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‘OUT OF THE AIR’: JUDITH WEIR’S EMERGENCE IN 1970S BRITAIN, OR INTERPRETING CREATIVE SELF- CENSORSHIP

BY DAVID BEARD*

ON 21 JULY 2014, Judith Weir was appointed Master of the Queen’s Music, the first woman to hold this prestigious title in its almost 400-year history.¹ This recognition adds lustre to a lively and varied career, which has already been marked by a stream of awards, commissions, residencies and visiting fellowships, community and youth music projects, multimedia collaborations, a major retrospective at the Barbican Arts Centre, London,² an output in excess of 125 works, including three highly acclaimed operas,³ and a strong conviction that the ‘role of the composer is to create wider musical communities’.⁴ Public attention came early: according to most accounts,⁵ Weir first emerged on the British music

*Cardiff University. E-mail: beardd@cardiff.ac.uk. I wish to thank Philip Rupprecht for inviting me to present an early version of this article at the 51st Royal Musical Association annual conference, Birmingham University, September 2015, in the themed session ‘When was British Musical Modernism? Post-War Perspectives, 1945–1980’, and Roddy Hawkins for the opportunity to present a revised version at the symposium ‘Michael Finnissy: Dialogues’, at the British Music Centre in Heritage Quay, University of Huddersfield, November 2016. I would also like to thank Cardiff University’s College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences for a Research Leave Fellowship in 2016–17, Judith Weir and Michael Finnissy for access to unpublished scores, Robert Fokkens, Peter Franklin, and Charles Wilson for responses to early drafts, the anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments, and Matthew Bromley for setting the music examples.

¹ Weir performs this role until 2024. She was also appointed President of the Royal Society of Musicians of Great Britain in 2016.

² ‘Judith Weir: Telling the Tale’, a series of concerts, talks, and free events organized by the BBC Symphony Orchestra, held at the Barbican Arts Centre, 17–20 Jan. 2008.

³ These are *A Night at the Chinese Opera* (1987), *The Vanishing Bridegroom* (1990), and *Blond Eckbert* (1994). She is currently working on an adaptation of Max Frisch’s *Count Oederland* for a joint Covent Garden/Frankfurt/Scottish Opera commission.

⁴ Judith Weir quoted in Alison Carter, ‘Parade Profile: Judith Weir’, *King’s Parade* [a special issue of the King’s College, Cambridge alumni magazine, titled ‘King’s & Opera’], [n.n] (Spring 2004), 4–5 at 4.

⁵ Representative examples include: Pwyll ap Siôn et al. (eds.), *Eduqas A and AS Level Music Study Guide* (London, 2017), 265; Tom Service, ‘A Guide to Judith Weir’s Music’, *The Guardian*, 28 May 2012; Matthew Greenall, ‘Repertoire Guide’, *Music Teacher*, Sept. 2004, 38; Barbara White, ‘Music Drama on the Concert Stage: Voice, Character and Performance in Judith Weir’s *The*

1 scene following the premiere of *King Harald's Saga* in 1979, three years after she graduated
 2 from King's College, Cambridge. In the same year, aged 25, she signed to the publisher
 3 Novello.⁶ Yet despite this early vault from the starting blocks and the recognition that
 4 followed, it is often asserted that Weir was a slow developer—a problematic notion that may
 5 have been informed by some of her own remarks,⁷ but is also arguably symptomatic of
 6 gendered aspects of the reception she has received, from scholars and journalists alike.⁸ In
 7 contrast, I argue that key tenets of Weir's music were established in her early works (1972 to
 8 1980), and that an analysis of these pieces provides critical insights into her musical
 9 development. Moreover, the techniques Weir explores in these works highlight the need to
 10 reassess her reception, her relationship to modernism and the avant-garde, and questions of
 11 creativity more broadly, as discussed below.

12 By Weir's own account, *King Harald's Saga* marked the 'first time' she felt she had
 13 written a piece 'which was really something'.⁹ Titled a 'Grand Opera in Three Acts', the
 14 work lasts just ten minutes and employs an unaccompanied solo soprano to portray nine
 15 characters and a male chorus. The apparent irreverence of this breakthrough piece led some,
 16 notably Paul Griffiths, in the 1995 revised edition of his influential monograph overview of
 17 post-war music, to associate Weir with postmodernism.¹⁰ For Griffiths, Weir's music is
 18 characterized by irony, scepticism, and 'amused disbelief', her works being 'beautiful things
 19 that cannot be trusted'.¹¹ Citing her 'outsider' status, as a Scot and a woman, her musical
 20 displays of unpretentiousness, and her Stravinskyan 'offbeam' way of building music from
 21 'the folk-music ground-up', he concluded: 'Weir delights in the inappropriate', in the sense

Consolations of Scholarship, *Cambridge Opera Journal*, 12 (2000), 55–79.

⁶ At this point, Weir handed over a number of works she had composed already, and granted Opus 1 status to her wind quintet *Out of the Air* (1975).

⁷ See e.g. Brian Morton, 'The Slow Leap Forwards', *The Wire*, 56 (1988), 42–3, in which Weir states: 'I'm very slow . . . It really takes a long time to sort yourself out' (p. 42). Similarly, a detailed article written when Weir was in her thirties refers to her 'vision of the kind of composer she wishes to be'; Tom Morgan, 'Judith Weir', in Michael Finnissy, Malcolm Hayes, and Roger Wright (eds.), *New Music* 88 (Oxford, 1988), 22–50 at 23.

⁸ Lisa Colton, 'The Female Exotic: Tradition, Innovation and Authenticity in the Reception of Music by Judith Weir', *Contemporary Music Review*, 29 (2010), 277–89.

⁹ Judith Weir in Bernard Hughes, 'Judith Weir in Conversation', *Tempo*, 59, no. 234 (2005), 20. The next significant landmark was *A Night at the Chinese Opera*, commissioned by the BBC on behalf of Kent Opera, which one critic described as 'simply brilliant, brilliantly simple, fresh, colourful, enchanting and quite the wittiest thing to be done in the musical theatre for years'; Paul Griffiths, 'Cheltenham Festival', *The Times*, 9 July 1987.

¹⁰ Paul Griffiths, *Modern Music and After: Directions since 1945* (Oxford, 1995), 240.

¹¹ *Ibid.* 240 and 241.

1 of ‘a friendly apartness from the rules, formulae, standards, and instruments of western
 2 music’—for example by ‘the placing of tonal chords contrary to conventional practice’.¹²
 3 The suggestion of impropriety may also relate to a sense that Weir sits outside any clear
 4 British or international schools of composition. In a similar spirit, Weir is often described as
 5 having a distinctive personal style, frequently expressed as some combination of the
 6 following: clarity and economy of expression; relative consonance with a quirky use of
 7 modal, octatonic, and tonal gestures in a non- or quasi-tonal context;¹³ wry theatricality and
 8 humour; detached objectivity; fastidious attention to detail; a ‘capacity to disconcert’;¹⁴
 9 rhythmic dexterity, informed by a close study of Scottish, Balkan, and other folk music;
 10 ironic references to Classical, Romantic, medieval, and other more distant historical periods
 11 or exotic styles; and a commitment to story-telling and narrative.

12 While this overview is in one sense accurate, it unwittingly bolsters Griffiths’s triply
 13 Othered discourse (Weir the inappropriate female Scot), which suggests an ironic and
 14 playful postmodern rather (or more) than a critical and antagonistic modernist relationship
 15 with canonical composers and historical styles, an over-reliance on, rather than dialogue
 16 with, her models. Gordon Downie, for example, argues that Weir, like John Adams, Thomas
 17 Adès, Mark-Anthony Turnage, and others, assumes the ‘role of an entertainer’ by using titles
 18 that evoke ‘playfulness, titillation, and amusement’ to reassure listeners that their neo-liberal
 19 ‘desire for uninterrupted play and distraction during leisure’ will be fulfilled.¹⁵ Similarly,
 20 Richard Barrett accuses Weir of possessing ‘a comfortable, selfcongratulatory [*sic*],
 21 bourgeois kind of wit without incisiveness or purpose . . . ignoring the realities of its time . .
 22 . But then again: we do live in times of triviality and complacency; is this music a comment

¹² Ibid. 240–1.

¹³ Weir does not think of her music as tonal, although she has remarked: ‘[I] grew up loving classical music, and functional harmony, and in a childlike way I like playing my way through chord patterns. So I suppose there has been this lifelong wish to bring that together with a sophisticated interest in new music.’ Stephen Johnson, ‘Waiting for Rain’, *The Full Score* [Music Sales Group] (Summer 2003), [n.p.]. For more detailed examinations of this topic, see Anna Theresa Weesner, ‘Tonality in Nontonal Music: A Study of Judith Weir’s *The Consolations of Scholarship*’ (DMA thesis, Cornell University, 1995), and Andrea Daly, ‘Beautiful Baubles’, unpublished paper, posted at www.youtube.com/watch?v=CVTCVDydWYo (accessed 20 Jan. 2018). The only piece Weir has referred to in terms of ‘large-scale tonal planning’ is her String Quartet (1990); from ‘Judith Weir Talks to Anthony Burton’, BBC Radio 3, 5 May 1992 (BL Sound Archive, H326/3).

¹⁴ Malcolm Hayes, Record Review of Judith Weir, ‘Three Operas: *The Consolations of Scholarship, Missa Del Cid, King Harald’s Saga*’; Jane Manning (sop.), Linda Hirst (mezzo), Lontano, cond. Odaline de la Martinez, and Combattimento, cond. David Mason. Novello Records NVLCD109 [1989], *Tempo*, 172 (1990), 44–5 at 45.

¹⁵ Gordon Downie, ‘Aesthetic Necrophilia: Reification, New Music, and the Commodification of Affectivity’, *Perspectives of New Music*, 42 (2004), 264–75 at 271–2.

1 or a symptom?’¹⁶ Yet these perspectives arguably elide the ‘Foucauldian disciplinary
 2 processes and practices of exchange’ that create ‘the uniqueness of individual composers,
 3 their musical and social personalities’,¹⁷ which is to say, they fail to consider endorsements
 4 Weir has received from certain composers, and her attempts to distance herself from others.
 5 They also pass over a not inconsiderable number of earlier works, which have now almost
 6 all been withdrawn.

7 The purpose of this article is to contextualize and analyse the early withdrawn works,
 8 for they provide important insights into the evolution of Weir’s musical language, suggesting
 9 new perspectives that have been downplayed in existing studies.¹⁸ They also help chart
 10 Weir’s emergence in the context of 1970s Britain in which an unprecedented stylistic
 11 pluralism arose partly in response to the golden years of the 1960s,¹⁹ a loss of faith in the
 12 idealism of the ‘long 1960s’,²⁰ and a resulting confusion about how to proceed. Post-Cageian
 13 experimentalism existed alongside neo-Romantic and other historically conscious voices,
 14 Tippett’s late lyricism succeeded Britten’s ‘middlebrow’ modernism,²¹ but high modernism
 15 persisted: Peter Maxwell Davies blazed a trail with his Fires of London ensemble, a taciturn
 16 Harrison Birtwistle grew steadily in stature, and the ‘New Complexity’ was born. Where was
 17 Weir located in this diverse creative field? Was her irreverence evident from the start? What
 18 was her relationship to her modernist and avant-garde contemporaries, and how might her
 19 distinctive personal style be reconsidered in this context?

¹⁶ Richard Barrett, review of *Judith Weir: Three Operas* (Novello NVLCD109) [1989], *The Wire* 72 (Feb. 1990), 71–2 at 72. For the opposite perspective, see White, ‘Music Drama on the Concert Stage’ (2000), and Hannah Castein, ‘The Composer as Librettist: Judith Weir’s “Romantic” Operas *Heaven Ablaze in His Breast* and *Blond Eckbert*’, *Comparative Criticism*, 21 (1999), 253–72.

¹⁷ Hettie Malcolmson, ‘Composing Individuals: Ethnographic Reflections on Success and Prestige in the British New Music Network’, *Twentieth-Century Music*, 10 (2013), 115–36 at 117.

¹⁸ Earlier references to some of these works exist in the following: Martin Dreyer, ‘A Talent to Amuse’, *Musical Times*, 122 (1981), 593–6; Tom Morgan, ‘Judith Weir’; and Barbara White, ‘Music Drama on the Concert Stage: A Study of Judith Weir’s *The Consolations of Scholarship*, with *Life in the Castle* (Original Music Composition)’ (Ph.D. diss., University of Pittsburgh, 1997) [reproduced by UMI Dissertation Services].

¹⁹ Paul Griffiths, ‘Music’, in Boris Ford (ed.), *Modern Britain: The Cambridge Cultural History* (Cambridge, 1992), 48–83 at 81.

²⁰ Cornelius Cardew’s rejection of the avant-garde in his 1974 essay *Stockhausen Serves Imperialism* was arguably ‘symbolic of a pessimism regarding 1960s idealism which came over many in British society more generally’; David Addison, ‘Politics, Patronage, and the State in British Avant-Garde Music, c.1959–c.1974’, *Twentieth-Century British History*, 27 (2016), 242–65 at 264.

²¹ See Christopher Chowrimootoo, *Middlebrow Modernism: Britten’s Operas and the Great Divide* (Oakland, Calif., 2018).

1 To answer these questions, I begin by touching on Weir's early reception and her
 2 stance on modernism and the avant-garde before itemizing the withdrawn works (1972–80).
 3 I then re-examine Weir's emergence and gendered reception in three stages: (1) in relation to
 4 creativity theories; (2) in the context of the practice of withdrawing works in general; and (3)
 5 through an analysis of the early withdrawn works, based on scores and recordings held at the
 6 British Music Centre in Heritage Quay, University of Huddersfield, the British Library, the
 7 Victoria and Albert Museum Archive, and materials provided by the composer, her publisher
 8 Chester Novello (part of the Music Sales Group), and Michael Finnissy.

9 EARLY RECEPTION OF WEIR, AND WEIR'S RECEPTION OF MODERNISM

10 Weir's early reception was directly influenced by two profiles published in the 1980s: an
 11 essay by Martin Dreyer published in 1981, and a survey by Tom Morgan published in
 12 1987.²² Dreyer presents Weir as someone who rejected the Continental avant-garde and had
 13 little interest in modernism beyond Stravinsky and Messiaen, whose music she was
 14 introduced to by her first teacher, John Tavener. Morgan, on the other hand, highlights an
 15 objectivity and anti-Romantic fastidiousness, which he associates with Stravinsky, although
 16 he insists that Weir pursued 'a radical and unique voice *against* all the trends and fashions of
 17 the day'.²³ In essence, both writers present Weir as an independent mind from the start, and
 18 someone certainly not pulled towards any of the myriad trends in British music that existed
 19 in the 1970s.

20 When asked about her attitude towards the avant-garde, Weir has spoken
 21 enthusiastically of growing up in London in the 1960s and early 1970s, where she attended
 22 concerts conducted by Boulez in the Round House, heard *Le Marteau sans maître* and
 23 Berio's *Sinfonia*, and performed Second Viennese School classics under Boulez with the
 24 National Youth Orchestra.²⁴ However, it is not until 1980, during an interview published in
 25 *The Sunday Times*, that we find Weir's first public statement regarding high modernism:

26 Audiences find it remarkably difficult to follow a musical argument—in the way they follow a film,
 27 for example . . . The music of the last decade has hardly helped in this respect. Still I wouldn't want

²² Dreyer, 'Judith Weir, Composer: A Talent to Amuse'; Morgan, 'Judith Weir'.

²³ Morgan, 'Judith Weir', 23; italics added.

²⁴ Weir had a direct link to the London concert scene through her oboe teacher, Robin Miller (1946–2014), whom Boulez appointed principal oboist of the BBC Symphony Orchestra in the early 1970s. A founder member of the Nash Ensemble from 1964, Miller played with the Scottish Chamber Orchestra and the London Sinfonietta, and he was the dedicatee of Peter Maxwell Davies's *Strathclyde Concerto No. 1* (1987).

1 to discount the achievements of the avant-garde. They are part of us. But I feel we no longer need to
2 shock. For me the emphasis is on making every one of the notes count.²⁵

3 Nine years later, when asked whether she felt any affinity with the Manchester School, or
4 with an English tradition, she responded: ‘Well, to start off with, I feel very strongly that I’m
5 *not* English, I’m Scottish. [Regarding the Manchester School] the techniques in their work
6 are a constant source of enrichment.^[26] [But] I don’t believe we’re using a similar library of
7 techniques.’²⁷ In 1995, Weir’s stance had shifted only marginally, with modernism still
8 placed at a respectable distance:

9 When I started to write music, it was very much the age of high modernism, which I don’t
10 necessarily disapprove of, but abstraction was the thing that you were always talking about. That’s
11 what you were taught. So perversely I began to do the opposite, which to me seemed to be stories and
12 music attached to concrete events.²⁸

13 In 2003, however, Weir remarked: ‘I’m not one of those people who’ve repudiated post-war
14 modernism. I’m grounded in it.’²⁹ She has further commented: ‘I’m not in any way anti-
15 modernist or anti-complexity, but my reaction to so much new music is that it seems to be
16 massively cluttered. It’s all going on down there in the bass half of the orchestra, and it

²⁵ Weir quoted in [n.a.] ‘Judith Weir’, *The Sunday Times*, 24 Aug. 1980 [n.p.].

²⁶ Weir has stated that during her early years she felt she needed to develop ‘a stronger sense of line’ and in this regard the cor anglais melody in Harrison Birtwistle’s *The Triumph of Time* (first performed 1972; recorded 1975) was ‘a big piece for me in that direction’. Quoted in Stephen Johnson, ‘Waiting for Rain’, *The Full Score* (Summer 2003), [n.p.].

²⁷ Weir in conversation with Christopher Cook in ‘Kaleidoscope Extra’, broadcast on BBC Radio 3 on 13 Dec. 1989 (BL Sound Archive, B5278/0/52). Weir was born and educated in England but has strong links to her Aberdonian parents’ families, north of the border. Her stance on national identity has changed over the years. In 1988, she remarked: ‘I was brought up in England and maybe for that reason think of myself very strongly as a Scot’; quoted in Morton, ‘The Slow Leap Forwards’, 43. By 2011, however, this position had shifted: ‘I don’t even think of myself as a *Scottish* composer, because I never know where I’m from, really—I’ve lived in so many places. In that sense, “British” actually suits me better, because it means partly from England and partly from Scotland.’ Judith Weir in Andrew Palmer, *Encounters with British Composers* (Woodbridge, 2015), 443–55 at 447.

²⁸ Judith Weir, ‘Judith Weir’, in Neil Brand (ed.), *Dramatic Notes: Foregrounding Music in the Dramatic Experience* (Luton, 1998), 35–48 at 35.

²⁹ Weir quoted in Johnson, ‘Waiting for Rain’ [n.p.]. In the same year, she referred to ‘the flower of the European avant-garde . . . Boulez, Stockhausen, Berio, Ligeti’ as ‘all people I enormously admire still’; Nicholas Reyland, ‘Judith Weir in Conversation’, *The Warehouse*, London, 12 Mar. 2003. Originally posted on the London Sinfonietta website but subsequently removed. Last accessed by the author on 19 June 2007.

1 obscures the harmonics of the other instruments. I want whatever there is in the piece to
2 emerge with clarity, even if it's complex music.'

3 In most of these statements, Weir positions herself to one side of modernism and the
4 avant-garde; she remains connected to them in some way ('they are a part of us'; 'a constant
5 source of enrichment'), but she seeks to move beyond them by adopting different techniques,
6 avoiding shock tactics and overly congested sounds,³⁰ helping audiences follow a musical
7 argument,³¹ and making 'every one of the notes count'. Weir presents herself as 'informed
8 by, but not beholden to' modernist practice,³² and she neither fully rejects the past nor
9 entirely embraces the avant-garde, a position that has been characterized as 'mainstream' in
10 contemporary British music.³³

11 THE WITHDRAWN WORKS, 1972–80

12 A study of Weir's work lists published at various stages of her career reveal that she has
13 continually revised her official catalogue, with more works being withdrawn as time has
14 progressed. In 2018, just two compositions prior to 1981 are listed: *King Harald's Saga* and
15 *Several Concertos* (1980).³⁴ These are privileged survivors from a series of withdrawals,
16 dating back to 1972–3, when she composed the first of her pieces to receive a major public
17 performance,³⁵ and they highlight Weir's growing dissatisfaction with her earliest works. In
18 1987, there are an additional six compositions in the catalogue, including *Out of the Air*
19 (1975) and *An mein Klavier* (1980), which will be discussed later. In 1981, a further five
20 works are listed, including a commission by The Fires of London, *Twenty-Five Variations*.
21 Finally, if we factor in works that Weir had already withdrawn or not published before 1981,
22 it transpires that over twenty works were composed in eight years, between the ages of 18

³⁰ Weir quoted in Andrew Clark, 'Clear, Uncluttered Voice of Music Today', *Financial Times*, 11 Mar. 2000.

³¹ There are possible echoes here of Benjamin Britten's Aspen Award Speech, in particular his notion of the 'composer's duty, as a member of society, to speak to or for his fellow human beings', and his warning against the young composer feeling self-consciously pressured into using the 'latest *avant-garde* tricks'; Benjamin Britten, 'On Receiving the First Aspen Award', in Peter Wiegold and Ghislaine Kenyon (eds.), *Beyond Britten: The Composer and the Community* (Woodbridge, 2015), 9 and 10.

³² White, 'Music Drama on the Concert Stage' (2000), 57.

³³ Arnold Whittall, *Musical Composition in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford, 1999), 388.

³⁴ See www.musicsalesclassical.com/composer/works/Judith-Weir (accessed 20 Jan. 2018). Weir has stated that she wrote a lot of music in her teens, in the late 1960s, but this is no longer extant; the author has seen nothing prior to 1972. See Palmer, 'Judith Weir', 452.

³⁵ *Where the Shining Trumpets Blow* was performed by the New Philharmonia in 1974.

1 and 26 (see Table 1). <Place Table 1 near here>

2 RECALIBRATING THE DISCOURSE

3 The importance of examining the early withdrawn works needs to be understood in the
 4 context of the reception of Weir's music more generally. Lisa Colton has correctly observed
 5 that Weir reception and comments she has made herself 'are tied closely to a historical line
 6 that continues to feel anxious about the creative powers of women composers'.³⁶ Colton's
 7 arguments are carefully made and they are aimed at the apparent paradox whereby Britain's
 8 most celebrated female composer is also subject to a form of gendered reception.³⁷ The
 9 legacy of Weir's practice of withdrawing works has also played into this question in ways
 10 that, as Colton observes, are 'impossible to untangle from historical expectations of women
 11 and their behaviour'.³⁸ This point is illustrated by an interview with the BBC broadcaster and
 12 journalist Ivan Hewett for an article promoting a week of events devoted to Weir's music,
 13 hosted by the Barbican Arts Centre in 2008:

14 It took Weir a long time to find her voice . . . 'When I was a teenager I had a few lessons with . . .
 15 John Tavener, who lived down the road,' she says, 'and then in 1975 I had a piece played at a youth
 16 orchestras festival in Aberdeen [*Campanile*]. One of the jurors was . . . Aaron Copland, and he

³⁶ Colton, 'The Female Exotic', 277. See also Sally Macarthur, 'The Woman Composer, New Music and Neoliberalism', *Musicology Australia*, 36 (2014), 36–52, and Lauren Redhead, "'New Music" as Patriarchal Category', in Catherine Haworth and Lisa Colton (eds.), *Gender, Age and Musical Creativity* (Farnham, 2015), 171–84.

³⁷ Weir's music has received a mainly positive response in the UK press, with a blend of mostly congratulatory but occasionally mixed reception, ostensibly little different from that of her older contemporaries, Birtwistle and Davies. The principal exception to this is the opera *Miss Fortune*. The libretto, which Weir wrote herself, largely diverted attention away from the music, and a turn to realism in the plot introduced problems that are largely avoided in the earlier, more objective, Brechtian operas—a shift that probably reflects David Pountney's unusual request to write 'for an entirely normal audience'; Jessica Duchén, 'The Wheel of Fortune Turns for New Opera', *The Independent*, 2 Mar. 2012. Following a mostly positive response to the world premiere in Bregenz, under the title *Achterbahn* [*Rollercoaster*], the reception in London was vitriolic, far in excess of the work's shortcomings. Even when reviewers acknowledged Weir's track record, they did not pull their punches, the language in at least one instance veering into the misogynistic: Rupert Christiansen described the work as a 'limping, flaccid non-starter . . . wishy-washy stuff without belly, genitals or legs. It may tinkle prettily, it may amble gracefully, but it has no oomph'; 'Miss Fortune, Royal Opera, Covent Garden, review', *The Telegraph*, 13 Mar. 2012. Appropriately, one of the opera's principal themes was 'human recovery; the ability to pick up and move on from tragedies and setbacks'; Weir in conversation with the author on 10 Mar. 2010, when the opera was being written. For a more positive review, see Paul Conway, 'London, Royal Opera House: Judith Weir's "Miss Fortune"', *Tempo*, 66, no. 262 (2012), 50–1.

³⁸ Colton, 'The Female Exotic', 281.

1 suggested I go to Tanglewood.’ Her visit to the famous summer music school in New England was a
 2 life-changing experience, but years of confused struggle would follow before Weir found her own
 3 compositional voice. ‘It was the tail end of the modernist period, which in a way I found very
 4 inspiring. It was wonderful to hear Boulez conducting the BBC Symphony Orchestra, and new pieces
 5 by Birtwistle. But I was trying to do something completely different, which didn’t feel like “proper”
 6 music, and I just felt incompetent compared with these great figures.’ That ‘something different’ was
 7 a self-deflating wit, which came into focus with *King Harald’s Saga* of 1979 . . . ‘That’s the real me,
 8 I think, because of the way it refers to the history of opera and compresses something big into a small
 9 frame.’³⁹

10 As this illustrates, Weir’s statements about her musical identity and self-situation in
 11 historical and stylistic terms, which Colton refers to as Weir ‘knowing her place and frame
 12 of reference’,⁴⁰ are often couched in terms of reverence, modesty, and self-deprecation. This
 13 has led some commentators to amplify and distort her remarks. Accordingly, Hewett paints a
 14 distinctly unflattering picture of a woman awed by the serendipitous presence of great male
 15 composers around her, while she grapples ‘for a long time’ in a ‘confused struggle’ to find
 16 her own voice.⁴¹ The works composed prior to the breakthrough in *King Harald’s Saga* did
 17 not feel like ‘proper music’, and when the ‘real me’ was discovered, it amounted to a ‘self-
 18 deflating wit’. Although Hewett is drawing upon Weir in this portrait, and Colton rightly
 19 highlights the susceptibility of Weir’s remarks to ‘a historical discourse of women as little
 20 more than “sponges” of male creativity’,⁴² the question is whether any of this is supported by
 21 the music? Colton’s success in exposing the gendered discourse of Weir reception risks
 22 reinforcing it, leaving Weir on the ropes.

23 Invoking Harold Bloom, Colton refers to the supposed masculine traits of certainty,
 24 and the need for composers (modernists, especially) to speak confidently of their intentions,
 25 to reassure the listener they know where they are going: ‘Commentators need the composer

³⁹ Ivan Hewett, ‘Judith Weir: What Tavener and Copland Taught Me’, *The Telegraph*, 10 Jan. 2008.

⁴⁰ Colton, ‘The Female Exotic’, 287.

⁴¹ Hewett’s notion of four years (1975–9) as a ‘long time’ pales in comparison with the trials of many prominent male composers, for example Brahms, who claimed he aborted around twenty string quartets before his first three were published, and who took almost twenty years to complete his First Symphony. It also pales in comparison with the widely accepted ‘ten-year rule’, which is the average amount of time spent on intensive study before a creative work of significance is produced; see John R. Hayes, ‘Cognitive Processes in Creativity’, in John A. Glover, Royce R. Roning, and Cecil R. Reynolds (eds.), *Handbook of Creativity* (New York, 1989), 135–45.

⁴² Colton, ‘The Female Exotic’, 287.

1 to have shown a purposeful, assured artistic intention',⁴³ and promote the appearance of
 2 effortless creativity,⁴⁴ one consequence being that modernism in particular is perceived to be
 3 a 'man's world'.⁴⁵ Although an emerging body of work centred on female modernist
 4 composers promises to transform this impression,⁴⁶ such studies also highlight a broader
 5 critical-cultural tendency to focus on women composers only when they engage directly with
 6 a Central European 'New Music' tradition governed by an Adornian discourse of
 7 materialism, thereby effectively gendering them male.⁴⁷ As will be seen, this is directly
 8 relevant to Weir, whose engagement with materialist values in her early withdrawn works,
 9 including the pursuit of the new through complex conceptual approaches and extended
 10 techniques, arguably helped to secure her success at an early age. Weir is certainly
 11 purposeful and assured in the cogent explanatory notes she writes to accompany her works,
 12 but, as we have seen, this is sometimes downplayed in other statements, and when Weir's
 13 determination is acknowledged it is often in gendered terms—as one critic remarked: Weir's
 14 'gentle tones and shy laugh still hide strong opinions'.⁴⁸ Colton also draws attention to Lloyd
 15 Whitesell's assertion that 'artists who work with an aesthetic based on generosity, mutual
 16 exchange of ideas or a sense of nurture would be characterized, under Bloom's theory, as
 17 weak, and thereby feminized'.⁴⁹ These traits (one could equally call them attributes) are
 18 central to Weir's aesthetic.

19 My contention is that the entire discourse on Weir can be meaningfully recalibrated if
 20 it is resituated in the context of the widespread practice of withdrawing works, and in
 21 relation to recent creativity theories in which dialogue, serendipity, and uncertainty are

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Malcolmson, 'Composing Individuals', 126.

⁴⁵ See e.g. Annika Forkert, 'Magical Serialism: Modernist Enchantment in Elisabeth Lutyens's *O Saisons, O Châteaux!*', *Twentieth-Century Music*, 14 (2017), 271–303, esp. 272.

⁴⁶ See especially: Ellie H. Hisama, *Gendering Musical Modernism: The Music of Ruth Crawford, Marion Bauer, and Miriam Gideon* (Cambridge, 2001); Judy Lochhead, *Reconceiving Structure in Contemporary Music: New Tools in Music Theory and Analysis* (London and New York, 2016), which includes case studies on works by Kaija Saariaho, Sofia Gubaidulina, Stacy Garrop, and Anna Clyne; Laurel Parsons and Brenda Ravenscroft (eds.), *Analytical Essays on Music by Women Composers: Concert Music, 1960–2000* (New York, 2016); Denise Von Glahn, *Music and the Skillful Listener: American Women Compose the Natural World* (Bloomington, Ind., 2013), and Tim Howell with John Hargreaves and Michael Rofe (eds.), *Kaija Saariaho: Visions, Narratives, Dialogues* (Farnham, 2011).

⁴⁷ Lauren Redhead, "'New Music' as Patriarchal Category', 176.

⁴⁸ Martin Hoyles, 'Judith Weir', *Time Out*, 13–20 Apr. 1994, p. 110.

⁴⁹ Colton, 'The Female Exotic', 285; the reference is to Lloyd Whitesell, 'Men with a Past: Music and the "Anxiety of Influence"', *19th-Century Music*, 18 (1994), 152–63.

1 essential, irrespective of gender. The economic theorist Pierre-Michel Menger, for example,
 2 argues that successful artists benefit most when they ‘negotiate, cooperate and exchange
 3 points of view . . . putting themselves in the place of the other as much as they communicate
 4 with the other’.⁵⁰ This perspective is comparable to Howard E. Gruber’s notion that
 5 creativity requires the ‘active search and inquiry’ of a ‘welcoming mind’.⁵¹ In other words,
 6 creativity flourishes when it reaches out to existing ideas within a specialist field, and
 7 beyond. Support for this idea is provided by the concept of distributed creativity,⁵² which
 8 highlights the importance of dialogue in creativity. Even traditional sketch studies have
 9 challenged the notion of ‘purposeful, assured artistic intention’. Clarity of purpose may exist
 10 at a general level before a work is started, or be applied retrospectively, but creative
 11 processes are altogether more messy in detail: as is routinely observed, musical sketches
 12 often ‘illuminate a vast labyrinth of fragmentary gestures, partially successful methods,
 13 failed attempts and dead ends that seem to run in many different directions at the same
 14 time’.⁵³ Moreover, the common practice of revising works following first performances or
 15 publication further undermines the notion of ‘assured intention’.⁵⁴

16 Conceptions of uncertainty and unpredictability are central to a range of creativity
 17 theories at the micro-level of working practices, the macro-level of creative life cycles, and
 18 in social fields more broadly, where recipients and users are inevitably involved. Menger, for
 19 example, stresses the importance of serendipity, chance, and uncertainty in the career
 20 trajectories of artists. Small advantages, such as rewards for early signs of promise or
 21 endorsements from peers and those already established, arising from ‘incessant relative
 22 comparisons’,⁵⁵ may become significant advantages in crowded scenes in which artists are
 23 often barely separable in terms of talent. Although to some extent aligned with the relational
 24 approaches of Janet Wolff, Howard Becker, Pierre Bourdieu, and others, according to whom

⁵⁰ Pierre-Michel Menger, *The Economics of Creativity: Art and Achievement under Uncertainty* (Cambridge, Mass. and London, 2014), 7.

⁵¹ Howard E. Gruber, *Darwin on Man: A Psychological Study of Scientific Creativity* (Chicago, 1981), 248.

⁵² See Eric F. Clarke and Mark Doffman (eds.), *Distributed Creativity: Collaboration and Improvisation in Contemporary Music* (New York, 2018), and Margaret S. Barrett (ed.), *Collaborative Creative Thought and Practice in Music* (Farnham, 2014).

⁵³ Friedemann Sallis, ‘Afterword’, in Jonathan Goldman (ed.), *Texts and Beyond: The Process of Music Composition From the 19th to the 20th Century* (Bologna, 2016), 289–94 at 291.

⁵⁴ Revision is arguably standard practice in music but published works are seldom perceived in this context, especially canonical works, such as Musorgsky’s *Boris Godunov* or Britten’s *Billy Budd*.

⁵⁵ Menger, *The Economics of Creativity*, 318.

1 art is filtered through and success constructed by networks of cultural value and market
 2 demand,⁵⁶ Menger highlights the fundamentally unpredictable character of the creative field
 3 as a whole, which he defines as a nexus of ‘labor, talent, and chance’,⁵⁷ in which, crucially,
 4 artistic agency emerges from interactions, comparisons, and dialogue among fellow artists.

5 Menger’s ideas are key to the approach taken here, but it is worth noting that
 6 unpredictability is present in most other creative theories in some shape or form.
 7 Behavioural psychologists, for example, also acknowledge the role of uncertainty and
 8 indeterminacy in creativity.⁵⁸ Unpredictability is central to Margaret Boden’s definition of
 9 creativity as ‘the ability to come up with ideas or artefacts that are *new, surprising and*
 10 *valuable*’; the surprising element is ‘unexpected’, and creative ideas are ‘unpredictable’.⁵⁹
 11 Although there is disagreement over the precise role and importance of these factors,
 12 consensus exists regarding the importance of ‘dual-process’ models of cognition, in which
 13 autonomous thought and working memory combine in the generation and evaluative
 14 exploration of ideas, even as arguments continue about whether or not expertise and logic
 15 retain the upper hand over the unplanned and accidental.⁶⁰

16 Some behavioural theorists even try to differentiate artists as either decisive or
 17 indecisive. Such attempts soon run into trouble, however, although in ways that are

⁵⁶ See, e.g. Janet Wolff, *The Social Production of Art* (2nd edn., London, 1993), and *Aesthetics and the Sociology of Art* (London, 1983); Howard Becker, *Art Worlds* (Berkeley, 1982); and Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature* (Cambridge, 1993), and *The Rules of Art* (Cambridge, 1996).

⁵⁷ Menger, *The Economics of Creativity*, 319. Menger describes artistic labour as ‘a constantly grueling challenge, always accommodating to trial and error—oriented toward completion, but without a clearly and readily definable end. In this sense, regimes of artistic invention are coupled with regimes for managing uncertainty’ (pp. 177–8).

⁵⁸ For a useful overview see Aaron Kozbelt, Ronald A. Beghetto, and Mark A. Runco, ‘Theories of Creativity’, in James C. Kaufman and Robert J. Sternberg (eds.), *The Cambridge Handbook of Creativity* (Cambridge, 2010), 20–47.

⁵⁹ However, although Boden argues that chance is important, she also insists that ‘structural constraints and specialist knowledge are crucial’: ‘Chance with judgment can give us creativity; chance alone, certainly not’. Margaret A. Boden, *The Creative Mind: Myths and Mechanisms* (London and New York, 2nd edn., 2004), 1–3 and 237.

⁶⁰ Liane Gabora, for example, does not believe Darwinian selection and creativity are closely matched, although she admits that the comparison has drawn attention to ‘nonmonotonicity’ in creative practice (deviations from gradual improvement, such as random experiments, false starts, and backtracking), and the fact that creativity is not restricted to ‘purely logical, rational processes’; Liane Gabora, ‘An Analysis of the Blind Variation and Selective Retention (BVSr) Theory of Creativity’, *Creativity Research Journal*, 23 (2011), 155–65 at 164. See also Paul T. Sowden, Andrew Pringle, and Liane Gabora, ‘The Shifting Sands of Creative Thinking: Connections to Dual-Process Theory’, *Thinking and Reasoning*, 21 (2015), 40–60.

1 instructive. David W. Galenson’s highly reductive ‘finder-seeker’ creator typology,⁶¹ for
 2 example, divides artists into two types: conceptualists and experimentalists.⁶² The
 3 conceptual artist makes a breakthrough early, at the age of twenty-something. This ‘young
 4 genius’ finds an idea, plans and executes it quickly and with precision, then follows up the
 5 early breakthrough with a series of new conceptual innovations or stylistic changes (Wagner,
 6 Picasso, Schoenberg, Stravinsky, Cage, Stockhausen).⁶³ Experimentalists, on the other hand,
 7 engage in the slow, more uncertain process of incremental evolution, building upon rather
 8 than rejecting existing traditions. These seekers are less clear on where they are heading but,
 9 through painstaking trial and error, they arrive at heights of maturity later in life (Monet,
 10 Cézanne, Brahms, Bruckner, Verdi). While the finders are known especially for a handful of
 11 key works (Stravinsky’s Russian ballets), the seekers are admired for a corpus of work and a
 12 sense of culmination towards the end of their lives (Verdi’s *Otello*). Both types are essential
 13 to the development of art: ‘conceptualists create new styles and forms while experimentalists
 14 develop such styles and forms into mature symbol systems’.⁶⁴

15 Clearly, this theory is problematic. Besides its reliance on value-laden concepts
 16 (‘masterworks’, ‘genius’, ‘eminence’), and the notion of success (how is this measured?),
 17 there is a focus on individuals—in particular, exceptional, male individuals—in contrast to
 18 more relational approaches to art. Galenson and his followers, such as Aaron Kozbelt, are
 19 also overly reliant on what artists say they do, rather than on empirical evidence, and their
 20 judgements are shaped by the kind of hindsight that is not available to composers, who
 21 cannot predict how their musical languages or careers will develop. (This also raises the
 22 question of how best to approach early works, which are effectively steps in the dark: there
 23 is a balance to strike between interpreting them on their own terms and in relation to later
 24 music.) But fundamentally, the notion that artists are separable into finders or seekers itself
 25 is questionable: all creativity surely involves a combination of these approaches (ideation

⁶¹ Yana Durmysheva and Aaron Kozbelt, ‘Psychologizing the “Finder-Seeker” Creator Typology: Relations between the Creative Approach Questionnaire (CAPPQ) and Other Measures’, *Imagination, Cognition, and Personality*, 33 (2014), 341–58.

⁶² See David Galenson, *Painting Outside the Lines: Patterns of Creativity in Modern Art* (Cambridge, Mass., 2001), and *Old Masters and Young Geniuses: The Two Life Cycles of Artistic Creativity* (Princeton, 2006).

⁶³ I use ‘artist’ in this paragraph in the broadest sense, to cover visual artists, composers, novelists, poets, sculptors, and so on. The composers listed here are mainly drawn from Aaron Kozbelt, ‘Process, Self-Evaluation and Lifespan Creativity Trajectories in Eminent Composers’, in Dave Collins (ed.), *The Act of Musical Composition: Studies in the Creative Process* (Farnham, 2012), 27–52.

⁶⁴ Kozbelt, ‘Process, Self-Evaluation and Lifespan Creativity Trajectories’, 47, following Galenson, *Old Masters and Young Geniuses*.

1 and elaboration), in a reflexive, dialectical process of certainty and self-doubt, determined
 2 direction, and self-criticism. Musical sketches detailing Schoenberg's evolution of twelve-
 3 tone technique, for instance, show this so-called assertive conceptualist either uncertain
 4 where he is going,⁶⁵ or 'exploring a spectrum of approaches to row ordering'.⁶⁶ In other
 5 words, the idea of a conceptualist working with quick precision is flawed.⁶⁷ Moreover,
 6 composers frequently associated with a desire to control ideas, such as Pierre Boulez and
 7 Brian Ferneyhough, are arguably more concerned with freedom of expression within
 8 systems of constraint.⁶⁸ Such nuances are potentially lost in the 'finder-seeker' model.⁶⁹ If
 9 we are to take anything from this model, it is that artists are broadly classifiable as early
 10 starters or late developers; that they have varied practices and work at different speeds; that
 11 there is some heuristic value to the notion of conceptual and experimental approaches, if
 12 they are considered to work in conjunction.

13 Although Weir's breakthrough work was written at the age of 25, existing discourse
 14 tends to present her as an experimentalist, drawing on her own admission that she works
 15 slowly, especially in the early stages of a piece, and that she builds up a technique for each
 16 piece as she goes.⁷⁰ This results in a sense that 'it's only in the last few minutes that the

⁶⁵ Ethan Haimo observes Schoenberg making 'tentative', 'awkward' calculations for the Op. 29 Suite; Ethan Haimo, 'Atonality, Analysis and the Intentional Fallacy', *Music Theory Spectrum*, 18 (1996), 167–99; see 169–75.

⁶⁶ Jack Boss on Schoenberg's Op. 25 Suite for Piano, in Jack Boss, *Schoenberg's Twelve-Tone Music: Symmetry and the Musical Idea* (Cambridge, 2014), 37.

⁶⁷ For example, the myth of Mozart composing rapidly and with little effort has been debunked by studies of surviving drafts, sketches, and revisions; see William Kinderman, 'Mozart's Second Thoughts', in *The Creative Process in Music: From Mozart to Kurtág* (Urbana, Chicago, and Springfield, Ill., 2012), 17–41.

⁶⁸ See Robert Hasagawa, 'Constraint Systems in Brian Ferneyhough's *Third String Quartet*', in Goldman (ed.), *Texts and Beyond*, 271–88. Hasagawa observes that the constraints Ferneyhough sets up must be 'solved through an assortment of local strategies. The ad-hoc nature of these strategies and their irrevocability once chosen suggest the activity of an improviser—though of course Ferneyhough's improvisation is in slow motion, through notation rather than in sound' (p. 285).

⁶⁹ In a highly critical response to Galenson's work, Dean Keith Simonton notes that 'most creators adopt a combination of conceptual and experimental styles'; Dean Keith Simonton, 'Creative Life Cycles in Literature: Poets Versus Novelists or Conceptualists Versus Experimentalists?', *Psychology of Aesthetics, Creativity, and the Arts*, 1 (2007), 133–9 at 134. Kozbelt points to Beethoven and Debussy as figures who show 'a curious mixture of characteristics of Galenson's categories'; 'Process, Self-Evaluation and Lifespan Creativity Trajectories', 35. Why the mixture is deemed 'curious' is unclear, beyond the fact that it points to a problem with Galenson's theory, which Kozbelt is otherwise keen to adopt.

⁷⁰ Weir shares this less directed approach with many other composers who devise systems as they go, such as Birtwistle. Colton often compares Weir unfavourably to Birtwistle in this regard, but the latter is arguably more uncertain and doubtful about his direction.

1 piece gets going’, by which time it is too late to ‘tear up the first twenty minutes and start
 2 again’.⁷¹ Weir even describes herself as ‘an “experimental” composer’, which, according to
 3 Morgan, helps to explain ‘the reason why she has withdrawn works: some “experiments”
 4 simply do not work’.⁷² Yet this approach is deemed beneficial by Kozbelt, who argues that
 5 experimentalism offers valuable ‘learning opportunities’ to those who ‘deliberately seek
 6 improvement within tradition’.⁷³ Weir’s stance is more nuanced, however, since she does not
 7 work ‘within’ so much as draw on tradition, as it suits her, in which respect she is a model
 8 for the kind of ‘anxiety free’ use of the past frequently associated with Thomas Adès.⁷⁴ As
 9 White correctly observes, Weir ‘appropriates established conventions but places them in a
 10 rarefied “frame”’: her ‘dialogue with [tonal and expressive] conventions, and her refusal to
 11 conform to their established implications, is one of the most intriguing aspects of her
 12 language, and one of the most difficult to analyze’.⁷⁵

13 In the light of these observations, I approach Weir’s early withdrawn works as a
 14 series of experimentalist dialogues with increasingly conceptualist traits, each illustrating
 15 Menger’s concept of putting oneself ‘in the place of the other’, as much as communicating
 16 with the other, and Gruber’s notion of the ‘welcoming mind’ that actively searches and
 17 inquires.⁷⁶ Before turning to Weir’s music, however, it will be instructive to examine the

⁷¹ Andrew Ford, ‘Seeing Both Sides: Judith Weir’, in *Composer to Composer* (London, 1993), 107–14 at 109. This is occasionally reflected in Weir reception, for example, a review of the fifteen-minute orchestral piece *Forest* observes: ‘What the work lacks is . . . the feeling that it knows its destination’; Richard Fairman, ‘Weir and Wonderful’, *Financial Times*, 19 Dec. 1995, p. 13. However, this opinion is consistent with Weir’s intention to generate a series of organic, self-propagating shapes having started the piece ‘with nothing but the opening melody in mind’. From Weir’s Composer Note in the published score: *Forest* (London, 1995).

⁷² Morgan, ‘Judith Weir’, 23. Similarly, Bayan Northcott has observed: ‘most of the overtly Experimental pieces were among those withdrawn early’; ‘Light Hand through the Darkness’, *The Independent*, 16 Apr. 1994.

⁷³ Kozbelt, ‘Process, Self-Evaluation and Lifespan Creativity Trajectories’, 40. Kozbelt illustrates this point with reference to Beethoven, whose creative life cycle, he argues, demonstrates ‘a relationship between self-criticism and longitudinal improvement’; see Kozbelt, ‘A Quantitative Analysis of Beethoven as Self-Critic: Implications for Psychological Theories of Musical Creativity’, *Psychology of Music*, 35 (2007), 144–68 at 41.

⁷⁴ See Tim Rutherford-Johnson, *Music after the Fall: Modern Composition and Culture since 1989* (Oakland, Calif., 2017), 244–5; Edward Venn, ‘Thomas Adès and the Spectres of Brahms’, *Journal of the Royal Musical Association*, 140 (2015), 163–212; and Arnold Whittall, ‘James Dillon, Thomas Adès, and the Pleasures of Allusion’, in Peter O’Hagan (ed.), *Aspects of British Music of the 1990s* (Aldershot, 2003), 3–27.

⁷⁵ White, ‘Music Drama on the Concert Stage’ (1997), 38.

⁷⁶ My approach here reflects Latour’s insistence that it is ‘the work, and the movement, and the flow, and the changes that should be stressed’ when considering actor networks. Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network Theory* (Oxford, 2007), 143.

1 practice of withdrawing works more generally, both in order to challenge gendered
2 interpretations of Weir's actions, and to raise ethical considerations.

3 CREATIVE SELF-CENSORSHIP

4 Creativity theories have largely failed to consider the significance of the 'willing'
5 withdrawal of works from artists' official catalogues, as with Weir, or the withdrawal of
6 musical works following first performances. These acts amount to forms of creative self-
7 censorship, which may provide important insights into an artist's creativity as a whole.⁷⁷

8 There is not space to develop a gender-discourse analysis of the topic here, but
9 clearly, Weir is in the company of numerous male composers who have expressed doubts
10 about works subsequently withdrawn, but whose reputations remain undamaged.⁷⁸ With
11 Brahms, for example, the practice is held to demonstrate admirable levels of self-criticism
12 and awareness, linked with artistic growth and a heroic battle for perfection—in other words,
13 'experimentalist' struggle.⁷⁹ As will be seen, the ghost of Brahms hovers appropriately, even
14 ironically, behind a number of Weir's early works—as, indeed, it haunts the music and
15 thought of other British composers.⁸⁰ Yet the decision to remove from historical or audible

⁷⁷ Although such decisions may be reluctant, I use the term 'willingly' to refer to withdrawals made essentially for creative and aesthetic reasons as opposed to those determined primarily by other factors, such as political censorship. However, it is unlikely that a decision to withdraw a work is ever based exclusively on matters of creative practice, although it may be based entirely on external factors—for example, during the Yugoslav conflict in the early 1990s Weir understandably chose to withdraw *A Serbian Cabaret* (1984).

⁷⁸ György Kurtág, for example, composes 'painstakingly and haltingly: in 1985, when he was 59, his output had reached only Op. 23, and several works remained unfinished or had been withdrawn for revision'; Rachel Beckles Willson, 'Kurtág, György', *Grove Music Online*, www.oxfordmusiconline.com (accessed 20 Jan. 2018).

⁷⁹ For example: 'Brahms's *agens* [motivation] as a composer wishing to reach the "very best" makes more understandable the hesitation he had in admitting that a work was completed'; Imogen Fellinger, 'Brahms's View of Mozart', in Robert Pascall (ed.), *Brahms: Biographical, Documentary and Analytical Studies* (Cambridge, 1983), 57.

⁸⁰ This topic has been explored in detail by Edward Venn in relation to the music of Thomas Adès, in particular his work for baritone and orchestra *Brahms* (2001); see Venn, 'Thomas Adès and the Spectres of Brahms', which also examines Brahms's spectral presence in the musical thought of Schoenberg, and of Adès's teachers in Cambridge, Alexander Goehr and Hugh Wood. This phenomenon actually dates back earlier, to the emergence of the English Musical Renaissance, when Stanford 'strenuously advocated Brahms as a compositional paradigm'; Jeremy Dibble, 'Stanford, Sir Charles Villiers', *Grove Music Online* (accessed 31 Aug. 2018). A consequent anxiety of Brahmsian influence is evident in the early, unpublished works of Vaughan Williams and in Britten's juvenilia, although by 1940 Britten had developed an 'intense dislike' of Brahms; Christopher Mark, 'Juvenilia (1922–1932)', in Mervyn Cooke (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Benjamin Britten* (Cambridge, 1999), 11–35 at 14.

1 record a work that took time and effort to complete, perform, and even publish is far from
 2 inconsequential. What are the ramifications of such acts? Do they suggest hesitancy and self-
 3 doubt, or are they vital forms of critical reflection that strengthen artistic development?
 4 Moreover, when a work is withdrawn, what is the ontological status of that piece, and what
 5 are the ethics of writing about such works, if they are offered up for study? Before turning to
 6 Weir’s own withdrawn works, it will be instructive to consider some of these issues and the
 7 practice of creative self-censorship more generally.

8 Musical works are withdrawn for numerous reasons, and some composers withdraw
 9 works more frequently than others. All work lists are fluid, with pieces removed, restored,
 10 and sometimes not even officially acknowledged (certain genres are especially vulnerable to
 11 omission, such as incidental and film music). Weir has stated that she removes works to tidy
 12 her workshop: it is a practical solution to the problem of keeping on top of an expanding
 13 catalogue.⁸¹ Most often, however, the practice is associated with the sins of youth: juvenilia,
 14 student works, and early opus numbers are deemed to be underdeveloped, derivative, or
 15 unrefined—Gustav Holst, for example, referred to his ‘Early Horrors’.⁸² Richard Rodney
 16 Bennett withdrew all the works he composed while studying with Pierre Boulez, Bernard
 17 Rands those written under the guidance of Luigi Dallapiccola, and Henri Dutilleux nearly
 18 everything he composed before his Piano Sonata (1946–8), each perhaps seeking to erase
 19 their respective anxieties of influence.⁸³ Weir is similarly critical of her early pieces,
 20 describing them as impractical and unsympathetic to performers, written in an overly
 21 complicated idiom with which she did not feel comfortable, in contrast to the more practical
 22 music she wrote at this time for community and non-professional groups, which gave her
 23 greater satisfaction.⁸⁴ She found her community work liberating, and it clearly influenced the
 24 development of her mature style. But what lessons were learned from the withdrawn works?
 25 Were they relevant to later developments? The danger is that we simply accept the

⁸¹ Conversation with the author at the composer’s home, 14 Dec. 2013.

⁸² See Colin Matthews, ‘Some Unknown Holst’, *Musical Times*, 125 (1984), 269–72 at 269. A broader survey would include around eight operas and Singspiele that Schubert began but failed to complete. Robert Winter suggests a range of reasons for this, including a ‘lack of self-criticism’ in the earliest attempts, the poor state of opera in Vienna at the time, and the lure of more immediate commissions; Robert Winter, ‘Franz Schubert, (iv) Dramatic Music’, *Grove Music Online* (accessed 20 Jan. 2018).

⁸³ See Philip Rupprecht, ‘“Something Slightly Indecent”: British Composers, the European Avant-Garde, and National Stereotypes in the 1950s’, *Musical Quarterly*, 91 (2008), 275–326 at 323 n. 92); Christopher Small, ‘Bernard Rands’, *Musical Times*, 108 (1967), 905–7; Roger Nichols, ‘Dutilleux at 75’, *Musical Times*, 132 (1991), 701–2.

⁸⁴ Conversation with the author in Aberdare Hall, Cardiff, 1 May 2012.

1 composer's view and brand such pieces as failed attempts or, worse still, overlook them
2 altogether.⁸⁵

3 But the practice of withdrawing works is not restricted to early development. To take
4 a handful of examples: when George Antheil's career was in full maturity, in the 1930s and
5 1940s, he withdrew two symphonic works;⁸⁶ Karl Amadeus Hartmann's symphonies Nos.
6 3–6 were based on manuscripts that had been withdrawn or destroyed;⁸⁷ Salvatore
7 Sciarrino's Fifth Piano Sonata, composed when he was 47, was withdrawn for revision.⁸⁸ In
8 the case of Boulez, matters become more complex. As Edward Campbell has observed:

9 A great admirer of Joyce, [Boulez] took to heart the notion of the work-in-progress, routinely
10 spending several years on a single composition. He worked on *Pli selon pli*, arguably his greatest
11 achievement, from 1957, revising parts of it as late as 1989. Other works such as *Le Soleil des eaux*
12 and *Le Visage nuptial* exist in multiple versions, all of which will make for interesting debate as
13 scholars and performers in the future pour [*sic*] over the composer's choices and compare
14 manifestations.⁸⁹

⁸⁵ An excellent example is provided by Sebastian Wedler's efforts to bring out the 'other—repressed—voices in Webern's work', following a detailed, sketch-based analysis of the String Quartet (1905), widely considered the turning point in Webern's career when he began taking lessons with Schoenberg. Wedler notes 'the *inconsistencies* in Webern's later self-historiographical account as put forward in his 1932–33 lectures on *The Path to New Music*, where the composer aimed at bringing his entire musical development into a coherent narrative', suppressing voices that had 'a great impact on his early development', notably Strauss but also Mahler, Wagner, Wolf, Pfitzner, and Puccini. Sebastian Wedler, 'Thus Spoke the Early Modernist: *Zarathustra* and Rotational Form in Webern's String Quartet (1905)', *Twentieth-Century Music*, 12 (2015), 225–51 at 249 and 226. See also Ross Cole's interrogation of Steve Reich's formative 'proto-countercultural' collaborations, which he later downplayed: Ross Cole, "'Fun, Yes, but Music?": Steve Reich and the San Francisco Bay Area's Cultural Nexus, 1962–5', *Journal of the Society for American Music*, 6 (2012), 315–48.

⁸⁶ Sabra Statham, "'Back to Baltimore": George Antheil's Symphonic Excursion from European Modernism to American Postmodernism', *Musical Times*, 153 (2012), 3–16. At the same time, Antheil laboured on an 'American' symphony, which was rejected several times by potential conductors, revised multiple times, and not performed until fifty years after his death.

⁸⁷ See Andrew D. McCredie, 'Karl Amadeus Hartmann (1905–1963): New Documents and Sources in a Decennial Perspective', *Miscellanea musicologica: Adelaide Studies in Musicology*, 7 (1975), 142–85. For an associated discussion of Hartmann's suppression and revision of works from 1930 to 1945, to hide his earlier socialist convictions from West German audiences, see Ulrich J. Blomann and Jürgen Thym, 'A Semblance of Freedom: Karl Amadeus Hartmann between Democratic Renewal and Cold War, 1945–7', *Twentieth-Century Music*, 9 (2012), 143–59.

⁸⁸ This piece was withdrawn for revision after its premiere by Mauricio Pollini in Salzburg on 24 Aug. 1994.

⁸⁹ Edward Campbell, 'Open Form: Pierre Boulez, 1927–2016', *Radical Philosophy*, 197 (2016), 70–2, available at www.radicalphilosophy.com/obituary/open-form-pierre-boulez-1927-2016

1 For Boulez, arguably the most forthright modernist of all, uncertainty was part and parcel of
 2 his approach, as further examples attest. The first version of *Polyphonie X*, composed in
 3 1949–50, was superseded by an entirely new version in 1951, which was subsequently
 4 withdrawn.⁹⁰ In 1969, at a critical moment in his development, Boulez withdrew *Pour le Dr*
 5 *Kalmus* following its premiere, for reasons that are still not understood. He then reintroduced
 6 the piece into his official catalogue in 2005.⁹¹ And the withdrawn *Notation I* for piano
 7 (1945) was later revised as *Notations I* for orchestra (1978), which is essentially a new
 8 composition written in response to the original piano piece.⁹²

9 Many of these examples reflect the practice of withdrawing works in order to revise
 10 them at a later date, which highlights the unpredictable (some would argue evolutionary)
 11 nature of creativity and artistic self-perception. Weir has explained that this applies to some
 12 of her early works, such as *Hans the Hedgehog* (1978), a children’s ‘music-drama’ based on
 13 a Grimm brothers fairy tale, for reciter, two oboes, bassoon, and harpsichord, composed
 14 while she was Composer in Residence with the Southern Arts Association (1976–9). She
 15 could see the work needed revision but also did not feel it appropriate to have a piece written
 16 for non-professionals in her catalogue in the heady climate of 1970s experimentalism amid
 17 what she perceived to be ‘a rather doctrinaire atmosphere that it was hard to break away
 18 from’.⁹³

19 In other words, the decision to withdraw or withhold a work combines critical self-
 20 reflection with public image management, the dynamics of which will change during a

(accessed 20 Jan. 2018).

⁹⁰ See Martin Zenck, ‘Pierre Boulez: *Polyphonie X* (1951)—Ein gescheitertes, weil zurückgezogenes Werk: Ein “tombeau à tête reposée”’, *Archiv für Musikwissenschaft*, 72 (2015), 277–301.

⁹¹ See Brice Tissier, “‘A Garland on Pierre Boulez’: Quelques considérations sur *Pour le Dr. Kalmus* (1969/2005)”, *Intersections: Canadian Journal of Music/Revue Canadienne de Musique*, 34 (2014), 153–79.

⁹² See Christian Ofenbauer, ‘Vom Faltenlegen: Versuch einer Lektüre von Pierre Boulez’ *notation(s) I(1)*, *Musik-Konzepte*, 89–90 (1995), 55–75.

⁹³ Conversation with the author, 1 May 2012. During her time as Composer-in-Residence with the Southern Arts Association, Weir was invited in to schools for up to a week at a time, and worked with other groups, such as brass bands. *Hans the Hedgehog* and *From our Island: Scenes from the Isle of Wight* (1979) were written in this role, the former for schoolchildren and professional quartet Sheba Sound (see www.oboeclassics.com/Sheba.htm (accessed 20 Jan. 2018), the latter for the pupils of Medina High School, Newport, Isle of Wight, to celebrate the school’s opening. Weir clearly relished composing this substantial, ambitious work, although she withheld it from her publishers. Scored for orchestra, piano, chorus, tape, slide projector, and mimes, it presents eight snapshots of the island’s history (including early monastic settlers, invaders, smugglers, Queen Victoria), its present (represented by a *musique concrète* created by the children) and future.

1 composer's lifetime. In 1988, for example, promotional needs trumped artistic choices when
 2 an extract of Weir's harp piece *Harmony and Invention* (1978; revised 1980, withdrawn by
 3 1987) was used to promote the composer on the cover of *The Wire* (issue 56), the
 4 experimental notation superimposed across a fashionably blurred, sepia-toned photograph of
 5 Weir, clearly projecting the image of a young, modern, and progressive artist. As a
 6 composer's style and priorities evolve, so earlier works may seem flawed or less valid. Even
 7 a work as canonical today as Stravinsky's *Symphonies of Wind Instruments* was withdrawn
 8 for a period during the composer's lifetime; the original 1920 version was eventually
 9 reworked in 1947, and when both were performed in 1968 Stravinsky 'did not like anything
 10 in the old version'.⁹⁴ Stephen Walsh argues that the revision was an attempt to resolve the
 11 'many questions and uncertainties surrounding the work', including Stravinsky's own
 12 'puzzlement' with his creation.⁹⁵ A more extreme example is provided by Hans Werner
 13 Henze's *Ein Werkverzeichnis 1946–1996*. As Charles Wilson has argued, this authorized
 14 volume, with entries on each of Henze's acknowledged works, amounts to 'a wholesale
 15 "meta-revision" of his published output—an undertaking that involved, to be sure, the
 16 revision of individual compositions, but above all sought to mark out the boundaries of his
 17 official *oeuvre*'.⁹⁶ In addition to recomposing scores, and even altering titles, which in
 18 certain instances removed political associations that had been integral to the conception of
 19 those works, Henze concealed his withdrawn works: although these appear in the
 20 chronological index (in square brackets), they are excluded from the alphabetical list,
 21 therefore locating them 'requires either knowledge of their date or a willingness to scan the
 22 index from start to finish'.⁹⁷ In other words, Henze exercised the composer's right to forget
 23 entire works, reconceiving his evolution in subtle and more interventionist ways that

⁹⁴ Robert Craft, from a private communication with Stephen Walsh (1985), cited in Stephen Walsh, 'Stravinsky's Symphonies: Accident or Design?', in Craig Ayrey and Mark Everist (eds.), *Analytical Strategies and Musical Interpretation: Essays on Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Music* (Cambridge, 1996), 35–71 at 36.

⁹⁵ Ibid. Walsh suggests that Stravinsky's puzzlement was partly attributable to the confused nature of his sketching practices in the wake of the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution (p. 39).

⁹⁶ Wilson notes that the 'handsomely produced volume' comprises 'entries on each acknowledged work (many with short commentaries) and replete with colour-plate illustrations, excerpts from scores and sketches, a preface and a short essay, a biographical chronology, indexes of works (chronological, alphabetical and by scoring) and a roster of text authors and librettists. A designer engaged at Henze's expense had assured the catalogue's bibliophile quality, which won it prizes from the German book trade.' Charles Wilson, 'The Composer's Catalogue and the "Right to Be Forgotten": Hans Werner Henze's *Ein Werkverzeichnis 1946–1996*', unpublished paper.

⁹⁷ Ibid. Wilson observes that this approach was also applied to 'incidental music for film, stage and radio (including only independent concert works refashioned from it), "occasional music" (such as dedication pieces), and contributions to collective compositions'.

1 amounted to ‘a self-conscious act of conservation and self-canonization’.⁹⁸

2 As already discussed, comparisons of work lists presented by Weir’s publisher have
 3 changed throughout her career, with the notable omission of incidental music.⁹⁹ Some of
 4 Weir’s music has evaded cataloguing altogether, including *Memoriale* in memory of Britten,
 5 from 1986, the *Alveley* symphonies for amateur musicians,¹⁰⁰ and music for a story-telling
 6 project with Vaya Naidu and Sarvar Sabri, *Psyche* and *Manimekalai*, which toured the UK
 7 with the Birmingham Contemporary Music Group in 1996 and beyond.¹⁰¹ And some pieces
 8 have even eluded Weir herself, such as her *Mass* for string quartet, which was performed
 9 forty times then apparently lost (the full score and parts, I discovered, are located in the
 10 Victoria and Albert Museum Archive). Similarly, Michael Finnissy holds the ‘missing’
 11 manuscript of Weir’s Cello Sonata (1980). As this example demonstrates, performers are
 12 also important stakeholders in withdrawn pieces. The Arditti Quartet, for example, has
 13 repeatedly asked Gerald Barry to return the string quartet *Cork* to his performing
 14 catalogue.¹⁰² Similarly, Michael Finnissy has petitioned Weir to reinstate *An mein Klavier*,
 15 not only because he believes in its artistic value (the work was commissioned and premiered
 16 by him), but also because other players have asked to perform it.

17 But what are the artistic merits and ethical implications of studying or performing
 18 withdrawn works? Efforts to restore early, withdrawn versions do not always receive critical
 19 approval. After attending a series of ‘Vaughan Williams rarities’, including the original
 20 withdrawn version of the *London Symphony* (1911–13), Mark Doran lamented the ‘defective
 21 slow movement (disappointingly short in some places and crushingly long in others), its

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Examples include: *The Gift of the Gorgon* (1992), incidental music for Peter Shaffer’s play, premiered at the Barbican Arts Centre, London, directed by Peter Hall; and *Oedipus the King* and *Oedipus at Colonus* (1996), incidental music for plays by Sophocles, directed by Peter Hall at the Royal National Theatre. However, Weir’s incidental music for the premiere of Caryl Churchill’s *The Skriker* (1994) is included in the 2018 catalogue.

¹⁰⁰ There are at least three symphonies in this cycle; the first was composed for the Alveley Village Band, in Shropshire.

¹⁰¹ The project toured Birmingham in 1997. In 2000 it was repackaged as *Future Perfect*, touring England as part of an Arts Council Contemporary Music Network venture, which travelled to India in 2002. A further revised UK tour happened in 2005. See <https://www.bcmg.org.uk/manimekalai> (accessed 18 Jan. 2018).

¹⁰² This was most likely withdrawn because it was conceived as a contrapuntal exercise in preparation for Barry’s opera *The Intelligence Park*. See Adrian Jack, ‘Introducing Gerald Barry’, *Musical Times*, 129 (1988), 389–93 at 391–2. For an example of a conductor championing the restoration of an abandoned piece, see Oliver Knussen, ‘In Search of “Grohg”’, *Tempo*, 189, June 1994, pp. 6–7.

1 shipwreck of a finale, and its longer “epilogue” vitiated by the slow end of the (extended)
 2 scherzo’, leading him to regret the painstaking restoration and resurrection of ‘imperfect,
 3 withdrawn scores and unsatisfactory, rejected “first attempts” . . . to form the basis of gala
 4 events attended by royalty and relayed by radio. World’s gone mad.’¹⁰³ For others, however,
 5 the original *London Symphony* proved to be a ‘valid’ work in its own right, and ‘certainly
 6 worth hearing’.¹⁰⁴

7 During the fifteen or more years Michael Tippett composed before his first published
 8 work, his early symphony in B flat (originally titled Symphony No. 1) was performed then
 9 withdrawn.¹⁰⁵ Despite a clause in the composer’s will requesting that the work be left alone
 10 because he ‘regarded it as immature and overly influenced by Sibelius’,¹⁰⁶ Martyn Brabbins
 11 and the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra received permission from the Michael Tippett
 12 Musical Foundation to perform and record the piece in their 2017–18 season. Tippett’s early
 13 symphony is potentially instructive because it was the first orchestral composition he
 14 completed following his counterpoint studies with R. O. Morris (the work was composed in
 15 1933 then revised the following year). As Thomas Schuttenhelm has revealed, the symphony
 16 generated a positive critical response when it was first performed in 1934, with Tippett
 17 conducting, at Morley College. Tippett subsequently campaigned hard for a performance by
 18 the BBC, revising the work several times, but it was rejected, twice. With the outbreak of
 19 war the manuscript was deposited in the vaults of Schott in Mainz but it was subsequently
 20 withdrawn from Tippett’s catalogue, and on 6 July 1994 a note was appended to the copy in
 21 the British Library: ‘TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN: This manuscript may be inspected
 22 and studied for research purposes but not copied for publication performance or exploitation
 23 in any way until fifty years after my death.’¹⁰⁷

24 Owing to the efforts of Brabbins and the BBC SSO, audiences will not have to wait
 25 until 2048 to hear Tippett’s symphony. But should musicologists remain silent?

¹⁰³ Mark Doran, ‘First Performances: London, Barbican: Vaughan Williams Rarities’, *Tempo*, 58/228 (2004), 70–3 at 73.

¹⁰⁴ Colin Matthews, ‘Going behind Britten’s Back’, in Lucy Walker (ed.), *Benjamin Britten: New Perspectives on his Life and Work* (Woodbridge, 2009), 8–16 at 9.

¹⁰⁵ Thomas Schuttenhelm, *The Orchestral Music of Michael Tippett: Creative Development and the Compositional Process* (Cambridge, 2014), 31.

¹⁰⁶ Kate Molleson, ‘Tippett’s Work Resonates in Politically Charged Times’, *The Herald*, 23 Nov. 2016, <https://www.heraldscotland.com/news/14921328.michael-tippetts-work-resonates-in-politically-charged-times/> (accessed 20 Jan. 2018).

¹⁰⁷ Add. MS 72010; in Schuttenhelm, *The Orchestral Music of Michael Tippett*, 34. My thanks to Fiona McHenry in the British Library for confirming that there is no comma between ‘publication’ and ‘performance’ in Tippett’s note.

1 Schuttenhelm evidently thinks so, since he refrains from detailed commentary on the piece
 2 despite having seen two extant manuscripts, remarking: ‘it is probably wise to consider the
 3 composer’s caution against “exploitation in any way” before any such performance is
 4 arranged’.¹⁰⁸ The word ‘exploitation’ sounds an ethical alarm bell, and clearly permission
 5 needs to be granted. But what does the Tippett symphony reveal? Set against the view to
 6 ‘leave well alone’, Colin Matthews has argued it is ‘unthinkable that musicologists should be
 7 able to gloat in private over music that they consider unsafe for ears other than their own’.¹⁰⁹
 8 These remarks may be, in part, a defence of Matthews’s own ongoing work to revive or
 9 orchestrate Britten’s early music, but others have also argued for the value of this music and,
 10 in doing so, challenged the common division between ‘juvenile’ and ‘mature’.¹¹⁰

11 Armed with Weir’s permission to examine her scores, many of which she kindly
 12 placed at my disposal, I proceed now to the music. In discussing these works, I do not mean
 13 to ignore or in any way diminish Weir’s decision to withdraw them. Rather, I seek both to
 14 appreciate them on their own terms and understand how they informed her subsequent
 15 development. I will move forward chronologically and selectively, emphasizing certain
 16 works over others according to my own perception of their relative importance. And while I
 17 wish to avoid acting as an uncritical spokesperson for Weir—a problem that has been the
 18 subject of recent debate—it is worth emphasizing that I am concerned with music that the
 19 composer would prefer us not to hear.¹¹¹

20 WEIR’S EARLY WITHDRAWN WORKS

21 Weir’s earliest works reveal what we might clearly call an experimentalist engagement with
 22 historical models, inspired by Berio’s *Sinfonia*.¹¹² The first three acknowledged pieces are
 23 based on Mahler, Monteverdi, and Bach, and yet each in its own way demonstrates that far
 24 from being a slow developer Weir had immediately identified what would go on to be some
 25 of her main preoccupations, even some of her key stylistic traits. But this realization

¹⁰⁸ Ibid. 34.

¹⁰⁹ Matthews, ‘Going behind Britten’s Back’, 11.

¹¹⁰ See Lucy Walker, “‘How a Child’s Mind Works’: Assessing the “Value” of Britten’s Juvenilia”, *Notes*, 64 (2008), 641–58; Mark, ‘Juvenilia (1922–1932)’; and Christopher Mark, *Early Britten: A Study of Stylistic and Technical Evolution* (New York and London, 1995), esp. 7–36.

¹¹¹ I am referring to the conference ‘Writing about Contemporary Artists: Challenges, Practices and Complexities’, hosted by the Institute of Advanced Studies, Surrey University, 20–2 Oct. 2017.

¹¹² It is also possible that Weir was influenced by John Tavener’s use of Bach and medieval Spanish music in his *Ultimos Ritos* (1972).

1 emerged from experimentation. Rather than comprehend these traits as *sui generis*, the early
 2 withdrawn works demonstrate they grew from, and through, a deliberate modernist
 3 misreading and critical reinterpretation of the music of others, casting pre-existing music in a
 4 new, revisionist light. Dreyer refers to these earliest works as ‘classical parody pieces’.¹¹³
 5 Inasmuch as they are clearly modelled on pre-existing music, Weir’s earliest works are
 6 indeed parodies. However, parody is often narrowly defined as oppositional—a negation,
 7 rejection, or ironic inversion of a model—when in fact, as Linda Hutcheon highlights, it is a
 8 complex genre that covers a variety of approaches, ‘from respectful to playful to scathingly
 9 critical’.¹¹⁴ She notes that parody is ‘repetition with critical distance’, ‘a formal and
 10 structural relation between two texts’, ‘a mode of self-reflexivity’, and ‘one of the ways in
 11 which modern artists have managed to come to terms with the weight of the past’, perhaps
 12 by drawing attention to an ideal or a norm ‘from which the modern departs’.¹¹⁵ My reading
 13 of Weir’s earliest works is that they are all of the above but that fundamentally they are
 14 sympathetic dialogues with pre-existing models that seek points of rapprochement and
 15 common interest from which to depart, elaborate, and extend, rather than ridicule, satirize, or
 16 transgress. In this sense, they are closer in attitude and intent to sixteenth-century ‘parody
 17 Masses’, inasmuch as they pay a certain respect to and may seek to learn from a model,
 18 reimagining it through processes of ‘transfer, transformation and transfusion’, as John
 19 Milsom has usefully argued.¹¹⁶ Weir does misread and critically reinterpret her models, and
 20 this is consistent with Hutcheon’s idea of parody as a form of ‘authorized transgression’ that
 21 is ‘double and divided’, its ambivalence stemming from the ‘dual drives of conservative and
 22 revolutionary forces’.¹¹⁷ We might therefore conclude that Weir’s earliest works are parodies
 23 in the broadest sense but with an emphasis on the constructive and sympathetic; they are
 24 open to a range of attitudes but are never mocking or ‘scathingly critical’.

25 The first piece, *Where the Shining Trumpets Blow*, around seven minutes long,
 26 represents Weir’s earliest reflection on German Romanticism, which is an important strand
 27 in her later music.¹¹⁸ It was composed in 1972–3, the year before Weir went up to

¹¹³ Dreyer, ‘Judith Weir’, 593.

¹¹⁴ Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Parody: The Teachings of Twentieth-Century Art Forms* (Urbana and Chicago, 2000), p. xii.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.* 6, 22, 29 and 5.

¹¹⁶ John Milsom, ‘The T–Mass: *Quis scrutatur?*’, *Early Music*, 46 (2018), 319–31 at 320.

¹¹⁷ Hutcheon, *A Theory of Parody*, 26.

¹¹⁸ For more in this, see Castein, ‘The Composer as Librettist’, and David Beard, ‘From “Heroische Bogenstriche” to “Waldeinsamkeit”: Gender and Genre in Judith Weir’s *Heroic Strokes of the Bow* and *Blond Eckbert*’, in Beate Neumeier (ed.), *Dichotonies: Gender and Music* (Heidelberg, 2009), 77–96.

1 Cambridge and at the end of her private studies with John Tavener, a near-neighbour in her
 2 home borough of Harrow.¹¹⁹ In an expansion of the original, Weir took Mahler's 'Wo die
 3 schönen Trompeten blasen', from *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*, and recomposed it for eighteen
 4 solo strings (9/3/3/3). Given the importance of trumpets in the title and narrative, Weir's
 5 instrumental choice may seem ironic, but her gentle dynamics and softened fanfare gestures
 6 are sympathetic to Mahler's direction for the movement as a whole, 'Geheimnisvoll zart,
 7 verträumt [Secretly delicate, dreamy]', which reflects the song's subject matter: a maiden is
 8 awoken by her soldier lover whose ghostly presence and parting remark, that he must return
 9 to his 'Haus' under the green turf of the battlefield, suggests he has been killed.¹²⁰ Weir's
 10 song choice and approach further demonstrate her clarity about future preoccupations:
 11 gendered narratives of disappearance, loss, and senseless slaughter, distanced by framing
 12 devices, are central to her oeuvre.¹²¹ She may also have been attracted by the provocative
 13 aspect of Mahler's apparently naïve turn to folk tales as a counter to the materialism and
 14 modernity of *fin de siècle* Vienna.¹²² Weir amplifies the original (transposed down, from D
 15 to C minor, apparently to exploit the darker tones of the lower open strings on the viola and
 16 cello), clearly relishing Mahler's instrumental doublings and sometimes repeating ideas,
 17 such as the fanfare flourish in bar 126. Yet she also extends the original through extensive
 18 use of *divisi* to create an intricately contrapuntal canvas in which the melody is distributed
 19 democratically between the violins; at the opening, for example, the oboe melody (Weir's
 20 own instrument) is passed from first, to third, then fourth violin (see Pl. 1(a)). <Place Pl. 1a
 21 and b near here> The opening section is then further amplified by the addition of numerous
 22 short-note cells, which echo a demisemiquaver figure heard at the start of Mahler's song.

23 This elaboration of Mahler's delicately haunted soundscape, added to Weir's
 24 description of the piece as a 'fantasia', recalls Robin Holloway's orchestral 'paraphrases',
 25 *Scenes from Schumann* (1970), although Weir claims she was unaware of Holloway or his

¹¹⁹ The autograph score is dated 'December 1972—February 1973', which places it in a gap year between her attendance at the North London Collegiate School and university. Weir began lessons with Tavener in 1970. According to Dreyer, she studied with Tavener for three years, although Weir has stated 'we met five or six times over a couple of years'; quoted in Nicholas Wroe, 'The Storyteller', *The Guardian*, 12 Jan. 2008.

¹²⁰ Weir returned to Mahler's *Wunderhorn* in 1978 in her own eponymously titled orchestral work, lasting twelve minutes. At the time of writing, however, neither score nor recording is extant.

¹²¹ Examples include *King Harald's Saga, Thread!* (1981), *Missa del Cid* (1988), and, more recently, *Armida* (2005) and *In the Land of Uz* (2017).

¹²² See Julian Johnson, *Mahler's Voices: Expression and Irony in the Songs and Symphonies* (Oxford, 2009), 225.

1 music at the time.¹²³ Unlike Holloway, however, Weir adopts certain avant-garde techniques,
 2 which have a more striking transformative effect. One ‘mildly aleatoric’ feature,¹²⁴ which
 3 further illustrates a democratizing purpose, is her instruction that the players should avoid
 4 their standard instrumental groupings and instead sit randomly on the stage or scattered
 5 throughout the auditorium, ensuring that Mahler’s melody is spatially dispersed and the
 6 piece will sound different each time it is performed. There are also Manchester School
 7 overtones in Weir’s reference to three basic strands in the music: (1) Mahler’s notes freely
 8 orchestrated; (2) variations on the original; and (3) ‘a homophonic line which rises one
 9 quarter-tone per bar, occasionally coinciding with Mahler’s bass . . . or with something in
 10 strand (2) of the music’.¹²⁵ Each player moves from one strand to another every few bars.

11 The result is a distancing of Mahler’s voice, the fragments of his melodies woven
 12 more or less audibly through Weir’s invented textures. Sustained and quarter-tonal,
 13 sometimes chromatic and insistent, occasionally inserted between the original material,
 14 rather like Berio’s linking sections, or ‘cement’, in *Rendering* (1989), Weir’s new textures
 15 distort the original: her rising homophonic line undermines, at times submerges, the
 16 dynamics of Mahler’s tonal world (see Pl. 1(b) above). Consequently, when Mahler
 17 modulates from D minor to major, as the soldier addresses his lover for the first time, Weir
 18 marks the transition texturally, replacing the previous mixture of ghostly *col legno* and *arco*
 19 with more vivid snap *pizzicato*. Similarly, Mahler’s subsequent modulation to G{fl} major
 20 (E major modified by quarter-tones in Weir’s score), is marked by multiple descending
 21 chromatic figurations played *fortissimo*, ‘at the heel’ of the bow; these are used extensively
 22 until the music modulates again.

23 Many features of the original are inevitably lost in this translation, notably Mahler’s
 24 poignant shifts between narrating and speaking voices, which would have attracted Weir to
 25 the song. Some semblance of this device is retained, however, at the moment in the original
 26 when the soldier begs his lover not to weep, assuring her that within a year ‘sollst du mein

¹²³ Although Holloway’s work was composed in 1970, Weir did not meet him or become aware of his music until her third year at Cambridge (1975–6), during which time she recalls having ‘about ten composition lessons’; Judith Weir in Palmer, ‘Judith Weir’, 451. In her final year, Gordon Crosse also gave some seminars in his capacity as a visiting composer at King’s College. Composers Robert Saxton and James Wood were in the year above Weir and they ran a new music group with whom she performed on the oboe, including performances of Webern and Messiaen. From conversation with the author, 1 May 2012.

¹²⁴ Judith Weir, ‘Composer Note’, *Where the Shining Trumpets Blow* [unpublished autograph score].

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

1 Eigen sein'. Here Weir's rising homophonic line dominates in *fortissimo* tremolo figurations,
 2 its shivering gestures implying the maiden's distress in contrast to Mahler's focus on the
 3 soldier's desire to be reunited. Weir also undermines Mahler's habit of drawing out certain
 4 poetic images. For example, his lyric epiphany at the soldier's 'O Lieb auf grüner Erden' is
 5 grounded in her version by ominously repeated *tenuto* bass pedal notes, marked *crescendo*,
 6 again implying a darker reality for the maiden. Weir also emphasizes the subsequent contrast
 7 between the soldier's reference to 'the shining trumpets' blowing on the battlefield (the
 8 melody carried by all nine violins) followed by the darker image of his 'Haus' of green turf
 9 (played by a single violin).

10 Despite these modifications to Mahler's narrative, it is remarkable how in certain
 11 respects Weir's approach anticipates Dieter Schnebel's *Schubert-Phantasie* (1978; rev.
 12 1989), for chamber orchestra, in which the late G major Piano Sonata, D.894, is 'placed
 13 behind a thick, widely spaced veil of orchestral strings Schnebel called a *Blendwerk*, literally
 14 a "blinding work" . . . a product of the mid-1970s spectral turn [that] meticulously filters out
 15 and smudges together the overtones of Schubert's harmonies, while figurations from the
 16 earlier composition come and go in slow succession'.¹²⁶ In an interpretation that might also
 17 apply to Weir's piece, Seth Brodsky argues that Schnebel's 'string supplement', or 'sound
 18 screen', preserves Schubert's distance and absence, and is both a means of elucidation and
 19 an impediment to reception, serving 'as a kind of modernist horizon onto which the
 20 Schubertian forms are projected'.¹²⁷ Weir's mildly aleatoric, Berio- and Manchester School-
 21 inflected score, which unknowingly parallels Holloway and anticipates Schnebel, is certainly
 22 not shocking, but its textures are intricate, surprising, and subtly askew, and its concept
 23 indicative of a 1970s trend to re-examine Romanticism, later adopted by a swathe of other
 24 composers.¹²⁸

25 The second of the student pieces, *Ohimè: Variations on Monteverdi's Messenger*
 26 *Scene*,¹²⁹ around eight minutes long, is an original response to the moment in Act II of *Orfeo*
 27 when the female messenger, Sylvia, informs Orpheus of Eurydice's death, leading Orpheus

¹²⁶ Seth Brodsky, *From 1989, Or European Music and the Modernist Unconscious* (Oakland, Calif., 2017), 165. 'Blend' may also be translated as 'dazzling' or 'deceiving'.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.* However, when he emerges from behind the screen, Schnebel's Schubert becomes distinctly Wagnerian or Mahlerian, suggesting a prismatic approach, as in Berio's *Rendering*.

¹²⁸ For a sample of such works, see ch. 8, 'Recovery: Gaps between Past and Present', in Rutherford-Johnson, *Music after the Fall*, esp. 244–52.

¹²⁹ The autograph is dated 'London–Cambridge, Dec. 1973–Feb. 1974', placing it in Weir's first year at university.

1 to declaim ‘Ohimè! [Alas!]' (see Ex. 1 and Pl. 2). <Place Ex. 1 near here> <Place Pl. 2
 2 together with Ex. 1 or at least on the same opening> Composed for the Cambridge New
 3 Music Group, conducted by Edwin Roxburgh, Weir adopted the instrumentation of the
 4 Birtwistle/Hacker Pierrot ensemble: flute, clarinet, violin, cello, piano, and percussion
 5 (xylophone and glockenspiel). The ‘Theme’ is based on the famous chromatic twist between
 6 Orfeo’s G minor sigh, ‘Ohimè! Che odo?’ and the messenger’s preceding E major harmony.
 7 Appropriately, Weir’s Theme begins with a bright E major triad momentarily blotted by a D⁷
 8 chord before E is hesitantly then testily reasserted—a very early example of the ‘framing’
 9 device White believes is central to Weir’s musical language, whereby tonal conventions,
 10 such as cadential figures, are alluded to but distorted somehow and ‘placed in a rarefied
 11 “frame”’.¹³⁰ We then hear Orfeo’s melody in the flute followed by Sylvia’s response (‘La tua
 12 diletta sposa è morta [Your beloved bride is dead]’) in the piano. However, the notes from
 13 Sylvia’s melody are displaced through different octaves, in a leaping figuration, with
 14 repeated pitches omitted. In the remainder of the Theme, Weir freely adapts several other
 15 passages from the messenger scene. The pitch content and rhythm of the *recitativo* is largely
 16 retained but is broken up, transposed into different octaves and distributed through the
 17 ensemble. The harmonies are generally consistent with the original, too, but added notes
 18 begin to creep in (E{fl} is added to B flat major; E to E{fl} major), amplifying chromatic
 19 inflections in Monteverdi’s vocal line.

20 The real interest lies in the variations, the first of which begins with another framing
 21 device: a short, bright E major chord, followed by a sustained G minor triad in the strings
 22 beneath an extended chromatic melody in the flute, beginning G–B{fl}–C{sh}–D{sh}. This
 23 recurring idea retains the G and B{fl} from Orpheus’s sigh (D–B{fl}–C–G), but sharpens
 24 the C and D, thereby bringing elements of G minor and E major together (see Pl. 2(b)). Of
 25 course, the E major and G minor triads are present in one of the three transpositions of the
 26 octatonic scale (collection CI: C{sh}, D, E, F, G, G{sh}, A{sh}, B), and the recurring four-
 27 note motif belongs to another (collection CIII: D{sh}, E, F{sh}, G, A, A{sh}, C, C{sh});
 28 therefore Weir transmutes Monteverdi’s tonal tension through octatonic colouring.¹³¹ The
 29 remainder of the melody is entirely chromatic, however, Weir working through a sequence
 30 of quasi-serial rotations. A recitative-like quality is not entirely lost, but the melody becomes
 31 increasingly fragmented. Octave displacements then figure prominently in an extended piano
 32 solo, which cunningly ends by combining the wide leaping figuration with the notes of the E

¹³⁰ White, ‘Drama on the Concert Stage’ (1997), 38.

¹³¹ The octatonic labelling used here is derived from Pieter van den Toorn, *The Music of Igor Stravinsky* (New Haven and London, 1983).

1 major triad, the tonal reference almost evading recognition. A rapid *moto perpetuo* texture
 2 with G minor- and E major-based clusters follows, before a return of the chromatic sigh
 3 motif in extended arpeggios, the piece ending with gleaming E major trills in two triangles,
 4 glockenspiel, and upper register piano, alternated with very soft G minor chords in the
 5 strings. Once again, preoccupations in Weir's later works (in this instance speech-melody
 6 and narration) are approached experimentally, Weir juxtaposing quasi-serial passages with
 7 neo-tonal gestures, dramatizing the chromatic conflict at the heart of Monteverdi's
 8 messenger scene, but in a manner that becomes her own and barely resembles the original at
 9 all. Of the new ideas generated in the process, the *moto perpetuo* tonal clusters (triads with
 10 added pitches) frequently reappear in later works, notably during the 'Reel' in *Airs from*
 11 *Another Planet* (1986), and 'Kite in *moto perpetuo*', Act I, scene 3 from *A Night at the*
 12 *Chinese Opera* (1987).

13 Weir's growing confidence is demonstrated by a willingness to depart further from
 14 her model, and this trend is continued in *Campanile* (1974), scored for full orchestra. The
 15 band is Classical but with harp, extended brass (four horns, three trumpets, two tenor
 16 trombones, bass trombone, tuba), arranged either side of the conductor, and two sets of
 17 tubular bells, also placed antiphonally. According to Dreyer, the piece comprises 'a
 18 concertino core' derived from Bach's Cantata No. 50, *Nun ist das Heil und die Kraft*, BWV
 19 50, 'framed by two Brahmsian elegies, all threaded together by an effective bell motif'.¹³² It
 20 is unclear whether he actually saw the piece since the outer sections develop chromatic
 21 clusters around F and G{fl}, these notes introduced by the tubular bells at the start and
 22 subsequently extended by the orchestra, down to E and up to A{fl}, forming knotted spectral
 23 harmonies akin to those of Ligeti, Xenakis, or Lutosławski, albeit punctuated by
 24 Stravinskyan bell-like chords. If Brahms is present at all, a likely model is the Serenade No.
 25 1, in D major (the same key as the Bach), although it would be more accurate to suggest that
 26 elements of this piece haunt Weir's score. For example, Brahms's pastoral opening (a
 27 repeated open-fifth drone on D and horn melody that evoke hunt and pastoral topics,
 28 commonly considered a reference to the finale of Haydn's Symphony No. 104), which might
 29 have attracted Weir given her interest in folk traditions, could have prompted thoughts of
 30 natural overtones and, hence, of bells. Likewise, a prominent chromatic descent from A to E,
 31 first heard in the bassoon at Letter B in the first movement of Brahms's Serenade,
 32 subsequently repeated in the oboe and horn, may have led to Weir's notion of working
 33 within that pitch space (see Ex. 2). <Place Ex. 2 near here> Repeated syncopations in Weir's

¹³² Dreyer, 'A Talent to Amuse', 593.

1 melodic-like rhythmic figurations could be ghostly repetitions of any number of lilting
 2 Brahmsian melodies, such as the rocking *dolce* horn solo from bar 64 in the Serenade's third
 3 movement (see Exx. 3 and 4), and an irregular walking bass recalls numerous Brahmsian
 4 perambulatory bass lines (see the cellos, double basses and harp in Ex. 4). <Place Exx. 3 and
 5 4 near here> But any model Weir used has been refracted beyond easy recognition. This
 6 means that the insertion of the Bach cantata, from the reprise of the principal fugue subject
 7 in bar 76 of the original, is a rude intrusion, its tonality and clear melodic profile (the parts
 8 rearranged) forming a complete contrast with the preceding chromaticism. Likewise, the
 9 abrupt return to Weir's opening clusters wrenches away the expected resolution on 'Gott', in
 10 Bach's final bar. Moreover, what Dreyer refers to as a bell motif threading the whole
 11 together is in fact the chromatic cluster idea. Introduced into the cantata by a sustained bass
 12 pedal on F, the cluster (joined by the irregular walking bass) expands through the orchestra
 13 and, like a creeping plant on its host, strangles Bach's counterpoint.¹³³ In short, *Campanile*
 14 demonstrates an impressive display of instrumental dexterity and a continued interest in
 15 framing, corrupting, and refracting tonal models through increased chromaticism.

16 The result was striking enough to win a competition in Aberdeen, where one of the
 17 judges was Aaron Copland, which in turn led to a Koussevitzky scholarship to study at
 18 Tanglewood in 1975, where Weir was tutored by the musical polymath Gunther Schuller.¹³⁴
 19 According to Dreyer's masculinist reading, Schuller
 20 became a crucial influence at a vital moment . . . With typical American pugnaciousness about the
 21 European avant-garde, Schuller disabused her of any remaining shreds of Darmstadt dogma and set
 22 her on a new harmonic track. This immediately found concrete expression in the wind quintet *Out of*
 23 *the Air*, which she considers her true opus 1.

24 As we have seen, however, prior to her time in Tanglewood, there was little Darmstadt
 25 dogma in Weir's approach. Moreover, contrary to Dreyer's statement, *Out of the Air*

¹³³ The recovery and corruption of Bach chorales in this manner is reminiscent of Birtwistle's *Medusa* (1969; rev. 1970), in which Bach's Chorale Prelude on the Magnificat *Meine Seele erhebt den Herren* and the Chorale *Wer nur den lieben Gott last walten* are appropriated and transformed, and it is possible that Weir attended a performance of a revised version of this work at the Queen Elizabeth Hall on 3 Mar. 1970, performed by the Pierrot Players under Birtwistle's direction. In a telling parallel with Weir, Birtwistle was uneasy about his use of the Bach material and withdrew the piece, describing it as 'a lie'; see Birtwistle interview in Michael Hall, *Harrison Birtwistle* (London: Robson Books, 1984), 147.

¹³⁴ This occurred in the summer vacation between Weir's second and final years at Cambridge.

1 demonstrates that Weir actually moved closer to the avant-garde.¹³⁵ What is immediately
 2 apparent from the opening is not just the slow rate of harmonic change but the chromatic
 3 nature of that movement (see Pl. 3). <Place Pl. 3 near here> The first nine bars unfold a
 4 closing chromatic wedge in which the upper voice descends by regular semitone steps, from
 5 G to D, while the lowest voice ascends by a mix of small intervals, from F{sh} to D{sh}
 6 (see Fig. 1). <Place Fig. 1 near here> In fact, the very soft, slowly unfolding harmony, in
 7 which one chord emerges gradually from another, followed by rapid, staccato single-note
 8 repetitions, then stabbing chords, all point to a particular model, namely Ligeti's *Ten Pieces*
 9 *for Wind Quintet*, from 1968 (see Ex. 5). <Place Ex. 5 near here>

10 The opening pages of Weir's and Ligeti's pieces bear a striking resemblance,
 11 including the opening measured silence. To be clear, *Out of the Air* is more original
 12 composition than parody. Indeed, to employ Yayoi Uno Everett's distinction, it is more
 13 *unmarked* allusion than *marked* double-voiced parody because the model is not set in sharp
 14 relief from its new context: model and host are closely entwined, the music heard as one
 15 style rather than two.¹³⁶ This stylistic consistency means that the listener is not called upon
 16 to decode an incongruity, as in parody. However, the trend, established in Weir's earlier
 17 works, of transforming a model is continued, and there are important formal, technical, and
 18 structural relations between the two works.¹³⁷ From Ligeti's *Ten Pieces*, Weir derives the
 19 idea of nine short sections, each roughly a minute long, separated by silences of different
 20 lengths. She also draws from Ligeti an interest in instrumental role-play, and his
 21 fragmentation of form and clarity of expression become vital ingredients in her later music.
 22 And yet initially Weir pushes her music in a more chromatic direction than Ligeti: her
 23 opening chord (E{fl}–E–F{sh}–G) contrasts with Ligeti's initial white-note cluster (E–F–G–
 24 A–B), and she adds quarter-tones to further distort her model, as in *Where the Shining*
 25 *Trumpets Blow*.

26 Weir's opening chord is actually derived from the opening of Ligeti's second

¹³⁵ *Out of the Air* was preceded by the string sextet *Italian Doubles* (1975); Dreyer states this piece was performed when Weir arrived at Tanglewood, where it impressed Schuller but not Olivier Messiaen. According to Weir, this work is no longer extant.

¹³⁶ Yayoi Uno Everett, 'Signification of Parody and the Grotesque in György Ligeti's *Le Grand Macabre*', *Music Theory Spectrum*, 31 (2009), 26–56 at 30.

¹³⁷ White suggests, somewhat disingenuously, that the Ligeti influence in this piece is 'discrete', and that Weir 'quickly moved away from the Ligetian harmonic language'. However, she also notes that Weir's 'more recent pieces share something with [Ligeti's] music of the 1960s, in that she has retained her interest in minimal materials, in stark, crisp phrasing, and in episodic forms'. White, 'Music Drama on the Concert Stage' (1997), 28–9.

1 movement, although she omits the central F. In other words, she conducts a form of dialogue
 2 with Ligeti, his score functioning as an agent that, in Bruno Latour’s sense, speaks back to
 3 her.¹³⁸ For example, Weir’s response to the rapidly repeated *staccatissimo* tones introduced
 4 in Ligeti’s fifth movement comes early, at the end of her first section, where they disrupt
 5 Ligeti’s notion of a slowly evolving harmonic field (although she omits his extended
 6 techniques). At the start of Weir’s second section, Ligeti answers back: his dry *sff possibile*
 7 chords appear literally ‘out of the air’, following a silence of five to nine seconds. But Weir
 8 responds again: her chord is different (widely spaced and not fully chromatic) and is
 9 repeated and distorted with sustained quarter-tone bends, up and down, followed by a
 10 descending three-note figure in the flute and bassoon, which later assumes a thematic agency
 11 that is absent from Ligeti’s piece. Weir’s third section is a free interpretation of Ligeti’s
 12 virtuosic fourth movement, whereas her remaining sections follow their own logic. From
 13 here onwards the mood changes and Weir’s agency emerges more clearly, although she
 14 achieves this by using Ligeti’s figurations in new ways, like actors in a new drama. Ligeti’s
 15 sound world is ultimately left behind, the music at times resembling late Stravinsky or the
 16 gentler moments in early Birtwistle, but with a sense of poise and theatrical gesture that is
 17 Weir’s own. Unlike Ligeti, Weir ends with a varied reprise of the opening, the repeated
 18 chords gradually shortened and separated by longer rests, until all trace of her interlocutor is
 19 gone.

20 Even as late as 2003, Weir commented that Ligeti is ‘a composer I’d love to think I
 21 approach’.¹³⁹ How much Schuller actually guided Weir in this direction is unclear. Weir’s
 22 near contemporaries Oliver Knussen and Simon Bainbridge, who also studied with Schuller
 23 at Tanglewood in the 1970s, moved in an entirely different direction, returning to late
 24 Romantic and early modernist textures, possibly in the light of Nicholas Maw’s sumptuous
 25 *Scenes and Arias* from 1962.

26 Weir’s experiment evidently paid off, for in 1974 *Out of the Air* won a Greater

¹³⁸ See Latour, *Reassembling the Social*, esp. 63–86. My attribution of agency to Ligeti’s score is more specifically informed by Benjamin Piekut’s ‘Actor-Networks in Music History: Clarifications and Critiques’, *Twentieth-Century Music*, 11 (2014), 191–215, in particular his observations that ‘the social extends out across the objects we share’ (p. 200), and that these objects have agency if they make a difference, for example as a consequence of the fact that they ‘represent, summarize, exhort, cajole, afford, implore, or persuade’ (p. 199). Additionally instructive are his arguments that: in Actor-Network Theory (ANT), it is ‘an action or an event—not an intention—that manifests an agent’ (p. 195); ‘a musicological approach informed by ANT will take seriously the agency of the aesthetic object’ (p. 197 n. 26); and ANT is a research methodology ‘committed to empirical work’ (pp. 211–12), in which ‘an action is always a kind of translation’ (p. 198).

¹³⁹ Weir in Reyland, ‘Judith Weir in Conversation’.

1 London Arts Association award and received its UK premiere in the Purcell Room.
 2 Moreover, the resulting exposure and associated prestige led to a commission by one of the
 3 UK's leading modernist ensembles, Peter Maxwell Davies's *The Fires of London*. A period
 4 of experimentation with avant-garde techniques followed, a fact that has gone largely
 5 unreported in accounts of Weir's development. Weir is disingenuous on this point, however,
 6 stating that prior to her lessons with Robin Holloway, in 1975–6, her music 'had been
 7 congested with little cells: Robin forced me just to write a line'.¹⁴⁰ Line is not a key feature
 8 of her first work for the *Fires of London*, however, and an interest in extended melody only
 9 fully emerges in Weir's music from the millennium onwards, notably in *The Welcome*
 10 *Arrival of Rain* (2001–2), *I Give You the End of a Golden String* (2011–13), and *Blue-Green*
 11 *Hill* (2013). And yet the origins of this development are revealed in a hitherto unknown
 12 piece composed in Cambridge, which bears Robin Holloway's initials ('RGH') in pencil on
 13 the last page of the score, indicating that he had looked it over.

14 A substantial piece, lasting around fifteen minutes, *Stone Columns and Sky* for string
 15 orchestra (1975–6) explores a dramatic dialogue between floating, cirrus-like melodic
 16 figures, initially moving in fairly constricted spaces, and more grounded, lower-register
 17 tremolo textures. Initially the former are associated with the violins and the latter with the
 18 other, lower, strings, but in the second half of the piece the situation is reversed: the violas
 19 and cellos assume the role of melody makers and the tremolos pass to the violins. This work
 20 may have been a response to Holloway's criticism, for it charts an evolution from short,
 21 cellular ideas to more extended melodies, initially presented in the first violins from bars 50–
 22 71 (see Pl. 4(a) and (b)). <Place Pl. 4a and b near here> The piece is framed by a series of
 23 softly sustained, widely spaced chords—presumably, the 'stone columns' of the title—heard
 24 at the start and reprised near the end. The close attention to relative weight and density in
 25 these chords clearly relates back to the slowly changing harmonies in Ligeti's *Ten Pieces*,
 26 but their broader spacing is more characteristic of Weir's approach in later works. An
 27 analytical summary of the first thirteen bars, up to Figure 1, is given in Fig. 2.¹⁴¹ <Place Fig.
 28 2 near here> Most of these chords are hexachords based on dominant seventh triads (for
 29 example, E flat major 7 in b. 1, F major and F sharp major 7 in b. 3), corrupted by additional
 30 notes. In their smallest form, four of these chords (those in bb. 8, 9, 12, and 13) are subsets

¹⁴⁰ [Anon.], 'Judith Weir', *The Sunday Times*, 24 Aug. 1980. According to Holloway: 'I remember finding what she wrote in those long ago days very exiguous. Her music is made up of very spare, beautiful images, precise and delicate. She's very exact. As the pieces developed and as she grew into her full nature I saw that she was something very special.' Quoted in Tom Service, 'Judith Weir: The Female Music Master with Royal Seal of Approval', *The Guardian*, 3 July 2014.

¹⁴¹ The piece is 220 bars long.

1 of octatonic collections CII, CII, CI, and CIII respectively, and the remaining chords (those
 2 in bb. 1, 3, 5, 7, and 11) are subsets of octatonic collections but with an additional rogue note
 3 (E{fl}, F, E, C{sh}, and G respectively). This approach, used later in *Isti Mirant Stella*
 4 (1981) and *Ballad* (1981), is another early indication of Weir's interest in octatonicism.¹⁴²
 5 The stacked minor and major thirds in the penultimate hexachord, especially, become a
 6 hallmark of Weir's mature style in which augmented and diminished added-note triads are
 7 used as floating signifiers in a post-tonal context where no harmonic direction is implied.

8 Weir subsequently received two commissions from the Fires of London. The first,
 9 *Twenty-Five Variations*, scored for the full Pierrot ensemble, was premiered at the St
 10 Andrews Festival in 1977 then performed at the Queen Elizabeth Hall the following year. It
 11 is a substantial piece lasting twenty-three minutes, and it is significant because it was Weir's
 12 first vocal setting and her first foray into Scottish folklore. The work sets ballads from
 13 Orkney and Islay that refer to mythological figures known as 'silkies', seals that shed their
 14 skins and assume human form when they come on land, seducing unsuspecting villagers. In
 15 the two versions Weir sets, 'The Great Silkie' and 'A Sealchie Song', a woman tending a
 16 baby ponders who the father can be. The silkie then appears, claiming to be the father, and
 17 returns with the baby to the sea. Given this context, Weir's generic title is somewhat
 18 obscure. It may be an allusion to Brahms's *Variations and Fugue on a Theme by G. F.*
 19 *Handel*, Op. 24, which comprises twenty-five variations, and which is referenced more
 20 directly in another work discussed below, but Weir presents neither theme nor variation in
 21 any clear sense. Rather, her score is divided into five sections, with settings of the two
 22 versions of the story in the first and last sections respectively (in the first, the silkie is killed;
 23 in the latter he mocks the gunner: 'pouther winna burn i' saut' ['powder won't burn in
 24 salt']).

25 Weir provided a piece that fits the Davies/Fires of London mould neatly: it is a
 26 theatrical, experimental score, with serial-like part-writing, although the vocalist is not
 27 stretched unduly. The overall sense is of Weir stepping into Davies's world, striving for a
 28 broader, expressionistic palette with richly varied textures, albeit on her own terms. This is
 29 especially evident at the climax towards the end when the vocalist, depicting the defiant
 30 silkie, plunges from A{sh}{2p} to 'as low a pitch as possible', in two extended sections for
 31 E{fl} clarinet with virtuosic leaps, and from several striking sound effects involving

¹⁴² Tom Morgan discusses this approach to harmony in *Isti Mirant Stella*, where it also unfolds as a series of ascending scales; see Morgan, 'Judith Weir', 37–8. Similar ascending scales also figure prominently in *Blond Eckbert* in association with the bird.

1 washboard, guiro, high register *col legno battuto* on viola and cello, and knocks on the wood
 2 of the piano. The magical shape-shifting silkie is also evoked through vivid timbres,
 3 combining vibraphone with rapid figurations in the celeste, and glinting string harmonics
 4 and glissandi. Elsewhere, piano and marimba feature prominently, with an array of
 5 percussion in section 3. Distinctive to Weir, however, is a geometric poise and dramatic
 6 counterpoint formed through an abstract attachment to certain intervals and rhythmic
 7 figurations, supported by numerous *moto perpetuo* textures.

8 As Pl. 5 illustrates, with its five meticulously notated and independent parts, this
 9 piece is the origin of the objectivity and fastidiousness that some commentators have
 10 detected in Weir's mature style. <Place Pl. 5 near here> The result is highly restless, the
 11 textures notably denser and more fragmented than in previous works, with frequent changes
 12 in tempo, as if Weir felt the need to produce a more complex-looking score, or feared the
 13 performers might feel insufficiently challenged. There is some use of microtones and overall
 14 the melodic profile is angular, the harmony chromatic in a broadly post-tonal, modernist
 15 manner. Closer inspection, however, reveals the presence of octatonicism. This is audible in
 16 the frequent use of repeated minor thirds, at times extending to subsets of the interval-three
 17 cycle, but obscured by jagged leaps, especially elevenths and thirteenths, and a constant
 18 shuffling between subsets of the three transpositions of the octatonic scale (see Ex. 6).
 19 <Place Ex. 6 near here> However, section 4 begins by unfolding a whole-tone pattern in the
 20 solo viola, and section 5 reintroduces Ligeti in the form of tremolando-like semiquaver
 21 quintuplets, in a narrow chromatic cluster (C4 to F4).

22 This particular figuration, of written-out tremolos, is especially prominent in Weir's
 23 second commission for the Fires, *King Harald Sails to Byzantium*. Here a series of layered
 24 tremolo effects closely resembles the continuous, rapid polyphonic figurations in Berio's
 25 *Points on a Curve to Find*, from 1974—although in Berio's piece the piano is afforded a
 26 more important role (see Exx. 7 and 8).¹⁴³ <Place Exx. 7 and 8 near here, preferably on the
 27 same opening> More isolated, but no less striking, references to avant-garde music also
 28 occur in *Black Birdsong*, composed in 1977, in which Weir sets two Scottish ballads. Both
 29 ballads concern the fate of a fallen knight overlooked by hungry ravens. In the first version,

¹⁴³ The comparison to Berio's *Points on the Curve to Find* was also made in a review of the premiere, which described *King Harald Sails* as a 'severely disciplined *perpetuum mobile* of about eighteen minutes' duration . . . [that] impressed by the purity of its intentions, [but] seemed to suffer a little from a lack of formal articulation'. Paul Driver, 'First Performances: 1979 St. Magnus Festival', *Tempo*, 130 (1979), 35–8 at 38. On her interest in Berio, Weir has commented: 'I thought Boulez, Stockhausen, Berio were all great composers—especially Berio, who had melodic poetry and eloquence that stood out for me'; Wroe, 'The Storyteller'.

1 sung in English, the knight's hounds, hawks, and pregnant maiden (symbolized by a 'fallow
 2 doe') seek him out, the latter dying by his side. However, in the second, sung in a Scottish
 3 dialect form of English, he is abandoned: since his 'lady's ta'en anither mate', the birds
 4 descend to feast and the wind blows over his bare bones 'for evermair'; once again, the
 5 futility of masculine conflict is underscored, with nature an oblivious but resourceful
 6 onlooker. Here the image of the birds pecking out the dead knight's eyes and making a nest
 7 from his 'golden hair' is evoked by a texture that could have been lifted from any number of
 8 avant-garde works from the 1960s and 1970s (see Ex. 9). <Place Ex. 9 near here> It is
 9 another accomplished, vivid score, although the use of experimental techniques largely for
 10 illustrative purposes shifts the emphasis at times towards an ironic form of parody.¹⁴⁴
 11 Clearly, both Fires of London commissions encouraged Weir to develop a range of
 12 techniques, put to use in her later narrative-based pieces.

13 Present in the audience at the premiere of *Black Birdsong* was another young
 14 composer who had become an admirer and good friend of Weir's. Eight years Weir's senior,
 15 Michael Finnissy was at the time embarking upon some of his most uncompromisingly
 16 virtuosic, often frenetic piano works when he met and became friends with Weir in 1976.¹⁴⁵
 17 The two met through a mutual friend, the American choreographer and dancer Kris
 18 Donovan, with whom Finnissy had collaborated, and whom Weir first encountered when she
 19 attended the National Choreographic Summer School at Surrey University in 1976. Weir
 20 subsequently received a Gulbenkian Foundation commission to compose a new score for a
 21 rerun of Robert Cohan's *Mass*, a London Contemporary Dance production. Finnissy had
 22 been involved extensively with this company since his student days in the mid-1960s as a
 23 pianist and composer, and although he had moved away from it by 1976, Weir recalls
 24 encountering him quite often at dance-related events at the time. Impressed by Finnissy's
 25 'incredible breadth of knowledge', Weir felt that he represented a welcome escape from the
 26 'inertia and smugness of English creative life'.¹⁴⁶ Musically, she especially admired his flow
 27 of lines and clarity of register, more recently remarking: 'I always say it's very lyrical,
 28 melodic writing.'¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁴ White notes that 'the composer's comments confirmed my suspicion that the language of this piece was situated "on the fence" between inherited conventions and her own developing style: "yes, it is still very modernist. One of the movements, the one with the English song, was deliberately on the verge of parodying that very kind of angular style.' White, 'Music Drama on the Concert Stage' (1997), 25–6.

¹⁴⁵ From email communication between Michael Finnissy and the author, 16 Sept. 2016.

¹⁴⁶ From an email to the author, 14 Sept. 2015.

¹⁴⁷ Conversation with the author, 1 May 2012.

1 Despite some obvious differences, both composers share many common interests,
 2 including an attraction to remote ethnic cultures and distant historical periods, a concern for
 3 vocal forms of story-telling,¹⁴⁸ and the use of pre-existent material, especially folk music.
 4 Yet for Finnissy, several of these concerns emerged only fully from around 1979–80.¹⁴⁹ His
 5 *Verdi Transcriptions* and *Gershwin Arrangements* were under way at this time and almost
 6 all works ‘from this point on make reference to some other music’.¹⁵⁰ At this very time, in
 7 1980, Weir composed the piano piece *An mein Klavier* to a commission from Finnissy.¹⁵¹ In
 8 the following year, Finnissy dedicated the piano piece *Reels* to Weir, in which he explored
 9 the pibroch, which Weir then began to examine in the mid-1980s. When Finnissy became
 10 President of the British Music Information Centre in 1985, Weir composed the piano piece
 11 *Michael’s Strathspey* for him, and this gesture was reciprocated with a work for Weir’s
 12 fiftieth birthday.¹⁵²

13 So what kind of piece is Weir’s *An mein Klavier*? Despite the obvious nod to
 14 Schubert’s eponymous song, set to a poem by Christian Schubart (essentially a love letter
 15 from a pianist to his piano), Dreyer detects in this work an ‘anti-Romantic austerity’,¹⁵³
 16 while Morgan suggests it is a character sketch revealing something of Finnissy’s
 17 personality.¹⁵⁴ In fact, Weir was following a form of emulation and critique that Finnissy had
 18 himself pursued in his portrait works *Ives* (1974), *Grainger* (1979), and *Nancarrow* (1980),
 19 which explore aspects of these personalities but in a style that is entirely Finnissy’s own.¹⁵⁵

¹⁴⁸ It was Finnissy who suggested Weir base her 1978 children’s ‘music-drama’ *Hans the Hedgehog* on ‘Hans mein Igel’; see Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, *Kinder- und Hausmärchen*, 7th edn., vol. 2 (Göttingen, 1857), no. 108, pp. 114–19.

¹⁴⁹ Ian Pace, essay on Finnissy’s *A History of Photography in Sound*, 8. <https://divineartrecords.com/recording/finnissy-the-history-of-photography-in-sound/> (accessed 20 Jan. 2018). Weir’s detailed work on folk sources began around 1984.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.* 9.

¹⁵¹ Finnissy premiered this piece on 20 July 1980 at South Hill Park Arts Centre, Bracknell.

¹⁵² In 1996, Weir was included in a list Finnissy gave of composers ‘I prize very highly, and whose work undoubtedly influences mine’ (Michael Finnissy in Christopher Fox, and Ian Pace, ‘Conversations with Michael Finnissy’, *Uncommon Ground: The Music of Michael Finnissy* (Aldershot, 1997), 9), and in 2008 Weir declared Finnissy to be ‘the most important living British composer’ (www.theguardian.com/music/2008/jan/22/classicalmusicandopera1 (accessed 20 Jan. 2018)).

¹⁵³ Dreyer, ‘A Talent’, 595.

¹⁵⁴ Morgan, ‘Judith Weir’, 24.

¹⁵⁵ Regarding his *Gershwin Arrangements*, for example, Finnissy uses the term ‘critique’, commenting that he tore up his first attempt at this piece and the first versions of the *Verdi Transcriptions* because they were ‘[t]oo close to the originals. No profile. No insight’; Fox and Pace, ‘Conversations with Michael Finnissy’, 9.

1 A clue to the kind of dialogue Weir's piece explores is offered in the Schubart poem, in
 2 which the performer breathes 'celestial and pure' thoughts to the piano, the piano speaks
 3 'innocent and virtuous' feelings to the pianist, and the two sing together. Similarly, Weir's
 4 *An mein Klavier* alludes to the kind of frenetic virtuosity expressed in Finnissy's *English*
 5 *Country-Tunes* and *all.fall.down* (both 1977), but does not adopt the precisely notated yet
 6 fluid, asynchronous textures of those works (see Pl. 6). <Place Pl. 6 near here> Weir uses her
 7 own means to approximate Finnissy's virtuosity: her dynamic range is less extreme, there
 8 are no extended broken chords or intricate time ratios. Like Finnissy, Weir dispenses with
 9 bar lines, although in Finnissy's performing score the composer implements his own
 10 metrical scheme—a practical necessity, no doubt, but one that reveals his own hand in
 11 realizing Weir's musical portrait. Although the metrical scheme was not introduced into the
 12 published score, Weir did incorporate Finnissy's preferred method of half pedalling, which
 13 she has gone on to use in subsequent works, such as *Ardnamurchan Point* (1990).

14 The markings in Finnissy's performing score are revealing, highlighting the music's
 15 instability, its irregular phrase lengths with misfires and constant interruptions. Its nervous
 16 energy and attention to detail seem purposefully designed to draw in performers, forcing
 17 them to analyse the piece when working out how to make it their own. Finnissy's metrical
 18 scheme emphasiz

19 es frequent hemiola-like shifts, and draws particular attention to Weir's interest in shaping
 20 pockets of time through the relative weight of harmonic events, with downbeats generally
 21 falling on chords or clusters with more notes. However, Finnissy is not consistent in this
 22 regard; for example, the first chord in the piece, on the third crotchet, is marked '3' in a
 23 phrase of four crotchets.¹⁵⁶

24 Although somewhat uncharacteristic of Weir's music in general, any sense that *An*
 25 *mein Klavier* is a parody of Finnissy, or of modernism more generally, sits awkwardly with
 26 the two composers' mutual respect. Rather, Weir's piece is a kind of transcription of
 27 Finnissy's pianism, one that, to paraphrase Finnissy's own thoughts on transcription, is in
 28 the business of discovering its object and revealing what its perceptions and insights about
 29 that object are.¹⁵⁷ The work is also clearly concerned with identity and identification and, in
 30 this sense, it anticipates both Weir's and Finnissy's empathetic but inevitably subjective

¹⁵⁶ Finnissy's metrical scheme for the opening of the first section, with each number falling on a crotchet beat, is as follows: 1234, 12, 12, 12345, 1, 12345, 12, 12, 12, 12, 1, 12, 12, 12, 12, 1234, 1234, 123, 12, 12 [etc.].

¹⁵⁷ Fox and Pace, 'Conversations with Michael Finnissy', 3.

1 responses to different musical styles and folk traditions: in each case, the composer learns
2 something about his or her own identity by engaging with another.

3 *An mein Klavier* comprises eight, roughly one-minute long sections, each of which is
4 characterized by a particular textural idea and an improvisational quality of Weir's own.
5 Like Finnissy, Weir is concerned with densities and gestures, extremes of register and
6 range.¹⁵⁸ Finnissy's interest in Gershwin is reflected in section 4, and elsewhere other voices
7 are implied, including those of Ligeti, Messiaen, Bartók, and Boulez. In some sections, such
8 as the fifth, shown in Pl. 7(a), the music becomes more abstract with ideas leaping across
9 multiple registers. <Place Pl. 7(a) near here> Humorous touches notwithstanding, Weir
10 evokes the violence in Finnissy's piano music from the 1970s, but also the passion,
11 directness, and raw commitment that are central to his output as a whole. Yet these emulated
12 qualities are expressed through gestures (the leaping block chords) that are distinctive to
13 Weir, not Finnissy. An internal dialogue, therefore, arises between gestures associated with
14 portraiture and new directions in Weir's own language. A tendency to vacate the middle
15 register and emphasize high, suspended textures (for example, the high semiquavers
16 suspended over low bass notes in section 3, shown in Pl. 7(b)) becomes a hallmark of Weir's
17 later music. <Place Pl. 7(b) near here> While the tremolo figuration of the opening is
18 familiar from earlier works, the rising scales become characteristic of later pieces, their
19 scampering quality suggestive of a theatrical imagination (see Pl. 7(c)); here the accidentals
20 imply A major but the D-centricity established by the D major triad and repeated octave Ds
21 in the inner voices suggest a mode based on D in which the raised fourth note (G{sh}) is
22 equivalent to the raised fourth in the Lydian mode). <Place Pl. 7(c) near here> The
23 deployment of tonal shapes, especially dominant sevenths and ninths, relates back to the
24 quasi-tonal play, or 'framing', in *Ohimè*, but more clearly anticipates works composed in the
25 1980s, such as *A Night at the Chinese Opera*, where their placement adds poise and surprise,
26 illustrating Weir's interest in the way 'Stravinsky sometimes had that sharp timing that just
27 makes you lose your balance a bit'.¹⁵⁹ Most important, however, is the use of cinematic,
28 montage-like cross-cutting, which increases as the piece progresses, bringing back snippets
29 of the opening material. This is a technique that Finnissy himself had deployed from as early
30 as the mid-1960s and that reflects his strong interest in film and photography. Rather than
31 sound like Finnissy, however, Weir's portrait clarifies the *qualities* that she values in his
32 music, in particular the cross-cutting device, which she then makes her own in subsequent

¹⁵⁸ For more details on Finnissy's piano style, see Ian Pace, 'The Piano Music', in Brougham, Fox, and Pace (eds.), *Uncommon Ground*, 43–134.

¹⁵⁹ Weir cited in Reyland, 'Judith Weir in Conversation'.

1 works.¹⁶⁰

2 But there is one more model lurking beneath the surface of this piece, revealed in the
 3 first four notes: Brahms's *Variations and Fugue on a Theme by G. F. Handel*, Op. 24,
 4 mentioned earlier in relation to Weir's *Twenty-five Variations*, in which not just Handel but
 5 Bach and Beethoven are clearly enshrined.¹⁶¹ Here is a likely source not only of the opening
 6 figuration—derived from the first four notes of Brahms's fugue subject, a truncated written-
 7 out tremolo (see Ex. 10(a))¹⁶²—but perhaps also the idea of a succession of contrasted
 8 miniatures (most of Brahms's brief variations are further subdivided, each half repeated), as
 9 well as numerous textural and virtuoso devices, including the opening rising scale motif
 10 (variations 1, 2, and fugue; see Ex. 10(b)), regular semiquaver motion (variations 4, 8, 12,
 11 14–16, 18, 21, 24, and fugue), cross-metric shifts created by denser chords (23, 24, fugue;
 12 see Ex. 10(c)), sliding chromaticism (2, 9, 12, 20), split registers (15–17, 25, fugue), leaping
 13 block chords (fugue) (Ex. 10(d)), contrasting humorous sections (10, 14, 16), mannered
 14 ornamentation (14, 19, 21), and arrested motion (19, 22). [<Place Ex. 10a–d near here>](#)
 15 However, besides the allusion to the fugue subject, which recurs throughout Weir's piece,
 16 Brahms is nowhere fully audible, hence there is no sense of historical distance as in *Where*
 17 *the Shining Trumpets Blow*. Nor is there any suggestion that Weir based her work on
 18 Brahms's in a more specific manner, as did Mauricio Kagel in his *Variationen ohne Fuga*
 19 for large orchestra (1972), in which Brahms's Handel variations are both audible and
 20 distorted by new techniques.¹⁶³ In effect, *An mein Klavier* is a matryoshka doll-like portrait
 21 of Handel (Bach and Beethoven), inside Brahms, inside Gershwin, Messiaen, Ligeti, and
 22 company, inside Finnissey, each layer nuanced, added to, or significantly reinterpreted by

¹⁶⁰ Twenty-four years later, Finnissey returned the compliment with his own portrait of Weir. His short chamber piece, *Judith Weir* (2004), brings together various components redolent of Weir's mature style, principally a breezy strathspey melody in the violin, which moves in steady cycles, continually varying and regenerating itself. Beneath this, a pizzicato cello tags along, never fully in step with the violin. Meanwhile the keyboard (Finnissey played a melodica at the premiere) adds florid bursts that at times contribute to the ensemble but otherwise go their own way. Finally, the clarinet provides a series of halting, solitary pitches that suggest a withdrawn, solemn character, entirely detached from proceedings. This somewhat incongruous yet astutely etched tableau, while relevant to Weir and her interests (Scottish folk music, non-professional music-making, instrumental agency, humour), has an Ivesian feel that very clearly emanates from Finnissey's attraction to multiple lines moving in different directions, each part speaking a different dialect or language, yet somehow shepherded along together.

¹⁶¹ I am indebted to Cameron Gardner for pointing out this correspondence.

¹⁶² The resemblance is disguised by the fact that whereas Brahms's metrical placement stresses the third note in the motif, Weir's notes are evenly weighted.

¹⁶³ It is tempting to see *An mein Klavier* as an ironic response to Kagel's piece, since it is the reverse of his conception—a *Fuga ohne Variationen*.

1 Weir herself.

2 CONCLUSIONS

3 It should now be clear that modernism of various hues, from Stravinsky through Berio,
 4 Ligeti, Davies, and Finnissy, played a formative role in Weir's development. Key aspects of
 5 her personal style, including experimentation with historical models, economy of expression,
 6 fastidious attention to detail, instrumental role-play, expressionistic imagery, fragmented
 7 structures, written-out tremolos, and cinematic structuring devices, all arose directly from
 8 her engagement with modernism. Moreover, the fact that many of these works won awards,
 9 which then led to prestigious commissions—notably the first Fires of London commission
 10 that followed the success of *Out of the Air*—supports Menger's theory that creativity is
 11 founded upon uncertainty, chance, and reputation-building through risk-taking.

12 Weir's 'indebted independence' is really no different from that of any other
 13 composer,¹⁶⁴ although where Weir has been prone to hide this relationship, by withdrawing
 14 works, others have chosen different strategies. Thomas Adès's openly parodic *Brahms*, for
 15 example, is an intriguing psychological exercise in 'sending-up' a composer whose approach
 16 clearly mirrors Adès's own, most obviously in a shared obsession with intervallic cycles.¹⁶⁵
 17 Whether stated openly, hidden, disguised, or undermined in some way, all such relationships
 18 can be understood as forms of dialogue that are central to creativity.

19 Further dialogues are also suggested by the titles of some of Weir's early withdrawn
 20 works, such as *Italian Doubles* (1975), for string sextet, with its punning allusion to a game
 21 with two pairs of players, and the septet *Between Ourselves* (1978), in which Weir
 22 deliberately heightens the situation in ensemble music where close communication between
 23 players is essential—it is 'so full of tempo modulations, pauses, and rhythmic coincidences,

¹⁶⁴ Arnold Whittall, 'A Fine First Recording of Weir's mid-1980s Opera on the Life of a Chinese Architect' [Review of Judith Weir, *A Night at the Chinese Opera*, Scottish Chamber Orchestra and soloists, cond. Andrew Parrott, NMC D060 [released 2000]'], *Gramophone*, Nov. 2000, p. 127.

¹⁶⁵ Adès's satirical approach clearly calls into question Rutherford-Johnson's argument that his use of the past is free of anxiety or 'aesthetic hang-ups'; *Music After the Fall*, 244–5. Indeed, Venn's masculinist interpretation of *Brahms* sees Adès 'confronting the authority of Brahms in order to "master it, to appropriate its power to go on composing"', in an attempt to 'exorcise' the spectres of Brahms that continue to haunt modernist music, in a manner that is 'more ambivalent, less reverential, and altogether more confrontational' than Schoenberg; Venn, 'Thomas Adès and the Spectres of Brahms', 209 and 211. By contrast, Weir's approach is neither reverential nor confrontational, her preferred method being to bring Brahms into dialogue with other voices, including her own.

1 that the players are forced to make a great many individual decisions in the course of
 2 performance and to communicate these decisions clearly to one another'.¹⁶⁶ Other early
 3 works pair instruments, requiring them to shadow each other in rapid unison, overlap, and
 4 interact closely, as in the *Pas de Deux* (1980) for violin and oboe,¹⁶⁷ and *Etude basse* (1978–
 5 9) for tuba and piano. Dreyer rightly describes the former as 'a supreme exercise in playing
 6 together, as violin and oboe dance in a close clutch, tripping each other briefly in the middle.
 7 The oboe just fails in an escape-attempt towards the close, and the piece ends abruptly in
 8 mid-air, exactly as it began'.¹⁶⁸ Given the oboe was Weir's instrument, Dreyer's description
 9 may be seen to imply that she was attempting to free herself in some way. However, a social,
 10 democratic impulse is fundamental to her aesthetic:

11 It's not very interesting to do music on your own. Interaction is what makes it valid, I think, for
 12 amateur musicians, and professional musicians too. You know, I'm not doing this to show that I'm a
 13 really decent person who's got democratic ideals. It's a true need on my part to say, 'do you or don't
 14 you think that's right. What do you think about this music?' It's important for me to feel that there's
 15 a connection with other people's thought processes.¹⁶⁹

16 Menger refers to 'the indeterminate nature of the emergence of what is original and new':¹⁷⁰
 17 some experiments will not satisfy the artist, but with luck a reputation builds through
 18 relationships with contemporaries who 'test' one another and impart reputation by
 19 association, through commissions and collaborations. As noted earlier, Menger also argues
 20 that successful artists benefit most when they 'negotiate, cooperate and exchange points of
 21 view . . . putting themselves in the place of the other as much as they communicate with the
 22 other'.¹⁷¹ As we have seen, far from being derivative, Weir's key musical and aesthetic
 23 preoccupations all emerged in her earliest works, even as she reached out to others.
 24 Moreover, her willingness to remain open to an exchange of ideas and perspectives with
 25 such a radical artist as Finnissy, even after she had composed *King Harald's Saga* and by
 26 most accounts already emerged fully on the British music scene, is surely testament to a

¹⁶⁶ From the announcer's introduction to the BBC Radio 3 broadcast of the work on 29 Apr. 1980; the words are most likely Weir's but neither her Composer Note nor the score is extant (BL Sound Archive, M8396).

¹⁶⁷ This piece was commissioned by the Southern Arts Association and composed for Alan Wilkinson and Sarah Ionides.

¹⁶⁸ Dreyer, 'A Talent', 593.

¹⁶⁹ Reyland, 'Judith Weir in Conversation'.

¹⁷⁰ Pierre-Michel Menger, *The Economics of Creativity*, 7.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*

1 strength of character in one who is willing to go on listening to others. Even if the immediate
 2 results of that exchange were subsequently withdrawn, the lessons learned are there for us to
 3 hear in subsequent, so-called ‘original’ works.

4 ABSTRACT

5 Most accounts of Judith Weir’s music focus on her mature, apparently
 6 postmodern approach. By contrast, my analysis of the early withdrawn works
 7 highlights a series of creative dialogues with some of Weir’s older British and
 8 Continental contemporaries, and more historical models. These interactions
 9 reveal that modernism and the avant-garde were essential to the evolution of
 10 Weir’s musical language—a formative experience that has been downplayed in
 11 attempts by critics to distance Weir from modernism. The gendered reception of
 12 Weir’s music is also noted, in which her natural modesty and withdrawal of early
 13 works have been portrayed as symptoms of feminine uncertainty, self-criticism,
 14 and anxiety. This discourse is recalibrated by relating it first to creativity
 15 theories, in which dialogue, uncertainty, and serendipity are valued, and second
 16 to the more widespread practice of withdrawing works, which illustrates how
 17 self-censorship is a common and vital part of creative practice, irrespective of
 18 gender.

19 <captions>

20 PL. 1. Judith Weir, *Where the Shining Trumpets Blow* (1972–3), bb. 9–16: (a) violins; Mahler’s oboe
 21 melody passed ‘democratically’ from violin 1 to 3, to 4; (b) lower strings, quarter-tone distortions of
 22 Mahler’s harmony. From the composer’s unpublished autograph manuscript

23 PL. 2. Weir, *Ohimè: Variations on Monteverdi’s Messenger Scene* (1973–4), Variations, bb. 36–45.
 24 From the composer’s unpublished autograph manuscript

25 PL. 3. Weir, *Out of the Air* (1975), bb. 1–9

26 PL. 4. Weir, *Stone Columns and Sky*, for string orchestra (1975–6): (a) short cellular ideas, Fig. 4, bb.
 27 29–32; (b) Weir, Fig. 5, bb. 37–42, start of violin 1 melody. From the composer’s unpublished
 28 autograph manuscript

29 PL. 5. Weir, *Twenty-five Variations* (1976), bb. 44–6

30 PL. 6. Michael Finnissy, *all.fall.down.* (1977) (extract from *all.*, p. 2). © Michael Finnissy.
 31 Reproduced with permission

32 PL. 7(a). Weir, *An mein Klavier* (1980), section 5 (extract)

- 1 PL. 7(b). Weir, *An mein Klavier*, section 3 (extract)
- 2 PL. 7(c). Weir, *An mein Klavier*, section 1, opening
- 3 FIG. 1. Weir, *Out of the Air*, summary of outer voices, bb. 1–9
- 4 FIG. 2. Weir, *Stone Columns and Sky*, analysis of opening chords, bb. 1–13, which return near the
5 end at Fig. 18
- 6 EX. 1. Monteverdi, *Orfeo* (1609), Act II, Orfeo's 'Ohimè' from the Messenger scene
- 7 EX. 2. Johannes Brahms, Serenade no. 1, Op. 11 (1860/1), for small orchestra, 1st mvt., from letter
8 B, chromatic descent from A to E in *espressivo* bassoon solo, passed to *dolce* horn and oboe solos
- 9 EX. 3. Brahms, Serenade No. 1, 3rd mvt., b. 64 ff., *dolce* horn solo
- 10 EX. 4. Weir, *Campanile* (1974), bb. 46–53. Transcribed from the composer's unpublished autograph
11 manuscript
- 12 EX. 5. György Ligeti, *Ten Pieces for Wind Quintet* (1968), bb. 1–4. © Schott Music Ltd. Reproduced
13 with permission
- 14 EX. 6. Weir, *Twenty-five Variations*, octatonicism, bb. 1–3
- 15 EX. 7. Weir, *King Harald Sails to Byzantium* (1979), bb. 209–10. © Hal Leonard Europe
- 16 EX. 8. Luciano Berio, *points on the curve to find...* for piano and twenty-two instrumentalists (1974),
17 at Fig. 6. © Copyright 1974 by Universal Edition S.p.A., Milano. Copyright assigned to Universal
18 Edition A.G., Wien. Reproduced with permission
- 19 EX. 9. Weir, *Black Birdsong* (1977), bb. 224–5, after the words 'Wi' ae lock o' his gowden hair /
20 We'll theek our nest when it grows bare'
- 21 EX. 10(a). Brahms, *Variations and Fugue on a Theme by G. F. Handel*, Op. 24 (1862), fugue, bb. 1–
22 3
- 23 EX. 10(b). Brahms, *Variations and Fugue on a Theme by G. F. Handel*, Variation 1, bb. 1–3
- 24 EX. 10(c). Brahms, *Variations and Fugue on a Theme by G. F. Handel*, Variation 24, bb. 1–4
- 25 EX. 10(d). Brahms, *Variations and Fugue on a Theme by G. F. Handel*, fugue, bb. 94–109
- 26