a well assorted contrast of light and shade, which serves to animate the figures without altering their contours.” (Strunk, 933)

Mozart never politically positioned himself as a reformer. Monteverdi, Gluck and Wagner were all self-proclaimed reformers who conscientiously and publicly sought recognition for their status. The most controversial statement that Mozart made can be found in a letter to his father:

“...in opera, willy-nilly, poetry must be the obedient daughter of music. Why do Italian operas please everywhere, even in Paris, as I have been a witness, despite the wretchedness of their librettos? Because in them music rules and

compels us to forget everything else. All the more must an opera please in which the plot is well carried out, and the words are written simply for the sake of the music and not here and there to please some miserable rhyme, which, God knows, adds nothing to a theatrical representation but more often harms it." (Kerst, 16)

Wagner took it upon himself to save the operatic condition from what he saw as the worst of the Bel Canto and French Grand operatic tradition:

"With Rossini the real life history of opera comes to end. It was at end when the unconscious seedling of its being had evolved to nakedness and conscience bloom; when the musician had been avowed the absolute factor of this artwork, invested with despotic power; when the taste of the theatre public had been recognised as the only standard for his demeanour."

(Wagner, 188.)

Wagner took exception to virtuosity for the sake of it, to the uninvolved audience, and supreme lack of communal responsibility and ceremony that had crept into the theatre, and to the divorced relationships between the musical and poetic texts. He fought a battle to restore theatre to his notion of the ancient classical ideal, to develop a music theatre environment that induced high ceremony, to return the art of music theatre to the people, largely by creating the perfect alliance between the word and music to create his concept of Gesamtkunstwerk.

The advent of the director's primary role in the twentieth century led to the renewed search for meaning through their work and insight, articulated over and above composer or singer. Bertolt Brecht, with his composers, pitted himself against both Stanislavsky's notion of dramatic truth and Wagner. Brecht saw himself as a reformer of theatre and still typifies the contemporary rebel and socio-political hero of the theatre. It is in this context that Brecht embraced drama and music as a powerful medium for social awakening and developed his concept of Epic Theatre as an educating force and a return to historic event: not designed for our consumption and evasion of the human condition but one that dealt with it in a critical manner. Brecht sought a theatre in which the text did not already have a determined meaning, but was to be actively interpreted.

Language in relation to meaning in opera remains a contentious area for modern opera houses, whose public and dramaturges incessantly argue the advantages and disadvantages of translation or use of the original language. The almost ubiquitous use of surtitles has become a compromise, whereby the intensity of the stage performance may be judged by the quantity of heads straining above the stage. The debate obscures the importance of meaning beyond language.

The director Peter Sellars said "I love opera because it has a feeling, emotion and awareness of structure that has nothing to do with language. Meaning in opera can't be reduced. It has all the art forms existing and contradicting each other."

(Cornwell)

Meaning in opera may be seen as historically contentious and contradictory in its treatment of simultaneous art-forms, where creators vie with each other for superiority: "The good singer should be nothing but an able interpreter of the ideas of the master, the composer...In short, the composer and the poet are the only true creators." (Rossini)

The solutions of the past are themselves surpassed in the Doctoral Thesis by Experience Bryon, through the theory of *Integrative Performance Technique*, where the singer may be seen to be the purveyor of meaning (Bryon, 33). This brings into question the traditional pre-eminence of the score as regards meaning, and comes closest to my own view of how the collaborative process of opera achieves meaning, whereby the singer takes authority from the score, but then informs it. In this sense, interpretation is itself a creative process, and one that gives life and therefore meaning to a work. Meaning is no longer a fixed, immutable essence, but one which is reconstructed within the given parameters of the work, by the performers.

Despite the shifting emphases, the synthesis of music and words from Monteverdi until the twentieth century, was broadly to combine words that variously describe action, articulate reaction and thus imply character, within the common language of the composer and audience. In this model, music may reflect, enhance or comment on whatever is taken to be the dramatic truth, as evinced by the text. Thus, *meaning* or *truth* in dramatic terms, is primarily a linguistic, textual concern, capable of being contextualised afterwards by the music. *La Malinche* departs radically from this model in that four languages are used, two of which are unlikely to be understood by any audience. In this circumstance, words alone cannot be said to lead

either the stage-director or the actor-singers in their search for meaning. Meaning itself then establishes itself as an integral objective of all the participants which lead to the performance.

Musical analysis uses words to evince internal and external structural relationships, which may illuminate the composer's intention or inference. Literary or dramatic analysis often seeks to uncover layers of significance, offering scope for a range of subjective interpretations. Operatic analysis tends to emphasise musico-textual relationships that underpin character and plot, usually reflecting the ability of music to comment on or elucidate text. The score is taken as the repository of content in such analysis, but a musical score – much less an operatic score – cannot be taken as the representation of the work in the same way that a book represents a novel. A musical score is more closely analogous to a screenplay for a film. In terms of understanding operatic meaning or intention, two words I consider interchangeable in this context, the performance, being an amalgam of words, music and visual stimuli, is obviously a far more relevant starting place, if precariously ephemeral.

A libretto shares something in common with a play: the words chosen illustrate points of view which may or may not be taken at face value, and are affected by their context. They represent a rhetorical point of view, and as Barthes points out, truth is not a goal of rhetoric, which is "a technique, an art in the classical sense of the word, the art of persuasion" and that it operates and may aver as truth "even if what he [sic] is to be convinced of is 'false'". (Barthes, 1977, 5). Directors, actors and academics also value the importance of subtext, and much time may be spent divining this. When music is added to words, simultaneously the aspect of meaning is both simplified and made more complex. To some extent, a composer's music is a coded elaboration of both subtext and context. However, the important word here is *coded*, and the understanding of that code is by no means simple, as it often involves language itself, or otherwise results in the ephemeral act of performance. The performance must contain more meaning than the score, otherwise presentation would be redundant. When synthesis is achieved the sum becomes more than the parts.

"The music, in fact, is the dramatic content of an opera, provided in a ready-made musical form. It is in it, and in it alone, that one has to look for the nature of the action." (Stanislavsky, 170) For Stanislavsky, who originally trained as an opera

singer and later in his life directed the Bolshoi Opera, in his efforts to conjure dramatic truth to the actions and intentions of his pupils, music often became the means by which he could utilise an actor's instinct, as opposed to the cerebral processes enacted by words. Implicitly within his statement lies recognition of the limits, for him, of interpretation which language alone can produce, and through the music, or through the actors personal or shared interpretation of that code, may arise an understanding of the meaning.

Opera is not a rational art form, in the sense that its effect and success may not be ascribed to rational or logical principles. Rather it may be seen as a precarious balancing act resulting through a synthesis of rational and irrational media:

"In relation to the writer the composer is always mad (and the writer can never be so, for he is condemned to meaning)." (Barthes, 1985, 308)

"Too often 'voice' is conflated with speech, thereby identifying language as the primary carrier of meaning. However, human vocality encompasses all the voice's manifestations (for example, speaking, singing, crying, and laughing), each of that is invested with social meanings not wholly determined by linguistic content." (Dunn, 1-2). Furthermore, an opera contains more voices than merely those of the singers: before they can themselves operate effectively, they must have first subsumed and be empowered to speak with the various voices of the librettist, composer, director and designer.

The admixture of words and music certainly provokes controversy, but that itself is made more complex when considering the tradition of translating operas. In the model of opera in earlier centuries, the libretto was written in the language of the country in which it was to be performed. As opera became more international, composers found the need to make translations for the new audiences. This suggests that opera composers traditionally assumed their audiences expected to be able to understand the words in performance. Several factors developed during and since the nineteenth century that created a new set of problems: some composers began to write music that organically grew out of the language they used. Debussy and Janáček, for example, in contrasted ways, moulded their music from their own language, and their performances always lack something, perhaps meaning, in translation. There also developed the corpus of works known as standard repertory, which travelled every continent. It was not possible to sustain the translation of even

those works that might have been translated into the many languages required. Finally, during the last century, nationality and language within each country became less polarised. In Texas today, more than half the population have Spanish as their first language. In some cities in the UK, Punjabi is the first language at many schools. Assumptions about nationality and language have never been so precarious as now. Today, musical settings can never be made on the assumption of reflecting the linguistic complicity of a local audience.

The twentieth century produced many composers who implicitly demonstrated their understanding of meaning in the wider operatic context by experimenting with music-theatre works that reflect a fusion of text and visual stimulus along with sound composition. The artist Kandinsky proposed the accepted division of arts into music, dance and drama as a form of capitalist corruption in *The Blaue Reiter Almanac* in 1912. His ideas influenced a generation of artists and colleagues, including Schönberg, who wrote *Die glückliche Hand* under his influence. The work of later composers such as Berio, Cage, Kagel, Ligeti and Aperghis may also be seen to reflect related concerns, although with varied emphases. Berio's deconstruction of language in such works as *Sequenza III*, *Visages*, *A-Ronné* and *Sinfonia*, and his favourite writers Joyce and Calvino, broke with music and language into a new synthesis with voice and performance in terms of meaning. Cage explored ideas of multi-layered simultaneity in confrontational contexts in such as *Theatre Piece* (1960), *Hpschd* and in his influential collaboration with Cunningham. Kagel as composer, filmmaker, dramatist and performer has developed as well a form of "Instrumental Theatre", where the performers actions and movements are as much a part of the composition as their sound. His *Pas de Cinq* bares interesting comparison with Samuel Beckett's play *Quad* in relation to contemporary developments in textless, musico-dramatic performance. Ligeti's *Aventures* and *Nouvelles Aventures*, and the virtuosic output of Aperghis take these notions of inter-relationships of text, sound and movement into even further extremes of synthesis. To a very small extent, Kandinsky's notion of synthesised art-works may be seen to have been born out, and opera in it's new guise has perhaps long-since left the institution of the opera house far behind. Just as in the history of the theatre, the development of the director has been a relatively recent development, it may be seen that composers today are reaching out to include that role within their

own discipline. For instance, when Berio replaces dynamics with emotional directions to the singer of *Sequenza III*; when Kurtág writes “Augen und Mund weit offen” (trans. Eyes and mouth wide open) in “...und eine neue Welt...” from the series *Einige Sätze den Sudelbüchern, Georg Christoph Lichtenbergs, Op.37*; when Alfred Schnittke writes notes which are to played only visually in his *Piano Quintet*; and when Schönberg fills his score of *Die glückliche Hand* with instructions for lighting and expressionistic dance-like movement. Puccini’s opera scores, too, are replete with directorial instructions, often ascribed as much serious attention as the score.

Meaning in *La Malinche*

The operatic use of dead languages seems to be a phenomenon, albeit relatively rare, of the twentieth century. Composers such as Stravinsky (*Oedipus Rex*), John Buller (*The Bacchae*) and Philip Glass (*Akhmaten*) have deliberately written operas in languages that cannot be understood by any audience. Perhaps these examples, each solving different compositional problems with ostensibly similar solutions, represent a view that although an opera’s music may depend upon its text, the meaning of the text can sometimes best be left to the music without the complicity of the audience’s linguistic faculty.

La Malinche is a special, if not a unique case, in respect of its use of languages. The use of four, two of them dead, certainly challenge the orthodox view of the function of a libretto, when meaning and feeling are not ascribable to language and music respectively. The story of *La Malinche* is the story of an interpreter in a unique position and time. Its subject is linguistic communication: on many occasions, she was the only person present in meetings between Cortés and Moctezuma who knew everything that was being said, endowing her with extraordinary power and responsibility as a teenager. The use of classical Nahuátl was more than just a device to free the Villagers from the limitations of semantically intelligible word setting and allow more complex musical counterpoint and texture. The meaning of the story is tied up in the cultural clashes represented by ecclesiastical Latin and priestly Nahuátl on the one hand representing two religious Old World orders, and Spanish and English representing two secular New World orders. Those are the frictions at work in performance that give the work its own grain, to be given life and meaning by the

performers. If there were a problem of meaning in the Nahuátl text it would represent a lack in the clarity of musical thought and expression, rather than the libretto. The function and emotion of the language should be made clear by a performance of the music, and its semantic unintelligibility remains a symbol of the inability of the New World to come to terms with the concepts of the Old World, which Cortés and others wantonly destroyed in the blind pursuit of their materialist goals. It remains beguilingly exotic, at least to European ears, a quality enhanced by its inaccessibility: it represents a world that no longer exists. The process is not unique to Mexico, and the twentieth century painfully tried and failed continually to come to terms with the surviving indigenous peoples of the Brazilian rainforest and Australia, to name but two.

In *La Malinche*, truth is ultimately the performer's responsibility, infused with insight from composer/writer/director/designer. And through the music of that voice, the truthful dramatic action, which is the predilection of Stanislavsky, may become apparent to the audience. In this case there is no possibility of the text being rhetorical as opposed to truthful, as Barthes' suggests, but is unambiguously bound with the representational or emotional truth of the music.

Multi-lingual libretti play an important part in my dramatic works, which play with the dynamic between linguistic meaning and sound as much as music. The preceding opera, *The Pillow Song*, which served as something of a constructional model for *La Malinche*, used a recurring Japanese text for the vocal climaxes (P. 20, 25, 33, 38; see Fig.7 & 8). The historical and cultural reference for the language served the same purpose as the Nahuátl in the later work. The simultaneity of two classical dead languages, Nahuátl and Latin in *La Malinche* (902) also provides the symbolic, dramatic and musical climax in that opera.

901

Cortés
A - - - LEPH

Eb, Ben,
Ix, Men
Cib, Caban
Xict-zot-zo-na. in mo-hue-hue-uh xi hue-huet-zca. yc__ ixt-lil-xo-chi-tle xo-mit-fo

Eznab,
Cauac,
Ahua,
Imix
Xict-zot-zo-na. in mo-hue-hue-uh xi hue-huet-zca. yc__ ixt-lil-xo-chi-tle xo-mit-to

904

Cortés
E-go vir vi - dens pau-per-tam me - am_ in vir - ga in-dig-na-ti - o - nis

Eb, Ben,
Ix, Men
Cib, Caban
ti-a - o in qua-uh-qui-a - - huac Me-xi-co. ni mo-cuecā - liz - chi-ma - lo

Eznab,
Cauac,
Ahua,
Imix
ti-a - o in qua-uh-qui-a - - huac Me-xi-co. ni mo-cuecā - liz - chi-ma - lo

907

Cortés
ci - us. A - - LEPH

Eb, Ben,
Ix, Men
Cib, Caban
. cūc-cue-ya - - hua yan te-ma-la - - ca-tit-lan y__ xi-mo - - chi-cau - hā-ca

Eznab,
Cauac,
Ahua,
Imix
cue-cue-ya - - hua yan te-ma-la - - ca-tit-lan y__ xi-mo - - chi-cau - ha-ca

Fig.2 La Malinche (904)

The Sirens and the Sea, written afterwards also used a recurring text by Homer in the original Greek, to the same end (Dialogues I, II & III). This work also uses recurring excerpts from Joyce's novel, *Ulysses*, where the intrinsic music of the language takes precedence over meaning:

"Lost. Throstle fluted. All is lost now...

Fro. To, fro...

Fff! Oo!"

(James Joyce: Section 11 [The Sirens] from *Ulysses*)

Fig. 3 The Sirens and the Sea, end of Dialogue 2

The setting of this text in each Dialogue coincides with the setting of Homer's Song of the Sirens (from *The Odyssey*) in the original Greek, playing with the tension of unintelligibility of English as well as a classical dead language. The climax of the work (P.18, bottom line) occurs when the English chorus of the Sea are subsumed or engulfed by the Greek of the Sirens. The effect is primarily textural and musical, rather than linguistic.

The sound of words has often served as the model for instrumental music, as in Romatz, the second movement of *Four Quartets in Three Movements*. The title is an anagram of Mozart, and the music recreates with instruments the sound the four phonetic components of the sound. My most recent dramatic-vocal work, *Before the Beginning*, develops these ideas further, by eschewing language altogether in favour of non-linguistic sounds notated with the international phonetic alphabet.

Ballad

with nervous rhythm

mf f

a e u e u e u e u e

f

continue 'u' vowel, move lips rapidly between neutral and kissing position, whilst glissandoing up and down harmonics

o e o u w lu /w lu /w lu /w u o a

p f

u e u ly lu ly lu ly lu ly lu le/w/e/w/e/w/e/w/e/w/ lufylufylufylufylufyl

p sempre

u e o f f f f

Fig. 4 Ballad from *Before the Beginning* (aka *Songs Between Words*)

The rich and flexible relationship between language and music and the consequent ambiguity of meaning has become a conscious preoccupation in my composition. It has not replaced the traditional role of music interpreting text in a single known language, as the setting of Plath's poetry in *Three Songs for Sylvia* demonstrates. Rather do I see it as an elaboration or development of the infinite possibilities of music for voice, which continues to fascinate me.

3) Music & Theatre

Theatrical Structure of *Prologue*

The *Prologue* is a single event or statement that serves to place the events of La Malinche in its own past, rather than ours. There are many intentional uses of dramatic mirroring: the Woman faces her enforced death by fire and relates the same death of the Quetzalcoátl. It tells of his prophecy of return heard in the silence after his dying scream. In her final scream on the pyre, his words fuse with hers; there is at least some ambiguity as to whether it is her own prophecy as well. The story of Malinche and Cortés has many parallels with *Prologue*. If we are forced to see Cortés through La Malinche's eyes as a possible Quetzalcoátl returned, then we may consider the possibility that Malinche herself is a reincarnation of The Woman. The cyclical nature of the stories is a deliberate reference to the cyclical view of time described by many pre-Hispanic civilisations, from the Mayan to the Aztecs. In their non-linear vision, events recur; lives are repeated through ever changing cycles. The reference of the names of The Villagers to the cyclical Mayan calendar weekdays helps support this.

The intention of *Prologue* as regards the audience is also deliberately ambiguous. They are placed as court spectators rather than audience. The Justices produce no evidence for her guilt and she even implicates them in the so-called crime. Consideration of production begs several questions: Are we to believe the judges or The Woman? How are we to understand that the man she slept with and helped humiliate was a God? How could he have withheld the evidence of this from her or she refuse to notice it? No doubt a clever director might help the audience enjoy watching her death by fire, as did many who watched Joan of Arc and countless others wrongly condemned. A wise director might also find a way to make that enjoyment also uncomfortable, a feeling made audible by the encircling percussionists. The mute involvement and complicity of the audience in the judgement should be explicit in performance. The lack of ambiguity that results contrasts greatly with the outcome of the opera.

The ten singers as the Cihuacoatl appear at the beginning and the end of *Prologue*. They themselves are given prominence by the drums that surround the court/auditorium and by the strange tuning of the conch-shells. At the point at which

they are to pronounce their verdict, The Woman speaks for the first time. The whole middle section of her story is a flash back; the fifteen minutes of theatre time that follow are a suspension of real time, which is resumed with the return of all the drums, conches and the Cihuacoatl, who now pronounce their verdict and the immediate punishment.

Theatrical Structure of La Malinche

The function of The Villagers in *La Malinche* is quite different to that of the Cihuacoatl in *Prologue*. If the intention of the latter was to be understood linguistically above all, the reverse is true in *La Malinche*. They sing in a dead language: the text is classical Nahuátl, quite different from the modern Nahuátl spoken by contemporary Indians. They become, to all intents and purposes, the orchestra of the opera; the backcloth against which all other voices are heard, as well as the foreground activity in many passages, such as the beginning, which is, in effect, a vocal-orchestral overture.

They also become the Chorus in the classical Greek sense: it is through them that the repercussions of the words and actions of the soloists are transmitted to the audience. The audience are no longer the object of their utterances, as in *Prologue*, but instead the audience subjectively understands the meaning of the action, the story or the music, with and through them, despite the apparent loss of linguistic contact. The specific, expressive musical style seeks to personalise them for the audience, whereas the didactic Cihuacoatl distance the audience, despite the reverse implication of linguistic comprehension. The contrasting role of the chorus between both stories must reflect a change in identification and alliances with the audience, whom begin as complicit or powerless witnesses to a dialectic and end as an ambiguous audience to an irresolvable trialectic.

The Pillow Song, exploits a chorus for similar dramatic objectives. In contrast the choruses in that work are, with one exception, in English. The elaborate, interwoven lines that anticipate the contrapuntal structures of *La Malinche*, occasionally and purposely threaten to obscure linguistic comprehension (e.g. *The Pillow Song* P.18, 22). However, the English texts are simplistic poems, almost childish doggerel, and each is repeated twice to aid comprehension. The final climactic chorus of *The Pillow Song*, sets a Japanese text, relinquishing the task of

verbal comprehension from all but a Japanese-speaking audience (see Fig. 8).

La Malinche begins with a solo Villager, unaccompanied voice singing Nahuátl a cappella. Malinche is one of the Villagers, but not special, except in her vision of the Quetzalcoátl which influences her ability to understand Cortés. When she sings, she sings in English, but her words here are internal – she speaks to herself, an act to which the audience are privy.

Cortés first musical entry (off-stage) was, in the original version, in Spanish. The intention was that although we understand his manner, we only understand Cortés through La Malinche herself, like the Villagers. The dichotomy of *understanding* linguistically or musically and the allied concept of *meaning* between opposed cultures lies at the kernel of the works intention, as it was at the centre of the historical event.

The fight at the climax between Xicotencatl and Cortés is carried out in their silence, to the ritualistic chanting of the Villagers. Xicotencatl is seen as a manly warrior, fearless and strong. The counter-tenor voice that is heard after the fight is calculated to contrast with these perceptions, and suggests additional spiritual qualities of the composite priest/warrior/wise-man. His explanation of why he does not kill Cortés is long-winded. The Villagers do not doubt his vision but it is clear that they do not entirely understand. Their ambiguity remains intact from the beginning of the Opera.

The final trio represents the three options for the future: La Malinche represents an optimistic vision, albeit a romantic one, of a future of liberation from all oppression. She is willing to believe this even despite the evidence of Cortés' nature. Xicotencatl's vision is Brechtian, hard and eternal: "As I peer into the future, I see priests and soldiers forever wasting our children and ourselves." As a priest and soldier himself, this view is extraordinarily self-critical, and foretells both of the ruin of his own civilisation and the centuries of dispute between the church and the military governments which ensued in Mexico. Cortés is the more modern option, rampantly materialistic. He promises wealth and prosperity for all, or at least to those who would follow him. This irresolvable trialectic articulates the impossibility of coexistence I perceived between the Old World and the New World: a reality that exists in Mexico today, and beyond.

Music and Theatre in my Works

My work challenges certain operatic conventions both in terms of its constituent ingredients, its dimensions and possible venues for performance. The lack of an orchestra, the smaller forces required and the emphasis on all the participants as theatrical performers accentuate a more fully theatrical rather than operatic presentation. Despite over a century of experimentation and imagination in the development of chamber opera, opera is still perhaps most associated with large scale forces, plush theatres with orchestral pits and expensive balcony seats for an affluent public. Whereas the rejuvenation of theatre in the twentieth century has witnessed a plethora of possibilities in terms of scale and environment, opera houses remain to some extent welded to nineteenth century expectations: the style of building that typifies an opera house exerts its own restraints on a repertory that often covers everything from Monteverdi to musicals. Smaller, more intimate forms of music theatre may be presented in more neutral venues, without confusion of association. *The Pillow Song*, for instance, was originally devised to be presented in a costumed but concert presentation, semi-staged. At an original performance a critic pointed out that the work was “a gift for television” (see Appendix), which has happened in 2003, in Mexico. *La Malinche* (which has also been televised) is bigger and more overtly theatre-based, but has been successfully performed in an enclosed patio in Mexico. I have frequently experimented with opera in unusual venues: such as the internet (*The Mechanical Operation of the Spirit*, 1999), a sailing barge on the Thames (*Figure of Eight*, 1994), a circus tent (*Circopera*, 1993), and in a shopping centre (*shOPERA*, 1995). The constraints of a traditional opera house, with its own social expectations, chorus, orchestra and theatrical machinery do not always allow the flexibility of resources and their deployment that composers require. The only opera of mine that remains to date unperformed (*The Sorceress' Tale*) was uniquely designed for a traditional house and orchestra, alongside a performance of Purcell's *Dido & Aeneas*. This obviously begs the question whether my works might be considered opera at all, and if so, in what way.

The important issue of nomenclature reflects two contemporary and contradictory trends: on the one hand, in the all-pervading world of marketing, we are expected to know a thing before we witness (or buy) it, and mainstream Hollywood films are

released within a number of fixed, given genres. Opera houses are no less factories for producing ready-made entertainment purportedly to large cross-sections of society, but they remain infinitely less flexible even than Hollywood, welded as they are to ancient aesthetic conventions. On the other hand, a fundamental feature of contemporary art has been in the breaking up of traditional boundaries of genres and typologies, presenting a dynamic and volatile form. The twentieth century witnessed a succession of schools or movements, no sooner identified by critics and writers than they are disbanded or trespassed against by practitioners. The issue of the true identity of any object vexed philosophers for centuries, and remains the area of research for many of today's artists. This tension or dichotomy seems to be well established as a determining element between the artists own research needs and his or her need to sell.

I would suggest that the debate about what constitutes opera, or its various aliases as music-theatre, musical-theatre, performance art or interdisciplinary work, is a healthy debate for all that it uncovers, and is of itself more important than any attempt at a resolution.

4) Tradition and Innovation

Arguably, since Wagner, the orchestra has taken an increasingly important role in opera. Berg's *Wozzeck* is sometimes described as an orchestral opera, so great a role does it play. Ligeti's *Le Grand Macabre* further exaggerates this characteristic, employing the full panoply of twentieth century special effects. Opera's more recent development into multi-media and the digital domain may be seen as a modernized attempt of a digitally motivated society to emulate Gesamtkunstwerk. The development of chamber opera from Stravinsky's *The Soldier's Tale* to Britten's *The Turn of the Screw* exploits the extraordinary orchestral skills of the composers when using only a handful of instruments, to emulate an orchestra. *The Pillow Song*, *La Malinche* and its *Prologue*, on the other hand, contain no separate instrumental orchestra. The instrumentalists would all, in an ideal performance, play on stage in costume with the singers, or encircle the auditorium. In turn, the chorus take on this modern role of the orchestra. Their function is inherent in the original Greek word for orchestra, which described the semi-circular space in front of an ancient Greek amphitheatre, where the chorus simultaneously danced and sang. *La Malinche* does not require an orchestral pit in performance, avoiding the problems of balance that Wagner sought so hard to resolve. Music and action are unified in a more theatrical tradition. *La Malinche* is above all a singer's opera, where the 13 singers and 6 instrumentalists must create characters, chorus and orchestra between them.

The Pillow Song used a special set of four Dobachi, or Japanese temple bells. As with the shells of *La Malinche*, their tuning was a matter of chance rather than design, and since these instruments were the only means of pitching, singers in *The Pillow Song* worked to some extent in the field of untempered pitch. The use of non-Western orchestral instruments has been a theme in many of my operas, from *The Marriages Between Zones 3, 4 & 5*, where a prominent part was written for a Persian sarod, the following opera *Phantastes* which utilized the Uilean Pipes or Irish Union Bagpipes, and *Dirty Tricks*, which utilised only an electric bass guitar. Taking the shells as their pitching cue, singers in *La Malinche* with perfect pitch had to work against the notated music and respond to the pitches unintentionally made possible by a crustacean. In terms of harmonic relationships in the overall structure, the use of random or natural pitch-sources gives a unique sound to the works concerned, even

though the relative pitches woven from these fundamentals between the voices are themselves are largely tempered. There may be seen here a reflection of the twentieth century's experimentation with alternative methods to the tempered scale, from the early microtonal explorations of the Mexican composer Julian Carillo and the Czech composer Alois Haba, to the invented instruments of Harry Partch in the US and Hugh Davies in the UK. Though in my case, the choice was as a result of chance or natural occurrence, rather than deliberate invention. For instance, the fact that by chance I found two conch-shells with an identical pitch close to Eb, led to that pitch becoming the epicentre of an entire structure. A drawback with this method of construction concerns the practicality of performance of a work where a single existing set of Dobachi or seashells are a prerequisite. In international productions of *La Malinche*, the shells were brought from the UK, however in *The Pillow Song* in Mexico, a new set of Dobachi were specifically ordered, made and delivered from Tokyo.

Prologue demonstrates a musical construction where spatial considerations dominate the percussion quartet. The calculated effect, impossible to achieve on a standard recording, is that the music moves or revolves around the audience. To enhance the effect, special consideration has to be given to both their tuning and the manner of attack, which is articulated in the preface to the score. Percussion music is an important section of my output. *Four Quartets in Three Movements*, for 19 drums and four players has been recorded on CD, and *Stone Song/Stone Dance*, a more theatrical work for a quartet of players with pairs of small river-stones, another example of a found instrument, has been played extensively in Europe and Latin America.

Much of the choral writing in *La Malinche* depends on canon, but almost exclusively, the canons are purely pitch-based and usually employ canon at the unison. The rhythmic diversity between the parts dictates the arches that join the unison beginnings and endings, and are constantly varied between the voices, although each voice or character maintains an individual aspect. These large arches are formed from small phrase structures, for example the following phrase opens *La Malinche* at bar 403:

[* signifies a very flat Bb]



Fig.5: opening of La Malinche (403)

at bar 410, it is transformed into an harmonic arch shared between 6 voices:

Fig.6, La Malinche (410)

The same technique represents both kernel and core in most of the choral sections and some larger sections, such as 537- 577, also incorporate pedal notes and a freely written solo line. It is also visible in the choruses of *The Pillow Song*, as in the following example where the recurring setting of the Japanese text is heard by the solo soprano and then by the 4 chorus singers, transposed:

(21)

with great intensity * signifies quarter-tone sharp *p*

[BB]

Sei KA - - TA . . . - CHI WA - - YO - YO - NI

Sei KA - WA - - RU - - - TO - - - - - MO - - - - -

Fig.7: The Pillow Song (BB)

[XX]

1 KA

2 KA KA KA

3 KA KA KA TA

4 KA TA CHI WA * quarter tone flat

1 TA CHI WA YO - YO - NI

2 KA - TA - CHI WA YO - YO - NI KA - WA - RU

3 CHI WA YO - YO - NI KA - WA - RU

4 YO - - YO - - NI KA - - WA - - RU

[YY]

1 KA - - WA - - RU TO

2 TO MO MO

3 TO MO MO

4 TO MO MO

Fig.8: The Pillow Song (XX)

The same technique is employed in the setting of the Greek in *The Sirens and the Sea*. It also appears in my instrumental works on occasion, for example in the string writing for *A Great Event* from *Three Songs for Sylvia*. The following excerpt begins at bar 69 and culminates in unison Eb.

Fig.9: Three Songs for Sylvia; A Great Event (69)

Although the derivation is clearly contrapuntal, I exploit it for its climactic effect, especially through controlled coincidence of the unison as a pitch goal. To this extent, unison voices are for me reserved for special emotional effect, as in the climax of the fight scene in *La Malinche*, when the chorus sing their battle-hymn in Nahuátl simultaneously with Cortés' Latin Gregorian chant (902-912, see Fig. 10). The unison of like voices, itself typified in ancient religious chant throughout the world, has always seemed to me both profoundly complex and simple, beyond its apparently analysable function. In many of these sections in *La Malinche*, individual lines articulate complex rhythms against each other, but the overall effect is of undulating textures, rather than polyrhythms.

The technique may be seen as an expansion of monody, as developed by the Florentine Camerata in reference to their perception of classical Greek models. Galilei (1581) expressed the point of view that the then traditional forms of counterpoint could not serve to successfully express a text intelligibly, and he advocated monody, which would serve to enhance the natural speech inflections of a good narrator. My distinction between counterpoint and monody reflects the emphasis on language either as cultural sound-reference or bearer of linguistic meaning, according to the nature and context of the language used: the English language is rarely subjugated to complex textural treatment, but is intended to be understood as language. The monodic writing in my work reflects not just a traditional concern for intelligibility but also a preoccupation with melody, which in most of my above mentioned works reflects concerns with modality or an extended

harmonic vocabulary. These melodies may be seen in the solo setting of Nahuátl in *La Malinche* at the opening (Figure 5) the unison theme from the battle-hymn (901-910):

901

Cortés
A - - - LEPH

Eb, Ben, Ix, Men, Cib, Caban
Xict-zot-zo-na. in mo-hue-hue-uh xi hue-huet-zca. yc__ ixt-lil-xo-chi-tle xo-mit-to

Eznab, Cauac, Ahua, Imix
Xict-zot-zo-na. in mo-hue-hue-uh xi hue-huet-zca. yc__ ixt-lil-xo-chi-tle xo-mit-to

904

Cortés
E-go vir vi - dens pau-per-tam me - am_ in vir - ga in-dig-na-ti - o - nis

Eb, Ben, Ix, Men, Cib, Caban
ti - a - ò in qua-uh-qui-a - - huac Me-xi-co. ni mo-cuecã - liz - chi-ma - lo

Eznab, Cauac, Ahua, Imix
ti - a - o in qua-uh-qui-a - - huac Me-xi-co. ni mo-cuecã - liz - chi-ma - lo

907

Cortés
ei - us. A - - - LEPH

Eb, Ben, Ix, Men, Cib, Caban
cuc-cue-ya - - hua yan te-ma-la - - ca-tit-lan y__ xi-mo - - chi-cau - ha-ca

Eznab, Cauac, Ahua, Imix
cuc-cue-ya - - hua yan te-ma-la - - ca-tit-lan y__ xi-mo - - chi-cau - ha-ca

Fig. 10: *La Malinche* (901)

in English in Malinche's aria (the solo part 546-580), in the setting of the Japanese text which recurs throughout *The Pillow Song*, and in the setting of the Greek text in *The Sirens and the Sea*. Large leaps across vocal ranges are an essential part of the vocal writing, which contrasts greatly with the Gregorian chant in *La Malinche*. In that work, voices are also at times treated as percussion instruments, as in 821-844,

where the chorus articulate the syllables substituted by the Aztecs to suggest specific rhythms in a similar way to Indian classical music:

La Malinche: Part 3

The musical score is divided into two systems, 820 and 824. Each system contains four staves for the voices: Eznab, Cauac, Ahau, and Imix. The lyrics are written below the notes. Dynamics such as *p*, *f*, and *sfz* are indicated above the notes. The lyrics for system 820 are: Eznab: to to to to ti - qui ti ti - qui ti to co ti co; Cauac: to to to to ti - qui ti ti - qui ti to co; Ahau: to to to to ti - qui ti ti - qui ti; Imix: to to to to ti - qui ti ti - qui ti. The lyrics for system 824 are: Eznab: to co ti co ti - qui - ti ti - qui - ti ti - qui - ti; Cauac: ti co to co ti - qui - ti ti - qui - ti ti - qui - ti; Ahau: to co ti co to co li co ti - qui - ti ti - qui - ti ti - qui - ti; Imix: to co ti co to co ti co ti - qui - ti ti - qui - ti ti - qui - ti.

Fig. 11: La Malinche (821)

The vocal writing also explores microtonal altering of pitches (403, Fig.5), and glissandi as a cadential effect from a flattened leading note (533, 550) as a textural structure (845-848). The vocal glissandi seem to relate to the weird glissandi produced by the conch shells in *Prologue*.

Rhythmic complexity plays a crucial structural part elsewhere in *La Malinche*, when for instance the repetitive martial rhythms of the drums underpin the complex, but natural word-based rhythms of Cortés (P.72), where each bar displays a new time signature; or when the ensemble of voices sing their individual phrases in coinciding but contrasted time signatures (P.83 et seq. - a section much easier to sing

than it seems on the page, according to many of the singers who have performed the work); when the free rhythms of Gregorian chant coincide with the notated rhythms of Malinche (P.92), in a section also marked by examples of constantly modulating bitonality. The unison pulse, when eventually arrived at, provides a counterpart to unison pitch, to create the effect of a climax. For instance, the voices in the climactic a cappella trio starting at bar 1103 do not articulate a syllable simultaneously until the resolution at bar 1113.

1103

Malinche
and steeped _____ with strength _____ strength _____

Xicotencatl
But, it will be a long time, a

Cortés
I am _____ Her-nan Cor - tés. I am _____ Her-nan Cortés
Yo soy _____ Her-nan Cor - tés. Yo soy _____ her-nan Cortés

1106

Malinche
strength. _____ It is the mo-ment

Xicotencatl
long time be-fore a new ge-ne - ra - tion comes from the

Cortés
I am, I am, I am, I
Yo soy, Yo soy, Yo soy, Yo

1109

Malinche
the mo--ment the moment It is the moment of fulness

Xicotencatl
Mexican earth, a long time before the Sadness we feel is lift - ted.

Cortés
am, I am Herman Cortés!
soy, Yo soy Herman Cortés!

Fig. 12 La Malinche (1103)

The articulation of a pulse in the percussion writing rarely appears as summation or distillation of general tempo, but articulates a pulsual counterpoint or a fluctuating cross-rhythm, which creates texture and allows rhythmic modulation.

Summary

My music-theatre and operatic works demonstrate strong convergences and divergences with various operatic traditions, and illustrate the discrepancy between the institutionalised and artistic realities that exist today, in terms of meaning, function and presentation. I contend that some concepts of music theatre have become ubiquitous throughout many of the arts, and that in particular many composers such as myself are working in an area which may have once been seen as cross-disciplinary, but in fact are organically connected, and have only relatively recently suffered from an increasing sense of separation and specialisation that pervaded the last century.

Statement and Declaration

My published work referred to here has not previously formed the basis for a successful submission for a degree of the University or any other institution and is not currently being considered for such an award.

Annex 2
Convergence and Divergence in Opera and Music Theatre:
Supporting Thesis for a Folio of Work

By Paul Barker

**A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the
University of Hertfordshire for the award of degree of Doctor of
Philosophy Based upon Published Work**

July 2004

Annex 2

- 3) Libretto of The Prologue
- 10) Libretto of La Malinche
- 23) The Characters and their Sources
- 28) Translations and Foreign texts
- 35) Summary of Operas by Paul Barker to 2004
- 37) Critical Comments, Recordings and Performances
- 44) Published Articles and Books
- 45) Selected list of works not included in the thesis, which are relevant to the period in question
- 49) Bibliography

1) Libretto of The Prologue

Although designed to be performed before it, *The Prologue* was written three years after *La Malinche*, between October and December 1991, at the request of the Festival del Centro Histórico, Mexico City, who had commissioned performances of *La Malinche* for the 400th festivities in 1992.

Cast:

Cihuacoatl (Judiciary):	EB, BEN, IX, MEN, CIB, CABAN EZNAB, CAUAC, AHUAU, IMIX	Sopranos Baritones
The Woman:	A PROSTITUTE:	Mezzo Soprano
The Crowd:	As in Cihuacoatl	Sopranos & Baritones
Other Woman:	In the crowd [Eb]	Soprano
Ik, Akbal	PLAYERS:	Conch-shells/Trumpets
Kan, Chicchan, Cimi, Manik:	PLAYERS:	Percussion (12floor- toms)
The Elder	Xicotencatl in the opera	Mute

The Libretto and Translation:

The setting is Ancient Mexico, many centuries before the Spanish arrived. In the town centre of a city-state ruled by a civilisation resembling the Aztecs.

Cihuacoatl: Yo soy Cihuacoatl, Justicia Suprema del Tlaxitlán.
Tráed a La Mujer ante mi.

I am Cihuacoatl, Supreme Justice of Tlaxitlán. Bring the woman before me.

The Woman is brought forward.

She is imprisoned in a cage too small for her to stand in.

	Has sido acusada de los siguientes crímenes:	You stand accused of the following crimes:
Solo 1	Crímen contra La Persona; conducta violenta.	Crime against the Person; violent conduct.
Solo 2	Crímen contra La Sociedad; prostitución.	Crime against Society; prostitution.
Solo 3	Crímen contra El Estado; traición.	Crime against the State; treason.

The People revile The Woman

Cihuacoatl: Después de la debida consideración, y a través del poder que nos otorga El Estado, nosotros, el Tecutlatoque por unanimidad pronunciamos este veredicto:

After due consideration, and with the power granted by the State, we the Tecutlatoque unanimously pronounce this verdict:

General excitement. The Elder enters, seen only by the Woman.

Her reaction is noticed by The people who turn to the Old Man.

The Woman addresses him:

The Woman:	Me dijeron que era un mal hombre. Me dijeron lo persiguieron por todos lados hasta que sólo quedó este lugar. Me dijeron que era asunto político. Y les creí. Después de todo, por qué no lo habían matado no más.	They told me he was a bad man. They told me they had pursued him everywhere until only here remained. They told me it was a political matter. And I believed them. After all, why not just kill him?
-----------------------	--	--

Slowly she opens the door of the cage and steps out.

The people are surprised and frightened.

They move as if to attack her

but the smallest of signals from The Elder prevents them.

Me dijeron que lo hiciera feliz. Me dijeron que lo hiciera muy feliz. Eso fue todo. No pensé que hubiera nada malo, pero después me pagaron mucho. Eso me hizo sospechar. Les pregunté que pasaría con él. Se miraron uno al otro y sonrieron. Al irse me pagaron todavía mas. Me dijeron: "No te preocupes, todo saldra bien. Una sola cosa:	They told me to make him happy. They told me to make him very happy. That was all. I didn't think I was doing anything wrong, but later they paid me money. That made me suspect something. I asked them what would happen to him. They looked at each other and smiled. They told me: "Don't worry, everything will be all right. Just one thing:
--	---

no olvides que esta será su primera vez.”

don't forget that it will be his first time.”

Recuerdo que estaba borracho cuando llegó. Muy borracho. Tenía una extraña apariencia: una piel tan pálida. Nunca antes había visto una piel tan pálida. El fue el más difícil de mis trabajos. Se la pasó queriendo llorar y yo tuve que consolarlo. Intenté todo cuanto sabía. Al final, lo hice feliz. Estaba agotada. Cuando me desperté ya se había ido.

I remember he was drunk when he arrived. Very drunk. He had a strange appearance: a very pale skin. Never before had I seen such a pale skin. It was my most difficult job. What happened was, he began to cry and I had to console him. I tried everything I knew. Finally, I made him happy. I was exhausted. When I awoke, he had already left.

Salí corriendo a la calle a buscarlo. No quería que regresaran por la paga. Prometí tenerlo contento. Me encontré con una muchedumbre a la orilla del mar y me las arreglé para llegar hasta el frente. Vimos un extraño templo flotando sobre el mar, alejándose. Preguenté a una mujer qué cosa era. Me dijo:

I ran into the street to find him. I didn't want them to return to pay me. I had promised to make him happy. I found a crowd by the seashore and I pushed my way to the front. We watched a strange temple floating on the sea, drifting away. I asked a woman what it was. She told me:

A woman in the crowd has become agitated.

She is the Other Woman whom The Woman asked.

She has remembered being asked by The Woman and interrupts:

Other Woman:	¡Yeho! Quetzalcoatl se haido y se llevado nuestra esperanza con él.	Alas! The Quetzalcoatl has left and taken our hope with him.
The Woman:	Me di cuenta de que muchos entre la multitud lloraban en silencio. De repente, a lo lejos en mar, surgió una llamarada gigantesca que devoró el templo. Se escuchó un áterrador grito de angustia que casi me ensordeció.	I realised that many in the crowd were crying in silence. Suddenly, far out at sea, a giant fire burst arose and devoured the temple. We heard a terrible cry of pain that almost deafened us.
	Vinieron por mí. Dijeron que yo era una bruja. Me hicieron de cosas y dije lo que fuera para terminar con el dolor. No se detuvieron. Una vez, cuando creyeron que estaba inconsciente, miré en sus ojos. Y en sus ojos vi el más grande temor que jamás haya conocido. Ahora, ya no tengo miedo.	They came for me. They said that I was a witch. They did things to me and I said anything to make them stop the pain. They didn't stop. Once, when they thought I was unconscious, I looked into their eyes. And in their eyes I saw the biggest terror I have ever seen. Now, I am no longer afraid.

The People are now angry and move towards her threateningly.

She begins to walk backwards to her cage.

Lo único que nunca les dije fue, que en el momento de absoluto silencio que siguió grito, escuché su voz, y la palabra que nunca pude olvidar: "Regresaré."	The only thing I didn't tell them was in the moment of absolute silence that followed the cry, I heard his voice, and the words that I will never forget: "I will return!"
---	--

She re-enters the cage and closes the door herself.

The People now feel safe to threaten and abuse her.

The Elder exits unnoticed.

Cihuacoatl: Despues de la debida consideración y a través del poder que nos otorga El Estado, nosotros, el Tecutlatoque, por unanimidad prononciamos este veredicto: culpable de todos los crímenes. La sentencia es muerte en el fuego.	After due consideration, and with the power granted by the State, we the Tecutlatoque unanimously pronounce this verdict: guilty of all crimes. The sentence is death by fire.
---	--

The People cheer, pick up the cage and set it on the pyre.

They torch The Woman.

The Woman:	Regresaré. El Quetzalcoatl regresará.	I will return. The Quetzalcoatl will return.
-------------------	---------------------------------------	--

*As the fire builds, it takes the light from all around.
At the climax of the music only the fire and smoke are visible,
and her voice audible.
The music dies as the fire dies, slowly.
All is darkness.*

Segue La Malinche

2) Libretto of La Malinche

Commissioned by the London International Opera Festival, 1989

Programme Note:

When Cortés landed in Mexico in 1519, the Aztecs were at the peak of their power and influence over the other natives. They revered the Quetzalcoatl or Feathered Serpent as one of their greatest gods; prophecy told of his return precisely in their cyclical calendar when Cortés was first reported to the Emperor, Moctezuma. Cortés appeared to them as a reincarnation of their light-skinned, bearded god.

With just 500 conquistadors, hungry for gold and adventure, Cortés gained the support of tens of thousands of the Aztecs unwilling subjects in Tlaxcala, where one of the elders was Xicotencatl. In the name of Christianity, the Conquistadors and their followers destroyed the Aztec civilisation and raised the great city on a lake, Tenochtitlán, where Mexico City now stands. The Indians who were the Spanish allies soon found their subservient role had transferred to their new masters: the Spanish.

All of this could not have been possible without the assistance of one Indian woman of unusual abilities and looks. She was abandoned by her chieftain parents and later became a gift from Moctezuma's emissaries to Cortés, in a vain attempt to bribe him to quit Mexico. Cortés passed her to one of his right-hand men before discovering her abilities as an interpreter: she learned Spanish in a matter of weeks and acted as his interpreter in discussion with Moctezuma. She also told Cortés of the legend of the Quetzalcoatl to his own advantage. Later she bore the child of Cortés.

The Opera explores a moment in time when the Old World met face to face with the new; a moment of poise and reckoning before one civilisation toppled under

the relentless force of another; a moment when one woman held the key to two doors, two irreconcilable futures. That person was La Malinche.

Cast:

La Malinche	INDIAN NATIVE	Soprano
Cortés	SPANISH CONQUISTADOR	Baritone
Xicotencatl	INDIAN WARRIOR-PRIEST	Countertenor
Eb, Ben, Ix, Men, Cib, Caban Eznab, Cauac, Ahau, Imix:	FEMALE VILLAGERS	Sopranos
Ik, Akbal	MALE VILLAGERS	Baritones
Kan	INSTRUMENTALISTS	Conch-shells/ trumpets
	PERCUSSIONIST	Small drums/bass drum

La Malinche: Part One

[Mexico, 1519. The Villagers, subjects of the Aztecs, are singing as they work]

Ebb: Nihualchocay nihaulicnotlamati çan nicui canitl huiya
tlaca anichuicaz yn toxochiuh ohuaye. Maic nina pantiaz
cano ximo huaya, huaye. Nihuallocoya ohuaya,
ohuaye....

Villagers: Nihualchocay nihaulicnotlamati çan nicui canitl huiya
tlaca anichuicaz yn toxochiuh ohuaye. Maic nina pantiaz
cano ximo huaya, huaye. Nihuallocoya ohuaya,
ohuaye....

Malinche: *[she appears from among them; she sings to herself]*
Today our sadness sits heavily upon us. The Aztecs
destroy our villages and murder our children; we live in
fear of the mighty Aztecs. Ohuaya.

Long ago we banished our White God, the Feathered
Serpent, and now we pray for his return. In our ancient
world of great trees, lake-like rivers and laughing parrots,
there was no sadness. The sadness we feel now has
fallen since the Feathered Serpent was banished.

It is said that the Feathered Serpent will return. When he
does his people will not know him. They will fight but it is
not to be dreamt that a God can be overcome.

Feathered Serpent, I will be there when you return. I
have learnt of the mysteries of things and understand
many languages. When I think of serving you I become

so happy that I can hear at a great distance. I can hear all over the world.

[off-stage]

Cortés: (1) Come here, my friends and fellow soldiers! I have promised you gold and riches and power, women more beautiful than you have ever imagined. Now we are here we must prepare ourselves for the greatest battle of our lives, so fight as you never have fought before. Now we are here we must prepare ourselves for the greatest battle of our lives, so fight as you never have fought before! When we return to our country we shall be known as Conquistadors, proud of our valour; throughout all time all men shall honour and praise us!

Villagers: Tahui!

La Malinche: *[to the Villagers]*
He has returned. The Feathered Serpent has come back. We must prepare ourselves. From this moment on, we begin a new life. We shall never be the same again.

[to herself]

The sun has climbed the hill; the day is on the downward slope between the morning and the afternoon. Stand I here with my soul and lift it up.

Villagers: Yeho. Tonachico....

La Malinche: *[to herself]*
My soul is heavy with sunshine and steeped with strength. The sunbeams have filled me like a honeycomb. It is the moment of fullness, and the crest of the morning.

Cortés: *[He has been watching her, hidden]*
(²) Such beauty, such elegance and such passion. With such a woman to inspire us to fight we cannot loose.
[To her]
Indian noble, future Queen of a new nation, all of Spain shall pay you homage and adore you, Princes and Kings of all nations shall bow before you. Nothing can stop us, join us and we shall conquer!
Let me see you. Look in my eyes, let them hold you. You and I both know it; Your faith and mine are one, now, joined together. See me, touch me. I know that you cannot say no.
[To All – his men are of course unseen]
I name this woman the first mother of this nation! From now on, let her be known as La Malinche!

Villagers: Yeho....

La Malinche: I have known you as a God, but you woo me as a woman. If I find in you a man shall I loose my God?

Villagers: Ohuaye, Ohuaya....

La Malinche: O newly returned White God, I am not good enough, but I shall die if you do not take me for yourself.

Cortés: *[to the Villagers]*
(³) I am Hernan Cortés! Join with me, give me your soldiers and I promise you freedom from the Aztecs. Together we cannot be beaten. In return, I'll give you gold, freedom and an end to sadness....

La Malinche: *[to herself]*

I do not know why but I understand his words. The mystery is working through me; the Spirits are dreaming dreams through me.

[to Villagers]

The White God is Hernan Cortés.

Villagers: Yeho...

La Malinche: *[to villagers]*

He has come to take away our sadness. He asks us to join him in fighting the Aztecs.

[to Eb] He needs our soldiers and promises gold....

Eb: ...Oro *[repeat to Cib]*

La Malinche: *[to Ben]* freedom

Ben: ...La Libertá *[repeat to Caban]*

La Malinche: and an end to sadness.

Cib, Caban: Oro, la Libertá...*[repeat to Eznab, Cauac, Ahau & Imix]*

La Malinche: *[to Ix]* The Feathered Serpent has returned.

Ix: The Feathered Serpent has returned...

La Malinche: *[to Men]* He has returned to us.

Men: He has returned to us.

Eznab,
Cauac,
Ahau, Imix:

Oro, la Libertá...

La Malinche: *[to herself]*

Whatever he says to my people passes through my lips.
Whatever my people say to him passes through my lips. I
am my Lord's voice and I am the voice of my earth.

[to Cortés:]

Our Chiefs seek proof of your claim. Prove your power
and they will join you with open hearts. But to do this you
must defeat our bravest and most valiant warrior. His
name is Xicotencatl. Will you accept this challenge?

Cortés: ⁽⁴⁾ You tell them I will accept their challenge. The future of
your people and mine is as one now, in my hands I hold
it....

La Malinche: *[to Villagers]*

Cortés accepts. He says our fortunes, for better or worse
are cast with his.

Cortés: *[suddenly praying]*

Statuit Dominus supra petram pedes meos et direxit
gressus meos: Et immisit in os meum, alleluia, hymnum
Deo nostro, alleluia.

La Malinche: *[to herself]*

How strange. He prays to a father, he prays for help! Is
he not a God himself? Is he not the Feathered Serpent?
Cortés prays for help. How can he be a God? How can
he take the sadness from our country if he is so
helpless?

I must choose. I must either lead my people to join the God Cortés or help my people fight against Cortés the man.

Cortés: Pacem meam do vobis, pacem meam commendo vobis:
non sicut mundas dat pacem do vobis.

La Malinche: He prays to a father, but it is not because of him that I choose Cortés. Later, out of his scales armour will come the Feathered Serpent.

Cortés: Alleluia.....

La Malinche: Later, I shall be justified.

End of Part One

Part Two: The Fight

[Cortés prepares himself for the battle]

**Eznab,
Cauac, Aha,
Imix:** To to tiquiti. Toco tico tiquiti.

**Eb, Ben, Ix,
Men, Cib,
Caban:** Xicotencatl....

**Eznab,
Cauac, Ahau,
Imix:** *[enter Xicotencatl]*
Xictzotzona in mohuehueuh. Xihuehuetzca yc ixtlilxochitle
xomittotiao in quauhquiahauc Mexico nicā
mocueçalizchimalo cuecue yahau yan temalacatitlan y ximo
chicauwaka.

**Eb, Ben, Ix,
Men, Cib,
Caban:** To co to, to co ti co....

*[Xicotencatl and Cortés fight; Xicotencatl is stronger, and
knocks Cortés down several times. Cortés gets up each
time with renewed strength, despite obvious wounds]*

**Eznab,
Cauac, Ahau,
Imix:** Netleya, to to to...., netleya, toco tico...., tiquiti, to to to..

**Eb, Ben, Ix,
Men, Cib,
Caban:** Xicotencatl!

**Eznab,
Cauac, Ahau,
Imix:** Xicotencatl!

[Cortés is down for the last time]

**Eb, Ben, Ix,
Men, Cib,
Caban,
Eznab,
Cauac, Ahau,
Imix:** Xictzotzona in mohuehueuh. Xihuehuetzca yc ixtlilxochitle
xomittotiao in quauhquiahauc Mexico nicā
mocueçalizchimalo cuecue yahau yan temalacatitlan y ximo
chicauwaka.

Cortés: *[praying, but also waiting for strength to return]*
ALEPH
Ego vir videns paupertan meam in virga indignationis eius.
ALEPH
Me minavit, et adduxit in tenebras et non in lucem

ALEPH

Tantum in me vertit, et convertit manum suam tota die.

BETH

Vetustam fecit pellem meam, et carnem meam contrivit osa
mea

BETH

Aedificavit in gyro meo et circumdedit me felle et labore

BETH

In tenebrosis collocavit me, quasi mortuos sempiternos

GHIMEL

Circumdaedificavit adversum me, ut non egrediar: aggravit
compedem meam

GHIMEL

Sed, et cum clamavero et rogavero exclusivit orationem
meam

GHIMEL

Conclisit vias meas lapidibus quadris semitas meas
subvertit Jerusalem, convertere ad Dominum Deum tuum.

Xicotencatl: I have knocked him down and he has risen and gone on. I have knocked him down again, and a third and a fourth time and he rises and goes on again. He is no ordinary man. An ordinary man stays down when I hit him. As we make a temple of stones, so Cortés heaps dead body on dead body to carve himself a destiny. This shows he is a bad man. When a bad man is also an ordinary man, then the spirits are not dreaming their drams through him and it is well to kill him quickly and forget him. In Cortés I see the spirits dreaming. I will not kill him, for I do not cross the spirits.

Villagers: Tahui

Xicotencatl: Yet, as I peer into the future I see priests and soldiers

forever wasting our children and ourselves. The whole earth is a grave and nothing escapes it.

Villagers: Nihualchocay nihaulicnotlamati çan nicui canitl huiya tlaca anichuicaz yn toxochiuh ohuaye. Maic nina pantiaz cano ximo huaya, huaye. Nihuallocoya ohuaya, ohuaye....

La Malinche: So speaks Xicotencatl, each word to be weighed. Next to you I am a closed flower, yet at night I open myself to the stars. I take the Feathered Serpent to myself and pray.

Xicotencatl: The Feathered Serpent is a dream medicine, Malinche. If you have it, you can cure yourself, but you cannot cure others. You believe that the Feathered Serpent has returned. I know Cortés is more than a man, but less than a God.

La Malinche: Cortés will live in my heart and memory for ever. His unfathomable eye, the way he smiles through his black frown; the way he turns to look at me. But Cortés makes me suffer! The shadow of a tree holds no secret for him; nor will he stop to pick up a stone and marvel at its smoothness. He only stops for what he can use. Me, he loves, because I am of use to him. This is my torture.

Xicotencatl: If Cortés were a man a woman could love completely, he would not be the man to destroy the Aztecs. But his spirit calls to yours as a thing that lives calls to another thing that lives. Accepting him you answer his spirit: you do no wrong. But understand: he is no God.

One Villager: *[In the distance]* Yeho, yeho tonacico.

Other Tahui!

Villagers:

La Malinche: The God is not Cortés, but he is in Cortés – hidden, undiscovered. He stirs and speaks far away as in a dream.

Something has happened to the Feathered Serpent. He has returned but not in his own likeness. To free the God will need love, infinite love. Love will free the Feathered Serpent from his scaled armour. Then he will free us from our sorrow.

Villagers: Ohuaye!

Xicotencatl: This may be true, Malinche. But it will be a long time before a new generation comes from the Mexican earth, a long time before the sadness we feel is lifted. You will be gone, and I will be gone, and our children and our grandchildren will all be gone.

La Malinche: I will not be sad. Someone must lead the way. I will free the Feathered Serpent. Under my heart will grow the child of Cortés.

Cortés: Come here, my friends and fellow soldiers! I have promised you gold and riches and power, women more beautiful than you have ever imagined. Now we are here we must prepare ourselves for the greatest battle of our lives, so fight as you never have fought before. Now we are here we must prepare ourselves for the greatest battle of our lives, so fight as you never have fought before! When we return to our country we shall be known as Conquistadors, proud of our valour; throughout all time all men shall honour and

praise us!

Villagers: Yeho!

Xicotencatl: As I peer into the future I see priests and soldiers forever
wasting our children and ourselves.
The whole earth is a grave and nothing escapes it.

La Malinche: My soul is heavy with sunshine and steeped with strength.
The sunbeams have filled me like a honeycomb.

Cortés: *[almost delirious, still trying to fight or bribe]*
Yo soy Hernan Cortés!

La Malinche: It is the moment of fullness!

Cortés: I have promised you gold, and riches and power!

Xicotencatl: The whole earth is a grave and nothing escapes it!

FIN

Quetzalcoátl

The name translates as *Feathered Snake*, and he represents one of the major deities of the Aztecs, Toltecs, and other Central American civilisations. His story is fused with his namesake, the king of Tula, Ce Acatl Topiltzin Quetzalcoátl, in that many of the legends told about the one have merged in those of the other. For centuries this fusion of identities blended into confusion in that different sources tell different stories about what might be one and the same personality.

The Woman

A fictional character. Some sources suggest a woman was involved in the degradation of the priestly Quetzalcoátl, but few details are ever given.

Cihuacoatl

In Aztec mythology, partly inherited from earlier meso-American civilizations, the worship of the goddess Cihuacoatl required the sacrifice of the victims of war. Her image was kept in Tenochtitlán, always in darkness, and this sanctuary was accessible only while crawling. A lid usually closed the entrance. At the time of a great festival dedicated to the goddess, which was held after the twilight in the darkness, a slave had the open chest with a blow of knife and tear out his heart. His blood was recovered in a bowl, and then his body was thrown on the bodies of four other victims. For one day before his ritual sacrifice, the slave was revered as the goddess herself. Her name was also used as bond to the second magistrate of the State. Here, it is the name given to the Supreme Judiciary.

Tecutlatoque

According to Bernardino of Sahagún, a contemporary of Cortés, (*General History of the Things of the New Spain*) this was the name given to the Senators

in an Aztec principality. This and other words are borrowed from the Nahuátl language, which in its classical form was the official language of the prehispanic Aztecs, but did not become a written language until the Spanish Conquest, when certain individuals, such as the same Bernardino began to transfer the surviving oral history into literature.

Eb, Ben, Ix, Men, Cib, Caban, Eznab, Cauac, Ahau, Imix, Ik, Akbal, Kan, Chicchan, Cimi, Manik.

These names are borrowed from the Mayan calendar. The Mayans pre-dated the Aztecs by many centuries, and inhabited land covering present-day Guatemala and Southern Mexico, incorporated into the Aztec Empire by the arrival of the Conquistadors. Their week was made of 20 days, which cycled alongside 19 month names. (Morley, 1994)

Hernán Cortés

1485-1547, Spanish explorer and conqueror of the Aztec Empire of Mexico. He was born in Medellín. Cortés sailed for the Americas in the spring of 1504 and later joined Spanish soldier and administrator Diego Velázquez in the conquest of Cuba. After acquiring land and wealth, in 1519 he began an expedition to Mexico. Cortés sailed along the coast of Yucatán and landed in Mexico, subjugating the town of Tabasco. He then organized an independent government, acknowledging only the supreme authority of the Spanish monarch, cleverly avoiding some jealous reprisals by Velásquez. He destroyed his fleet to prevent would-be deserters from leaving. While in Tabasco he learned about the Aztec Empire and its ruler, Moctezuma II. En route to Tenochtitlán he enlarged his forces of a mere 500 men with the entire Tlaxcalan army, perhaps of many tens of thousands. After negotiations with Moctezuma, who tried to persuade Cortés not to enter the Aztec capital city of Tenochtitlán, Cortés started his march inland. In November 1519 he established his headquarters in Tenochtitlán. An Aztec prophecy, about the return of a legendary god-king Quetzalcoátl who was light-skinned and bearded, led the Emperor to receive Cortés with honour. However, Cortés seized Moctezuma as a hostage and forced him to swear allegiance to the King of Spain and provide a ransom in gold and jewels.

The next year, with their Emperor imprisoned in their own capital, the Aztecs led a revolt against the Spaniards. At the request of Cortés, Moctezuma addressed the Aztecs in an attempt to quell the revolt. Moctezuma was stoned and died three days later. The Aztecs finally drove out the Spanish in June 1520. Over the next year Cortés reorganized his army and began his return to the capital. In August 1521 he captured the new Aztec emperor and raised the city. Cortés all but demolished Tenochtitlán and began to build Mexico City from its ruins.

Carlos Fuentes, one of Mexico's most famous writers, once scandalously proposed a statue of Cortés in Mexico City. It was a far from popular statement. Cortés is still regarded by many as a man driven by dreams of riches and power, a wanton destroyer and a despot. There is no such monument. There is one to Columbus, who never set foot in Mexico, and another to Cuauhtémoc, the last Aztec leader, whose capture on August 13, 1521, marked the fall of one great empire and the rise of another. But Cortés, who more than any other individual shaped the future of the country, is almost uniformly vilified in Mexico today.

Malinche

A daughter of Caciques (chieftains) of a small town near Coatzacoalcos. After her father died, her mother remarried. A son was born and they wanted him to be the heir. They gave Malinalli in secret to the Indians of Xicalango. Some commentators have seized on this betrayal by her mother as consequent for Malinche's later betrayal of her country. But she was not an Aztec, merely a subject, like so many others. Later, she was given to the Indians of Tabasco. She was among the 20 slaves given to Cortés as a tribute, when he was still considered possibly as the Quetzalcoátl. Cortés gave her to one of his captains, Portocarrero, in April 1519. She was about 14 years old. In July 1519, Portocarrero was ordered to return to Spain by Cortés and Malinche became his lover. According to Prescott, Cortés later planned the murder of his wife in Spain. Cortés and Malinche had a son in 1522 named Martin Cortés.

She was given many names in history:

- Malinalli was her original Nahuátl name, meaning “climbing plant”.
- Doña Marina was the name she with which she was Christened. (All captured Indians were christened - not necessarily an act that the Indians took part in nor comprehended, given the lack of a common language - after which the church gave license to the soldiers to own them.)
- Malintzin was the name given to her by the Indians when she appeared next to Cortés; afterwards; the suffix “tzin” is a sign of respect, the equivalent of Don or Doña in Spanish
- Malinche is a distortion of Malintzin by Spanish influence – a mestizo name.

Her name came to be used to describe a person who turned his back on his own culture: *malinchista*.

She became invaluable to the Spaniards as translator. While Cortés was in Cozumel, he added Jerónimo Aguilar to his troops. Aguilar was a priest who had been shipwrecked on the coast eight years before and spoke Mayan. Malinche spoke Nahuátl from birth and had learnt Mayan, so Cortés would speak to Aguilar in Spanish, then Aguilar would speak to Malinche and she would translate into Nahuátl. She soon learnt Spanish and became one of Cortés’ greatest assets. Malinche would stand beside Cortés and translate his words or perhaps even issue instructions of her own. She was a key to success in convincing other Indian states to join them in their quest to destroy the great Aztec nation. Her omnipresence caused the Indians to mistakenly refer to Cortés himself as Malinche. There are no monuments to Malinche in Mexico today. Reputedly her house remains in a City suburb, unmarked and unacknowledged.

Xicotencatl

Tlaxcala was a semi-independent city kept uniquely unconquered for their practise of war craft by the Aztecs. After a ferocious battle with them, they became Cortés allies and an army with which to approach Tenochtitlán and the Emperor Moctezuma. Xicotencatl the Elder was a priest and spiritual leader,

while Xicotencatl the Younger was the General of the Army. Here the two characters are fused as one.

Translations and Foreign texts:

a) Nahuátl

- 1) **Nihualchocay nihaulicotlamati çan nicui canitl huiya tlaca
anichuicaz yn toxochiuh ohuaye. Maic nina pantiaz cano ximo huaya,
huaye. Nihuallocoya ohuaya, ohuaye....**

Here I'm weeping, grieving, I the singer: I wish it weren't that I can't be dressed in these, our flowers. I wish that I could go away adorned in these – to the place that all are shorn. Here I'm grieving.

- 2) **Tahui yeho tonacico**
Hail! You've arrived!

- 3) **Xictzotzona in mohuehueuh. Xihuehuetzca yc ixtlilxochitle
xomittotoao in quauhquAhauc Mexico nicā mocueçalizchimalo
cucueyahau yan temalacatitlan y ximo chicauwaca netleya.**

O Glad-in-Battle, O Craving weapons, ah! O Valiant, O Ixtlilxochitl!
Dance at the Eagle Gate! Here! In Mexico! Your scarlet-plume shields
are whirling at the round stone. Be strong! Hail!

(Above texts from Cantares Mexicanos: Stanford University Press, 1985)

- 4) **To to tiquiti. Toco tico tiquiti.**

To co to, to co ti co

to to to toco tico

tiquiti, to to to etc.

These phonemes represent the sounds or rhythms of Aztec drumming, as notated by early Spanish settlers. Poems were originally performed accompanied by the large two-tone huehuétl drum. The beat-patterns for a number of poems are preserved in the texts.

Code:

to = low tone stressed

ti = high tone stressed

co = low tone unstressed

qui = high tone unstressed

Ohuaye! Ohuaya! Huaya! Huaye! similar to Alas!

Tahui! a term of agreement

b) Spanish originally sung by Cortés

(1) ¡Mirad! Señores compañeros, ya veis que somos pocos, hemos de estar siempre tan apercebidos, y aparejados, como si aora viessemos venir los contrarios a pelear, y no solamente vellos venir, sino hazer cuenta que estamos ya en la batalla con ellos.

(2) Admirad tanta belleza, tanta gracia.
¡Cómo perder qualquier batalla con tal inspiración!
India noble al caudillo presentada,
De fortuna y belleza peregrina.
Con despejado espíritu y viveza.
Gira la vista en el concurso mudo;

Rico manto de extrema sutileza
Con chapas de oro autorizarla pudo,
Prendido con bizarra gentileza,
Sobre los pechos en ayroso nudo;

Reyna parece de la India Zona,
Varonil y hermosísima Amazona.

From *Moratin: Las Naves de Cortés Destruidas*

(3) ¡Yo soy Hernan Cortés! He venido a libraros de vuestros enemigos los Aztecas. A cambio de vuestros soldados, también os ofrezco oro, la libertad y el final de vuestro padecer.

(4) Haremos lo que se nos ordene. La suerte de la buena o mala ventura está echada.

Quotations 1,3 & 4 are derived from *Bernal Diaz: Historia de la Conquista*
(Bernal Diaz was a conquistador with Cortés, and quotes his captain with these
words.)

c) Latin

The three excerpts are chosen from portions of a Latin Mass during Holy Week, in a setting known to have been used in Spain at the time of Cortés.

- 1) **Statuit Dominus supra petram pedes meos et direxit gressus meos: Et immisit in os meum; alleluia, hymnum Deo nostro, alleluia.**

Psalm 39, verses 1-3, (Vulgate)

**Expectans expectavi Dominum,
et intendit mihi.**

**Et exaudivit preces meas,
et eduxit me de lacu miseriae et de luto
faecis.**

**Et statuit super petram pedes meos,
et direxit gressus meos.**

**Et immisit in os meum canticum novum,
carmen Deo nostro.**

**Videbunt multi, et timebunt,
et sperabunt in Domino.**

translation:

**I waited patiently for the Lord;
he inclined to me and heard my
cry.**

**He drew me up from the desolate
pit, out of the miry bog,
And set my feet upon a rock,
making my steps secure.**

**He put a new song in my mouth,
a song of praise to our God.**

**Many will see and fear,
and put their trust in the Lord.**

*[The verses above were also chosen by
Stravinsky for his Symphony of Psalms]*

- 2) **Pacem meam do vobis, pacem meam commendo vobis: non sicut mundas dat pacem do vobis.**

John 14.27: (Vulgate)	translation
pacem relinquo vobis pacem meam do vobis non quomodo mundus dat ego do vobis non turbetur cor vestrum neque formidet	Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

3) ALEPH ego vir videns.....

The Lamentations are found immediately following the Book of Jeremiah. They are part of the liturgy of the *Holy Week*, and exemplify the important component of lament, atonement and repentance of the Paschal festivities.

The text itself consists in 5 chapters. All but chapter 3 have 22 verses: chapter 3 has 66 verses. The chapters are acrostic in the original Hebrew: that is, if one takes the first letter of each verse, one obtains the alphabet in its usual order. In ancient times, letters also served as numerals, so the initial letters were both numeral and acrostic. In the case of chapter 3, verses are grouped in sets of three, each verse within a set beginning with the same letter, and the 22 sets ordered alphabetically.

Book of Lamentations 1-9 (Vulgate);

ALEPH ego vir videns paupertatem

meam in virga indignationis eius

**ALEPH me minavit et adduxit in
tenebris et non in lucem**

**ALEPH tantum in me vertit et
convertit manum suam tota die**

BETH vetustam fecit pellem meam et

carnem meam contrivit ossa mea

**BETH aedificavit in gyro meo et
circumdedit me felle et labore**

**BETH in tenebrosis conlocavit me
quasi mortuos sempiternos**

**GIMEL circumaedificavit adversum
me ut non egrediar adgravavit
conpedem meam**

Translation:

Aleph. I am the man that see my
poverty by the rod of his indignation.

Aleph. He hath led me, and brought
me into darkness, and not into light.

Aleph. Only against me he hath
turned, and turned again his hand all
the day.

Beth. My skin and my flesh he hath
made old, he hath broken my bones.

Beth. He hath built round about me,
and he hath compassed me with gall,
and labour.

Beth. He hath set me in dark places
as those that are dead for ever.

Ghimel. He hath built against me
round about, that I may not get out:
he hath made my fetters heavy.

GIMEL sed et cum clamavero et	Ghimel. Yea, and when I cry, and
rogavero exclusit orationem meam	entreat, he hath shut out my prayer.
GIMEL conclusit vias meas lapidibus	Ghimel. He hath shut up my ways
quadris semitas meas subvertit	with square stones, he hath turned my paths upside down.

The Lamentations were used in the office of matins of the Holy Week. There are 3 offices, on Thursday, Friday and Saturday. Each office consists in 3 vigiliae; each vigila consists in 3 psalms with respons and 3 lectures with respons. The Lamentations were read or sung in three lectures at each of the first vigila (the other lectures were drawn from the New Testament and Saint Augustine respectively). The Lamentations therefore consist of 3 sets of 3 lectures, for Thursday, Friday and Saturday. Each lecture is ended with this call, which actually comes from *Hosea 14:1*

Jerusalem convertere ad Dominum	Jerusalem, return unto the Lord thy
Deum tuum	God

Summary of Operas and Music Theatre Works to 2004

Generally, in terms of dramatic themes, each of my operas explores a different genre:

The Wall

Music theatre for baritone, actor and 5 trombones and tape.

1982, SPNM, Royal Northern College of Music; ca 30 mins.

The Marriages Between Zones 3, 4 & 5

Derived from a science fiction novel by Doris Lessing;

1985, Opera Viva, The Place Theatre, London; ca 90 minutes

Phantastes

Derived from an adult fairy tale by the Victorian novelist George MacDonald;

1986, Modern Music Theatre Troupe, Camden Festival, The Place Theatre, London; ca 60 minutes

The Pillow Song

Derived from a diary of the 10th century Japanese woman, Sei Shonagan;

1988, MMTT, London International Opera Festival, London; ca 30 minutes

La Malinche

Derived from historical events in Mexico

1989, MMTT, London International Opera Festival, London; ca 45 minutes

Prologue to La Malinche

Derived from mythological events in Mexico

1992, MMTT Festival del Centro Histórico, Mexico; ca 20 minutes

Albergo Empedocle

Derived from a short story by E.M. Forster;

1990, MMTT, London International Opera Festival, London; ca 50 minutes

The Sirens and the Sea

Dramatic cantata for about 30 female voices,

1992, commissioned by Pam Cook and Cantamus Girls Choir with funds from East Midlands Arts commission, Nottingham Festival; ca 20 minutes

The Sorceress' Tale

Original story examining the character of the Sorceress in Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas*;

1996/2001; ca 30 minutes

Dirty Tricks

Invented burlesque based on the ongoing litigation between two international airline companies;

1997, MMTT, Spitalfields Market Opera; ca 80 minutes

Stone Angels

Original story drawn from William Golding's *The Lord of the Flies*, told from a female perspective;

1999, Bloomsbury Theatre London; ca 50 minutes

The Mechanical Operation of the Spirit

Experimental translation of opera to the Internet, funded by the AHRB.

1999, <http://www.mmtt.co.uk>

***Before the Beginning* (aka *Songs Between Words*)**

Four voices (3 singers, 1 actor), a cappella, no text, exploring vocal sounds themselves as both musical and dramatic structures. The title refers to John 1:1;

"In the Beginning was the word."

2004, Festival de Mexico en el Centro Histórico, Mexico; ca 75 minutes

Excerpts recorded for Quindecim records, 2004

Critical Comments, Recordings and Performances:

La Malinche and The Prologue

1989 Premiere 7 July, Modern Music Theatre Troupe at London International Opera Festival. dir. Akemi Horie, conducted by the composer.

1990 2nd production, dir Caroline Sharman, conducted by the composer. UK tour with funds from the Arts Council of Britain and London Arts Board.

Recorded for BBC Radio 3.

1992 3rd production, dir Caroline Sharman conducted by the composer, British Council tour of Mexico

Televised for Canal Once TV, Mexico. 1993 The recording was shown at the Opera Screen Festival/Opera de la Bastille, Paris

An orchestral work, *Suite for Strings: La Malinche*, was commissioned and performed by the London Mozart Players in 1995, conducted by David Drummond. As the name suggests, it is a recomposition of some of the music for strings, principally the choral music with an orchestral function.

Press Notices:

The Modern Music Theatre Troupe, one of the most interesting fringe opera companies in the country today, staged a remarkable new work called *La Malinche* by one of its directors, Paul Barker...the opera daringly eschews textural variety and changes of dramatic pace and even plays with the idea of unintelligibility (the libretto is in English, Spanish, Latin and Nahuátl – the language of the Aztecs). However, its consistency of tone and capacity for sustaining tension over protracted scenes turn out to be the work's greatest strength, and what holds the attention from first to last.

Barry Millington, *Times Educational Supplement* July 1989

In comparison with many opera plots, and in spite of the partial use of Nahuátl, the narrative of *La Malinche* was easily accessible in this performance. The composer has made a musical distinction between each of the three characters: Malinche's radiant part contrasts with the haunting beauty of Xicotencatl's counter-tenor setting...In an age when few composers can still succeed in writing truly original music, Mr Barker has achieved something especially remarkable. Within a score that is both gratifying to both singer and listener, he has struck a distinctive note, exploring many unusual timbres.

***Opera* April 1990**

Contemporary opera has not been receiving too good a press recently, but before getting terminally disillusioned or being talked into a crisis, punters should become reacquainted with the Modern Music Theatre Troupe, who for some years now have been quietly -too quietly? -delivering the goods with an admirable ratio of success and near-success (let it not be forgotten that Paul Barker, MMTT's director, composed a notable Doris Lessing Zones opera long before that appalling load of tripe thudded onto the Coliseum stage last year).

Barker's latest piece, the 45-minute *La Malinche*, was premiered at The Place on Wednesday. How refreshing to encounter a new opera that is about music, based on elaborate, demanding and satisfying writing for a chorus of ten (excellently prepared and executed), and on genuine ability to write rewardingly for the voice, both elements discreetly supported by a band of three (percussion, and two conch shells doubling trumpets).

The rich musical content should not, however, entirely muffle doubts about one aspect of this treatment of a weighty moment in time, the meeting of Cortés and the Aztecs. The Indians sing in Nahuátl and Cortés sings in Latin and Spanish; English is reserved for the bilingual lady of the title and (in part) for the counter-tenor Xicotencatl, whose precise function was not entirely clear (one was admittedly, quite mesmerized by the beauty of Jonathan Peter Kenny's singing). Cortés ended up dead, not as the triumphant destroyer of Aztec civilization, and the whys and wherefores were lost in the multilingualism that was the only element of a certain purist bloody-mindedness that can afflict even the best music-theatre undertakings. (A case for surtitles? No, no, I'm joking.)

Otherwise, nothing but praise for Barker's conducting, the poised production (Akemi Horie) and above all for the singing of the title role by Christine Barker, a soprano with the dramatic intensity of a Barstow, and Richard Jackson as a definitely un-stout Cortés, both of whom seized the opportunities for expressive vocalism with due gratitude.

Rodney Milnes, *Financial Times*, Friday June 9 1989

While many opera composers seem to have been attracted to exotic subjects, few can match Paul Barker's achievement in having set a work partly in Nahuátl-the Mexican language used in *La Malinche*. The opera opens with Indian villagers at prayer: 'Nihualchocay nihualicnotlamati çan nicuicanitl huiya ...'

La Malinche, which was highly acclaimed at its premiere at the London International Opera Festival last year (see *OPERA*, August 1989, pp. 1010- 11), concerns momentous events in Central American history - the meeting between Indian natives and Cortés, the first Conquistador to arrive in Mexico. It is set in 1519; Indian villagers are mourning the loss, generations earlier, of their god Quetzalcoatl, who they believe is solely capable of liberating them from the tyranny of their Aztec overlords. The natives mistakenly take Cortés to be a reincarnation of Quetzalcoatl, and

the Conquistador seeks to enlist their help in destroying the Aztecs. The ensuing events, well documented in history books, are beyond the scope of this short work, which explores Cortés's dealings with the villagers, and one in particular: a woman of unusual abilities and looks whom he names La Malinche. She acts as his interpreter and explains to him the legend of Quetzalcoatl. As a test of his strength, the villagers set Cortés the task of battling with Xicotencatl, their bravest warrior. When Cortés loses, the Villagers begin to doubt his deity and Xicotencatl prophesies a gloomy fate; Malinche, on the other hand, is filled with hope and believes that love will free the god from inside Cortés. It is with these conflicts that the final scene closes.

In comparison with many opera plots, and in spite of the partial use of Nahuátl, the narrative of La Malinche was easily accessible in this performance. Credit for this must be given to the three principals, Susanna Murray (Malinche), Richard Jackson (Cortés) and Jonathan Peter Kenny (Xicotencatl), whose portrayals of the main protagonists were vivid. The composer has made a musical distinction between each of the three characters: Malinche's radiant part contrasts with the haunting beauty of Xicotencatl's counter-tenor setting. Additional elements are introduced into Cortés's part - his prayers are sung in Latin (the soloists otherwise sing in English) and set to plainchant. All three were well up to the technical demands of the score, but it was Miss Murray (soprano) who impressed most, with flexible singing ideally suited to the myriad moods of the music. The chorus of ten singers were notable both for their agility and subtlety-the complicated textures of the score vary from the faintest murmur to shrieking incantations.

In an age where few composers can still succeed in writing truly original music, Mr. Barker (who directed this performance) has achieved something especially remarkable. Within a score that is gratifying for both singer and listener, he has struck a distinctive note, exploring many unusual timbres. Most of the opera is sung unaccompanied, with the occasional use of percussion, off-stage trumpet and ethnic instruments such as conch-shell trumpets adding to the ethereal atmosphere of the music. Although no opera can be complete without a proper staging, the music itself should make rewarding listening when it is broadcast by BBC Radio 3 in the near future.

John Allison, *Opera*, June 1990, Vol 41 No.6 (La Malinche. Modern Music Theatre Troupe at the Secombe Centre, Sutton, Surrey, March 23)

The Pillow Song

Performances:

1988 Premiere 1 June; MMTT, London International Opera Festival; dir. Akemi Horie.

1991 2nd production by Sally Langford, Mansfield Festival and Arts Council tour.

1994 3rd production by Caroline Pope des. Susan Stockwell for MMTT at London South Bank Centre,

1996 4th production: scenes incorporated at Trinity College of Music production,

2003 5th production: Festival Música y Escena, México City

Televised by Canal 22, nationally in México

6th production: University of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, USA.

2004 7th production: Centro Nacional de las Artes, Mexico City
Recording for CD (Quindecim records, 2004)

Press Notices:

Pleasant though it was to encounter Mozart's musical squib in a new and workable English version, along with Stephen Oliver's *Waiting* (which OPERA failed to catch at last year's Buxton Festival), the real discovery of this triple bill was a new one-act work by Paul Barker. A composer of true originality, he avoids easy solutions on the one hand and fashionable obscurantism on the other. *The Pillow-Song* displays that skill in vocal writing and in 'keeping music and dramatic action moving forward' which Rodney Milnes hailed three years ago (June 1985, p. 706) in reviewing Barker's treatment of Doris Lessing in *The Marriages* between Zones 3, 4, and 5.

In the intervening *Phantastes*, Barker went for a weaker Victorian literary source: RM had less enthusiasm (June 1986, p. 250) for this piece than I did in the *Musical Times*. Now the composer has found a perfectly straightforward but emotionally rich story-line: a Japanese woman of 1,000 years ago narrates a diary telling of how she was selected at 14 as a concubine to the Emperor, of taking a lover and the death of their baby, of her fate when the Emperor died. It is typical of Barker's boldness that his long, beautifully expressive soprano monologue should be accompanied by four other sopranos in choral heterophony, with one solo percussion part (which he himself played) using oriental instruments.

His soloist was the astonishingly gifted Christine Barker: given a melody-line stretching from below middle C to above top C, she tackled it with the smoothness of a clarinet. A topmost D, very soft, was a sound you might seek in vain from some of the most famous of sopranos.

Costumed in Japanese style but not seeking the westerner's stereotype of oriental gesture, she had the guidance of a Japanese director, Akemi Horie, in a performance of poise and pathos. The whole work, of about 30 minutes, would seem a gift to television and meanwhile merits major festival performances.

Paul Barker was musical director for this work and pianist for Oliver's: the Modern Music Theatre Troupe obviously gains from him much besides his own works.

OPERA Magazine. –August 1988; Arthur Jacobs:

Paul Barker, in *The Pillow Song*, used a spare and haunting texture of solo soprano, chorus of four women's voices, and occasional quiet gong-strokes, to off-set a gentle story of tenth-century Japan...this was enchanting. Akemi Horie's direction of Christine Barker matched its poised and stylised spaciousness.

The Independent, Monday 6 June 1988

...The Pillow Song demonstrated once again the remarkably individual gifts of the composer Paul Barker (who also played oriental instruments as a one-person accompaniment) and the superb evenness and range of Christine Barker's soprano.

Classical Music magazine, June 1988

Una visión general de esta triple, pero unificada función de ópera de cámara, permite afirmar que, desde el punto de vista de la buena fusión de música y escena, la obra de Paul Barker (*The Pillow Song*) que cerró el programa es la más lograda. No sólo presenta el texto más atractivo y coherente de las tres obras, sino que su componente musical es también la mejor planteada y resuelta. Una voz solista, un cuarteto de voces femeninas como microcoro y un discreto complemento de percusiones refinadamente manejadas por Ricardo Gallardo son suficientes para crear los ambientes sonoros y los cimientos dramáticos necesarios para una interesante exploración del *Pillow Book* de la Cortésana japonesa Sei Shonagan.

Y fue precisamente la protagonista de la ópera de Barker, la soprano Lourdes Ambriz, quien mejor asumió y realizó sus labores de solista, tanto en lo musical como en lo escénico.

Juan Arturo Brennan, *La Jornada*, México D.F. Martes 4 de febrero de 2003

(<http://www.jornada.unam.mx/2003/feb03/030204/03aa1cul.php?origen=opinion.html>)

Three Songs for Sylvia

1994: six performances in UK Cathedrals tour, London Festival Orchestra

Commissioned by **London Festival Orchestra** with funds from Southern Arts.

Premiere Bristol Cathedral, July 1st, **Sarah Leonard**, cond **Ross Pople**

Recorded & broadcast on Classic FM

Further performances with Ann Liebeck

2000 Recorded on CD with Sarah Leonard with the composer playing the piano reduction.

(Sargasso SCD 28035)

Press Notices:

But the highlight of the evening was her (Ann Liebeck) rendering of *Three Songs for Sylvia*. She captured beautifully the moments of high drama, passion, lyricism and sinister apprehension in the settings of these poems in a free recitative style. There were grand melodic leaps by both soloist and orchestra and some fine harmonic effects from the strings. These were gripping works, over all too soon.

Oxford Times Friday October 21 1994

But it was her [Ann Liebeck] interpretation of Paul Barker's *Three Songs for Sylvia*, which sent shivers of excitement down the spine. This modern work, inspired by a radio play written by the poet Sylvia Plath and entitled *Three Women*, was absolutely delightful. Had the orchestra included this in its vast repertoire of recordings, I would certainly be going out of my way to purchase a copy as soon as possible.

The Oxford Mail, Monday October 17 1994

Avant-garde composers would have us believe that they are perfectly capable of writing mainstream pieces when they want to. There is one at least who can, as was illustrated by last night's performance of "Three Songs for Sylvia" at Southwell Minster.

When Paul Barker brought a piece of his own to go with Dido and Aeneas in Mansfield [The Pillow Song] in Mansfield, the ears of his audience were stretched a long way. His new work for the distinguished soprano Sarah Leonard and the London Festival Orchestras is no less inventive, but recognisably inventive in a tradition embracing Vaughan Williams, Britten and Tippett.

There were ecstatic melismas for the singer within an elegantly flowing vocal line, the thoughts and feelings expressed were taken up and crystallised in glorious writing for the strings.

Nottingham Evening Post Friday July 8 1994

The Sirens and the Sea

Dramatic Cantata for 30 female voices, commissioned by Pam Cook and Cantamus Girls Choir with funds from East Midlands Arts, premiered Nottingham Festival, July 1992, staged by Caroline Sharman. ca 15 mins.

Press Notices:

Pamela Cook's Cantamus Girls Choir triumphed with an original National Music day offering at the congregational Hall last night.

They devoted the second half to Paul Barker's dramatic *The Sirens and the Sea* specially written for them.

It made play with settings of Homer and James Joyce, interspersed with a central scene from Milton's *Paradise Lost* and an episode from a medieval Welsh poem.

In Caroline Sharman's staging, and with Bridget Cairns as designer, the piece had colour, humour and power.

Peter Palmer *Nottingham Evening Post*, June 29, 1992

The Marriages Between Zones 3,4 & 5

1985: Libretto by the composer after novel by Doris Lessing.

Opera Viva; cond. Chris Willis; dir. Chris Newell.

2 acts ca 90 mins; 2 sop, mezzo, bar, dancer, children's chorus.

fl,cl,tp,tb,vl,vc,perc,sarod.

Awarded British Music Society Prize

Press Notices:

Mr Barker commands that most elusive and important quality needed for the stage -forward movement - indeed, I wager that we shall be hearing more from Paul Barker.

Financial Times

His musical language hovers in an attractive zone somewhere between tonality and atonality; his vocal lines are as testing as they are rewarding and his writing for chamber orchestra is consistently inventive.

Opera

...served to show genuine stage-flair on the part of the composer, Paul Barker.

British Music Yearbook, review of the year 1985

Published Articles and Books:

ARTICLE:

The Voice in Crisis, on composing for the voice.

The Singer, UK, June/July 2001

BOOKS:

Devised and Collaborative Theatre

contributory chapter on music and composition,

commissioned by the Crowood Press, UK, 2002

(Also available published in Spanish by Ñaque Editoria)

Composing for Voice

A textbook on composing for the voice

Commissioned by Routledge, NY, November 2003

Composing for Theatre

An examination of the theatrical aspect of music composition

In preparation for Routledge, 2006

Selected list of works not included in the thesis, which are relevant to the period in question

Aperghis, Georges

Récitations par Martine Viard

(recorded on Disques Montaigne (MFA 782007 ref : AD065; MO 782007)

Ball, Hugo

an important Dada poet, invented phonetic poems such as:

KARAWANE

jolifanto bambla ô falli bambla

grossiga m'pfa habla horem

égiga goramen

higo bloiko russula huju

hollaka hollala

anlogu bung

blago bung

blago bung

booso fataka

u u u

schampa wulla wussa ôlobo

hej tatta görem

eschige zunbada

wolabu ssabudu mww ssabudu

tumba ba- umf

kusagauma

ba - umf

Beckett, Samuel

Quad

Happy Days

Berg, Albban

Wozzeck

Berio, Luciano

Sequenza III

Sinfonia

Thema (Omaggio a Joyce)

Passagio (1962)

Opera (1970)

Brecht, Bertold

Die Dreigroschenoper

Britten, Benjamin

The Turn of the Screw

Brook, Peter

Orghast

Cage, John

Theatre Piece (1960)

Hpschd (1969)

Kagel, Mauricio

Phonophonie, vier Melodramen für zwei Stimmen und andere Schallquellen

(1963/64 Universal Edition)

Repertoire from Staatstheater, (1967-1970)

(1971 Universal Edition)

Kandinsky, Wasilly

Der gelbe Klang

Kurtág, György

Einige Sätze den Sudelbüchern, Georg Christoph Lichtenbergs, Op.37

Cabeza de Vaca

Film dir. Nicolás Echevarría, Mexico (1990)

(qv Mario Lavista)

Ligeti, Gyorgy

Aventures 1962

Nouvelles Aventures

Le Grand Macabre

Litolff, Henry

Verlag 1964

Marin Marais (1656-1728)

Le Tableau de l'Operation de la Taille

(for viola da gamba with text about an operation to remove a gall-stone)

Marinetti, Filippo Tommaso

I Vasi Communicanti (1916)

Matthews, Colin

The Great Journey (1997).

Maxwell Davies, Peter

Missa Super l'Homme Armé (1968, revised in 1971)

Vesalii Icones (1969)

Eight Songs for a Mad King

(1971, Boosey and Hawkes Music Publishers Ltd.)

(qv: Roy Hart)

Partch, Harry

Delusion of the Fury (1969)

(has a vocabulary of only some fifty words, responding to Artaud's desires.)

Alfred Schnittke

Piano Quintet

Schoenberg, Arnold

Pierrot Lunaire

Erwartung

Die glückliche Hand

Stravinsky,

L'histoire du Soldat

Stockhausen, Karlheinz

Stimmung

Wangenheim, Gustav von

Chor der Arbeit 1923

Judith Weir

King Harald's Saga

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Image-Music-Text / The Grain of the Voice

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Bryon, Experience

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Melbourne: Doctoral thesis, Department of Music, Monash University. 2002

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Sidney: Sydney Morning Herald, June 5. 1996

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