

**Reading the Score: Music Novels
and the Alternative World of Words**

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Reading the Score: Music Novels and the Alternative World of Words

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this thesis is to write a ‘music novel’ for children and by doing so examine some of the many ways words and music play a role in storytelling. A music novel can be studied critically and to write one is ultimately a creative act. Academic scholarship on literary representations of music has so far been primarily focused on attending to the presence and representation of Western classical music in adult literary texts. Eminent leaders in the field include Delia da Sousa Correa, Emily Petermann, and Werner Wolf. Research into music in children’s fiction has not been undertaken to such an extent. This thesis takes a first step towards readdressing this gap in knowledge, taking as examples children’s novels by Aimee Lucido (*In the Key of Code*, 2019), Philip Reeve (*Railhead*, 2015), and Lewis Carroll (*Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*, 1865); and a more recent, contemporary adult novel by Matthew Herbert (*The Music – A novel through sound*, 2018). My detailed analysis centres on how music contributes to the construction and development of these works, as well as music that has made use of fiction as a compositional device in György Ligeti’s *Nonsense Madrigals* (1988-93). The theoretical framing of my study draws on work by Roland Barthes, John Cage, Jean-Jacques Nattiez, and Patricia Waugh. *Underdog*, my music novel aimed at readers aged eight years and over, is my creative response to the questions this thesis raises. The two soundscapes that accompany the novel are musical paratexts born from *Underdog* that help unite the words with the music beyond the printed page. I provide a critical reflection on the inspirations behind *Underdog* which serves as a bridge into critical case studies that investigate what happens when one art form (music) has infiltrated the other (fiction) as part of what Jean-Jacques Nattiez calls the poietic process. My study demonstrates that the literary techniques used in fiction to imitate music, regardless of genre, are shared. These traits include references to pop and classical music embedded in the text, imitation of motifs and numerical musical patterns associated with a particular piece of music, and individual pieces of music that underpin the construction of a literary work.

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
PART ONE: UNDERDOG	
Prelude	13
Part One	20
Part Two	67
Part Three	101
Part Four	137
Coda	169
PART TWO: CRITICAL ACCOMPANIMENT	
1. Underdog: Notes from the Margins	171
An Author's Perspective	
2. Writerly Games Writers Play:	203
Patterns, Playlists, and Recurring Themes	
3. The Alternative World of Words: Listening to Lewis Carroll's	233
Alice Books and Reading György Ligeti's Nonsense Madrigals	
4. The Full Score: Reading and Listening to Matthew Herbert's	264
The Music – A novel through sound	
CONCLUSION	296
BIBLIOGRAPHY	302

INTRODUCTION

Ars est celare artem—art consists in concealing art; when creative artistry proves truly successful one does not notice the ‘art’ (skill) that has gone into the creative process.¹

How do you write a children’s novel with music integral to the framework and fabric of the story? What happens when one artform enters the poietic process of another? Is it possible for two different mediums to unite and become a single cohesive work? Can fiction be read as music? These are the questions I have been scrutinising in my quest to produce a music novel for children. A music novel does not attempt to become music. It draws attention to its metafictional role in the construction and development of a work, and at the same time can trigger the impression of music in what remains a literary text. In the context of this interrogation, I aim to provide an insight into the inner workings of fiction that has used elements of music in the structure, content, and themes of the novel; as well as music that has made use of fiction as a compositional device. Such analysis showcases the shared and transferable techniques common to these different forms. I argue that a writer or composer who understands what literature and music can offer each other will be better placed to find new ways of creating and telling stories.

There is a critical as well as a creative context to the writing of *Underdog*. Academic research into the affiliations between literature and music has primarily focused on reading representations of classical music in canonical adult literary works such as James Joyce’s *Ulysses* (1922), Aldous Huxley’s *Point Counter Point* (1928), or Anthony Burgess’s *Napoleon Symphony* (1974).² An early pioneer of this approach was Calvin Brown with the publication of *Music and Literature* (1948), which focused on fiction that structured itself on musical form. His work was taken up by Steven Paul

¹ James Marwood, *A Dictionary of Latin Words and Phrases* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 22.

² In the foreword to Anthony Burgess’s *A Clockwork Orange* (1962) – Penguin Modern Classics (paperback edition, 2000) it states: ‘He believed that with the fusion of the musical and literary forms lay a possible future for the novel.’

Scher in *Notes Towards a Theory* (1970), who proposed categories for describing relations between words and music: word music, structural analogies, and verbal music. In 1997 the International Association of Words and Music (WMA) was set up 'to promote interdisciplinary scholarly inquiry devoted to the relations between literature/verbal texts and music.'³

Founding member Werner Wolf was one of the first theorists to identify three types of intermediality that connect fiction to music:

- 1) Overt musico-literary intermediality involving music and literature
- 2) Covert intermediality resulting from an indirect appearance of literature in, or a transformation of literature into music
- 3) Converse form of covert intermediality resulting from an indirect appearance of music in, or a transformation of music into literature⁴

The WMA has its own *Word and Music Studies* book series published by Brill/Rodopi. Yet, to date, there has been no critical writing on music in children's fiction and my thesis seeks to address this gap.

Perhaps most importantly in the work that has been undertaken so far, Emily Petermann builds on Wolf's concept of intermediality in *The Musical Novel* (2018) by describing the term as 'any crossing of medial borders *within* a given work or media product.'⁵ My definition of intermediality locates it as an intersection where one art form interacts with another as a conscious part of its artistic foundations. In the case of a music novel, this can be through referencing works, imitating elements of music (rhythm, pitch, dynamics, timbre) or actual compositions, and adopting musical forms and structures. I prefer the term 'music novel' to 'musical novel'. A 'musical' is a genre of music and therefore misleading in this context. The term 'music novel' is inclusive to all genres of music in fiction whether that be Mississippi blues in romance or grime in crime.

There have been recent shifts in academic research onto examining other forms of music in literature. Claus-Ulrich Viol's *Jukebooks* (2006) examines

³ International Association of Words and Music <<http://www.wordmusicstudies.net>> [accessed 17 August 2021].

⁴ Werner Wolf, *The Musicalization of Fiction* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1999), p. 228.

⁵ Emily Petermann, *The Musical Novel* (Suffolk: Camden House, 2018), p. 17.

pop music in British fiction, and Michael Meyer's collection of essays in *Literature and Music* (2002) discusses texts dealing with jazz, folksong, and classical music. *The Edinburgh Companion to Literature and Music* (2020) edited by Delia da Sousa Correa, brings together newly commissioned essays on the relationships between literature and music from the Middle Ages to the present. It is divided into five parts with seventy-one chapters but only four engage with contemporary connections between literature and music beyond 1990. The companion does not include any standalone chapters on music in children's literature.

My thesis comprises two parts. Part One is *Underdog*, my music novel for readers aged eight years and over.⁶ There is no requirement to understand musical forms or recognise references to particular pieces to make sense of the story. *Underdog* can be read as a 'readerly' text for the pure enjoyment of the narrative or a 'writerly' text where the reader engages in the production of the work. Readerly and writerly are two terms Roland Barthes presented in *S/Z* (1970). A readerly text requires minimal effort from the reader. The storyline and structure are conventional, and the pleasure is in consuming the story the author has crafted. In this case, the reader according to Barthes is 'plunged into a kind of idleness' and the only option open to them is 'to accept or reject the text'.⁷ This differs from the writerly text which demands an active role from the reader to go beyond the linear presentation of the plot, and make sense of the multitude of layers that have gone into the construction of the work. As Barthes explains, 'To interpret a text is not to give it a (more or less justified, more or less free) meaning but on the contrary to appreciate what *plural* constitutes it.'⁸ The plurality of *Underdog* may therefore require a rereading so the 'rereading is no longer consumption but play (that play which is the return of the different).'⁹ Rereading is a form of structured learning for children. It helps build comprehension skills and a

⁶ *Underdog* is the sequel to *Dognapped*, the first book in my Dotty detective series. It also relies on music as part of the narrative structure of the work.

⁷ Roland Barthes, *S/Z*, trans. by Richard Millar (UK: Blackwell, 2002), p. 4.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

reading confidence which allows them to delve deeper into a text and pick up on new information. Lewis Carroll reflects on this at the end of *Through the Looking-Glass* when he makes the reader responsible for interpreting just who dreamed ‘all’ the dream by asking, ‘Which do *you* think it was?’¹⁰

Part Two of this thesis discusses the poietic process of creating *Underdog*, the methodologies behind the work, and ways in which music has been integrated into the text. This is followed by a chapter-by-chapter analysis of important works that have engaged with strategies of production and content across two medial forms that have informed my creative practice. The selected works are:

In the Key of Code (2019) by Aimee Lucido
Railhead (2015) by Philip Reeve
Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland and *Through the Looking-Glass*
(1865 and 1871) by Lewis Carroll
Nonsense Madrigals (1988-93) by György Ligeti
The Music – A novel through sound (2018) by Matthew Herbert¹¹

Pioneer of musical semiotics, Jean-Jacques Nattiez proposed three types of interaction with a work:

- (1) poietic analysis
- (2) esthetic analysis
- (3) analysis of the work’s immanent configurations (of the *trace*); that is, analysis on a neutral level¹²

The poietic analysis focuses on how the work came into being whilst the aesthetic analysis is how the receiver reconstructs the making process. Their connection to one another do not necessarily coincide. The interpreter will project their own configurations on a text leading to two possible points of departure – a unity or diversity between the maker and the receiver. Trace

¹⁰ Lewis Carroll, *Through the Looking-Glass* (London: Puffin Classics, 2015), p. 160.

¹¹ Aimee Lucido, *In the Key of Code* (London: Walker Books, 2019); Philip Reeve, *Railhead* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015); Lewis Carroll, *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* (London: Puffin Classics, 2015); György Ligeti, *Nonsense Madrigals* (New York: Scott, 1999); Matthew Herbert, *The Music – A novel through sound* (London: Unbound, 2018).

¹² Jean-Jacques Nattiez, *Music and Discourse: Toward a Semiology of Music*, trans. by Carolyn Abbate (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), p. 15.

analysis essentially takes a neutral standpoint by interpreting the construction of the work itself. My approach to uncovering the *ars est celare artem* follows a mix of these three families of analysis and Nattiez's theory of the interpretant. He advocates that the space between the poietic process and the aesthetic process is the material trace of the work that can be analysed i.e. the physical results of the poietic process. Nattiez sets this theory out in the following diagram:



Nattiez's diagram developed out of Jean Molino's theory for communication, which can be represented as follows:



The main difference between the two schemas is the direction of the arrow on the right. Molino's model implies that the intended message created by the producer will be understood by the receiver. In Nattiez's system, the emphasis is on the receiver understanding how the trace was created. As a musician turned music novelist, this viewpoint appeals to me. For instance, it would be hard to argue that Igor Stravinsky's signature motif for his protagonist in the ballet *Petrushka* (1911), a text which I analyse at length in this thesis, is not made up of two clashing C major and F-sharp major chords. The point of difference will be on interpreting how the notes are played. All artefacts, then, are open to multiple readings. In the unveiling of the art that lies hidden in the art within my chosen works, I do not consider the strengths or weaknesses of story lines, character flaws or any other subjective aspects of the texts. My focus lies purely on the practice of how the work was made and functions with another medium. For example, I ask,

¹³ Ibid., p. 17.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 16.

how does Matthew Herbert structure *The Music* – an album written in words as a three-part symphony?

This theme of a diversity of interpretation applies to reading *Underdog*. In many ways it is two detective novels rolled into one. On the surface the work is a children's detective story set in a canine world. There is a crime and a detective who solves the case by compiling the evidence. However, contained within the structure and the narrative of the novel is the music. The music provided a framework and a route for developing the story in the act of composition. It is a cypher to be decoded by a willing musical detective who follows the musical clues embedded in the work. This type of reading places high demands on the participant to make sense of the form and recognise references to particular pieces of music. I do not expect young readers to understand this level of intertextuality. Good stories last and to quote C. S. Lewis, 'A children's story which is enjoyed only by children is a bad children's story.'¹⁵ I am under no illusion about the fact that if *Underdog* is to be a success the story needs to be enjoyable regardless of how the interior functions; it needs to be readerly as well as writerly. I therefore also wanted to make it possible to read *Underdog* purely as a children's story. The music or even the musical novel is currently not defined as a genre in the publishing industry. I demonstrate what constitutes a music novel in my critical readings of Matthew Herbert, and other writers, in this thesis.

The music novel as a form may be little understood but there are plenty of examples of crime or mystery novels for Middle Grade readers. Series examples include Enid Blyton's *The Famous Five* (1942-1963) and *The Secret Seven* (1949-1963), Lauren Child's *Ruby Redfort* (2009-2016), and Robin Steven's *Murder Most Unladylike* (2014–). Commercial adult crime writers like James Patterson, John Connolly, and John Grisham with his *Theodore Boone* (2010–) collection have also entered the arena with child protagonists on the whodunit trail. There are fewer animal related detective

¹⁵ C. S. Lewis, 'On Three Ways of Writing for Children', *Of Other Words: Essays and Stories* (New York: A Harvest Book, 1975), p. 24.

stories. Examples include Andrew Cope's twenty-two *Spy Pets* (2005-2016) book series, Gareth Jones's *The Dragon Detective Agency* (2006-2008), and H. Y. Hanna's *The Big Honey Dog Mysteries* (2013-2015). *Underdog* not only adds to the genre but extends the boundaries through music and wordplay which contribute to the sense of the story being a multi-layered puzzle.

As a music novel, *Underdog* is inspired by Stravinsky's four-act ballet *Petrushka*. Reflecting this, there are four parts to the novel. Its structure is based on a 'theme and variations' which many composers (and writers) have used as a technical device to underpin a particular piece. My protagonist is Detective Dotty de Bono. She is a hot-headed Dalmatian who lives and works in the canine town of Bonesville. It is the opening night of Starvinsky's (deliberate misspelling of Stravinsky and used throughout) *Petrushka* at the Babooshka Ballet. Rising star Goneoffsky is in the title role. During his death dance he falls to the ground, shot by a poisoned dart. Dotty suspects the underdog but when *Petrushka* No. 2 goes missing during the second performance she is forced to think again. Things go from bad to worse. After the third performance, *Petrushka* No. 3 falls through an open trap door and breaks a leg. It is up to Dotty to join the dots before the culprit strikes again.

The text does not always follow a linear format. Some pages go from the bottom to the top and the reader needs to follow the directional arrows. Others are blank or surrounded by white space to reflect that music is not all about sound, it also includes silence.

Part Two consists of four chapters. In framing my reading of the selected works, I draw on Roland Barthes's foundational understanding of intertextuality – that the 'text is a fabric of quotations, resulting from a thousand sources of culture'¹⁶ – and develop this idea to suit the music novel. Barthes's understanding of intertextuality is particularly relevant in *Underdog*. I quote from Stravinsky and Stravinsky quotes from the past; while Matthew Herbert structures *The Music* using works by John Cage.

¹⁶ Roland Barthes, *The Death of the Author* (London: Fontana, 1977), p. 146.

Chapter 1, 'Notes from the Margins: An Author's Perspective', is a critical reflection upon my own practice and an exegesis of the work to show how I researched and developed the story. This is followed by an introduction to the music in part one of the novel to reveal the intertextuality of the text. The two soundscapes that accompany the novel are musical paratexts that play with my protagonist's name in notes.¹⁷ My ambition being to unite the novel and the music beyond the printed words on the page.

Chapter 2, 'Writerly Games Writers Play: Patterns, Playlists, and Recurring Themes', turns to reading Aimee Lucido's *In the Key of Code* and Philip Reeve's *Railhead*. Both texts draw attention to the metafictional role of music as part of their own artistic construction and in shaping the work. I draw on Patricia Waugh's theory on self-conscious fiction in setting the scene and Angela Leighton's notion that literature is an interactive activity between the creator and the reader.¹⁸ The analyses demonstrate how Lucido explicitly soundtracks her text and imitates noteworthy characteristics of certain pieces of music as recurring themes within the narrative. Lucido relies on a range of music terms to bring her characters to life and plays with typography and space using elements of music such as rhythm, pitch, and dynamics. This approach is in contrast to Reeve's, who implicitly builds his story world around 1970s pop music, and divides his novel into four distinct movements as if he was composing a large-scale orchestral work.

Chapter 3, 'The Alternative World of Words: Listening to Lewis Carroll's Alice Books and Reading György Ligeti's Nonsense Madrigals', focuses on shared and transferable techniques in two different disciplines. The *Alice* books are full of sounds, silences, and music. Carroll continuously plays with the musicality of the text using puns, parody, and portmanteaus. Ligeti's *Nonsense Madrigals* are for six male voices. Carroll's texts are included in three out of the six movements. The unifying idea that holds them together is Ligeti's extended note play with Carroll's puns and parody.

¹⁷ The soundscapes have been uploaded to SoundCloud and are located here <<https://soundcloud.com/lisaoj>> [accessed 3 September 2022].

¹⁸ Patricia Waugh, *Metafiction: Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction* (London: Routledge, 1996), p.6; Angela Leighton, *Hearing things: religion, illusion, and the American* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2018), p. 15.

The novels I have chosen for analysis in chapters 2 and 3 reflect the intended commercial reading age of *Underdog*. In the final chapter of my thesis, I introduce an adult text. My personal view is that my poietic process would be the same if I was writing a music novel for adults. It was simply that the story idea for *Underdog* was right for readers aged eight years plus and what fascinates me about this next text is that it is an album written in words. Chapter 4, 'The Full Score: Reading and Listening to Matthew Herbert's *The Music – A novel through sound*', then, concludes the analysis with a focus on whether it is possible for two forms to unite and become one. Herbert wants his text to be listened to – to be approached through an ear – in order to implicate the reader in the sound-world of the work. The reader/listener is no longer tacet. They are the producer, the performer, and the interpreter in the function and destination of the work – recalling the attributes of the writerly text in Roland Barthes's sense of the term. This method demands a new way of reading and listening so the aural takes precedence over the visual imagination. My analysis demonstrates how Herbert frames *The Music* as a three-part symphony, breaks down the duration of each track to show how the work lasts an hour, and uses three pieces by John Cage to structure the content. I conclude with reflections on what the music novel offers the reader and the writer, and my future ambition for this quirky art form.

As a contribution to knowledge, *Underdog* is an example of how music can work in children's fiction and how it can shape it. The music plays a continuous role in the structure and development of the story. Sometimes explicitly, sometimes implicitly. It is a cypher to crack. There has been little analysis from a music novelist's perspective on the texts I have selected as part of my research. My project takes a first step towards bridging this gap and therefore adds significantly to the field of literary sound studies, particularly with regard to music in children's literature. My analysis of Herbert's *The Music* demonstrates how another practitioner explicitly and implicitly uses one art form in the creation of another. 'Notes from the Margins' – my reflection on writing *Underdog* that bridges the critical and

creative work undertaken in this study – could be used by any writer wanting to compose a multidimensional work regardless of genre or the age of the reader. This thesis is primarily a practical resource for writers and composers to cross boundaries, learn more from each other, and ultimately create a new fusion between fiction and music.

PART ONE

UNDERDOG

PRELUDE

Shhh!

A VIEW TO A KILL

KLANG

KLING-KLING-KLING

KLANG

KLING-KLING-KLING

KLANG

The
clanky
old
lift
went
down
the
metal
elevator
shaft

KLING-KLING-KLING

KLANG

KLANG

THWACK

And shuddered to a stop

DING!

The lift doors slid open → → → →

DOORS OPENING

Dong!

*way
only
the
It's*



*pay
to
going
you're
Now*



*it
for
asked
You*



LIFT GOING UP

STAND CLEAR OF THE CLOSING DOORS

He hit the button for the ninth floor

→ → → → A dog dressed in black stepped inside

He slunk into the dark and made his way along the narrow platform.

He waited. Hidden. Up in the fly tower. Swallowed by the void. Watching.

He had one shot. Just one. But not yet.

Soon.

Timing is everything.

PART ONE: CHAPTER ONE

Detective Dotty de Bono parked her motorbike in front of the piazza. Seven fifteen, Bonesville time. Tail in the air and with a swagger in her stride, she made her way across the square to the ballet. Tonight was the opening of *Petrushka* with rising star Goneoffsky in the title role. On a detective's wage it had taken Dotty ages to save enough bonios to buy a ticket. But Dotty didn't care. She loved the ballet. The music. The dancing. The drama. And the magic of make-believe.

Two giant bronze statues of ballet dogs standing in fifth position flanked the stairway up to the main entrance. Dotty pushed through the revolving door. Her toenails tip-tapped on the black marble floor. Rich scents of expensive perfumes shot up her nose. Dotty filtered them out, breaking each stench into single strands. Fartbutt. Raspberry-ripple. Lemon turd and bergamutt. She bought a programme and showed her ticket to the steward.

BABOOSHKA BALLET
Petrushka
Stalls Row K
Seat 9

'Towards the front on the right,' the steward said.

Dotty padded down the aisle past rows of plush red velvet bucket seats. Dogs were chin-wagging in low excited voices or indulging in some enthusiastic bottom sniffing. The first night of any new production was a big event. Dotty found her seat and adjusted her brown suede G&D silver-buckle collar. She looked smart, if less showy than some of the other hounds in their fancy designer chokers and clip-on tassel earrings. Dotty was a no bling-bling diamond dog and even if she had the money, she wouldn't have been seen dead wearing any of that clobber.

A plump, shaggy-haired dog in a bright yellow sequinned waistcoat came running down the gangway.

'Excuse me. Excuse me. Out of my way,' he barked in a high-pitched voice. He plopped himself down next to Dotty and let off a real stinker.

Delightful! she thought.

'Yay! I made it,' he yelped. 'I love watching dogs in tights.'

'Really?' Dotty said.

There was a sharp whine from the speakers around the theatre, then a booming voice said, 'WELCOME TO **BABOOSHKA BALLET**.

THIS EVENING'S PERFORMANCE
IS ABOUT TO BEGIN!

Several dogs howled with delight.

Dotty's tail twitched.

The doors closed.

And the lights went down.



Stage Right

Stage Left

In the pit below the stage, Martha, the conductor of the Jellybean Orchestra, banged her stick several times on the music stand.

The audience stopped muttering and there was some last-minute coughing and throat clearing.

The oboe played a long A.

The rest of the band tuned their instruments to match it.

Silence. Martha counted

One

Two

Three

She scrunched up her face and waved her stick in the air. The curtain went up to a lively fanfare from the flute. The cellos high in their register answered back and downward flourishes in the violins got the party started.

Act 1: The dancers waltz round the square enjoying the fun fair.

The Master of Ceremonies shouts out the attractions.

Two drummers bang their toy drums.

A Magician appears in front of a small puppet theatre.

The curtains open.

Three puppets are slumped, lifeless, in their booths:
the Moor in silks and velvets, the Ballerina in a powder pink tutu,
and Petrushka in red-and-yellow check tights and a white ruff collar.

Stage Right

Stage Left

Martha cranked up the volume and the whole band belted out a rip roaring dance.
The metallic **ting ting ting** of the triangle kept time.

The sweet smell of freshly cooked popcorn wafted around the theatre.
One-thousand plus black noses sniffed the air. The same number of pink
tongues licked their doggie lips as tubs were given out by the stewards.

ra-ta-ta-ta ra-ta-ta-ta ra-ta-ta-ta ra-ta-ta-ta

The dog next to Dotty grabbed her paw. 'What's happening?'
'The Magician's about to start his show,' she whispered.
Someone further along the row growled, 'Shut up!'

The Magician plays his magic flute.
The Moor comes to life with a jolt.
The Ballerina springs onto her tippy toes with a little wobble.
Petrushka's legs twitch and twitch again.
He pulls himself up and sways in time to the music.
The puppets burst out of their booths and to the
amazement of the crowd they dance, all by themselves.

Stage Right

Stage Left

Toot-toot.

Toot-toot.

TOOT-TOOT went the flute.

The music went spiky and sharp. In came the triangle with a loud and steady **ting-ting-ting-ting-ting**. Then the whole orchestra joined in with some big crunchy punchy paw-stomping chords.

The stage plunged into darkness and the red velvet curtain dropped to the floor to signal the end of the first act. The audience jumped out of their seats. They stamped their paws and roared their applause with howls of 'BRAVO!' echoing from every corner of the house.

Act 2: A large paw pushes Petrushka into his room and he falls to the floor.

He cries.

He loves the Ballerina but the Ballerina likes the Moor.

He curses the Magician for bringing him to life.

The Ballerina saunters in.

Petrushka leaps round the room.

The Ballerina is petrified and runs away.

A desperate Petrushka tears down the walls of his prison cell.

Stage Right

Stage Left

The curtain went up. Two clarinets clashed with rising-*arpeggio* tunes in two different keys. The piano took over with tinkling teary **tum-ti-tums**.

Then piercing trumpets belted out **Daa-da-da daaa. Daa-da-da daaa** accompanied by trembling, menacing chords on the piano.

The music shifted into something more lyrical. It didn't last long.

The crazy pounding piano came back: jum^{ping} and racing up and down the keys with alternating ⁰, **pizzicato** and **arco** strings underneath.

*Petrushka's lost it big time, Dotty thought, watching the action unfold.
Stop. You're scaring her. Stop. And now she's gone.*

The whole orchestra shimmered, shrilled, and swooped at full volume.

Furious woodwind screeched **Daa-da-da daaa**.

Act 3:

The Moor is in his room.

The Ballerina enters playing her toy trumpet.

The Moor wags his tail and they dance a waltz.

A jealous Petrushka pounds down the corridor.

He bursts in on them. Full of rage he fights the Moor.

But Petrushka's no match for the big angry hound who pushes him
out the door.

Stage Right

Stage Left

drumroll dddd dddd Ploddy clarinets accompanied by percussion,
and plucked strings **slowed everything back down**. A snappy
snare drum and a bouncy trumpet picked the pace back up. AND... A...

One two three, mm-BAP-BAP, mm-BAP-BAP.

'This isn't going to end well,' Dotty muttered.

In came the trumpets and horns

Daa-da-da daaa.

Then everyone started playing angry music, really loudly.

SCRUNCH.

SCRUNCH.

SCRUNCH.

Act 4: The dancers swirl about the square enjoying the last of the fair.

A piercing scream stops the party. Petrushka runs onto the stage.
He's being chased by the Moor who is being chased by the Ballerina.
The Moor gets out his sword. Petrushka jumps high in the air ...
then drops to the
floor
like a rag doll.

Stage Right

Stage Left

Dance after dance, the band played louder and louder. Faster and faster.

Dotty gasped when the Moor swished his plastic sword. She howled with
delight when Goneoffsky started Petrushka's last dance.

Leap after leap with splits in the air, he flew across the stage.

A tambourine rattled on the floor.

Two clarinets belted out a piercing

SHRIEK

that slowly faded away.

A dancer in an old-fashioned police collar steps into the spotlight.

He tiptoes

over to

Petrushka.

The expression on his face switches from confusion to sheer panic.

He blows his whistle.

PHWWWWWWWWHHT. PHWWWWWWWWHHT.

And barks, **'I THINK HE'S DEAD.'**

Stage Right

Stage Left

plip-plop plip-plop plip-plop went the bassoon.



Martha and the Jellybean Orchestra screeched to a halt.

Then ... nothing.

Goneoffsky lay motionless on the stage.

A few mutterings **r i p p l e d** through the stalls,

the dress circle and all the way up into the gallery.

The hairs on the back of Dotty's neck stood on end.

There was something horribly wrong.

CHAPTER TWO

Dotty shifted uneasily in her seat.

The audience was so quiet you could have heard a fart up in the gods.

The Moor dropped his plastic sword. 'HE'S BEEN SHOT. HELP! SOMEBODY, HELP!'

The dog next to Dotty poked her in the ribs. 'This isn't part of the show.' He flicked through his programme. 'Look it says here—'

'SHUT UP,' Dotty barked. She unclipped her iBone from her collar and glanced at the screen. The inbuilt snout ID technology on her phone scanned her nose and unlocked the device.

The reception was rubbish.



She held it in the air trying to get a signal.



'Come on.'



'Come on.'



Dotty leapt up and hit the speed-dial button for Bonesville Police Department. 'Nobody move. Stay where you are,' she howled, doing a 360-degree turn.

'It's a hold-up,' a dog barked from somewhere up in the dress circle.

'The shooter,' another yelped, pointing at Dotty.

'RUN! RUN FOR YOUR LIVES,' someone else howled.

The dog next to Dotty let out an almighty shriek. He clambered over the back of his seat with all the grace of a cardboard box in a gale and knocked Dotty's paw. Her phone slipped from her grasp and slid across the floor.

Panic spread through every level of the theatre. Dogs howled and shrieked. Big ones. Little ones. Long-nosed ones. Snub-nosed ones. Some

with long hair. Short hair. Curly hair. No hair. Maybe one hair. They **pushed** and **shoved** each other in a scramble to get out.

‘STOP!’ Dotty yelled. ‘I’m a cop.’ *Poops, poops, and more poops. I’m not wearing my police collar or ID tag.*

BRRR-BRRR. BRRR-BRRR.

Dotty crawled along the row. She growled a few bad words when some heavy paws stood on her. And said some more when a half-eaten tub of popcorn landed on her head.

BRRR-BRRR. BRRR-BRRR.

Her phone was wedged in between two seats.

She reached out and grabbed it.

‘What’s your emergency so I can direct your call?’ the operator said.

‘This is Detective Dotty de Bono. Badge ID 9663. We have a code 3. Babooshka Ballet.’

‘It’s a bit noisy. Can you repeat that?’

‘CODE 3.

BABOOSHKA BALLETT.

A DOG IS DOWN.

SEND EVERYONE.’

Going against the flow,

Dotty fought her way to the front of the stalls.

She ran along the side of the crash barrier and dashed up the

	stage!	
	the	
	to	●
	on	●
stairs		

The ballet dancers backed away, unsure of this strange looking hound with a brown-spotted white coat and popcorn kernels stuck to her head.

‘No-no-no. Don’t hurt us,’ squeaked the Ballerina, wearing a pink powder puff tutu.

‘I’m Detective Dotty de Bono,’ Dotty said. ‘I’ve got this. I’m an off-duty cop. An ambulance is on its way.’

She went over to Goneoffsky. There was no blood. No bullet wound. She crouched down next to him. Embedded in the dog’s white ruff collar was a thin black metal dart about ten centimetres long with a red plastic flight head.

Dotty reached forward and felt for a pulse. He had one. Just about. She stared out into the empty theatre. It was difficult to guess the direction where the dart could have been fired. The stalls and dress circle were unlikely. Too risky to take a shot without getting caught in the act. The gallery was probably too far to hit the target. But the boxes in the grand tier closest to the stage were a possibility.

‘We need to keep him warm until the medics arrive,’ Dotty said.

The Ballerina still teetering *en pointe* curtseyed and disappeared. She came back with a big soft yellow fluffy blanket. ‘Will this do?’

Dotty gently placed it on top of Goneoffsky.

‘Is he going to be OK?’ the Moor asked.

‘I don’t know,’ Dotty said. ‘Did anyone see what happened?’

Twenty heads shook.



‘I’M COMING!’

‘I’M COMING!’

An older dog strutted out from the wings on stage right into the glare of the lights. He had long black hair with shimmering strands of silver, deep brown eyes, and a Handel bar moustache. The scent of Paw de Lick Parfum tickled Dotty’s nose. Potpourri. Vanilla. Blancmange. The glamorous hound swished his way towards Dotty in his turquoise blue velvet flower collar bow tie.

‘Goneoffsky! I’m here—’ He stopped in his tracks. ‘Oh! My paws! What a pity and on the opening night.’

'And you are?' Dotty asked.

'I'm the *grrreat* Babooshka! Boss of the most important ballet company on the planet.'

There was a chuckle from the orchestra in the pit.

A tambourine rattled to the floor.

'It's true,' Babooshka shrieked, throwing his paws in the air.

'Babooshka, Babooshka, Babooshka-ya-ya!' a voice in the orchestra pit called out.

Another roar of laughter came from the band.

Babooshka flounced over to the edge of the stage and stared into the dark hole where Martha and the Jellybean Orchestra sat.

'Who said that?' he demanded.

One of the brass players blew a big loud raspberry into their trumpet.

Dotty checked Goneoffsky's pulse again.

Doggit! I'm not sure he's going to make it.

'Lock the place down now,' she barked, frantically looking round.

'You want me to close *my* theatre?' Babooshka said.

'Yes.'

'No.'

'Yes.'

'Whatever for?'

'The shooter could still be in here.'

'Nonsense, dahling. Everyone's gone, apart from us.'

'It's De-tec-tive Dotty de Bono to you. The Babooshka Ballet is now a crime scene. Nobody leaves until I say so.'

Babooshka twiddled his moustache and called out for Hank. A titchy-tiny dog, about thirty centimetres high with large prick ears and a short pointy muzzle, stepped forward. He was wearing a wireless headset and a black leather collar with **STAGE MANAGER** printed on it in large white letters.

He said, 'WOOF!'

'Dash it all,' Babooshka said, shaking his head. 'Hank, do it. Close the theatre.'

Hank wagged his stumpy tail and barked instructions into his mic.

'Martha,' Dotty called.

'Yeeeeees,' came a low and gravelly reply.

'I want you and the band to join the dancers.'

There were some growls and grunts followed by the sound of chairs moving. A few minutes later around forty of them, grumbling and shuffling their feet, like a pack of grumpy pups heading for detention came onto the stage. They were all dressed in black.

CHAPTER THREE

Dotty caught a whiff of a familiar scent: mandarin and thyme with a twist of lime. Her head turned to the source. An Alsatian wearing a perfectly pressed red police collar came striding towards her, his long black auburn-highlighted hair all neat-and-tidy like he'd just stepped off the set of a hairspray commercial. It was Floyd. Her partner.

'I brought as much backup as I could,' Floyd said.

Dotty nodded. Several beat cops appeared on cue. There were a few gasps from the dancers and the band on either side of the stage. Three medics joined the line-up. Dotty waved them forward and gave them space to tend to Goneoffsky. One checked his breathing while the other two secured the stretcher on a set of collapsible wheels. They gently lifted him on to the trolley and wheeled the dancer off stage.

'Steaks and bones! What happened?' Floyd said.

'GONEOFFSKY, HE'S OUR VICTIM. He was doing his final dance routine and someone fired a dart. He fell and never got up,' Dotty said.

'You think it was loaded with poison?' Floyd said.

'That's my guess,' Dotty replied.

'Hula-la-la! And I thought ballet was boring. But why would anyone want to shoot a dog who wears tights for a living?'

'No idea. But we're going to find out. The beat cops can take statements while we crack on with a sniff and search of the building.'

'Sounds like a plan,' Floyd said.

They went over to Babooshka. He was talking quietly to his stage manager. Dotty tapped him on the shoulder and introduced Floyd. He flashed his police ID tag. When the ballet boss saw Floyd, he grinned. And grinned. And grinned some more, showing all his whiter than white teeth.

'What a superwaggywoofilisticbowwowexpialidoggylicious example of a perfectly proportioned hound,' Babooshka said with a bow. 'You've got nice long limbs. Muscles too. Do you dance?'

'Err... No,' Floyd said. 'I can't dance. I've got four left paws.'

‘Impossible. I don’t believe it. Some just do it better than others.’ To prove his point, the ballet boss did several twirls on one foot, jumped high in the air, and landed perfectly on another. ‘See, it’s easy peasy when you know how.’

Dotty looked at him sharply. ‘Can we—’

‘Forgive me, detectives. All this excitement on the opening night has made me forget my manners.’

‘We’re going to need statements from everyone,’ Floyd barked. ‘That includes the dancers—’

‘Statements?’ Babooshka howled. ‘Is that necessary? It’s late and we have to reset the stage.’

‘Absolutely not,’ Dotty said firmly.

‘You can’t possibly think this was one of us,’ Babooshka said. He paced up and down. The next time he spoke his voice had gone up several pitches. ‘We’re family. We’re artists. We all love Goneoffsky, even if he is a big show off. That’s why he is such an excellent *danseur*. Well, maybe not anymore. But no worries. I have plenty more Petrushkas.’

Dotty wrinkled her nose. The pompous potpourri-vanilla-blancmange smelling hound was starting to get right up her snout. ‘We need to know where everyone was when Goneoffsky was shot,’ she snapped. ‘This is the only way of eliminating you and everyone else from being a suspect in an attempted murder case.’

‘Bow, wow, wow. Are you accusing me of being a *suspect*? No way,’ Babooshka said. ‘I-I-I watch the TV detective shows when I have the time. Magnum. Ben and Jerry—’

‘Ice cream?’ Floyd said, licking his lips.

‘Then you’ll know it’s important for us to act quickly,’ Dotty said.

‘All right, all right. You win. The great Babooshka is at your service,’ he replied, somewhat sulkily. ‘I shall make a speech.’

Babooshka flounced to the centre of the stage. He adjusted his bow tie. He cleared his throat. Then cleared it again. He flung his paws in the air. He held his head high and made the announcement. There were lots of growls

and groans. The beat cops got out their notebooks and started taking down everyone's names.

'Now what, detectives?' Babooshka asked.

'How about a little guided tour of your theatre?' Dotty replied.

'What good will that do?'

'This is not a request. It's an order.'

Babooshka lowered his tail. 'OK! Where would you like to start?'

Dotty pointed to the boxes in the grand tier.

'And then we can reset the stage?'

'No.'

'Yes.'

'No.'

'Hank, show the good detectives around. I have important ballet business to do,' Babooshka boomed. Then with a small bow followed by pirouettes and *tours en l'air*, he disappeared off stage right into the wings.

'The show must go on.'

CHAPTER FOUR

Hank led Dotty and Floyd down a grotty corridor with a grey cement floor and black block walls. On one side there were large trunks with **BABOOSHKA** **BALLET** stencilled in red letters on the lids. A few were open. Dotty recognised some of the costumes from the crowd scene. They followed Hank past racks of wigs hanging on wooden spaghetti stands, tables set with props, and down a corridor with doorways going off in every direction.

‘Holy macaroni! I need a map to get around this place,’ Floyd said.

‘It’s simple enough when you get used to the layout,’ Hank said. ‘Theatres are mirror images. One side is pretty much like the other.’

They wound up next to the lift.

There was a set of concrete steps on the right.

‘Quicker to walk,’ Hank said. ‘The clanky old lift takes ages. The crew use it for moving scenery about the place.’

On the way up, Dotty counted three sets of nine steps, turning through three sets of sixty degrees. At the top pinned to the door, there was a well-worn notice written in capital letters on cheap faded white paper.

ATTENTION!

YOU ARE ABOUT TO ENTER FRONT OF HOUSE

BE VERY QUIET DURING A SHOW

THE AUDIENCE PAY YOUR WAGES

ANYONE WHO DOES NOT LISTEN TO THE

GRRRRREAT BABOOSHKA WILL BE IN VERY

BIG TROUBLE POSSIBLY FIRED ON THE SPOT

DOOR CODE: 13061911

‘That’s not very good security,’ Floyd said.

‘It’s better than one, two, three, four,’ Hank said with a bit of a growl.

‘We’re not criminals. Theatres are usually safe, happy places to work.’

Dotty watched the stage manager as he punched the string of numbers into the keypad next to the doorframe. The light turned from red to green and the electronic locking system released the door.

‘How often does the code change?’ Floyd asked.

‘Not changed all the time I’ve been here,’ Hank replied.

‘And how long’s that?’ Dotty asked.

Hank looked like he was trying to work it out in his head. ‘Woo-woof! Since I was a wee pup. I started as a runner, helping wherever I was needed and then made my way up from there. After you, detectives.’

The door closed behind them.

‘At least the code’s not on stuck to the wall on this side of the theatre,’ Floyd said.

Hank grunted.



Dotty and Floyd found themselves in a grand corridor designed to impress the highest-paying ticket holders. Their paws sank into a deep-burgundy shaggy soft silk carpet. The ornate bronze mounted wall lights gave off a warm yellow glow showing off the shoulder height oak panelled walls, the expensive red velvet flocked wallpaper above, and a gold leaf ceiling.

‘What about security during a show?’ Floyd said.

‘Front of House, you can’t get in without a ticket. Backstage access for friends or family is through the stage door. And that’s only if your names on the list. You’d have to go through Big Sid. He’s always there.’

‘Suppose someone knew the key code, what’s to stop them from going backstage the way we’ve just come?’ Dotty said.

‘Nothing,’ Hank admitted. He gestured to a wooden door. ‘This is the house box. It gets used by the dancers, the players, or ballet guests if there’s no room to put them anywhere else. It never goes on sale.’

Floyd exchanged a glance with Dotty. ‘So, if a dancer is not in a scene they can come up here and watch the show?’

‘Yes, the same goes for the players in the band,’ Hank replied. ‘That’s why it’s called the house box.’

‘Got you,’ Floyd said.

They stepped inside.

‘There are eighteen boxes in the grand tier,’ Hank said. ‘They all seat twelve. In the stalls there are 390 seats. The dress circle holds 336 and the gallery 364.’

Floyd quickly did the maths. ‘So that’s 1,306 seats.’

Hank nodded. ‘We’re not as big as the theatres on Broadway. That’s why ballet tickets tend to cost more. Putting on new productions is expensive.’

Dotty sniffed her way down the two rows of six gilt chairs. The odours that shot up her nose were very different from the audience perfumes. The box smelled of sweaty bodies and pongy paws. ‘Hank, was anyone in here tonight?’

‘Couldn’t tell you,’ he said. ‘When the show starts, I’m too busy to think about anything else. My job is to give the dancers their cues, make sure the scene changes happen without any woofups, and raise and lower the curtains.’

‘What about Babooshka?’ Floyd said.

‘He barks orders from his production box.’

‘Where’s that?’

‘Back of the orchestra pit. Nothing can happen without his say-so.’

Dotty unclipped her iBone. ‘I’m going to get forensics to dust for prints.’

‘Do you really think one of us shot Goneoffsky?’ Hank asked.

‘We follow the evidence and see where it leads us,’ Floyd replied.

Hank sighed, ‘OK! I got you.’

‘That’s how *police* business works.’

‘It’s just... Never mind.’

Dotty leaned over the red velvet rail. ‘Bow wow! Bow wow! Can you see me up here?’

The beat cop interviewing the Magician squinted in Dotty’s direction.

‘We’re busy. Who wants to know?’

‘Detective Dotty de Bono.’

‘Sorry, Ma’am. No, I can’t see you.’

Dotty tried from a different position. 'What about now?'

'No,' barked the same beat cop.

'I can't either,' another cop howled.

Dotty stretched forward past the partition and peered into the box on her left. With the house lights down, each space was like its own private cubbyhole. Totally invisible to outsiders.

'Stay here,' Dotty said to Floyd and Hank.

She strode down the corridor into box number six. Her eyesight was pretty good. But all Dotty could make out when she looked at Floyd and Hank were their rough outlines. In box twelve, she wasn't entirely sure they were still there. And inside box number eighteen – directly opposite – everything was black. If the shooter shot Goneoffsky from any of the boxes on either side of the stage, the chances of them being seen would be slim to none.

CHAPTER FIVE

After a thorough front of house sniff and search, Dotty wanted to see Goneoffsky's dressing room. Hank ushered Dotty and Floyd through a door marked *Ballet Corps Only*. The corridor was cold and grim. There was paint peeling off the walls with green gunk growing in places it shouldn't. Compared to the glitz and glamour on show for ticket holders, backstage could definitely do with a makeover. It was dirty and disgusting. They trotted past the Prop Department, Hair & Makeup, Wardrobe, and Massage.

'You have masseurs for dancers?' Floyd asked. 'I'm in the wrong job.'

Hank glared at Floyd. 'Ballet is hard work. It's very competitive. Make a mistake and there's always someone waiting to take your place.'

They continued in silence until the corridor split in two.

'Which way?' Dotty asked.

'Go right,' Hank said. 'There's a pecking order. Stars get their own rooms. Left is for rank and file. They have to muddle along together.'

'What about Martha and the Jellybean Orchestra?' Dotty asked.

'That includes the band. Martha's always growling they need more space. But what can you do? This is an old building.'

A door slammed. Dotty, Floyd, and Hank turned around.

It was Babooshka. 'Did you find anything interesting?' he asked.

'That remains to be seen,' Dotty replied.



Babooshka escorted them to Goneoffsky's dressing room which was next to the prima ballerina. A gold card cut in the shape of a star with his name in black marker pen was stuck on the door. Dotty saw that someone had scribbled *plonker* underneath it in pencil.

'Someone's not a fan,' Floyd said.

'Goneoffsky insisted on having the biggest and best,' Babooshka said.

'Now I give it to the next Petrushka.'

The space inside was decent enough. Dotty calculated roughly twelve strides long by nine strides wide. There was a tatty green settee on a brown

swirly-patterned rug; an enormous floor to ceiling mirror for warm up exercises; and a metal clothes rack on wheels with spare pairs of Petrushka tights and white ruff collars. Sitting on top of the upright piano was an impressive bouquet of white Hydrangeas in a blue vase. The giant pompom blooms were the size of Dotty's head. The fruity fragrances shot up her nose.

'WOOF c H O O ...

WOOF c H O O ...' she spluttered.

'Bless you, detective,' Babooshka said. 'It's like a flower shop in here and very bad luck for a *danseur* before a show.'

'wwwwwwwoooooof CHOO!'

On the dressing-table there were an assortment of magazines from *Ballet Times* to *Dogue* and a collection of greeting cards. Dotty read the one with a clown holding a bunch of balloons on the front.

Dearest Goneoffsky,

May your grande jetés be high

And your pirouettes bellissimo!

Dance your paws off.

Sorry we're all on holiday and can't be there.

Will write soon.

love and licks

Mama xx

Dotty put it back and made a mental note to call Goneoffsky's Mama to let her know what had happened. She picked another card. Then another. Tucked away...

Behind all the rest...

was another card. It said simply:

MERDE

Dotty reached for it and this time read the message out loud.

MERDE, Goneoffsky, MERDE.

MERDE, Petrushka like you know you can.

Boneapart

‘Mur-der?’ Floyd barked. ‘That’s not very nice.’

‘Nonsense,’ Babooshka boomed. ‘MERDE! Not *murder*. And it’s a lovely message from a grumpy old frumpet. Poof. You don’t know much about the ballet. Everyone says *merde* to a *danseur* to wish them a good show before they go onstage. In theatre it’s *break a leg* and in opera *toi toi toi*. It’s very bad luck to say good luck.’

‘Noodles and poodles,’ Floyd said, scratching his head.

‘Who’s Boneapart?’ Dotty said.

‘Err... you don’t know?’ Babooshka asked, sounding surprised.

‘No! What does he do?’ Dotty said.

‘Boneapart owns half of theatreland.’

‘How can somebody *own* half of theatreland?’

‘The buildings, dahl ... detective. The buildings. Two families control all twenty-seven theatres on the Broadway strip. The Boneaparts and the Chewberts. You want to put on the next big blockbuster musical like *Barklahoma!* or *We Will Lick You*, then you have to go through one of them.’

‘Boneapart delivered the card himself,’ Hank said.

‘Uh-huh!’ Floyd said with a swish of his tail. ‘Go on.’

Hank gave Babooshka a quick sideways glance before continuing. 'He had a run in with Sid on stage door. Refused to sign in, said everyone knew who he was and stormed backstage in a tantrum.'

'He'd be hard to miss with his big fat head,' Babooshka said.

'Big fat everything,' Hank added.

'Does he come here a lot?' Dotty asked.

Babooshka howled with laughter. 'You're very funny, detective. Boneapart hates the ballet. The music puts him to sleep. He's only interested in catchy little ditties that'll make him the big money.'

'Then what's his connection to Goneoffsky?'

'You'd have to ask him.'

'Did he stay for the show?'

'No! I just said, *he hates the ballet.*'

Dotty's tail went up. 'Did anyone see him leave?'

'He pushed past me when I was on my way to give Goneoffsky his ten-minute curtain call,' Hank said. 'No idea after that. I had to break up a fight between Goneoffsky and Lickanova.'

'Who's Lickanova?' Floyd said.

'He's the underdog,' Babooshka said.

'The what?'

'Petrushka number two. The great Babooshka would be stupid not to have spare Petrushkas. What if Goneoffsky got hurt during a show?'

'When you put it like that—'

'Why were they fighting?' Dotty asked.

'Lickanova is jealous of Goneoffsky. Goneoffsky is jealous of Lickanova. It's no secret. They're big rivals,' Hank said.

Dotty and Floyd exchanged a look.

'They both want to be top *danseur* all of the time,' Babooshka said. 'It's exhausting. But Goneoffsky is a better Petrushka and Lickanova is a better Apollo. You know that Starvinsky piece? It's my favourite.'

Dotty and Floyd shook their heads.

‘Sorry!’ Hank held his paw to his headphones and spoke into his mic.

‘Stage door. Hank receiving you. Can you hear me?’

There was a pause followed by a crackle and a pop.

‘I’ll let them know. Hang on.’ He looked at Dotty and Floyd. ‘The press is going crazy outside. Sid wants to know what to do about them.’

Babooshka howled with delight. ‘**M**Agnifi**Q**u**E**, this is very good.’

‘No, it’s not,’ Dotty barked.

‘But, we’ll be front page news. We’ll sell more tickets.’

Babooshka

Jumped

up

and

down

on

the

spot,

showing

off

his

soubresaut.

‘The Babooshka Ballet will be even more famous,’ he howled.

‘Woof ...’ Floyd said with his head bobbing in time with the ballet boss. ‘I don’t think that’s the point.’

‘Hank, tell Sid to do nothing. The press can wait.’ Dotty pointed at Babooshka. ‘And **you** can take me to Lickanova.’

CHAPTER SIX

Dotty stood in the centre of the stage in front of the *corps de ballet* with her tail held high. The dancers had positioned themselves on the right of the stage and the band on the left. The two camps were still giving their statements to the beat cops.

‘Bow wow wow,’ Dotty barked. ‘Hopefully, this won’t take much longer and then you can all go home.’ There were a few whoop-whoops from the band. ‘Who is Lickanova?’

‘That would be me,’ boomed a deep, silky baritone voice. A long-limbed canine with a close-cropped curly white coat stepped forward. He was at least twenty centimetres taller than Dotty and quite a bit bigger than Floyd.

Ted Barker blue suede collar. He’s got style. Then Dotty clocked the knitted leg warmers! *You’ve got to be kidding me. They went out of fashion in the—* Dotty pushed her thoughts aside and said, ‘Where were you when Goneoffsky was shot?’

‘Watching his death dance in the wings,’ he said.

‘I didn’t see you,’ Hank said.

‘Nor me,’ the Magician said.

‘You must both be mistaken,’ Lickanova replied.

There were a few murmurs from the ballet dancers.

‘You were seen fighting with Goneoffsky before the show,’ Dotty said.

Lickanova laughed. ‘That... That was just a bit of playful banter so he would dance *Petrushka* like it should be danced.’

‘Goneoffsky argues with everyone over the slightest thing,’ the Ballerina said with a small curtsey.

‘WOOF! WOOF!’ chorused the other dancers.

‘Goneoffsky definitely thought he was the sp^eCial one,’ the Moor said. ‘He was always the first to get his massage.’

‘IT’S NOT FAIR,’ the Magician barked. ‘I want to make a complaint. We should take it in turns.’

Lickanova pointed at Martha and the Jellybean Orchestra. 'Goneoffsky had a go at them during the dress rehearsal for not watching what was happening onstage and doing their own thing.'

'Tell-tale, Lickanova. No surprise there,' Martha growled and showed her teeth.

'But it's true,' Lickanova replied.

'It's not our fault you lot can't count in time or keep up with Starvinsky's masterpiece,' Martha barked back.

Toot. Toot. Toot went the flute.

This was followed by **Tweedle dum Tweedle dee** from the clarinets. The trumpet player butted in with a very loud **WAH-WAH.**

'The flute was three notes ahead when the Magician brought the puppets to life,' Babooshka howled.

'We can't play extra notes when we feel like it. Starvinsky would turn in his grave,' Martha said. 'He was a stickler for having his music played like a metronome. If we go **daa-da-da daaa, daa-da-da daaa** you don't go **plop ploppety plop**. That's how it goes.'

'You're all rubbish,' Babooshka snapped. 'Always playing out of tune.'

Martha banged her stick several times on the floor. 'You're lucky we play any notes at all. We've not been paid so you can **toot, tooooooooooodle-oo** as much as you want. Without us there'd be no show.'

'What about us?' a few of the ballet dancers muttered.

'The great Babooshka promises all of you ... I will get your bonios. Soon.'

'And I will be the next Petrushka,' Lickanova said, launching into several barrel roll turns. 'The best to ever grace this stage.'

'We shall see about that last bit,' Babooshka said.

'Yes, let's see if your next Petrushka can do better,' Martha said, stomping across the stage over to him.

Dotty's nose twitched. She caught a strong base note of bergamutt with undertones of oakmoss. Sniff. Sniff. There was also lavender in the middle and a hint of orange on top.

Martha snarled and pushed her face up close to Babooshka. 'I can't

believe it took a dart to get Goneoffsky to die on the right beat.'

'And next time let's see if you can stick with the dancers for a change,' Babooshka barked.

'Hold up!' Dotty howled. 'The ballet's closed until further notice.'

Babooshka turned to Dotty. 'Nonsense, I have a new Petrushka. We've sold tickets. The show *will* go on.'

'No way,' Dotty said.

'I've got friends in high places, detective. The Mayor has given his go ahead and he's coming to the ballet tomorrow night. Haaaaaa! Ha! I win.'

Dotty bit her tongue and counted to three. She craned her neck back and looked up into the blackened interior above. She could just about make out a network of pipes and platforms.

'What's up there?' Dotty barked.

'The fly tower,' Hank said. 'That's where we roll drop a new scene faster than you can wag your tail. Some of our most famous stage curtains are stored up there.'

A speck of dust fell into Dotty's eye. 'Get me up there, now!' she barked.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Dotty, Floyd, Hank, and Babooshka waited for the backstage lift. Dotty growled and pushed the button, again and again. There was a faint sound of metal on metal: kling-kling-kling klang.

‘Here it comes,’ Hank said. ‘I told you it was slow.’

The sound grew louder and louder.

KLING-KLING-KLING

KLANG KLANG.

KLANG. The grey lift doors slid open and they stepped inside.

‘What floor?’ Dotty barked.

‘Nine,’ Hank said.

Dotty hit the button for the ninth floor. **DING!** The doors closed and slowly up, up, into the fly they went. **DONG! Doors Opening.** At first all Dotty could see was the blackness while her nose was attacked by millions of stinky stale and unpleasant smells from A-Z. It took a few seconds for her eyes to adjust. The space above the stage was like another world. There were rows of tiered black pipes stretching the width of the fly tower and five narrow black mesh walkways.

‘There’s thirty numbered pipes,’ Hank said. ‘Each one holds a rolled-up canvas with a different backdrop inside. If we need a woodland scene, I tell the fly dogs to release the relevant pipe and the canvas slams down.’

‘Clever, no?’ Babooshka said.

‘Anyone working up here tonight?’ Floyd said.

‘We don’t need fly dogs for *Petrushka*,’ Hank said. ‘Everything happens on a revolving stage. It works a little bit like a record on a turntable. There’s a section for the two scenes at the fair, one for *Petrushka*’s room, and one for the Moor.’

‘Stay where you are,’ Dotty said to Babooshka and Hank. ‘Floyd, let’s take the middle walkway.’

Dotty stepped on to the narrow metal platform. One step. Two steps. Three steps. Four. She couldn’t help herself. She looked down. Then froze.

Her paws wobbled. Heights terrified her. Through the diamond patterned mesh she could see the stage below. Dotty was tempted to grab hold of the barrier. She resisted the urge.

Stay focused. Don't mess up. If the shooter fired the dart from the fly, there may be prints, Dotty told herself.

DOORS CLOSING. LIFT GOING DOWN.

'That's got to be at least a twenty metre drop,' Floyd said.

'You're not helping,' Dotty said. She kept moving forward. Slowly but surely. Floyd followed behind, talking softly to Dotty with encouraging words.

'Easy does it. Head up,' he said. 'Cor blimey! It's hot up here.'

Dotty kept going until she was standing above the centre of the stage. She took a deep breath and looked over the edge of the rail. 'This is pretty much where Goneoffsky got shot.' She bent down. Towards the bottom of the barrier she saw a hole about five centimetres wide in the wire mesh.

Floyd peered over her head. 'Someone's cut that—'

'To steady the dart gun or get a better angle,' Dotty said.

'That makes sense. But you'd still have to be pretty good to hit a moving target from here. Hey! Dotty! What's this?' Floyd pointed to tiny piece of black fabric.

Dotty pushed her nose up close to the hole, making sure not to touch anything. 'I smell blood. Our shooter nicked themselves.'

'I reckon they snuck up here before the show,' Floyd said.

'I think you're right,' Dotty said. 'No one would've seen or heard anything from the stage. But why did our shooter wait until the fourth act to take Goneoffsky out?'

'Maybe they were enjoying the dancing,' Floyd suggested.

'HMMMMMMMM,' Dotty replied. She turned to Floyd and lowered her voice. 'One thing's for sure, the shooter knows this place inside out.'



In single file, Dotty and Floyd made their way back along the platform to Babooshka and Hank.

'I want a list of everyone who's been backstage today,' Dotty told them.

‘The great Babooshka will get Sid to sort it. Hank, tell Sid. Now can we send my troupe home and re-set the stage? We have work to do. The Mayor must not be disappointed.’

‘If everyone’s given their statements that’s fine,’ Dotty said.

DONG! DOORS OPENING.

Two forensic crime scene officers stepped out dragging trolley cases. Doc Martin and his assistant Keith put on their white paper onesie protective suits and full-head masks with a lot of puffing and panting. Dotty quickly filled them in on what she wanted them to do. The whole walkway had to be photographed and dusted for evidence.

She hoped they’d strike lucky with some decent paw prints to run through APIS. The Automated Pawprint Identification System held the names of every dog who’d been caught breaking the law. It was a long stretch, but Dotty was relying on their shooter having a criminal past. For good measure, she asked the crime scene officers once they’d finished in the fly to check for prints in the lift and the house box in the grand tier.

BRRR-BRRR. BRRR-BRRR. BRRR-BRRR.

Dotty tapped the ‘answer’ button on her phone. ‘Captain Copland. I was going to call you.’ She cocked her head and listened. Then barked: ‘Boss, we can’t close the ballet— We tried— The Mayor—

He gave the green light for the show to go on. Our paws are tied.’

CHAPTER EIGHT

Huff. **Puff.** **Puff.**
Huff. **Huff.** **Huff.**

‘Big Sid, where are you? It’s the police,’ Dotty barked.

Two small black triangular ears appeared above the counter. Then a big flat forehead with sunken almond-shaped eyes and a large snub nose.

‘Howdy, detectives. I was doing my push-ups. Need to keep fit in this job. I do thirty, every hour on the dot.’

Dotty glanced at the clock on the wall. It was 21:01.

Sid clambered onto the high-backed chair behind the security shelf and rested his chunky paws on the top. He was wearing what looked like a homemade pink crocheted collar with matching leg and arm bands. He had big, deep wrinkly folds all over his face. Wrinkles. Wrinkles everywhere. Wrinkly shoulders. Wrinkly legs. Wrinkly tail, and when he opened his mouth he had a blue-black tongue and a goofy grin. But at least he had all his own teeth.

That’s definitely fake Millionhair perfume, Dotty thought then asked, ‘How often do you leave your post?’

‘Never-never-never,’ Sid said. ‘The stage door is my domain from midday to midnight. Nothing gets past without me knowing about it.’

‘Must be great meeting all the stars,’ Floyd said.

‘Ohhhhhh! Yes. The place is always bustling. Day and night. I’ve got the dancers, the orchestra, the make-up artists, the costume and set designers, coming and going. In. Out. In. **O**ut. All the time. And their friends, their family. Then there’s the flower deliveries, the electricians, the backstage tours.’

‘Does everyone sign in?’ Dotty asked.

‘The dancers and the band are supposed to when they arrive and when they leave. I try my best to get everyone else to squiggle in my book. Most do but some think they’re too important to bother.’

‘We heard about Boneapart,’ Floyd said.

‘He’s the worst. Marching in here like he owns the place. If you ask me, he’s up to no good. I’ve worked too many doors not to get a whiff of something rotten when I see it. Hold on. I’ve got something for you.’

Sid slid down his chair and disappeared out of sight into the little room behind his post. ‘Now where did I put that thing? Nope, it’s not there. Not there either.’

CRASH. BANG. **‘AWCHHHH.’**

‘Are you all right,’ Floyd barked.

‘Yeah! Woof. Yeah! Just trying to—’

Dotty cocked her head and peered at the large leather-bound book which was lying open. Each page was close-ruled and divided into four columns. One for the date, the next for names, followed by time in and time out. She picked up the pencil on a string leash attached to the book. Under the last entry which was not much more than a wiggly scribble she wrote her name. Instead of entering a time she put her phone number.

‘Phew!’ Sid puffed. ‘I thought I’d lost it then. Hank asked me to make a copy of everyone who’d signed in today.’

‘Thanks,’ Dotty said and tucked the folded piece of paper in the pouch on her collar. ‘Did anything unusual happen before the show?’

‘You mean like someone waltzing in carrying a dart gun?’

‘Did they?’ Floyd said.

‘Of course not. They’d have to go by me. Before this dreadful attack on Goneoffsky it was a typical day at the ballet.’

‘And you’re sure no one sneaked past you?’ Dotty said.

Sid blinked then nodded. Dotty decided to go easy on him. Sid had given up some important pieces of information even if he wasn’t paying attention doing his push-ups. If the shooter came through the stage door, he must be known to the ballet. And if they knew Sid’s routine ... it would be easy to get past without being spotted.

‘Thank you, Sid. If you remember anything else give me a call,’ Dotty said.

Sid shrugged. ‘I don’t know your number.’

Dotty flung open the stage door. ‘It’s in the book.’

CHAPTER NINE

Outside, the pupperazzi snapped pics on their cameras and a pack of reporters fired questions at Dotty and Floyd.

‘How’s Goneoffsky?’

‘Where’ve they taken him?’

‘Is he alive?’

‘When’s the press statement?’

‘Is Lickanova the new Petrushka?’

‘Will tomorrow’s performance go ahead?’

Dotty scanned the faces in the crowd. She was looking for Scarlett, the pain-in-the-bottom crime reporter from *The Daily Chews*. When they were pups, Scarlett had been a couple of classes ahead of Dotty in Little Tails Nursery and made her life a misery. Nothing had changed. But the cranky Chihuahua wasn’t all bad. Once upon a time, Scarlett had shown mercy when it was a life or death situation and given Dotty information to help crack a case, in return ... for an exclusive. That was always the pay back.

That’s odd. Scarlett’s normally on the ball if something’s going down.

A few beats later, Dotty realised this lot were the newspaper back enders. The arty press. The reviewers and photographers that were sent to cover the first night of the ballet. It was the stuff hardly anybody read. She recognised one or two faces from their pictures next to their columns. The hard-core front-page headline mob would soon be hot on their tails, meaning the frenzy would only get worse.

Dotty and Floyd waved the reporters away and made their way round to the front of the building. The packs in the piazza were smaller but there was still plenty of buzz about the place with hounds enjoying the last of the funfair.

‘My bike’s on the other side of the square,’ Dotty said. ‘Piccolo’s should still be open. Fancy a bite? We haven’t seen Antonio in ages.’

Floyd wagged his tail and licked his lips. ‘Yum ^d yum yum. I’m starving.’

Dotty snorted. 'You're always... What the...'

She started to run. 'HEY! YOU!

What you doing?

Get off my bike.'

A dog wearing a black jumpsuit jumped off Dotty's Dogatti and scarpered into the crowd.

'Probably some chancer,' Floyd said when he caught up with her.

'**Did you get a good look at that hound?**' she said, sniffing her bike up and down. 'We should go after them.'

'Dotty! We've got enough trouble coming our way without chasing after more.' Floyd hopped on the back of the bike. He checked out his hair and teeth in the wing mirror. 'Come on. It's late.'

'Grrr... Whatever.' Dotty leapt on the front and activated the engine. The superbike growled to life.

VROOM

VROOM

'Hold on,' Dotty said and pawed the accelerator towards her.

VROOOOM

Piccolo's

was

a

short

ride

in

a

fast

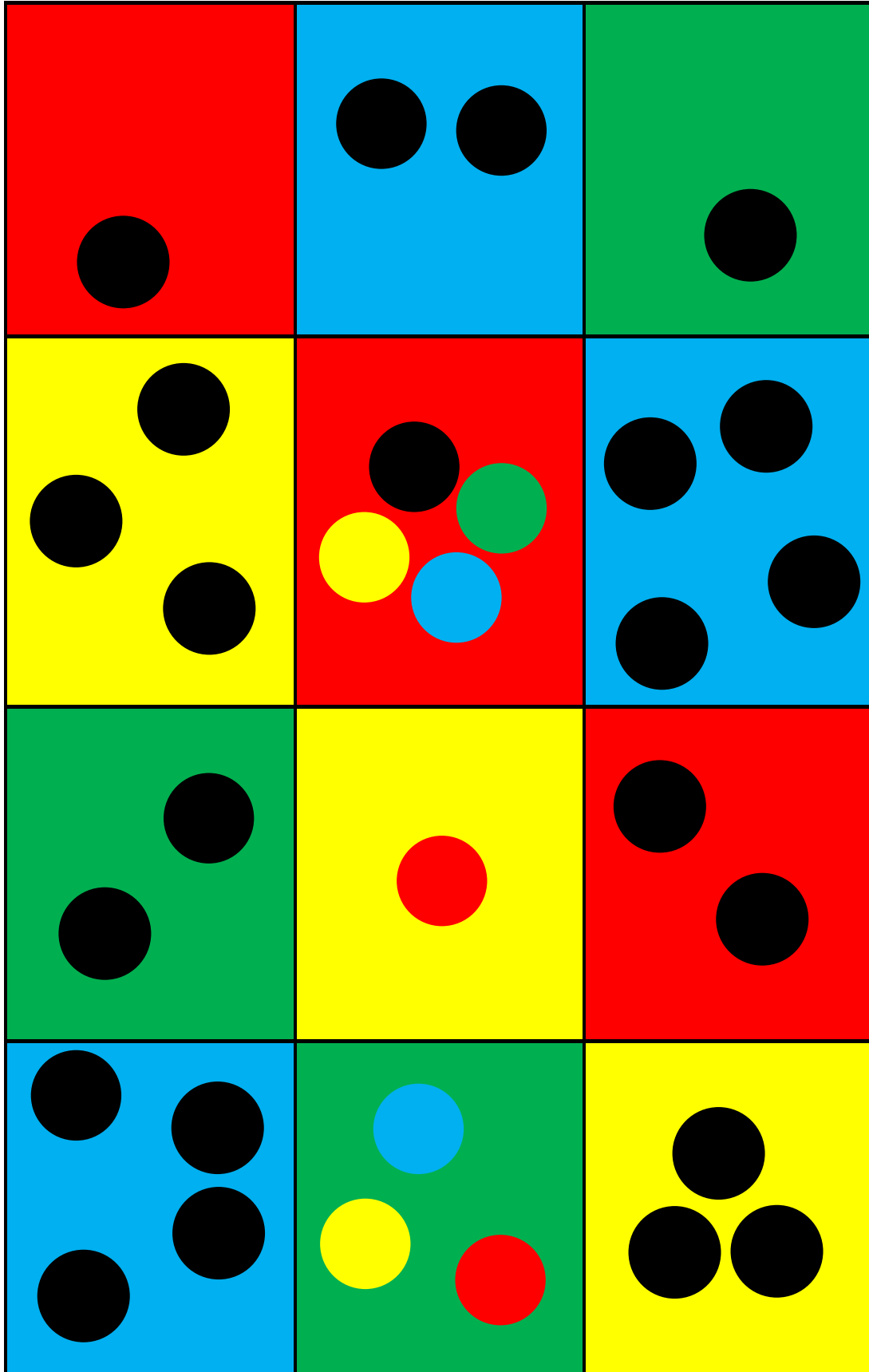
machine.

162 beats per minute or 324 tail wags per minute.

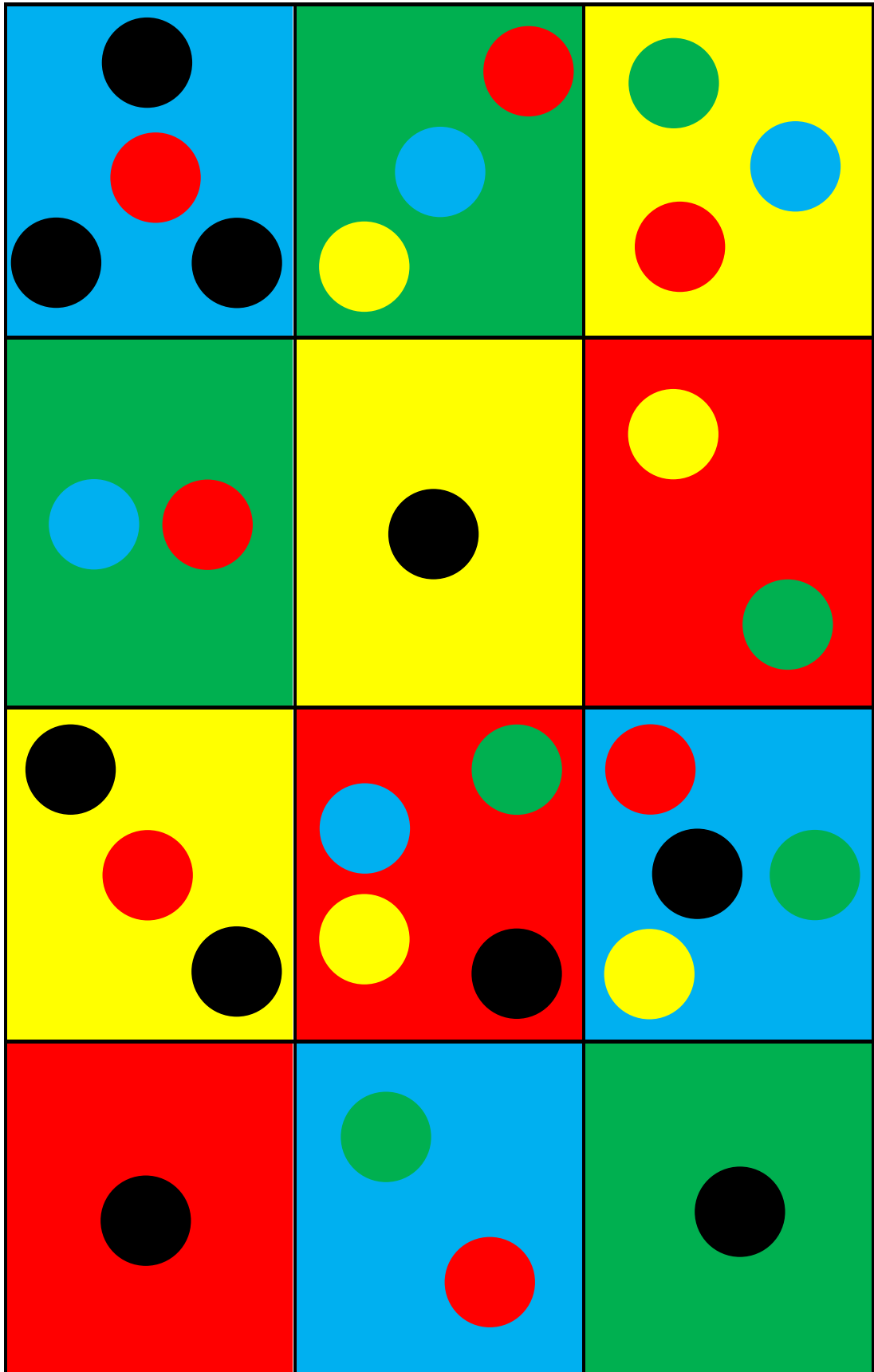
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vrooom



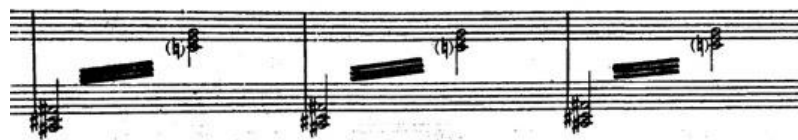
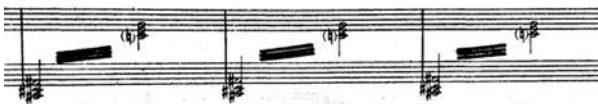
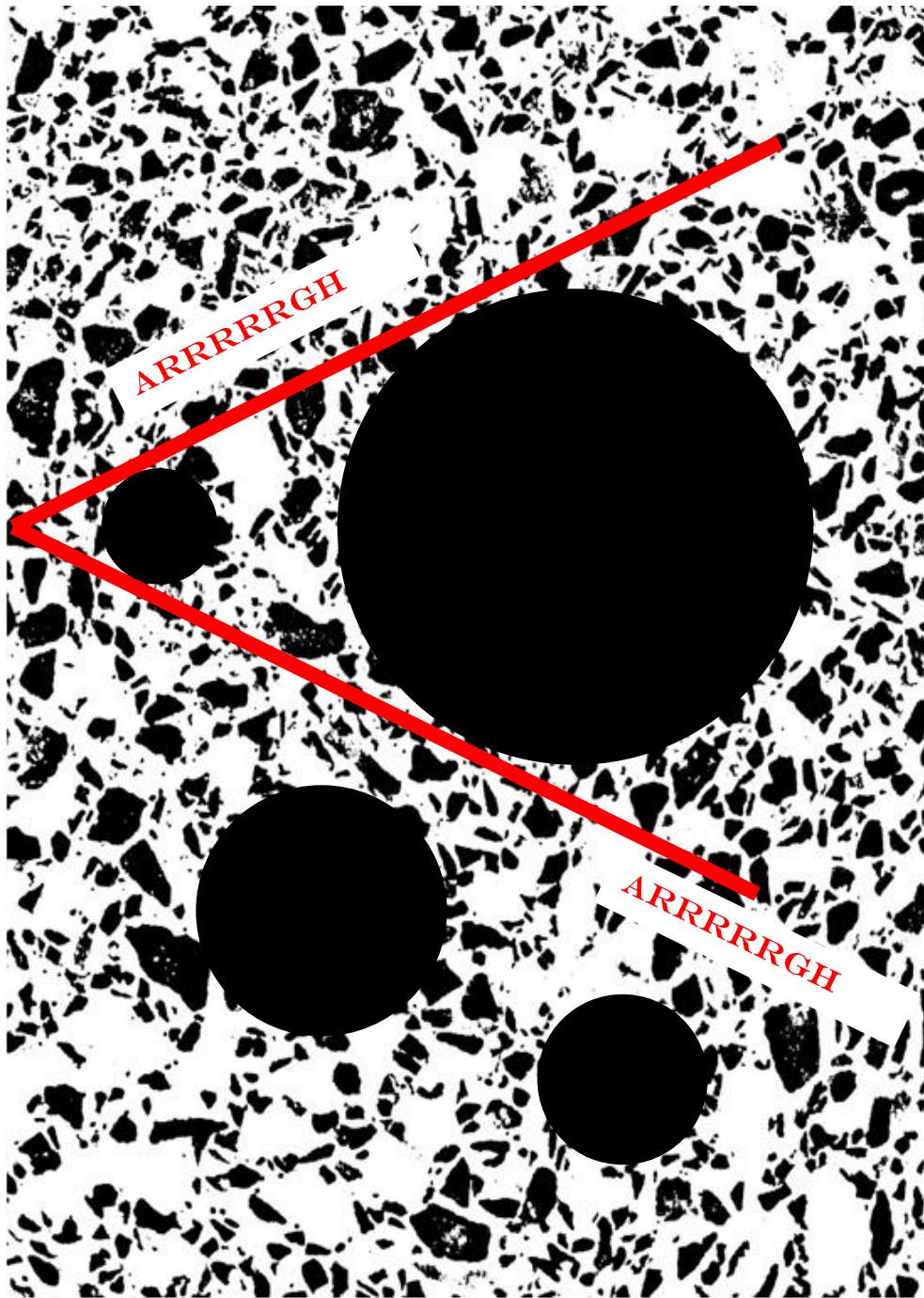
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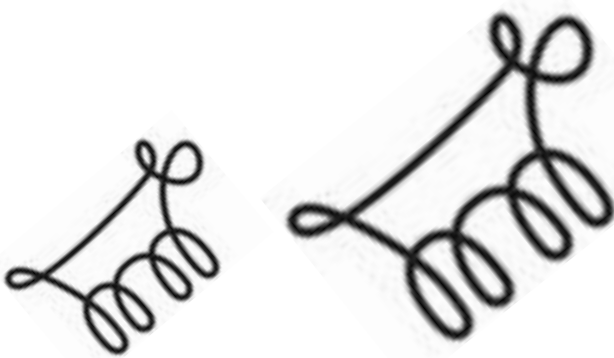
espress.

The image displays a page of musical notation with three staves. The top staff contains two black notes on the bottom line and two blue notes on the second line. The middle staff contains two black notes on the bottom line and two blue notes on the second line. The bottom staff contains two black notes on the bottom line and two blue notes on the second line. A red circle is positioned below the first staff, and another red circle is below the third staff. A large, faint graphic of a hand playing a piano is visible in the background, with a red triangle pointing towards the center of the page. Other abstract shapes include black circles of various sizes, a red triangle, a blue triangle, a yellow triangle, and a green triangle.

volante

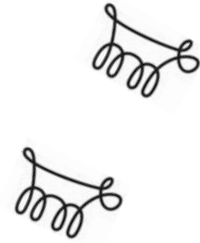


voltio subito



For a split-second time stood still.

Then panic kicked in.



Air-swimming doggy style Dotty and Floyd flew a good nine metres ... and landed slap bang in the water fountain in front of Piccolo's.

Dotty wasn't sure if she was dead or alive. She suspected most likely dead, the white twinkling lights in front of her eyes were so bright. Her ears whined and popped as she spluttered to the surface. Gulping and gasping. Coughing up water. A curtain of cold water pounded her head like a giant tap on full blast. Dotty slammed her paw on the surface of the water.

Floyd groaned.

Dotty paddled over to him.

Splosh

Splish Splosh

Splash Splish

Splash

Splash

Splish Splash

Splosh Splish

Splosh

'Bangers and mashups. Where am I?' Floyd said.

'Sipping barkaritas in a hot tub on the beach in Wagaluf,' Dotty said.

'That sounds nice.'

'Floyd! We're in the fountain.'

'My head. My hair. My lovely hair. What happened?'

'The accelerator jammed. I had no choice—' An image flashed through Dotty's mind. 'Didn't you see the dog with the waffle cart? I had to swerve to miss him.'

She turned to her Dogatti and sighed. The front forks were bent and the back tyre was still spinning. Several well-dressed glitterati dogs in the restaurant had come out to see what was going on.

‘Mamma Mia! Dotty! Floyd! Is that you? Are you ok?’ barked a dog with ginger-biscuit-brown hair that fell to the ground in loose ringlets.

‘Hey, Antonio, nice night for a dip,’ Dotty said.

‘That’s one of your most dramatic entrances,’ he replied. ‘Let me guess. You were desperate for my ligeti and meatballs.’

‘Something like that.’

Antonio laughed. Dotty waded over to her old friend. He offered Dotty his paw and pulled her out of the fountain. ‘Pedro, turn the engine off and take the bike round the back,’ Antonio said to a smartly dressed waiter. ‘Everyone else inside. There’s nothing to see.’

Dotty shook herself dry. ‘Thank you,’ she said.

‘You want me to call anybody?’ he said.

‘We’re fine. I’m sorry, I didn’t mean to scare your diners.’

‘Forget it. It’ll be tomorrow’s tittle-tattle.’

Dotty and Antonio sauntered into the restaurant wagging their tails in time.

‘Don’t mind me,’ Floyd barked. ‘It’s all right for you and your short fine hair. Mine’s ruined and I only got a wash and blow dry today.’

‘There’s probably nasty flesh-eating bacteria in that water,’ Dotty barked.

‘Eeeeeeeeeeeeeek.’ **Splish. Splash. Splosh.** Floyd quickly clambered out of the fountain. He tried his best to restyle his hair into some sort of shape and joined Dotty in one of the leather-clad window booths.

Antonio trotted over with two bottles of Snuffles beer on the house and took their order. Dotty and Floyd knew the menu off by heart and opted for the Vivaldi wood-fired four seasons pizza to share, along with two portions of ligeti and meatballs. When Antonio was gone Dotty leaned across the table.

‘Are you thinking what I’m thinking?’ she said.

‘What ... that someone messed with your bike...?’ Floyd said.

Dotty took a slurp of her Snuffles. Her mind was doing little dances trying to think of other explanations.

Pedro delivered their food and topped up their drinks.

Dotty licked her lips and her stomach rumbled. 'Bone appetite,' she said, taking a slice of cheesy pizza. Nom. Nom. Nom. 'You've got to admit. It's strange timing. Babooshka's star ballet dancer gets shot on the opening night of *Petrushka* and we're nearly bumped off before we've really started the investigation?'

'There's no way the shooter would have known an off-duty cop was going to be in the audience and got there on a posh bike,' Floyd said, chewing a meatball. 'It was probably some pup trying it for size and showing off to their mates.'

Dotty finished her Snuffles and belched. 'Yes, maybe you're right.'

Antonio came over to ask how they were doing.

'Scrumdiddly yummmmtious,' Floyd said with his mouth full.

'Bellissimo! Best meatballs in Bonesville,' Dotty barked. 'Are you sure you won't give me the recipe?'

'The answer, like every time you ask is no-no-no-no. What about a tasty dessert instead?'

Dotty and Floyd shook their heads.

'Just the bill,' Dotty said.

Antonio swished his tail and Pedro trotted over with the scanner machine. Dotty put her right front paw on top. The device read her microchip implant and flashed green to confirm payment had been made. After numerous air-licks and bottom sniffs all round Dotty promised she'd arrange for her bike to be picked up.

'Woof-woof.' Floyd nudged Dotty and pointed to the window. 'Isn't that Martha, the conductor, outside? I wonder where she's going?'

'There's only one way to find out,' Dotty said, heading towards the door.

'What? Now? You're crazy.'

'Yes, now, before we lose her.'

PART TWO: CHAPTER TEN

Bonesville was famous for its colourful nightlife. It had three established party zones. Uptown was the playground for the A-listers and wannabe celebrities who liked to hang out in fancy lounges. Midtown was known for racing, bingo, and all-night waffle houses popular with older locals and tourists. And then there was Downtown. This neighbourhood attracted pupsters and the curious who wanted something a bit different. It had a more edgy feel. An anything goes vibe with themed bars to suit every taste – the more bizarre the better – and underground pop-up pads that caused a buzz, only to disappear in a wag of a tail.

Dotty stood outside Piccolo's. The sky had turned from blue to black, bringing with it a blanket of twinkling orange stars and a lopsided yellow moon. Even though it was gone midnight there were plenty of happy smiley dogs still larking about. She sniffed. Hundreds of smells shot up her nose. She sniffed again searching for Martha's scent. Bergamutt. Sniff. Oakmoss. Lavender. Sniff-sniff. A little orange. With her nose latched on, she and Floyd followed the conductor through Midtown as she headed East. The packs with money to burn got smaller the closer they got to Downtown. They were replaced by strays with no homes to go to huddled in doorways. A street dog howled a bad version of 'Running Up That Hill'. Dotty dropped a few bonios in his bowl and they turned off the main drag.

The buildings here were tall and dark. The glow from neon signs hanging above made it easier for Dotty and Floyd to keep Martha in their sights. Not that Dotty needed it. Her nose skills were pretty good and she had the Golden Nose Award from the Police Academy to prove it. There was no chance she was going to lose track of the no-nonsense conductor.

At the end of the next block Martha took a right onto 33rd Street. She was going faster now. She glanced both ways and crossed the road. Part way down she turned left into a side street. She led Dotty and Floyd through a maze of deserted cobbled alleyways.

'What's she up to?' Floyd whispered.

‘No idea,’ Dotty said.

And then Martha vanished, swallowed up by the darkness. Dotty sniffed in all directions. Martha’s scent was everywhere, which added to the confusion. Dotty pointed to a set of stone steps running down to a lower level. The archway would have been easy to miss, it was so narrow. She peeked around the corner and signalled to Floyd to keep close to the wall. They shuffled along then took cover in the mouth of a doorway.

Martha was outside a rundown building with a faded red-and-white front. Sandwiched between a tattoo and piercing parlour, and a collar repair shop, the windows were blacked out and covered with thick bars. The only light came from a white neon sign in a backlit red box that flickered above the red wooden door.

Mambow's

Neither Dotty nor Floyd noticed a small dog on the other side of the street, watching them.

Martha pulled open the door.

‘Shall we check it out?’ Floyd said.

‘Give her time to settle, then we’ll go in,’ Dotty said.

They waited. Not for long.

Thirty slow tail wags at the most and then they made their move.

The inside of Mambow’s was nothing like the grotty exterior. The entrance hall was jaw-droppingly beautiful. The floor, the walls, and the ceiling were covered in a grid of tiny green, blue, red, pink, and orange square tiles. Expertly laid in neat straight lines.

They cleared the corridor and found themselves in a large lounge bar with an impressive selection of colourful bottles on mirrored shelves. The floor continued with the same tiled theme. The walls were now a soft lilac, lit only by dim orange lights. The ceiling was made to look like a pale blue sky that went on forever with little fluffy pink clouds on a sunny summer’s day.

In front of the bar there were rows of square tables. Dotty calculated there must be fifty plus dogs, most of them sitting two to a table, facing each other. There was no music. Only the sound of clicks, rattles, and growls. The click-

click-click clicks came from paws tapping on metal boxes, starting and stopping a clock timer, which were mixed with the sounds of thousands of rattling plastic tiles being drawn at random from brown suede pouch bags.

Dotty tried not to howl with laughter when she realised where they were. They'd walked into a Scrabble bar. Dotty had played the game as a pup. But in their family home, Scrabble had definitely not been a leisurely pastime on a rainy afternoon or any afternoon. The game had caused more fights and squabbles between her brothers and sisters than anything else.

There were claims of cheating. The most frequent being:

1. Peeking in the bag to draw the best letters – that was usually Polly or Molly.
2. Playing phony 'werds' was Ziggy's speciality. Being the eldest, he got away with it by claiming he knew more words than anyone else.
3. Picking extra tiles and switching letters when no one was looking – always Iggy.

One time Dotty caught Wally, her youngest sibling hiding the two blank power tiles – the most valuable because they could be used to represent any letter – along with the J, Q, X, and Z so there were only 94 tiles rather than the standard 100 in the bag. In the end the game board got chewed and scratched; too many tiles went missing and eventually, the whole thing was banished by her Ma to the back of the cupboard. Dotty never played again.

A hostess with orange hair clipped to a number-two, wearing an elasticated red-and-white striped tie-collar stood behind a clear glass podium. She smiled, showing her chequered red-and-white teeth and a pierced tongue. Dotty sniffed and sneezed. The hostess smelled of rhubarb and ginger spice.

'WOOF! Have you booked a scrabble table or are you here for the community jigsaw time trial?' she said.

'JIGSAW TIME TRIAL?' Floyd barked like he couldn't quite believe what he was hearing and sounding pretty excited by the idea.

‘That’s upstairs,’ the hostess said. ‘They’re doing an epic 12,000-piecer. Hobark’s *The Fool’s Progress*.’

‘How long will that take?’

‘On the box it said three to five years.’

‘What?’ That can’t—’

Dotty stepped on Floyd’s paw. ‘Downstairs is pretty busy.’

‘The warm up games for the annual Bonesville’s Scrabble Showdown are always popular,’ the hostess replied. ‘Would you like to register? It’s simple to do and everyone has such a good time.’

‘Scrabble’s only fun until someone loses an i,’ Dotty said. ‘We’re looking for someone.’

‘Who’s that?’

‘Martha.’

‘On a games night?’

‘It’s a surprise,’ Floyd said.

‘There she is.’ Dotty pointed at a table off to the left near the south wall, towards the back of the room. Martha was sitting with her back to them but it was unmistakably the conductor of the Jellybean Orchestra. She was the only dog dressed in black.

‘Hang on,’ the hostess said.

‘We might even play a round,’ Floyd said.

Dotty glared at him. There was no way she was going to be playing Scrabble with anyone. Although Dotty couldn’t help reminding herself of a few Q words she’d memorised as a pup.

Qwerty, qwertys, qwerties, qintarka, qabalist.

The hostess checked the flat-screen tablet on the podium. ‘Martha’s challenger’s not here. I suppose it would be ok to interrupt. I can show you to her table.’

‘I think we can manage,’ Dotty said. Not bothering to wait for a reply, she trotted down the middle line of tables with Floyd trailing two steps behind.

Martha had her head down studying seven letters on her rack.

P	T	U	S	E	S	C
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

'That makes suspect,' Dotty said.

'Is that why you've been following me, detectives?' Martha said.

'We were in the neighbourhood,' Dotty said.

'I think you're pulling my tail and telling me tales!'

Dotty shrugged. 'I wouldn't have put you down as a tile mover.'

'Why ever not?' Martha pursed her lips. 'Starvinsky was the hippest composer who ever lived. He was also a big Scrabble fan. That's probably why he had a preference for the number seven. I average thirty points with every go and I'm ranked seventh in Bonesville.'

'How many points for bowwows?' Floyd asked.

'If it's a bingo word and I use all seven letters I'd get an extra 50 points on top of the normal word score,' Martha said. 'There aren't many of them in a game. But I doubt you're here to talk about my Scrabble tactics.'

Dotty took the seat opposite Martha and Floyd pulled up another pew. 'That was quite an exchange onstage between you and Babooshka. Is there a reason why the two of you don't get along?'

'There's always tension at the start of a new season,' Martha said. 'And a bit of heartfelt rivalry gets the best out of everyone. Reputations depend on performances going well and getting good reviews.'

'That doesn't bode well for *Petrunka*,' Floyd said.

'You mean *Petrushka*?' Martha said.

'Yes, the ballet,' Floyd said.

'Quite the opposite,' Martha said. 'Babooshka will be front page news like the good old days. We'll sell loads of tickets and then ... hopefully we'll all get paid.'

'Is Babooshka in trouble?' Dotty asked.

'Putting on a new show is expensive. There's a lot to lose. If it's a flop, you can't pay the bills and before you know it, the Broadway brat pack are knocking on the door ready to swallow you up.'

'You mean the Boneapart and Chewbert empires?'

Martha shrugged. 'If you want to earn big bonios and have security don't work in the arts. That's why most of us have other jobs. I play Scrabble and I

like to win. The prize money's good. It's a game that requires skill and lots of practice.'

'And a bit of luck,' Dotty said, tapping her paw on the tile bag.

'That too,' Martha admitted.

'How long have you been with the ballet?' Floyd asked.

'Long enough to know the *grrreat* Babooshka is not going to destroy his precious little theatre by having his star dancer bumped off.'

'What about you?' Dotty asked.

'Bough-wough! Call yourself a Special Branch de-tect-ive? Take it from me, you're barking up the wrong tree if that's where you're going.' Martha leaned across the table. 'I never left the pit and the same goes for each and every one of my band. The notes don't play themselves.'

'Then who shot Goneoffsky?' Floyd demanded.

'I've no idea. I'm not an officer of the law, detective. That's your job.' Martha picked up the letters on her rack and one by one placed them on the board. 'I've no experience in such matters but if I were you, I'd start with lucky Lickanova. As you already know, he was desperate to be Petrushka number one. Now he's got what he wanted.'

Martha reached inside the tile bag and put seven more letters on the rack.

Y	L	N	A	B	E	O
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

Grrr! She's playing with us, Dotty thought. There was no point pushing for more and the constant clicking and tapping sounds were driving her crazy. She didn't care if she never saw a Scrabble board again. All she wanted to do was get out of there. Dotty stood up. 'Well, enjoy your game,' she said. 'We'll be seeing you.'

Martha's phone beeped on the table. She tapped the screen and smiled.

'What did you make of that?' Floyd said as they walked away.

'Baloney!' Dotty muttered.

The hostess wished them a good night and hoped they'd visit again.

Not if I can help it. Dotty pushed open the door of Mambow's and walked out into the darkness. In silence Dotty and Floyd made their way back up to the maze of cobbled streets.

Buzz. Buzz.

They both jumped.

Buzz. Buzz.

Dotty unclipped the phone. 'Unknown Caller'. She hit the 'answer' button and held the iBone to her ear. 'Detective Dotty de Bono.'

She was silent for about six moderato tail wags then barked, 'Who is this?' Dotty listened some more. The hairs on the back of her neck stood on end. Every muscle in her body tensed. 'How did you get my number?'

'What's going on?' Floyd mouthed to Dotty.

She shrugged. 'Is this some kind of windup?'

...

...

...

'Who are you?'

The line went dead and Dotty stared at the screen.

'Are you OK?' Floyd asked.

No answer.

'Dotty, what's wrong?'

She looked at Floyd then back at her phone. 'I'm not sure.' Her voice wobbled. 'Probably some joker having a laugh.'

'Tell me what they said.'

'They hummed a tune.'

'A tune?'

Dotty did her best to repeat what she had heard. '**Daaa-daaa-da-daa**. No that's not it. Maybe it was **da-da-da daaa**.'

'**!@!**!** What was that?'

'I don't know.' Dotty racked her brain. A tingling sensation shot up her paws. The menacing phrase seemed familiar but she couldn't remember where she'd heard it before.

'And they said nothing at all?'

'They said, let the games begin.'

CHAPTER ELEVEN

The next morning, Dotty was already sitting at her desk when Floyd turned up. The Special Branch Unit (SBU) was on the top floor of the famous Barker Building on Letsby Avenue. The space was self-contained, away from nosey noses and snooping eyes and they were lucky enough to have a window which let in some daylight. It was pretty basic with six desks, three filing cabinets, a printer, a water cooler, and a large wheelie magnetic white board pushed up against the side wall. At the far end of the room, tucked away on the south side, was a makeshift office used by their boss, Captain Copland.

Floyd went over to Dotty. 'Doesn't look like you got much sleep.'

Dotty stretched out her paws and straightened her back. She'd changed out of her fancy theatre outfit into her red police collar, ready for the day ahead. Like her Pa, who'd also been a cop, she always kept a spare uniform at work for times like this.

'I got you a sticky doughnut with rainbow funfetti sprinkles on top. Your favourite ...' Floyd wagged his tail. '... from Duckin' D's Barkery.'

Dotty opened the brown paper bag and sniffed. 'Woof-woof!'

Floyd plonked himself down at his desk and fired up his computer. 'I knew you wouldn't go home.'

Dotty licked the sprinkles off her doughnut. After the unknown caller episode, she had fully intended on going back to her pad but changed her mind. The office was closer and she wanted to keep working the case. An early start meant that Dotty had already arranged for Two Wheels Good to pick up her bike, called the hospital to see on how Goneoffsky was doing, and spoken to his Mama.

Dotty was about to take a bite of her doughnut when the door burst open. It was Captain Copland. She had taken over SBU after Dotty and Floyd had blown the whistle on their previous corrupt captain. In the short time the Giant Schnauzer had been there, she had quickly gained a reputation for being a hard-nose, hard-working boss. The decision to appoint a dog with little experience of running a department to such a high rank, had caused

ructions from challengers who thought they could do a better job. But Captain Copland was made of sterner stuff. She'd taken no notice of the jibs and jibes that came her way and stood her ground when it came to looking after her detectives.

Dotty couldn't deny she'd had reservations at the start. Taking orders was not her strong point especially after everything that had happened with the disgraced Captain Wagner. He'd controlled his team with an iron paw and by being a bully. But after working several cases Captain Copland had earned Dotty's respect.

'Captain,' Dotty said, turning around.

Floyd raised his paw in a salute.

Captain Copland wore a wide red collar with three white stripes to show her rank. Her black wiry coat was clipped short but she kept her beard bushy and eyebrows long, which gave her an air of authority.

'Have you seen the headlines?' Captain Copland said, emphasising the beginning of every word which gave her speech a bouncy, marching beat.

Dotty pressed the space bar on her computer. The screen came to life showing the Canine News Network homepage. '**Dogs flee Ballet**,' Dotty said. The main image was a picture of smartly dressed dogs with their bums in the air clambering over seats to get out of the theatre.

Dotty tapped the arrow key on the keyboard. The screen changed to the front page of *The Woof* with the headline **Fright Night at the Ballet** – the image was similar to the CNN shot. She tapped the arrow key again. 'According to the *Bonesville Times* **Death Dance Stops Ballet** and I'm saving the best till last.' Dotty paused then hit the arrow key. '*The Daily Chews* has gone with **Corpse de Ballet** by ... you guessed it, Scarlett, Bonesville's top crime repawter.'

Floyd gasped. The picture under the headline was a close up of Goneoffsky. He was lying on the stage with a dart sticking out of the ruff of his collar. The two sidebar images were of Dotty. Neither were flattering. One had Dotty holding her phone in the air surrounded by panic-stricken dogs. The other had Dotty bending over Goneoffsky with her tongue hanging out.

‘That pretty much sums up the situation,’ Captain Copland said. ‘The Mayor’s breathing down my neck. He wants this case solved as quickly and quietly as possible.’

‘Then, why won’t he order the ballet to close and let us get on with our job?’ Floyd gestured to the four empty desks. ‘We’re short pawed as it is.’

Arietta and Poochini were out of town working another high profile case. Haydn was undercover and Monteverdi was on unpaid leave after failing his annual fitness test three times. Word flying around the station was that he’d been put on a strict diet of fruit and veg.

‘That’s not going to happen,’ the Captain said. ‘We need to focus on what we know and go from there. So, what you got?’

Dotty explained how a search of the theatre led them to the shooter’s position in the fly above the stage. They’d found blood, a tiny piece of fabric, and forensics were dusting for prints. Floyd added that all ballet staff had given statements to beat cops before they were allowed to go home.

‘Who’s on your suspect list?’ Captain Copland asked.

Dotty stood up and wheeled the white board into the centre of the room. She picked up a red marker pen, flipped the lid, and wrote:

Babooshka

‘The ballet boss called the Mayor to make sure we wouldn’t close them down. He needs money to pay the dancers and the band, and news headlines sell tickets,’ Dotty said. ‘And then there’s...’

Hank

‘He’s the stage manager. His job is to give the dancers their cues and make sure the show runs smoothly. Hank takes his orders from Babooshka.’

Martha

She tapped the white board with the end of the red pen. ‘Martha is unhappy with Babooshka and Babooshka is unhappy with Martha. They both blame each other for anything that goes wrong. Martha also argued with Goneoffsky during the dress rehearsal. When we questioned her, she said we should look into—’

Lickanova

‘He was the underdog for the starring role but wanted to be Petrushka number one. With Goneoffsky out of the way, Lickanova’s now got what he wanted. Lickanova and Goneoffsky by all accounts are arch rivals.’

‘Could be motive enough,’ Captain Copland said.

‘I agree,’ Dotty said. ‘At the time of the shooting Lickanova claimed he was watching Petrushka’s death dance from the wings. But the other dancers weren’t so sure. And then there’s...’

Boneapart

The pen squeaked as Dotty scrawled the letters of his name.

‘Why did the top dog of Broadway go and see Goneoffsky before the show? What’s his connection to our victim? He hates the ballet and saunters in there like he owns the place.’ Dotty turned to face Captain Copland and Floyd. ‘Nobody could be sure when Boneapart left.’

‘Interesting,’ Captain Copland said. ‘You need to look into that.’

‘And we can’t forget about...’ Dotty shook the marker pen to get more ink into the tip and added:

Corps de ballet

‘It could be any of them from the dancers to the players and Sid on the stage door. None of them have been paid,’ Dotty said.

‘That would be enough to cause bad feeling,’ Captain Copland said. ‘But why target one of their own?’

‘Good point,’ Floyd said. ‘Taking Goneoffsky out could’ve been a warning to Babooshka that if things aren’t sorted he could be next?’

‘That doesn’t feel right,’ Dotty said. ‘Babooshka wasn’t upset about replacing Goneoffsky. He said he had plenty more Petrushkas waiting in the wings. If anything, he was happy.’

‘Has anyone spoken to Goneoffsky?’ Captain Copland said.

‘The hospital is keeping him zonked,’ Dotty replied. ‘No guarantee when they’ll bring him out of it. The doc will know more about the poison when the test results come back.’

‘Who takes top spot on your list?’ Captain Copland asked.

Dotty wiggled her head from side-to-side weighing up the facts. 'At the moment I'd say, it's a tossup between Boneapart and Lickanova.'

'We've not met Boneapart,' Floyd said.

'Then start with him,' Captain Copland ordered. 'Right no time for dilly-dallying. Get to it.' She started to make her way towards her office.

'There's more,' Floyd said.

Captain Copland stopped in her tracks. 'Out with it.'

'After the ballet we went to Piccolo's for a bite to eat,' Floyd replied. 'We'd just finished and spotted Martha—'

'Who's Martha again?'

'The conductor of the Jellybean Orchestra,' Dotty said. 'We followed her to a scrabble bar Downtown. That's where she tipped us off about Lickanova. But, that's not the weird part...'

'When we left, Dotty got a call from an unknown number,' Floyd said. 'They hummed a tune—'

'Whoa. Hold on.' Captain Copland turned to Dotty. 'You got serenaded down the phone?'

'I wouldn't put it quite like that,' Dotty said.

'Come on, Dotty. Something's going round in that clever head of yours. What you thinking?'

'I think it was some sort of riddle in notes.'

'Did you recognise the tune?'

'I'm working on it.'

Captain Copland paced up and down the room. 'This has got to be the most crazy-humdinger of a story I've heard in a long time. I want to know if our shooter and your unknown caller are the same dog.' She pointed to the names on the white board. 'Are they on that list?'

'More than likely,' Dotty replied. 'Before they hung up they said let the games begin.'

'What's that supposed to mean?'

Dotty cleared her throat and took a deep breath. 'She or he wants to have some fun. And somehow it involves the ballet. Whoever's behind this has put

a lot of thought and preparation into this crime. What they've got planned, I've no idea. But they've made a big mistake.'

The captain's ears shot up. 'What mistake?'

'They called Dotty,' Floyd barked.

'I don't follow.'

'Well,' Floyd said, looking extremely chuffed with himself. 'If you want to play a game there's no point playing on your own, which means—'

'They'll be back in touch,' Dotty said.

CHAPTER TWELVE

The iBone on Dotty's collar buzzed. She reached for it and frowned. The display screen showed 'Unknown Caller'. She turned the phone round so Floyd and Captain Copland could see.

'Dooby-scoooooobily-doo. I don't believeeeeee it,' Floyd said. 'You don't think it's—'

'Answer. Now,' Captain Copland barked.

Dotty placed the phone on her desk and put the call on speakerphone for everyone to hear. 'Detective Dotty de Bono, Special Branch Unit,' she said.

There was a strange rhythmic clicking noise in the background. Click. Click. Click. No variation in pitch or tempo, just the same metallic click, click, click, like a metronome or a clock keeping time. The clicking stopped. Silence. Then ... another single click, different to the others they'd just heard. This was followed by a crackling sound a bit like a needle being placed on a groove of a record. And. Then. Very. Loudly ...

Daa-da-da daaa. Daa-da-da daaa.

... came through the tiny speaker on Dotty's phone, making Floyd and Captain Copland jump. Dotty didn't flinch but she was trembling inside. It was the same tune the mystery caller had hummed the previous night. Only now, the same notes were being played on a loop by an orchestra. When the music stopped there was another short pause before a high-pitched laugh bounced off every wall in the room.

'Who is this?' Dotty barked.

No reply.

Floyd and the captain moved a step closer, surrounding Dotty's desk.

Dotty tried again. 'What do you want?'

Still no reply.

'Fine. Have it your way. I'm counting to four and hanging up. One—'

Pause.

'Two—'

'What are you doing?' Captain Copland mouthed to Dotty.

‘Three—’

‘Do you like games, detective?’ the caller said.

Dotty angled her head. The caller’s voice sounded different. Robotic like it was going through some sort of electronic voice changer.

‘If you want to play, let’s play,’ Dotty barked.

The caller laughed. *‘That’s the idea.’*

‘Then drop into the Barker Building and we can have a proper chinwag.’

‘I knew you wouldn’t let me down.’

‘How’d you know?’

‘I saw you. That was so sweet how you looked after Goneoffsky when everyone else was in a flip-flap.’

Dotty stared at the phone, her heart thumping. She wanted to howl out loud. She knew she’d been distracted by what had happened onstage. That was her mistake.

‘Listen to me very carefully,’ Dotty growled. ‘I WILL FIND YOU.’

‘Owww ... Yippee. A game of hide and seek. My favourite.’ The caller laughed again, but this time it was more of a cackle that chilled Dotty to the bone. *‘Tick-tock, tick-tock.’*

‘Ready or not. I’m coming to get you,’ Dotty barked.

‘Catch me if you can.’

And then the line went dead.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

The dog ended the call to Dotty. He looked up at the infamous Barker Building on Letsby Avenue and smiled at his good fortune. He felt every hair stand on end. Excitement taking hold of his body like pure liquid electricity injected into his bloodstream. This was way better than he had ever imagined. Having a dedicated Special Branch cop part of his five-star masterpiece was priceless. He swished his tail. Dotty had not been part of the plan. But seeing her onstage at the ballet had changed all that. He couldn't resist making some tweaks and adding in an extra level of fun.

'Starvinsky would be proud of such attention to detail,' he muttered. 'A glorious scene within a scene just like the ballet.'

He unclipped the tiny voice transformer from his collar and dumped it in the bin outside Jam & Jolly's toy store. He calmly crossed the road and headed east down 18th Street towards Central Station. This was a huge building. It needed to be. All seven of Bonesville's K9 shuttle trains went through the station, making it one of the busiest hubs in and out of town.

The main entrance was impressive, standing eighteen metres high. On top of the massive concrete and granite building, three stone-carved Great Danes representing wisdom, speed, and strength sat proudly on three fluted columns. The dog walked straight through packs of tourists snapping pictures of the popular landmark and entered the station. At the turnstile he tapped a paw on the pad reader. The barrier opened and he took the down escalator to Platform 1 for the ③ train. He walked to the far end where it was less crowded.

'Attention passengers,' boomed a big voice through the platform speakers. 'This is your platform manager speaking. Stand well behind the custard-yellow line. The next train is calling at all stations to Barktoria.'

The rumble down the track got louder and louder. Lights blazing, the six-carriage train came thundering out of the darkness. **TOOOOT TOOOOT!** The train slowed and came to a halt at the red light.

‘No pushing. No shoving. Take your time. Let everyone off first,’ the platform manager barked.

The graffiti-tagged doors slid open. The dog stepped into the train. There were no seats, only a central aisle rope to hang on to. The K9 trains were only allowed to carry 702 passengers but many more squished on during rush hour, in whatever space they could find.

‘Mind your noses, mind your tails, the doors are gonna close,’ the platform manager barked. ‘Toodle-pip.’

A series of warning beeps sounded in the train.

TOOOOT TOOOOT! And the train roared into the tunnel.

He grabbed hold of the rope as the train picked up speed and rattled along the track. Station after station flashed by.

‘Next stop Piazza Square,’ the train driver barked. ‘Get off here for the funfair and Babooshka Ballet.’

The doors opened and the dog barked, ‘Showtime.’

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Dotty, Floyd, and Captain Copland stared at the phone like they were frozen in time. Captain Copland was the first to break the silence.

‘Who is this crazy hound?’ she asked.

‘There’s no way of telling from that performance,’ Dotty replied.

‘She’s right,’ Floyd said. ‘The caller sounded as if they were using some sort of voice changing gadget.’

‘Well, whoever they are, I want them behind bars right now.’ Captain Copland turned to Dotty. ‘You’re involved in this game whether you like it or not. You need a phone recorder Yapp. Get a tracker too and that’s an order.’

Dotty nodded. ‘I’ll speak to Scooter.’

There was no point in arguing with the captain even though the chance of a tracking device working was slim to zero. The signal relied on the caller staying on the phone for several minutes to pinpoint their location. No criminal mastermind would be daft enough to fall for that old trick. And a voice recorder would really only be of any use if they had a suspect.

‘Scooter could help us out?’ Floyd suggested.

‘We don’t have time to babysit a rookie cop,’ Captain Copland said.

‘Scooter’s a fast learner,’ Dotty said. ‘And from what I hear he’s running rings round the tech geeks.’

The wire fox terrier had been a cadet at the Police Academy when Dotty and Floyd first met him. His computer skills had helped them bring down their old boss Captain Wagner and they’d remained friends ever since.

‘There’s a bunch of statements from last night to go through,’ Floyd said. ‘If the Mayor wants this case cracked before you can say ta-da then we’re going to need some help.’

Captain Copland held up her paws in surrender. ‘I’ll sort it. Now scram, before I change my mind.’

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Bonepart's luxury office at the top of The Grand Theatre on Broadway was easily twice the size of Dotty and Floyd's back at SBU. Every inch of every wall was plastered with publicity posters for famous musical productions. Dotty recognised all of them from *Barkin' in the Rain* to *Piddler on the Roof*, and *Lickago!* Most of the shows on Broadway never changed. They went on and on. The big hitters clocking up several thousand performances attracting tourists from out of town, coach parties, and dogs who liked wearing fluffy boa collars.

Dotty wasn't a fan. Although, she didn't mind the film version of *The Hound of Music* starring the legendary Digger. That had some tunes to wag your tail to and reminded Dotty of her brother Wally. Without fail. Every Saturday morning, he'd dress up and twirl round the living room howling along to the record, driving everyone barking mad.

The thud of the door closing brought Dotty back in the room.

Bonepart sat behind a large antique wooden desk inside a white plastic ball chair with a red velvet interior. Smoking a hubbly-bubbly, he was dressed in a silk green and gold cravat. He sucked on the mouthpiece of a long hose which went into a sealed glass bowl of flavoured water and blew. A cloud of sweet melon- and mint-flavoured smoke rings filled the room.

Dotty couldn't help staring. Bonepart was massive. He had a thick neck, a droopy triple chin that almost reached his chest, and ginormous paws the size of dinner bowls. He was exactly as Babooshka and Hank had described him. Big everything. But Dotty hadn't expected him to be so old.

'Sit,' Bonepart said, looking over the top of his over-sized wire-rimmed glasses. He made a theatrical gesture to two short legged red bucket seats. They were so low that anyone who sat in them would be lucky if their noses cleared the height of the desk.

'We'll stand,' Dotty said. There was no way she was going to let Bonepart get the upper paw.

‘As you wish,’ Boneapart replied, taking another drag on his hubbly-bubbly. His gold letter B medallion, suspended on an expensive twisted link chain around his neck, banged against the edge of the desk. ‘Which one of you is Detective Dotty de Bono?’

‘I am,’ Dotty said, stepping forward. ‘And this is my partner, Floyd.’

They showed their IDs.

‘My assistant tells me you want to see me about an incident at Babooshka Ballet. What’s this got to do with me?’ Boneapart said.

‘Does the name Goneoffsky ring a bell?’ Floyd said.

‘You’re a bit behind breaking news,’ Boneapart replied, showing his full-set of falsetto denture teeth. ‘It’s all over Bonesville, Goneoffsky was shot with a poisoned dart.’

‘We understand you went to—’ Dotty said, before being interrupted by a high-pitched buzz on the intercom.

Boneapart pushed the red flashing button and held up his paw to silence her. His assistant explained who was on the line. ‘Tell that lazy hound, there’s no, yeah but, about it. If I want a real forest as part of the set then I want a real forest. We can’t do *Pups in the Wood* without one.’ He ended the call. ‘You were saying, detective?’

‘Why did you go and see Goneoffsky?’ Dotty asked.

‘Why not, detective?’

‘Goneoffsky doesn’t work for you.’

Boneapart roared with laughter. ‘Everybody wants to work for me. I’m the ticket to everlasting fame and glory. I’m top dog of Broadway.’

‘That’s not strictly true,’ Dotty said. ‘The Chewberts have fourteen theatres to your thirteen and they have The Pawladium. The biggest and grandest of them all.’

‘PAH! You’ve done your homework,’ Boneapart snapped. ‘But the Chewberts haven’t had a decent new show since ... I can remember. And the way Babooshka is going I’ll be ready to gobble up his theatre when the time is right.’

The intercom on Boneapart’s desk buzzed again. He pressed the red button. ‘Gotta take this.’ There was a click and the caller was connected.

Boneapart picked up the phone. 'Pickles! Give it to me straight. We got a deal or not?' Boneapart waited for the answer. 'Nine is my final offer. The show's a flop without me. Take it or leave it...'

Dotty and Floyd looked at each other.

'Excellent. That's the right choice. You'll have the paperwork by the end of the day.' Boneapart put down the phone.

'Can we hold the calls for now?' Dotty asked.

'For nine million bonios? No, you can wait!' Boneapart pressed the button on the intercom and barked instructions to his assistant. He released the button and howled at the top of his voice, 'Two of my favourites things, money and musicals. And I've just bought a brand new blockbuster. I got Snoop Doggie-do-dah writing the songs, Boogie Down Inc working out the dance moves, and Scratchy T designing the set. It's going to be bigger than *Barklahoma!* Bigger than anything. The Chewberts can chew on that. I'm laughing all the way to the bank.'

Dotty suppressed a growl. 'We were talking about Goneoffsky.'

'Why did you go and see him?' Floyd barked.

'That's my business, detectives.'

A second phone on Boneapart's desk buzzed. Dotty picked up the receiver and put it back down again, cutting off whoever was on the line.

Boneapart growled.

'I'm not in a rush,' Floyd said. 'You in a hurry, Dotty?'

'No, not particularly,' Dotty replied. 'We can hang out here until we get some answers.'

'All right! I've got nothing to hide,' Boneapart snapped. 'I'll answer your question and then you can clear off...'

'Go on,' Floyd said.

'Goneoffsky wanted to leave Babooshka. He came to me with an idea for a new musical. It wasn't bad. Had some legs with the right cast.'

'That still doesn't explain what you were doing last night,' Dotty said.

'Goneoffsky heard rumours I was ditching his show and wanted to see me. I thought I owed him a proper explanation. He's a great dancer, good

looking but he's no ear candy. He can't hold a tune for love nor marrow bones. We sent him for a hundred singing lessons and he was still hopeless.'

'How did he take it?'

'He was fine. No hard feelings.'

'What? Just like that?'

'Yes, *just like that*. I gave him a card. He seemed happy enough back on track as lead dancer.'

'Maybe it was Goneoffsky who decided he didn't want to work for you.'

'I'd watch your tongue, detective. I had nothing to do with what happened,' Boneapart said, jabbing a paw in Dotty's direction. 'I like everyone as long as they do what I want them to do.'

Dotty didn't let up. 'If there were *no hard feelings* then why didn't you stay for the show?'

'I hate the ballet. The music puts me to sleep. Those dreadful thumpety noises of paws pounding the boards get on my nerves, and all that twirling makes me dizzy.'

Dotty chewed the inside of her mouth. *Babooshka wasn't lying about Boneapart*.

'Anyone see you leave?' Floyd asked.

'That lapdog Lickanova was hanging around outside Goneoffsky's dressing room looking shifty as usual.'

'For someone who doesn't like the ballet, you know a lot about the place,' Dotty said.

'Detective, it's my job to know everything. That's show business.'

'Anyone else see you?' Floyd said.

'Hank.'

Dotty took a step towards Boneapart's desk. 'What time was this?'

'No idea.' Boneapart sucked on the mouthpiece of his hubbly-bubbly and blew a cloud of smoke in Dotty's face. 'Call my driver. Yaris will tell you, I was back here for the second act of *Phantom*.' Boneapart tapped his extra-large flat screen tablet. He pushed his face right up to the screen and read out the number 867-5309.

Dotty put it in her phone. 'We'll check.'

‘Go ahead and the next time you want to see me, make an appointment.’



Dotty and Floyd stepped out of The Grand Theatre into the midday sunshine.

‘There’s no way Boneapart’s the shooter,’ Floyd said. ‘His eyesight’s dreadful. He could hardly see what was in front of his nose.’

‘That doesn’t mean he didn’t get someone else to do his dirty work,’ Dotty said. ‘If Goneoffsky had changed his mind about leaving the ballet, I can’t see Boneapart rolling over without a fight. That’s motive enough for me. He stays on our suspect list.’

Floyd flicked his perfectly groomed hair. ‘But why give Goneoffsky a good luck card?’

Dotty stopped in her tracks. ‘It’s a cover up. Listen. What if Boneapart didn’t like being second best to the ballet and came up with a crazy plan to get back at Goneoffsky and Babooshka?’

‘His ego is as big as his head, I’ll give him that,’ Floyd said.

‘And he’s certainly got a sense of humour. Finding a card with MERDE in big letters on the front was genius. It’s a play on words, like a pun.’

‘You think *merde* means murder?’

‘That was your first reaction in Goneoffsky’s dressing room.’

‘True, but—’

‘Murder Goneoffsky. Murder Petrushka. The show’s over. A double hit. Only Boneapart didn’t realise Babooshka would be beyond thrilled at being front page news and had plenty of Petrushkas in reserve.’

‘Still sounds far-fetched to me.’

‘Floyd! We’re in theatreland,’ Dotty said, waving her paws in the air and doing a twirl. ‘They make things up for a living and they’re good at what they do.’

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

After a quick snack in Starbarks, Dotty and Floyd went to pick up Floyd's Reliant MK2. The two-door car on three wheels looked like three boxes stuck together with chewing gum. With a top speed of 65 mph the four-cylinder engine sounded like a clunky old sewing machine. On a more positive note, the Reliant was cheap to run. The fibreglass body didn't rust. It still had its original bright red paintwork with a large white vector stripe on both sides. Inside, the once red fake leather seats had faded to brown and two red furry dice dangled from the central mirror, which was definitely not cool, in Dotty's book.

Floyd opened the driver's side door and took the **POLICE BUSINESS** sign off the dashboard.

'Isn't it about time you traded this banger in for something a bit more modern?' Dotty said, climbing into the passenger seat.

'No way,' Floyd said. 'What's wrong with my wagon wheels?'

'More like, what's right with them? The steering wheel comes off, the doors fly open when you take a corner too fast, and we got overtaken by a granny going uphill on a pedal bike.'

'That granny was on a battery-powered bicycle. She didn't have to pedal and my little Reliant will get us from A to B while your bike's being fixed.'

'Harumph!'

'Buckle up,' Floyd said.

Clunk. Clunk.

Click. Click.

Floyd turned the ignition key. He put the car in gear, checked both wing mirrors twice, and indicated left. When a gap in the traffic opened up he zoomed off with a very small *z* down Broadway. Dotty wound her window down a crack. The air was warm and muggy. The pong of rotting garbage from a dumpster truck tickled her nose. Then the sweet smell of freshly baked pretzels and a whiff of wee. Bonesville was a place of dreams. The good, the bad, and the smelly. But that's why she called it home.

Dotty's phone pinged. She unclipped the iBone from her collar.

A text from Scooter.

Poison from rare flower

Dancer lucky not larger dose 🍀

Dotty replied: Any news on Goneoffsky?

'Who's that?' Floyd said.

'Woof! Scooter,' Dotty said.

Ping.

Scooter: Still zonked. 🐶

Dotty clipped her phone back in place and updated Floyd.

'So, we're hunting a shooter who likes strange flowers,' Floyd said, stopping at a red light.

'You got it!'

The light changed to amber. Then green. Floyd revved the engine.

'Does this thing come with an accelerator?' Dotty asked. 'It's the rectangular pedal next to the square one.'

Floyd ignored the remark. He put the car in gear and turned off 41st Street opposite The Pawladium and headed down 6th Avenue. The Reliant chugged its way over Brandenburg Bridge and Broadway slowly became a distant speck in the rear-view mirror. Next stop, the Babooshka Ballet. Floyd parked round the back of the theatre in a bay marked BABOOSHKA ONLY.

Dotty laughed. 'Nice move. That'll get his moustache in a twist.'

Click. Click.

Clunk. Clunk.

Perfectly synchronised,

they climbed out

of the three-wheeler

and made for

the stage door.

This time, Big Sid was not doing his push-ups. He sat on his haunches behind the sign-in desk knitting what looked like a Howler's flyball team supporters' scarf and reading *Teach Yourself Doga*.

‘Detectives, back so soon,’ Sid said. He offered them a McWittie’s Tasties Bourbone #FriendsForever peanut-butter-custard-cream-filled biscuit. Dotty declined, although Floyd was tempted. He reached into the tin to take one. The biscuits felt sticky to touch and Floyd quickly changed his mind. Sid had licked away the sandwich filling and re-stuck the rectangular biscuits back together again.

‘Anyone get past you today, who shouldn’t be here?’ Dotty said.

‘Nope. Take a look for yourself.’ Sid put down his very long and pointy knitting needles and pushed the sign-in book towards Dotty.

She ran her paw down the list of names.

‘Where’s Lickanova?’ Floyd asked.

Sid reached for a biscuit and shoved it whole into his mouth. ‘Bootter nurry,’ he said with his mouthful. ‘Tay-about ta (nom, nom, nom, nom) start rehearsing.’

Dotty and Floyd scribbled their names in the book and hurried backstage. Dancers in leg warmers lined the corridor, limbering up, stretching their legs and backs, and doing breathing exercises. They found Hank in the wings on stage right. He was wearing his headset and muttering into the mic. Dotty tapped him on the shoulder.

Hank turned. He put a paw to his lips and pointed at the stage. The music started. The pitter-patter of dancers rushing down the corridor got louder. Every one of them accidentally or on purpose bumped into Floyd who was standing in their way before they leapt onto the stage.

‘Hey! Mind out,’ Floyd barked and crashed into Dotty. She desperately tried to stay upright and grabbed hold of a tassel rope cord attached to a small brass pole fixed on the black brick wall. Two mini black velvet curtains parted to reveal three monitors.

‘What are these?’ Dotty asked, pointing at the screens. ‘I didn’t see them last night.’

Hank shrugged and flicked a switch. ‘Here’s Martha in the pit.’ The black and white image was grainy but the light from the conductor’s music stand was bright enough for Dotty to make out it was Martha down there, waving her stick about. ‘This one’s so I can keep an eye on the stage.’ Hank turned

it on. The dancers appeared on the screen. They pranced and twirled, round and round, going through their routine.

‘And the third screen?’ Dotty asked.

‘Don’t need it for *Petrushka*. Not with a rotating stage.’

Dotty scrunched up her face. The bone dropped. ‘That’s for the fly dogs. But as there’s no background scene changes the monitor was off.’

‘Correct,’ Hank said. ‘You’re starting to get the hang of this.’

‘Doggit!’ Dotty muttered. ‘If we’d have known about the monitors, we could’ve had eyes on our shooter up in the fly.’

‘Any of these things record?’ Floyd said.

‘This is a theatre, detective, not the pound,’ Hank said. ‘Think of the screens as real-time mirrors into another room. There’s no recording.’

‘And during a performance you don’t leave your post?’

‘I told you. When the curtain’s up and the music is playing, you’ll find me here. I take orders from Babooshka in my ear.’ Hank tapped the side of his headset. ‘I give the dancers their cues and make sure everything happens at the right time.’

‘Where’s Babooshka?’ Dotty said.

‘He’s in the production box,’ Hank replied.

‘How do you know?’ Floyd said.

Hank pointed to a tiny camera above the monitors and wagged his tail.

‘He can see us.’

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

Dotty and Floyd found Babooshka in a box room, about three-strides long by six-strides wide with a glass front. There were two stools and a microphone plugged into a laptop on a desk next to a bank of TV monitors just like Hank's.

'Detectives! This is exciting, no? Watching the grrreat Babooshka at work.'

Dotty cut to the chase. 'We had an interesting chat with Boneapart. He told us Goneoffsky was going to leave you for him.'

'Pah! Goneoffsky can be very very stupid.'

'You knew?'

'Of course. That's why I changed my mind. It was Lickanova's turn to dance the lead but I made Goneoffsky, Petrushka number one instead.'

'No wonder Lickanova was upset at being the underdog,' Floyd said.

Dotty wagged her tail. *That's motive and he had the opportunity.*

'This is a win-win situation, detectives,' Babooshka said with a big grin. 'They both got to be Petrushka.' He tapped the stage

monitor. Lickanova leapt across the boards doing splits in the air. 'See ... Babooshka makes everyone happy.'

'There's still the matter of who shot Goneoffsky?' Floyd said.

'Don't be a spoil sport. Nobody died.'

Floyd pushed his nose right up to Babooshka's face. 'A crime has been committed. Goneoffsky's not out of the woods. He could still—'

'Easy, partner,' Dotty said.

Floyd stepped back. 'We're going to get to the bottom of this.'

'Woof, woof,' Dotty said, checking out the other monitors. There was one for Hank and two were dark. 'Why are these switched off?'

'Because there's nothing to see,' Babooshka said.

'I'd like to take a look,' Dotty said.

Babooshka turned them on. The first was a shot of an empty foyer, the other was the fly above the stage.

'And these were on last night?' Floyd said.

‘Only the one for the foyer. I need to know when the audience are in so I can start the ballet. No point having eyes on the fly when it’s not being used. It’s a distraction.’

‘Where were you when Goneoffsky was shot?’ Dotty said.

‘Well, of course I was here—’

There was a creak as the door opened.

‘Ah! Rufus, our number one fan, come in. These detectives are investigating what happened to Goneoffsky,’ Babooshka said.

‘Dreadful news and on the opening night. Timing couldn’t be worse,’ Rufus said, shaking his head. He placed a small black duffle bag on the floor. ‘I’m sorry I couldn’t get here sooner.’

‘Nothing to worry about. Plenty more Petrushkas,’ Babooshka said. ‘The show must go on.’

Rufus wagged his tail and smiled, showing off his perfect scissor bite white teeth. He was a tall dog with short brown hair. Trim but not too muscular in stature, with perfectly manicured nails and eyes like ping-pong balls. Wearing a red, yellow, gold floral silk double-necked collar, matching waistcoat, and white paw cuffs, he was a

snappy dresser, dressed to impress.

There wasn’t really enough room for four dogs in the tiny booth and Dotty thought she was going to go nose blind from the smell of expensive lemon turd with fartsberry toilette shooting up her nostrils.

‘A pleasure to meet you,’ Rufus said. He held out his right paw to Dotty. His yellow-gold round cufflink with a diamond border had the word “awesome” engraved in red letters in the centre. Dotty raised an eyebrow. She couldn’t resist taking a glance at the left which had “pawsome” in blue lettering.

‘Awesome, pawsome,’ she said.

‘Why thank you,’ Rufus said. ‘I dare say I am.’

‘I was referring to your Gruff cufflinks,’ Dotty said.

‘Well spotted, Detective Dotty de Bono. You have style.’

‘How do you know my name?’

‘It would be hard to forget when you’re splattered all over the news.’ Rufus cocked his head towards Floyd. ‘And you must be...?’

'Floyd! I'm Dotty's partner. If you don't mind, we were asking Babooshka a few questions.'

'Sorry to interrupt the party,' Rufus said.

'No, no,' Babooshka said. 'I think we're done here, detectives.'

'Excellent.' Rufus plonked himself in front of the stage monitor. He opened a bag of marrow bone chews and popped one in his mouth without offering them round. He growled when Lickanova grabbed the Ballerina, making her stumble. 'He's way too rough with her. Tell him.'

Babooshka pressed the button for the mic and barked at Hank for Lickanova not to be so pushy.

'What makes you a number one fan?' Dotty said.

'I'm a long-term sponsor of Babooshka Ballet and their prima ballerina, Pavlova. She's magnificent. Graceful and elegant. The best I've seen dancing the role of the Ballerina in *Petrushka*. It's my all-time favourite ballet,' Rufus replied, mesmerised by her twirls across the stage on the monitor. 'Finding anyone talented enough to work alongside her is an ongoing battle.'

Dotty nodded. She'd read that many theatres took money from wealthy donors to help with funding.

'And...' Rufus continued. 'My great grandma loves the ballet. It's because of her that I support great artists. The cost of tutus and pointe shoes are expensive. In return I get to take Pavlova for dinner and hang out here whenever I want.'

'Sounds like a nice arrangement,' Floyd said. 'Were you in the audience last night?'

'No, I had a long-standing date in the diary that couldn't be moved,' Rufus replied. 'But I've had the pleasure of seeing several dress rehearsals.'

'Where were you?' Dotty barked.

'At a Professor Bloomfield talk on sustainable wet lands in the Botanic Gardens. Bogs are my other passion after ballet. I'm a big fan of his work.'

Floyd nudged Dotty. The orchestra were packing up and the stage was starting to empty. Dotty banged her paw on the glass window. 'Stop,' she barked. 'Stop. I need to talk to—'

'Nobody will hear you,' Babooshka said. 'This room is sound proofed.'

Dotty grabbed the microphone and barked at Hank to catch Lickanova before he vanished. There was no reply. Rufus tapped the monitor. Hank had disappeared from his post and left his headset behind. Dotty and Floyd were out of the production box in a shot.

They pushed
their way through
the band packing
up their instruments.

Sprinted up the stairs to the ground floor

and fought their way through the packs of dancers to the stage door.

There was no sign of Lickanova
and no sign of Sid.

Huff. **Puff.** **Puff.** **Puff.**
Huff. **Huff.** **Huff.**

Dotty glanced at the clock. It was 17:01. 'Doggit!' she muttered.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

Dotty was under strict orders from Captain Copland that the show must go on. The ballet was sold out. The Mayor was guest of honour. Press seats that would normally have gone to back page arts reviewers had been replaced with front page, hard-nosed, headline grabbing, celebrity crime reporters. All of them were itching to snap a scoop if the slightest thing went wrong.

Dotty had tried arguing her case. Lickanova had motive and the opportunity to shoot Goneoffsky. But the answer was still a big fat no. Dotty would have to wait until after the show to question the dancer. Beat cops had been positioned on all entry and exit points as extra backup. Their job was to make sure everything ran smoothly without embarrassing the Mayor. There was nothing else she could do.

At half past six the doors to the Babooshka Ballet opened. The foyer started filling up with smartly dressed, expensive-smelling ticket holders. A buzz of excitement wafted around the space. All the chitter-chatter was about what would happen tonight. Would Lickanova be a better Petrushka than Goneoffsky? Would the ballet get to the end of the fourth act? Dotty, Floyd, and Captain Copland stood at the bar, looking out of place in their police collars.

'This is a waste of time,' Dotty said.

'The real suspect could be in this room. I don't need to remind you about your unknown caller,' Captain Copland said.

'My gut says it's Lickanova.'

'That's not enough. Where's the proof?'

'I'm with the boss until we know for sure,' Floyd said.

'Goody, goody four paws,' Dotty muttered under her breath.

'I heard that,' Floyd said, giving her a poke. 'Check your blind side.'

Dotty turned her head. Rufus in his red, yellow, gold floral silk double-necked collar, matching waistcoat and paw cuffs was heading their way.

‘Good evening, detectives,’ he said. ‘Can I buy you a drink? I can highly recommend the Cosmopawlitan or Howlapaw Sling.’

‘We’re busy,’ Captain Copland growled. ‘Now if you don’t mind ...’

Dotty and Floyd exchanged a look.

‘Fair enough. Maybe another time. Enjoy the show. I think we’re in for a real treat.’ Rufus bowed his head and sauntered off with his tail held high. There were a series of loud barks. The Mayor had arrived and Rufus was all over him like a puppy dog. A bell sounded and a voice boomed over the loud speaker for ticket holders to take their seats.

‘Babooshka-ya-ya! Wish me luck,’ Floyd said.

Dotty mustered a smile. Floyd had pulled the short straw. He was in the production box with the ballet boss.

‘Let’s take our seats,’ Captain Copland barked.

Dotty nodded.

They made their way up the marble stairs to the house box. The auditorium was packed. The doors closed and the lights went down. After some last-minute coughing the hubbub faded to silence. **The oboe played a long A-note and the orchestra tuned their instruments.**

The curtain went up to the familiar sound of the fluttery flutes, as Starvinsky’s music filled the hall. Onstage the ballet dancers pranced around the square. The sweet smell of popcorn tickled Dotty’s nose. She leaned over the red-upholstered rail to watch the action. The dancers continued to shift and drift as they went through their routine. A drumroll split the pack on either side of the stage. From behind a mini-theatre out popped the Magician. He played his magic flute. He swayed this way and that as the notes rose and fell. The curtain parted to reveal three puppets, slumped, lifeless in their booths.

Toot-Toot went the flute. Bang on the beat the Moor came to life.

Toot-Toot. The Ballerina sprang up onto her points.

Toot-Too... Nothing. Petrushka was still on the floor.

Dotty held her breath. *He’s missed his cue.*

... **OOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO**T. His paws twitched, twitched, and twitched again. Then bam. Lickanova pulled himself up and swayed in time to the music. The Moor, the Ballerina, and Petrushka burst out from their booths and took centre stage. The puppets danced all by themselves to the delight of the crowd in the square. They twirled and swirled. Faster and faster. The street dancers joined in and the red curtain came down to signal the end of the first act.

There was a round of woofs and barks from the audience. The house lights came part way up to signal a set change. Everyone stayed in their seats for the short break.

'I should come to the ballet more often,' Captain Copland said, giving Dotty a sideways glance. 'I really enjoyed that.'

Dotty grunted. She wondered how Floyd was getting on. Then thanked her lucky stars that she wasn't sitting next to Babooshka. She looked down into the stalls. Her eyes scanned the hundreds of heads. She spotted the Mayor in his gold livery chain but couldn't find Rufus.

He's probably got his own special seat, Dotty thought.

'What happens next?' Captain Copland said.

'Wait and see. You'll get no spoilers from me,' Dotty said.

The house lights went back down. The Jellybean Orchestra started to play. The red curtain went up to reveal Petrushka's room. But there was no Petrushka. It was empty. Then Dotty heard...

Daa-da-da daaa. Daa-da-da daaa.

'The riddle in notes,' she barked. 'It's Petrushka's theme tune. And, he's gone. Lickanova's GONE!'

PART THREE: CHAPTER NINETEEN

The whole house erupted into chaos. Dogs were barking and throwing popcorn tubs at the stage and fighting with each other. The curtains came down with a thud and the band screeched to a messy stop that ended with a loud whoopee tuba fart. Dotty bolted out of the house box with Captain Copland hot on her tail. She tugged at the door that separated the audience from the back-of-house.

‘Doggit! What’s the code?’ She punched in several combinations. Nothing worked. The door wouldn’t open. *Think! Dotty. Think!*

‘Hurry up! What you waiting for?’ Captain Copland barked.

Dotty closed her eyes. She tried to remember Hank’s paw pattern on the keypad on the other side of the door. *Top left, top right. Bottom middle. Second row right. Back to the top then bottom right and top left twice.* ‘Got it: 13061911,’ she said out loud and tapped in the eight-digit passcode.

The lock released and she flew down the three flights of stairs. After a fight with the wing curtain she stumbled onto stage left. Hank and the ballet dancers stood gawking at Petrushka’s empty room.

‘Where’s Lickanova?’ Dotty barked.

‘I don’t know,’ Hank replied with a note of panic in his voice.

‘Didn’t you have eyes on the monitor?’

‘When the curtain came down I gave a three-minute call for the start of the second act. I thought we were good to go.’

‘Did any of you see Lickanova?’ Dotty asked the dancers.

Twenty heads shook.

‘What about you?’ Dotty said, pointing to the Moor and the Ballerina.

The Ballerina shrugged. There was a commotion in the wing coming from stage right. Floyd was struggling to hold onto Babooshka.

‘Let go of me,’ the ballet boss yelled and wriggled free. ‘I’ve got to speak to my audience. The *grrreat* Babooskha will make everything OK.’

‘Hold it right there.’ Captain Copland blocked his path. ‘Two clowns, two nights on the trot, what’s going on?’

The Mayor appeared, surrounded by his minders, three burly hounds with muscles the size of tree trunks. 'I'm sure this is all a misunderstanding and there's a simple explanation,' he said. 'Have you started searching the theatre?'

'Not yet,' Captain Copland replied. 'We're just—'

'Then I suggest you get on with the job and allow Babooshka to make his announcement.' He raised his long pointy snout and gestured to the audience on the other side of the curtain.

Babooshka thanked the Mayor with a bow. He did a slow pirouette and swished through the main stage curtains. Dotty could hear him clearing his throat. There were howls of: 'Rubbish!' 'Rubbish!' from the angry ticket holders.

'Friends of the great Babooshka, there has been a minor blip in tonight's performance. Argh... Argh... Argh!' Babooshka howled as he was pelted with tubs of popcorn. 'My *danseur* is... Argh... Argh... un^well.'

'Find Lickanova,' Captain Copland growled at Dotty and Floyd. 'I'll deal with this.'

Dotty and Floyd quick marched in four-four time off the stage. They instructed the beat cops to get their noses into every nook and cranny. No space was to be left untouched. Dotty grabbed Hank's headset and spoke to Sid on the stage door. He'd not seen the missing star since the start of the show.

Where is he? Dotty turned the knob on the toilet door. It didn't budge. She rattled it with such force the sign fell off with a clang to the floor. 'Lickanova? Open up.'

'Hang on,' a low voice replied. The lock clicked and the door creaked open. The Magician appeared holding his plastic flute. 'He's not in here.'

Dotty stuck her head in to make sure. She stormed to the next door and flung it open. Nothing. Dotty and Floyd checked every room along the main corridor with Hank trailing behind.

'Floyd, you were with Babooshka,' Dotty barked. 'Didn't you realise something was wrong?'

‘Don’t have a go at me. I haven’t got a clue about ballet and I’ve not seen the show before,’ he said. ‘The set was dark at the start of the second act. I only got something was wrong when the spotlight came on and Babooshka yelped, stop. But by then it was too late. Martha was waving her stick about and the curtain was up.’

Dotty growled with frustration. ‘We should’ve arrested Lickanova and brought him in for questioning. Not played along with this crazy side show.’ They pushed through the door marked *Ballet Corps Only*. At the T-bone intersection, Dotty barked, ‘Hank! Which way for Lickanova’s dressing room?’

‘Go right, we put him in Goneoffsky’s old room,’ he replied.

Dotty wrinkled her nose. There was a whiff of citrus in the air.

YAOWWWWWL!

‘What was that?’ Floyd said.

‘Not sure ...’ Dotty replied, picking up her pace.

YAOWWWWWL! YAOWWWWWL!

‘Sounds like someone’s being strangled to death.’

CHAPTER TWENTY

Dotty and Floyd skidded to a stop outside Lickanova's dressing room door. A yellow post-it note with his name written in black marker pen had been lopsidedly stuck over the gold star. Like it had been hastily put there without much care or attention. Dotty tried the handle. It was locked. She bashed the door several times with her shoulder. 'Lickanova, is that you?'

'YAOWWWWWWL! YAOWWWWWWWL! YAOWWWWWWWL!'

'Hank, the key,' Dotty barked.

Puffing and panting Hank fumbled with a key ring attached to his collar.

BANG! BANG! BANG! BANG!

'HELP ME. I CAN'T BREATHE.'

'The key,' Dotty barked.

'I'm going as fast as I can, detect—'

'HELLLLLLLLLLLP! I'M GOING TO DIE.'

BANG! BANG! BANG! BANG!

'Here you go,' Hank said. 'I'll be back with Babooshka.'

Dotty turned the key in the lock. The door still wouldn't open. 'Lickanova! Step away from the door. This is Detective Dotty de Bono.'

She burst into the room, taking Lickanova with her as they crashed to the floor. Dressed in his clown's outfit the dancer lashed out, kicking and swinging his paws left and right. Floyd grabbed Lickanova by the ruff of his collar. 'Chill,' he growled. In between howls and sobs, and incomprehensible ga-ga mutterings, Floyd plonked him on the tatty green settee.

The star's dressing room was pretty much the same as before. The only difference being there were no good luck / bad luck cards and the space no longer looked or smelled like a flower shop.

'What happened?' Dotty asked, not in the mood to be messed around. This led to another round of howls and sobs. *He's such a drama queen*, she thought.

Floyd stepped in to play the good cop routine. He gently put a paw on Lickanova's shoulder and settled himself down next to him. 'It's ok. You're frightened. I can understand that.'

'Spit it out,' Dotty barked. 'We haven't got all night.'

Floyd's voice was soft and encouraging. 'You can tell us.'

Lickanova turned to Floyd, totally ignoring Dotty. 'Some nasty hound banged bent nails into the floor of my puppet booth. My tights got stuck. I panicked and missed my cue. When I pulled free they laddered and I cut myself.'

He leaned back and lifted his long legs. Held them in the air. No shakes. No wobbles. His nails pointing straight up to the ceiling. Like a pro.

Dotty cocked her head. *Yep, they're ripped. Blood too. If that's a match with the blood in the fly, he's our dog.*

Lickanova continued to tell his tale through more sniffs and snuffles. 'At the end of the first act I dashed back here to change.' He gestured to a pair of red-and-yellow checked tights on the metal clothes rack. 'A big paw pushed me inside and locked the door.'

'Any ideas who it was?' Dotty asked.

Lickanova shook his head.

'What did they smell like?'

He started to sob again. 'Maybe a bit orangey. My nose isn't great.'

'You're doing really well,' Floyd said. 'Then what?'

'I pounded the door. **Begged** them to let me out. Then ... he laughed.'

'Are you sure it was a he?' Dotty said.

'Yes! He said PETRUSHKA IS TOO BIG A PART FOR A DANCER WITH NO FUTURE. Perhaps, I was a little under-rehearsed,' Lickanova admitted. 'But the audience would have still loved my performance.'

Dotty looked at Floyd and shrugged. Lickanova was clearly freaked out by what had happened. Dotty wanted to believe his story. It was paw-sible. But ... that didn't mean it was true. Her gut instinct told her he was hiding something. She chewed over an alternative scenario in her head.

Lickanova could've set this whole thing up so we'd rule him out of the mix for bumping off Goneoffsky to get the role.

'I messed up. My Petrushka days are over,' Lickanova howled. 'First Goneoffsky and now me. We'll never get on the cover of *Dogue* magazine.' He stared at the brown swirly-patterned rug on the floor, his nail digging into an ever-expanding hole in the settee until the yellow foam rubber popped out.

'Nonsense,' Floyd said. 'You're a wooftacular dancer. I'm sure it won't come to that when we explain what happened.'

Lickanova wouldn't look at Dotty or Floyd. 'You don't understand. Before h-h-h-he left, he spouted some hocus pocus to summon the g-g-g-g-ghosts of Petrushka and whistled his tune. Bad things will happen if I dance the role again. I'm c u r s e d.'

'What a shame and you were doing so well,' a voice boomed, making Lickanova jump. He flung his paws around Floyd and howled. Babooshka and Hank leaned in the doorway.

'A terrible tragedy,' Hank agreed.

'Lickanova, you can't believe in all that mumbo jumbo,' Floyd said.

'It's not rubbish,' Hank said. 'There are many superstitions. That's why we always leave a stage spotlight turned at night so the diva ghosts and ghoulies can still perform.'

Dotty snorted.

'Hank's right,' Babooshka said. 'Ballet tights and pointe shoes have been seen dancing around on their own, props thrown across the stage, and pictures ripped off the dressing-room walls. It brings misfortune to the whole ballet if traditions are ignored. And... whistling backstage is a very big no-no.'

'Are you crazy?' Dotty barked.

Babooshka wasn't listening. 'Don't worry, Lickanova, you'll be front page news. Probably for the wrong reasons but now you're famous. I will find a new Petrushka. Perhaps it's time for Phumbleklot to step into the spotlight. He's a bit of a klutz but that's no bad thing for a clown,' he barked with a triumphant smile.

'Absolutely not,' Dotty said. 'The Babooshka Ballet is closed.'

‘The show must go On,’ Babooshka said, swishing his tail. ‘The audience will not be disappointed for a third time. I have the approval of the Mayor. Poof! Weren’t you going to arrest Lickanova after the show? You have your suspect.’

‘Arrest me?’ Lickanova cried, visibly trembling. He looked up at Dotty. ‘What for? I’m innocent. I’ve done nothing wrong. Never in a million, trillion years would I hurt Goneoffsky. He’s my best friend.’

There was a moment of stunned silence.

Even Babooshka seemed surprised.

‘I thought you were arch rivals,’ Floyd said.

‘That’s rubbish,’ Lickanova muttered and then admitted, ‘that was a long time ago.’

‘You were arguing with Goneoffsky on the opening night,’ Dotty said.

‘It’s true,’ Hank said.

‘I was upset. When Boneapart came out of Goneoffsky’s dressing room, I freaked. I thought he’d changed his mind about staying at the ballet. I swear on my life, we only pretended to hate each other. It was all an act so no one would find out.’

‘Find out what?’ Dotty asked.

‘He’s my dogfriend. We were just waiting for his Mama to come back from her travels before telling everyone.’ Lickanova slumped forward and put his head in his paws. ‘That’s where I went after the rehearsal – to see my gorgeous Goneoffsky. When he wakes up, he’ll tell you.’



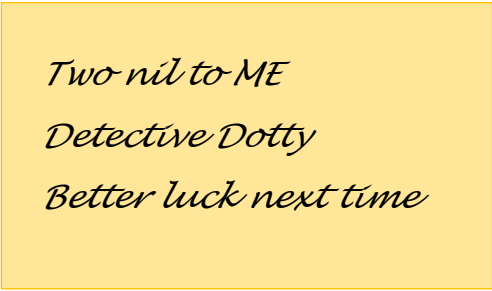
Dotty decided to let Lickanova go on two conditions. He wasn’t to leave town and was barred from entering the theatre until the case was closed. The dancer agreed. Hank escorted him to sick bay to get the scratch on his leg checked out. Lickanova’s tights were put in an evidence bag, after a big to-do with Babooshka about taking ballet property, and sent to the lab for testing.

‘I’ll double check Lickanova visited Goneoffsky,’ Floyd said.

Dotty nodded. 'If he did, then we're back to square one. Who shot Goneoffsky and who locked Lickanova in his dressing room?'

'Maybe our culprit has a thing against clowns?' Floyd suggested.

'Or they just hate the ballet, which brings us back to Boneapart,' Dotty said, stepping out into the corridor. The yellow post-it note with Lickanova's name on it had fallen off the door and was now stuck to the floor. She picked it up and turned it over.



Two nil to ME
Detective Dotty
Better luck next time

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

Night was turning into day when Dotty finally made it onto Wagtails Road. Soon the big fat marmalade sun would be peeking over the horizon. Hounds would be stirring and getting ready for the day ahead. Dotty let out a long sigh. She strode past the neat Bowhouses painted in zingy primary colours with manicured blue-grass lawns towards number eighteen. She was tired. She was starving and their mysterious suspect who had a thing about clowns was playing on her mind.

Better luck next time. What that's about? She didn't think the post-it note message had rattled her – not really. But then she felt the hairs on the back of her neck stand up all the way to the tip of her tail. Without looking she stepped off the pavement. A car honked and made her jump. *Get a grip, Dotty. You're losing it.*

Taking more care, Dotty crossed the road and picked up her pace. She trotted down her yellow-flagged path. At the red front door, she put her head up to the eye-swipe sensor. The device turned from white to blue as it scanned the lines and dots of her eyeballs. Match confirmed, it flashed green. The door swung open and she went inside. The door automatically shushed shut behind her.

'Sirius, turn the lights on,' Dotty barked at her smart home hub device. Before going any further, she sniffed. Nothing seemed out of place. Dotty sniffed again to be on the safe side before choosing the deadbolt option on the security screen.

The open-plan living space was simple and divided into quarters. There were sections for chilling, eating, sleeping, and grooming. The walls were sprayed a biscuit-brown throughout, while large canvas paintings added splashes of colour: an orange rectangle, a yellow triangle, a blue circle, and a red square.

She opened a packet meal for one and popped it in the microwave. The machine hummed as her dinner spun round. Her stomach growled. It was a long time since her last bite to eat. The machine went pop-pet-ty ping.

Dinner time.

'Bone appetite' she barked and gobbled the whole lot.

Dotty knew she should really go to bed and get some sleep. But she was still revved up after everything that had happened. Keeping the ballet open was asking for trouble with a crazy hound on the loose attacking clowns.

'Sirius, play some music,' Dotty said, padding over to her desk in the chill-out zone. Her music system crackled and announced: Rag 'n' Bone Dog, 'Shake with Me'.

'Good choice.' Dotty couldn't help woofing along as she tried to find her tablet amongst the clutter of notebooks, half-eaten chews, and stacks of paper. Her phone pinged. The tablet pinged from inside the drawer.

Dotty spun round and knocked over her Police Cadet Academy graduation photo which caused a domino effect. One by one framed pictures of her brothers and sisters toppled over, and her favourite picture of her Ma and Pa fell to the floor.

'Doggit!' She grabbed her iBone. It was a message from Floyd, checking she was home. Dotty breathed a sigh of relief and typed back: Yep! All fine. See you in the lab, later.

Dotty put everything back and made herself comfy on her favourite polka dot cushion. She entered the tablet passcode and opened up the NoteMaker Yapp. Every case was different but the key to unlocking any case was to narrow down the information and sort it in a way that would help her find a pattern or motive for the crimes. Only then could she think about putting the pieces of the puzzle together. Dotty started to write down what she knew.

THE FACTS

Two shows
Two nights
Two disasters
Same production
Same role
Two different dancers

THE EVIDENCE

Dart & poison from flower
Blood & fabric in fly tower
Possible pawprints?
Lickanova's tights?

THE SUSPECT

Smells fruity
Knows the theatre
No trouble getting in or out
Knows the ballet / music
Knew fly tower not in use
/ monitor would be off
Excellent shooter
Good with technology
Likes games

POSSIBLE MOTIVES

Doesn't like the ballet
Grudge against Goneoffsky
Grudge against Lickanova
Grudge against Babooshka
~~Grudge against me~~

SUSPECT LIST

1. Babooshka (ballet boss)

Motive: Needs money. Headlines sell tickets. Wants the ballet in the spotlight.

Opportunity: Claims he was in production box when Goneoffsky was shot. Only Babooshka's word for it. No witnesses.

Thoughts: Quick to replace dancers. Desperate to keep ballet open. Needs to pay the wages. Why didn't Babooshka order Hank to drop the curtain when Goneoffsky got shot? Curtain came down when Lickanova was a no show onstage. Floyd was with Babooshka when Lickanova went missing which probably rules him out.

2. Martha (conductor)

Motive: Martha and Goneoffsky argued during the dress rehearsal. Tension between her and Babooshka.

Opportunity: First performance? In the pit. Second performance, Floyd saw Martha on the monitor when the curtain went up for Act 2.

Thoughts: Lickanova said the dog that locked him in his dressing room was a 'he' so it can't be Martha. BUT, Martha and the band wear black onesies. Could be a match with the fluff in the fly.

3. Lickanova (dancer)

Motive: Jealousy? He was supposed be Petrushka No. 1.

Opportunity: Not part of the performance on the opening night. Had run of the theatre and access to the fly tower.

Thoughts: Lickanova victim No. 2. Hospital confirmed he visited Goneoffsky. He did seem upset about his dogfriend. Wait and see what comes back from the blood on the tights before removing from suspect list.

4. Hank (stage manager)

Motive: Tired of being bossed around by the boss?

Opportunity: Hank can't leave his post when the show starts so he could hardly have been hiding up in the fly. But...

Thoughts: Why didn't Hank drop the curtain when Goneoffsky was shot? The curtain came down when Lickanova was a no show at the start of act two. Seems a bit suspect as stage manager, he didn't know his lead dancer wasn't onstage.

5. Boneapart (Broadway big shot)

Motive: Hates the ballet. Payback for Goneoffsky snub. He wants to add the theatre to his list of buildings to equal the Chewberts.

Opportunity: Backstage on the opening night. Could be a distraction?

Thoughts: Bad eyesight so definitely not the shooter. Rich enough to pay someone else. His driver confirmed Boneapart was back at his theatre for the second half of *Phantom*. But if Boneapart's behind this then what's the link to Lickanova?

6. Ballet Corps

Motive: Not been paid.

Opportunity: ?

Thoughts: All dancers are on stage in act 4 so seems unlikely to be one of them. The band have loads of notes to play. The pit is a long way from the fly and the dressing room. Hank? But then who would raise and drop the curtain. Sid on stage door? Not much to do when show starts. Can't imagine Sid doing this.

Who else? Dotty thought, tapping her iStick on the screen.

7. Rufus (property tycoon)

Motive: ??? ~~Loves the ballet.~~

Opportunity: Missed the opening night. In the audience for the second.

Thoughts: Loves the ballet. Sponsors Pavlova, the Ballerina. *Petrushka* is his favourite ballet. Knows the theatre. Turned up at the production box during the rehearsal. Where was he sitting for the show? On good terms with Babooshka and the Mayor. Probably helping to keep the ballet open in return for some favour!!

Dotty remembered she had the list of names from the sign-in book. She retrieved the folded piece of paper from the pouch on her collar. After her dip in the fountain outside Piccolo's the tiny square of paper had stuck together. She carefully opened it and spread out the fragile sheet on her snack table. Some entries were no more than quick squiggles and some dogs had put X for signatures. There was no telling who these hounds were.

8. Unknown Caller

Motive: ??? Grudge against the ballet. Grudge against the dancers.

Opportunity: Succeeded twice backstage!!

Thoughts: Most likely our suspect. Threw down the gauntlet with the first game of hide-and-seek. Bold move putting post-it note message on the dressing room door. Why does he want to involve me in some 'catch me if you can' game? Will there be another clue / another strike on *Petrushka* No. 3? Who is he? Part of the corps? The audience? Not hard to get key code for door between front and back of house. Not changed since forever. How did he get my number?

Dotty chewed the inside of her mouth and added:

I put my number in Sid's sign-in book. Our suspect has got to be attached to the theatre.

FIND OUT / TO DO

Why didn't the curtain come down when Goneoffsky got shot?

Check wardrobe dept for rips and any missing costumes.

Ask Sid about the X and squiggle signatures.

Check how many audience members were ticket holders for both shows.

Dotty sighed and sent her notes to Floyd, Captain Copland, and Scooter. Nothing made sense. There seemed to be more questions than answers. Then a thought popped into her head. She felt a tingle of excitement grab hold of her.

'What if ...?' she barked. 'What if we're not looking for one dog but two dogs working together. That changes everything.'

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

Zzzzz Zzzzz Zzzzz
Zzzzz Zzzzz

BEEP BEEP-BEEP BEEP

BEEP BEEP-BEEP BEEP

Dotty growled and put her paws over her ears to shut out the noise.

BEEP BEEP-BEEP BEEP

BEEP BEEP-BEEP BEEP

'OK! OK!' she barked, reaching for her soft ball alarm clock and flinging it at the wall. Silence.

Dotty rolled out of bed. The morning edition of *The Daily Chews* was on the doormat. She picked up the newspaper and padded to the kitchen for breakfast. Licking her lips, she poured herself a bowl of Wakei-O's Rise and Shine and drowned them in water. She got as far as one mouthful before she caught sight of the headline on the front page:

CLOWN DOWN JOKER strikes again

by Scarlett

Bonesville's Top Crime Repawter

Dotty nearly choked on her cereal. *Grrr! What's she doing giving him a nickname? Grrr!* She read on, shaking her head in disbelief.

Babooshka Ballet's staging of *Petrushka* stopped mid-performance for the second time. Lickanova was found locked in his dressing room. Several sources have confirmed the dancer was too petrified to continue in the title role after being cursed by what some are calling, the Joker. On the opening night, rising-star Goneoffsky was shot with a poisonous dart and remains in hospital.

Tickets for tonight's performance inside the theatre have sold out. But more have gone on sale with the offer of free popcorn for those who want to see what happens next on the big screen in the piazza. The event will also be streamed – for a small sign-up fee – live on *The Daily Chews* news platform.

The ballet boss asks everyone, however you are watching, to dress up as clowns in support of his dancers. **Turn to page 9 for instructions on how to make your very own clown costume!**

Dotty groaned and growled some more, and dashed out the door.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

The forensic laboratory was located on Onyer Way, not far from Bonesville Police Department on Letsby Avenue. With its metal window bars and black exterior, the building looked more like a special pound for dangerous dogs than a high-tech facility for science. The lab evidence presentation was scheduled for half past eight on the dot. Normally, Dotty and Floyd would have let the assigned Doc get on with the job and wait for the results to be uploaded to Yabber. The system allowed detectives to keep track of investigations and share progress updates. But not today. Dotty wanted to be there. This was too important to miss. The trouble was everyone else seemed to have the same idea. Lab Room 2 was packed.

In addition to Doc Martin and his assistant Keith, Dotty, Floyd, and Captain Copland, the Assistant Superintendent was there with his boss, and the head of the Canine Investigation Department (CID). Even the Chief Commander had turned up for the occasion. He'd been given a special chair at the head of the table to sit on, so he didn't have to stand like the rest of them.

'Whenever you're ready,' the Chief Commander ordered.

Doc Martin looked a bit startled at his star line-up of who's who in Bonesville's law enforcement. 'Thank you for coming,' he said, showing his wonky brown stained teeth.

The evidence had been bagged and tagged, and laid out on a shiny, stainless steel table. The Doc's paws shook nervously as he picked up a see-through bag labelled **Fabric in the Fly Tower**.

'We found this tiny piece of black polyester on some cut wire mesh in the fly tower above the stage,' Doc Martin croaked. He cleared his throat. 'The material comes from recycled plastics which are melted into a syrup, filtered through a sieve to create giant pieces of string, and then tightly woven together to make a fleece. Cheap mass-produced coats, jumpers, and blankets are all made from the stuff. This means that identifying the manufacturer is nearly impossible.'

There was a collective growl around the room.

‘Could the fabric be from an item of clothing?’ Dotty said.

‘There’s no way of telling,’ Doc Martin replied. ‘But if you want my personal opinion then I’d say more than likely.’

‘Why’s that?’ Captain Copland asked.

‘Keith and I struggled processing the scene in our paper onesies. The fly tower is very hot with the stage lights on. When we asked for them to be turned off the temperature nose-dived from one extreme to the other. All I’m saying is ... if the shooter was in position before the start of the show it would have been cold—’

‘And as the performance went on,’ Dotty interrupted, ‘the temperature would have risen, because of the heat from the lights. The shooter took off whatever he was wearing to cool down. That’s when the fleece caught on the wire mesh.’

‘Exactly,’ Doc Martin replied.

‘What about pawprints?’ the head of CID asked.

Doc Martin pressed a button on his tablet. An image of the fly tower was projected on to the white wall. The Doc tapped another key and added a blue light filter over the image. ‘The metal platforms and wire mesh barriers have tiny diamond holes. As you can see from our dibs and dabs, there are loads of partial paw prints from hundreds of hounds but nothing that’ll help us pinpoint who they belong to. The same goes for the lift. No identification possible.’

‘I dusted the house box for paw prints in the auditorium,’ Keith, the assistant said. ‘Like the fly. Nothing good enough to run through APIS.’

‘What about the dart?’ Dotty asked.

‘Wiped clean. The shooter was extremely thorough,’ Keith said.

‘Is there anything that helps the case?’ the Chief Commander growled.

Doc Martin grinned and adjusted his white leather collar. ‘We found a teeny-weeny drop of blood in the fly,’ he replied. The pic changed to a red blob with the heading: DEA 1.13.

‘What’s that in Barklish?’ Floyd muttered a bit too loudly.

'This is where things get interesting, detective.' A coloured bar graph appeared underneath listing all the different canine blood groups. 'Find the dog with this rare blood type and you've got your shooter.'

There were a few woofs of excitement around the room.

'Does the blood in the fly match the blood on Lickanova's tights?' Dotty asked.

'I'm afraid not, detective. The dancer is like most of the dogulation, bog standard, DEA 1.1 positive.' On a roll, the Doc picked up the evidence bag with the dart inside. 'I think some of you already know, the toxin the shooter used is from a rare plant.'

Dotty wagged her tail.

The picture changed to a striking red flower with spear-like petals. An L-shaped ruler showed the green stem as twenty-seven centimetres high, while the flower itself was twelve centimetres in width.

'Don't be fooled by this pretty looking thing,' Doc Martin continued. 'The Magnuffnotrott, nicknamed the corpse plant, is extremely toxic. In bloom, the flower produces an attractive sweet-smelling fragrance but this soon morphs into something rotten as the head starts to droop. When this happens the sap from a single stem can be deadly.'

'Where can we find this killer plant?' Dotty asked.

'The Grimaldi marshes along the Blackwater river.'

'Doc, if I'm hearing you correctly,' Captain Copland said. 'We're hunting a shooter with rare blood, who likes rare flowers from far flung places.'

'I couldn't have put it better myself,' he said.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

A press conference had been scheduled for ten thirty. This was so there would be plenty of time to get reports out on the lunchtime news. The Chief Commander, Captain Copland, and a dog from the press office who was having a very bad hair day, with crinkly strands sticking up all over the place, faced the media. They sat at a table draped with the Bonesville Police Department shield staring out at a packed room.

Dotty and Floyd stood at the back, behind the mass of cameras and journalists. The Chief announced the Babooshka Ballet would remain open. There would be a heavy police presence inside and outside the theatre to ensure the safety of everyone. Bonesville would not be frightened by the act of one selfish criminal and he urged whoever it was to give themselves up. When the Chief finished giving his statement every paw in the room shot up. Everyone started barking and firing questions at the same time.

‘Have you got any suspects?’

‘Any idea who’s the Joker?’

‘Is it safe to go to the ballet?’

‘Why don’t you close the ballet until this is all over?’

The Chief leaned forward, holding his audience’s attention. ‘We’re investigating several lines of enquiry. I have complete faith in my detectives to do their job and stand by our motto to *pawtect and serve* the whole community. We will catch this culprit and, in the meantime, show our support for our first-class ballet company. Next question.’

‘Scarlett, from *The Daily Chews*. The Joker clearly knows their way around the theatre. Could this be an inside job?’

There were several woofs and gasps around the room.

Captain Copland showed no emotion on her face and answered the question. ‘There’s no evidence to suggest that *anyone* from Babooshka Ballet is involved.’ She pointed at a stout brown dog in the third row.

‘I have one more question,’ Scarlett howled. ‘What type of poison was in the dart?’

The captain's tone was friendly but firm. They would not be revealing any details about the poison at this stage. She went back to the brown dog. Dotty felt her phone vibrate and unclipped it from her collar.

Press conferences don't have to be boring.

Are you ready for our next game,

DETECTIVE?

There were more questions from the floor, but Dotty wasn't listening. Her eyes were scanning every hound in the room.

'Grrr! Where are you?' she muttered.

'What's up?' Floyd asked.

Dotty's phone buzzed again.

I'll throw you a bone to help you out.

Twelve is the magic number.

Maybe this time you'll try a bit harder.

BUZZ. BUZZ.

Another message.

Dotty gasped.

Solve the Puzzle and Save a Clown!

O	B	S	T	T	L	W	S	E	S	R	E	L	W
B	K	D	H	L	R	N	B	R	U	A	E	A	E
H	S	R	P	E	T	R	U	S	H	K	A	L	A
E	T	F	O	A	B	D	Y	T	T	O	D	H	R
E	O	B	E	T	T	U	C	M	H	E	O	B	I
T	E	A	O	H	U	E	B	K	G	L	N	U	N
R	O	L	D	R	T	Y	A	T	L	L	S	C	G
N	H	L	M	E	U	W	B	U	U	D	T	E	K
N	H	E	O	E	E	E	O	A	K	T	A	L	D
P	W	T	R	T	K	D	O	T	B	T	G	B	D
H	O	A	F	N	E	A	S	X	O	E	E	K	O
O	H	O	I	T	U	V	H	N	U	M	B	E	R
O	S	P	A	E	T	B	K	D	W	H	O	L	E
S	R	U	L	A	H	E	A	O	O	B	A	E	A

On your marks. Get set. Go.

You haven't got all day.

The Joker!

The Chief stood up to leave the meeting. **Bleep. Ping. Ping. Bing. Ping. Ring. Ring. Ding. Ting.** All the phones in the room started going off. There were stunned looks from googly-eyed journalists reading their screens. The pack synchronised. Working as one they turned and with a higgledy-piggledy cha-cha-cha made an undignified dash for the door.

'Scarlett! Stop!' Dotty barked.

'Got things to do,' she howled, trying to make a run for it.

Dotty lunged forward. She grabbed Scarlett by her mauve turtleneck collar and spun her round.

'Get off me,' Scarlett howled. 'I've got a code to crack.'

'Scarlett, give me your phone.'

'What? And let those hacks get a head start.'

'You got the puzzle?' Dotty said.

Scarlett flicked her wispy, stray strands of hair out of her face. Her long dangerous-looking multi-coloured painted nails tapped the screen of her phone. 'Seems like everyone got the message.'

'Show me,' Dotty demanded.

Scarlett held out her phone.

'My next challenge,' Dotty said, letting her go.

'The Joker's in contact with you, isn't he?' Scarlett said. 'I can help. Solve the puzzle and I'll splash what you need on the front of *The Daily Chews*. In return...'

Dotty knew what was coming. 'All right. When this is over, you'll be first in line for an exclusive.'

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

Back at Special Branch HQ there was a sense of urgency in the air. Dotty, Floyd, and Scooter had pushed their desks together and were hunched over large paper printouts of the puzzle. They'd been there for what seemed like forever, trying to make sense of what was in front of them. The Joker's 'Save a Clown' challenge was all over the news and every type of social media platform from WhatsYapp and WoofSnap to ChinWag. The Bonesville Police Department's phone lines were jammed. Do-gooders far and wide were calling the station suggesting names for the Joker or claiming they'd solved the letters game. None of them had.

'Frobly-mobly. This is like trying to find a fart in a tumble dryer,' Floyd said.

'There has to be twelve words in this jumble of letters,' Dotty barked. 'The Joker's message said twelve is the magic number. That's got to be a clue.'

'I've found some words,' Scooter yelled, triumphantly.

'What you got?' Dotty said.

Scooter showed his printout to Dotty and Floyd. He had drawn lines through some of the letters to make: NUMBER, WHOLE, and TEA.

'Good work, Scooter. Keep going,' Dotty said.

'TEA? Why would the Joker put tea in a puzzle to save a clown?' Floyd growled.

'Floyd, you're not helping. Go grab us a takeaway from Maggie's Mutts. We'll crack on with this,' Dotty said. 'And while you're out, see how Goneoffsky's doing.'

Floyd was nearly out the door when he stopped. 'My nana liked these games. I'm sure three letter words don't count, only four or more, and you can't use the same letter twice.'

Dotty rolled her eyes and copied down Scooter's words. 'I've found PETRUSHKA, BABOOSHKA, and WEARING,' she said, tapping her pencil on the table. 'Poops. You know what? I think Floyd's right. Tea is wrong. But go one letter up from the 'A' and we have 'B' then follow the column down the page and we have BALLET.'

‘The B also makes BET,’ Scooter barked. ‘Oh, that’s three letters.’

‘We’ve already used the B,’ Dotty barked.

‘Hang on. Go down from the T in BET and we have THREE.’

‘WOOF! And next to that there’s TUTU. Finally, we’re getting somewhere.’

Dotty went over to the white board and wrote the words they’d found so far. The smell of ink and the squeaky sound reminded Dotty of being a cadet at the Academy. Her old teacher had drilled it into her year group from the very first day that they always had to look at things from different angles to get a different perspective.

Dotty turned her printout upside down. Straight away, she spotted her name under the A in PETRUSHKA. ‘Thank you,’ she whispered and ran her paw across the fourth line to show Scooter.

‘Yip! Yip!’ he said. ‘Look, under your D for Dotty and there’s ONSTAGE. This game is more fun than I thought it would be.’

‘We have words going forwards and backwards, and some going down the grid,’ Dotty said. ‘What about diagonals?’

Floyd came back with the news Goneoffsky was still out of it and Lickanova hadn’t left his side since being banished from the theatre. He set the munchies down on the table: veggie frittatas and dried banana chips. They all licked their lips and tucked in.

‘That’s better,’ Floyd said. ‘And you’re not going to believe this but I’ve found two four-letter words.’

‘Better late than never,’ Dotty said. ‘Come on then, tell us what they are.’

‘SHOW,’ Floyd barked. ‘Two lines from the bottom, second letter in going up the grid. And next to the S, there’s the letter P which gives us PINK in a diagonal.’

‘How many words?’ Dotty barked.

Scooter counted the ones he’d marked up on his sheet. ‘Yip! We’ve got the magic number. TWELVE.’

O	B	S	T	T	L	W	S	E	S	R	E	L	W
B	K	D	H	L	R	N	B	R	U	A	E	A	E
H	S	R	P	E	T	R	U	S	H	K	A	L	A
E	T	F	O	A	B	D	Y	T	T	O	D	H	R
E	O	B	E	T	T	U	C	M	H	E	O	B	I
T	E	A	O	H	U	E	B	K	G	L	N	U	N
R	O	L	D	R	T	Y	A	T	L	L	S	C	G
N	H	L	M	E	U	W	B	U	U	D	T	E	K
N	H	E	O	E	E	E	O	A	K	T	A	L	D
P	W	T	R	T	K	D	O	T	B	T	G	B	D
H	O	A	F	N	E	A	S	X	O	E	E	K	O
O	H	O	I	T	U	V	H	N	U	M	B	E	R
O	S	P	A	E	T	B	K	D	W	H	O	L	E
S	R	U	L	A	H	E	A	O	O	B	A	E	A

Dotty, Floyd, and Scooter stared at the puzzle, looking pretty smug with themselves. Then Floyd spoiled the moment.

‘Not wanting to be the party-pooper,’ he said. ‘But all we’ve got is a jumble of words. I can’t make head nor tail of this message.’

Dotty grunted and wrote the remaining words on the whiteboard.

NUMBER WHOLE PETRUSHKA BABOOSHKA WEARING BALLET

THREE TUTU DOTTY ONSTAGE SHOW PINK

‘We need to think like the Joker and put them in the right order so they make sense,’ Dotty said.

They tried different arrangements.

All of them sounded equally ridiculous from:

WHOLE BABOOSHKA BALLET NUMBER ONSTAGE PETRUSHKA

WEARING THREE PINK TUTU DOTTY SHOW

to

PETRUSHKA BALLET WHOLE BABOOSHKA SHOW ONSTAGE

WEARING PINK TUTU DOTTY NUMBER THREE

Dotty's mind was racing. *The clue in my first challenge was Petrushka's theme tune and the game was hide-and-seek. This time it's a puzzle so the clue to the real test must be in the words. Doggit! What does this psycho dog want me to do?* Then it hit Dotty. The Joker was giving her instructions.

'I think... I think... I've got it,' Dotty barked. She wiped the white board clean and with a brand new red marker pen wrote:

BABOOSHKA BALLET

'That's where he wants me to go. The next performance is...'

PETRUSHKA NUMBER THREE

'And ... then with the words we have left...' Her breath caught in the back of her throat. 'He wants me...'

DOTTY ONSTAGE WHOLE SHOW

WEARING PINK TUTU

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

Floyd and Scooter couldn't stop laughing. They rolled on the floor wiggling their bottoms from side to side and kicking their legs in the air. Floyd pranced on tiptoes and so did Scooter. Floyd twirled. Scooter twirled. Floyd hopped. Scooter hopped. This was followed by several wonky star jumps and dodgy splits on all fours.

'Stop it,' Dotty howled. 'Some friends you are.'

'We're just messing with you,' Floyd barked. 'And you've got to admit, this crazy hound has a wicked sense of humour. I'd pay good bonios to see your tip-tappy dance moves in a pink tutu.'

'Grrr! This is pointless,' Dotty snapped.

'*Pointeless*, the Joker's keeping you on your tootsies,' Scooter barked, trying to balance on one leg. 'In your pointe pink ballet shoes.'

Floyd struck a pose. 'Talk to the paw. I think that's 2-2 to me and Scooter.'

'You're so not funny,' Dotty growled.

Floyd and Scooter were howling so much they hadn't noticed Captain Copland standing in the doorway. 'Sounds like you've managed to solve the puzzle,' she said. 'And we have a new ballet star in the making.'

Floyd and Scooter snapped their mouths shut. Their shoulders going up and down was a bit of a giveaway that they were still sniggering inside.

'NOOOOOOOOOOOOO,' Dotty barked. 'There's no way I'm dressing up as a ballerina and being made to look like a fool in front of a sold-out house.'

'Don't forget the show's live on *The Daily Chews*,' Scooter added. 'That means millions and millions and millions can tune in and watch the ballet over and over again for—'

'SCOOTER! You're not helping,' Captain Copland said.

'Anyway, Babooshka would never agree to this,' Dotty said.

'Oh, he'll go for it,' Floyd barked. 'If I've learnt anything from this case, it's headlines sell tickets.'

Dotty's ears drooped. She knew her partner was right.

‘I can see the front pages,’ Floyd went on. ‘Dancing detective branches out or how about Dotty detective dance debut?’

Dance disaster is probably more like it. Dotty shook her head to shake away the image in her brain. She thought about having a dizzy spell, faking a pulled muscle, or even breaking a leg. None of these options sounded like much fun and then she’d never solve the case. Her heart sank.

Captain Copland held up her paw for silence. ‘Right, detectives, and you too, Scooter. Playtime’s over. This is serious. We have to work out why the Joker wants Dotty onstage. Is it to distract us from something else he’s got planned or is he plotting another audience surprise? If it’s the latter, then Dotty could be the target.’

‘Dotty’ll be part of the pack,’ Floyd said. ‘She’s not dancing *Petrushka*.’

‘By doing what the Joker wants, Dotty saves a clown by becoming a clown,’ Captain Copland replied. ‘He’s trying to make her look like a fool. She’s not a professional dancer.’

‘The captain’s right,’ Dotty said. The jovial atmosphere in the room evaporated. ‘That was the point of the puzzle. There’s only one clown in *Petrushka*. You can’t have two and when I’m dressed in pink I’ll be easier to spot onstage as part of the corps.’

‘So, you’re the hit?’ Scooter said.

‘It’s a possibility,’ Dotty said.

Floyd looked horrified. ‘We could pretend we haven’t solved the puzzle.’

‘No way,’ Dotty said. ‘That would put *Petrushka* number three in mortal danger and we’ll look like idiots if we can’t find twelve words. The Joker sent every news hound the puzzle to make sure his demands were known. The odds on no-one cracking the code is highly unlikely.’

There were a few huffs and puffs and some nail chewing as they pondered what to do.

‘I know, I’ll take your place,’ Floyd said.

Dotty smiled grimly. ‘That’s really sweet, Floyd. I’m sure you’ll look much better in pink than me. But that’s not going to work. The Joker’s message is very clear.’

They all turned and looked at the message on the white board.

BABOOSHKA BALLET
PETRUSHKA NUMBER THREE
DOTTY ONSTAGE WHOLE SHOW
WEARING PINK TUTU

There was no getting out of the situation. Dotty resigned herself to playing her part. Captain Copland called Babooshka. She signalled a paw up and disappeared into her office. Dotty unclipped her phone and found Scarlett's number. Bonesville's top crime reporter answered on the first ring. After several snorts and more howls of laughter everything was set up. Scarlett ran with a big picture of Dotty in a photoshopped pink tutu under the headline: **BALLET COP SPECTACLE TONIGHT!**

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

It was mid-afternoon and back at the Babooshka Ballet the dancers and the Jellybean Orchestra were starting to arrive for the afternoon rehearsal. The rumour a detective would be part of the show had already done the rounds on the dogvine. Dotty tried to ignore the strange looks and sniggers directed at her. It was one thing enjoying productions as a member of the audience but a totally different ball game trying to imitate a real dancer.

Dotty, Floyd, and Scooter split up to cover more ground. Dotty questioned Sid on the stage door about the X and squiggle signatures in the sign-in book. He couldn't tell her whose they were. The only helpful thought he had was that none of the entries seemed unfamiliar. He insisted he knew everyone who came through his domain. There had been no new faces in the days leading up to the opening of *Petrushka*. This only confirmed for Dotty that their primary suspect was known to the ballet.

She grilled Hank on why the curtain hadn't come down when Goneoffsky was shot with the dart. He said Babooshka didn't tell him to do the drop. He followed orders like everyone else.

Babooshka claimed he'd been so surprised Goneoffsky had timed his death dance fall to the floor on the right beat, he was in a state of shock. It was perfect. Even after weeks of rehearsals he'd only managed this once, to the frustration of both the dancers and the band. The ballet boss told Dotty he'd dashed from his production box to the stage when Goneoffsky failed to get up. It was only when he looked out into the auditorium that he'd remembered about the curtain. By then it was too late. The audience had scarpered, fearing for their lives.

Dotty was hoping Floyd was having more luck in the Wardrobe Department. His job was to find out if any black onesies worn by Martha and the Jellybean Orchestra had gone missing or were in for repairs.

'I've not had any onesies for a long time,' the sewing mistress said, draped in ballet costumes and a strawberry pin cushion stuck on top of her head. 'Players are issued with two concert dress kits when they start with the

band. After that they're entitled to one free replacement every other year. To be honest I spend most of my time fixing the dancers' costumes. They're always getting rips and tears.'

'Could you double check?' Floyd asked, wagging his tail.

The sewing mistress showed Floyd her clipboard chart for the band. The last entry was for Martha. According to her notes, Martha's black onesie had mysteriously disappeared from the band's dressing room several weeks ago. The conductor had been given a new kit without charge.

Scooter had been tasked with cross-checking audience names on the box office computer. Anyone with tickets for both nights could be their suspect. Scooter scratched his head. Twenty-seven names matched the criteria. He checked to see if any had tickets for that evening. The same twenty-seven popped up again. Scooter scratched his head some more.

'Woof! Herbert, what's the odds on the same dogs buying tickets to three shows on the trot?' Scooter barked.

The box office manager wheeled his chair over to Scooter. He tapped some keys on the keyboard and the screen changed to the seating plan for the hall. 'See these blocked out seats?'

Scooter nodded.

'They belong to what we call Members. Between them, they own seventy-two seats in the stalls and the boxes in the grand tier,' Herbert said. 'We can't sell tickets for those seats even if the owners have no intention of turning up.'

'What?' Scooter said. 'Why's that?'

'The seats were sold to fund the building of the hall. Now they get passed down through family lines or sold on for thousands of bonios.' Herbert dug out the original terms of the agreement and pointed to the third paragraph.

Members are entitled to access their private property for any performance. Nobody else can sit in these seats without their prior permission. Members can sell their seats on the open market or through an agent. The hall cannot under any circumstance play a role in this transaction or buy the seats back. This memorandum lasts 999 years.

'Only another 468 to go,' Herbert said.

‘Have you got contact numbers for these seat holders?’ Scooter asked.
Herbert pressed some more keys on the keyboard and printed out a list.
‘Here you go.’

‘Thanks, that’s really helpful.’

Scooter decided to work his way down the list of names and call them up. If any of the members had been at the first two performances they could potentially be their shooter. Seventeen answered on the first attempt. Twelve had taken up their seats for the first night, four had gone on the second, and one said she was on a *howliday*. Sixteen out of the seventeen were definitely planning on being there later. They were gripped by all the media excitement and what would happen to *Petrushka* number three. Scooter left messages for the remaining ten members to call him back. He was about to take a break and go for a widdle when his phone rang. He tapped the ‘answer’ key.

‘Hello! My name’s Edna,’ the caller said in a quivery voice. ‘Can I speak to the police officer who called me? I can’t remember his name.’

‘That’ll be me. I’m Scooter.’

‘Are you going to arrest me?’ Edna said.

‘Should I?’ Scooter replied.

‘Once upon a time I rode my tricycle on the pavement.’

‘That’s no big deal, everyone’s done that.’

‘And one night I snuck out after lights out so I could go to the ballet.’

Scooter laughed.

‘The great Margot was the Ballerina in *Petrushka*. She was amazing. The best. And I’ve seen all the stars dance the boards. As a pup I dreamed of being her. Alas it was never to be. I was way too tall.’

‘Have you seen Babooshka’s version of *Petrushka*?’ Scooter asked.

It was Edna’s turn to laugh. ‘I’m in a care home, my dear. I can’t get out any more without setting off the alarms.’

She’s definitely not going to be our shooter, Scooter thought. ‘Well, it’s been nice talking—’

‘But my great grand-dog. He’s ever so generous. He just bought me a big flat 3D-TV so I’ll be tuning in to watch *Petrushka* on what’s it called?’

‘*The Daily Chews* online,’ Scooter said.

‘Yes, that’s it. The screen’s so big I’ll not have to wear my glasses.’

‘That’s lovely. Enjoy the show. Now I really have to—’

‘My great grand-dog. He’s called Rufus. He’ll be there tonight. He looks after my two seats in box eighteen. He loves the ballet almost as much as I do. He’s a great supporter of the Babooshka ballet.’

Scooter’s ears pricked up. He remembered seeing a ‘Rufus’ on the updated suspect list Dotty had circulated. He pressed Edna for more. But she didn’t know for sure if Rufus had used her seats on the opening night.



Dotty stood onstage in her pink tutu and looked out over the empty rows in the stalls. Soon the auditorium would be packed with ticket holders. Her whole body trembled. This was her worst nightmare, made a trillion times worse by the thought that she could be taken out at any moment during the show. Hank scuttled about, barking instructions at her.

‘I’ll put white sticky-tape markers on the floor for the opening of Act One,’ he said. ‘All you need to do is hop, shuffle, shuffle, hop to the first cross, stop and twirl to your left, repeat the steps to the next cross, stop and twirl this time to your right, and then go back and forth between the two crosses three times.’

‘Easy for you to say,’ Dotty said. ‘You’re not wearing a big itchy doughnut around your waist.’

‘Detective, concentrate.’ Hank stuck several white Xes on the floor. ‘When the Magician pops out from behind the puppet theatre follow the green markers. You go up on your tippy-toes. Keep a straight back, raise paws above the head, and tip tap toe—’

‘I’ll never remember all this.’

‘Copy the street dancers.’

‘But then I’ll be behind everyone else.’

‘Just try your best. The important thing is not to be nervous. It’s not as if the punters are here to watch you.’

‘No, but the Joker’s here for me,’ Dotty muttered under her breath.

‘Hold on,’ Hank said and tapped the side of his headphones. ‘What? Sid, can you say that again?’ He wagged his short stumpy tail. ‘Got you. Over and out.’ Hank turned to Dotty. ‘There’s a package waiting for you at stage door. Better be quick.’

Dotty padded awkwardly down the corridor past dancers doing their warm up exercises. With every paw step the twelve stiff layers of her tutu made a crackling sound, like a bowl of exploding rice puffs drowning in water.

Sid was sitting behind his security counter holding a bunch of colourful balloons tied together with a big pink satin bow and flowing ribbons.

‘Woo-woof!’ he barked, nervously. ‘These err ... arrived err ... for you. I ... err ... I didn’t ... err ... see ... err ... who dropped them off. I was doing ...’

‘Let me guess.’ Dotty glanced at the clock on the wall. It was 19:03. ‘You were doing your push-ups.’

‘I’m sorry,’ Sid said.

The stage door banged open. Dotty’s nose twitched. Lemon and fartsberry shot up her nostrils. Rufus sauntered in, swinging his tail from side to side. He was wearing his red, yellow and gold floral double-necked collar with matching silk waistcoat and white paw cuffs held together with his expensive *awesome* and *pawsome* Gruff cufflinks.

‘Evening, Sid,’ Rufus said. He picked up the pencil in his right paw.

You’re so not awesome in my book, Dotty thought.

Rufus signed in and turned to Dotty. ‘Break a leg, detective or *merde* as we like to say in the ballet. The tutu suits you.’

Before Dotty could reply, Rufus had disappeared. Her ears pricked up. She could hear him howling with laughter. *Grrr...*

‘Take no notice,’ Sid said. ‘He’s another big show off who thinks he owns the place. *Merde, Dotty! Merde*. You’ll be grand out there and don’t worry, I’ve got your back.’

Dotty wasn’t so sure about that. She checked the last entry in the book. ‘So, he’s our mystery \mathcal{X} ’ she muttered and took the balloons off Sid.

Attached to the bow

was a plain white card

with a printed message:

**Every step you take
I'll be watching you.
The Joker**

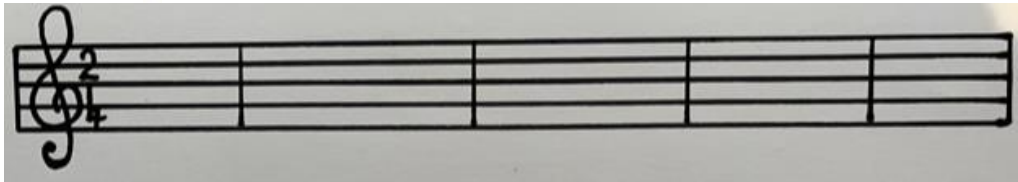
PART FOUR: CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

Dotty stood waiting in the wings, stage right, with the rank and file ballet dancers. With only a few minutes to curtain up, the sound of excited hounds filtered backstage from the auditorium. She couldn't help wondering how many dogs inside and outside would be watching a ballet for the very first time. Her legs wobbled at the thought. Her whole body felt like her veins had been pumped with liquid terror. She sang a silent song in her head to help calm her nerves.

THE ODE OF THE PETRIFIED

🐾Poochelbel

Scherzo ♩ = 108



Hank wagged his tail. He was watching Martha on the monitor. She banged her baton several times on her music stand. The audience stopped muttering and there was some last-minute coughing and throat clearing.

The oboe played a long A.

The house went quiet. Everyone was ready. Hank held his paw in the air to signal showtime. 'Merde.' 'Merde.' 'Merde.' 'Merde,' rippled down the line of dancers. The music started and the red curtain went up. A ballerina gave Dotty a hefty shove and she stumbled onto the stage into the glare of the lights. She froze. Someone sniggered. Dotty raised an ear. Another snigger. Slightly muffled this time. She couldn't be sure but it seemed to be coming from box eighteen.

'You can do this,' Dotty muttered and retreated upstage.

The dancers were going about their routine, prancing and twirling around the square, enjoying the fun of the fair. Hop, shuffle, shuffle, hop. Dotty made it to the first white sticky-tape marker on the floor. She twirled to the right, bumped into another dancer, tumbled backwards and nearly fell, only to realise she should have gone left.

‘Watch out,’ the dancer growled, pirouetting away from her.

Hop, shuffle, shuffle, hop. At the next marker, Dotty was in a state of panic. Her heart was pounding. *Which way?* she screamed in her head. She spun right and breathed a sigh of relief. *Phew! I did it.*

Two drummers stepped in front of the puppet theatre attracting the attention of the crowd with their drumrolls. The Magician appeared. The dancers went up on their tip-toes and lurched forward. Dotty tried to do the same, but she was three-beats behind everyone else. There were howls of laughter from the stalls. Dotty hadn’t realised her tutu was caught on the sweet stall. When she tried to carry on with the routine, her tutu [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED].¹⁹

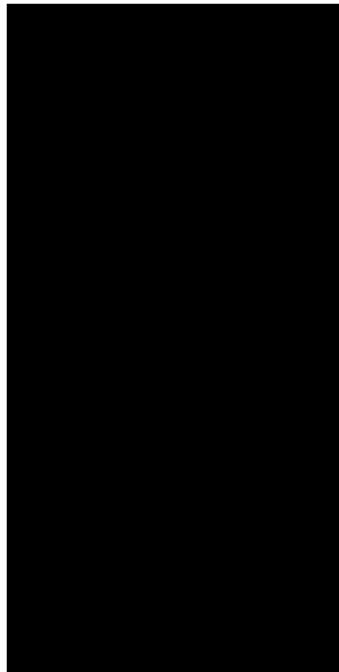
¹⁹ This is most unusual. Dotty has requested that her debut stage appearance is not documented any further and what is already down for the tutu scene is blacked out, otherwise she will refuse to continue with the story. I decided in the best interests of you, dear reader, that after getting this far, you’d probably prefer to know what happened with the rest of the case. I can only apologise and report there was much heckling and howling from the audience, most of whom were only there to see what would happen to *Petrushka No. 3*. I have Dotty’s permission to restart the story following his death dance so we get to the end of the ballet.

Petrushka number three lay stretched out on the floor, pretending his head was broken. The dancers formed a circle around him. One of them pulled Dotty into the pack and they closed any gaps so the audience couldn't see what was about to happen. Without warning, a section of the stage floor dropped half a meter and stopped.

Petrushka howled
and

whoosh

he disappeared
into the black hole.



Dotty peered into the
dizzying drop below.
'Pssst! Phumbleklot.'

'I'm all right,' he barked,
a bit too loudly.

‘Step back,’ a dancer growled. ‘Don’t get caught in the grave trap.’

And then in less than a tail wag, another floor appeared. There was a slight hiss as it slid up into the gap with a puppet doll who was the spitting image of Petrushka. The dancers parted. They stretched out their paws, pointing to the lifeless body. Dotty didn’t move. She was momentarily mesmerised by the speed of the switch and then it dawned on her. No one would have eyes on Phumbleklot – the real Petrushka – now under the stage all on his own.

Doggit! Why didn’t I know about this?

A dog in the dress circle barked, ‘Is he dead for real?’

‘Nothing’s real in that performance,’ someone roared in the stalls.

‘This is boring. When’s the Joker going to turn up?’ another barked.

The dancers looked anxiously at one another. Dotty frowned, feeling her hackles rise. A dancer with long floppy ears dressed as an old-fashioned police officer spun behind the puppet theatre in search of the Magician. Several popcorn tubs were thrown at the stage. They fell short and landed in the orchestra pit.

The orchestra threw the popcorn tubs back out into the stalls. There was nearly a full-blown riot as more members of the audience joined in, tossing tubs and ballet programmes into the orchestra, which were lobbed straight back in the direction they came from. Order was restored when burpy ploddy noises from the bassoons grabbed everyone’s attention and the audience settled back down to watch what was left of the ballet.

Martha picked up the tempo. Unfortunately, Dotty was out of time with her one-two, one-two, two step shuffle-shuffle. It was the shift to the triplet beats that got her. Trying to make up for being off the beat, Dotty flung herself in the air and attempted what can only be generously described as a lopsided star jump flop. The audience were in stitches. Box eighteen erupted into high-pitched squeals of laughter. Dotty glared in that direction.

Back in the zone, Dotty refocused on the performance. The Magician held up Petrushka’s corpse, wiggling it to show the fairground crowd and the audience in the auditorium that he wasn’t real. Petrushka was just a doll made from wood and sawdust.

The lights went out.

And the red curtain dropped to the floor.

CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

Dotty ran off stage right into the wings and demanded to see Phumbleklot. Still in his Petrushka costume, the dancer stepped forward and wagged his tail. He was alive. He was in one piece. Dotty felt a rush of relief. Putting aside the dancing, they'd miraculously got through all four acts without any show-stopping disasters and so far, nobody had died.

'Get ready to take your bows,' Hank barked. 'There's not much applause so you'd better hurry or you'll miss what's left of it.'

The rank and file ballet dancers quickly shuffled onto the stage in a long neat line. The curtain went up and they bowed to a smattering of appreciation that was still being drowned out by a lot of very loud booooooooooooooooooing. The Magician, the Ballerina, and the Moor were next. The audience response wasn't much better, although there were several enthusiastic barks of 'Pawsome Pavlova', which echoed around the house.

They were barely out of their second bow when Phumbleklot announced, 'My turn.' Not bothering to wait for Hank's signal, he pirouetted onto the stage. Phumbleklot's twirl came to a stop with his back to the audience which he corrected with a half-spin.

'Booo,' several members of the audience howled.

'You can't even get that right,' yelled another.

'What a klot,' Hank muttered. 'Now you.'

'I've done my part,' Dotty said.

'You're the only performer not out there,' Hank said. 'Now, get a spin-on before the applause totally dries up. Nothing worse than taking the boards in silence.'

Dotty scrunched up her nose and pushed her shoulders back defiantly. 'I shouldn't be going on last.'

'Well then, you should've gone with the rank and file.'

'Please. No. I... I can't go on again.'

'The show's not over.'

'What do you mean?' Dotty said with a note of panic in her voice.

‘The show’s not over until the final curtain comes down. Everyone’s waiting.’ Hank gave her a nudge. ‘Head up, tail up, and don’t forget to smile.’

Dotty reluctantly made her entrance. The blinding light during the performance had been dimmed. This was the first time Dotty could actually see into the auditorium. She gulped. Hundreds and hundreds of hounds, all dressed as clowns, stared back at her in silence. Petrushka held out his paw, gesturing for Dotty to step into the spotlight. She tentatively tip-toed across the front of the stage.

‘The comedy dancing cop. Bravo! Detective Dotty! Bravo.’

Dotty turned. *Box eighteen again and it’s—*

‘Bravo!’ Rufus was out of his seat. He laughed. ‘Bravo!’ He laughed so much he could hardly get the words out. ‘Bbbb-Bravo! Detective Dooooootty.’ He slow-clapped his paws above his head. Everyone started joining in. ‘Bravo! Bravo!’ and laughing in between.

Dotty had never felt more of a plonker in her whole life. She wanted the floor to open and swallow her up. Then something switched. Her whole body was shaking but not from nerves. This was pure rage. She forgot all about the possibility of the Joker taking her out. She just wanted to bite Rufus very hard where it would hurt.

The curtain came down and shot straight back up again.

The dancers bowed once more.

When Dotty looked up Rufus was gone.

Doggit!

Hank lowered the curtain for the final time that night.

Doggit!

Doggit!

CHAPTER THIRTY

Dotty quickly changed out of what was left of her tattered pink tutu and put on her red police collar. She wanted to go home and forget all about the night she had just endured. The last thing she needed was an aftershow shindig backstage with the dancers, the players, and VIP special guests. But there was no getting out of it. Captain Copland's orders. The party was a good place to gather more information and get insider gossip that could help the case. Dotty headed for the Green Room.

One question raced around her head.

Why didn't the Joker strike?

Her thoughts lurched from one extreme to the other in her desperation to find an answer that made sense.

Too many beat cops dotted about the place to risk getting caught.

Solving the puzzle really did save a clown.

No. No. No. He wanted to mess with my head.

He was enjoying the pantomime.

The joke was on me.



The Green Room walls were mint green with fuzzy black blobs, but that was more to do with the mould rather than the colour of the paint. The hum of excited hounds laughing and chin wagging was very different to the nervous energy before the show. Dotty sniffed. It was easy to distinguish between the VIP guests with their expensive perfumes and the pongy paws of the dancers. She wrinkled her nose and looked around. The 'high-society' dogs had not dressed up as common clowns. They wore pearl chokers, diamond-studded collars, clip-on twinkly bow ties, and talked loudly in posh voices, clutching plastic champagne flutes like they were at a fancy dress party.

Martha and the Jellybean Orchestra sat together as a pack near the door. They were still in their black onesies, sipping bottles of Snuffles beer, and seemed to be having a ball of a time. Dotty side-stepped towards them and raised an ear. A player was telling a joke about a thief stealing a guitar from

a shop called No Strings Attached. He was chased down the high street by a beat cop barking, **you're under arrr...rest**. The player paused before delivering the punch line: 'And the thief replied, **is that a fret?**'

There were howls of laughter and even more when Martha asked in a deadpan voice, if the thief was under a quaver or a crotchet rest.

'I've got one,' another player said. 'Why couldn't the music teacher open the piano lid?'

'I don't know,' several chorused.

'The keys were inside.'

'Ting! Ting!' Martha said, playing an imaginary triangle. 'Very funny. I'll be back in a *minuet*.' She got up and stared at Dotty in a funny sort of a way – as if she wanted to say something. But then changed her mind and walked towards Babooshka who was deep in conversation with the Mayor.

Dotty spotted the rank and file ballet dancers at the opposite end of the room. They were now wearing everyday collars and an assortment of obligatory leg warmers, taking advantage of the free nibbles on offer to stuff their faces. She went over. A few of them curtsayed, some sniggered.

The long sideboard table was draped with a white linen tablecloth. There were silver foil platters covered with plastic domes, and under them all kinds of tasty treats including pickled marrow bones, carrot sticks, and crinkle-cut sweet potato chips. Dotty licked her lips and put a selection in a bowl.

She wandered around the Green Room, lingering next to different groups, eavesdropping on snippets of conversations. The Magician and the Moor were entertaining two guests wearing an astonishing amount of bling.

'That's right, my dear,' the Moor said in a sing-song voice. 'There's little funding for dance so we're always looking for individual sponsors. Sometime soon, I'm going to be Babooshka's top dancer.' He put a paw around the shoulder of one of the hounds.

Dotty rolled her eyes and sighed. She noticed Phumbleklot. He was grinning from ear to ear, nattering to Pavlova. The ballerina seemed in a world of her own, her eyes fixed on the door as if she was waiting for

someone. She sensed Dotty's gaze and turned towards her. Dotty popped a potato chip in her mouth. The ballerina looked away in disgust.

Floyd appeared next to Dotty. 'Here, drink this.'

She downed the bottle of Snuffles in one long gulp and burped. 'Not sure I should give up the day job.'

'I thought you were amazing,' Floyd said. 'No one else could or would have done that. You saved a clown and I'm proud to call you my partner.'

Dotty felt totally embarrassed for the second time that night. She grabbed another Snuffles off the drinks trolley that was being pushed around by a young waiter in a dickie collar bow tie. Out of the corner of her eye, she caught Martha and Hank nose-to-nose, eyeball-to-eyeball. Martha bared her teeth and pushed him. Hank stomped off in a huff.

'I wonder what that's about,' she muttered, munching a carrot stick. 'These are delicious.'

'Hey! detectives, nice to see you,' Phumbleklot said, swishing his tail.

'What's up with Martha and Hank?' Dotty asked.

Phumbleklot shrugged. 'Probably a lovers' tiff or it's scrabble season again. Their relationship is the worst kept secret ever.'

Dotty tried not to show her surprise. *Martha must have been waiting for Hank when we turned up at Mambow's. I'd never have put them together.*

When Phumbleklot was out of earshot, Floyd said, 'There was no time to tell you earlier. Scooter found twenty-seven names with tickets for all three performances.'

'Crikey! That sounds like a lot,' Dotty said.

'Yes and no. Turns out, they're Members and own seventy-two seats,' he replied. 'Nobody else can sit in them even if they're not going to turn up.'

'Do we know how many came to all three shows?'

'We're still chasing down ten members. One of them could be our Joker.'

'At least that gives us something to work with.'

'Scooter's on the case. He also had an interesting chat with Rufus's great grandma, Edna. She has two seats in box eighteen which he looks after.'

'But Rufus wasn't in the audience on the opening night. We know he was here yesterday and he sure made his presence known earlier.'

'We've only got his word for the first night and Edna didn't think Rufus would miss the premiere of his favourite ballet.'

Dotty chewed this over for a moment. *Box eighteen is opposite the house box. Theatres are mirror images. Easy to get back stage from there.* Her eyes scanned the room. *And where is that dreadful hound?*

The party was interrupted by the sound of someone barking.

'Bow wow wow,' Babooshka howled. 'May... I... have... your attention.'

Everyone stopped what they were doing. Hank and the Mayor shouldered their way through the crowd to stand either side of the ballet boss. Dotty moved a few steps to her left to get a better view.

Babooshka cleared his throat, and then again, a bit louder. After the third time, he started his party speech. 'Thank you, dear dahlings, dancers, and players.' His eyes met Martha's. A flicker of understanding passed between them and then it was gone. 'The grrreat Babooshka...'

Dotty was expecting the band's usual Babooshka-ya-ya but it never came. The band sat quietly with Martha, heads all tilted to the right listening to what was being said. *The great pawtenders! Everyone's on their best behaviour, playing their part in front of the guests.*

'... is happy to welcome each and every one of you to our celebratory drinks party,' Babooshka continued. 'Finally, and not without difficulty from certain quarters, we've managed to get to the end of a show without losing a clown.'

A round of applause echoed around the room.

'He doesn't seem too pleased about it,' Floyd muttered.

'The performance may not have been quite what I expected...' Babooshka flung a paw in Dotty's direction. 'But nevertheless, the good news is ... there's no such thing as bad publicity. *Petrushka* is now sold out in the theatre and the piazza for the rest of the season, and online sales are through the roof. The Babooshka Ballet will be even more famous.'

The room exploded into howls of agreement.

'That's all he cares about,' Floyd whispered.

Dotty grunted and made a mental note where everyone was positioned. The rank and file ballet dancers were guarding the table of nibbles. The Moor

and the Magician and their guests hadn't budged from their spot. A worried-looking Pavlova stood on her own, eyes fixed on the door. Rufus was still a no-show and Phumbleklot was nowhere to be seen. Dotty checked behind her just in case she'd accidentally missed him.

Hank gave Babooshka a champagne flute.

'To old friends and new friends.' Babooshka paused to take a breath.

He raised his plastic glass. 'Bottoms up! The show must go—'

At that moment there was an almighty piercing howl.

Everyone turned in the direction of the sound.

Dotty's ears pointed forward, her tail went stiff.

'Theatres are full of drama,' Babooshka yelped, emptying his glass in one gulp. 'Probably some clumsy klot stubbed a toe.'

The cry came again. 'AWWWWWWWWWOOOOOOOOOOO!'

And again. This time slightly more muted but still totally terrifying.

'AWWWWWWWWWOOOOOOOOOOO!'

CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE

Dotty dropped her bowl of treats. She pushed past the Moor and the Magician barking, 'Out of my way. Move it.' In a flash, she was out of the Green Room with Floyd hot on her tail. They sprinted down the dingy passageway. Turned left. Turned right. They rounded the last corner which brought them onto the backstage corridor. There was another howl.

'Where's that coming from?' Floyd said.

'The stage,' Dotty barked. 'Come on.'

The red velvet curtain that separated the dancers from the audience was up. One soft-edged spotlight illuminated the boards.

That's strange. The curtain was down at the end of the show. Then Dotty remembered. They keep a light on for the ballet ghosts to perform at night. Grrr! All this make-believe is getting to me.

'There's nobody there,' Floyd whispered.

'Shhh!' Dotty said.

'Arrrgh!' Floyd shrieked. 'I swear something just rustled my hair.'

'You're imagining things,' Dotty snapped.

'No, I'm not,' Floyd protested.

'IS SOMEBODY THERE? HELP! HELP!'

Dotty tiptoed onto the stage. 'Phumbleklot, is that you?'

'The trap's open,' he yelped.

Dotty knew instantly what he meant. 'He's under the stage. Stick next to me,' she told Floyd. The further upstage they went, the darker it got. 'Whoa, back up, partner. There's a big hole in the floor.'

'Chip sticks that was close,' Floyd said, jumping backwards.

'Are you, all right?' Dotty barked into the elevator trap in front of the puppet theatre.

'I think I've broken my leg,' Phumbleklot cried.

'Don't panic. We'll get you out of there,' Floyd said.

'What happened?' Dotty said.

'I was nipping outside for a smoke before Babooshka started one of his boring speeches. I know I shouldn't. But I always have one after a show as a special treat. Then I heard someone calling my name. He said there's a big surprise waiting for you onstage.'

'And, you didn't think this was strange?'

'Why, no. I love surprises.'

Dotty sighed. She couldn't believe Phumbleklot had been so stupid and careless. 'Then what?'

'I followed the sound of the voice. A clown was holding the biggest, the most magnificent bouquet of flowers I've ever seen.'

The Joker, Dotty thought. *He must have opened the trap when everyone was in the Green Room.*

Phumbleklot continued, 'He said come closer, they're yours for dancing Petrushka. I did and the next thing I knew, I was under the stage.'

'Did he say anything else?' Dotty asked.

'Got to watch your step. Theatres are dangerous places and you're the worst Petrushka I've ever seen. And then he threw the flowers in after me. They're all bent and broken.' Phumbleklot was now crying and mumbling. 'My leg. My flowers. My leg. My flowers.'

'Don't suppose you got a look at him?' Floyd said.

'He was a clown!' Phumbleklot howled.

There was a commotion in the wings onstage right. Dotty and Floyd turned to see Babooshka, Hank, Martha and the Jellybean Orchestra, the dancers, and the aftershow guests appear *en masse*.

The ballet boss ran into the spotlight beam. 'The ghost of Petrushka strikes again,' he barked, frantically flapping his paws about as though he was doing an extreme exercise routine.

'He's having a meltdown,' Floyd said to Dotty.

'The Babooshka Ballet is cursed. We're cursed,' Babooshka howled at the top of his voice. 'I'm telling you. We're doomed.'

All eyes were on the ballet boss.

'Shut up,' Dotty ordered and Babooshka dramatically slumped to the floor. 'Hank, I need you to turn the main lights on and raise the trap elevator.'

'I promise you it was closed,' he replied.

'Hank! Do it now. Phumbleklot's been hurt.'

The stage manager did as he was told. He turned on the lights and a few tail wags later, the slide trap snapped into place but there was no Phumbleklot. 'Oooops. Sorry, pressed the wrong button. Hang on.'

The slide trap reopened. There was a low rumble as the elevator floor crept back up into place and filled the hole in the stage. Phumbleklot sat on his bottom holding a big bunch of battered white Wagnolias.

The same type of flowers that were in Goneoffsky's dressing room.

'Is there a doctor in the house?' Floyd barked.

'I'm a doctor,' said a tall skinny dog with long, flowing shiny orange hair and dangly ears.

'And me.'

'And me.'

'And me.'

Four hounds rushed towards Phumbleklot and formed a semi-circle.

'Don't move. You mustn't put any weight on that leg,' one of them barked.

'I'll take a look.'

'No, I'll do it.'

'I've got this.'

Dotty's iBone buzzed. She unclipped the phone from her collar and read Scooter's message.

Dead end with the twenty-seven names.

None were at all three shows.

She quickly typed a reply: You sure about Rufus? and pressed send.

Scooter: In box eighteen for 2 & 3.

Dotty chewed the side of her lip. She messaged Scooter again. Did you check his alibi for 1?

Scooter: Yip! Rufus was on the guest list for the Botanic Gardens talk.

Dotty: Double check if anyone saw him.

Scooter: Got ya. On it. 🐶

Dotty: Be careful. P3 broken leg. The Joker struck after the show. We're still at the ballet.

She clipped her phone back in place. Babooshka was now pacing up and down the front of the stage talking to himself.

‘Who can dance Petrushka number four? I really do not know. Spinotti or Donbette? I cannot think. The show must go on.’

She was beginning to feel slightly sorry for the ballet boss. *Maybe Floyd is right. He’s finally cracked. Three disasters in three nights is very bad luck even if he’s sold more tickets and got more publicity than he could possibly have imagined.*

But at the back of Dotty’s mind, she couldn’t help thinking that there was more to Babooshka’s weird outburst. She turned to Floyd and lowered her voice. ‘That was Scooter. No seat owners were at all three shows and I think we can rule out anyone at the party being the Joker.’

‘The quicker we clear this place, the quicker we can get back to working out what’s really going on,’ Floyd whispered.

Dotty nodded. They were holding up the case. She scanned the faces of the pack, huddled together, talking in hushed tones. Her jaw dropped. Rufus was standing next to Pavlova. She wanted to charge over and give him an earful but first she needed to deal with the situation.

‘Most of you know who I am but for those that don’t, I’m Detective Dotty de Bono.’ Dotty looked directly at Rufus. A smile twitched at the side of his mouth. She managed to suppress a growl. ‘My partner, Floyd is going to take your details and then you’re free to go.’

The pack murmured their approval.

‘If anyone has information that will help, now is the time to come and speak to me,’ Dotty continued. ‘Thank you for your cooperation. We’d be grateful if you didn’t talk to the press.’

Floyd made a start on recording everyone’s names. Dotty gestured to Rufus. Dressed in his fancy matching collar, waistcoat, and pawcuffs, he came over with his tail held high.

‘Congratulations, detective, on what can I say [chuckle] your extra [chuckle] ordinary debut performance. [chuckle] How can I help?’ Rufus said.

Dotty's brow furrowed and she gritted her teeth. 'You weren't at the aftershow party which makes me wonder what you were doing? Luring Phumbleklot to his downfall by any chance?'

'Detective, you have an over active imagination. Canine Network News wanted to interview me about the Babooshka Ballet and my ongoing financial support for the company at this difficult time. Naturally, I obliged.'

'That's hardly an alibi.'

'Live TV?' He looked quizzically at Dotty. 'Now you're having a laugh.'

Dotty sighed. Rufus was right. She knew she was snapping at sticks. 'Remind me again, why you weren't at the opening night of your favourite ballet?' she asked, desperately resisting the urge to sink her teeth into him.

'I was at Professor Bloomfield's talk on bogs at the Botanic Gardens.'

'Your great grandma seemed pretty certain you'd be here.'

'Edna's old and forgetful. Ask her tomorrow and she'll probably give you a different answer.' His nose twitched and there was a hint of menace in his eyes. 'And as you already know, I had the privilege of seeing several *Petrushka* dress rehearsals. Will that be all? I think everyone's had enough excitement for one night.' He held out his right paw.

Dotty reluctantly took it. *That's pawsome.*

She glanced at the left. *And that's awesome.*

Rufus sauntered off to re-join the party pack.

Hang on ... pawsome, awesome.

The cufflinks.

They're the wrong way round!

CHAPTER THIRTY-TWO

Dotty kept her cool even though her heart was pounding. Everything was starting to make sense. They'd been looking at everything backwards. The case wasn't about who hated the ballet or disliked clowns. It was about who loved the ballet most of all. The answers had been in front of her the whole time. The connecting link between the victims – Goneoffsky, Lickanova, and Phumbleklot – they all messed up dancing the Joker's favourite ballet.

What did Martha say about Petrushka No. 1? Dotty racked her brain. I can't believe it took a dart to get Goneoffsky to die on the right beat. Rufus by his own admission had seen several dress rehearsals. He knew Goneoffsky always fluffed the Petrushka death dance. That's why he waited till then to take him out.

Dotty's mind jumped to Rufus in the production booth. He was angry when Lickanova was too rough on his Pavlova, the Ballerina. He put the nails in the puppet booth so Lickanova would miss his cue and rip his tights. Then he locked Lickanova in his dressing room just like the start of act two in the ballet.

And poor sweet Phumbleklot...

Dotty shook her head.

He was the worst of the lot. But Rufus was stuck in box eighteen. He had to wait until everyone was off their guard, enjoying the aftershow party or maybe that had been plan all along.

'Grrr...' *The live TV interview was a good cover story. Although, it wouldn't take long to do. A few minutes at most. There would have been plenty of time for Rufus to change into a joker costume. But how could Rufus have known that Phumbleklot would go out for a smoke?*

Dotty paced up and down the stage. He must be getting help from someone on the inside. Doggit! Dotty!

She let out a little yelp. THE ACCOMPLICE.

Rufus has been keeping me so busy I'd forgotten all about two dogs working together. Grrrrrrr... Don't get distracted. Rewind. Stick with the Rufus trail. Get him and you'll find who's working with him.

OK! Think.

After the TV interview, Rufus puts on his joker costume which he'd stashed backstage. He opened the trap and tricked Phumbleklot to his downfall. He knew Phumbleklot's howls would be heard in the Green Room and we'd come running. Grrr... I've been totally played. Then what?

Job done, he changes back into his evening dress but doesn't realise his cufflinks are on the wrong paws. Rufus has to be the Joker.

It can't possibly be anyone else.

Floyd marched over to Dotty. 'That's us sorted. Phumbleklot's having his leg put in plaster. Don't think he'll be dancing for a while. You ready to go?'

'Yes, quick. Wing side stage left so we don't bump into Babooshka or any other stragglers still hanging around. I know who the Joker is.'

'You what?' Floyd said, trotting after his partner. 'Then why aren't we arresting him?'

'We've got no proof and he's not working alone.'

CHAPTER THIRTY-THREE

Dotty and Floyd stood in the shadows between two lampposts, a safe distance from the Babooshka Ballet, watching the stage door. The night was still warm and the air smelled of stale popcorn. Most of the corps de ballet and party guests had long gone. The distant sound of a wailing siren broke through the silence as the last of the band members stepped out the back of the building.

‘NEE-NAH NEE-NAH NEE-NAH. My chaaaaaaarzzzziot,’ a player barked.

‘Vurryfunny. Onezefortheroad?’ slurred a shaggy haired dog almost tripping over his trombone case.

‘I’d be HIC! UP HIC! UP for a snifter HIC! in the Jam Jar,’ another howled.

A small dog playing air drums barked, ‘Zen weeee’d bettler be kerwick. Nearzly last lorders.’

Dotty kept an eye on the merry pack, who were not too steady on their paws, till they disappeared round the corner heading towards the piazza.

‘How about we call it a night as well? Start fresh tomorrow and work out how we’re going to get the evidence we need,’ Floyd said.

‘Rufus doesn’t suspect we’re on to him. That works to our advantage. I say we stay and see what happens,’ Dotty said.

‘If Rufus is the Joker, he’s not the type of dog to leave anything to chance,’ Floyd said, thoughtfully. ‘This whole shebang’s been carefully planned. He’s probably factored in every possible situation and got a back-up for that as well.’

‘We know a lot more than earlier and he’s got to leave at some point,’ Dotty snapped.

‘Then what?’ Floyd asked. ‘Rufus is hardly going to come out carrying a joker costume and waving a banner naming his accomplice, if he has one. And that’s still a big IF!’

Dotty shook her head. ‘I don’t care how smart he is. There’s no way he pulled this off on his own. The Joker’s entrances and exits were stage-

managed like a performance within a performance. A scene within a scene. He had help.'

'Hank could be the accomplice,' Floyd suggested. 'Stage managing is his job and he has eyes up in the fly.'

'Same goes for Babooshka.'

'Good point. Maybe Rufus, Babooshka, and Hank are like Hubble, Bubble, and Trouble, they're all—'

Dotty's phone buzzed. 'That'll be Scooter. He was double checking Rufus's alibi for the opening night.' She unclipped her phone and read the message.

Spoke to Dr Fleur. She couldn't

be sure Rufus was at the talk.

Never met him.'

Dotty scrunched up her nose and pinged back: You got the right gig? Professor Bloomfield, Botanic Gardens.

Scooter replied: Prof B family emergency. Dr F last min stand in on growing marsh plants.

The bone dropped. 'Arrgh! Rufus's other passion. Sustainable wet lands. Marshes. Bogs. Swamps. Fens. They're different names that mean the same thing. And what keeps them alive?' Dotty said.

'Plants!' Floyd said.

'Yep, like the deadly Magnuffnotrott along the Blackwater river.'

Dotty's phone pinged again.

Scooter: Fancy a ?

Dotty's iPhone flashed a warning: Low battery 5% power. 'Doggit,' she muttered and quickly typed: No can do. On stake out with Floyd. Good work. Phone about to die.

'Game on,' Dotty said. 'Rufus has no solid alibi for the opening night. If anything, he's blown a woofing great big hole in it. He didn't know there'd been a change of speaker at the Botanic Gardens talk.'

'That's grrreat,' Floyd said. 'We've got him.'

'Yep! Just gotta make it stick.'

Floyd nodded. 'What's the time?'

Dotty checked her phone. 'A few mins to midnight.'

'That's when Sid clocks off. By my reckoning that'll only leave Rufus, Babooshka, and Hank in the building.'

'Hold up. Who's that?'

A figure with a determined stride approached from the east side of the building. Dressed all in black carrying a small duffle bag the shadow of the dog got bigger and bigger, the closer they got to the stage door. The dog pulled open the door. The light from inside the theatre lit up the dog's face.

'That's Martha,' Dotty whispered. 'What's she doing coming back here?'

'Holy moly macaroni. This is getting better by the tail wag. You think she's involved as well?' Floyd asked.

'Martha and Hank were arguing at the party.'

A few beats later, big Sid came out and hurried away into the night.

'I'm getting a bad feeling about this,' Floyd said.

Dotty nodded and felt a final zzz from her iBone. She was out of juice.

CHAPTER THIRTY-FOUR

'Let's call this in,' Floyd said.

'And say what exactly?' Dotty didn't wait for a reply and answered her own question. 'Four dogs are having a late night party at the Babooshka Ballet.'

'Dotty, I'm telling you. Something's going down.'

'Then it'll be, who's having a party? Oh! The ballet boss, the stage manager, the conductor, and their very rich sponsor who happens to be good friends with the Mayor.'

'Dotty, you're not listening. Think about it.'

'I am thinking about it,' Dotty snapped. 'We've got no solid evidence Rufus is our Joker. Not turning up at a talk is hardly an offence and having cufflinks on the wrong paws isn't illegal. And ... we need to know if he's working with Babooshka, Hank, Martha, or all three of them. I say we go in now and get the proof we need.'

'This is not a game.'

'But this is our game changer moment.'

Floyd shrugged. 'We should at least give Captain Copland the heads up.'

'Then you phone her.'

'You know I don't carry mine with me. Use yours.'

'The captain will have a fit if we wake her at this hour.'

'She'll be barking mad if we don't.'

'That's easier said than done. My battery died.'

Floyd's hair stood on end. 'Then we definitely can't risk it. If they're all involved it'll be four against two and I don't fancy our chances on those odds. They did over three Petrushkas, three nights on the trot. It's too dangerous.'

'Don't be a wuss. We sneak in. Find out what they're up to and get out. What can possibly go wrong?'



Dotty and Floyd entered the building through the stage door. The lights were out. It took a moment for their eyes to get accustomed to the darkness. Dotty cocked her head and listened. No movement. No sound. If she didn't know

any better it would have been reasonable to assume there was no one in there at all. She sniffed. Sid's fake Millionhair perfume still lingered in the air and she could smell Martha's base notes of bergamutt.

Follow Martha. She was on a mission to find the others.

Dotty motioned to Floyd for them to push on. There would be no place to hide once they'd gone beyond Sid's cubbyhole until they cleared the single corridor that led them into the heart of the corps de ballet. Side by side, the two of them quickly and quietly made their way backstage. Dotty stopped next to the lift. All quiet. The only sounds were the low-pitched gentle hums and vibrations of an old building cooling and shutting down for the night. She sniffed again. She got another whiff of Martha's scent. Stronger this time.

Where'd she go? Sniff. Sniff. Nope. She definitely didn't head for the main stage or the dressing rooms. Sniff. And she didn't take the lift. Sniff. The stairs. Up or down? Dotty tiptoed forward. She went down. The orchestra pit? Quicker this way rather than taking the ones on stage right.

'This way,' Dotty whispered.

In single file they took the steep stone steps down into the underbelly of the theatre. Dotty's nose twitched. She could tell by the strength of Martha's scent they were not far behind. They found themselves on the lower ground floor where the orchestra was top dog. Another turn of stairs would have taken them into the basement to the generator rooms.

Unlikely, Dotty thought. To be on the safe side she double-sniffed the stairwell. The air was damp and musty. Sniff. *All clear of any fresh doggy odour.* She pricked her ears, listening for any sort of sound. All quiet apart from the quiet hum of the building. Dotty wagged her tail and beckoned Floyd to follow her. They moved along the dingy corridor past open trunks filled with sheet music and large instrument cases pushed up against the wall. Dotty pointed to the side corridor.

'The orchestra pit,' she whispered. As she crept forward she sensed Floyd's reluctance. Her head screamed this was a reckless idea. They were essentially entering a pitch-black tunnel. A trap with no secret hideaway spots if anyone came from the front or behind. But it was too late. They had

to keep going and hope for the best. There was no way, Dotty was going to give up now and come away with nothing.

Her heart was beating faster and faster. Her legs were trembling with every tentative step in the dark. Then finally. A little bit of luck. The thick black noise-reducing curtain that separated the corridor from the sunken area in front of the stage wasn't quite closed. A ray of light breaking through the gap made it slightly easier for Dotty to see where she was going and not step on discarded empty sandwich packets littered by the band.

A high-pitched muffled cry made them stop dead in their tracks.

The hairs on the back of Dotty's neck bristled.

Then silence.

Dotty wagged her tail in a 'let's keep moving' type of way. Senses now on high alert they tiptoed forward. Dotty put her ear flat to the curtain and listened. Taking a deep breath, she gently pulled it back just enough to take a quick peek.

'Whose there?' Floyd whispered.

Dotty let go of the curtain and hundreds of tiny dust particles shot up her nose. 'All of them,' she replied. 'Martha's got her back to us. Rufus, Babooshka, and Hank are seated—' Dotty scrunched up her nose.

Her head went back.

She

tried

desperately

not

to ...

'... aaaa ... aaaaa ...'

'... AAAAACHOOOOOOO!**'**

'What the?' Martha howled.

Their cover was blown.

CHAPTER THIRTY-FIVE

Dotty and Floyd stormed into the orchestra pit. They charged through the double bass section and skidded to a halt at the back desk of the cellos. Martha was holding a gun and it was pointed at them.

‘Bow wow wow! Don’t shoot,’ Dotty barked.

‘**DETECTIVES!**’ Babooshka howled from the second violins. ‘I’m so pleased to see you. Martha’s the **JOKER.**’

‘I was wondering when you’d show up,’ Martha growled.

‘**Arrest her,**’ Babooshka cried. ‘She planned this whole thing to take me down.’

Martha’s aim jumped back and forth from Dotty to Floyd. ‘He’s lying. Don’t listen to that evil talentless good for nothing hound.’

‘**BABOOSHKA!** Talentless.’ He leapt out of his chair and shook his paw angrily at Martha. ‘You’d be nothing without me. I’m the *grrrrrrreat—*’

‘**SIT** or I’ll blow your brains out,’ Martha barked. The gun now firmly pointed at the ballet boss. She took a backwards step up onto the conductor’s podium. ‘And don’t think for a moment I wouldn’t do it.’

Babooshka sat down with a thud and scowled.

‘Martha, give me the gun. We can sort this out. Nobody needs to get hurt,’ Dotty said, moving level with the fourth desk in the cellos. Rufus was in her field of vision sitting second chair, third desk in the first violins.

‘That’s far enough, detective. This is my gig and I’m in charge.’ She waved the gun in Dotty’s direction to prove her point then trailed the weapon back on Babooshka.

‘Do something,’ he shrieked. ‘She’s going to kill us all.’

‘That sleaze ball, Ba-booooo-sh-ka! He’s the Joker,’ Martha barked.

‘Nooooooooo-no-no. She’s lying. What are you waiting for? Arrest her,’ Babooshka yelled.

‘Martha has nothing to do with this,’ Hank cried out from the violas.

Dotty's gaze quickly flashed to Floyd and back again to the scene unfolding in front of them. He'd managed to move without attracting Martha's attention into the brass section.

'Hank, don't say another word,' Martha snapped. 'I'll handle this.'

'This is my fault. I got us into this mess. I knew—'

'STOP! YOU IDIOT! STOP! You'll ruin everything.'

Hank shook his head. 'I knew Babooshka was up to something dodgy when he ordered me not to drop the front stage curtain and close the ones on the monitors when Goneoffsky got shot.'

'Babooshka was causing a distraction so Rufus could escape from the fly in the mayhem,' Dotty said.

'That's a lie,' Babooshka protested.

Hank ignored his boss. 'There was nothing I could do—'

'Hank didn't want any part of this,' Martha muttered. 'He should have told me what was going on before it was too late.'

That must have been what they were arguing about at the party, Dotty thought, taking a small step forward. Martha was angry with Hank for not confiding in her.

'Babooshka threatened if I spoke out he'd say I was in on the plan all along.' Hank looked down at the floor. 'Martha, you've got to believe me.'

'This is all nonsense,' Babooshka protested. 'We're being held hostage against our will. She's the Joker and she's going to kill us.'

Dotty sensed the rage building in Martha.

The gun was wobbling in her paws.

'Martha, it's all right,' Dotty said softly. 'I know you're not the Joker and Babooshka's not the brains behind these crimes. He's the accomplice.'

'I should've known HE was too stupid to have put this together,' Martha barked, glaring at the ballet boss in the second violins. 'That leaves...'

'Rufus,' Dotty said. 'He's the mastermind and Babooshka stage-managed everything so Rufus could take out Goneoffsky, Lickanova, and Phumbleklot.'

'But why?' Martha asked.

'They weren't good enough at dancing Petrushka,' Dotty said.

‘Bravo! Detective Dotty,’ Rufus said with a smirk. ‘You got it. What gave me away?’

‘Your cufflinks,’ Dotty replied.

‘My cufflinks?’ Rufus said, sounding surprised.

‘After you tricked Phumbleklot to his downfall you needed to change out of your joker costume into what you were wearing during the show. There wouldn’t have been enough time to leave the stage without the risk of getting caught. Your only option was to make the switch behind the puppet theatre. The lack of light at the back of the stage was essential for this part of your plan to work. But you didn’t realise your cufflinks were on the wrong paws.’

Rufus let out a high-pitched laugh.

Dotty ignored his outburst. ‘Babooshka’s job was to bring everyone from the Green Room on to the stage to find out what was going on. He then set in motion the final part of the plan. The distraction. He stepped into the spotlight and started his performance. The freak out about the ballet being cursed. With everyone’s focus on Babooshka, you crept down the wing side and timed your entrance perfectly for when Hank turned on the main stage lights.’

‘She’s smart,’ Babooshka said.

‘Shut up,’ Rufus snapped.

‘The cufflinks weren’t your only mistake,’ Dotty said. ‘In the production booth you let your emotions get the better of you. Lickanova was too rough on Pavlova and you punished him for it. The nails trick in the booth was clever. There was no way Lickanova could dance his big solo in ripped tights. After you locked him in his dressing room, you hid next door in Pavlova’s dressing room, and waited for your cue that the coast was clear. Am I getting close?’

Dotty saw a flicker of acknowledgement across Rufus’s face.

‘Through the adjoining wall you would’ve heard everything. When Babooshka and Hank arrived, this allowed you to make your exit, while we were being distracted by the tales of ghosts and whistling backstage.’

‘And Goneoffsky?’ Rufus asked.

‘The poison in the dart was from the corpse plant. Professor Bloomfield’s area of expertise. You didn’t go to his talk otherwise you would’ve known he was replaced by Dr Fleur. Instead you were hiding up in the fly waiting to take Goneoffsky out where he always messed up. And I wouldn’t be surprised when we take a sample of your blood that it’s a match with the drop we found when you cut yourself. But your biggest slip-up—’

‘Oh! Do tell, detective-know-it-all,’ Rufus said.

‘Involving me. The Petrushka signature tune down the phone was a nice touch. Grabbed my attention and the hide-and-seek challenge. They were all clues for me when something was going to happen.’

‘That wasn’t part of the plan!’ Babooshka shrieked at Rufus. ‘Only the dancing onstage so we could sell more tickets and save the ballet.’

‘This was my plan. Not yours,’ Rufus shot back. ‘I wanted to have some fun. Test Bonesville’s finest and have a worthy admirer who would truly appreciate my masterpiece.’ He turned to Babooshka. ‘You only wanted to be rich and famous again so that bonehead Boneapart wouldn’t drive you out of your poxy little theatre.’

Martha growled. Her eyes narrowed. She started swishing the gun back and forth from Rufus to Babooshka. ‘I don’t know which one of you is worse. You’ve ruined the ballet, destroyed our reputation, and dragged my Hank into your stupid mindless games. You’re lucky no one died.’

‘There’s still time. Go on. Shoot. I dare you,’ Rufus said with a smirk.

The gun stopped on Rufus.

‘No, don’t do it.’ Dotty took a step towards Martha. ‘He’s not worth—’

Martha squeezed the trigger.

CHAPTER THIRTY-SIX

The gun went pop and from the end of the barrel a white square flag appeared with the word **BANG!** in big red letters. There was a moment of stunned silence and then all hell broke loose in every direction.

'What the—?' Martha howled. 'You gave me a toy gun to take to a dog fight.' She leapt across the stage, shoving music stands and chairs aside to get to Hank in the violas.

'Honey-puff-pie, I'm sorry,' Hank yelped, desperately trying to escape her grasp, clambering over the back of his chair. Martha grabbed him by the collar. 'Get off me,' he squealed. 'I thought you'd only use it to scare Babooshka into making a confession, not fire the flipping thing. Don't hurt me.'

'If you think I'm going to play scrabble with you again,' Martha barked, 'you've got another thing coming.'

'Don't be mean. We both love Mambow's and I love you,' Hank replied.

'Grrr...'

Loud crashing noises were coming from the front of the pit. Rufus was throwing chairs and stands at Dotty to stop her advancing on him.

'Catch me if you can,' he barked.

'Wait till I get my paws on you,' Dotty barked. She dodged a chair and another. A music stand smacked her in the face sending her staggering backwards. Rufus vanished down the right pit wing corridor. Dotty scrambled over the trashed first violin section in hot pursuit.

Meanwhile, Floyd charged through the woodwind section to Babooshka in the second violins. He picked up a chair and whacked him over the head. The ballet boss wobbled for a moment and then he was on the floor. He

groaned. He tried to get up. Floyd hit him again. He barked at Martha and Hank who were still scrapping and arguing. 'If Babooshka moves. Sit on him,' and took off after his partner.

At the end of the corridor, Dotty caught sight of Rufus scooting up the stone stairs to the ground floor. She heard Floyd panting behind her. 'Go up. Go up,' she said. 'I'll try and cut him off from the other side.'

'WOOF!' Floyd replied.

Dotty kept running as fast as she could past the instrument cases and open trunks filled with sheet music. She took the stone steps at the other end of the corridor two at a time. Ground level. The lift. The only corridor leading to the stage door and out of the building. She listened and sniffed. Then she saw him and grinned.

'Give yourself up,' Dotty barked. 'There's nowhere to go.'

'Never,' Rufus howled. He turned to make another run for it.

'Best do as she says,' Floyd growled, standing in his way.

Rufus was trapped. Stuck in the middle of Dotty and Floyd.

Tail up. Ears up. Hackles up. Dotty saw her chance. **'NOW!'**

She charged at Rufus and bit him hard on the bum. He cried out in pain. Paws flying every which way Dotty and Floyd wrestled him to the ground.

'GAME OVER,'
she snapped.



**'I win and
you're under
arrr-rest.'**

CODA

THREE MONTHS LATER

Tail in the air and a swagger in her stride, Dotty made her way across the piazza to the ballet. It was six forty-five and tonight was the opening of *Pulcinella*, with rising star Spinotti in the title role. This was the first time Dotty had been back since her infamous debut performance and taking down what the media had dubbed, **The Joker and his Accomplice**.

In the days that followed, Rufus pleaded guilty to one account of attempted murder, two for grievous bodily harm, and resisting arrest. Babooshka held his paw up to assisting Rufus in executing his plan, although he had only been trying to boost ticket sales to save the ballet. Both had been sent to a high security pound and wouldn't be seeing the light of day for a very long time. Hank was lucky. After a good word from Dotty to the Judge, he avoided jail and was given ninety hours community service for withholding evidence. Martha got let off with a warning and a lifetime ban of owning any type of gun.

Boneapart tried but failed to add the venue to his collection. The extra ticket sales generated from screening *Petrushka* into the square and the tens of millions who had paid to watch online through *The Daily Chews* was enough for Martha and Hank to secure the future of the building which they renamed Bonesville Ballet.

Goneoffsky made a full recovery. Reunited with Lickanova, they returned to the corps de ballet as the new joint artistic directors. Phumbleklot realised a life as a dancer wasn't for him. He went back to school and set his heart on becoming a costume designer. Even Scarlett was happy. She was awarded Scoop of the Year for her feature documenting the whole *Petrushka* debacle.

'Dotty, over here,' Floyd barked from outside the main entrance.

She wagged her tail.

'I bought us a programme. You ready to go in?' Floyd said.

'Sure am.' Dotty pushed through the revolving door.

Her phone buzzed.

She unclipped it from her collar. The inbuilt snout ID technology scanned her nose and the device unlocked. It was a message from an 'unknown number'. Dotty slow wagged her tail as she read the text:

One day I'll be out.

And, I'll be coming for you.

Enjoy the ballet.

The Joker 🤡

'Rest assured,' Dotty growled. 'I'll be ready for you.'

PART TWO

1. Underdog: Notes from the Margins An Author's Perspective

Everything, however unconnected and irregular it may seem, is connected to other things. Sounds, events, people: they are all connected as a complexity, or rather as a complex unity. This unity of everything is brought out much better when no apparent relation between things is mentally imposed.

—John Cage²⁰

'Notes from the Margins' is a critical reflection on how I went about writing *Underdog*. I consider the space between thought and words as part of my poetic process, track my own compositional links, and show how everything is 'connected' however 'unconnected' they may seem. I discuss the methodology for constructing the work and the influences behind the narrative layers to reveal my musical codes contained within. This is followed by an introduction to the music in part one of the novel to explicitly expose the trace evidence I have left behind for a 'writerly' reader to decode and revel in a form of Barthesian *jouissance* when patterns are discovered. The goal of the creator as Barthes points out 'is to make the reader no longer a consumer, but a producer of the text. A purely readerly text, irreversible in all its features, leaves the reader with no productive work.'²¹

I do not expect young readers to get the musical associations or to fully engage with how the work was made. Music is my writing tool for telling stories, structuring material, and developing content. The connections are often complex or seemingly random because in the act of composition I am drawing on my own knowledge, understanding, and experience of a professional life in music. I hope my model for writing a music novel will inspire others to engage with the many ways words and music play a role in creating fiction. At the end of the chapter there is a track listing for some of the pieces referenced in *Underdog* and a link to the two soundscapes that accompany the novel, my ambition being to provide a further listening context beyond the text and acknowledge the music that has inspired this particular journey. Traditionally, this type of information would be relegated to

²⁰ John Cage introduction to his performance lecture, *Indeterminacy: New Aspects of Form in Instrumental and Electronic Music* (1959). Source: 'The Writing of John Cage: Stories on Silence and Mushrooms', Gelly Cryntaki, *The Collector* <<https://www.thecollector.com/john-cage-writing-stories-on-silence/>> [accessed 5 May 2022].

²¹ Graham Allen, *Roland Barthes* (London: Taylor & Francis, 2003), p. 88.

the back pages of the appendices. However, the music is not secondary information. It is the heartbeat of *Underdog*. The foundation, the fabric, and the glue that holds the everything together even 'when no apparent relation between things are mentally imposed.'²²

Underdog is a multifaceted work that offers different ways to interact with the text. On one level it is a 'readerly' detective story aimed at a Middle Grade audience.²³ There is a crime and a lead detective to investigate the crime. The identity of the perpetrator is unknown. The detective solves the case by compiling and interpreting the evidence. The familiar investigative plot line provides the reader with a stable linear platform to follow the narrative from the first page to the last. Readers require no technical understanding of music, or any awareness of the musical intertexts engaged with, to make sense of the story. But, *Underdog* is also a music novel for a musical detective to follow the clues embedded within the work. The plotline was inspired by Igor Stravinsky's ballet, *Petrushka* (1911; revised 1947).²⁴ Sound and music is everywhere – sometimes explicit and sometimes implicit. The underlying tonal surfaces of the text may be passed over in a first reading and only become apparent in later sittings when the story is known. Like learning to play a new piece of music, the more the performer connects with the work, the more it reveals about itself. The reader or performer is no longer a consumer but a player free to interpret the piece in substantially different ways. I decided to change the spelling of Stravinsky in the novel to Starvinsky because he was a super 'star' and portmanteaus are a recurring theme in my canine world. Spectacular becomes woofacular. Schubert becomes Chewbert and so on.

²² Ibid., John Cage.

²³ 'Middle Grade is a term that relates to books for more confident and independent readers. Although there are many different interpretations, usually it is considered to mean readers between seven and twelve years old. By eleven to thirteen, they are often reading the younger end of YA books, but the real difference in the classification at the top end of middle grade and the younger end of YA is more about content than ability to read the text.' Linda Strachan, online extract from *Writers' & Artists' Guide to Writing for Children*, October 2020. <<https://www.writersandartists.co.uk/advice/writing-middle-grade>> [accessed 3 May 2022].

²⁴ I prefer the 1911 version of *Petrushka* which has a much grittier sound than the revised 1947 version scored for a smaller orchestra.

Why Igor Stravinsky?

Stravinsky was a story-teller in notes and a trend-setter who changed the course of classical music in the first-half of the twentieth century. *The Firebird* (1910) made him an overnight success, *Petrushka* established his reputation, and *The Rite of Spring* (1913) started a riot.²⁵ Stravinsky took from the past and remade new idioms for the present. He recycled Mozart in *The Rake's Progress* (1951), rewrote Pergolesi in *Pulcinella* (1920), borrowed from Bach in *Dumbarton Oaks* (1938), reinvented Verdi in *Oedipus Rex* (1927), and sound washed Tchaikovsky into *The Fairy's Kiss* (1928; revised 1950). He is often quoted as saying, 'My music is best understood by children and animals.'²⁶ Stravinsky and his *modi operandi* is a harmonious match for *Underdog*. My story is for children. It is all about dogs. And I am following Stravinsky's methodology of taking from the past and reimagining it in a different form for today.

I am not the only one. New generations are doing to Stravinsky what he did to others. His music is constantly cut-up and reconstructed. John Williams's two-note motif *dun dun dun dun dun* sound posting the advancing shark in the film *Jaws* (1975) is straight out of 'The Augurs of Spring' in *The Rite of Spring*. The art work for the Pet Shop Boys single 'I Wouldn't Normally Do this Kind of Thing' (1993) is an image of young men in pink tops dancing around the Chosen One. On the track, Neil Tennant sings, 'I feel like taking all my clothes off | dancing to The Rite of Spring'.²⁷ In the late 1970s the Fairlight CMI synthesizer library of recorded effects included ORCH2. The sampled orchestra hit or stab – a loud thwack – is the opening of the 'Infernal Dance of All the Subjects of Kastechi' from *The Firebird*. Stravinsky's staccato chord was made famous by DJ Afrika Bambaataa in

²⁵ The three ballets were written for Sergei Diaghilev's Ballets Russes company and premiered in Paris.

²⁶ Igor Stravinsky, *Observer*, 8 October 1961, p. 40.

²⁷ It is not unusual for pop songs to quote classical pieces. Matt Bellamy lead singer/songwriter of rock band Muse constantly draws on classical music. 'Butterflies & Hurricanes' on the album *Absolution* (2003) quotes Rachmaninov's arpeggio passages from his Prelude in G minor for piano Op. 23, No. 5 (1901); 'I belong to you' on the album *The Resistance* (2009) Bellamy sings in French, Saint-Saëns's aria 'Mon Coeur s'ouvre à ta voix' from his opera *Samson and Delilah* (1877); 'The Globalist' on the *Drones* (2015) album quotes Elgar's Nimrod theme in the *Enigma Variations* (1899).

'Planet Rock' (1982). Many acts copied the sound from Duran Duran, New Order, The Smiths, Art of Noise to the Backstreet Boys, Paul Hardcastle, Britney Spears, and Bruno Mars. It is still one of the most iconic sounds in pop music culture. I have also incorporated Stravinsky's 'thwack' into *Underdog*.

Early versions of the novel were based on Stravinsky's *The Rake's Progress* (1951). He wrote the opera after seeing William Hogarth's *A Rake's Progress* (1732-1734), a set of eight paintings at an exhibition in the Art Institute of Chicago. My premise for the plotline was that Hobark's paintings on display in Bonesville's Museum were all fakes. They had been switched by a master forger. Each painting in the series would have a clue for Dotty to discover and lead her to the real art works. Whilst this worked as a basis for a detective story, I ended up discarding the draft I had dubbed 'Hobark's Heist'. I had been writing an art novel not a music novel. There was no Stravinsky or textual imitations of the opera woven into the narrative. I considered *The Firebird* but with 'bird' being part of the title this did not fit with my canine world. I contemplated *The Rite of Spring* but felt the 'Sacrificial Dance' would be unsuitable for a Middle Grade audience. This led me to *Petrushka* which conveniently has 'pet' as part of the title. Words hidden within words are a feature of *Underdog*, just like 'mad' in Ligeti's *Nonsense Madrigals*. But this in itself would not be enough to justify a whole novel based on the work. Further investigation into the ballet and the music was needed to ensure there was enough material to weave the story and the sounds into the fabric of my novel and make it my own. I achieved this by creating a listening guide for the piece which essentially involved putting the music into words.

A Listening Guide for *Petrushka*

Introduction

The ballet is set during the Shrovetide Fair in Admiralty Square, St Petersburg in 1830. On the left of the square is a booth for the master of ceremonies and on the right vendor stalls selling sweets. Taking centre stage is the Magician's theatre with merry-go-rounds, swings, and slides behind. There are two worlds. The real world of humans and the imaginary world of puppets.

The description of the music is best read whilst listening to a recording of *Petrushka*.²⁸ Most recordings arrange tracks to co-inside with the different scenes of the ballet, making it easier to follow the musical narrative. The listening guide highlights key moments in each act. The ballet lasts approximately thirty-five minutes.²⁹

Act 1: The Shrovetide Fair

Petrushka opens with a lively fanfare from the flute backed by tremolos in the clarinets and horns. Four cellos high in their register answer back. Downward flourishes in the violins trigger more tremolos as the flute leads the merrymaking. The bassoons and lower strings tentatively announce a snippet from the 'Song of the Volochobniki', a Russian folksong for Easter day. Stravinsky cranks up the volume and the whole orchestra belts out the rip-roaring Easter song to accompany the drunken partygoers' dance. The Master of Ceremonies appears on the balcony with the trumpets and bellows out the attractions available at the fair. The crowds rush to check out the rides and the stalls. Spikey notes in the strings pave the way for the organ grinder to play a waltz for a dancing girl. The rowdy crowd abruptly interrupts. Briefly reinstated the waltz shifts into another pulsating Russian

²⁸ There are many recordings available. The CD in my collection is 'Stravinsky *Petrushka* / Bartók *The Miraculous Mandarin*' with the London Symphony Orchestra conducted by Kent Nagano and recorded at the Colosseum, Watford in 1997. Publishers: Boosey & Hawkes (Stravinsky); Universal Edition (Bartók).

²⁹ The score in my collection is 'Igor Stravinsky: *Petrushka* in full score, (original version)' (New York: Dover Publications, 1998).

folksong 'Toward Evening, in Rainy Autumn' accompanied by the sharp metallic ting of the triangle beating time. A music box player enters with another dancing girl and we hear the French music-hall song 'La Jambe en bois', again with the pounding mechanical sound of the triangle. Both tunes are played at the same time, so that they compete with each other.

The drumrolls attract the attention of the crowd. The Magician appears in front of his theatre with sliding chromatic scales and grunts from the bassoons. The Magician plays some spooky music on the flute and the curtains go up to reveal three puppets (the Moor, the Ballerina, and Petrushka) slumped in their booths. He touches them one by one punctuated with two staccato notes from the flute and the puppets come to life. The whole orchestra blasts driving parallel chords for the foot stomping Russian dance based on the folksong 'A Linden Tree is in the Field', which is performed by the puppets. The 'Song of St John's Eve' played on the oboe weaves its way into the score. Stravinsky jumps between the two tunes in a mechanical frenzy to end the act. The stage plunges into darkness and the curtain falls.

Another drumroll catapults us from the real world into the uncanny world of the puppets. Backstage, Petrushka's shrieks of distress are played on the oboes.

Act 2: Petrushka's Room

The door to Petrushka's room opens and the Magician kicks him inside. Petrushka falls to the floor and the door is closed. The scoring is stark with jarring loud then quiet bursts of hopelessness. The puppet now endowed with human feelings is given his own signature sound. It takes the form of two clashing triad chords (C major and F-sharp major) played on top of each other to represent the two sides of his character. The famous 'Petrushka chord' as it is often called is first heard as two quiet upward arpeggios in the clarinets. The piano takes over with tinkling arpeggios for Petrushka's tears (the left hand playing the black keys and the right hand the white keys). Loud piercing trumpets blast Petrushka's signature theme, this time presented in a

downwards motion underpinned by trembling menacing chords in the piano as he curses the Magician. The music shifts to being more lyrical when Petrushka thinks about the Ballerina. She saunters in with two unassuming bars from the piano. There is a huge crescendo. The piano goes crazy supported by harmonics, plucked, and played notes in the strings. Petrushka is unable to control his emotions and the frightened Ballerina runs away. The clarinets taunt Petrushka. The piano takes over with more arpeggios. The whole orchestra loudly curses the Magician with the 'Petrushka chord'. Two solo clarinets register the puppet's pain and the curtain comes down.

Act 3: The Moor's Room

The drums lead into the Moor's room. His theme tune is slow and ploddy in the clarinets accompanied by the bass drum, cymbal, and pizzicato strings. The ballerina enters playing a toy trumpet punctuated by a snappy snare drum. She seduces the Moor and they dance a waltz borrowed from Joseph Lanner's *Steierische Tänze* (1841), which is split between the flute and the trumpet. Shimmering strings signal a shift in mood. Petrushka is coming. His signature sound is heard in the muted trumpets and horns. He bursts in on them and attacks his rival. The Ballerina faints. Petrushka is no match for the Moor who easily wins and throws him out, accompanied by a series of loud thwacks in the strings.

Act 4: The Shrovetide Fair (Toward Evening)

Another drumroll takes us back to the real world of the Shrovetide Fair. The whole stage is reminiscent of the opening scene. A catchy popular dance song 'la vechor moloda' is heard in the solo oboe and then the strings. Two oboes play another folk tune 'Akh vy sieni, moi sieni' which is picked up by the trumpets and then the whole orchestra. Both melodies are played on top of each other. Stomping string chords against syncopated clarinets and horns introduce another dance 'O! Snow now thaws' – a twelve bar phrase that is split across several parts – and followed by more Russian dances.

The solo trumpet shrieks Petrushka's signature theme. Petrushka has escaped from the theatre. The Moor is in hot pursuit with rushing chromatic

scales and the Ballerina is trying to stop him. The Moor strikes Petrushka with his sword. Petrushka falls and a tambourine is dropped on the floor. He dies to shivering string tremolos and lamenting phrases on the clarinet, then a solo violin with the bassoon. A policeman appears to a bouncy plip-plop plip-plop on the bassoon.³⁰ The Magician assures the crowd Petrushka is only a puppet. The crowd departs with quiet horns and lower plucked strings. The music momentarily comes to an end, then picks up again as the Magician drags Petrushka's corpse back to the theatre. The ghost of Petrushka appears on the roof to loud muted trumpets. They shriek his signature theme for the last time as Petrushka thumbs his nose at the Magician. Terrified, he drops the puppet and runs away. Four quiet pizzicato notes fittingly close the work, the final two landing on C and F-sharp in the lower strings.³¹

The transcribing of the orchestral sounds into words came out of many score reading and listening sessions. This enabled me to rework some of the key features into *Underdog*, in particular chapter one and chapter twenty-eight which gives the reader a mini version of the piece in words. I returned to the listening guide throughout writing the novel as a reminder of significant moments in the score that could then be used in the development of the story. The idea for creating the listening guide was inspired by Matthew Herbert's *The Music – A novel through sound*. The book is a music album written in words.

Fine.

³⁰ Chapter one of *Underdog* sound posts key moments in the score up to this point.

³¹ Chapter twenty-eight of *Underdog* takes the reader to the end of the ballet to complete the story within the story.

The Space Between Thought and Words

Developing a Creative Writing Methodology for Underdog

Having decided on Stravinsky's *Petrushka* as the inspirational foundation of my story, I then set about creating a system for internal references and patterns that could be applied to structuring the material and developing the narrative content. This led to a creative writing framework that enabled me to keep the music in the novel as part of the poietic process whilst maintaining a readerly perspective on how the story was organised and presented. The seven-point methodology for writing *Underdog* is as follows:

- a) adapt Stravinsky's *modi operandi* to interweave the sounds and the story of *Petrushka* into the fabric of the novel
- b) adopt a musical structure for the framework of the novel
- c) soundtrack the text with pop music inspired by Stravinsky
- d) imitate musical elements such as pitch, rhythm, dynamics on the page
- e) include traits associated with other composers in the Stravinsky sound chain to develop and drive the plot forward
- f) incorporate composer techniques that have come out of the research to unite the creative and the critical components
- g) create a Dotty signature motif to sit inside and outside the work

In the English music nomenclature system, notes are named in ascending order from the first seven letters of the alphabet (A-G) which reflect the seven numbered entry points in the critical-creative approach to writing *Underdog*. Numbers and numerical patterns are important in music – eight notes in an octave, twelve notes in a chromatic scale, five parallel lines make a stave, inverted intervals add up to nine – and feature as a recurring theme throughout this thesis.

I will now move on and discuss the structural foundations of *Underdog* which relate to points b) and e) in the methodology and the importance of numbers.

Structural Foundations and the Importance of Numbers

The novel is based on a theme and variations. In music, this is an established compositional form. The theme is usually a simple memorable idea. The variations play with the idea until it twists and turns into something different, something more complex, something more interesting but still recognisable. For example: Mozart's 12 variations for piano on 'Ah! Vous dirai-je Maman' (c.1780s), more commonly known as 'Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star' (which forms part of my analysis in chapter three). The piece starts off relatively easy and gets harder with each variation. There are no limits on the number of variations.³²

J. S. Bach's *Goldberg Variations* (1741) consists of 32 movements that can be divided into two halves (16+16).³³ The work opens with a 32 bar aria in G major which is followed by 30 variations, and the cycle is completed with a repeat of the aria to end (1+30+1). Most of the variations are 32 bars in length and can be split into two 16 bar measures. The 30 variations are made up of 10 groups of three, every third variation is a canon (except No. 30 which is a quodlibet), and three variations (15, 21, and 25) are in G minor. The playing hands in variation 15 move further and further apart and variation 16 with its stately dotted rhythms marks a new beginning. Bach was not randomly doing this. He liked symmetry and playing games with numbers.³⁴

The structure of Bach's *Goldberg Variations* gave me the idea to do something similar with *Underdog*. I needed shape and following this type of compositional model gave me a timeline to plot each escalation within the narrative. The theme or idea for the story is presented in the Prelude 'A View to a Kill'. The text suggests there is going to be a crime as the perpetrator

³² Rachmaninov's *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini* (1934) for piano and orchestra has 24 variations and Beethoven's *Diabelli Variations* (1801) for solo piano has 33 variations.

³³ Mozart and Bach form part of Stravinsky's sound chain in his neoclassical period. Works include *The Rake's Progress* (1951), *Octet* for wind instruments (1922-3), and *Dumbarton Oaks* (1938).

³⁴ Emily Petermann demonstrates how these characteristics become building blocks in *The Musical Novel* (New York: Camden House, 2018), pp. 149-180. Her study is an in-depth analysis of Richard Powers's *The Gold Bug Variations* (1991), Nancy Huston's *The Goldberg Variations* (2008), Gabriel Josipovici's *Goldberg: Variations* (2002), and Rachel Cusk's *The Bradshaw Variations* (2008).

takes the lift up into the fly tower. The novel is then divided into four parts to mirror the format of the ballet. Each part is not less than nine thousand words (9x4=36+) and consists of nine chapters (9x4=36) that can be loosely grouped into threes. The coda at the end of the work is a variation on how the novel started to set in motion a new twist of possibilities in the imagination of the reader.

The first variation occurs in chapter one with Petrushka No. 1. During the fourth act of the ballet he is shot on stage with a poisonous dart. Dotty witnessing the event as a member of the audience enabled me to give the reader a mini synopsis of the ballet, a story within a story, just like the ballet. The second variation is Petrushka No. 2 who takes over the role. His performance is interrupted in between the first and second acts. The dancer is locked in his dressing room, which reflects the start of act two in the ballet. In the third variation Petrushka No. 3, against the odds, clumsily completes the performance. Celebrations are short-lived and tragedy strikes again. The three Petrushkas are linked by their imperfections in performing the role in the eyes of the culprit. When Dotty works this out she is able to solve the case.

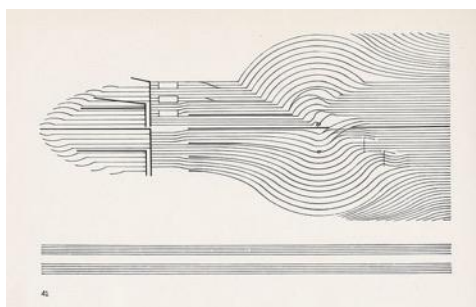
The next section focuses on the imitation of techniques within *Underdog* inspired by other musical forms and traits associated with composers in Stravinsky's sound chain. I also discuss the ideas behind the Dotty signature motif and how this developed into two soundscapes. These points relate mainly to a), e), g), and f) in the methodology.

Graphic Scores, Cryptograms, and Signature Motifs

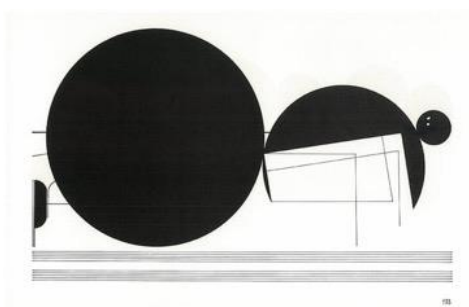
At the end of part one Dotty and her sidekick Floyd leave the ballet and head across town to Piccolo's for a bite to eat. In early drafts, I described the journey in words. Every time I got to this scene, the writing felt flat and cumbersome. There was no pitch or pulse to the page. I started to question what I was doing. Why was the journey in the text? Did it add anything to the story? Maybe I should leave it out? I decided, I needed to find a more dynamic way of bridging the gap. By chance, I was going through some old

scores and rediscovered Cornelius Cardew's *Treatise* (1967).³⁵ 'Treat' being part of the title immediately piqued my attention – all dogs like treats – and there was a connection back to 'pet' in *Petrushka*. Words within words. The 193-page graphic score is a beautiful collection of lines, symbols, and geometric or abstract shapes for a single player or ensemble to interpret.³⁶ Here is an example of two pages from the score:

***Treatise*, page 42**



***Treatise*, page 133**



The two music staves at the bottom of the landscape score are maintained throughout the work. There are no instructions on how to play the piece. Players make up their own rules. No two interpretations can be the same. No two performances can be the same. This was my answer. I could create my own graphic score to be interpreted visually and/or played when Dotty is driving to the restaurant. The idea appealed as a way for musical readers to interact with the imaginary sounds of the scene. They could create their own set of rules for playing the work or even compose their own version of Dotty's journey or use the technique to tell their own stories.³⁷ For non-musical readers, the first two pages of the score could also be interpreted as a numerical puzzle (*Underdog* pp 58-59).

³⁵ Cornelius Cardew, *Treatise* (London: Peters Edition, 1970). Examples of famous graphic scores including a page from *Treatise*, can be seen on the Classic FM website in their feature: 'Art and music collide in these 20 stunning graphic scores' <<https://www.classicfm.com/discover-music/latest/graphic-scores-art-music-pictures/>> [accessed 30 January 2022].

³⁶ Interestingly, Matthew Herbert's *The Music* is also 193 pages in length. I discuss the reasons for Herbert choosing this number in chapter four of the critical part of this thesis.

³⁷ There are various online resources for teachers to explore graphic scores with their students. For example: David Ashworth, *Music Teacher* online magazine, January 2019 <https://www.rhinegold.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/MT0119-scheme-KS3-4_Graphic-scores.pdf> [accessed 22 January 2022].

The title of Cardew's piece is a reference to Ludwig Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-philosophicus* (first published in German 1921; translated into English 1922). In his seven propositions, Wittgenstein explored the relationship limits of thought and language or sense and nonsense. Cardew's score attempts to identify the connection between language and listening within the limits of music. This made me think about the constraints and opportunities of combining music and text as part of the novel. My graphic score is an attempt to bring the two together so they can be read and heard at the same time as a scene within the story. I now had my compositional form for the journey. But was there also a way of bringing *Petrushka* with me? The obvious sound reference to the ballet was to include the Petrushka signature chord in the graphic score. This triggered another idea. Why not create a signature motif – a musical cryptogram – for my protagonist's name and give her a sound identity?³⁸ A Dotty motif re-emphasises the duality of the work and unites my words and the music with the story. Thinking about Bach in Stravinsky's *Dumbarton Oaks* and Bach's obsession with signing his name in pieces inspired this thought process.

Cryptograms in music are not new. Many composers have signed their name and written secret messages in their works. The writerly challenge to overcome is that music has far fewer notes than the alphabet. The English music notation system of A-G limits the number of word options. In German musical nomenclature there are two additional letters H and S for chromatic pitches. The note B-natural is H and E-flat is S. Bach wrote his name in pieces with the notes: B-flat, A, C, B-natural. The sequence can be heard in his Sinfonia No. 9 in F Minor (1723), and the fourteenth Contrapunctus of *The Art of the Fugue* (1742). Dimitri Shostakovich used the same music notation system for his signature D-S-C-H (D, E-flat, C, B) in a number of works including Symphony No. 10 (1947-53), Symphony No. 15 (1971), and most notably in String Quartet No. 8 (1960). Alban Berg's *Lyric Suite* (1926) is structured around four love notes: A and B-flat for his initials and B-natural and F for Hanna Fuchs-Robettin, with whom he was having an affair at that

³⁸ Music cryptograms combine note names with the alphabet to spell words.

time. I was stuck. None of this helped in creating a signature theme for Dotty. Using the English and German methods only the letter D made it onto the stave for my detective. This led me to the French music cryptogram system which takes the first seven notes A-G and places the letters of the alphabet underneath.³⁹ *The Firebird*, *Petrushka*, and *The Rite of Spring* commissioned by Sergi Diaghilev's Ballets Russes company were premiered in Paris. For me this was another defining 'French' connection in joining the dots in the sound chain for *Underdog* and Dotty.

The French Cryptogram System

A	B	C	D	E	F	G
A	B	C	D	E	F	G
H	I	J	K	L	M	N
O	P	Q	R	S	T	U
V	W	X	Y	Z		

Dotty's signature motif is highlighted in yellow in the above table. In the key of A minor her notes are D, A, F, F, D. This process can be used for all twenty-four keys (12 major / 12 minor) using the root as the starting point.⁴⁰ In C major Dotty's note sequence becomes F, C, A, A, F highlighted in green in the following:

C	D	E	F	G	A	B
A	B	C	D	E	F	G
H	I	J	K	L	M	N
O	P	Q	R	S	T	U
V	W	X	Y	Z		

³⁹ Maurice Ravel combined the German and French method in his *Menuet sur le nom d'Haydn* (1909) presumably not to have so many repeating notes. The solo piano piece spells out Haydn's name in a five-note motif with B-natural, A, D, D, G.

⁴⁰ There are online Apps that can do this without having to manually work out the note sequences. For example, in audiocipher.com all the user is required to do is type their name or message, select a key, and hit the play button. The file can then be saved to a MIDI system.

I have chosen D minor for Dotty’s signature key. D for dog, Dalmatian, detective, and Dotty. The motif in notes becomes G, D, B-flat, B-flat, G as shown in blue:

D	E	F	G	A	B-flat	C
A	B	C	D	E	F	G
H	I	J	K	L	M	N
O	P	Q	R	S	T	U
V	W	X	Y	Z		

The motif has a melancholy edge, which signals that not everything is going to be easy. There will be hurdles to overcome as part of the journey in cracking the case. The next challenge was how to make more of Dotty’s signature to unite the music with the text and enhance the interactive reading and listening experience. I came up with the idea of creating a soundscape to accompany the novel.⁴¹ My creative constraint was to only use Dotty’s five-notes. In a linear format the motif would have 120 different combinations ($5 \times 4 \times 3 \times 2 \times 1 = 120$) and endless possibilities with notes stacked on top of each other. All of which would be tediously time-consuming, if not impossible for a human to work out without the help of a machine. K9 Mark 1 (Doctor Who’s robot tin dog) and the infamous title music for the series that spooked and delighted generations of children was playing on a continuous loop in my head.⁴²

⁴¹ This dual approach of music and fiction working together is becoming more popular. For example, Pink Floyd’s David Gilmour wrote a track to accompany Polly Samson’s novel *A Theatre for Dreamers* (2020); Dolly Parton and James Patterson’s book collaboration *Run, Rose, Run* (2022) is accompanied by an album of the same name with twelve original tracks based on characters and scenes in the novel. The lyrics to the songs are included at the end of the book.

⁴² K9 first appeared in *Doctor Who* in ‘The Invisible Enemy’ (1977). Delia Derbyshire was part of the BBC Radiophonic Workshop team, originally set up in 1958 by Daphne Oram and Desmond Briscoe. They created music and sound effects for a variety of programmes from *Quatermass* (1953), *The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy* (1981) to *The Living Planet* (1984). The BBC Radiophonic Workshop was disbanded in 1998 and revived in 2012 with Matthew Herbert as the Creative Director. Chapter 4 is an analysis of Herbert’s *The Music – A novel through sound*.

The *Doctor Who* theme tune (1963) was created by Delia Derbyshire using oscillators, tape manipulation, and a plucked string. Derbyshire triggered connections to modular sound pioneers who made electronic music without having to cut and splice magnetic tape loops. The sound chain led me to Laurie Spiegel's 'Appalachian Grove' (1980), Suzanne Ciani's 'Princess with Orange Feet' (2012), Caterina Barbieri's 'Scratches on the Readable Surface' (2017), and Hannah Peel's 'Mary Casio: Journey to Cassiopeia' (2020). Their work is about playing with sound that expands out from a fixed set of data by changing the material through repetition, permutation, variation, and shifting patterns. I had already created the data in Dotty's case with her signature five-notes. The next logical step was to explore what would happen to them if they were locked into a modular synthesizer to create a piece. I like to think of this as a musical dialogue between Dotty and her notes.

A modular synthesizer is an electronic instrument built from different components that have different functions. The user puts the modules together to create a specific type of sound or style of music. The modules are set independently in a music box with a power source.⁴³ They are then wired externally by the user so they can communicate. This is done with a network of patch points, sockets, and cables. Sound is produced by an electrical voltage passing through the patch cables and then manipulated.

⁴³ A basic synth needs five modules: 1. Oscillator is the sound source that creates different types of waveforms. 2. Filter modifies the tone and timbre of the sound. 3. Voltage Controlled Amplifier (VCA) turns things up or down. This can be done very slowly or very quickly or a mixture of both depending on what sort of sound signals the module is being fed. It is mostly used with an envelope generator. The user puts in an audio source and then adds an envelope as a control voltage. The VCA then outputs the sound with the varying levels of amplitude – attack (amp turning up), decay (amp turning down slightly), sustain (amp holding the level), release (amp turning down). The VCA can also be used with non-audio signals like an LFO (low frequency oscillator) to change and effect modulation. 4. Control Voltage and Modulation envelopes and LFOs are the main ones used for modulating signals. For example, an LFO (which is an oscillator that is so low it is not audible) can slowly open a filter and when an envelope is used it creates a bouncy sound (acid). Mixing the two together or mixing two LFOs give the impression of movement within a piece a bit like taking the sound wave shape on a rollercoaster ride. 5. Sequencer is another control voltage module and swirls everything around by shuffling or shifting the sound patterns or a series of repeated notes. When a user hits a phrase they like, they lock it in. Increasing or decreasing the volt moves the pitch up or down.

There are no pre-determined sounds or effects built in, the ethos being: think of a sound, now make it.

When the synthesizer is switched on there is a constant stream of sound generated from the electricity. The creative process is about finding the music in the machine, going with the energy flow, and then sculpting those electronic sounds in real time using the modules. There is no replay, rewind, or pause. When the machine is turned off, everything is gone unless the performance is recorded. I set synthologist Paul Usher with his modular synthesizer called TOM, the Dotty signature soundscape challenge.⁴⁴

Paul Usher's modular synthesizer, TOM



Usher locked Dotty's five-notes into his machine and worked towards creating a sketch idea. This led to a number of developmental phases going back and forth between us. Discussion centred around when to lock in and get out of the data set, how to shift and shape modulations, and how to create an overall arch for the piece. Basically, a beginning, a middle, and an end. Two alternative soundscapes were recorded live for Dotty.⁴⁵ Having two options fits with the duality of *Underdog*, almost like having an A and B side

⁴⁴ TOM is an acronym for Tonnes of Modulations. Picture credit: Paul Usher.

⁴⁵ Listen to Dotty's signature soundscapes on SoundCloud <<https://soundcloud.com/lisaoj>> For best quality on a laptop or home computer listen with headphones.

of a (digital) vinyl record to demonstrate how the motif can be treated differently. *Petrushka* also has two identities – the real and the imagined.

Before I move on to show how I have embedded the music into part one of *Underdog*, I would like to focus specifically on numbers and patterns. They are a recurring theme in the creative and critical parts of this thesis and an obsession for many composers and writers. And as Claude Debussy (1862-1918) once said, 'Music is the arithmetic of sounds as optics is the geometry of light.'⁴⁶

Numbers and Patterns

Numbers and numerical patterns are important in terms of structure and thematic development of a work. Bach used 14 or 41 as another type of musical signature. B is the second letter in the alphabet, A the first, C the third, and H the eighth. Add together the positions $2+1+3+8=14$. Berg preferred the number 23. His *Lyric Suite* (1926) is made up of twenty-three bar phrases. The number 3 is prominent in *The Magic Flute* (1791) by Mozart. The key signature has three flats. There are three knocks at the door which feature throughout and the characters enter in threes. Stravinsky loved the number seven. Schoenberg was petrified of the number 13. He died on the Friday 13 July, 1951. Composers and their obsessions with numbers made me think about how to use them in my work. The number nine features prominently in *Underdog*. This is to emphasise my *canine* world and in many police departments the dog unit is called K-9. When Dotty goes to the ballet she sits in row K, seat number 9. And as already stated: there are nine chapters in each part of the novel making a total of thirty-six (9×4). I also use the number 3 (three-squared is nine) and the three times table to vary the number options. Dotty's badge number is 9663 and spells woof on the phone number keypad system. She lives at No.18 Wagtails Road ($6 \times 3=18$ or $1+8=9$ and $6+3=9$). The Babooshka theatre door code between front and back of house (13061911) is the date *Petrushka* was premiered at the Théâtre du

⁴⁶ Dean Keith Simonton, *Greatness: Who Makes History and Why* (New York: The Guilford Press, 1984), p. 110.

Châtelet in Paris on 13 June, 1911. The 867-5309 phone number Boneapart gives Dotty and Floyd so they can check his alibi is a reference to the number in the song 'Jenny' (1981) performed by the band Tommy Tutones. The famous number has been used in video games such as *Duke Nukem* and *Everquest* and seemed a bit more fun than the typical 555 number exchange used in TV and films.

Composers are not alone in playing with letters and numbers. Writers play these games as well. Lewis Carroll's poem 'A boat beneath a sunny sky' at the end of *Through the Looking-Glass* spells out the full name of the girl who inspired the work: Alice Pleasance Liddell. Each letter of her name starts a new line of the poem. Carroll liked the number 42, which he weaved into the *Alice* books. There are forty-two illustrations in *Alice in Wonderland*, the King sends 4,207 horses and men to put Humpty Dumpty together again in *Through the Looking-Glass* (7 is a factor of 42), and combined the *Alice* books have twenty-four chapters (12+12= 24) i.e. 42 backwards.⁴⁷

Inside Out: Intertextuality in Practice

Books are mostly seen not heard but between the covers, they are noisy places. Pages are alive with sound and music. Printed words constantly play with language, mixing and remixing dynamics to balance the sonic landscapes of a text. A novel that imitates music and borrows musical forms establishes the way in which a story is to be read. Angela Leighton suggests:

The silent page may become a trove of riches or a Pandora's Box, but either way, there is such a complex orchestration of noises in it, such a 'roar' within its silence, that to read without listening for those noises might be to miss much of what literature is about.⁴⁸

What follows is an introduction to the music in part one of the novel. It is not a full deconstruction of *Underdog*. Subsequent analyses or interpretations

⁴⁷ Source: Martin Gardner, *Lewis Carroll The Annotated Alice* (London: Penguin Books, 2001). Gardner's analysis is full of interesting facts and figures annotated in the margins alongside the original texts.

⁴⁸ Angela Leighton, *Hearing things: religion, illusion, and the American* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2018), p. 14.

are the responsibility of the 'writerly' reader or musical detective to discover and arrive at their own conclusions.

Underdog starts with a single word '*Shhh!*' in the middle of the page. The silence of the white page draws the reader in from outside the work to the inner world of the story. *Shhh!* is a call to action and suggests something dramatic is about to happen. Not too dissimilar to 'Are you sitting comfortably? Then I'll begin.' The phrase was used before the start of the story on the BBC Home Service radio programme *Listen with Mother* in the 1950s until the end of the series in 1982. *Shhh!* means 'be quiet'. In music, tacet in the form of a rest is an instruction for the performer(s) not to make a sound. Silence in music is just as dramatic as sound. The exclamation mark is there to emphasise the noise of silence surrounding the word. And without it the *Shhh* feels rather underdressed. *Shhh!* is in italics because it is an authorial intrusion communicating directly to the reader and in conventional scores dynamic level instructions are abbreviated in italics to *ff*, *f*, *mf*, *p*, *pp*, and so on. *Shhh!* could have been *Shh!* or *Shhhhhh!* There is a reason for the four-letter spelling. *Shhh!* was inspired by the opening of Ludwig van Beethoven's Symphony No. 5 in C minor, Op. 67 (1808). Most listeners think the piece starts with the famous four note sequence: Da-da-da-Dum. But the work starts with silence – a quaver rest on the downbeat. Beethoven is dragging the audience into the start of the work. The (un)silent white page and *Shhh!* is also a nod to John Cage. He proved that there is no such thing as silence with his piece *4'33"* (1952).⁴⁹

'A View to a Kill' in the Prelude, is a reference to Duran Duran's thirteenth single released on 6 May 1985 by Capitol-EMI. It was written for the James Bond movie with the same name. The track uses Stravinsky's staccato chord or ORCH2 in the Fairlight CMI synthesizer library of sounds. The klang kling-kling-kling klang is the sound of the lift. The positioning of this text is an attempt to follow the opening rhythm of 'A View to a Kill'. The white space

⁴⁹ Try the John Cage experiment in the World of 4'33" App. I did this for twelve consecutive days at 4.33pm in homage to Cage and Matthew Herbert who uses this work to structure *The Music – A novel through sound*.

between the kling-klangs represents the sound gaps. Kling Klang is the name of Kraftwerk's studio in Düsseldorf, their record label, and the title of the first track on the *Kraftwerk 2* album (1972).⁵⁰ Kling klang translates into ding dong – the noise the lift makes when the doors open and close. I decided that page two of the lift scene would travel from the bottom of the page to the top. This represents the movement of the lift going up and signals to the reader to pay attention to the layout in *Underdog* as not all pages work left to right in a block linear format. The column like structure that contains the text also reminds me of how non-Western music notation works. For example, the shakuhachi (Japanese end-blown bamboo flute) has its own tablature notation system which looks a bit like a graphic score with lines, diagrams, and symbols that are read top to bottom in a vertical column from right to left.⁵¹ When the dog exits the lift, the single text lines at the top of the page complement the view high above the stage and reconfirms the connection back to 'A View to a Kill'. The white spaces below the lines is the 'silence' or emptiness before the ballet performance begins. The blankness of the page allowing the reader to hear external noises proving that there is no such thing as silence.

At the start of chapter one, Dotty parks her motorbike in front of the piazza and makes her way to the ballet. The ballet company is called Babooshka. This is a reference to Kate Bush's track on the album *Never for Ever* (1980). In the song, Bush used the smashing glass option available as part of the library of sounds on the Fairlight CMI synthesizer. Dotty is described as a 'no bling-bling diamond dog'. The term 'bling' is slang for shiny jewellery, gold, or money and became entrenched within the hip hop movement after Baby Gangsta's single 'Bling Bling' from his album *Chopper City in the Ghetto* (1999). Bling also refers to the imagined sound that light makes when it hits a diamond. 'Diamond dog' is a reference to David Bowie's song 'Diamond Dogs' (1974) which features on his eighth studio album of the same name.

⁵⁰ Another link in the chain: DJ Afrika Bambaataa sampled the track 'Metal on Metal' on Kraftwerk's *Trans-Europe Express* (1977) album in 'Planet Rock' which started the ORCH2 craze.

⁵¹ I studied the shakuhachi with Yoshikazu Iwamoto at Dartington College of Arts.

The cover design depicts Bowie as half-man, half-dog – although my protagonist, Dotty, is all dog. This was Bowie’s last album in his glam rock phase.

Dotty takes her seat in the auditorium. In the ballet there is always a scene within a scene. This is reflected in the text by dividing the pages into three distinct sections. The top third represents the out-of-sight culprit in the fly tower who is silently waiting to take his shot at Petrushka. The story of the ballet is set out in the middle panel in the present tense to represent Dotty watching the ballet in real time. The lower section is the orchestra in the pit and the audience. Both parts can be read independently of each other or in a traditional Western linear way from top-to-bottom.

Matthew Herbert’s *The Music* partly inspired this page division idea. He challenges the reader to hear the scaffold of sounds on the page like reading a music score and not to consume the text line-by-line. My structure for the scene divided opinion in my peer creative writing group. Some thought the presentation would be too difficult for young readers to follow. I subscribe to author, M T Anderson’s view:

Experimental fiction is great for children because kids pick up on these techniques naturally and take to them better than an adult might. They are more accessible than in adult literature. Experimental techniques teach us how to read the book. They are a process of learning in and of themselves.⁵²

Innovative techniques from shuffle book stories to hypertext novels, structures without plot, and play with typography in children’s fiction is not uncommon across the different reading age categories. David Macaulay’s picture book *Black and White* contains a ‘warning’ on the inside jacket and title page that there may be ‘a number of stories within the pages that do not

⁵² M T Anderson talk at the SCWBI LA Conference 2010 <<https://ingridsnotes.wordpress.com/2010/11/13/experimental-fiction-is-perfect-for-childrens-literature/>> [accessed 31 January 2022]. I prefer the term innovative to experimental. The latter implies as Ronald Sukenick points out in an author interview with Zoltán Abádi-Nagy, ‘The word experimental is associated with something you do in a laboratory for mysterious reasons remote from life [...] which relegates you immediately to a shelf as not doing something very serious, that is only “experimental”.’ p. 11 <<https://jstor.org/stable/41273795>> [accessed 8 May 2022].

necessarily occur at the same time. Then again, it may contain only one story.⁵³ Readers are challenged to pay attention to the words and the pictures to get a different perspective with each encounter. Another classic is Mark Dunn's *Ella Minnow Pea: A Novel in Letters* set on the fictional island of Nollop.⁵⁴ When letters of the alphabet drop from the commemorative statue of Nevil Nollop – creator of the famous pangram 'The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog' – they also disappear from the text.

Some of the music connections in the text are random. They popped into the realm of consciousness at the time of writing. For example, Martha and the Jellybean Orchestra are inspired by Martha and the Muffins – a Canadian rock band – who had one major hit with 'Echo Beach' (1979). I was trying to find a silly name and couldn't get muffins out of my head. The dog who sits next to Dotty in the audience was originally called Eulenberg as a reference to Ernst Eulenberg. The music publishing house was established in 1874 and famous for its bright yellow miniature study scores of orchestral, choral, and chamber music. There are over 1,200 titles as part of the series which includes Beethoven's Symphony No. 5. Conscious of the fact that there is a large cast of characters for young readers to remember, in the final editing process of the work, the name Eulenberg was dropped as he did not feature in later parts of the novel. However, I kept the yellow sequined waistcoat to harmonise with the famous score covers.

Other music connections within the narrative are deliberately embedded into the work to reinforce the relationship with Stravinsky's score. The sound words in Times New Roman that accompany the story of the ballet in the middle panel reflect what can be heard in the score. For example, **ra-ta-ta-ta ra-ta-ta-ta** are the drummers announcing the puppet show is about to start. **Toot-toot** is the two staccato notes the flute plays when the puppets come to

⁵³ David Macaulay, *Black and White* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1990).

⁵⁴ Mark Dunn, *Ella Minnow Pea: A Novel in Letters* (United States: Anchor Books, 2002). Ella is a girl's name, minnow is a fish, and pea is a vegetable. If one sings Ella Minnow Pea to the 'Alphabet Song' there is an obvious sound reference to the letters L, M, N, O, P. The novel is structured as a series of letters between Ella and various characters. This is a pun on the letters of the alphabet and letters one writes to another person. In my first attempt at purchasing the book it mysteriously disappeared in transit for several weeks beyond the anticipated delivery date. The book eventually dropped on my door matt after the bookseller agreed to a refund.

life. **Mm-BAP-BAP, mm-BAP-BAP** is the rhythm of the waltz when the Moor and the Ballerina dance in his room. **Daa-da-da daaa** is how I have reinterpreted the Petrushka signature theme in the trumpets when the puppet curses the Magician and features as a recurring theme in each development stage of the story. The 'Listening Guide' I created influenced my interpretation and sound imitation of the music within the text.

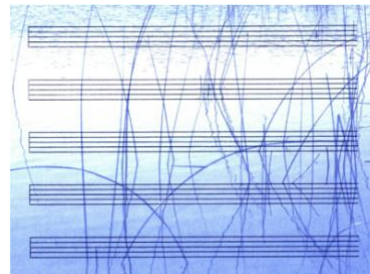
At the end of chapter one, when Petrushka fails to get up, the police officer onstage barks: 'I think he's dead.' The orchestra grinds to a screechy halt. I wanted a visual means to recreate that distinctive sound. Stephen Vitiello's graphic score *First Horizontal* (2007) came to mind.⁵⁵ His blue line scribbles on a blueish piece of manuscript paper looks like it could have been done by a child. But, Vitiello's marks are bold. He is stretching the boundaries of listening with his impressionistic interpretation of a recorded piece of music.

Here is my sound translation of Martha and the Jellybean Orchestra coming to a stop alongside *First Horizontal*:

Underdog
page 28

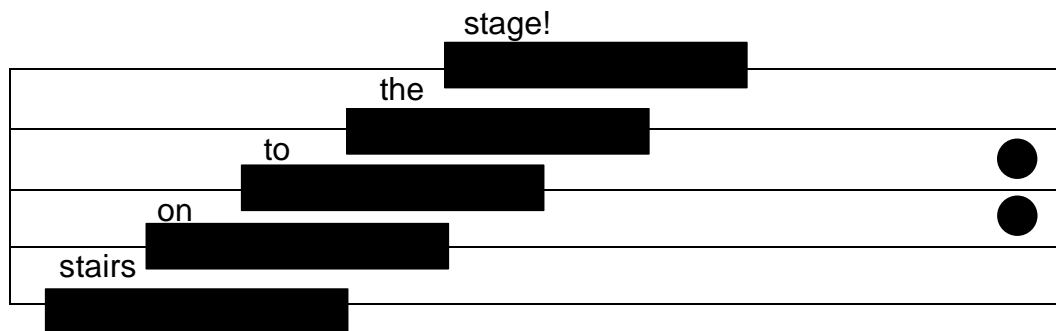


Stephen Vitiello
First Horizontal



⁵⁵ Stephen Vitiello is an electronic composer and media artist. His piece *First Horizontal* was part a group exhibition exploring drawing, thinking, and sound through experimental music, called 'Between Thought and Sound: Graphic Notation in Contemporary Music' at The Kitchen, New York in 2007. Exhibition catalogue <<https://tinyurl.com/3783vy96>> p. 68. [accessed 16 July 2022].

In chapter two, chaos erupts as the audience flee the theatre. Dotty pushes her way to the front of the hall. I decided to imitate Dotty running up the stairs to get onstage with a music stave.



The long black blocks on each line of the stave are the ascending steps. Each stair or block is accompanied by a single word (stairs | on | to | the | stage!) and could be interpreted as notes E, G, B, D, F. The two dots at the end of the bar communicates to the reader to repeat the words (hopefully, singing them) with the assigned notes. The black blocks trigger for me the image of the black keys on a keyboard. This is not a random connection. The piano plays an integral role in the sound narrative of the ballet. Stravinsky also played and composed at the piano and wrote a version of the work titled 'Three Movements from Petrushka' (1921) for Arthur Rubinstein. When Dotty races onstage, the petrified Ballerina is wearing a pink powder-puff tutu. Barbara Karinska designed this type of ballet skirt in the 1940s for the choreographer, George Balanchine. He wanted a tutu that showed the dancer's movements unhindered by a large, hooped skirt. Balanchine and Stravinsky first met in France through Sergei Diaghilev. They forged a partnership which lasted throughout their lifetime. Their first collaboration was on the ballet *Apollo* (1928). Balanchine choreographed forty ballets to Stravinsky's music. It seemed fitting to acknowledge this connection within the text. *Tutu* (1986) is also a jazz album by Miles Davis. The opening track 'Tutu' imitates the loud thwack or sampled sound from Stravinsky's *The Firebird* that was part of the Fairlight CMI synthesizer library of sounds.

Babooshka, the ballet boss, has a 'Handel' bar moustache – a deliberate misspelling of handle – to reference the composer. The orchestra ridicule Babooshka by howling, 'Babooshka, Babooshka, Babooshka-ya-ya!' which links to the lyrics in the Kate Bush song. I am playing with names and sound posting my text with notable references contained within the pop song which would be instantly recognisable if the reader listened to the track.

In chapter three, Superwaggywoofilisticbowwowexpialidoggylicious is an extended doggy rip on the Sherman Brothers song title 'Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious' in the Disney film *Mary Poppins* (1964 and adapted by Cameron Mackintosh as a stage musical 2004). A number of musicals are referenced in connection to Boneapart and the Chewberts (my portmanteau for chew and Schubert) who run Broadway. Chapters four and five play with typography to emphasise the sound and dynamics of the scene and includes the date *Petrushka* was premiered. The date is the door code between the back and front of house – a symbolic connection to the imaginary world of the theatre and the real world of the audience, just like the ballet. The text in chapter six is split into two columns to signify a visual reference to the stage. Dotty's boss, Captain Copland is introduced in chapter seven. Aaron Copland was an American composer, teacher, writer, and conductor. This follows on from Dotty and Floyd's previous boss, Captain Wagner, who was named after the German composer. All the Special Branch team have composer names, apart from Dotty who is one in her own right, with a signature motif and two soundscapes.

In Chapter nine, the climax to the end of part one, I wanted to bring the music back into the spotlight. Dotty and Floyd are heading to Piccolo's for a bite to eat. A piccolo is part of the woodwind family and half the size of a flute. The journey is introduced as a *Short Ride in a Fast Machine* (1986). This is a reference to a work by American composer, John Adams. The orchestral piece was composed for the opening of the music festival 'Great Woods'. Adams explained the piece as: 'You know how it is when someone

asks you to ride in a terrific sports car, and then you wish you hadn't.'⁵⁶ Floyd feels this way when Dotty crashes into the fountain outside the restaurant.

The journey is notated as a four-page graphic score titled 'Vrooom'. 'Vro' in italics followed by the non-italicised 'oom' links to the 3x4 grid structure of the opening of the work. The idea of giving the piece a tempo instruction of 162 beats per minute or 324 tail wags per minute was threefold. In my head I had György Ligeti's *Poème Symphonique* (1969) for a hundred metronomes and ten performers.⁵⁷ The pendulum movement of the metronomes reminded me of a pack of dogs wagging their tails. $1+6+2=9$ and $3+2+4=9$. And I wanted a fast pace (162 bpm and above is a good tempo for drum 'n' bass) so the work could be quickly skipped over by readers who did not want to engage with the performance element of these pages. They would be seen as a bit of fun or an interlude between the narrative restarting. The music terms at the top of each page support this instruction: 'accelerando' to go faster, 'espress' to become more expressive, and 'volante' is that we are flying. The 'volito subito' direction at the bottom of the last page means to turn the page quickly.

The score as I have already alluded to was originally inspired by the lines and black dots in *Treatise*. Like Cardew, I give no instructions on how to play the work and no fixed interpretation exists. The piece can be played by a single performer or an ensemble, on any number of instruments or objects found around the home. The score went through a number of sketch phases. The first few attempts were black-and-white hand drawn pages on my iPad to spark that space between thought and sound. When I came back to them several months later, I decided I could only use Microsoft Word to create the piece. This would align with everything else in *Underdog*. Typographical play with words to signify pitch changes or dynamics in the text are all done in Word. No other programme. I created a number of other versions developing the Cardew lines and dots idea and then started to introduce colour into my

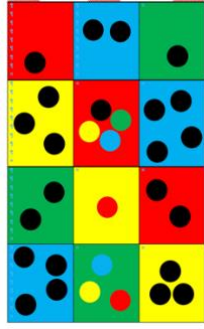
⁵⁶ 'Performing Miracles at the Proms', BBC Radio 3 online <<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p02szs9g>> [accessed 23 March 2021].

⁵⁷ György Ligeti, *Poème Symphonique* <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xAYGJmYKrl4>> [accessed 25 May 2022].

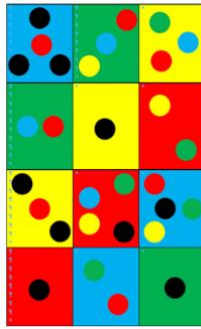
work. It was only when I laid the pages out next to each other that a conscious connection to one of my favourite artists in my teenage years became apparent.⁵⁸

These are the first two pages of my graphic score alongside a painting by Wassily Kandinsky, pioneer of abstract modern art.

Underdog
page 58



page 59



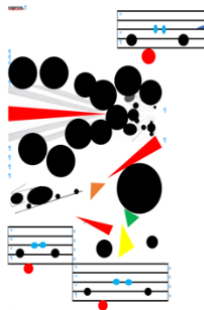
Squares with Concentric Circles (1913)



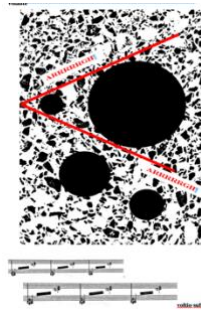
Lenbachhaus, Munich

The last two pages alongside another Kandinsky artwork:

page 60



page 61



Composition 8 (1923)



Guggenheim Museum, New York

⁵⁸ Whilst studying for my 'A' level in music (over three decades ago), I was intrigued by a collection of letters Arnold Schoenberg (1874-1957) and Wassily Kandinsky (1866-1944) sent each other. The letters discussed their thoughts on the relationships between music and painting in their work. See, *Arnold Schoenberg and Wassily Kandinsky: Letters, Pictures and Documents*, ed. by Jelena Hahl-Koch (London: Faber & Faber, 1986). On the back of my bedroom door, I attempted to recreate a version of Kandinsky's *Composition 8*, a poster of his *Squares with Concentric Circles* hung on the wall, and my fascination with how the two art forms worked together continued into my undergraduate music degree with my dissertation on *Music and Art: A Survey of Interrelationships* (1991). The titles of Kandinsky's paintings are often aligned to music and his illustrated book with fifty-six woodcuts titled *Klänge* (1913) was described as a 'musical album'. Schoenberg's pieces also reference elements in art such as 'Farben' (colours) from his *Five Orchestra Pieces Op. 16* (1909).

Kandinsky's *Squares with Concentric Circles* is a landscape painting in a 4x3 grid structure. Each square holds colourful circles that have a central point. My grid is a vertical 3x4 grid system. I consciously wanted five horizontal lines to represent the five lines of a music staff and Dotty has five letters in her name. The 3x4 grid could indicate a time signature or the three columns could be the three different notes that make up Dotty's signature theme. The dots may be interpreted as rhythmic patterns or pitch references. Dalmatians also have spots which links back to the breed of my protagonist. The four coloured blocks could be different sounds of various household objects or alternative ways a saucepan is struck with different utensils. The first two pages can work as a linear or horizontal system or both at the same time depending on the number of players. But for a non-musical reader the pages are a numerical puzzle to be cracked. The numerical order for page one, column one is 1, 3, 2, 4; column two becomes 2, 4, 1, 3, and column three 1, 4, 2, 3 (and/or relate to various pitch intervals). Page two reverses the order and the block sequencing.

The coloured blocks also remind me of an electronic game popular in the late 1970s and 1980s called *Simon* (1978). The circular machine was divided into four panels with four colours (blue, yellow, red, green) with an assigned pitch E, C-sharp, A, E. When the player pressed play, the machine created a motif that had to be repeated. The sequences got progressively more complex and the game ended when the player failed to reproduce the correct sound and rhythmic pattern. The 2014 version of the game still maintains the colours but the notes have changed to G, C, E, and G.

Page 3 of the score develops the five dot sequences and, on the staff, they become Dotty's signature notes (G, D, B-flat, B-flat, G). As there is no key signature the two blue dots are squished/flattened for B-flat. The coloured triangles are sharp percussive noises. Although, now I am consciously aware of Kandinsky's *Composition 8*, I do see a relationship with the coloured triangles and geometric shapes.

Page 4 anticipates the crash. The hairpin increases the volume, the black dots have got bigger and they have also lost their form by being splattered all over the page. Petrushka's menacing signature chords rumbles underneath

to signal impending doom. Graphic scores are not static. They create a revolving space for imagining, reading, interpreting, and performing without the restriction of language. The first page is deliberately placed on the left so the piece ends on the right to contain the score. I hope a musical reader will attempt to play their own version and that it adds another interactive layer to engage with the novel.

In this section I have shown how I have weaved musical form and elements of music from 'A-G' into part one of the novel. What follows is a track listing for some of the music referenced in *Underdog*. The songs with an asterisk imitate the loud stab or thwack that was part of the Fairlight CMI synthesizer library of recorded effects made famous by DJ Afrika Bambaataa. The sampled sound was taken from the opening of the 'Infernal Dance of All the Subjects of Kastechi' in Stravinsky's *The Firebird*.

Track Listing

Stravinsky *Petrushka* (1911)
*Duran Duran, 'A View to a Kill' (1985)
*Afrika Bambaataa, 'Planet Rock' (1982)
Kraftwerk, *Trans-Europe Express* (1977)
Kate Bush, 'Babooshka' (1980)
Baby Gangsta, 'Bling Bling' (1999)
David Bowie, 'Diamond Dogs' (1974)
Martha & the Muffins, 'Echo Beach' (1980)
John Adams, *Short Ride in a Fast Machine* (1986)
The Orb, 'Little Fluffy Clouds' (1990)
Nacio Herb Brown (music), Arthur Freed (lyrics), *Singin' in the Rain* (1952)
Queen, 'We Will Rock You' (1977)
Rodgers & Hammerstein, *Oklahoma* (1943)
Rodgers & Hammerstein, *The Sound of Music* (1959)
*The Cars, 'Hello Again' (1984)
*Miles Davis, 'Tutu' (1986)
*Britney Spears, 'Lucky' (2000)
*New Order, 'Round and Round' (1989)
*En Vogue, 'Hold On' (1989)

You can listen to some of the music in the novel here:

<<https://open.spotify.com/playlist/3TZy0cn8dyt2DikNCzhEO3>>

The two Dotty soundscapes for *Underdog* can be found here:

<<https://soundcloud.com/lisaoj>>

In 'Notes from the Margins' I have presented how I researched, built, and developed a music novel. My starting point was Stravinsky and his music. This led me to composers in the sound chain that influenced Stravinsky at different stages of his career, and composers who were inspired by this great iconoclast of the first half of the twentieth century. The *Petrushka* story gave me a foundation that held everything together and allowed me to recreate and present an alternative version of it. The musical form I chose to imitate was a theme and variations. The clearly defined motifs within the score, from the flexibility of *Petrushka*'s signature theme tune to the two staccato notes of the flute sound posting the puppets coming to life helped drive the storyline forward and keep the music in the work. The two soundtracks based on my protagonist's name would not exist without reading Stravinsky's score for the ballet and imitating how other composers have played with notes and numbers to create their own. Everything is 'connected' even if the relationships seem 'unconnected'. The music plays a role in the structure and development of the work as a whole. Sometimes it comes to the forefront, sometimes it hums gently in the background. It is not there to overtly interfere with the storytelling.

My focus now shifts to other writers who have used music in fiction and fiction that has inspired composers in their compositions.

2. Writerly Games Writers Play: Patterns, Playlists, and Recurring Themes

A story is a game someone has played so you can play it too.
—Ronald Sukenick⁵⁹

Meta. Metafiction matters. Construction and deconstruction. This is a thing. The act of self-conscious writing. Text promoting itself as its self. Reminding us of the design processes involved. The length of this sentence is eight words. I'm playing my writerly game that every word counts. The role of the reader is to crack the code. I'm explicitly demonstrating in the text how this paragraph was made.⁶⁰

In other words, in the opening paragraph, I have been playing my own compositional game to create the text. Within the text I have planted clues so the reader can join the game. In the act of composition, I have been performing Ronald Sukenick's quote and by putting the game on paper, I have recorded that performance. The game-orientated or play-orientated story becomes an interactive work between the author and reader.

Patricia Waugh states in *Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction* that 'the lowest common denominator of metafiction is simultaneously to create a fiction and to make a statement about the creation of that fiction.'⁶¹ With this in mind, I have chosen two children's novels as the focus for this chapter. The primary text is Aimee Lucido's *In the Key of Code* (2019).⁶² The story is aimed at Middle Grade readers and written in verse.⁶³ The secondary text is Philip Reeve's *Railhead* (2015).⁶⁴ The sci-fi adventure is aimed at readers eleven years and older.⁶⁵ Both texts draw attention to the

⁵⁹ Ronald Sukenick, *Death of the Novel and Other Stories* (New York: The Dial Press, 1969) p. 57.

⁶⁰ Each sentence in my opening paragraph increases incrementally by one word.

⁶¹ Patricia Waugh, *Metafiction: Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction* (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 6.

⁶² Aimee Lucido, *In the Key of Code* (London: Walker Books, 2019). 'Further references (to this edition etc.) are given after quotations in the text'.

⁶³ The narrator is twelve-year-old Emmy. Her life has been turned upside down. She is in a new city, starting a new school, and feels out of place. Emmy loves music but doesn't believe she can be a musician until she discovers computer programming. Lucido's premise for the story was to weave music, code, and prose into one harmonious composition to tell Emmy's journey from feeling out of tune to being in tune with her new surroundings.

⁶⁴ Philip Reeve, *Railhead* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015). 'Further references (to this edition etc.) are given after quotations in the text'.

⁶⁵ The protagonist is Zen Starling, a thief who rides sentient trains that travel from one world to another. He is offered a life-changing job to infiltrate the Emperor's train to steal a box and gets caught up in a war that could destroy the whole planetary network. Philip Reeve did not

role of music as part of their own artistic construction of the novel and in shaping the story. By following the trace evidence, my analysis will show how Lucido explicitly soundtracks pop and classical music and imitates noteworthy characteristics of a particular work as a recurring theme within the text. I will demonstrate how Lucido relies on a range of music terms and forms to bring her main character to life, and explore how typography and space register elements of music such as rhythm, metre, pitch, and dynamics. Reeve implicitly builds his story world with pop music connections and divides the novel into four distinct movements as if he was composing a large-scale orchestral work. I will argue that he follows the technical aspects of the symphony's first movement sonata form principle in part one of the book. The aim of this contribution is a musical reading of these works to highlight various techniques and devices two different writers engage with in the act of composing their work. And ultimately uncover what characteristics define a metafictional music novel.

In the Key of Code: Patterns, Playlists, and Number Games

Sound tracking popular and classical music is a recurring theme in Lucido's *In the Key of Code*. Lucido follows three main techniques. The first is to reference a track with title links to other songs and other artists. Lucido establishes this at the very beginning of the book which opens with the poem called 'California Dreaming' (p 5). This immediately triggers a meta-awareness to the well-known song made famous by The Mamas & The Papas. In the narrative Emmy is recalling the drive from Wisconsin to her new home in San Francisco. Before the move she had only heard about the Gold State in songs. The playlist for the journey lists three pop acts with connections to the title of the poem.

consciously set out to write a music novel. But embedded within the structure of the story, there is music from the first page to the last.

1. Katy Perry

The singer-songwriter's hit 'California Gurls' (2010) featuring Snoop Dogg is a homage to The Beach Boys. The unusual spelling of Gurls versus Girls is a reference to Big Star's 'September Gurls' (2008) – another tribute to the legendary 1960s rock band.

2. The Beach Boys

'California Girls' (1965) remains one of their most famous songs. Brian Wilson likened the slow *bum-ba-dee-dah* to a Western cowboy riding into town. The inspiration behind the shuffle beat came from J. S. Bach's 'Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring' (1723).

3. The Mamas & The Papas

'California Dreamin'' (1965) is imitated in the title of Lucido's poem by adding the 'g'. The track is unusual in that it has an alto flute solo. The Beach Boys recorded a version of the song for their greatest hits compilation *Made in U.S.A* (1986).⁶⁶

There are countless songs with California in the title by famous pop and rock acts. The artists Lucido sound posts are not randomly plucked. They are all interconnected: Katy Perry is acknowledging The Beach Boys' 'California Girls' with 'California Gurls' and The Beach Boys produced their own cover version of The Mamas & The Papas song. In the third verse of the poem Lucido shifts to Emmy's first day at her new school. The 'kids' look as if they have 'jumped off the cover of a magazine' with their designer glasses and ripped jeans and Emmy is 'nothing like the cover of a magazine' (p 5). The repeated 'cover of a magazine' refrain is a link to Madonna's hit single 'Vogue' (1990).⁶⁷ The song name-checks Hollywood stars 'on the cover of a magazine' and the opening lyrics 'What are you looking at? | Strike a pose'

⁶⁶ 'California Dreamin'' (1963) was written by John and Michelle Phillips in New York when they were missing home. At the time they were part of the folk group New Journeymen which became The Mamas & The Papas.

⁶⁷ Vogue or voguing is a type of dance that was popular in the gay community in New York in the late 1980s. Dancers would define a pose with facial expressions and elaborate hand gestures imitating *Vogue* fashion magazine models. Lucido uses several dance forms as a recurring theme in her novel.

suggests how Emmy sees her fellow students. The music video for the chart-topping track was filmed in the famous Burbank Studios in California. Lucido is again reinforcing and amplifying the text connections back to the title of the poem which ends with Emmy wishing California was just a song. This desire is repeated in the poem 'So I Don't Worry Her' (p 42). When Emmy's school life improves she admits that maybe 'California' is not such a bad song after all (p 76).

The second type of sound tracking occurs in the poem 'Hazy'. This time Lucido references one artist and two songs to show the difference between Emmy's feelings on the first day of term in her old and new school (p 16). Wisconsin reminds Emmy of Ella Fitzgerald singing 'Summertime' (1968) where the 'livin' is easy'. In San Francisco, the track has changed to 'Lost in a Fog' (1957). The opening lyrics are:

Like a ship at sea, I'm just lost in a fog
My mind is hazy, my thoughts are blue

The word 'hazy' has become the title of the verse. The song lyrics reflect how Emmy feels like a 'wrong note' looking out the window 'into all that fog'. Lucido returns to the 'fog' when Emmy is feeling blue. This sentiment is not only associated with being at school. Things have changed at home too. Her father is making a noise learning a new piano piece. Her mother has given up singing and Emmy no longer has anything to practice on the piano. She fills her time on the couch with the dog staring 'out the window into the fog' (p 46).

The track selections in both examples reflect how Emmy is feeling at a particular time. Lucido is not being didactic. She is asking her readers to explore their own emotions on moving home and changing schools by engaging with the music and the words. As Angela Leighton puts it 'learning to listen is what literature might teach, by a kind of shared activity between author and reader, page and ear, sound and soundings, in a mutual or

interactive work of apprehension.⁶⁸ Listening, like reading is not a passive activity. They are two different senses. Two different skills that need to be learned. Words on a page are like notes on a score. They are not silent. They are waiting to be brought to life with the eyes and the ears so the reader can immerse themselves in the safety of the fictional world the writer has created.

The third and most complex technique is where Lucido extends her *interactive* game of 'know that tune' to include elements of the piece of music. Thereby, 'shaping the novel and the story so the reader gets the impression that music is involved in the signification of the narrative [...] and that the presence of music can indirectly be experienced while reading.'⁶⁹ Beethoven's Minuet in G, No. 2 (1796) is introduced in the poem 'Pretending' (p 7). The piano piece is Emmy's favourite 'walking song' and features as a recurring theme throughout the book to show movement from one space to another.⁷⁰ Emmy first hums the tune in her head on the way to find her locker. Her pace is described as 'andante' which means at a medium tempo or 'walking' pace. The text humming follows the pitch and pattern of the opening statement in the piano played with the right-hand:

*dum dee dum dee dum dee dum dee dum*⁷¹

The rhythm is reproduced with Emmy's footsteps:

left, and right, and left, and right, and left

⁶⁸ Angela Leighton, *Hearing things: religion, illusion, and the American* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2018), p. 15.

⁶⁹ Werner Wolf, *Selected Essays on Intermediality by Werner Wolf* (1992-2014), ed. by Walter Bernhart (Leiden | Boston: Brill/Rodopi, 2017), p. 248.

⁷⁰ Beethoven's Minuet in G was originally an orchestral work. The piece is structured as a Minuet and Trio in extended ternary form (A-A-B-A). Section A is made up of two mirrored parts with eight or sixteen bars which can be broken down into four bar phrases. Section B introduces new material and it is the same length as section A. The piece ends with a return to section A.

⁷¹ UK readers of a particular age (without the score) may instinctively hum the opening theme tune to BBC Radio 4's long running series 'The Arches' with the 'dum dee dum dee dum'. Lucido is an American writer and may not be familiar with the association. I suspect Lucido chose dum and dee as they are softer sounding words than taa tee taa or ump paa ump.

When bar lines are inserted into both phrases the text relationship with the score becomes clear.

Minuet in G, opening right-hand phrase with the novel text

dum dee | dum dee dum dee dum dee | dum



left, and | right, and left, and right, and | left

The *dum* [...] *dum*

left, [...] *right*, are the dotted quavers.

The *dee* [...]

and [...] are the semiquavers.

The final *dum* and *left* are the minims.

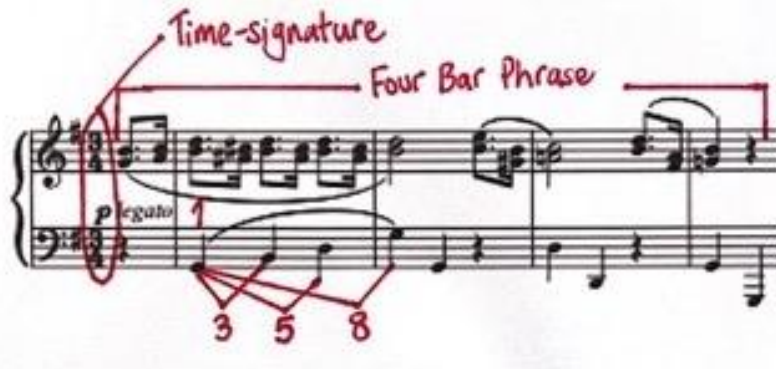
Lucido is deliberately placing the comma of the foot-marching text as the dotted part of the quaver so the *and* is forced into the semi-quaver. This is to reflect the anacrusis (the unstressed note or notes before the first bar) which is maintained throughout the piece. Werner Wolf states, 'by referring to individual works of music, sound may occasionally be conjured up in the reader's imagination, this is only possible for a short time, after which his reading will inevitably relapse into habitual voicelessness.'⁷² This is certainly the case in my musical reading of the work. Once the theme tune and the rhythmic connection is made to the opening of the Minuet, the presence of music on the tonal surface of the text can be directly experienced. When the sound starts to diminish Lucido then amplifies the visual and aural reading of the page by repeating the walking rhythm three times.

In the previous chapter, I demonstrated how numbers are significant in music and how they worked within my own novel. Lucido develops her sound posting of Beethoven's Minuet by using numbers that are structurally

⁷² Werner Wolf, 'Can Stories be Read as Music?', *Selected Essays on Intermediality by Werner Wolf* (1992-2014), ed. by Walter Bernhart (Leiden | Boston: Brill/Rodopi, 2017), p. 217.

relevant to the piece. The Minuet is in three-four time, the tune moves in thirds, and the piece can be broken down into four bar phrases (or eight bar passages). The first four notes of the bass line are an arpeggio (notes: 1, 3, 5, 8 within a scale or in solfège: Do, Me, So, Do). This becomes evident when reading the score.

Minuet in G, opening four bar phrase



The red numbers in the bass-line show the intervals from the first note (G) to the second (B) is a third, and to the third (D) is a fifth, and to the fourth (G) is an eighth (G) i.e. 3, 5, 8. Emmy's three-digit locker number is 538. This is no accident. Lucido is remixing the note order of the arpeggio. When the key to this code is cracked it may (for some readers) involuntarily trigger the sound of the pitch intervals of the locker (D, B, G). The notated slur reaching over the bass-line four notes means they are to be played without separation which locks them together. The tonic (1) is not required as it forms part of the Minuet title. Playing with sound in the text continues with the locker code combination: 12 clockwise, 32 counter-clockwise, 8 clockwise and then Emmy is 'stuck' (p 8). She has forgotten the fourth part of the sequence. Three out of the four-part sequence is stated. This is again stressing the play with the two numbers. The locker combination is not random.

12	$1+2 = 3$
32	$3+2 = 5$
8	$= 8^{73}$

⁷³ If the numbers in the columns are seen vertically they become $1+3 = 4$ and $2+2 = 4$ and when doubled or added together they become 8. The piece works in four bar phrases which can then be grouped as eight bar passages. There are also eight notes in a one octave

By splitting the clockwise / counter-clockwise numbers and adding them together Lucido is again remixing the arpeggio notes (3, 5, 8) back to the original bass line intervals. Lucido takes the arpeggio number game a step further. Emmy is trying to open the wrong locker. She is at locker number 583 (D, G, B). This is a form of remixing in music when an existing piece or an idea is arranged in a different way to create a new version of the original. Through repetition of the locker number references, the sound patterns become more audible allowing the reader to not only see but hear the text. To the responsive ear the notes ping and pong off the page. The sound sequence in this numbers game is:

(1) 3-5-8 | 5-3-**8** | 3-5-8 | 5-3-**8** |
 (1) (1)

If note **8** is substituted with **1** in phase two and four of the pattern, we have two ascending and descending arpeggios. But the number references do not stop there. If the locker combination is added together they become:
 $12+32+8 = 52$. Incidentally, there are 52 white keys on a standard piano. Only the piano version of Beethoven's Minuet in G exists. The starting point for this Fibonacci type pattern originated from the four bar phrases of the Minuet.

4+4 = 8
 4+8 = 12
 8+12 = 20
 12+20 = 32
 20+32 = 52

Each digit is the sum of the preceding two numbers. The sequence becomes: 4, 8, 12, 20, 32, 52 and so on. I would suggest when Emmy is 'stuck' the fourth combination to the locker would be 20 counter-clockwise. In math games, the creator typically leaves out a stage in the puzzle.⁷⁴ Listing

scale (A—A). I reflect on the importance of eight in my discussion on how the visual elements reinforce the meaning of music terms.

⁷⁴ The fourth locker code is unlikely to be 52. I believe this number is a reference to the number of white keys on the piano and therefore, already allocated. Also, if we look at the number of steps from '= 12' to '= 32' there are three downward steps and to get to the '= 8'

three out of four steps as part of the code is another sound posting back to the time signature of Beethoven's Minuet. An enthusiastic musical reader could create another sequence of sound bites for the number puzzle following the note pattern that I have presented. This play-orientated setup increases the interactive layers of the novel for the reader beyond the written words on the page. When the code is cracked it does trigger a euphoric sense of *jouissance* in Barthes's sense of the term.

Lucido demonstrates her virtuoso technique of playing with the numbers by showing how three and four relate to another type of music composition. Emmy's heart beats in three-four time 'boom-bah-dah | boom-bah-dah | boom.' when she is excited (p 19). The time signature is the same as a Minuet but Emmy's inner pulse is a waltz. The rhythmic characteristics between the two forms are not the same. A waltz starts with a strong downbeat: ONE-two-three | ONE-two-three | or | OOM-pah-pah | OOM-pah-pah | and is typically played as the bass note. Beats two and three are lighter which give the sense that the three divisions are one quick beat. Later in the novel, Lucido confirms twice for the reader she is sound positing a waltz. In the poem 'A Good Weekend' Emmy's Dad is playing Chopin as she waltzes with her dog through the kitchen (p 89) and in 'The Symphony' (p 201) the 'boom-bah-dah' heart beat is compared to a pounding bass line. The waltz is a ballroom dance where couples revolve around the floor in a box step – a series of six steps that form the shape of a square. A square has four sides. The six dance steps can be divided into two parts ($3+3 = 6$). Lucido positions the text to mirror this pattern. This three-four number play as a theme is reinforced in the narrative when Emmy has to pick a class to go to *three* times a week (p 18). There are *four* choices:

- A) Symphony Orchestra and Choir
- B) Winter Play: *A Tale of Two Cities*
- C) Cooking Around the World
- D) Introduction to Computer Science

there are four upward steps followed by three downward steps to get to '= 20'. Lucido is again playing with moving between the time signature numbers 3 and 4.

Emmy is unable to decide who she wants to be:

- A) Musician
- B) Actor
- C) Chef
- D) Geek

She loves music. She desperately wants to be a musician like her parents. But after nine years of lessons Emmy has come to realise loving music does not make you a musician. She turns her paper in blank, leaving everything to *chance* and gets option D.⁷⁵

Lucido returns to Beethoven's Minuet in G in the poem 'Back and Forth' with the *left, and right, and left, and right, and left* which is repeated four times (p 49). Emmy is pacing up and down outside the computer lab trying to pluck up the courage to go in. Before stepping inside, she takes a big breath like her Mother before hitting a high G! Again, this type of repetition is reinforcing the note and key connection back to the Minuet. The *dum dee dum dee dum dee dum dee dum* accompanies Emmy on her way to computer class. The recurring motif appears when Emmy is trying to find her friend, Abigail (p 278). In the poem, 'The Final Number', Lucido repeats the *left, and right* rhythmic sound descriptor when Emmy walks on stage to present her computer game with the music she has composed (p 378). This clearly shows how Lucido has maintained elements taken from the Minuet throughout the novel.

The next composer and piece Lucido soundtracks as a recurring theme could easily be missed. It is only when the title of the work is revealed that the almost *silent* journey becomes apparent. The idea is very quietly introduced when Emmy hands in her class elective choice with no preferences and leaves everything to *chance* (p 21). The composer and piece setup gathers pace in the poem '04:00 p.m.' (p 77). This used to be Emmy's favourite time of the day. But like all the other shifts in her life this is no longer the case. Her father is no longer 'playing' but 'practicing' the piano. The new piece her Dad is working on sounds 'clunky and dissonant'. The

⁷⁵ Chance in this instance is a conscious decision by Lucido to quietly sound post the next composer and piece she uses as a recurring theme.

scene is originally introduced in 'Evening Music' and 'Griiiiiiiiiind' when Emmy covers her ears with a pillow to shut out or *silence* the racket (pp 43-44).

The poem '04.00 p.m.' segues into '4'33"' (p 78). This is a reference to John Cage's famously dubbed 'silent' piece. Lucido clearly distinguishes between the two poems in the title presentation. The time of day is written as four digits with the post meridiem abbreviation and Cage's piece is correctly titled, *4'33"* (1952). There is no confusion that it is not 04.33 p.m. Cage used *chance* operations to construct his compositions and emphasized it is 'the listener's responsibility for the musical experience, the extent to which the way one listens determines what is heard.'⁷⁶ The meta-awareness of *4'33"* within the work is dependent on how attentively the musical reader has been listening or paying attention to the trace evidence. The reader has been nicely played over fifty-seven pages to get to this John Cage, *Ah-Ha! Moment*.⁷⁷

Lucido uses *4'33"* to prove Cage's point that there is no such thing as silence. Emmy can feel the music 'surging', 'jumping', and 'cha-cha-chaing' inside her. But when she tries to play the music on the piano keyboard it is silenced. In the verse 'Disappear', Emmy can still feel the music but she is now happy to sit at the piano and let it go (p 170). This is a pivotal moment in the book because Emmy has come to terms with not being a musician in the traditional sense of playing an instrument. Computer coding is her way of making music. It just happens to be on a different type of keyboard. When Ms. Delaney is teaching about randomness, her computer programme shuffles the students into different working pairs (p 205). Emmy's new partner is Francis. They have an argument and Francis is sent out of the room. In the poem '*4'33"* Remix', the class falls silent so they can hear Ms. Delaney talking to him outside in the hall (p 209). External noises outside of the work become part of the performance in *4'33"* such as an audience member coughing, rain pounding on the window, or the noise of a truck.

⁷⁶ John Cage, *Silence: Lectures and Writings*, 50th Anniversary Edition with foreword by Kyle Gabb (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2013), p. xxii.

⁷⁷ It would have been a great musical joke if Lucido had extended her game play on the reader to sixty-four pages. Cage's compositional method used *I Ching* which contains sixty-four hexagrams.

In another scene, Emmy asks Ms. Delaney if computers can generate music. It is no surprise the verse title is '4:00 p.m.' and a reference to her favourite time of day (p 235). Ms. Delaney shows Emmy an algorithm. The next verse is 'Digital Music'. Lucido has broken the pattern by not following on with '4:33". This is because Emmy has found a new instrument to learn. 'The music surges jumps cha- cha- chas' and she feels like a musician. The 'ing' has been deliberately dropped. Emmy is in the moment. She wants to make music writing code but she needs to practice. Emmy works on her computer project after the class presentation at Ms. Delaney's home. She realises her game needs to make more noise. The music inside her is back to 'surging', 'jumping', and 'cha- cha- chaing'. The 'ing' is back. Emily is unable to sleep. The time is 4:33 a.m. and no longer the title of Cage's 'silent' piece because Emmy is no longer 'silent' (p 358). She has found her music. It is interesting to note, the zero has been silenced in the three intervening poems with '4:00 p.m.' in the title (pp 116, 129, 235). Lucido had to do this in order to get to the poem title '4:33 a.m.' otherwise the time / Cage referencing would not have worked. I have identified over sixty pieces of music embedded within the text.

In this section, I have presented three explicit techniques for sound tracking pop and classical music in a text. I have shown by following the trace evidence how a writer can exploit elements of a piece as a recurring theme by playing with patterns and numbers. Lucido is actively challenging readers to interact with the text by drawing attention to the role of music in the creation of the work. The next writer I consider uses implicit techniques and offers an alternative system for building stories with pop music.

Railhead: Pop Conversations

Music is the underlying heartbeat of Philip Reeve's *Railhead*. The music hums in the background as a structural device and offers an alternative pathway for a writer wanting to use music covertly in writing a novel. Reeve opens with '*Listen ... He was running down Harmony when he heard it. [...]* The Interstellar Express was thundering down the line from the Golden

Junction, and singing as it came' (p 1). Reeve's direct instruction to the reader is an invitation to stay in tune with the text and what lies behind the lines. The influence of 1970s electronica pulsates off the page. The humanoid robots are nicknamed 'Motorik' (p 4). Kraftwerk pioneered the motorik beat, inspiring a new genre of music with their foil-wrapped percussions pads, wired-up knitting needles and futuristic sounds.⁷⁸ They describe their output as half-man, half-machine and their robot 'dummies' or 'dollies' act as stand-ins at events. Even Reeve's slang for motorik is 'a wire dolly' (p 29).

The singing train is heading towards Ambersai station. K-trains go through K-gates and 'Only the trains ride the K-bahn' (p 6). Kraftwerk's iconic 'Autobahn' (1974) synth symphony recreates the sounds of the highway system with cars singing and trucks hooting on their sonic journey across Germany.⁷⁹ In 'Trans-Europe Express' (1977) Kraftwerk replicate the mechanical patterns of the trains on a railway network that connected 130 cities.⁸⁰ Reeve masterfully railroads these tracks into the thematic pulse of his novel. It gives a sense of rhythm to the themes – not just language. The singing cars on the A-bahn become singing trains on the K-bahn. He titles part one, 'Interstellar Express' which is a spin on Kraftwerk's 'Trans-Europe Express'. The band's deadpan chanting is how I hear the 'booming loudspeaker voices reciting litanies of stations' in *Railhead* (p 3). The lyrics at the end of their track: 'From station to station | Back to Düsseldorf City | Meet Iggy Pop and David Bowie' segue into the next music connection.⁸¹

Kraftwerk were acknowledging with their train that David Bowie's album *Station to Station* (1976) ripped ideas from 'Autobahn'.⁸² Bowie's sixty-five second exposition of the title track is the sound of a train travelling from speaker to speaker. This started a two-way musical conversation. 'V2-

⁷⁸ Kraftwerk are a German band. Motorik is a 4/4 tempo, counted in 8: 1, 2, skip, 4, 5, 6, skip, 8. The repeated ostinato pattern projects a forward motion.

⁷⁹ Kraftwerk, 'Autobahn', *Autobahn* (Warner Brothers, 564-7 46153 2, 1974) [on CD].

⁸⁰ Kraftwerk, 'Trans-Europe Express', *Trans-Europe Express* (Capitol, 0777-7 46473 2, 1977) [on CD].

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² David Bowie, 'Station to Station', *Station to Station* (RCA Records, R32P-1039, 1976) [on CD].

Schneider' on Bowie's *Heroes* album is a tribute to Florian Schneider, nicknamed V2 and co-founder of Kraftwerk.⁸³ The snare percussion is deliberately imitating the synth percussion on 'Trans-Europe Express'. These details are important because Reeve riffs and remixes from both to build his story-world. Reeve's singing train is pulling into the station. It is a huge loco called Helden (Heroes) Hammerhead – a fusion of two Bowie tracks (p 4). This is no coincidence. The set-up is clear: 'For as long as anyone could remember, the Bazar had been a happy hunting ground for people like Zen who were young and daring and dishonest, the low heroes of this infinite city' (p 2). *Low*, *Heroes*, (both 1977) and *Lodger* (1979) make up what is referred to as Bowie's Berlin Trilogy.⁸⁴

According to Wolf: 'An implicit metareference does not use overt but rather covert means to establish a meta-level in a work and trigger meta-thoughts in the recipient.'⁸⁵ It would be unfair to expect an everyday reader (regardless of age) with little knowledge of electronic music to pick up on these associations. Reeve's originality is in how he orders these connections into a recognisable system to make something new. Through sound tracking his text, Reeve adds his twist on their tête-à-têtes, creating an artistic bridge to their associations and beyond. The short musical exchange I have presented could continue to Stockhausen, Schoenberg, Cage and Boulez. Creativity depends on open-ended relationships and this resonates with how Mikhail Bakhtin sees language 'as an ongoing chain of meaning which is constantly renewed and reborn through each link in the chain.'⁸⁶ Everything exists because of the past and the past will continue to inform the present. Reeve's meta-references do not hinder the plot. They are a structural device to help frame the novel and develop the storylines.

The meta-referencing in *Railhead* is not limited to music. I have recorded over forty connections to a range of works. Raven's train is called

⁸³ David Bowie, 'V-2 Schneider', *Heroes* (RCA Records, 7243 521900 05, 1977) [on CD].

⁸⁴ David Bowie, *Low*, *Heroes*, *Lodger* (RCA Records, 7243 521900 04|05|06) [on CDs].

⁸⁵ Ibid., *Selected Essays on Intermediality*, p. 326.

⁸⁶ Andrew Robinson, 'In Theory Bakhtin: Dialogism, Polyphony and Heteroglossia', *Ceasefire* magazine, 29 July 2011 <<https://ceasefiremagazine.co.uk/in-theory-bakhtin-1/>> [accessed 8 September 2022].

the *Thought Fox* (p 30). It is also a poem by Ted Hughes. 'McQue Junction' is a reference to Ian McQue, a concept artist at Rockstar North, the home of Grand Theft Auto games (p 15). His art work is used on the inside covers of *Railhead* and the outside covers of *Black Light Express* – book two in the series.⁸⁷ And off the page the continuity of connections is meticulously maintained. Reeve's *Railhead* book readings resemble a live show. Onstage he performs the text with music and film accompaniment. *Listen ...* 'Take the K Train' composed by Sarah Reeve has the motorik beat and the red-and-cream train on screen is not too dissimilar to the former Trans Europe Express colours.⁸⁸

Lucido and Reeve's poetic approaches are very different. But what they both have in common is a clear understanding of how one work segues into another link in the sound chain as part of their methodology. In the next two sections, I discuss how terms associated with music and musical forms are used in storytelling.

In the Key of Code: Music Terms and Musical Forms

Lucido weaves over fifty different musical terms and forms into her work.⁸⁹ These add another sonic dimension and interactivity to the text. The patterns for showing the meaning of a term include a mix of the following:

1. descriptor to introduce the term
2. sound reference that points to a piece of music
3. text demonstration of how the term works in the narrative
4. play with the sound of the term in the form of word punning
5. play with typography and space on the page (discussed later as a separate section)

⁸⁷ Philip Reeve, *Black Light Express* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

⁸⁸ Sarah Reeve, 'Take the K Train' [YouTube video], 29 June 2015.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A_dRb2bmsKU> [accessed 5 November 2021].

⁸⁹ In the 'Author's Note', Lucido asks the reader to look up words they do not recognise. 'It may reveal a deeper layer to a poem that you missed on the first read', p. 391. There is also a glossary of music and computer code definitions at the end of the novel.

An explicit example is the poem 'Polyrhythm' (p 56). The term is described as 'when one orchestra is playing in three-four time and a second orchestra is playing in two-four time' and sounds 'like two people trying to have a conversation while reading different pages of sheet music' (p 56). The piece referenced is Mozart's opera *Don Giovanni* (1787). Lucido does not inform the reader where to find the polyrhythm in the work. The interactive part between the text and the music is for the reader to listen to the piece. The polyrhythm can be heard in the ballroom scene at the end of the first act. Two ensembles are positioned onstage and the orchestra is in the pit. The three different groups are playing their own dance music in their own time signatures: three-four, two-four, and three-eight. Lucido demonstrates how polyrhythm works as part of the narrative in 'Orchestra One vs. Orchestra Two' (p 57). Francis is in Emmy's computer class. He is unable to comprehend that Frankie Delaney is a woman and not a man. The page is vertically split in half to visually sound post the confused out of sync exchange between the pupil and the teacher. The glossary definition at the end of the novel is: 'The simultaneous use of two or more conflicting rhythms that are not part of the same or related meters' (p 405).

The poem 'Presto' is a more challenging game aimed at advanced musical readers (p 226). Presto means to play at a very quick tempo. On the tonal surface of the page, this term seems simple enough to 'literally' understand. The text imitates a lively pace in a group conversation.

Presto

The conversation whizzes
like Chopin's *Fantaisie-Impromptu* {
 "The auditions are—";
 "Ms. Sinclair said—";
 "Sing from your—";
}

Everyone interrupts one another mid-sentence alluding to a sense of speed and Emmy finds it hard to find any 'white space' to join in. There is no room for her. Every time she takes a breath to do so the 'moment has passed'. On

a first hearing this seems a reasonable demonstration of the term. However, the piece example is Chopin's Fantasy Impromptu in C-sharp minor, Op. 66 (1834) for solo piano.⁹⁰ The 'cut-ins' or interruptions by the group are punctuated by en-dashes. They break the rhythm and momentum of the text, stopping each phrase in its track. This sounds at odds with the rapid free flowing sweeping passages of the Impromptu and leads to the critical question: Why did Lucido pick this piece?

The clue is in reading the score. The time signature for the Fantasy Impromptu is two-two time (2/2) also referred to as *cut* time or cut-common time. There are two beats in a bar counted as 1 and 2 and (strong-weak strong-weak). I would suggest when members of the group *cut* into each other's sentences this is a link to the *cut* time signature of the Impromptu. The fun play on Chopin's name adds another humorous level: Chop-in and the 'chopping' of the text dialogue. The piece is also another example of using two different rhythms or polyrhythm. The right-hand is playing sixteenth note semiquavers against sextuplet quavers in the left-hand. Basically, one hand fills the gaps between the notes of the other which represents how Emmy is unable to take part in the conversation.

Chopin Fantasy Impromptu: Bars 5-6



⁹⁰ Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia. 'impromptu, a 19th-century piano composition intended to produce the illusion of spontaneous improvisation.' <<https://www.britannica.com/art/impromptu>> and 'fantasia, also called fantasy or fancy, in music a composition free in form and inspiration, usually for an instrumental soloist; in 16th- and 17th-century England the term was applied especially to fugal compositions (i.e., based on melodic imitation) for consorts of string or wind instruments.' <<https://www.britannica.com/art/fantasia-music>> *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 20 July, 1998 [accessed 18 November 2021].

The red lines in bar 5 show how the semiquavers *cut-in* between the quaver triplet notes. They are not hitting at the same time. The red lines in bar 6 indicate where the semiquavers hit at the same time as the quavers (on beats: and-two-and). It is clear from the Chopin polyrhythm that there is no sound space to interrupt which perfectly matches how Emmy feels. Everything on the page is carefully orchestrated by Lucido from the title of the poem to the choice of piece, and the word play with Chopin's name.

A Diminished Fifth is nicknamed 'the devil in music'. The interval is made up of six semitones (for example: G to D-flat) and is introduced in the poem 'Try Tone' (p 35). The chord was banned by the church in the Renaissance period because of its discordant sound. Other names for a diminished fifth are tritone, augmented fourth, or a flattened fifth. Lucido is playing with the spelling of the music term tritone in the title of the poem.⁹¹ Emmy is desperate to be friends with Abigail. They are both going to be in the same computer science class. Abigail is surrounded by her friends and ignores Emmy's attempt to grab her attention. This leaves Emmy feeling *flat*. She doesn't belong in this harmonious unit. She's a diminished fifth. Lucido is trying to show in sound how her character feels out of tune and by referencing a piece which uses the chord. Lucido soundtracks Jimi Hendrix's 'Purple Haze' (1967) (p 105). The opening notes of the psychedelic rock classic are played on an electric guitar and bass. They are octave-shifting tritones. The devil's interval appears later in the novel when Emmy is in the cafeteria watching Abigail and her friends sitting at their table (p 219). Only this time it is Abigail who is feeling distant or dissonant from her music friends. When Emmy plucks up the courage to join the quartet, the verse title becomes 'Augmented Fifth' to reflect the increase in group numbers (p 224). She is happy. Lucido is cleverly playing with two types of sound – discordant and harmonious – to show two different emotions.

⁹¹ Playing with the sound of words is not limited to music. There are computer jokes within the text. In the poem 'Yes', Abigail announces that she received a raspberry pi for her birthday. She invites Emmy to her home so they can 'figure out how it works', p. 140. Emmy is confused because she is thinking about raspberry pie.

The difference between 'Atonal Music' (p 229) and 'Tonal Music' (p 338) is expressed through Emmy. Atonal music is compared to the computer language C++ and sounds like 'cold metal steely assembly lines'. It is the opposite of Java which gives Emmy a warm fuzzy feeling. Tonal music is linked to the art works in Ms. Delaney's condo. The variety of picture styles work together in harmony like an ensemble. The page numbers for the music terms may be a coincidence but the sequence is interesting. The 2's and 9's are visually inharmonious. The 3's are curvy, like half of 8 as if they were meant to be together. $2+2+9=13$ is odd and $3+3+8=14$ is even. The two pages are on opposite sides (right and left) and a hundred-and-nine pages apart. This again shows the distance between atonal and tonal music.

Throughout the novel Lucido describes characters with musical metaphors. The homeroom teacher buzzes around the room like Rimsky-Korsakov's *Flight of the Bumblebee* (p 11). Ms. Delaney 'crescendoes' in with a smile like a red candy-apple. 'She's like the flourish of an electric violin in the middle of a Beethoven symphony' (p 64). When Emmy becomes friends with Abigail in her head they 'shine red like allegro | fortissimo | the flourish of two electric violins' (p 135). They fall out and everything inside Emmy is 'out of tune' (p 221). The computer class students bond together for the project showcase. During Emmy's performance they join in and support her. They are a choir, an orchestra, a symphony with Ms. Delaney conducting from another place. 'And when the music stops | and out voices fade | we're left holding each other | like a fermata | over the last note | in the world's | most beautiful | symphony' (p 388). Emmy finally belongs.

Interpreting Musical Form in Railhead

Da-da-da-DUM ... The most famous four-note sequence in the history of music. Instantly recognisable as Beethoven's Symphony No. 5 and full of allusions: Fate knocking at the door, V for Victory, a symbol of freedom, and a vehicle for propaganda. The recurring motif is used throughout in different guises articulating a journey from darkness into a blaze of glory. But the story does not start there. Beethoven's Fifth opens with silence. A quaver

rest on the downbeat.⁹² That emptiness. That nothingness is critical to the impact of those first four notes. Beethoven is dragging that silence from outside the work into the work. He is demanding your attention. Only then can we begin. Three short syllables with a fermata on the double-length fourth to punctuate the importance of the opening statement. This is the symphony of symphonies and a masterclass in storytelling.

The role of a novelist is not unlike that of a symphonist. The search for themes from which everything else flows is paramount. Why are they there? How do you start? What is the story-world? The story-line? Who takes the lead? Will the form justify the content? These are difficult questions in the decision-making process. The structure of a symphony is to tell the story in four movements. The sonata form first movement establishes the theme, introduces the main subject with a bridge into the second. This is followed by a codetta leading into the development, a recapitulation, and a coda. Reeve did not consciously structure *Railhead* as a symphony, but the format is different to his other books with un-named chapters divided into four parts. The recurring motif of the train is stated at the start and used throughout to dramatize the scene changes. The first subject, Zen Starling, is introduced as a 'thin brown kid' (p 1). Several verbs orchestrate Zen's character as he's racing, dancing, listening, itching, watching, whilst being hunted by a drone.

The reader is given more information as the subject/character is expanded. Zen is poor. He is a thief. He is impulsive. He verges on being arrogant. A thematic bridge points towards the second subject – 'the girl in the red coat' – giving some indication of what is to follow, without reducing the impact when it actually happens (p 3). Red is the symbol of love and danger. Will she be with him or against him? Zen ignores her. He is flying solo as we are shown his world and meet an ensemble of characters who will help counterpoint the plot.

Dissonance creeps into the text with Captain Malik. Zen is about to be injected with a truth drug. The train engine whines and hiccups. Then Reeve

⁹² Ludwig van Beethoven, Symphony No. 5 in C minor, Op. 67, study score, edition No. 402 (London: Eulenburg, 1986).

rips the drapery aside by introducing the second subject. “Well, this is exciting!’ she said. [...] ‘I’m on your side. My name is Nova’” (p 29). The codetta starts with the resounding statement of Zen as the first subject. He escapes with Nova to the *Thought Fox*. Raven needs Zen to pose as a member of the Noon family and steal a box on the Emperor’s train. The development harmonises Zen and Nova’s relationship as he learns the role. The recapitulation reminds the reader of the threads that have been introduced such as Malik and Raven’s past history.

New material falls into a coda at the end of part one of the novel. Reeve introduces a new character, Chandni Hansa (p 73). She hardly makes an appearance in *Railhead* but comes into her own in the sequel *Black Light Express* (2016). Zen is not the only hireling. Part one ends with the *Thought Fox* dropping Zen and Nova off at a dead platform to embark on their heist.

Each part of *Railhead* opens with an illustrated double-page spread acting as the silence between movements. The confident scoring never falters. Everything is in the right place to deliver the story-line and the book ends as it starts with the train coming down the rails, rising up her siren voice, and singing. The trains lead characters to and from danger. They are the platform for action and show the expanse of the story-world. Michel Foucault sums up why it is a great vehicle for driving the story-line:

A train is an extraordinary bundle of relations because it is something through which one goes, it is also something by means of which one can go from one point to another and then it is also something that goes by.⁹³

Reeve takes this further. His trains carry passengers to different planets with different time zones and like all ‘closed’ forms of transport, the vehicle becomes a world of its own which is distinct from the outside surroundings it is travelling through. These trains are not objects. They are characters with their own thoughts and feelings. They talk. They sing. Write music. The

⁹³ Michel Foucault, trans. by Jay Miskowiec, ‘Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias’, *Architecture / Mouvement / Continuité* (October 1984), p. 3
<<http://web.mit.edu/allanmc/www/foucault1.pdf>> [accessed 19 November 2017].

Thought Fox is ruthless and unpredictable. The *Damask Rose* battered but loyal. Others form relationships and act like humans. 'The *Wildfire* was dead, but the *Time of Gifts* was still alive. That awful bellowing was a cry of grief' (p 131). By borrowing titles from a diverse range of works and using the trains to go up, down, criss-cross and double back along the stave, Reeve unites his world-in-words and his world-in-notes.

Both writers have used music terms and musical forms to structure and develop the narrative. I will proceed to examine how Lucido uses typography and space to imitate elements of music on the page.

Typography and Space as Elements of Music

Traditional typeset novels follow a linear format. The text is placed in a box. One sentence follows another and these are assembled into paragraphs that are contained within chapters. The typeface usually remains the same throughout and the margins allow the reader to hold the book without covering the printed words. When a writer consciously plays with typography and space it must be considered relevant to the story.

The presentation of the text in *In the Key of Code* is very different from *Railhead*. The latter follows a conventional layout and comes in at two hundred and ninety-nine pages. The former is a hefty three hundred and eighty-nine pages. A typical Middle Grade novel is usually between a hundred and two hundred and fifty pages.⁹⁴ The high page volume is due to Lucido's innovative approach. Page lengths can vary between two and twenty-three lines of text. One argument might be that Lucido is visually emphasising the meaning of words with a variety of different typographical sizes, formats, and page layouts. But Lucido is doing much more than this. She is explicitly promoting an auditory reading. The clue is in the Author's Note: 'This book is close to my heart because it combines the three subjects that I love the most: code, music, and poetry' (p 391). The keyword is

⁹⁴ 'Ask an Editor: Word count for Middle Grade and Young Adults', *Kite Tales* [online blog], published for the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators <<https://scbwikitales.wordpress.com/2016/10/12/ask-an-editor-word-count-for-middle-grade-and-young-adult/>> [accessed 9 November 2021].

'combines'. To truly merge music into the construction of a novel there has to be an aural dimension to the work.

In Angela Leighton's introduction to her study on sound in literature, she states: 'Written words make noises as well as shapes, calling on the ear like an after effect of being seen and understood.'⁹⁵ This is certainly true in Lucido's text. Embedded within the text is a rich and varied sonic soundscape. Elements of music (rhythm, meter, pitch, and dynamics) underscore the importance of listening and trigger the experience of music in the act of reading. An example where Lucido expresses rhythm, meter, pitch, and dynamics within a single page is the poem is '4'33"' (p 78).

4'33"

There's music in me
I can feel it

surging

 m g
 u p n
j i

cha-
 cha-
 chaing
So while Dad cooks dinner
and Mom is walking Jeopardy
I
cha-
 cha-
 cha
my way over to the piano.

I sit on the bench
put my hands on the keys

and the music in me

disappears

⁹⁵ Ibid., Angela Leighton, p. 5.

The font size of the word 'surging' increases with each letter to the 'g' and decreases again. The 'sur' and 'ing' mirror each other in point size. By definition 'surge' means to go forward or upwards with a sudden motion. Lucido does this with the first four letters even if the last three do not carry on the trajectory. I would further suggest that the upward and downward play sets in motion the sound of an arpeggio – a sequence of four notes rising from the tonic 1, 3, 5, 8, and three notes falling 5, 3, 1 back to the tonic – as the point size format is not an incremental step-by-step change. The shift from non-bold letters to bold implies a crescendo and decrescendo which many vocalists naturally do when practicing arpeggios. Recapitulation: (1), 3, 5, 8, are the intervals of the bass-line notes in Beethoven's Minuet in G. Emmy's locker number is 538. The split combination number for the locker sequence when added together is 358. Emmy is also standing at the wrong locker number 583. Lucido has taken the arpeggio number motif and skilfully integrated it into the sound of the narrative.

The letters of 'jumping' hop up and down over three lines. This again shows a visual metafictional relationship between the meaning of the word and the text presentation. But if one looks more closely at the letters and listens with the ear, it becomes clear that Lucido is playing with the sound of the word. The 'j' and 'i' are on the same line which I am going to call line 1. Line two is skipped. Letters 'u', 'p', 'n' are positioned on line 3. Line 4 is skipped. Letters 'm' and 'g' are on line 5. This is a split major chord which consists of three notes: a root, a major third, and a perfect fifth (notes: 1, 3, and 5).

The 'cha- cha- chaing' and 'cha- cha- cha' is positioned in a step downward motion over three lines each time to show the rhythmic movement towards the piano.⁹⁶ When Emmy places her hands on the piano keys the music 'disappears'. The letters of the word gradually get fainter until the 's' is barely visible or audible on the page. This would suggest a decrescendo.

⁹⁶ The cha-cha or cha-cha-cha is a lively Cuban dance created by the composer and violinist Enrique Jorrin in the 1950s. It has a four-four time signature. For the dance these are made up of three full beats and two half beats (three crotchets, two quavers). The name cha-cha comes from the sound the dancer's feet make with the two quicksteps on the fourth beat.

The arpeggio, split major chord, and cha-cha-cha dance form are implicit examples of playing with the recurring theme of three and four in the form of typography.

An explicit example would be Lucido positioning her text to signify a scale in music. 'A scale (*Latin* 'scala' a ladder) is an alphabetical succession of sounds ascending or descending from a starting note.'⁹⁷ There are seven notes in Western music (A-G). The eighth note of a scale is a repetition of the first note an octave higher (A—A, B—B, C—C, etc.). Emmy has tried learning eight different instruments: piano, flute, violin, voice, saxophone, drums, bass, and guitar (p 20).⁹⁸ This is visually sounded by each instrument listed in a step formation like a descending scale on the page.

Lucido reinforces the meaning of a 'scale' in another class session. Ms. Delaney is teaching primitive types (objects that exist without the programmer having to do anything). In the poem 'Purple', she gives the students eight words to type on their screens (p 97).

In my head
the words feel like nonsense.

int
char
short
long
boolean
byte
double
float

Emmy feels like she is playing scales even though the words are meaningless until she presses play and they turn into music. Again, the words are presented in step formation like a descending scale. By contrast and to prove my theory, when Ms. Delaney asks the class to remember the eight entry points for the computer programme Java, the text presentation is

⁹⁷ *Rudiments and Theory of Music* (England: The Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music, [n.d.]), p. 4.

⁹⁸ Lucido mentions thirty different musical instruments during the course of the novel.

different.⁹⁹ The words are not laid out in a downward or upward step formation. They are stacked in a ladder formation (p 69).

```
public
static
void
main
string
bracket
bracket
args
```

Lucido is referencing true computer code. Positioning the eight words like a music scale would be misleading and confusing for the reader. However, the class are asked to think of the words as sounds, keystrokes, and music they can sing in their sleep. The open '{' bracket reminds Emmy of a time signature and the closed '}' bracket becomes the double bar line at the end of a score. Whilst it may be a coincidence that eight words form the basis of this programme, I would argue that the class size is not random. The seven pupils equal the number of notes in Western music, plus a teacher makes eight like an octave. This is a conscious decision by Lucido to combine computer code and music terminology into the text. The class would have been too small with three or four and these numbers are connected to Beethoven's Minuet in G. Five or even six would have worked. Twelve (the number of notes in a chromatic scale) would have been too many characters to deal with and Emmy just happens to be aged twelve.

There are many examples where Lucido extends the time duration of words by adding in extra spaces, repeating letters, and increasing the volume on the page. The gaps between the word 'last' has eight-character spaces between each letter (p 143). 'Grind' has eight and twelve extra 'i's (pp 44, 273) and when things are less of a chore the word is spelt correctly (p 347). 'Sl-o-w' has sixteen extra 'o's and in other variations descends down

⁹⁹ Java was released in 1995 and is still used today in consoles, web design, mobile apps, and household appliances.

the text from clapping, dancing, giggling, hopping, jumping to laughing, pacing, surging, tumbling, and whirling.

Lucido increases the tempo of the text by joining words together in a string formation: 'Fun-fact-so-fun-it-pours-our-of-her' (p 58), 'You-belong-here smile | you-belong-here thumbs-up' (p 99), and 'The musical girl | The back-to-class girl | The braids-in-her-hair-and-smile-on-her-face | Abigail' (p 134). In many ways the hyphenated notation of the text acts like a notated slur in a score. The notes or words in this case are spoken without separation and become another sound reminder of the opening bass-line in Beethoven's Minuet in G.

In this chapter, I have followed the trace evidence left by Lucido and Reeve to reveal how their novels were constructed. Music is integral to *In the Key of Code* and *Railhead*. Both stories draw on elements of another art form and in doing so make metafictional statements about the poietic processes involved in the act of composition. I have shown how two different writers build structural frameworks using music which are then incorporated into the narrative fabric of the work. Lucido explicitly soundtracks pop and classical music. She draws on characteristics associated with a particular piece and transforms them into recurring themes within the story. Introducing musical terms and forms into the body of the piece increases the interactive engagement between the writer and reader and her play with typography adds another sound dimension to the work. Reeve is implicit in his approach but music provided a system to order information and build his story world. By analysing, documenting, and recording these writers' techniques I have demonstrated that music is not 'plucked' from the ether but truly integrated into the heart of these innovative stories. The next chapter explores how sound matters in the creative processes of two icons of the twentieth century.

3. The Alternative World of Words: Listening to Lewis Carroll's Alice Books and Reading György Ligeti's Nonsense Madrigals

The joy of the text is the beat in the words that rings in the ears.

ONE

TWO

TRI

Paws!

Jam it up. Raise FOUR to FIVE.

FOUL

FOOL

FOOT

FORT

FORE

FIRE



FIVE

Trance-fiction.

Take care of the sense, and the sounds will take care of themselves.

*FUL SOUP!*¹⁰⁰

Curtain up. Spotlight on. Lewis Carroll's double-bill. *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) and *Through the Looking-Glass* (1871).¹⁰¹ Taking centre stage, the stars on the page: puns, parody, and portmanteaus. The paradox of pleasure in Wonderland where noisy words morph, lose their senses, and break out into song, all in the name of *humour*. György Ligeti's *Nonsense Madrigals* (1988-93) transforms Carroll's text into a mashup of music games and playful parody. The score is littered with pantomime treats that stagger from *pppp* to *ffffff*, poke fun at the past, and mess with popular tunes.¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ An introductory remix to show different elements of Lewis Carroll's play with words. The quotes in italics are from *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* pp. 99 & 119.

¹⁰¹ Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (London: Puffin Classics, 2015) and *Through the Looking-Glass* (London: Puffin Classics, 2015). 'The abbreviations *AiW* and *TLG* and further references (to these editions etc.) are given after quotations in the text'.

¹⁰² György Ligeti, *Nonsense Madrigals* (New York: Scott, 1999).

Two icons. Two genres. Two languages. Two systems in dis-or-harmony. The creator and the recreator. The dual point of interrogation: listening to Carroll's *Alice Books* and reading Ligeti's *Nonsense Madrigals*. Our guide is the letter P. Not *p* for *piano*. P for peas, puns, parody, portmanteaus, and a slice of paradox. The quest in the question and the contribution to knowledge: What can a music novelist learn from two works in two different disciplines? But first. The *importmanteau* of understanding two serious sound master gamers with an insight into their poietic processes and what makes them tick. After all, neither the *Alice Books* or the *Nonsense Madrigals* were made in a day.

Lewis Carroll and György Ligeti: Two Peas in a Pod

Charles Lutwidge Dodgson aka Lewis Carroll. One man with two identities and two egos. The shy, 'upright', 'uptight' mathematician in numberland versus the 'camp as custard' writer with a 'pocketful of puzzles and a headful of stories'.¹⁰³ Carroll enjoyed magic tricks and miniature worlds, and collected music boxes that he played backwards. He invented card, board, word, and number games. His favourite number was forty-two. The original *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* had forty-two illustrations by *Punch* magazine political cartoonist John Tenniel. During 'Alice's Evidence' as part of the tarts trial the King of Hearts calls on Rule 42. In *TLG* 'The Lion and the Unicorn' the White King sends 4207 foot-soldiers and mounted troops to put Humpty Dumpty together again.¹⁰⁴ Both *Alice* books have twelve chapters, making twenty-four in total which is forty-two in reverse.

György Ligeti was one of the most progressive post-war composers of his time. His pieces are often short, striking, and full of humour. He tried to bring something different to every work whether that was through new ways of structuring music, parodying the past, playing with rhythm or exploring the limits of musical language. He was obsessed with fractal geometry although he claimed not to use maths in his music. He was agoraphobic, enjoyed

¹⁰³ 'Lewis Carroll & the story of Alice', *Start the Week*, BBC Radio 4, broadcast 20 March, 2015. Robert Douglas-Fairhurst quoting Robert McCrum [accessed 23 November 2020].

¹⁰⁴ 7 is a factor of 42.

magic, crazy machines, and was a life-long admirer of Lewis Carroll. In December 1982, he was a castaway on Roy Plomley's *Desert Island Discs*. Ligeti's choice of book was *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. At the end of his *Ten pieces for Wind Quintet* (1968) Ligeti plays a prank on the audience. The music is cut short with a single clipped note from the bassoon in the penultimate bar. Hilarity prevails. Is this the end of the piece and where the audience should clap? The answer is no. In the score, Ligeti quotes from chapter six of *Through the Looking-Glass*:

'... but—'
There was a long pause.
'Is that all?' Alice timidly asked.
'That's all,' said Humpty Dumpty. 'Good-bye.' (p 96)¹⁰⁵

The last bar is a rest with a fermata and marked *senza tempo*, ca 10". The joke on the audience is that the piece lasts another ten seconds in silence before it is finally over. Only then should they clap.

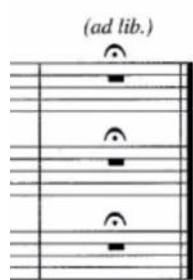
Carroll explored how meaning came out of language and how meaning changes with words. Reversal. Distortion. Inversion. Turning things upside down and back-to-front are constant themes in the *Alice* books. He played with shortening, extending, and exchanging letters. That is how caterpillar can be cut to cat then changed to bat. In *TLG* Alice is a pawn in the chess game who meets a fawn who is also a pawn. Humpty can double in size by dropping the H and adding D and backwards be ... **Dinah** the cat. Carroll developed his ladder brain teasers in his puzzle book *Doublets*.¹⁰⁶ The objective is to get from one word to another by substituting one letter at a time. Carroll suggests that 'The easiest "Doublets" are those in which the consonants in one word answer to consonants in the other, and the vowels to vowels; 'head' and 'tail' constitute a Doublet of this kind.'¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵ Ligeti's interruption is striking and impactful on the score reader. It reminds me of Carroll addressing the reader directly in *AiW*: 'If you don't know what a Gryphon is, look at the picture' p. 102. This led to my author interruption in the form of a footnote when Dotty is part of the cast in the live performance of *Petrushka*.

¹⁰⁶ Lewis Carroll, *Doublets A Word-Puzzle* (Online: Read Books Ltd, 2011). The game first appeared in the magazine *Vanity Fair* in 1879.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

Ligeti's eighteen *Études* (1985-2001) are considered the most significant addition to the solo-piano repertoire in the last fifty years following in the footsteps of Frédéric Chopin, Franz Liszt, Claude Debussy, and Alexander Scriabin. *Étude* No. 13, 'The Devil's Staircase', inspired by the neither up nor down staircases of MC Escher is a bonkers psychedelic piano trip. The ascending chromatic tones representing the staircases turn into ringing bells in different registers at different times. The humour is in the final performance instruction on the last bar.



The *étude* could not have ended any other way.

Poème Symphonique (1962) is for a hundred metronomes and ten performers. The metronomes are set out on the stage like an orchestra. They are wound up to the maximum and set to different speeds. After 2-6 minutes of silence the conductor instructs the performers to set them off and leave the stage. The metronomes create unpredictable sound patterns as they wind down leaving one solitary survivor until that stops.¹⁰⁸ Ligeti's only opera and longest work is *Le Grand Macabre* (1974-77, rev. 1996). The prelude is performed entirely on twelve car horns imitating the opening of Monteverdi's *L'Orfeo*. He then sends up Mozart, parodies Rossini, steals from Offenbach, pokes fun at Verdi, and plays with the finale of Beethoven's *Eroica* Symphony. As well as standard orchestral instruments the score calls for: a duck-quacker, cuckoo whistle, wind machine, paper bag, sandpaper blocks, sledgehammer, a large alarm clock, electric doorbells, a tray of crockery, a saucepan, kettle, and a lion's roar.

¹⁰⁸ As I have already alluded to in my 'Notes from the Margins', the visual image and the audible clicks of Ligeti's hundred metronomes in *Poème Symphonique* triggered the idea for including a tempo guide of 324 wags per minute in my graphic score. The pendulum movement is not unlike dogs wagging their tails.

Carroll and Ligeti had a great sense of humour which they injected into their poetic processes. This leads me to introduce another P into the mix in a mini-prelude to the works under analysis.

Prelude: The World of Wonderland and the Landscape of Through the Looking-Glass

Carroll was obsessed with unity and separation; how two ideas become one or one becomes two. This is the case in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass*.¹⁰⁹ Two books. Two dreams. Two Alices. The real and the imagined. The multiplicity of two hum in the text. Carroll's cameo playing DoDo. Alice fearing losing Alice. The scrambled realism of eggastical Humpty Dumpty when Humpty refers you back to Dumpty. And let us not forget the 'contrariwise' and 'nohow' of the equally round twins Tweedle/Dum/Dee because: 'if it was so, it might be; and if it were so it would be, but as it isn't, it ain't. That's logic' (*TLG* p 48).

Cookie humour prevails. Dry biscuits quench thirst and before you know it we are digging for apples. The latter sounds funny. Apples grow on trees. But there is sound logic at play as the Duchess reminds Alice: 'Take care of the sense, and the sounds will take care of themselves' (*AiW* p 99).

Comment c'est possible? When Alice is unable to think of the word in English the Red Queen tells her to say it in French. Translate apple into French and it becomes *pomme* and potato is *pomme de terre*.¹¹⁰ Transform the phrase back into English and it turns into apples of the earth. The depth of humour on the page and the layers that sit outside the text keeps readers coming back for more. Restating Roland Barthes: 'rereading is no longer consumption but play (that play which is the return of the different).'¹¹¹ The

¹⁰⁹ *AiW* is a game of cards. The aces accompany Alice on her adventure. The gardeners are spades, the soldiers are clubs, the courtiers are diamonds, and Royalty are hearts. The magic of wonderland is brought back to reality when the pack start to stack up against Alice and she declares, 'You're nothing but a pack of cards!' p. 139. The joker in *Alice* is Carroll, the writer. *TLG* is structured on a game of chess. This is explicit before the story begins: *White Pawn (Alice) to play, and win in eleven moves*. Each character moves according to their assigned chess piece. The game starts as soon as Alice climbs through the mirror, hears about the scary Jabberwocky, and declares she wants to become Queen.

¹¹⁰ Martin Gardner, *The Annotated Alice* (London: Penguin Books, 2001), p. 42. See footnote 8. 'Irish apples were also a nineteenth century slang term for Irish potatoes.'

¹¹¹ Roland Barthes, *S/Z*, trans. by Richard Millar (UK: Blackwell, 2002), p. 16.

Alice books are 'writerly' texts. There are always new discoveries in a rereading whether it is a word within a word or a text within a text. This is an example of intertextuality. The term was first introduced by Julia Kristeva in her reading of Mikhail Bakhtin's literary theory on language whereby 'language is always double, always involved in polysemy (multiple meanings).'¹¹² Carroll's intertextuality is the sense in nonsense and the connotations contained within the subtexts of sound (the oral and the aural).

Alice in the Madrigals

Ligeti's *Nonsense Madrigals* are for six male voices (two altos, tenor, two baritones, bass) and written for The King's Singers.¹¹³ They are Ligeti's only English vocal works. The six movements use texts by Lewis Carroll, William Brightly Rands, and Dr Heinrich Hoffmann and the English alphabet.¹¹⁴

1. Two Dreams and Little Bat
2. Cuckoo in the Pear-Tree
3. The Alphabet
4. Flying Robert
5. The Lobster Quadrille
6. A Long, Sad Tale¹¹⁵

Carroll's text are included in 'Two Dreams and Little Bat', 'The Lobster Quadrille' and 'A Long, Sad Tale'. Madrigals are collections of secular songs written for four to eight *a cappella* voices in a polyphonic style. Popular in the sixteenth century, they were witty by nature, mostly sung in Italian, and

¹¹² Graham Allen, *Roland Barthes* (London: Routledge, 2003), p. 81. Footnotes are an example of intertextuality. The quote is from a book on Barthes but I am quoting Kristeva on her interpretation of Bakhtin.

¹¹³ The CD in my collection is *György Ligeti: Madrigals, Mysteries, Adventures and Songs*, edition 4 (London: Sony Classical, 1996). The *Nonsense Madrigals* are performed by The King's Singers. For an online version of the complete work visit <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kOhkJBcfs2w>> [accessed 23 August 2022].

¹¹⁴ For a full musical analysis of Ligeti's *Nonsense Madrigals* see: Daniel Malfatti, 'An Analysis of György Ligeti's Nonsense Madrigals' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Louisiana State University, 2004) and Joseph Cadagin, 'Nonsense and Nostalgia in the Lewis Carroll Settings of György Ligeti' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Stanford University, 2020).

¹¹⁵ *Nonsense Madrigals* Nos. 1-4 were first performed at the Berlin Festival (1988). No. 5 at the Queen Elizabeth Hall, Southbank Centre (1989). No. 6 at the Huddersfield Festival (1993). The complete work lasts around 14 minutes.

aimed at the literati. They were published in sets called 'books' and the texts tended to be based on themes of love, life, and death. Composers used 'word painting' to show and tell the story in the music. The unifying musical idea that holds Ligeti's *Nonsense Madrigals* together is parody. The theme of the set is 'nonsense'. This is clearly stated in the title and a direct reference to Carroll. The style of vocal work is also suggested with 'madrigal' even though Ligeti includes other song-forms such as the *Ars Nova* motet and the Parisian chanson. When Alice gives evidence at the trial of the Knave of Hearts for stealing the Queen's tarts, she shouts 'Stuff and nonsense!' (*AiW* p 139). I would tentatively link 'stuff' to the other types of songs within the set. 'Madrigal' is in the title because 'mad' forms part of the word. It is funny and sits with Ligeti's sense of humour. Whilst I am unable to prove this theory neither can it be unproven if we are following the principle and reasoning of Modus Ponens: 'According to which Q logically follows from both P and if P, then Q' i.e. 'the hypothetical is logically true ($P \& (P \rightarrow Q) \rightarrow Q$).'¹¹⁶ And in my defence it is hard not to recall the Cheshire Cat's famous exchange with Alice when thinking about mad in the *Nonsense Madrigals*:

'But I don't want to go among mad people,' Alice remarked.
'Oh, you can't help that,' said the Cat: 'we're all mad here. I'm mad. You're mad.'
'How do you know I'm mad?' said Alice.
'You must be,' said the Cat, 'or you wouldn't have come here.'
(*AiW* p 67)

Reading with the eye and listening with the ear is important in the *Alice* books and in the *Nonsense Madrigals*. In the next section, I will proceed to examine the role of puns and parody to show how Carroll and Ligeti play sound jokes on their characters, performers, and their audience. Following this, I shall turn my focus on portmanteaus and paradox.

¹¹⁶ Corine Besson, 'Norms, Reasons and Reasoning: A Guide Through Lewis Carroll's Regress Argument', forthcoming in *The Oxford Handbook of Reasons and Normativity*, ed. by Daniel Star (Oxford: Oxford University Press [n.d.]), pp. 1 & 8
<<https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/30615244.pdf>> [accessed 1 March 2022].

Sound Play with Puns and Parody

Gillian Beer describes the troublesome duo as ‘a doubleness that runs under the pellucid surface of the text. Puns have a forked presence, a single word leading in to at least two semantic directions; parodies live most fully alongside their original and need that original to reach their power of contradiction.’¹¹⁷ The ‘forked presence’ of a pun suggests that the sign has a two-timing relationship with a signifier and a signified, and another signifier and a signified. Puns play with one sound and two meanings to upset the flow of the text with comic effect. They are riotous and packed with mayhem and mischief. Set on disordering order, puns demand attention to the sense in the nonsense and a *punny* sense of humour. Loathe them or love them, the fun of a pun is that it keeps on giving: two for the price of one. This is in stark contrast to Humpty Dumpty. When Alice asks him, whether he can make words mean different things, Humpty Dumpty admits, he always has to pay extra. According to Catherine Bates:

A good pun poses no problems of recognition and is easily understood, obediently yielding up two stable and identifiable signifieds which can be seen to combine in a way that is fully relevant to the context. It suggests that the random associations which language yields are not arbitrary but purposeful and motivated. The “best” puns are those deemed to be the most pointed.¹¹⁸

And alas for poor Alice, she is always caught between the two. The written sign gets lost in the sound translation as Carroll exploits the two identical homophones with opposing meanings at her expense. The *fundum* for the reader is that Alice repeatedly *punts* on the wrong sign. The reader makes the right oral connection to the intended sign as part of the written dialogue. The joy of the text is perfectly set up by Carroll in the ‘Caucus-Race and a Long Tail’. He plays with two different words with two different meanings that sound the same.

¹¹⁷ Gillian Beer, *Alice in Space: The Sideways Victorian World of Lewis Carroll* (United States of America: The University of Chicago Press, 2016), p. 160.

¹¹⁸ Catherine Bates, ‘The Point of Puns’, *Modern Philosophy*, May 1999, Vol. 96, pp. 421-439 (p. 429) <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/439009>> [accessed 23 February 2022].

'Mine is a long and a sad tale!' said the Mouse, turning to Alice, and sighing.

'It *is* a long tail, certainly,' said Alice, looking down with wonder at the Mouse's tail; 'but why do you call it sad?' (*AiW* p 27)

The humour in the text is the writer colluding with the reader. The aural/oral verbal joke is on Alice. She cannot see what is heard on the page. When Alice looks down she see-hears the sound-image of 'tail' as a reference to the Mouse's long 'tail'. She misunderstands that the Mouse is attempting to tell her a story and is therefore unable to understand why the 'tail' is sad. When the Mouse's tale is eventually told Carroll uses two double puns. The poem is presented in a curved structure in the centre of the page. The shape signifies the tail of the mouse.

"Fury said to
a mouse,⁶ That
he met in the
house, 'Let
us both go
to law: I
will prose-
cute you.—
Come, I'll
take no de-
nial: We
must have
the trial;
For really
this morn-
ing I've
nothing
to do.'
Said the
mouse to
the cur,
'Such a
trial, dear
sir, With
no jury
or judge,
would
be wast-
ing our
breath.'
'I'll be
judge,
I'll be
jury,'
said
cun-
ning
old
Fury:
'I'll
try
the
whole
cause,
and
con-
demn
you to
death.' "

(*AiW* p 28)

But the tale/tail does not end there. When the poem is straightened out, the tale is told in the form of a tail-rhyme: two rhyming lines followed by a single line of different length in a three-line pattern. The long line resembles the shape of a mouse with a long tail. Here are the first two verses with the text laid out in their three-line format.

Fury said to a mouse,
That he met in the house,
'Let us both go to law: I will prosecute you –

Come, I'll take no denial;
We must have a trail:
For really this morning I've nothing to do

The title of Ligeti's sixth nonsense madrigal is 'A Long, Sad Tale'. This is an obvious connection to Carroll's 'Caucus-Race and a Long Tail'. The movement is structured around four different word ladder games. The two-player puzzle was devised by Carroll and first appeared in the magazine *Vanity Fair* (1879).¹¹⁹ The example in the magazine shows how to turn head into tail in six moves. Ligeti recreates the head to tail game. The tenor fires the starting pistol with the Queen of Hearts's famous statement: 'Off with her head!' (*AiW* p 86). 'Off' and 'head' are sung very loudly and with attack (>) whilst 'with' and 'her' are much quieter and the two notes are to be held (–) for their time value. Then the two baritones play the game. The first five words are sung as if they are unsure the letter changes are correct and then on the sixth they come in with a bit more gusto. They have completed the first phase of Ligeti's imitation. The single syllable words are sung on the same note with a rest of equal note value in between. To extend the game Ligeti backtracks up and down the ladder six times emphasising the six words in the game. As I stated in my 'Notes from the Margins', Ligeti's treatment of Carroll's word game inspired me to include my own ladder game at the end of part one of the novel. I too go up and down the ladder several

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

times and play with accenting and holding the duration of the words. Ligeti's first game is highlighted in the opening six bars.

Madrigal No. 6: Bars 1-3

The bass quotes the mouse: 'Mine is a long, long, a long, and a long, long, long, long, long, long, long, long, tale.' The bass has the lowest vocal range which in itself is funny as mice have high pitched squeaks.

Bars 4-6

Ligeti's sense of humour is not lost on the reader when the baritones sing 'head' and 'tail'. Both *heads* are on the off-beat, the first *tail* is on the on-beat and the second time the *tail* is off! The timing shows how much thought has been put into recreating the scene with Ligeti's clever note play. The game entails two double puns on tail/tale. The first time it is in the tenor with 'tale' and the baritones on 'tail' as shown in the next example.

Bars 16-18

T (dim.) sad, sad, sad, sad, sad, sad tale.
 Bar I pp tall, tell, teal, heal, HEAD, heal tail.
 Bar II pp tall, tell, teal, heal, HEAD, heal tail.

Ligeti repeats these three bars later in Baritone 2 and the bass. The joke is on the audience. They are unable to hear the difference between tale and tail on both occasions. Reading the score and seeing the clever punning layered on top of each between the voices had more impact on me than Carroll's word play. The objective in the third ladder game is to get from furies to barrel in seven steps. Whilst this is not an example of pun it is interesting to show how Ligeti shifts from a one syllable word game to a two-syllable challenge. The volume has increased to loud (*f*) to reflect the meaning of fury. Each syllable is a quaver but to add extra bite Ligeti adds a staccato mark (•) to shorten the note length and gives it an accent (>) for more *punch*. Each ladder word is sharpened by a half-step raise in pitch with two quaver rests in between.

Bars 26-31

T *p perfidiously* fu-ry said to a mouse, that she met in the house, fu-ries, bu-
 Bar I *ppp* She met in the house, fu-ries, bu-
 Bar II *p perfidiously* Fu-ry said to a mouse, that she met in the house, fu-ries, bu-

T *menacing* > > > *ff sempre* *backtrack* *molto*
 - ries, bu-ried, (a) "Come take no de - ni - al, we must have a tri- ..."

Bar I *menacing* > > > *ff* *cres - - - cen - - - do* *backtrack* *molto*
 - ries, bu-ried, bur - ked, bar-ked, bar - red, bar - rel, bar -

Bar II *menacing* > > > *ff* *cres - - - cen - - - do* *backtrack* *molto*
 - ries, bu-ried, bur - ked, bar-ked, bar - red, bar - rel, bar -

menacing ff

In both ladder examples, Ligeti is humorously demonstrating to a music novelist how to play with pitch, rhythm, sound, silence, and volume. He has taken a simple game and made it more dynamic. A recurring theme in *Underdog* is play with typography and text placement on a page with the aim of imitating these musical elements. I considered putting music accents on certain words in the story but decided against this because of the age of the intended reader. But I constantly thought about the pattern of words in a sentence to emphasise the natural rhythm of a phrase and how it would sound read out loud. For example, 'hot dog' has a different pulse to 'apple pie' and 'avocado on toast'. Brian Bilston, dubbed the 'Twitter Poet Laureate', creates poems under the constraints of the 140-character limit. His poem about writing on a windy day is a simple but effective example of playing with pitch, pace, and rhythm.

**The Problem of Writing Poems
on a Wild, Stormy Day**

The problem of writing po e m s
 on a wild, storm y d a y
 is that you write the words do w n
 but they just b l o w a w a

Brian Bilston *to*

¹²⁰ Brian Bilston, *The Problem of Writing Poems on a Wild, Stormy Day*. Twitter: @brian_bilston, posted on 18 February 2022.

Returning to Barthes, he states that:

The readerly text is a *tonal* text (for which habit creates a reading process just as conditioned as our hearing: one might say there is a *reading eye* as there is a tonal ear, so that to unlearn the readerly would be to unlearn the tonal), and its tonal unity is basically dependent on two sequential codes.¹²¹

Reading with the eye and listening with the ear is important in narrative text and music scores. Only by doing both can the reader/listener begin to understand the plurality of the work. In *Through the Looking-Glass* Alice ventures into 'The Garden of Live Flowers' and stumbles upon a large flower-bed with a willow-tree in the middle. The Tiger-Lily announces all the flowers can talk. Alice is unable to speak for a minute. When Alice finds her voice, she asks:

'Aren't you sometimes frightened at being planted out here, with nobody to take care of you?' [Alice]
'There's a tree in the middle,' said the Rose: 'what else is it good for?'
'But what could it do, if any danger came?' Alice asked.
'It could bark,' said the Rose.
'It says "Bough-wough!"' cried a Daisy: 'that's why its branches are called boughs!' (TLG pp 21-22)

The flowers believe the tree will bark (woof) and the branches will bough-wough (bow-wow) to protect them. This is their home. They are part of the pack. A dog barking in this situation would sound the alarm to the rest of the family (the flowers) of a potential threat and act as a warning to the intruder that their presence had been detected. Carroll is making the distinction between the sound association of 'bark' on a tree and a dog's 'bark'. He adds another level of play with 'bough-wough' which sounds like bow-wow and 'bough' is another term for the branches on a tree. Even if younger readers do not get the triple pun in Carroll's logic, he tries to explain the joke whilst retaining the importance of sound on the page. The passage is also a

¹²¹ Ibid., S/Z, p. 30.

nod to the linguist and philologist Max Müller. He was critical of the theory that human speech evolved from mimicking animal noises and called it bow-wow.¹²²

Ligeti plays with this type of sound association in the third madrigal, 'The Alphabet'. Whilst it is not based on any text, Ligeti imitates the repetitive nature of children learning the letters of the alphabet and humorously turns it on its head. Carroll constantly pokes fun at the tediousness of rote learning in Victorian schooling. Alice fails to remember her multiplication tables, gets the words wrong to popular poems and rhymes of the time. Learning by memory may have a place in the education system but the act of recall does not lead to any life understanding. Elizabeth Sewell in her study on nonsense states that 'words are themselves units made of collections of smaller units, the twenty-six letters of the alphabet, and play with these lesser units is possible as well.'¹²³ Ligeti uses the phonetic spelling of the alphabet to make his point. A becomes ei, B becomes bi, C becomes si. The joke this time is firmly placed on the singers. To confuse them, the first seven letters of the alphabet (eight if one is following the German nomenclature system) are assigned a different pitch to their letter name.¹²⁴ A=C#, B=D, C=D#. The letter C is a triple pun on the letter name, note name and the solfège syllable 'si'. The madrigal opens and ends so very quietly with *pppp* and climaxes with *fffff* to comic effect.

Ligeti and Carroll constantly turn up and down the volume dial. In the croquet scene the Queen shouts, 'Can you play croquet?' The soldiers are silent and Alice shouts, 'Yes!' The White Rabbit tells Alice to 'hush', she screams with laughter, and the Queen responds in a voice of thunder (*AiW* pp 88-89). When the Queen wants to carry on with the game Alice is too

¹²² There are a number of hypotheses on the origins of language. For example: bow-wow, ding-dong, pooh-pooh, yo-he-ho, ta-ta, and la-la. What these theories have in common is that all words began as onomatopoeia.

¹²³ Elizabeth Sewell, *The Field of Nonsense* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1952), p. 33.

¹²⁴ Joseph Cardagin points out in his PhD that Ligeti is 'creating a musical version of the Stroop test, the psychological study in which subjects are faced with the cognitive interference of reading a color name printed in a different shade of ink – e.g. the word "red" printed in blue ink', p. 285.

frightened to say a word (*AiW* p 101). As Kiera Vaclavik states, ‘Carroll sometimes simultaneously plays with size and volume together, as with the (smaller) talking flowers who take the (larger) Alice’s breath away that they speak louder than she does.’¹²⁵

‘The Alphabet’ madrigal may sound like the odd one out as part of the set – a bit of silly ABC nonsense with wrong pitches on wrong letters for some light-hearted amusement and/or to show off the dexterity of The King’s Singers. If it was then why (the bass and baritone one, end on the letter ‘Y’ or ‘Wai?’ in the score) is it the longest out of all the madrigals?¹²⁶ What is Ligeti’s point? Is this just another sound punning game like the tail/tale joke on the listener or is it meant for the score reader? Music, to cite Jean-Jacques Nattiez ‘is not a narrative, but an incitement to a narrative, to comment, to analyse.’¹²⁷ Ligeti’s inclusion of the question mark on the homophone is a provocation to the wider philosophical question of ‘why?’ Are the *Nonsense Madrigals* a form of reflective life questioning about the dreams of love and the disappointment of death?¹²⁸ This would be in tune with the sixteenth century madrigal composers who explored similar themes in entertaining ways and a canny connection to children continually asking, why, why, why, in their act of learning. There is nothing simple about Ligeti’s creative process. Like Carroll, everything has an underlying meaning, a duplicity that comes from deep philosophical thought aimed at writerly readers of words and music to go beyond the humour on the page. Disguised in the verbal and musical allusions of the work are the themes of love (madrigals 1 and 2) and death (four onwards). The sixth madrigal

¹²⁵ Kiera Vaclavik, ‘Listening to the Alice Books’, *Journal of Victorian Culture*, Vol. 26, No. 1, 1—20, p.17 <doi:10.1093/jvcult/vcaa022> [accessed 26 May 2022].

¹²⁶ Ligeti’s time indicators for each madrigal is as follows: Madrigal No. 1: 2’; Madrigal No. 2: 1’30”; Madrigal No. 3: 3’30”; Madrigal No. 4: 3’; Madrigal No. 5: 1’45”; and Madrigal No. 6: 1’30”.

¹²⁷ Jean-Jacques Nattiez, *Music and Discourse: Toward a Semiology of Music*, trans. by Carolyn Abbate (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1990) p. 128.

¹²⁸ Daniel Malfatti in his thesis suggests the question marks reinforce the growing tension in the music and ‘The Alphabet’ is Ligeti’s parody on himself. ‘The expressive psychological extremes of the work (humour plus horror), echo Bauer’s definition of parody as being “marked by a range of intent, from the serious to the gently mocking.”’ *Ibid.*, p. 118.

literally ends on 'death' in the lower registers – a going to ground – which comes out of the last ladder game.

Madrigal No. 6: Bars 59-63

The musical score for Madrigal No. 6, Bars 59-63, is presented for six parts: A I, A II, T, Bar I, Bar II, and B. The lyrics are: "glide, guide, guile, GUILT, guile, guide, glide, slide." and "you, you" for the vocal parts. Performance instructions include *ff*, *ppp*, *sub.*, *pp*, and *pp**. A red circle highlights the word "GUILT" in the vocal parts, with a red arrow pointing to it from the annotation "CAPS & cuts game 4 short by missing sub, quilt". Another red arrow points from the annotation "CAPS & cuts game 4 short by missing sub, quilt" to the word "death." in the lower parts. The score ends with "G.P." (General Pause) for all parts.

*) Voice *pp* but breathing intensively (*ff*) — a kind of voiced whisper.

Schott Music, Mainz 46750

129

Ligeti is also cleverly mirroring Carroll's darker undercurrents in the books as Alice has conversations with herself about death, destiny, and how long things last. Rereading and rereading, and 'rereading draws the text out of its internal chronology ("this happens *before* or *after* that") and recaptures a mythic time (without *before* or *after*)'.¹³⁰ Nothing is as simple as ABC and there is a lot for a music novelist to draw from in Ligeti's work. To play with words like composers play with sound, silence, and meaning is to see what language communicates when one truly listens.

¹²⁹ The score performance instruction for the lower three voices on 'death' is '*pp* but breathing intensively'. The G.P. on the last bar means a general pause before the piece is over. Ligeti would have been familiar with the English non-musical meaning of the abbreviation GP. This is possibly an insider joke with the singers that they may indeed need a doctor after performing the piece! If this is not the case then why did Ligeti not put a fermata over the rest as he did with *Ten Pieces for Wind* and the 'The Devil's Staircase' in the *Études*? Recapitulation: the *Nonsense Madrigals* were Ligeti's only English vocal works. He knew exactly what he was doing.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, S/Z, p. 16.

The term parody comes from the Greek word *parodia* meaning ‘a song sung alongside another’. The prefix *para* has two meanings, ‘counter’ and ‘beside’ whilst *odos* refers to song. The ‘counter’ is where one text is set up to go against another usually for comic effect. It may poke fun at individuals or a piece of work. ‘Beside’ implies a closeness to the original text that is being parodied rather than necessarily ridicule. According to Linda Hutcheon:

‘Parody, then, in its ironic “trans-contextualization” and inversion, is repetition with a difference. A critical distance is implied between the backgrounded text being parodied and the new incorporating work, a distance usually signalled by irony.’¹³¹

Parody then, is another form of imitation. The humour lies in what is reworked from the old into the new. To fully get the joke the reader needs to recognise the intertextuality between the texts. ‘Beautiful Soup’ is Carroll’s parody on the song, ‘Star of the Evening’ (1855) with words and music by James M. Sayles. He copies the pulse of the song so it sits ‘beside’ the original. He replaces ‘star’ with ‘soup’ and the common menu phrase, ‘soup of the day’ is turned into ‘soup of the evening’ to mimic ‘star of the evening’ in the original. The pleasure in the ‘counter’ part of the parody is Carroll mocking the overblown sentimentality of the lyrics. He does this with exaggerated comical effect in the chorus with the sounds of ‘oo’ and ‘soo – oop’. At the end of the day: soup is plain old soup.

Beautiful star in heav’n so bright,
Softly falls thy silv’ry light,
As thou movest from earth afar,
Star of the evening, beautiful star.

Beautiful soup, so rich and green
Waiting in a hot tureen
Who for such dainties would not stoop
Soup of the evening, beautiful Soup!
Soup of the evening, beautiful Soup!

Chorus:

Beautiful star,
Beautiful star,
Star of the evening, beautiful star.

Beau – ootiful Soo – oop!
Beau – ootiful Soo – oop!
Soo – oop of the e – e – evening,
Beautiful, beauty – FUL Soup!
(*AiW* pp 118-9)

¹³¹ Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Parody: The Teachings of Twentieth-Century Art Forms* (New York: Methuen, 2000), p. 32.

In 'A Mad Tea-Party' time is stuck at six o'clock (*AiW*, pp 71-82). Carroll plays with the meaning of 'time' for the duration of the chapter. Alice and the Hatter are at odds and in tune with their understanding of the sign and the relationships between the signifier and the signified. 'Time' for Alice is a concept of beating time in music and for the Hatter 'Time' is a person who will not stand a beating. The Hatter's pocket watch tells the time with days and months rather than the hours and minutes of the day. Alice mocks the Hatter by telling him that he should 'do something better with time' instead of wasting it on riddles that have no answers. The Hatter rebukes Alice because she has not spoken to 'Time'. Carroll masterfully brings the concept of time back to music and parody. The Hatter quarrelled with Time at a concert given by the Queen of Hearts when he had to sing 'Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Bat!' – a parody on Jane Taylor's poem 'The Star'. At the end of the first verse the Queen shouts: 'He's murdering time!' Since then six o'clock is always tea-time.

The Star

Twinkle, twinkle, little star,
 How I wonder what you are!
 Up above the world so high,
 Like a diamond in the sky.
 Twinkle, twinkle, little star,
 How I wonder what you are!

Parody

Twinkle, twinkle, little bat!
 How I wonder what you're at!*
 Up above the world you fly,
 Like a tea-tray in the sky.
 Twinkle, twinkle –**

* Interruption from the Hatter with: 'You know the song, perhaps?'

** At this point the Dormouse starts singing in its sleep: '*Twinkle, twinkle, twinkle –*'

The grammatical structure remains the same in Carroll's parody apart from the changes in lines 2 and 3. He follows the AABBAA rhyme scheme and lexis except where highlighted. The humour comes from changing 'star' to 'bat' and 'diamond' to 'tea-tray'. Stars may twinkle like diamonds but comparing a bat to a tea-tray is the sound of nonsense. Carroll adds another level of linguistic fun with a poke at his teacher Professor Bartholomew Price. He was nicknamed 'The Bat'. The melody for 'Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star' is based on the French folk song 'Ah! Vous dirai-je, Maman' (1761) and

recognised all over the world.¹³² It was written in the key of C Major. There are no sharps or flats. The melodic shape is simple with a small note range (C to A) and leaps of perfect fourths and fifths with step-by-step movements back down again. Here are the notes of the melody with Carroll's lyrics.

Twinkle, twinkle, little bat! How I wonder what you're at!
 C C G G A A G F F E E D D C
 Up above the world you fly, Like a tea-tray in the sky.
 G G F F E E D G G F F E E D
 Twinkle, twinkle –
 C C G G

Ligeti takes the Greek meaning of *parodia* literally in the first nonsense madrigal. 'Two Dreams and Little Bat' is a mashup of three poems. The 'Two Dreams' refers to 'The Dream Of A Girl Who Lived At Seven-Oaks' and 'The Dream Of A Boy Who Lived At Nine-Elms' by William Brighty Rands. 'Little Bat' is a reference to 'Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Bat' and he ridicules the tune in the tenor part with Carroll's text.

Madrigal No. 1: Bars 4-17 (tenor part)

The musical score for the tenor part of Madrigal No. 1, bars 4-17, is shown below. The score is in G major and 3/4 time. The lyrics are: "Twin - - - - kle, twin - - - - kle, lit - - - - tle bat, how I won - - - - der what you're at! Up a - - - -". The score includes dynamic markings (p, mp, mf, m) and articulation (accents). Red annotations highlight specific musical features: "Twin' twice as long as 'kle'", "elongates time", "pitch twist", "allows for the Hatter's", and "interruption and Alice's reponse".

¹³² The same melody is used for 'Baa, Baa, Black Sheep' and 'The Alphabet Song'. For example: A-B-C-D-E-F-G | Yes, sir, yes sir three bags full | Up above the world so high | and so on.

The circled notes show how Ligeti follows the melodic shape of the song which he maintains throughout. He takes his cue from the Queen to poke fun at the rhythmic structure by ‘murdering time’. ‘Twin’ is double the duration of ‘kle’. ‘Lit’ is double the duration of ‘tle’ and so forth. They should be the same note value. Each phrase has a duration pattern of 10 5 10 5 10 5 10. Ligeti sets the ‘Little Bat’ in C flat instead of C major and adds a pitch twist with an F natural instead of F flat in bar 10. This is funny because the sound is not as bright as the original. The unexpected semitone raise in pitch accentuates how some children can be sharp or flat when learning how to sing (or play an instrument) in tune. Ligeti follows Carroll by cutting short the first verse but at the end of line five with ‘bat’ rather than on ‘twinkle’. The humour also comes in setting the long-held slow-moving notes of a children’s song in a *cantus firmus* (fixed song) mostly reserved for sacred polyphonic compositions. Reading the score and seeing how time is extended and pitch is altered is a great tool music novelists can use in their work for dramatic effect. Carroll plays on the page but the presentation follows a conventional format. In *Underdog* I imitate Ligeti by extending the space between letters in words, exaggerating intervals between words, and by placing letters/words at different heights.

The fifteen poems Carroll parodies in the *Alice* books were well-known in Victorian times. Here is Isaac Watt’s *How Doth the Little Busy Bee* versus Carroll’s *How Doth the Little Crocodile* (*AiW* p 15):

How doth the little busy bee
 Improve each shining hour,
 And gather honey all the day
 From every opening flower!

How doth the little crocodile
 Improve his shining tail,
 And pour the waters of the Nile
 On every golden scale!

How skilfully she builds her cell!
 How neat she spreads the wax!
 And labours hard to store it well
 With the sweet food she makes.

How cheerfully he seems to grin,
 How neatly spreads his claws,
 And welcomes little fishes in
 With gently smiling jaws!

By (mostly) keeping pace with the linguistic pulse, Carroll breathes new life into his revamped version. Using imitation Carroll shows how easy it is to

replace words by setting free the signifier and the signified. The new signifiers serve to mock the moral: 'Be hard working and dutiful!' The little bee who works so hard will get her reward for doing so! As Beer puts it: 'Between the original and riposte there is a doubling, reversing, and more doubling. Ideally, the reader can hear how the two poems chime together as well as how they strain apart.'¹³³ The set-up leading into the parodied poem fuels the humour. Alice questions who she is and tries to remember things she learnt at school. The scene goes terribly wrong. Her mistakes are humorous. Basic maths fail. Four times five becomes twelve. Four times six is thirteen. She gives up and tries geography. London becomes the capital of Paris and Paris becomes Rome. Frustrated Alice crosses her hands on her lap and attempts to recite the poem. Predictably she misquotes the poem. Learning does not come from endless, meaningless sound repetition. The irony in the text is that time has become timeless. The connection to the original text no longer matters. The sing-song meter and the clever rhymes makes Carroll's poem zing off the page. A crocodile has a tail, scales, claws, and a big mouth to eat the fish. And wet as the sea can be: 'no wise fish would go anywhere without a porpoise' (*AlW* p 114). Crocodiles are also very slow moving in comparison to a busy bee buzzing about the place which adds to the humour.

In chapter 10 of *Alice in Wonderland*, the Mock Turtle and a Gryphon teach Alice 'The Lobster Quadrille'. The dance was fashionable in France in the late eighteenth century and the craze spread across Europe. It was performed by four couples arranged in the shape of a square. The couples constantly swapped partners to give variety to the dance and the 'stately quadrille' became a metaphor for the changing alliances across Europe at the time. The dance movements were made up of head turns from left to right and swinging feet to imitate circles, rectangles, and diamonds. The Gryphon has forgotten the words of the song so the Mock Turtle sings them very slowly and sadly as they dance around Alice, clumsily stepping on her

¹³³ Ibid., *Alice in Space*, p. 164.

toes. 'The Mock Turtle's Song' also known as 'The Lobster Quadrille' is a parody of Mary Howitt's 'The Spider and the Fly'. Carroll imitates the rhythm and the rhyme and parodies the first line: 'Will you step into my parlour?' said the Spider to the Fly. 'Tis the prettiest little parlour that you ever did spy' (*AiW* p 112). The nonsense song is a three-part rondo. Each verse has six lines with two rhymes (underlined in footnote) and a chorus.¹³⁴

In the fifth madrigal, 'The Lobster Quadrille', Ligeti follows Carroll's text. It is set in three parts to reflect the three verses. The score is marked 'Allegro molto leggiero e ritmico' with a 4/8 time signature meaning that there are four quaver beats in a bar. The fast tempo with a light rhythmic touch parodies the liveliness of the quadrille dance rather than the slowness of the Mock Turtle. The madrigal takes the form of a dance similar to that of a passacaglia which is characterised by a repeated melodic-rhythm pattern (ostinato). The ostinato in Ligeti's case corresponds to first line of the song. In the following example, the first half of the ostinato 'Will you walk a little faster?' is underlined in red and sung by Alto 1 / Baritone 2. The second half of the ostinato 'said a whiting to a snail' is underlined in blue and sung by Alto 2 / Baritone 1. Ligeti relies on the pitch interval of a perfect fifth to give the words a feeling that the dancers are stepping forward and back or performing the repetitive movements of the quadrille. The purple circles indicate the pitch interval.

¹³⁴ Verse 1: Will you walk a little faster?' said a whiting to a snail, | There's a porpoise close behind us, and he's treading on my tail. | See how eagerly the lobsters and the turtles all advance! | They are waiting on the shingle -- will you come and join the dance? | Will you, won't you, will you, won't you, will you join the dance? | Will you, won't you, will you, won't you, won't you join the dance? Verse 2: You can really have no notion how delightful it will be | When they take us up and throw us, with the lobsters, out to sea! | But the snail replied 'Too far, too far!' and gave a look askance – | Said he thanked the whiting kindly, but he would not join the dance. | Would not, could not, would not, could not, would not join the dance. | Would not, could not, would not, could not, could not join the dance. Verse 3: What matters it how far we go?' his scaly friend replied. | There is another shore, you know, upon the other side. | The further off from England the nearer is to France – | Then turn not pale, beloved snail, but come and join the dance. | Will you, won't you, will you, won't you, will you join the dance? | Will you, won't you, will you, won't you, won't you join the dance?

Madrigal No. 5: Bars 1-8

Allegro molto leggero e ritmico
 (♩ = 160) **fast tempo**

György Ligeti
 1989

Annotations in the score include:
 - Red bars under the lyrics 'Will you walk a lit-tle fast-er?' in A I and Bar II.
 - Blue bars under the lyrics 'Said a whit-ing' in A II, T, Bar I, and Bar II.
 - Circled notes in A I, A II, and Bar I.
 - A green oval around the first two bars of the bass line.

Annotations in the score include:
 - Red bars under the lyrics 'Will you walk a lit-tle fast-er?' in A I and Bar II.
 - Blue bars under the lyrics 'to a snail' in A II, T, and Bar I.
 - Blue bars under the lyrics 'Said a whit-ing' in A II, T, and Bar I.
 - Circled notes in A I, A II, and Bar I.
 - A green oval around the first two bars of the bass line.

There's a por-
 poise close be-hind us,
 Line 2: Bass rhythm
 Durata: 1'45"

The ostinato can be divided into two nine beat statements with a 2+2+2+3 pattern. The humour comes in that the two halves are out of sync just like the Gryphon and Turtle treading on Alice's toes when they pass too close. They overlap into each other's bars with the odd number of beats. This gives the dance a sense that it is always teetering on the edge and about to fall over. The ostinato is repeated twelve times and sung in pairs that constantly switch to represent the changing partners in the quadrille dance.

The following chart show how both parts of the ostinato work across the three verses and the different voices.

The Lobster	Quadrille										
VERSE 1	OS 1		OS 2		OS 3		OS 4		OS 5		OS break
Alto 1	Red	Blue	Red	Blue	Red	Blue	Red	Blue	Red	Blue	Diagonal
Alto 2	Blue	Red	Blue	Red	Blue	Red	Blue	Red	Blue	Red	Diagonal
Tenor											Diagonal
Baritone 1	Blue	Red	Blue	Red	Blue	Red	Blue	Red	Blue	Red	Diagonal
Baritone 2	Red	Blue	Red	Blue	Red	Blue	Red	Blue	Red	Blue	Diagonal
Bass											Diagonal
BAR Nos	B1	B3	B5	B7	B9	B11	B13	B15	B17	B19	B21
VERSE 2	OS 6		OS 7		OS 8		OS 9		OS break		
Alto 1	Red	Blue	Red	Blue	Red	Blue	Red	Blue	Red	Blue	Diagonal
Alto 2	Blue	Red	Blue	Red	Blue	Red	Blue	Red	Blue	Red	Diagonal
Tenor	Red	Blue	Red	Blue	Red	Blue	Red	Blue	Red	Blue	Diagonal
Baritone 1	Blue	Red	Blue	Red	Blue	Red	Blue	Red	Blue	Red	Diagonal
Baritone 2	Red	Blue	Red	Blue	Red	Blue	Red	Blue	Red	Blue	Diagonal
Bass	Red	Blue	Red	Blue	Red	Blue	Red	Blue	Red	Blue	Diagonal
BAR Nos	B23	B25	B27	B29	B31	B33	B35	B37			
VERSE 3	OS 10		OS break			OS 11		OS 12			
Alto 1	Red	Blue	Red	Blue	Red	Blue	Red	Blue	Red	Blue	
Alto 2	Blue	Red	Blue	Red	Blue	Red	Blue	Red	Blue	Red	
Tenor	Red	Blue	Red	Blue	Red	Blue	Red	Blue	Red	Blue	
Baritone 1	Blue	Red	Blue	Red	Blue	Red	Blue	Red	Blue	Red	
Baritone 2	Red	Blue	Red	Blue	Red	Blue	Red	Blue	Red	Blue	
Bass	Red	Blue	Red	Blue	Red	Blue	Red	Blue	Red	Blue	
BAR Nos	B43	B45				B56	B58	B60	B62	B64	B66 B67

OS = ostinato

The red blocks are the first part of the ostinato and the blue blocks are the second part of the phrase. The red and blue blocks continually bump into each other's bars making the ostinato feel unstable. The chart also shows how the voice pairs switch. In the first verse to establish the ostinato, Ligeti is constant with the Alto 1 / Baritone 2 and the Alto 2 / Baritone 1 pairings until the second part of ostinato 5 leading into the break. In verses 2 and 3 the ostinato shifts around between different pairs of voices. This parodies how the basic quadrille would have been danced.

Ligeti breaks the ostinato pattern three times. He drops the sixth line of the first two verses and the ostinato to reflect the text omission and restarts the ostinato during the first line of the second and third verses. This is the trigger for parts two and three of the madrigal, not the ostinato break itself. The third ostinato break is in verse three, line three with the introduction of the English and French National Anthems. This makes sense as the text is: 'The further off from England the nearer is to France'. None of this may seem relevant to a music novelist but seeing the vocal patterns laid out as a chart shows how easily they can be translated on to a narrative page. I have not

included an ostinato in *Underdog*. This idea is reserved for a musical numbers game story based on Stockhausen's *Klavierstücke* (1952).

The next chart shows how the three parts of the madrigal work and how the lines of each verse are distributed across the voices.

The Lobster Quadrille											
VERSE 1	Line 1		Line 2		Line 3		Line 4		Line 5		Line 6
Alto 1	1a				3a	3b	4a		5a	5b	
Alto 2		1b								5b	
Tenor					3a	3b	4a	4b			ostinato break
Baritone 1		1b									
Baritone 2	1a										
Bass			2a	2b				4b			
BAR Nos	B1		B7		B11		B15		B17		
VERSE 2	Line 1		Line 2		Line 3		Line 4		Line 5		Line 6
Alto 1				2b		3b	4a	4b	5a	5b	
Alto 2								4b			
Tenor				2b			3c				ostinato break
Baritone 1					3a		3c				
Baritone 2	1a	1b	2a								
Bass						3b	4a				
BAR Nos	B20		B25		B27		B33		B38		
VERSE 3	Line 1		Line 2		Line 3		Line 4		Line 5		Line 6
Alto 1		1b					4a	4b	5a	5b	6b
Alto 2			2a	2b	3a	3b					6a
Tenor		1b			ostinato	break	4a	4b	5a	5b	6b
Baritone 1	1a										6b
Baritone 2					3a	3b					
Bass						3a	3b				
BAR Nos	B41		B44		B47		B57		B60		B64

Ligeti structured this madrigal by sticking to Carroll's text format. It is difficult to unhear and unconsciously (for me) not mimic Ligeti's intonation, pitch, timbre, delivery, and rhythm of the opening when reading the text. His meticulous attention to detail perfectly matches the natural beat of the phrasing and gives a sense of movement. Other musicians who have put music to the words have written perfectly good tunes but not managed to create a lasting memorable impact (for me) such as Franz Ferdinand's version which featured as the sound track of Tim Burton's film adaptation of *Alice in Wonderland* (2010).¹³⁵ Timing is important for composers and writers in equal measure. Ligeti probably dropped the last chorus line in the first two

¹³⁵ Compare Ligeti's version with Franz Ferdinand's interpretation of 'The Lobster Quadrille'. Ligeti: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q27hBmF_rq8> and Franz Ferdinand: <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nRlItWonGDMs>> [accessed 26 February 2022].

verses for aesthetic reasons and decided to have some sound compositional fun with the national anthems in the third verse. He does this with pitch for 'God Save the Queen' and dotted rhythms for 'La Marseillaise'. Both of which are sung very, very quietly in an undertone. Keeping the ostinato in these sections would have been an aural distraction.

Portmanteaus and a bit of P in Paradox

A portmanteau is two words fused into one with two senses and two sounds. Children unconsciously make sense of the gap between the intended and the imagined. Michael Rosen and Dr Laura Wright in their BBC Radio Four programme *Word of Mouth* explored how children invent and reimagine words from snostrils and jumpolines to hippyhoppymus, Farmer Christmas, troblems, strangled eggs, and Marks & Spensive.¹³⁶ What goes on in the brain to make these linguistic leaps? How are phonetic rules unconsciously applied? What makes an invented word sound appealing? Every syllable we utter has connotations and consequences. A fair degree of noise in a consonant is going to bring energy, activity and motion in a word. Combinations of sounds in a portmanteau are critical. When word adjustments are made it feels and sounds like a real word because made-up words sound like their original. In the 'Jabberwocky' poem portmanteau words run riot in the seven verses. Here is the first and fourth:

'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe:
All mimsy were borogoves,
And the mome raths outgrabe.'
[...]

And as in uffish thought he stood,
The Jabberwock, with eyes of flame,
Came whiffing through the tugley wood
And burred as it came. (*TLG* p 15)

¹³⁶ 'Snostrils and Jumpolines: Kids' Invented Words', *Word of Mouth*, BBC Radio 4, broadcast 4 October 2016.

Frumious. Bandersnatch. Uffish. Snicker-snack. Galumphing. Frabulous. Chortled. The combinations of sounds are critical. They jingle-jangle in harmony because they sound like their origins. The vowels and consonants roll off the tongue. Most are nouns and adjectives. The rhythm of the order in the line supplies the meaning as readers unconsciously fill in the blanks. Twas ■■■■, and the ■■■■ did ■■■■ and ■■■■ in the ■■■■. This is because 'the eye rests on visual resemblances; the mind's ear pauses over pockets of sound.'¹³⁷ The rules are there so the reader can reconstruct the language even if the sign is lost and Alice is at a loss. In chapter six, Alice asks Humpty Dumpty to explain the poem (*TLG* pp 90-92). The on-and-off-the-wall pretentious egg tries to give meaning to it. 'Brillig' is a time when you start *broiling* things for dinner. 'Slithy' is a combination of 'lithe' and 'slimy'. 'Mimsy' is 'miserable' and 'flimsy' and 'mome' is home. The comic impact comes from the liberties Carroll takes with language. The new words exploit the departure between the two old words and get a life of their own. This is an important point in establishing that Carroll's nonsense is not merely mind-boggling gibberish noises.

Jacqueline Flescher states, 'Nonsense bears the stamp of paradox. The two terms of paradox are order and disorder.'¹³⁸ Words refer to a sense that is not in themselves. Nonsense points to an implied sense which does not exist. Sense-making cannot be understood without taking into account nonsense. To upset order, you need to reverse it. 'Sentence first – verdict afterwards,' shouts the Queen of Hearts during the trial of who stole the tarts (*AiW* p 139). 'Hand it round first, and cut it afterwards,' the Unicorn remarks about the plum-cake (*TLG* p 110). This sounds like nonsense but nonsense is upstaging sense and showing how nonsensical sense can be. Whilst paradox does not rely on sound structure the disorder in the order still rings in the ears. The paradox of time gets into a pickle when Alice is addressing the White Queen who has been unsuccessfully a-dressing herself. Her shawl

¹³⁷ Marnie Parsons, *Touch Monkeys: Nonsense Strategies for Reading Twentieth-Century Poetry* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), p. 144.

¹³⁸ Jacqueline Flescher, 'The Language of Nonsense in Alice', *Yale French Studies*, No. 43 (1969), p. 128.

is wonky. Her brush is tangled in her hair. She is *just about managing*. Alice remarks to the Queen, she really needs a lady's-maid to take care of her. Alice is promised jam but told at the same time that she cannot have it.

'I'm sure I'll take your pleasure!' the Queen said. 'Two pence a week, and jam every other day.'
Alice couldn't help laughing, as she said, 'I don't want you to hire *me* – and I don't care for jam.'
'It's very good jam,' said the Queen.
'Well, I don't want any *to-day*, at any rate.'
'You couldn't have it if you *did* want it,' the Queen said. 'The rule is, jam to-morrow and jam yesterday – but never jam to-day.' (TLG p 66-67)

It is a philosophical problem, when does the present becomes the past and the future the present? The sense in the nonsense is that you can never know the present. To know it would mean making it an object in your mind and the thinking of it would push it into the past. Everything is logical within the setting. A silent cry. A deathly silence. Daniel Albright argues that the paradox of language and music is 'the more we try to understand music as language, the more strongly it resists that understanding; and the more we try to understand music as the opposite of language, the more sweetly, strongly, plainly it speaks to the ear.'¹³⁹ The statement is a musical variation of itself. Words are play with sounds, just like music is play with sounds. The reader/listener has to work to achieve understanding on both sides and what it means to them. It is what it is. And to quote John Cage: 'I have nothing more to say and I am saying it' which proves there is something to say regardless if it is nothing.¹⁴⁰

In this chapter, I have shown how the playful, quirky, logical minds of Carroll and Ligeti work. They are two P's in a pod where sound games with words and games with notes take priority in the act of serious creativity. Ligeti's attention to detail can be applied to the structure of a music novel and how

¹³⁹ Daniel Albright, *Panaesthetics* (USA: Yale University Press, 2014), p. 177.

¹⁴⁰ John Cage, *Silence: Lectures and Writings, 50th Anniversary Edition* with foreword by Kyle Gann (Middletown: Wesleyan University press, 2013), p. 183.

text can be treated, organised, and presented. Everything on the page in the *Alice* books is placed with pinpoint precision. Carroll demonstrates how words are empty forms that can be brought to life with sound and leave enough room for the adult reader to take pleasure in uncovering the various layers behind the work. The unpredictability of the black text brings timbre to the white page because it is never static. Cadences set up harmonics as we read. The layered jokes work like polyphony and the aural constantly trumps the written. Nonsense literature deepens our uncertainty about reality. It functions to question, criticise, and evaluate the world it has intruded and allows us to see and hear from another side. Carroll delivers a plethora of meaning through sound structures and imaginative wordplay. The analytical devices in both these masterpieces go way beyond the power of P and my point of interrogation. The permutations for analysis are endless, which is why they have stood the test of time and inspired generations of all ages. They are undoubtedly *frabulous* fantasies with a sonic range of different pleasures.

**4. The Full Score: Reading and Listening to
Matthew Herbert's *The Music* – A novel through sound**

0'00"

10"

There is no

20"

such thing as silence. Something is al-

ways happening that makes a sound.

No one can have an idea

30"

once he starts really listening.¹⁴¹

33"

50"

(advance to the next page)

¹⁴¹ John Cage, *Silence: Lectures and Writings, 50th Anniversary Edition* with foreword by Kyle Gann (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2013), p. 191.

Is it possible for two different mediums to unite and become a single cohesive work? That is the paradigm Matthew Herbert sought to explore in *The Music – A novel through sound*.¹⁴² The book is an album written in words that takes place over a one-hour time period. It opens with a three-page 'Prelude' which sets up how to listen to the work and introduces the twelve main characters. This is followed by twelve numbered tracks.

My intention is to delineate the authenticity of the work as a piece of music. The chapter is divided into three parts. I begin by introducing Herbert and following the sonic landscape that helped pave the way for the genesis of *The Music*. In 'Reading the Score', I deconstruct how Herbert frames the work as a three-part symphony, break down the durations of each track to show how the work lasts an hour, and implicitly relies on three works by John Cage to structure the content. In 'Listening to the Novel', I analyse the narrative themes, the text presentation, and why numbers again play an important role in the uniting the music and the words. My approach follows a mix of Jean-Jacques Nattiez's three families of analysis:

- 1) poietic analysis which focuses on the making process and how the work came into being
- 2) aesthetic analysis where the receiver reconstructs the making process of the work
- 3) trace analysis which essentially takes a neutral standpoint by discarding how the work came into being or how it is understood and interprets the construction of the work itself.¹⁴³

My contribution to knowledge is to explicitly demonstrate how to write a music novel with music integral to form, structure, and content.

¹⁴² Matthew Herbert, *The Music – A novel through sound* (London: Unbound, 2018). 'Further references (to this edition etc.) are given after quotations in the text'. The subtitle of the paperback edition of *The Music* has changed from *A novel in sound* to *An Album in Words*, published by Unbound, 21 July 2022. I have always described the work as an album in words. The paperback edition is also a different size to the original hardback book.

¹⁴³ For more information see: Jean-Jacques Nattiez, 'The Semiological Tripartition', *Music and Discourse: Toward a Semiology of Music*, trans. by Carolyn Abbate (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), pp. 10-17.

Herbert in Context

Matthew Herbert is a ground-breaking composer, artist, producer, and writer. Since his debut dance album *All Around The House* (1998) which mixed house music with domestic noises from toasters to toothbrushes, Herbert has been commissioned by the Royal Opera House, National Theatre, Royal Court Theatre, London Sinfonietta, Elbe Jazz Festival, Deutsche Grammophon, amongst others. His output extends to more than thirty albums including *ONE PIG* (2011) which documented the 24-week lifespan of a pig from birth to consumption and beyond. (The pig's remains were turned into musical instruments). He has written music for film (*DIS[INTEGRATION]*, 2020; *A Fantastic Woman*, 2017), TV (*The Responder*, 2022; *The Beast Must Die*, 2021; *Noughts + Crosses*, 2020), and radio (*The Unknown*, 2015). Moving between a variety of pseudonyms such as Doctor Rockit, Radio Boy, Mr. Vertigo, Transformer, Wishmountain and looping back to Herbert, he has performed all around the world from the Sydney Opera House to the Hollywood Bowl. Herbert is a long-term collaborator with the experimental pop icon, Björk and creative director of the BBC Radiophonic Workshop. On the inside of the dust jacket, Herbert describes *The Music*:

As well as being a description of an imagined album, this novel is a manifesto for sound, challenging how we hear the world itself, while listening to stories about humanity and our place in that world.

Manifestos are driven by ideals and ideology. A declaration of what they were for, or against, and where they hoped to go. 'Long live this' or 'down with that', manifestos are something that is demanded now but speaks in the name of the future. Popular in the early part of the twentieth century (and still relevant today), they were a rallying call to action against convention. A place where art and politics met. Herbert's manifesto builds on Luigi Russolo's *The Art of Noises* (Futurist Manifesto, 1913). Russolo wanted the old order to break away from working with classical sounds and embrace the 'infinite variety of noise-sounds'. He predicted a new form of music and

urged people to go out, to listen to their surroundings for a true musical reality because they accompany our everyday life. Russolo compiled six categories of noises for the futurist orchestra:

1	2
roars	whistles
claps	snores
noises of falling water	snorts
driving noises	
bellows	
3	4
whispers	shrill sounds
mutterings	cracks
rustlings	buzzings
grumbles	jingles
grunts	shuffles
gurgles	
5	6
percussive noises	animal and human voices
using metal, wood, skin,	shouts, moans, screams,
stone, baked earth, etc.	laughter, rattlings, sobs ¹⁴⁴

This new way of thinking about music as sound inspired a new generation of makers. Composer, Edgar Varèse was ahead of his time. He spent years creating noise-based music that sounded like it was made in a studio. His piece *Ionisation* (1931) used conventional sonata form by having two contrasting subjects, a development, and recapitulation. But it was the timbre and the texture of the work rather than the melody and the harmony that pointed the way to *musique concrète* and electronic music. His notion of music reflected his vision of ‘sound as living matter’ and he posed an important question: ‘What is music but organized noises?’ Henry Miller described Varèse as ‘The stratospheric Colossus of Sound’ and Frank Zappa’s tribute to the composer in *Stereo Review* (1971) was titled *The idol of My Youth*.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁴ Luigi Russolo, *The Art of Noises* p. 10

<http://www.artype.de/Sammlung/pdf/russolo_noise.pdf> [accessed 10 July 2020].

¹⁴⁵ Henry Miller quote <<https://www.boosey.com/shop/ucap/Var-se-360-at-the-Southbank-Centre/951>>; Frank Zappa tribute <https://www.afka.net/Articles/1971-06_Stereo_Review.htm> [accessed 12 May 2022].

The most radical post-war experimental composers wanted new sounds and set out to transform old music into something new. Daphne Oram was the first British composer to produce electronic sound and went on to invent the Oramics Machine, a synthesizer that could change drawings into sounds. Pierre Schaeffer, pioneer of *musique concrète* recorded sounds of the world, edited and manipulated them until they became separated from their source. Karlheinz Stockhausen built new sounds from scratch like a scientist in a laboratory. In *Gesand der Jünglinge* (1955-6), he mixes three types of vocal sounds (vowels, fricatives, consonants) and three types of electronic sounds (sine tones, white noise, pulses), distorts them and spins them round a room using the space as an instrument. Maryanne Amacher found that different sound frequencies played at certain levels triggered inner-ear sensations that produced their own audible tones. This can be experienced in works like *Living Sound* (1980). Jonty Harrison's piece *Klang* (2009) was made using two earthenware casserole dishes, cowbells, metal rods, aluminium bars, alongside analogue and digital electronically generated sounds; and Gabriel Prokofiev's *Concerto for Turntables and Orchestra* (2011) manipulates the sounds created by the orchestra. What Roussolo, the harbinger of noise-sounds anticipated has become the new normal.

Creating and making music in innovative ways is not the only connection Herbert has with the generations that came before him. These post-1950s composers were not only good with notes but good with words. Oram's *An Individual Note of Music, Sound and Electronics* (1972) was a manifesto for the future of electronic music. Stockhausen published numerous articles on music theory and included his own made up languages in some of his pieces. John Cage was the most prolific. His output includes: *Silence* (1961), *Notations* (1969), *Empty Words* (1974) which uses texts from the *Journals of Henry David Thoreau* (1837-1861) to deconstruct language. Part 1 omits sentences, Part 2 omits phrases, Part 3 omits words, and Part 4 omits syllables to leave a virtual lullaby of letters and sounds. It makes sense that Herbert would draw from past pioneers and consciously attempt to combine two art forms (sounds and words) in one work.

Before moving onto the analytical sections, I want to briefly discuss Herbert's role for the reader/listener and touch on the physical attributes of the book that setup the foundations for following the trace evidence.

The Music and the Role of the Reader/Listener

When we read words on a printed page they unconsciously become images in our mind as we picture and understand the context. Ferdinand de Saussure argued that a linguistic sign whether written or spoken is made up of two parts: the sound-image (signifier) and the concept (signified). Neither can be separated from the arbitrary word they have been assigned. It is impossible to have sound without thought or thought without sound. They are inseparable like a sheet of paper. The front cannot exist without the back.

Emily Petermann states:

What is frequently misunderstood is the abstract nature of *both* sides of the sign. The signifier is not material or concrete, does not consist of the actual acoustic properties of a spoken word, for example, but the abstract sound pattern as stored in the mental lexicon. Similarly, the signified is not a material referent, but the abstract concept or meaning also as stored in the lexicon.¹⁴⁶

In other words, the two facets of the sign are intrinsically linked in the form of a production and a response so meaning or communication is possible. This raises the question of the musical sign if the study of semiotics is about understanding through association. Does music mean anything? Stravinsky believed that 'Music is, by its very nature, essentially powerless to *express* anything at all ... *Expression* has never been an inherent property of music.' Varèse echoed this with 'My music cannot express anything other than itself', and Boulez's view point was that 'Music is an art that has no meaning.'¹⁴⁷ All three composers are speaking about their creative processes. They do not need a particular emotion or feeling to write music.

¹⁴⁶ Emily Petermann, *The Musical Novel: Imitation of Music Structure, Performance, and Reception in Contemporary Fiction* (New York: Camden House, 2018), p. 28.

¹⁴⁷ Jean-Jacques Nattiez and Katharine Ellis, 'Reflections on the Development of Semiology in Music', *Music Analysis*, Mar. - Jul., 1989, Vol. 8, No. 1/2 (Mar. - Jul., 1989), p. 26 <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/854326>> [accessed 14 May 2022].

In *The Music*, Herbert is pushing the boundaries of the novel by privileging the aural over the visual. The reader not only has to understand the linguistic sign but transform the work into an orchestrated system of sounds. He is explicitly asking the reader to approach the text through the ear so they become implicated within the sound-world of the work. They are now the reader and the listener. They are the interpreter, the composer, the sound stacker and the collaborator in the production of the work. This resonates with Roland Barthes's theory of the 'writerly' rather than 'readerly' texts in that every text is constantly being rewritten, remade in the here and now because the scriptor replaces the creator. A work can no longer be assigned a single meaning when it is released out into the world.

Listening to *The Music* demands a new way of reading and processing images so the aural becomes an equal player set free from the constraints of the onomatopoeia. Sound words are contained within the text but they are deliberate author interruptions to remind the reader to listen. They have to forget Western ways of linear book reading from left-to-right or Eastern traditions from right-to-left, top-to-bottom. The reader/listener has to take-in the whole page like an orchestral score to hear the sounds, the rhythms, and the dynamics. Only then can they decide how the work can be played.

It would be easy to label *The Music* an acousmatic novel in the narrative form. The piece describes unrecorded sounds from the world around us, presented in a documentary newsfeed style with no commentary or interpretation. But I resist this reading. Acousmatic music began as *musique concrète* with Pierre Schaeffer. Sounds were recorded, edited, and reworked until a composition materialised. Central to Schaeffer's idea was a 'reduced listening' whereby the source of the sound was deliberately discarded to be in tune with the characteristics of the sound. In other words, a conscious toppling of the sound from its setting. The term acousmatic music was adopted in the 1970s to include compositions that used *musique concrète* and spatial audio techniques. Herbert is proposing that the sound and the story are heard at the same time. They are not separate from the source. This is the opposite of the concept of acousmatic music.

Herbert states:

The methods of composition in the book [*The Music*] attempt to consciously and precisely glue the context to the sound to the point where to separate the sound from its roots is to not-hear the sound at all.¹⁴⁸

To hear every sound described in the book would be impossible. What would 1,129 alarm clocks, belonging to garment workers all going off at the same time in Dhaka sound like? (p 10). How would one hear every black prisoner in America breathing in unison or experience the sound of a nuclear explosion in the Pacific Ocean? (p 48). The reader/listener has to use their imagination and borrow the ears of others in a collective listening experience. This is what Herbert tentatively calls '*music entendu* – music that is aware of everyone, everything and every story embedded in the process of its creation.'¹⁴⁹

Key words in this statement that helped crack the code to the construction of the work are 'music', 'everything', and 'embedded'. This led me to reflect on the physical attributes of the book. The hardback first edition of the book is 5.5 inches wide x 8.5 inches high. This is digest size in the publishing industry. The vertical side margin width is 2cm. Each track number is introduced on the right-hand page with a single bar line of varying lengths. The left-hand page after the title track is blank. Silent. The track starts playing on the right-hand page. The novel is composed over 193 pages. The last page is blank and not numbered. Silent. Sounds and silence or the sounds that surround silence are a continuous theme in *The Music*, acting almost like a first and second subject within the work. The typeface is Linotype Avenir and classified as a humanist linear grotesque with roots to the geometric types of the 1920s and 1930s. It was designed by Adrian Frutiger in 1988. His ideals were based on the theory that everything in the present is built on knowledge from the past. This is Frutiger's description of

¹⁴⁸ Matthew Herbert, 'Listen while you work: negotiating power and meaning in post-concrete music' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Canterbury Christ Church University, 2021), p. 25.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., Herbert, PhD, p. 9.

the font: 'The essence of a sign is like a pure tone in music. The exterior form, however, is what makes the sound' (p 212).

Herbert leaves nothing to chance. Everything is meticulously planned. A musical cypher to be decoded by a willing co-producer. In the next section my analysis will show how Herbert draws from the past, relies on three pieces by John Cage to structure the work and numbers associated with the construction of these pieces for the duration of the album.

Reading the Score: Form, Structure, and Time

John Cage writes, 'The principle of form will be our constant connection with the past, although the great form of the future will not be as it was in the past.'¹⁵⁰ His words articulate what Herbert does with form in *The Music*. On the Unbound crowdfunding pledge page to publish the book, he describes the novel as 'an instrumental work in the history of the symphony.'¹⁵¹ Early Baroque symphonies were three movements: fast, slow, fast. *The Music* follows this principle. But then Herbert turns everything on its head and gives the form a makeover. The ensemble of a Baroque orchestra would include strings, woodwind, brass, timpani, and a continuo. In Herbert's three-part symphony, there are only sounds. The form no longer needs to be 'confined to specifically designated instruments, we can now make the music out of anything.'¹⁵²

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., *Silence: Lectures and Writings*, p. 5.

¹⁵¹ Unbound is a crowdfunding publisher <<https://unbound.com/books/matthewherbert/>> [accessed 22 June 2020].

¹⁵² Ibid., *The Music*, inside cover dust jacket.

The contents page clearly lays out the structure of the piece:

	<i>Prelude</i>	1
1. Andante	<i>To move</i>	7
2. Adagio	<i>To wait</i>	17
3. Allegro	<i>To hurt</i>	31
4. Accelerando	<i>To struggle</i>	43
5. Largo	<i>To stop</i>	59
6. Grave	<i>To love</i>	105
7. Tenuto	<i>To be rich</i>	113
8. Presto	<i>To digest</i>	127
9. Sostenuto	<i>To work</i>	145
10. Rubato	<i>To be naked</i>	157
11. Moderato	<i>To synthesize</i>	161
12. Diminuendo		175

The Prelude acts as a short introduction to the work. All twelve track titles are references to classical music terms and the accompanying subtitles are clues to the narrative themes (discussed separately). Title tracks 1-11 are tempo markings.¹⁵³ They typically indicate a mood or expression of the piece and measured in beats per minute (bpm). For example: 60 bpm would equal one beat per second and the note value of the beat is specified by the time signature. By following Herbert's tempo markings, the reader can work out where one movement ends and the next begins. The first movement starts with track '1. Andante' (walking pace). The second movement starts with track '5. Largo' (slow), and the third movement on track '8. Presto' (fast). This can be summarised in the following:

First Movement

1. Andante 76-108 bpm
2. Adagio 66-76 bpm
3. Allegro 120-156 bpm
4. Accelerando get faster/accelerate to 156 bpm

¹⁵³ Tempo in Italian means time.

Second Movement

5. Largo 40-60 bpm
6. Grave 25-45 bpm
7. Tenuto hold pace

Third Movement

8. Presto 168-200 bpm
9. Sostenuto sustain tempo
10. Rubato freedom to vary the pace
11. Moderato 108-120 bpm
12. Diminuendo get quieter

Herbert reminds the reader to keep paying attention to the tempo because time is important. This work lasts sixty minutes. In track '3. Allegro' (120-156 bpm), he directs the reader/listener:

Again the shuffle-shuffle of hands on fake leather; this elongated but brief chirr forms the basis of a triplet loop across a mechanical 120bpm. The backbone of the beat is a driver stamping in fear and anger on the footwell inside on the downbeat. (pp 35-36)

In conversation with Herbert, I asked why he chose this classical form for a work that had no instruments or singing. He replied:

I just needed something. I needed shape somehow. I needed to get shape from somewhere. [...] But because it's an hour long, it ends up in my head being much more symphonic in the sense of the shape. You have a slow movement to the middle and then you have the themes that are introduced at the beginning and then are woven through.¹⁵⁴

Most pieces of music, fiction or non-fiction depend on some sort of system. *Underdog* is based on a theme and variations. Herbert prompted this way of thinking about writing prose and making connections with music. What is

¹⁵⁴ Matthew Herbert in conversation with Lisa Owen-Jones, Zoom, 4 June 2020.

contained within the form does not need to be a repetition of the past. According to Roland Barthes, 'the past is always open to re-composition'. Time does not stand still.

Three works by John Cage are alluded to in the compositional structure of *The Music*. They are: 4'33" (1952), *Imaginary Landscape No. 4* (1951), and *Imaginary Landscape No. 5* (1952). Cage's (in)famous 4'33" dubbed his 'silent piece' lasts four minutes and thirty-three seconds. Pianist David Tudor premiered the work in Woodstock, New York. He indicated the start of each movement by closing the lid of the piano and the end of each movement by opening the lid. The duration of the three sections are 33", 2'40", and 1'20". The lesson is that there is no such thing as silence.¹⁵⁵ The external sounds during the performance take over and we create our own 4'33". We hear the unintended, the shifting surrounding sounds, the environment. Cage used *I Ching* to determine the duration of each movement.

Imaginary Landscape No. 4 (onwards: *IL4*) is written for twelve radios in AM tuning, twenty-four players, and last approximately four minutes. One performer controls the frequency and one performer controls the volume and tone of each radio. The score is organised into events that belong to two types: sound and silence (a constant theme in Herbert's *The Music*). The compositional method Cage used was *I Ching*.

Three coins tossed six times yield sixty-four hexagrams (two trigrams, the second written above the first) read in reference to a chart of the numbers 1 to 64 in a traditional arrangement having eight divisions horizontally corresponding to the eight lower trigrams and eight divisions vertically corresponding to the eight upper trigrams.¹⁵⁶

Imaginary Landscape No. 5 (onwards: *IL5*) is one movement and lasts 4 minutes. It is scored for 42 recordings on an eight-track magnetic tape

¹⁵⁵ I have proven this by recording my own version of 4'33" on twelve consecutive days at 4.33pm whilst reading the same pages of *The Music*. The audio files have been uploaded to <https://johncage.org/4_33.html> Location: Cullybackey, Northern Ireland, Name: Lisa.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., *Silence: Lectures and Writings*, p. 57.

format. The score is a block-grid manuscript and each square equals three inches of recording tape (around 0.2 seconds). The compositional method was again using *I Ching* with a five to five structure.

Track '5. Largo' (plays pp 61-103) in *The Music* is the key to unlocking the structural code that these works by Cage are at play. 4'33" and *IL5* are dominant on the page where as *IL4* hums in the background. As I have already stated, the size of the book is 5.5 inches wide x 8.5 inches high. The vertical side margins are 2cm wide. All the track titles are on the right-hand side of the page and have a vertical bar line of varying lengths starting from different positions. The left-hand page after the title track is always blank. Silent. This is our own continual loop of 4'33".

Track 5 p 59

Left p 60

Right p 61



The gap from the top edge of the page to the top of the bar line is 4.3cm. The gap from the 2cm left margin to the edge of the bar line is 4.3cm. The 4.3cm is a reference to 4'33". The length of the bar line is 12.3cm. The rhythmic structure of *IL4* is 2-1-3 and playing with the numbers (4x3=12 and 12/3=4) points towards the twelve radios in *IL4*. The track consists of 42 pages acknowledging the 42 recordings in *IL5*.

The text for '5. Largo' starts on page 61 (right-hand page). It is set out in a three-column vertical structure and triggers a visual reference to the three movements of 4'33". One of Herbert's characters (a woman in Guangdong, China) provides the sounds in the outer vertical text columns. The first sound

on the left column is 'An in-breath'. The first sound on the right column is 'Then an out-breath'. 'Then an in-breath', 'An out-breath', 'An in-breath' etc.

After the theme is established, the narrative in the central column follows a three-line format. This is a nod to the three inches of recording tape in *IL5*. The gaps between the text lines are 1.5cm which is half of three. The words are a link to 4'33". The lines are all about silences: 'The silence | before | a long-desired kiss' or 'The silence | before | the vicar says amen' (p 62). Herbert occasionally varies the three-line system. He introduces four lines twice (p 63, p 95) which if written as 42 is a connection to *IL5*; five lines once to reinforce track 5 and the *I Ching* chart system of *IL5* (p 71), and six lines twice (6x2=12), which suggests the 12 radios in *IL4* (p 83). If the central column is viewed horizontally across the double-page spreads the text looks like it is being contained in a six-track system. *IL5* uses eight tracks. This number difference is possibly due to the limitations of the size of the page. It would look too busy with eight and the six-track system is most likely a reference to the duration of the book album: 60 minutes with the 0 (zero / nothing) being silenced.

The grid structure pp 62-64



Structuring a music novel in this way may seem extreme. A lack of musical knowledge or intimacy with the piece and the composer's output would be a barrier to understanding the work but for me, Herbert's attention to detail is

inspirational. I am already thinking how I could construct a piece of writing based on Stockhausen's Klavierstücke No. 9 (1955-61) which makes extensive use of the Fibonacci series.

Now that I have established how Herbert uses a Baroque symphony to organise the novel and three works by Cage to structure the content, the focus for the next part of my analysis is time. How could a novel with 193 pages have a duration of sixty minutes? One approach to solving the problem would be to divide the number of pages by time or the number of tracks by time to get a sense of duration. The problem with both techniques is that they are not accurate. Pages differ in word counts and the number of pages within a track are inconsistent. Herbert is meticulous. Everything is planned down to the finest detail. The time code had to be 'embedded in the process of its creation.'¹⁵⁷ I needed to think like Herbert and follow the trace evidence, most of which pointed in one direction. John Cage. In my quest to answer my question I revisited Cage's lecture '45' For A Speaker' written for the Composers' Concourse in London (October 1954) (a snippet from this speech started this chapter). Each line of text was allocated two seconds and the duration for the performance was forty-five minutes. At 15'00", Cage states: 'One thing to do with time is this: Measure it. **(Slap table)**.'¹⁵⁸ I slapped the table and took his advice and measured different parts of the book. The only tools I required were a ruler, a pencil, and a rubber.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., Herbert, p. 9.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., *Silence: Lectures and Writings*, p. 163. The structure of the talk was inspired by 34' 46.776" for two pianos.

When the single bar line lengths on the Prelude and twelve track title pages are added together, they come to 42cm as shown in the table below.

Track title	Bar line length in cms
Prelude	0.8
1. Andante	2.1
2. Adagio	3.1
3. Allegro	2.7
4. Accelerando	3.9
5. Largo	12.3
6. Grave	1.7
7. Tenuto	3.5
8. Presto	4.8
9. Sostenuto	2.7
10. Rubato	0.5
11. Moderato	3.6
12. Diminuendo	0.3
Total	42cm

I believe, this is a reference to *IL5* and the 42 recordings that make-up Cage's piece. Step one on the analytical journey was complete. The vertical bar lines were significant. They had to be a code to the duration of the tracks like on the back of a CD or a vinyl record. This prompted me to measure the distances from the 2cm left margin to the edge of the bar lines. They came to 64cms as show in the next table.

Track title	Left margin gap to bar line in cms
Prelude	0.8
1. Andante	1.4
2. Adagio	2.2
3. Allegro	2.4
4. Accelerando	3.8
5. Largo	4.3
6. Grave	4.9
7. Tenuto	5.7
8. Presto	6.5
9. Sostenuto	6.9
10. Rubato	7.5
11. Moderato	8.3
12. Diminuendo	9.3
Total	64 cm

Cage adopted the sixty-four hexagrams in *I Ching* as part of his chart system for composition. I was on the right track, but if the gaps equalled time, I was still four minutes over the duration of the album. I now needed to think like Cage and act like Herbert. 4'33" is all about sound that surrounds the silence of the piece. The piece is key to the construction of the work. '45' For A Speaker' has durations for speech and silences. *The Music* challenges the listener to hear sounds and silences of the world whether that is a cassette tape splintering in a car crash or the silence of strangers looking at the night sky. Everything with Herbert is placed on the page for a reason. I was continually drawn to the single bar lines on the track numbered pages. When the bar lines are seen in a continuous line they form a sound wave.



159

This triggered the sound sensation of the static hiss when a needle is placed on a vinyl record before a track starts to play. The incidental sound is an interruption to the music. They had to go. The bar lines are 3mm in width and I silenced them by taking them out of the calculations. The revised track lengths and album duration was now 60.1cm as shown in the following table.

¹⁵⁹ Please note: the bar lines are individual screenshot images taken from the title pages in *The Music* and then compiled into a linear format to give a sense of how they look as one continuous unit. Therefore they are not an exact representation in relation to the page height.

Track title	Minus 3mm bar line width
Prelude	0.5
1. Andante	1.1
2. Adagio	1.9
3. Allegro	2.1
4. Accelerando	3.5
5. Largo	4.0
6. Grave	4.6
7. Tenuto	5.4
8. Presto	6.2
9. Sostenuto	6.6
10. Rubato	7.2
11. Moderato	8.0
12. Diminuendo	9.0
Total	60.1cm

Track '5. Largo' is silent on page 60 and the sounds enter on page 61. There is an obvious numerical visual reference with pages 60 and 61 to 60.1cm. Before the book starts Herbert states: 'What follows takes place over a one-hour period.' It is much neater to say 60mins rather than 60.1mins and by definition 'rubato' allows for artistic freedom to stretch or shorted time in a performance. The accuracy of this interpretation is unconfirmed. In conversation with Herbert, I asked if these works by John Cage were the key to unlocking the structure and track lengths. Herbert's response:

I'm not going to give you an answer. I think that's one of the really important parts of the book for me is that ... it's a refutation of the value of the author.¹⁶⁰

It is not the role of the composer to provide the meaning or understanding of a particular work. That is the role of the interpreter. In Barthes's seminal essay, *The Death of the Author* (1968) he argued, 'a text's unity lies not in its origin but in its destination.'¹⁶¹ The reader determines the meaning of the text not the creator. This is especially true of *The Music* because it is also a work in progress. Herbert's challenge is for the reader/listener to complete the

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., Herbert, 4 June 2020.

¹⁶¹ Roland Barthes, 'The Death of the Author', *Image, Music, Text* (London: Fontana, 1977), p. 148.

'unfinished' piece whilst experiencing the performance on the same artistic plane as the creator. According to Umberto Eco:

This invitation offers the performer the chance of an orientated insertion into something which always remains the world intended by the author.

In other words, the author offers the interpreter, the performer, the addressee a work *to be completed*. He does not know the exact fashion in which his work will be concluded, but he is aware that once completed the work in question will still be his own. [...] The author is the one who proposed a number of possibilities which had already been rationally organized, orientated, and endowed with specifications for proper development.¹⁶²

All works are open to differences of interpretation. Herbert proved this point at the Barbican's Beethoven Weekender (2020). In a sonic installation, he played thirty different recordings of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony by different orchestras simultaneously to demonstrate shifts in tonality and tuning, texture and timbre, and most of all speed. There is no definitive version of a piece of music or text. Thomas Gurke's essay 'The Musicalization of Sound and Remix Aesthetics in Matthew Herbert's *The Music*' suggests the twelve tracks 'exceed any known classical framework of composition.'¹⁶³ I have explicitly shown how the piece follows the form of a three-part Baroque symphony. Gurke considers if the track durations are a 'sound collage of five minutes' (i.e. 60mins/12 tracks=5 mins).¹⁶⁴ Track '5. Largo' is key to unlocking the code but I dispute the tracks are equal lengths. I have presented a coherent argument how Herbert structured the work using three pieces by Cage, and given a detailed step-by-step guide how to measure time for each track based on 4'33", *IL4*, and *IL5*. Cage's compositional output amounts to over two hundred and fifty works. These three short pieces (totalling 12'33") are not here by chance. Everything in *The Music* is a

¹⁶² Umberto Eco, *The Role of the Reader: Explorations in the semiotics of texts* (London: Hutchinson & Co, 1983), p. 62.

¹⁶³ Thomas Gurke, 'The Musicalization of Sound and Remix Aesthetics in Matthew Herbert's *The Music* (2018)', awaiting publication in the next edition of the WMA *Word and Music Studies* book series ([n.p.], Brill/Rodopi, [n.d.]), p?

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, Gurke.

writerly masterclass on how to use musical form, structure, and time in planning a music novel.

In the final part of this chapter, I will introduce the main characters and explore the different types of narrative as part of the score. This is followed by an introduction to the significant numbers contained within the text and a discussion on the presentation style. These issues form the basis of 'Listening to the Novel'.

Listening to the Novel: Sounds, Characters, and Narrative

Which is more musical, a truck passing by a factory or a truck passing by a music school?

—John Cage¹⁶⁵

Neither, sound is sound irrespective of how or where they are produced. Cage is making the distinction between the aesthetics of musical and non-musical sound. Both can be beautiful or ugly, whether it is the roar of an engine going down the road or a pianist playing a Beethoven bagatelle. The act of listening is what matters. In the text layout of the Prelude, the single stacked words, vertical words, horizontal blocks of text, descending step-texts, and empty spaces suggest a multi-layered listening approach to the work. Herbert also sets up the narrative theme and the sound context for the twelve tracks that follow. A microphone has been inserted into a hole in the seabed of the Pacific Ocean to listen to the world. It is the early hours of the morning. Three-thirty to be precise. A submarine slowly rises to the surface towing twelve waterproof speakers.¹⁶⁶ The hydrophone on the ocean-floor starts recording the twelve unnamed characters:

- 1) A man asleep in Denver.
- 2) A girl asleep in Chibok.
- 3) A woman asleep in Monklands.
- 4) A man asleep in Sydney.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., *Silence: Lectures and Writings*, p. 41.

¹⁶⁶ It is interesting to note: if the twelve speakers and three-thirty in the morning are written as a number sequence they become 12330. If the zero is silenced and the numbers are referenced as minutes and seconds they become 12'33". The total length of the three pieces (4'33", IL4, IL5) by Cage that Herbert uses to structure *The Music*.

- 5) A woman asleep in Guangdong.
- 6) A parent asleep in Gaza.
- 7) A woman asleep in Uppsala.
- 8) A doctor asleep in Quetta.
- 9) A man asleep in Al Wakrah.
- 10) A person asleep in Kent.
- 11) A family asleep, on the move.
- 12) Something away from the earth awake, listening.

In learning how to listen to the text there are three different types of narrative to master before attempting to put them all together as a musical score. The first are the twelve characters who feature throughout.¹⁶⁷ They help anchor the text by offering mini soundbites into that fictional person's life alongside real people and historic events. Some characters are harder to follow than others. They take time to get to know. The listener needs to start with the track they are most associated with and work backwards and forwards from there to hear their journey. The subtitles of each track are clues to the narrative themes within. Track '8. Presto *To Digest*' features the doctor. Digest means to breakdown food or to understand information in a systematic way. The text focuses on food politics and opens with 'a polio doctor in Pakistan, on a break from work, sits at a small green wooden table with colleagues and picks up a knife and fork' (p 129). The next time the character enters, 'the doctor stabs a pakora with her fork' (p 134). The track ends with 'just as her colleagues break out in laughter at her story, the doctor raises her fork and opens her mouth' (p 144). The doctor also features in track 2, her coat 'is swinging wildly as they rush for shelter' (p 25). In track 3, she is on a tea break at 2am, smoking a cigarette (p 40) and in track 7, she 'scrapes her leftover kebab into a bin' (p 118). Hearing the sounds triggered by the words in '*To Digest*' would be familiar to most adults from the cling-clang of cutlery to a fork making contact with a plate and the cries of

¹⁶⁷ There are minor characters to follow as well, such as the artist and the musician. The artist buys all the animals that are about to be killed in Washington, p. 54. In another scene, the artist is inside a house she has built from all the tea and coffee cups she has collected over the years, p. 120. The musician asks forty-eight people to stamp on snail shells made out of pastry, p. 59. At a fashion party, he is throwing champagne glasses out of a toilet window, p. 126. There are also smatterings of fictional works in the text: *Days of Thunder* (1990), *The Woman in the Dunes* (2004), and several mentions of *Star Wars*.

laughter. Herbert is reinforcing that sound cannot be separated from context. But why did Herbert choose a polio doctor in Quetta? In conversation he elaborates:

When they captured Osama bin Laden, the CIA went undercover as polio doctors. What happened after the assassination was that in Pakistan, polio doctors were murdered and the polio rate has gone up because nobody trusted the polio doctors anymore. So it's not just one death. It's about all subsequent deaths of that one action.¹⁶⁸

The challenge for listeners is imagining the sonic landscape where the story was set. The glue. Herbert's fictional references are often reimagined extensions connected to real historical events. Social injustice, racism, and inequality are recurring themes. This brings us to the second type of narrative – biographical people. David Oluwale drowned in the River Aire, Leeds (April, 1969). Two police officers were seen chasing him on the night of the incident along the riverbank. His death led to the first prosecution of police officers in the UK for their involvement. Herbert draws attention to this event with 'a woman drinking lemonade on a bus is reading a magazine article about David Oluwale' (p 14). Herbert is emphasising the listener needs to connect the sound to the source. If David Oluwale was substituted with Robin Knox-Johnston (who also featured in the news that month) it would take on a completely different tone and meaning.¹⁶⁹ In another example, 'a photography student slips a photo of Eric Gardner into a chemical bath in a school darkroom' (p 149). Gardner died (2014), after a New York City police officer restrained him in a chokehold. He repeated eleven times, that he could not breathe. If Eric Gardner was replaced by George Floyd, the sounds would not be the same. But the listener may be able a form of collective historic hearing. Floyd's plea that he was unable to breathe when a police officer knelt on his neck for eight minutes was recorded by onlookers and circulated all around the world in 2020. This

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., Herbert, 4 June 2020.

¹⁶⁹ Robin Knox-Johnston was the first British man to sail around the world non-stop on his own (April, 1969).

would be an example of what Herbert describes as *music entendu*. Floyd died at the scene.

The third type of listening narrative concerns historic events. Herbert refers to the collapse of the eight-storey Dhaka complex (April 2013) on more than one occasion. 'A shrill dense cacophony of 1,129 alarm clocks belonging to garment workers going off at once in Bangladesh' (p 10). 'A recreation of the sound of the building at Ranza Plaza collapsing made by a musician using mainly coat hangers and security tags stolen from Primark stores' (p 167). The building housed a bank, several shops, and five garment factories. Built on swamp ground and three floors higher than the original plan 1,134 workers lost their lives and close to 2,600 people were injured. Thirty-eight individuals were charged with murder and three for attempting to help the owner, Mohammad Sohel Rana flee across the border to India. More than twenty-nine global brands including Primark, Matalan, Benetton, and Bonmarchè benefited from cheap labour and were complicit in failing to compel their suppliers to fix their factories. Splitting the text into three types of narrative helps to systematically structure the sounds on a page like reading a score (from top to bottom: woodwind, brass, percussion, strings). The difficulty for even a most competent co-producer is that there are over fifty-thousand familiar and unfamiliar sounds in *The Music*. Even mastering the sonic landscape of one track would be beyond most people and that is before attempting to perform a track within the confines of the time duration.

Another text technique is the repetition of words and phrases to emphasise pitch, rhythm, timbre, dynamics, and time. In *To be rich* this phrase is repeated eight times:

Bulldozers, seagulls, a multitude of drowned-out-voices. Grinding, cracking, torn plastic, mushy paper, rotten food and metal. Glass shards and broken wood. It gets louder. (p 113)

Each syllable presents a rhythm and a variation in pitch. The hyphenated words, the commas, and the full-stops are a form of rhythmic phrasing. Slipping and sliding from single words to six, to one, to two, and four, then five becomes the counterpoint of the repeated refrain. After the initial

statement, the score gets louder the next three times the passage is used. On the fifth repetition, the volume remains the same. On the sixth it gets louder, on the seventh quieter, and on the eighth the text volume remains the same. Herbert in this track repeats the number two, thirteen times: two-year-old battery, two communities, two broken fake-gold chains, two-way road, and so on. We are not used to actively listening to sound in books unless the sound is dictated to us such as a cock crows, a watch ticks, or a tap drips. By having words that pop through the text is an interruption but are an effective tool in reminding the reader to listen to the narrative. The following sounds words are used in *The Music*:

Bang, blast, bleep, bleeping, bong, boom, boomy, buzz, buzzes,
chugs, chugging, chunk, churn, clap, clang, clattering, click, clicking,
crack, cracking, crackle, creak, crunch,
drip, dong,
flip, fizz, fizzing,
gloop, glug, grind, grinding, gush,
hiccoughs, hiss, howl, hum, humming,
jangle, jangling, jingly,
knock,
meowing,
phfft, ping, plops, pop, popping, puff, purrs,
rasp, rattle, rattling, ringing, roar,
scrape, scrunch, sizzle, slam, slops, slopping, slosh, splosh, squawk,
squeak, squeal, squirt, snap,
tang, ting, tapping, taps, thud, thonk, throb, thwack, tick, ticking, twang,
whack, whine, whinnes, whirring, whizz, whizzing, whoomph, whoosh.

The repetition of these onomatopoeic words add to the rhythm, tempo, and pitch of the text. The squirt of hairspray. The squirt of air freshener. The squirt of red paint on a pine cone in a factory making Christmas decorations. The squirt of an asthma inhaler. The squirt of window cleaner (p 49). In this passage there are thirty-three sentences. Herbert uses the word 'squirt' twenty-eight times. It is another direction in how to stack sounds on a page.

In track '11. Moderato' the text presentation takes on a different form. After the introduction, the sound descriptions are divided into one, two, or three lines that play over six pages. The gaps are regular as if Herbert is starting to bring all the key elements from the previous tracks into play. Like

a novelist preparing to bring a work to a close, he is tying up his threads. Once this is done, Herbert shifts to just over two dense pages of justified text with no paragraph breaks. It is a cacophony of sound from ‘all the outside speakers that usually play music or announcements’ (p 170). The word ‘all’ is incorporated into the text 102 times with more speed and persistency as the listener moves across the spread. Then fortissimo. The margin shifts, all the ‘All’s’ now with a capital ‘A’ are stacked on top of each other and alternate with ‘Everyone’ without any full stops taking the listener into the finale. The techniques Herbert uses from word stacking, the play with space, and rhythmic repetition are all important in creating a music novel and establishing a way of listening to the score. Even if the listener finds it impossible to hear the track as a movement within the piece, the pages are visually striking. The two dense pages (pp 170-171) with the pulsating shapes created by all the ‘all’s’ I circled remind me of artist Tom Phillips. In 1966, Phillips bought a little-known romance novel *A Human Document* (1892) by W.H. Mallock. This started a fifty-year project in his altered book series called *A Humument: A treated Victorian novel* (first published in 1970, final edition 2016).¹⁷⁰ Phillips erased most of the text with his own artworks, leaving behind key words to show through in a non-linear narrative to tell the tale of Bill Toge. In the final track, Herbert starts stripping away the sound to end the work.

Diminuendo means diminishing in loudness or volume. The symbol is



Track ‘12. Diminuendo’ starts with the sound of an object leaving earth. What is it? A spacecraft? A space shuttle? A probe? The pages documenting the journey are sparse with single or snippets of sentences, or words. Their position on the page gradually getting lower. The vast empty space

¹⁷⁰ In the 1960s, Tom Phillips was probably better known for his connections with The Scratch Orchestra, an experimental ensemble set up by Cornelius Cardew, Michael Parsons, and Howard Skempton and his own music compositions such as *Irma: An opera, opus XIIB* (1969) – an operatic equivalent of *A Humument* and the *Literature for Four Pianos* (1969) described as a verbal score. For more information on Phillip’s life and work visit <https://www.tomphillips.co.uk/> [accessed 17 May 2022].

communicating that things are getting quieter. This makes sense. Space does not carry sound waves. There is no air. Then Herbert throws a curve ball with the sound of black holes collapsing. He stacks the word ‘multiplying’ thirty-eight times on top of each other. ‘The sound of cells multiplying at dizzying speeds’ (p 189). This implies through repetition that sound can exist in a vacuum. Like Russolo, Herbert is anticipating the future of listening and making sound that is not just confined to NASA scientists.

Space isn’t silent. It’s abuzz with charged particles that – with the right tools – we can hear. Which is exactly what NASA scientists with the Van Allen Probes mission are doing. The sounds recorded by the mission are helping scientists better understand the dynamic space environment we live in so we can protect satellites and astronauts.¹⁷¹

The Music as Herbert states in the inside jacket of the book is not only an album in words but a manifesto for sound. The text ends with ‘The sound of an explosion’ (p 192). Is this the sound of the unknown or the end of the world? Herbert offers no resolution. Then nothing. A silent un-numbered page (p 193). Herbert could not have ended on any other page. The clue is embedded in the previous track. ‘There are 195 teachers, one in each country’ (p 164). At the time of writing, the United Nations consists of 193 member countries and two non-member observer states: the Holy See and the State of Palestine. Herbert is reminding the listener that we are all connected and interdependent on one another. How we hear our place in the world matters for all our futures.

In the final section of this chapter, I will now focus my attention on significant numbers in *The Music* and end with a note on the presentation style of the work.

¹⁷¹ Mara Johnson-Groh, ‘Eavesdropping in Space: How NASA records eerie sounds around the Earth’, *NASA: The Sun Spot*, 11 December 2018 <<https://blogs.nasa.gov/sunspot/2018/12/11/eavesdropping-in-space-how-nasa-records-eerie-sounds-around-earth/>> [accessed 30 August 2022].

Significant Numbers and Presentation Style

1, 2, 3, 4, 6, (8), 12, and 16 are key whether they are working behind the page or as part of the text. Twelve being the most significant. There are twelve months in a year. Twelve hours in half-a-day for ante meridian (am) and post meridian (pm). Basic units of time (60 seconds, 60 minutes, 24 hours) are all divisible by 12. Its six divisors being 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, and 12. Twelve is also termed as an abundant number where the sum of its proper divisors are greater than itself: $1+2+3+4+6=16$. In music there are twelve pitches classes in an octave. There is twelve-tone music, twelve-bar blues, and 12-inch records. Herbert has twelve tracks. Twelve characters. Twelve speakers. Twelve skydivers. Twelve musicians. Twelve bulldozers. Twelve builders. Twelve side lights on twelve different rocks etc. It takes place over a one-hour period ($60/12=5$ and track 5 is the key to cracking the code). One could interpret the significance of twelve to the twelve pitches in the chromatic scale. I have discounted this theory for two reasons. The first being $A \rightarrow G$ -sharp is all about pitch and *The Music* is not about the frequency of sound. It is about listening. And secondly, in an interview with *The Independent* Herbert said, 'The only definition of music that makes any sense to me is that music is rhythm.'¹⁷² Rhythm is the order of sounds in time and does not rely on pitch. It is unlikely that the twelve tracks relate to the chromatic scale. In conversation with Herbert, he has since revised this theory:

My definition of music has moved on since rhythm, it's now time. That's the only definition that I can make sense of about music now. It's not about rhythm any more. It's just about time.¹⁷³

I would suggest that because track titles refer to tempo markings they also point to having time signatures embedded within the text. A time signature has two numbers such as 2/4, 3/4, 4/4. The top number is how many beats

¹⁷² Matthew Herbert, *Independent*, 3 November 2015 <<https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/classical/electronic-musician-matthew-herbert-explains-why-his-new-work-will-feature-imagined-sounds-recorded-a6719926.html>> [accessed 12 June 2020].

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, Herbert, 4 June 2020.

to count (1, 2; 1, 2, 3; 1, 2, 3, 4) and the bottom is the note value for each bar. The time signatures are harder to decipher but there are clues to remind the reader to keep 'time'. Paragraph one, track '1 Andante', there is a sound, two breaths, the third is a surprise and the wind catches four oak trees (p 9). This implies four beats in a bar. In track '3. Allegro' Herbert states:

This is the bit of the frequency range we usually assign to the bass drum, and here these thunks are edited, regardless of the fluctuations in speed, to a rigid 4/4 time signature. (p 34)

A Minuet is a dance with three beats in a bar and a three-part structure in an ABA format. The form dates back to the seventeenth century where they were written for aristocrats to impress the elite that would gather and indulge in fine food and drink. The Minuet is usually the third movement in a symphony, sonata, or a concerto. Track '8. Presto' takes the form of a Minuet and is all about food. It is the start of the third and final section in *The Music*. The track as I have already stated starts with the doctor picking up a knife and fork and ends with the doctor raising the fork and opening her mouth. A → A. It has a 3/4 time signature. The clues are in the text:

The flip of a single pair of slippers; it's 3 a.m. Flip, flip, flip. This is our metronome. All else is measured by this flip, flip, flip. The click of the snap of a photographer's bag on his way back from a South American farm. The grinding of teeth of a farm worker made to stand there and grin for a packaging image. The whack of a coconut on a head. Flip. (p 138)

Whilst time signatures are not necessary in *The Music* because a duration for each track has been established, they are helpful in recognising patterns, dividing passages into phrases, and reminding the listener to keep the tempo. I have found no references to numbers 7, 9, 10, and 11 in the text. Larger numbers tend to relate to facts. 'Different number plates are hit by 73,984 insects at once. Then a different collection of 73,984 insects come towards the listener from all directions' (p 55). These are the number of

insects that are killed every year on vehicle number plates.¹⁷⁴ All these factors are important in planning a music novel. How is the work going to be structured? What type of musical form will the work draw inspiration from? What musical elements will drive the arc of the story? Will there be recurring motifs based on a single or multiple pieces of music? Only when the foundations are in place can the story begin to take shape.

If we turn to the text presentation, Herbert maintains throughout a documentary news-feed style with no commentary or judgement. On paper, tracks '5. Largo' and '12. Diminuendo' look similar to the literary experiments of James Joyce and William Burrough's cut-up technique from the 1960s. But the key to interpreting *The Music* is through the ear and not the eye. At first, I thought Herbert was echoing American minimalist composer, Steve Reich's cut-up tape loop pieces like *It's Gonna Rain* (1965), *Come Out* (1966), or *Three Tales* (2002).¹⁷⁵ Reich's music explicitly addresses political themes and he works with audio and visual material to mark significant moments in history. I asked Herbert if Reich had been an influence:

He's a very big influence particularly early on when I was starting out. [...] He's less of a kind of direct influence on this work now. [...] One of the people that's had a big impact on me in the last few years is Heiner Goebbels. Spending time with him. He's a composer but also a kind of visionary. I saw his version of [sic] Louis Andriessen's *De Materie* with a 100 sheep in it.¹⁷⁶

The link was obvious as soon as Herbert mentioned his name. I had been on the right track but with the wrong composer. Heiner Goebbels's documentary

¹⁷⁴ A survey by Kent Wildlife Trust and Buglife in 2019 and 2021, found that the number of bugs killed on number plates has declined by nearly 60% in less than twenty years. Vehicle drivers as part of the survey cleaned their number plate before making an essential journey and then counted the squashed insects using a 'splatometer grid'. The Bugs Matter App enables anyone with a phone and use of a vehicle to get involved in biodiversity monitoring.

¹⁷⁵ *It's Gonna Rain* was written not long after the Cuban Missile Crisis. The piece was made by phase shifting a recording of Pentecostal preacher, Brother Walter's sermon about the end of the world. *Come Out* is a four second loop using the voice of Daniel Hamm that are repeated and layered so they gradually shift out of phase. Hamm was one of the boys beaten up by the police following the Little Fruit Stand Riot in Harlem in 1964. *Three Tales* is an audio-visual documentary highlighting landmarks in technological progress and the dangers that come with them. Part one, Hindenburg disaster (1937). Part two, Bikin atoll nuclear testing programme (1954-1956). Part three, the cloning of Dolly the sheep (1997).

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, Herbert, 4 June 2020.

piece *Everything That Happened And Would Happen* explores Europe since the outbreak of World War 1. It draws on three sources:

- 1) A book by Patrik Ourednik *Europeana* (2005) on how to deal with populist/nationalist tendencies
- 2) John Cage *Europeras 1 & 2* (1987) where all the classical elements of opera which are usually organised in hierarchical order are cut-up and put back together using *I Ching*
- 3) A TV channel called Euronews. Every hour they present the news without any comment, only sounds and a ticker-tape naming the date and location. The viewer/listener has to make sense of what they see and hear in order to understand why it is part of the news

Everything That Happened And Would Happen was premiered in a former railway station in Manchester in October 2018. *The Music* was published in April 2018. The close timing may seem out of line for Goebbels's piece to have had an impact on Herbert's novel through sound. However, Goebbels first staged *Europeras 1 & 2* as part of Cage's 100th birthday celebrations in 2012. Herbert saw Goebbels's production of *De Materie* (2014) at the Ruhrtriennale outside Hamburg and spent a 'couple of days' with him. Substantial works are not made in a day. Herbert took three years to write *The Music*. Connections along the sound chain from Cage to Goebbels are important in understanding the poetic and aesthetic influences in a work. They help the reader/listener understand the trace evidence and become a collaborative co-producer in completing the work.

Listening to *The Music* is like learning a piece of music. The more you read and play the work, the more it reveals about itself. My analysis has shown how Herbert has implicitly and explicitly used musical form, structure, numbers, time, and elements of music within the text. Only by unlocking the trace evidence can the interpreter appreciate the complexities and accomplishments of this virtuoso work and begin to hear the 'music'. Whether Herbert has successfully managed to compose '*A novel through*

sound from the first page to the last for an elite audience or produced a collection of fragmented sonic stories in the landscape of the mind's ear for a musical detective is dependent on the active engagement and knowledge of the participant. But, yes, in my opinion it is possible for two different mediums to unite and glide harmoniously around one another. It is only fitting that the last soundbite goes to Matthew Herbert: '*The Music*, is definitely a piece of music, [...] the more I wrote it as music though the more like a book it became. In the end though, the object is just a score, a cypher.'¹⁷⁷

In other words, a code to crack.

¹⁷⁷ Matthew Herbert, 'The Album That Is A Book: Matthew Herbert Faces The Music', thequietus.com, 24 August 2018 <<https://thequietus.com/articles/25175-matthew-herbert-the-music-interview-extract>> [accessed 19 June, 2020].

CONCLUSION

*All that is thinkable is possible; all that is impossible is unthinkable: that is, so far as our knowledge can go.*¹⁷⁸

The fate of all texts – musical or otherwise – is to be interpreted in different ways. ‘Readerly’ texts are fast-food takeaways consumed for instant gratification and discarded afterwards to make room for the next. ‘Writerly’ texts are interactive works that take time to unfold with each encounter and their impact can last a lifetime. And somewhere in the middle, there are texts that carefully balance the two. Readerly or writerly, the *mutatis mutandis* should be the same. The act of participation has to be enjoyable, regardless of genre. We start all texts as readers before we breakout into the writerly stratosphere. That intimate interaction, that desire to delve deeper only comes out of a love and an appreciation for a work.

Music novels can sit anywhere on this scale, but they also forge a relationship with another art form that is played out by textual means. For some readers, the downside of these quirky creations is that the music may be excluding if the forms, techniques, and associations are not understood and overtly get in the way of the storytelling. For others, they can be a challenging and rewarding experience when the codes are cracked and the reader understands how the music functions in the novel. This emphatic state of satisfaction was certainly true for me in the case of Lucido’s *In the Key of Code* and Matthew Herbert’s *The Music – A novel through sound*. I screamed with delight playing the role of a musical detective when one clue led to the next in the sonic landscape of the text. Both books actively encourage the exploration of the music embedded within the work and the music that sits outside of the work.

The plurality of the music novel means that the pleasure extends beyond the words on the page. For example, Lucido defining a polyrhythm, sound posting Mozart’s *Don Giovanni* and prompting the reader to listen to the

¹⁷⁸ Augustus De Morgan, anonymous review of Michael Faraday’s ‘Experimental Research in Chemistry and Physics’, *The Atheneum: A Journal of Literature, Science, the Fine Arts*, No. 1637, 12 March 1859.

opera. Hearing the term at the end of act one is a 'punch in the air' moment. I can only imagine the excitement and sense of achievement in completing the mission, a young reader would feel especially if it was their first encounter with the opera. This same sentiment for me, permeates with the discovery of three works by John Cage concealed in the structure of *The Music*. The double-triple checking of the trace evidence, the knowing I was on the right track, yielded a kind of *jouissance* not encountered before with such a difficult text. The listening and the re-listening to "4'33", *Imaginary Landscape No. 4*, and *Imaginary Landscape No. 5* alongside reconnecting with Cage's theories on music helped build a deeper appreciation for the care and precision that went into the poietic process of creating the album written in words. A reader unfamiliar with Herbert's work and references to these pieces would struggle to pick up on the patterns and techniques used in the novel. The high demands placed on the reader/listener in *The Music* may render the 'unfinished' piece incomprehensible or devoid of interest with so much work to do. Ultimately, music novels like all writerly texts rely on the knowledge and the participation of the reader.

Lewis Carroll's *Alice* books are full of music and noisy words that bump, beep, burp, and play on the surface of the page. They do not interfere with the story. They are sound connections holding everything together, weaving majestically in and out of the text, leading the listening reader from one scene to the next. In Philip Reeve's *Railhead* the pop conversations and symphonic like form could easily be missed. The work can be read without any knowledge that music is at play. This does not mean that the story should be dismissed as a music novel. Reeve did not set out to write a music novel *for* the reader. The music was a tool in the construction and the development of the story arch. For a musical reader regardless of age, Herbert is the undoubtedly the most demanding, followed by Lucido with Carroll gently pushing Reeve to the other end of the scale. I would place *Underdog* in the middle of this set. The story explicitly draws on Stravinsky's *Petrushka*, imitates the music in the ballet, and implicitly sound posts a chain of other musical connections within the work. Lack of knowledge on my poietic process and my interests in certain types of music would make it

harder to pick up on those patterns and techniques. For me, the ideal Middle Grade music novel is a mix of the readerly and the writerly. The reader can acknowledge the presence of the music but it does not overtly disrupt the storytelling which can be enjoyed independently. Thereby leaving enough room for new discoveries in subsequent encounters. Can fiction be read as music? To a certain extent, yes. A music novel can trigger the impression of music in what remains a literary text. The words on the page are what it is, not a total transformation from one form into another. What the music novel does best is offer two comparable modes. The exploration of the music within the novel and the music itself. The writerly reader gets two for the price of one.

Music novels from a writer's perspective are more than stories with a beginning, middle, and end. They are layered games you craft, play, and perform in the act of composition for others to enjoy afterwards. And just like a crime novel needs a crime, a music novel needs music. The extent to which music is present may vary from one story to another. The volume can be turned up or down depending on how overt or covert the creator wants to be. This is what makes these forms so adaptable. When music enters the writer's poetic process, its role is not to restrict a work or give it extra meaning. For Stravinsky and Boulez, music is unable to express anything outside itself whereas Herbert literally attempts to glue the sound to the narrative so the reader/listener understands the context of the source. A music novel does not attempt to become music, instead it draws attention to the metafictional role of another medium as part of its own artistic creation within the constraints of remaining a literary text.

The music adds to the creativity whilst at the same time serves to shape and develop the story. On a structural level, musical forms and techniques can be a model for setting the foundations of a work and organising content in a coherent system. I chose a theme and variations for *Underdog*. Each variation attempts to build on the one before to make it more interesting in the escalation of the work. Reeve divided his novel into four distinct parts imitating the format of a classical symphony and followed the first movement

sonata form principle to structure part one of the novel. Individual pieces can anchor a plot and drive the narrative counterpoint from the first page to the last. Herbert clearly demonstrated this technique by framing *The Music* using three works by Cage. Lucido established her recurring main theme with Beethoven's Minuet in G by imitating the rhythm, sound, and number patterns associated with the opening phrase. Some music novels quote actual musical notation from a particular piece or include imaginary works. *Underdog* does both. I included two bars from Stravinsky's ballet to show Petrushka's signature chords in notes at the end of my graphic score. Before Dotty goes onstage in the performance of the work she sings in her head the imaginary 'Ode to the Petrified'. Dotty also has two soundscapes based on her name that sit inside and outside the work. This again is another technique a writer can engage with in uniting the words and the music with their main character and their story.

Carroll's *Alice* double-bill is full of sound, song, and recitative, whether that's the tea cups rattling, the drums drumming, the Gryphon shrieking, the Mad Hatter singing 'Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Bat' or the Red Queen performing 'Hush-a-by-Lady' and Alice being too stumped to say a word. Ligeti expands Carroll's techniques with ladder games and his own musical parodies that demonstrate how a writer could develop this narrative play to another level. Sharpening pitches, elongating text with time, playing with rhythmic patterns, and musical jokes on the singers and the audience are all transferable techniques to include in a writer's tool box. At the end of *Underdog* when Rufus is under arrest, this is shown with a fermata over a minim rest. To play with words like composers play with sound and silence is to see what language communicates when one truly listens. Elements of music can add rhythm, pitch, and dynamics to dialogue and character traits. Typography can imitate musical themes that produce sound impressions of an actual work. These are the many ways music functions in a novel. Is it possible for two different mediums to unite and become one? Absolutely, by borrowing from music, the novel cannot escape its construction, it can only conceal what has gone into the making of the work.

Academic research into music novels is a valuable contribution to knowledge in the field of literary studies in general. They demonstrate what music can do for a contemporary novel in finding new and interactive ways of telling stories and the limitations of the form by remaining a literary work. In-depth musical readings of individual texts are rare and an important contribution because without overtly showing how a work is made, there will be no academic progress on bringing the music novel into the mainstream literary arena. Specialist music knowledge is not necessarily required to understand the intuitive relationship between words and music. The knowledge-exchange is not limited to those with an interest in the creative practice of writing. A composer and a musicologist can learn much from the study of music in fiction and fiction in music. How one practitioner in one medium develops that of another is a contribution in the development of knowledge in cross-disciplinary practice.

I set out to produce a music novel and answer: How do you write a children's novel with music integral to the framework and fabric of the story? In response, I have written a music novel for children and through my 'Notes from the Margins' provided a model for other writers to follow. My seven-point system for writing *Underdog* could be adapted by any writer wanting to embark on creating a metafictional work. The deconstruction of part one of *Underdog* explicitly demonstrates how I kept the music in the novel. 'Notes from the Margins', then, establishes a way to approach a text with Nattiez's three types of interaction: poietic analysis, aesthetic analysis, and trace evidence. The techniques I have uncovered through my analysis provide a mixing desk of sound possibilities that a writer can draw on from imitating forms of music and individual pieces to numerical patterns to evoke motifs and linking titles in pop conversations. The analysis of Lucido's *In the Key of Code* and Herbert's *The Music* contributes to and extends an existing body of scholarship in the area that has for the most part been preoccupied with reading the representation of classical music in canonical literary texts.

Throughout this study, I have shown how one artform enters the poietic process of another and how they can work harmoniously together. This is only the beginning in readdressing an imbalance in the scholarship of music

in children's fiction. I hope that by writing *Underdog* and casting a spotlight on key works in my critical chapters, which would otherwise remain as obscure readerly texts, there will be a shift towards including a wider variety of literary texts that rely on music as part of their construction. My ambition for the future is that more practitioners will take up the mantle and create these quirky, flexible works of art and be guided in their quest by some of the principles that I have highlighted in these pages. To recall this chapter's epigraph, 'All that is thinkable is possible; all that is impossible is unthinkable' is only limited by the knowledge and imagination of the writer.

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