

RESEARCH STATEMENT: Tim McKenry

TITLE: *Cynosure* for orchestra

YEAR: 2003

Research Background

Throughout much of the twentieth century, the narrative used to account for style change in Western art music has focused primarily on innovation and reaction, while excluding tradition and synthesis. Musicologists and theorists have contributed to this narrative by constructing music histories around ‘significant’ personalities and processes, and attempting to create a ‘genealogy of influence’ that links composers. Until recently, these constructs were the benchmark against which a composer’s aesthetic was evaluated: in order for their music to be considered legitimate in the eyes of groups such as academic institutions and funding bodies, composers were required to locate themselves within this narrative. However this new-music narrative excludes music that a) locates itself in a non-minimalist tonal tradition and b) openly, and without irony, employs techniques and processes associated with popular idioms.

Research Contribution

Cynosure is an orchestral piece that seeks to create a synthesis between contemporary art-music processes and vernacular musical materials and gestures: a piece which is ‘thoroughly’ vernacular and ‘thoroughly’ art music. The simplest of motivic material is processed and developed using a post-Serial process of motivic transformation, and the harmonic language used in the piece works to demonstrate a functionality that moves beyond a ‘common practice’ understanding of tonal function.

Research Significance

The work was publicly performed and recorded in 2003 by Orchestra Victoria and forms the basis of an exegesis contained in *Against Orthodoxy* – a 2008 unpublished PhD dissertation. The work has been used to demonstrate contemporary tonal functionality in undergraduate courses at the University of Melbourne and ACU.