

# New Music Inspired by Old Hispanic Chant\*

*Litha Efthymiou and Emma Hornby*

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Countless composers have turned to the Middle Ages for inspiration, a practice described by Pugh and Weisl as ‘medievalism.’<sup>1</sup> Multiple strategies have been developed; some composers rely on the use of existing medieval melodies,<sup>2</sup> others are inspired by medieval art or architecture.<sup>3</sup> In what is perhaps the most familiar approach, composers use identifiable musical signposts that signify—to modern audiences—an imagined medieval sound. For example, in much music by John Tavener, the medieval past is arguably evoked by recognisable modern signifiers rather than by building on concrete aspects of medieval Greek chant.<sup>4</sup> Use of such signifiers relies on listeners recognising stereotyped ideas of medieval music. Many of

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<sup>1</sup> Tison Pugh and Angela Jane Weisl, *Medievalisms: Making the Past in the Present* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), 1. On musical medievalism, see Annette Kreuziger-Herr, ‘Medievalism,’ *Grove Music Online*.

<sup>2</sup> To give just one example, Maxwell Davies’ *Worldes Blis* (1969) has plainchant permeating the music on every level. For detailed discussion of some examples by Arvo Pärt and John Tavener, among others, and for further bibliography, see Kirsten Yri, ‘Medieval Uncloistered: Uses of Medieval Music in Late Twentieth Century Culture’ (PhD diss., SUNY at Stony Brook, 2004).

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, Paul Rapaport, ‘The Music of the Symphony’ in Paul Rapaport and Harold Truscott, *Havergal Brian’s Gothic Symphony: Two Studies* (London: Havergal Brian Society, 1978), 77. We were also influenced by Lisa Colton, ‘Past Tense: The Middle Ages as Creative Stimulus in the works of Margaret Lucy Wilkins,’ Bristol University Music Research Seminar, 2015. Our thanks to Dr Colton for sharing her transcript of this presentation with us; a developed version of this paper is included in the forthcoming *Oxford Handbook of Music and Medievalism*, ed. Stephen C. Meyer and Kirsten Yri (Oxford: OUP, forthcoming).

<sup>4</sup> Ivan Hewett, *Music: Healing the Rift* (London: Continuum, 2003), 212.

the prevailing strategies adopted by composers since the nineteenth century are explored in detail in the forthcoming *Oxford Handbook of Music and Medievalism*. In the present article, we discuss an example of recent practice-based research falling under the umbrella of 'creative medievalism'.<sup>5</sup> The works discussed here were generated through collaborative research undertaken by a composer and a group of medievalists.

We begin by introducing the research project and, in particular, Emma Hornby's work on Old Hispanic melismas. Old Hispanic chant survives almost exclusively in unpitched notation, and has particular characteristics that are aesthetically alien from a modern perspective (e.g. a single syllable carrying over two-hundred notes). It is challenging to respond to this music through 'creative medievalism': a composer cannot be inspired by the medieval pitch content (since we do not know what it was), while a modern vocal piece with two-hundred notes on one syllable would probably alienate rather than engage listeners. This stimulated Litha Efthymiou to consider new modes of intellectual and creative engagement with the medieval past, pinpointing and conveying something of the essence of these chants in a contemporary musical idiom. In the second part of the article, we outline some of the compositional techniques that Efthymiou applied in pursuit of this goal.

### The Old Hispanic Office Project

The European Research Council-funded project *Shaping Text, Shaping Melody, Shaping Experience in and through the Old Hispanic Office* focused on the Old Hispanic liturgy. This Christian rite, while Latin, was independent of the familiar Roman liturgy and its Gregorian chant, and it was practised on the Iberian Peninsula until its suppression at the Council of Burgos (1080 CE). During the project, Hornby and Rebecca Maloy wrote publications on: the relationship between text, melody and theology in Old Hispanic chant; and the repertoire's melodic transmission, and its musical language. There were two postdoctoral researchers: a music palaeographer (Elsa De Luca), and a cultural historian (Kati Ihnat). A PhD student (Raquel Rojo Carrillo) undertook a case study of the *vesperinus*, which opened each Old Hispanic liturgical day.

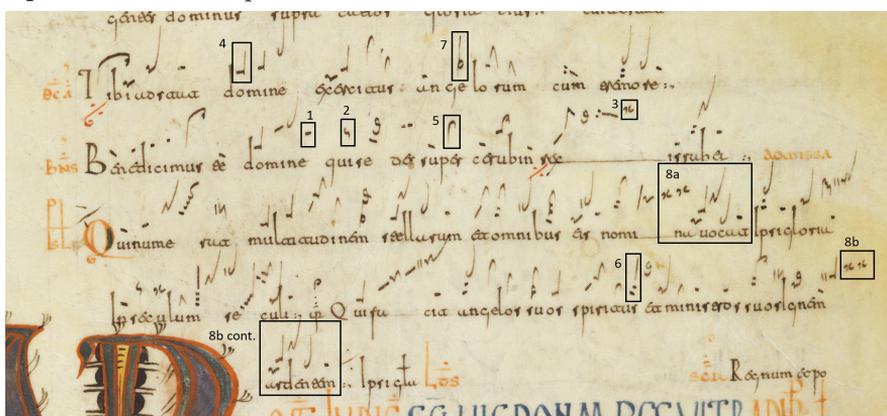
One major challenge in sharing this research with a wide audience was that fewer than thirty chants (out of thousands) are preserved in Aquitanian notation that shows intervals. These are mostly rather simple, for subdued occasions (e.g. the Maundy Thursday foot washing and the funeral service).<sup>6</sup> All the rest of the repertoire is preserved only in unpitched neumes. The neumes signal how many notes there are, and when the melody rises or falls within each notational sign. The precise pitches and intervals are unrecoverable. In this notation, the metaphor that time passes from left to right across the page is already established, as is the convention that a rise in pitch is represented by a rise on the page. Each note is represented by a dot, a curved line, a straight line, a wavy line, or an angle. Some of these shapes can appear alone, as a single neume signifying a single note, such as a straight line (Example 1, box 1), wavy line (box 2), or curved line (box 3: the two curves signify two unison notes). The shapes can be combined in various ways to signify two or more notes within a single neume. As they combine, they intersect with an angle (box 4: two straight lines, the second one higher, connected via an angle), a curve (box 5: two curved lines, the second one falling, joined via a curve) or a

<sup>5</sup> For this term, see Kreutziger-Herr, 'Medievalism.'

<sup>6</sup> These are edited in Casiano Rojo and Germán Prado, *El Canto Mozárabe* (Barcelona: Diputación provincial, 1929), 73–81.

small gap (box 6: three rising notes, with small gaps between them, smaller than the gaps we encounter between neumes). An angled or curved connection sometimes results in a looped pen stroke (box 7: a rising straight line, a curve, and another straight line, all joined by curves, with a loop, signifying three rising notes). These components combine flexibly, resulting in a very rich notational vocabulary where any melodic contour can be (and is!) represented in multiple ways. This means that, when we encounter recurring combinations of neumes, it is likely that they were written identically on purpose to represent the same musical gestures. See, for example, boxes 8a and 8b; note that this example was selected entirely at random. Such recurring combinations are absolutely characteristic of the repertoire.

**Example 1.** The León Antiphoner, folio 237v



In public presentations, the research team faced an apparent choice between focusing on the pitched chants, potentially limiting people’s impression of the repertoire’s sound world and conceptual scope, and finding non-auditory ways of communicating historical findings about medieval music, potentially risking dry abstraction. We took a third approach. A PhD composition student, Efthymiou was included in the research team in order to respond to the historical findings compositionally, and to communicate elements of Old Hispanic musical values and religious ritual experiences. Rather than trying to recreate such values and experiences within liturgy, Efthymiou chose to create music in a modern idiom, for modern audiences and for modern secular contexts, that evokes the experience medieval liturgical practitioners might have had of Old Hispanic chant. In the present article, we introduce two compositions emerging from Efthymiou’s practice-based research. These engage with the musical language of thousand-year-old chant, yet avoid creating a theme-park imagining of its original sound world.

**Old Hispanic Liturgy and Experiential Medievalism**

Medieval liturgy is made up of rituals in which, as Flanigan states, ‘there are no audiences ... since the entire congregation participates in them.’<sup>7</sup> Efthymiou aimed to reproduce something of medieval ritual experience. Such an engagement with the medieval past could be described

<sup>7</sup> C. Clifford Flanigan, ‘Medieval Liturgy and the Arts,’ in *Liturgy and the Arts in the Middle Ages: Studies in Honour of C. Clifford Flanigan*, ed. Eva Louise Lillie and Nils H. Petersen (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 1996), 9–35, at 9–10. Here, Flanigan also states that, in contrast to ritual, ‘the arts are marked by some sort of division between audience and performers.’

using Pugh and Weisl's term 'experiential medievalism'.<sup>8</sup> Although Pugh and Weisl's examples are far removed from musical performance (they identify jousting and medieval fairs as a way of 'becoming, or indeed, being medieval'),<sup>9</sup> their term could apply to any artistic practice that gives its audience first-hand experience of something that medieval people may also have experienced. Within the project team, the historical researchers introduced Efthymiou to a variety of potentially inspiring topics. One departure point was some particularly vivid Old Hispanic rituals and rites of passage. Efthymiou explored levels of initiation, stimulated by the Palm Sunday liturgy. The special rites of this day centred around initiation of those to be baptised the following week; they were given access to parts of the church that were usually reserved only for clerics. In *Myisi*, Efthymiou gave audience members a directly parallel experience: some were given a clear view of the dramatic action; others could view only through peepholes; and others could see nothing at all, paralleling the experience of the laity for whom the liturgical action was hidden behind a screen.<sup>10</sup> Here, the audience members shared something of the hierarchical experience of different members of medieval society, from full engagement with the liturgy, through partial or temporary access to proceedings, to the tantalising frustration of hearing something happening without being able to see it.

### Old Hispanic Melisma

Efthymiou and the musicologists also discussed further aspects of how liturgical participants' experiences were shaped by melody. Hornby, Maloy and Rojo Carrillo all worked on the melodic density of particular chants. Our approach began with a simple count of the number of notes per syllable within a chant, resulting in a growing understanding of the melodic norms associated with particular chant genres. Although we cannot know the pitches, we can uncover some aspects of how the liturgical melodies nuance and heighten the textual message: pacing it, punctuating it, and making connections between different pieces of text. The temporal control of text delivery affects liturgical participants' understanding of time passing.<sup>11</sup> This temporal control is achieved in two ways. First, short melismas are often employed to emphasise particular words or phrases, nudging listeners and singers to ruminate on their meaning. Second, long melismas (ranging from forty to over two-hundred notes on one syllable) often occur at the end of a chant or chant section. During such long melismas, it is very difficult to keep track of the word being sung, and textual meaning may recede into the background for singers and hearers alike.<sup>12</sup> If this were the case, then liturgical participants experienced an extended moment of textual stasis.

Hornby explored what these lengthy melismas might have meant to medieval liturgical participants. Here we briefly summarise the results that Efthymiou found most stimulating as a springboard for her practice-based research. Medieval liturgy is fundamentally text-centred,

<sup>8</sup> Pugh and Weisl, *Medievalisms*, 122.

<sup>9</sup> Pugh and Weisl, *Medievalisms*, 122.

<sup>10</sup> See short film of *Myisi* here: <https://vimeo.com/135793871>. See also Litha Efthymiou, 'Devising an Opera: *Myisi*,' *Contemporary Music Review* 35 no. 6 (2017): 599–611.

<sup>11</sup> Emma Hornby, 'Musical Values and Practice in Old Hispanic Chant,' *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 69 (2016): 595–650.

<sup>12</sup> We should bear in mind that many of these biblical texts were used only once or twice a year within the liturgy; we have very few Old Hispanic settings of the familiar Mass Ordinary texts (Kyrie, Gloria etc). These texts were not necessarily familiar to all liturgical participants.

and the primary role of liturgical text was to engender and articulate orthodox belief. What, then, is the theological justification for melody that obscures text, and what was its purpose? The writings of Augustine of Hippo (354–430) were widely influential across medieval Europe. We have some sense of how they were read in early medieval Iberia through the writings of Isidore of Seville (ca. 570–636), who selectively quoted many of Augustine’s passages pertaining to music. Augustine’s attitude towards music was ambivalent. In *Confessions*, he acknowledged the crucial role that music played in his own conversion. Music could distract the listener from focusing on God, however, and was therefore dangerous. According to Augustine, rational attention towards God should be rooted in the religious text being sung, instead of purely musical appreciation overtaking reason. For him, simple recitation was safer than elaborate melodies. These notions were selectively adopted by Isidore, who repeated the ideas about the positive power of sacred chant, but omitted Augustine’s anxieties about music’s potential to distract. If Iberian theology were purely Augustinian, it would be difficult to understand why Old Hispanic chant has such elaborate melodies. However, within Isidore’s theology—which was influential across medieval Iberia—it is readily explicable.

In *Confessions*, Augustine gives hints about how music could affect liturgical participants’ perception of time passing. During a familiar song, hearers move between memory of what has already been sung and anticipation of what is to come, while also being attentive to the present moment. This process of anticipation and remembering (‘distension’) can distance humanity from God, who transcends time and place. The danger is that participants can be distracted from the part of the song that is present at any one moment, as their memory extends over that which has already been sung and anticipates that which is yet to be sung.<sup>13</sup> Despite this, according to Augustine, a concentrated focus on the present moment can result in transcendent experience of the divine.

Some aspects of Old Hispanic melismas seem to encourage distension. Long melismas often have repeating neume combinations, resulting in structures such as AABBCCD, AA’BB’C, etc. During such repeating patterns, the singer (and perhaps the listener) is simultaneously aware of what has just been sung and what is about to come. This might make it hard to be rooted in the present. Conversely, as the natural flow of text halts in a long melisma, temporal awareness fades into the background. Melisma thus has the potential to promote a stable grounding in the present moment, avoiding distension and facilitating divine connection.<sup>14</sup>

Discussions of this research inspired Efthymiou to compose music that aspires to concentrated stasis, to meet Augustine’s ideal of a transcendent present moment, harnessing past (memory) and future (expectation). Rather than writing music that mimics Old Hispanic melismatic repeat structures, Efthymiou used other compositional devices to harness past, present and future in the perception of time passing for both audience and musician. The resulting compositions aim to make possible a perceptual experience that mirrors those engendered by the medieval chants. The static forms of composers such as Messiaen and

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<sup>13</sup> For Augustine’s confessions, see St. Augustine, *Confessions* trans. Henry Chadwick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991). For a critical account of Augustine’s views, see Carol Harrison, *Beauty and Revelation in the Thought of St. Augustine* (Oxford: Oxford: University Press, 1992).

<sup>14</sup> For more information about the philosophy of time perception, see Robin Le Poidevin, ‘The Experience and Perception of Time,’ in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2015 Edition), ed. Edward N. Zalta, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2015/entries/time-experience>.

Pärt were a good starting point. Both sought to create a sense of timelessness in their music. Efthymiou found Messiaen's approach particularly useful, especially his use of palindromes and symmetry.<sup>15</sup> Pärt's use of irregular phrase structure was also inspiring.<sup>16</sup> The American minimalists (including Reich, Glass, Riley, Young, Adams, and Feldman) promote stillness in their work in a very different way. They use repetition to avoid tension and release, resulting in uncertainty about the music's beginning, middle and end. Without taking on a minimalist aesthetic, Efthymiou drew on some of their techniques. This research resulted in two contrasting works: *Present Shadows* for flute, clarinet, piano, cello, and double bass,<sup>17</sup> and *Moments Held* for symphony orchestra.<sup>18</sup> Three main techniques were used to evoke a sense of stasis in the two works: pitch centricity; slow-moving macro-harmonies; and two techniques associated with 'vertical time.'<sup>19</sup> In what follows, we explore each of these techniques in turn.

### Pitch Centricity

Pitch-centric music focuses on a single pitch class, leading the listener to perceive that pitch class as having priority. All tonal music is pitch centric, although non-tonal music can also be pitch centric, 'organised around referential centres' that are emphasised through techniques including frequent repetition or sustained notes.<sup>20</sup> Pitch centricity can be a useful description of the sense of 'home' in non-tonal music. Lack of a tonal tonic can undermine teleology, while a single recurring pitch centre or pitch set can result in an extreme static quality, providing aural cohesion across the piece.

For some, pitch centricity exists on a symmetrical plane: the central note is the pitch centre, and other notes emerge on either side.<sup>21</sup> A similar conceptualisation has been applied to monophonic medieval music, although not specifically to Old Hispanic chant. According to both Crocker and McAlpine, medieval monophony has a central pivot note or reference pitch, with pitches being used less and less frequently (and imprinting less on listeners' minds) the more distant they are from the pivot.<sup>22</sup> For Kleppinger, pitch-class centricity can be present to different degrees in different works.<sup>23</sup> At one extreme lies Tavener's *The Lamb* (1982), with palindromic pitch symmetry around G. At the other extreme, the first movement of Carter's *Woodwind Quintet* (1948) applies pitch centricity at key moments for local emphasis.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>15</sup> See Andrew Shenton, 'Observations on Time in Olivier Messiaen's *Traité*,' in *Olivier Messiaen: Music, Art and Literature*, ed. Christopher Dingle and Nigel Simeon (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2007), 173–90.

<sup>16</sup> See Robert Sholl, 'Arvo Pärt and Spirituality,' in *The Cambridge Companion to Arvo Pärt*, ed. Andrew Shenton (Cambridge: CUP, 2012), 140–58.

<sup>17</sup> A recording can be heard at <https://soundcloud.com/litha-efthymiou/sets/present-shadows>.

<sup>18</sup> A recording can be heard at <https://soundcloud.com/litha-efthymiou/moments-held>.

<sup>19</sup> We are grateful to David Greenhorne, for drawing our attention to two of these devices as a means of creating unity. See David Greenhorne, 'Pictures on Silence' (PhD diss., University of Bristol, 2015).

<sup>20</sup> Joseph N. Strauss, *Introduction to Post Tonal Theory* (New York: Norton, 2016), 131. For similar definitions, see Dmitri Tymoczko, *A Geometry of Music: Harmony and Counterpoint in the Extended Common Practice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 4, 177, 179.

<sup>21</sup> Stanley V. Kleppinger, 'Reconsidering Pitch Centricity,' *Theory and Practice* 36 (2011): 72.

<sup>22</sup> Richard Crocker, *An Introduction to Gregorian Chant* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 2000), Chapter 2, and Fiona McAlpine, 'Trouvère Song: Analysis and Performance,' *Studies in Music Australia* 23 (1989): 1–12.

<sup>23</sup> Kleppinger, 'Reconsidering Pitch Centricity,' 65.

<sup>24</sup> Kleppinger, 'Reconsidering Pitch Centricity,' 84.

In *Present Shadows*, Efthymiou evoked both stasis and motion by using a pitch set (C, D, B, and A) rather than a single pitch centre. Usually, in pitch-centric pieces, different sections of the piece might have different pitch centres, but only one pitch centre is used at a time, across the entire texture. In *Present Shadows*, Efthymiou decided instead to use any or all of the four central pitches concurrently,<sup>25</sup> although each instrument focuses on just one central pitch at a time. In the first half of the opening movement, each instrumental line (apart from the piano's opening cluster chord) starts from one of the four central pitches, and has a melody rooted in a prominent iteration of the minor second and smaller microtonal intervals from its starting pitch. Each instrumental part moves between different pitch centres. For example, in the first twenty bars, the flute line moves no more than a semitone above or below its opening pitch of C' (see Example 2). The multiphonic at bar 21 moves the flute's focus to pitch class D, around which the line hovers before moving to pitch class A (bar 27). Similarly, the double bass begins by establishing pitch class C, moving, as the other instruments do, only a minor second above or below its starting note until bar 30.<sup>26</sup> Unlike the flute, however, which moves beyond the confines of a minor second interval approximately half way through the piece, the double bass maintains a close connection to the central pitch classes C, D, B, A for the whole first movement. This close concentration on a single pitch class at a time gives the music a static foundation, whereas in the flute line there is much more rapid shifting between pitch classes.

**Example 2.** *Present Shadows*, movement 1, bb. 1–30

The musical score for Example 2, *Present Shadows*, movement 1, bars 1–30, is presented in a standard orchestral layout. It includes parts for Flute, BB Bass Clarinet, Piano, Violoncello, and Double Bass. The Flute part begins with a 'Very breathy note (Ka)' and includes a section marked 'A'. The Double Bass part includes 'pizz.' and 'arco' markings. The Piano part has 'Strike strings inside piano' and 'f' markings. The Violoncello part includes 'pizz.' and 'arco' markings. The Double Bass part includes 'pizz.' and 'arco' markings. The score is marked 'Slowly' with a tempo of 60. The Flute part includes a 'Very slow vibrato - gradually getting faster' marking. The Double Bass part includes a 'ppp' marking. The Piano part includes a 'f' marking. The Violoncello part includes a 'ppp' marking. The Double Bass part includes a 'ppp' marking.

<sup>25</sup> Sometimes only one pitch class is in use across the ensemble (for example, from bars 5–9, only C is used, apart from the piano's sustained cluster from bar 1), and at other times they sound simultaneously in different instrumental parts (e.g. bar 44 includes all four notes).

<sup>26</sup> The only instance in which the double bass moves beyond a minor second of its starting note is the pizzicato chord at bar 21.



## Macroharmony

Static macroharmony is a different technique for creating music with the illusion of timelessness. A macroharmony is a collection of notes that is heard—to the exclusion of all other notes—over a span of musical time.<sup>27</sup> Macroharmonies, like harmonies, can be consonant or dissonant. They can change at a fast rate within any one piece, resulting in a sense of motion.<sup>28</sup> Static macroharmony is created when a single set of notes is used across a whole piece. This might comprise all twelve notes of the chromatic scale, and thus serialist pieces can be said to operate within static macroharmonic structures.<sup>29</sup>

In *Moments Held*, Efthymiou used static macroharmony to create an illusion of timelessness. Rather than having a single macroharmony throughout (limiting the pitches across the whole piece, or applying serialist techniques), the music shifts slowly between different macroharmonies. Eight complex neume shapes used in Old Hispanic melismas were the point of departure. For each neume, Efthymiou generated a corresponding pitch outline, following the rise and fall of the melody (see Example 3).<sup>30</sup> In a sense, the connection between these pitch groups and the Old Hispanic neumes is arbitrary, since Efthymiou had no aspiration to generate pastiche medieval melodies, as is clearly visible in Example 3.<sup>31</sup> The neumes do preserve the gestures of the medieval melodies, however; two arch shapes, say, may be conceptually related, even if they share no intervals. In this way, the medieval gestures inspired the shape of the modern composition. In order to reconcile these neume-inspired gestures with a macroharmonic structure, Efthymiou constructed the pitch sets in order to avoid directionality: no note functions as a leading note or tonic, for example.

The resulting notes were combined vertically as well as horizontally, generating both melody and harmony for *Moments Held*. Each macroharmony is used in turn through the work, and Efthymiou limited her pitch choices to a single macroharmony at a time. Each macroharmony can generate material for a relatively long period of time—patterns one and eight, for example, are each used for twenty-five percent of the work. Here, the listener is firmly rooted in one unchanging sound world at a time, reflecting the static nature (in terms of text delivery and hence rational thread of discourse) of an extended Old Hispanic melisma, and sharing some of a melisma's musical gestures.

In *Moments Held*, Efthymiou attempted to create transcendental timelessness through macroharmonic structures in two ways. First, the past is signalled through a reprise of earlier material. The major second interval is established early on, reflecting the prominent intervals chosen for each macroharmony, penetrating the texture until the middle of the work. This interval returns towards the end. Further, previous macroharmonies are alluded to, especially at transition moments; for example, notes from macroharmony 1 (D, F#, G) are employed in the piano and first flute at bars 63 to 67 as macroharmony 3 is being introduced. Second, musical

<sup>27</sup> Tymoczko, *Geometry*, 4.

<sup>28</sup> Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring* is used as an illustrative example in Tymoczko, *Geometry*, 162.

<sup>29</sup> On pitch class change in Schoenberg's op. 11, no. 1, see Tymoczko, *Geometry*, 163.

<sup>30</sup> Hornby and Maloy have developed a neume labelling system. Each component of a neume is defined in relation to the previous component as: N (neutral, or don't know), H (higher), S (same), L (lower), U (same or up), D (same or down). For a full introduction to interpreting the neumes, see Hornby, Ihnat, Maloy and Rojo Carrillo, *An Introduction to the Old Hispanic Office* (forthcoming), Chapter 4.

<sup>31</sup> These neumes are derived from the tenth-century León Antiphoner. Images of the full manuscript are available at <https://bvpb.mcu.es/es/consulta/registro.do?id=449895>.

**Example 3.** Macroharmonic structures underpinning *Moments Held*

The image displays eight musical staves, each representing a macroharmonic structure. Above each staff, letters (N, H, L) indicate the harmonic quality of the notes. To the right of each staff is a small, square image of a handwritten musical sketch, likely representing the macroharmonic structure being discussed.

- ONE:** N H H H L H L H
- TWO:** N H H L H H H H
- THREE:** N H H H H H
- FOUR:** N H H L H L H L
- FIVE:** N H L H L H L
- SIX:** N H H L H L
- SEVEN:** N H H L L L
- EIGHT:** N H H H H L L

events are overlapped from the beginning of the piece, the present, and the future. From bar seventy-seven onwards, the background harmonic trajectory transitions rapidly through macroharmonies 5 to 8, but the foreground figures in the woodwind (sometimes doubled in the strings) allude to past and future macroharmonies, as illustrated in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Macroharmonies in *Moments Held*, bb. 77–81

Bar	Main macro-harmony	Allusion	Pitches that make the allusion	Instruments making the allusion
77	5	Macroharmony 3	G#	Piccolo, oboe 1, xylophone
77	5	Macroharmony 4	D, D# and B	Flute 2, oboe 2
77	5	Macroharmony 1	C, D, B, G#	Clarinet 1 and 2
77	5	Macroharmony 7	D and B	Flute 1 and oboe 3
81	6	Macroharmony 7	C# and D	Flute 1 and violin 2
81	6	Macroharmony 1	F#, G#, D, G	Piccolo and flute 2
81	6	Macroharmony 3	A# and G#	Oboe 1 and clarinet 1
81	6	Macroharmony 3	F# and C#	Oboe 3

Macroharmonic structure is not immediately obvious on listening to *Moments Held*, and certainly not by comparison with the more tangible static devices used by minimalists such as repetition, palindromes, and drones. Instead, Efthymiou placed static macroharmonic qualities in the background structure, over which she explored more linear features, such as punctuating percussive moments and strong articulation of the downbeat. In this way the music achieves a subtle evocation of stasis in a context of musical motion, responding to the paradoxical quality of Old Hispanic melismas, where melodic virtuosity combines with a suspension of textual communication.

### Vertical Time

Music composed to suspend 'linear interrelationships between past, present and future' is described by Kramer as using Vertical Time.<sup>32</sup> Such music resonates with Augustine's idealisation of a transcendent experience in the present moment. Attempts to achieve such a state are particularly familiar from some minimalist works.<sup>33</sup> While minimalist music often uses repetition structures to this end, Efthymiou instead applied other techniques associated with Vertical Time: expansion and contraction, and musical mirroring.

#### *Expansion and Contraction*

Musical climaxes are often set up to be anticipated by the listener, who is thus aware of time passing. To avoid such clear-cut climaxes, Efthymiou used expansion and contraction to generate irregular phrase structures, which undermine any sense of time passing predictably. In the first movement of *Present Shadows*, Efthymiou used irregularly expanding and contracting rhythms. For example, the feathered beam in the flute in bars 5 to 9 (see Example 2, above) accelerates, but is soon countered by rhythmic expansion, the first note of which undermines the pulse suggested by the bar line. Another example is found in bars 11 to 16 where the double bass and cello rhythms speed up and slow down.

In the first movement, Efthymiou expanded and contracted textural density. Old Hispanic chant has striking variety in the number of notes per syllable, and Efthymiou transferred this feature to variations in textural density. The texture gradually becomes denser from the opening to the first tutti (bar 18), and contrasts of textural density continue throughout the movement. In this way, Efthymiou aimed to create stasis in the music's inner dialogue: the constantly cycling textures prevent any sense of momentum towards a climax.

In the second movement, Efthymiou instead used melodic expansion and contraction. In the cello part, for example, two melodic phrases are developed throughout the movement. The first idea is shown in Example 4. From bar 14, the first two notes of the cello's pitch set are used (C#'' and B'). The third note (G'') is added at bar 19, and the last note (A') at bar 23. The process is then reversed and the melodic line contracts.

Such techniques of expansion and contraction may not be readily apparent on the first hearing of *Present Shadows*. Despite this, they combine to undermine any sense of the music moving forward. Instead, phrase length, melody, rhythm and texture expand and contract in irregular cycles. This results in motion without clear directionality.

<sup>32</sup> Jonathan D. Kramer, *The Time of Music: New Meanings, New Temporalities, New Listening Strategies* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1988), 387.

<sup>33</sup> Wim Mertens, *American Minimal Music*, trans. J. Hautekiet (London: Kahn and Averill, 1983), 102.

**Example 4.** *Present Shadows*, movement 2, bb. 14–32

*Mirroring*

A second compositional technique that explores musical time is mirroring. In musical mirroring, characteristics are reflected, resulting in a structure that constantly folds in on itself, sidestepping a sense of progression. Mirroring is a well-established compositional tool. Here, Messiaen's use of rhythmic palindromes was of particular interest to Efthymiou,<sup>34</sup> as was Tavener's use of symmetrical form in *Ikon of Light* (1984).<sup>35</sup> While *Moments Held* does not make use of rhythmic palindromes or strict symmetrical structures, the overarching structure has broad durational symmetry, and there is mirroring of pitch material. In *Moments Held*, pitch mirroring can occur within a single timbre (see Example 5) or across different instruments, resulting in complex patterning (see Table 2).

**Example 5.** *Moments Held*, bb. 17–18

<sup>34</sup> Jonathan Harvey, *In Quest of Spirit: Thoughts in Music* (California: California Press, 1999), 74.

<sup>35</sup> Jeremy S. Begbie, *Theology, Music and Time* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 133.

**Table 2.** Musical mirroring in *Moments Held*, bb. 63–68

Instrument, bar	Mirrored in, bar
Piano, 65	Horn 1, 66
Horn 1, 66	Horn 3, 66
Horn 3, 66	Harp, 67

The piece also has symmetrical structure on a wider scale. This is first achieved through the prominent return of the major second interval at the end of the piece, and also through the loosely symmetrical timings of the macroharmonies. These gradually condense and minimally expand in duration, aiming to convey a sense of an overarching lack of progression, before the piece ends with a macroharmony held for the same length of time as at the opening:

- Macroharmony 1 = 29 bars
- Macroharmony 2 = 19 bars
- Macroharmony 3 = 19 bars
- Macroharmony 4 = 7 bars
- Macroharmony 5 = 4 bars
- Macroharmony 6 = 3 bars
- Macroharmony 7 = 5 bars
- Macroharmony 8 = 30 bars

Although these forms of mirroring are less explicit than those developed by Messiaen and Tavener,<sup>36</sup> they similarly aim to evoke a non-teleological soundscape that is also imbued with motion.

### Conclusion

In this article, we have presented a set of compositional techniques that Efthymiou applied in response to the potentially transcendent properties of Old Hispanic melisma. Efthymiou aimed to offer a modern, secular concert audience an experience of music that conveys a sense of stasis without engaging in a minimalist aesthetic. The static devices applied include pitch centricity, macroharmony, and some of the features of Vertical Time. The resulting works will, we hope, serve as useful examples of an unorthodox approach to creative medievalism, inspired by a repertoire whose original sounds are lost forever.

### About the Authors

Litha Efthymiou is a lecturer in composition at the University of West London. Her music, published by Edition HH, has been performed across the UK and beyond, with support from PRS, Wellcome Trust, Arts Council England, Hinrichsen Foundation and RVW Trust.

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<sup>36</sup> This mirroring form can be seen especially in Messiaen's *Quartet for the End of Time* (1941) and Tavener's *The Lamb*.