

RESONANT NARRATIVES: THE POWER OF HYBRID COMPOSITION

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Abstract

This research explores the transformative potential of hybrid composition as a vehicle for compelling storytelling in 21st-century opera and vocal music. By integrating diverse musical languages—from Western classical traditions to experimental and popular forms—it investigates how stylistic and cultural hybridity can deepen emotional resonance and expand narrative possibilities. At the heart of this inquiry is the belief that genre-fluid composition invites heightened listening, where familiar expectations are disrupted in service of empathy, insight, and emotional impact. Drawing on theoretical frameworks by scholars such as Nigel Fabb and David Huron, who emphasize the roles of expectation and surprise in affective response, this study proposes that musical hybridity can amplify intensity and render complex or confronting narratives more accessible.

The research is undertaken through a triadic lens: composer, performer, and scholar. This intersectional perspective foregrounds the multiplicity of voices—personal, cultural, and artistic—that shape the creative process, and it reflects on how collaborative devising, improvisation, and studio-based techniques contribute to a more porous and dynamic compositional practice.

As a case study, my original chamber opera 'Menarche' is examined. The work investigates intergenerational trauma and the female body through layered vocal textures, extended techniques, and improvisation within notated frameworks. Fusing music, text, performance, and design, 'Menarche' constructs an immersive storytelling environment that exemplifies the emotional and conceptual power of hybrid operatic form.

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