

Lines drawn from silence (2007)

This thirteen minute work was completed in early 2007 and is a setting of fragments of writings by Sir Isaac Newton, who in spite of reputed crankiness (or worse), said some memorable and moving things in reflecting upon his scientific discoveries. *Lines drawn from silence* is scored for soprano voice, wind quartet, piano and obbligato violin. It was written for the gifted violinist, Natsuko Yoshimoto and commissioned by the Music Board of the Australia Council for the Brisbane group, the Southern Cross Soloists.

The breadth of the total ensemble on offer is quite an interesting challenge for a composer given that a prominent violin part and a voice part within a chamber music context seem to offer a similar primary focus for the listener's attention. This leads to the possibility of there being too much on offer. For that reason and others, this piece is quite formally laid out with the reflective and spread-out use of vocal passages rather like ritornelli, chorales or frozen declamations.

The title of the work refers as much to the vagaries and frustrations in the compositional process and musical world as to the literal exploration of silence in the piece. Also relevant is the spirit of the text chosen. Making music seems akin to science in that creative ideas will sometimes leap ahead of conventional earthbound theory and a raw emotional charge surely comes in making a discovery. Newton's emphasis on reduction of problems to their pure fundamentals as a way of constructing an argument is profound.

The text fragments chosen have been arranged with a quasi-historical schema – from God's humble servant of the pre-Enlightenment to the rational, if fearful, existential figure of our time.

Optimistically, I am presuming that Newton's touching humility, like his hypotheses, is 'non fingo.'

Numero pondere et mensura Deus omnia condidit.
[God created everything by number, weight and measure.]

Truth is ever to be found in ... simplicity,
not in the multiplicity and confusion...

I know not what I appear to the world, but to myself I seem to have been only like
a boy

playing on the sea-shore and diverting myself in now and then finding a smoother
pebble or a prettier shell,

whilst the great ocean of truth lay all undiscovered before me.

Hypotheses non fingo.
[I feign no hypotheses.]

Words by Sir Isaac Newton drawn from *Principia Mathematica* and *Memoirs*.