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## Introduction: Pre-composition

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An assumption often encountered among musicians is that analysis is the inverse of composition, that analysis retraces the composer's thought processes. This is not a matter for surprise: most music education programmes include an analysis component. A few moments thought must make it clear that this cannot be the whole story. The disposition of the material that analysis of a piece reveals must be governed by some prior plan, and that prior plan is usually referred to as *pre-composition*. (Interestingly enough, in their articles here, both Doornbusch and Yim contest the very notion that such a thing as 'pre-composition' even exists. For them, it is all just 'composition.' Regardless of terminology, however, both provide illuminating discussions of that part of their 'composition' process analogous to 'pre-composition.') In fact, a derived analysis by a third party does not often resemble the processes that the composer adopted to arrive at the music; what analysis reveals is the music's anatomy, not its ontogeny. Most analysis is done on the *score* of a musical work, rather than an acoustical representation, and one could argue that such analyses reveal more the notational commonalities of the work's genre rather than essential insights into its morphology.

Analysis frequently provides somewhat trivial insights. It is all very well to show where all the pitches ended up, and how they relate to one another, but the *why* is much less easily addressed than the *where*. One can very easily show, for instance, the internal behaviours of the pitch sets in a work like Schoenberg's *Variations for Orchestra*, Op. 31, but that is hardly to provide an account of the work's musical effectiveness, or its dark, brooding power. To use an architectural metaphor, most analysis approaches the musical work from a quantity surveyor viewpoint. Significant enough, perhaps, but nowhere near as fascinating as the architect's original vision. In music, pre-composition is essentially the method by which composers bridge the gap from vision to material, and is usually unamenable to analysis. In this issue, Andrew Raiskums's analysis of the pre-compositional implications of the set of chants utilised by Josquin in his *Missa de Beata Virgine* offers an interesting halfway point.

Thus pre-composition can encompass a huge range of approaches. Indeed, there are arguably as many approaches as there are pieces. Providing instructions to improvisers,

laying out neo-Platonic route-maps, outlining a psychological narrative, writing software, inventing new musical instruments, considerations as abstract as generating a numerology for use in the compositional process, or as practical as choosing an instrumentation that can most appropriately articulate the musical vision—all these and more can be viewed as pre-composition. (Veronika Krausas, in her idiosyncratic survey of the pre-compositional territory, offers some fascinating insights into what she perceives to be the ethics of pre-composition.) To assemble a list of this kind is to become aware of just how intensely personal pre-compositional approaches can be. Asking composers to describe their practices in getting from concept to material is therefore potentially both immensely illuminating for the reader and profoundly discomforting for the writer.

When we requested articles on this very topic for this issue of *Context*, we were aware that we were touching on sensitive territory. Indeed, of the numerous composers approached to write an article for this issue, some were enthusiastic, some required a great deal of convincing, and some politely, but resolutely, declined. Yet another submitted but later withdrew his article. The fact that there were almost as many emotional responses to the notion of writing about pre-composition as there were composers is signal of the topic's intensely personal nature.

What follows, then, is in the nature of a *residuum*: what remains after (self-)censorship.