

Institution: Royal College of Music		
Unit of Assessment: 33		
Title of case study: Mark Anthony Turnage: Traditional Genres and Non-Traditional Audiences		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2000-2020		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s): Mark Anthony Turnage	Role(s) (e.g. job title): Research Fellow in Composition	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI: 2005-present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 1 January 2014 – 31 December 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		
1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words) <p>Mark-Anthony Turnage's work is underpinned by a fundamental question: how can traditional genres of Western art music and the institutions and agencies that serve them, be used as vehicles for forms of musical expression that reach new audience demographics? His work as a composer is eagerly anticipated and performed in many of the world's most prestigious venues, attracting new audiences and contributing to the economics of music production. Often controversial, his music contributes to new ways of thinking about music's role in society, prompting new modes of engagement between art-music performance institutions and their audiences.</p>		
2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words) <p>Mark-Anthony Turnage enjoys an eminent position in today's art-music world, as residencies with high-profile arts institutions such as the ENO, BBC SO, LPO and the Chicago SO attest. Through his compositions, he investigates two main questions: can classical music absorb contemporary narratives by including compositional and performance styles such as jazz, pop, and street-music, and, in so doing, can it reach new audiences who feel distant from it, especially the young? Turnage's work explores the conflict of popular musical forms and its associated, seemingly instinctive performance styles, with the highly worked-out practices of contemporary classical music composition. He experiments with the effect of musical tropes originating in spontaneous, often collectively driven, processes such as football terrace chants or frantic parties within rational compositions for the concert hall and the opera stage (e.g., <i>The Silver Tassie</i> (1997-9); <i>Scherzoid</i> (2003-04); <i>Anna Nicole</i> (2008-10) (3.1; 3.2). His research has brought together performers who are at home in several modes of musical imagining to investigate the creative potential of collaboration and its resultant effect on audiences. The first performance of <i>Anna Nicole</i> (ROH, 2011), for instance, had Led Zeppelin's John Paul Jones and Pete Dinklage join the Covent Garden orchestra (3.2). Embracing and questioning the centrality and function of a 'prima donna cult' in a wide variety of musics, as in other forms of art and entertainment, Turnage's work pushes audiences to question their motivations for, and interests in, their consumption of culture, whether classical music, jazz or soap operas. In works such as <i>From the Wreckage</i> (2004) and <i>Mambo, Blues and Tarantella</i> (2007) – concertos for trumpet and violin respectively – Turnage integrated features of classical and jazz virtuosity, testing the boundaries of the genre (3.3). Turnage explores the idea of 'the hero' in the cultural imagination: both, musically and dramatically, his works frequently start out with hero narratives only to undermine them. Such irony offers the audience a self-reflexive view of their own engagement with contemporary culture. It also opens up 'contemporary music' and opera, both widely seen as impenetrable, to new audiences including children, who thrive off an imaginative re-invention of hero figures. Using a popular children's novel, <i>Coraline</i>, for example, Turnage placed a child and her dreams of bravery, escapism and fear at the centre of an opera commissioned by a major opera house (3.4). Through his choice of subject matter, Turnage tests boundaries between genres – opera, reality TV, social media, the novel, the animation movie – to construct modern commentaries on an artistic past (3.5). This</p>		

past, manifest in literary and musical works as in paintings, is thus presented as the 'shared heritage' that dissolves the seeming disjunctions of 'high art', popular entertainment and 'street' narratives (e.g. Francis Bacon in *The Screaming Popes* (1988-89), Emily Dickinson, Benjamin Zephaniah, W.H. Auden, Brian Bilston in *Refugee* (2018); William Hogarth and Igor Stravinsky in *Anna Nicole* (2008-10); Beyoncé in *Hammered Out*, 2009-10; Klimt/Beethoven in *Frieze* (2013); 1880s Paris and John Singer Sargent via Davis in *Strapless* (2015) (3.2; 3.5; 3.6).

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

All citations are published scores of Mark Anthony Turnage's compositions. His compositional output comprises over 150 works for a variety of vocal and instrumental forces which are published mainly by Schott and Boosey & Hawkes. Publication details of all works since 2000 are on the latter publisher's website: <https://www.boosey.com/composer/Mark-Anthony+Turnage>.

3.1 *The Silver Tassie: Tragi-comic opera in four acts*. Vocal Score (Schott, 2002). Libretto by Amanda Holden after the play by Sean O'Casey (1928). Commissioned by the English National Opera (world première: 16.2.2000; revived 2002 and 2018).

Scholarship and media comments on the work and on its 2018 revival (incl. live BBC broadcast):

"Superb, fiery outing for Turnage's First World War masterpiece." (*The Guardian*, 11.11.2018)

"A remarkable performance that whetted appetites for a fully staged production." (*Rhinegold*, 13.11.2018)

Scoggin, Elizabeth. "Mark-Anthony Turnage's *The Silver Tassie*: Text, Subtext, and Context." PhD. Boston University (2008).

Halliwell, Michael. "The Play's the Thing': Self- and Metareference in Contemporary Operatic Adaptation of Twentieth-Century Drama," in Walter Bernhart and Werner Wolf eds. *Self-Reference in Literature and Music* (Amsterdam and NY: Rodopi, 2010), 105–39.

3.2 *Anna Nicole: Opera in two acts*. Full Score (Boosey & Hawkes, 2010). Libretto by Richard Thomas. Commissioned by the Royal Opera House (world premiere: 17.2.2011, revived 2014; pub. broadcast BBC 4 (67,700 viewers); DVD: Opus Arte OA 1054 (2011)).

Reviews of première and revival:

"Mr. Turnage's music is the primary reason that so much seemed so right in *Anna Nicole*. There are flashes of Weill in the clattering, cabaret-like scenes when the reporters, wielding microphones, mutter like a Greek chorus; and jazzy sneering brass writing in the scene with the dancers at the "gentleman's club" in Houston... this is a musically rich, audacious and inexplicably poignant work." (NY Times, 19.2.2011)

"Turnage is well schooled in modernist compositional techniques. The marvel is the degree to which he is able to weave elements of jazz, rock and American pop, as well as television music, into his work while strongly retaining his own musical identity." (*Opera News*, 4.12. 2011)

"What gives the opera its power is the persistent disconnect between score and subject: intelligent urgency in contrast to dismaying mindlessness and the sleazily grotesque." (*The Observer*, 14.9.2014)

3.3 *Mambo, Blues and Tarantella: Concerto for violin and orchestra*. Full Score (Boosey & Hawkes, 2008). Commissioned by the London Philharmonic Orchestra and the Toronto Symphony Orchestra (world premiere: 24.9.2008; CD: Chandos LPO-0066,2009).

"There's no doubting this is a significant addition to the repertoire. Accessible, tough and unmistakably Turnage ... A stunning piece." (*Financial Times*, 26.9.2008)

3.4 *Coraline: Opera for family audience*. (Boosey & Hawkes, 2017). Libretto by Rory Mullarkey, based on the novel by Neil Gaiman. Commissioned by the Royal Opera House, Folkoperan (Stockholm), Opéra de Lille, Theater Freiburg and Victorian Opera, Melbourne. German trans. Kerstin Schüssler-Bach, French trans. Mathilde Tamae-Bouhon. (world première: 27.3.2018).

“Mark-Anthony Turnage once again proves to be a composer with a knack for popular material... The music is accessible, suitable for the stage, and also truly singable...” (*Opernwelt*, 5/2018).

“A highly effective piece for the stage... The distinctive and colourful score, infused with jazzy harmonies and rhythms, is full of energy, exuding an almost childish sense of joie de vivre. Vocal lines are syllabic, enabling the words to be heard and understood by even the youngest of listeners, and are underpinned by dance rhythms which are never less than engaging... The last word, however, must go to the many young members of the audience. They laughed uninhibitedly, screamed ear-piercingly, and left the theatre chatting enthusiastically about what they had seen. ... Opera surely can't be understood and enjoyed by the under 12s? *Coraline* proves otherwise.” (*Opera*, 6/2018)

3.5 *Frieze: for orchestra*. Score (Boosey & Hawkes: 2014). Commissioned by the Royal Philharmonic Society for the 200th anniversary of their founding to react to their most famous commission, Beethoven's ninth symphony. (world première 13.8.2013).

“Demonstrates vividly, like so much of his music, how lovely is Turnage's unique take on harmony, past and present intermingling in passages that move freely between austerity and luxury.” (*5against4.com*, 13.8.2013)

“Without a doubt, one of the major symphonic scores of our century. Its expression is direct, its materials memorable, its orchestration brilliant and assured, and – on top of all that – it offers a bracing dose of its composer's personality. Best of all, it provides an honest and unsentimental commentary on one of the West's most daunting cultural objects.” (*artsfuse.com*, 4.10.2014).

3.6 *Refugee: for tenor and chamber orchestra* (Boosey & Hawkes, 2019). Texts by Emily Dickinson, Benjamin Zephaniah, W.H. Auden, Brian Bilston. Commissioned by Britten Sinfonia for World Refugee Day, 2019. (world première 19.9.2020). Reviews – see (5.5, below)

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

Sir Antonio Pappano, Music Director of the ROH, who conducted and was closely involved in the commissioning of Mark-Anthony Turnage's two recent operas, summed up key aspects of the composer's work as a researcher and performer when he commented that “his mission to embrace styles and forms that are deliberately aimed at widening audiences and capturing the attention of sectors of the population who feel distant from classical music, is consistently impressive.” (5.1)

Turnage's work has been commissioned and repeatedly performed, broadcast and recorded by leading ensembles, orchestras and opera companies, attracting large audiences, making a significant contribution to the economy of the music business. A selective overview of commissions and performances since 2014 includes: The Berlin Philharmonic, London Symphony and Boston Symphony Orchestras (*Remembering*, 2017), Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra (*Speranza*, 2014) Philadelphia and Halle Orchestras (*Piano Concerto*, 2015), Tokyo Metropolitan Symphony Orchestra (*Hibiki*, 2014). Commercial publication of scores document Turnage's contribution to all major genres: 2 operas for the Royal Opera House; 2 ballets for ROH and Sadler's Wells Theatre, as well as concertos, orchestral works, chamber music. He has projected art music forms in new directions by fusing western classical with non-western and popular compositional techniques and performance modes in unique ways to transmit musical meaning: in *Shadow Walker* (2017), for example, “Turnage includes, and very much exploits, Turkish percussion” (Andrew Mellor, Gramophone) (5.2). Since 2000, 22 of his works have been performed at the BBC Proms, a concert series accessed on Radio 3 and BBC Sounds by ca. 2 million listeners every week (5.3). His music has been recorded by Decca, Warner Classics, Chandos, Deutsche Grammophon, the LPO and LSO labels, and listener figures on leading streaming platform Spotify are currently 165,128 for his orchestral work *Ceres*, while *Remembering* has had 3.2k views on the LSO youtube channel (5.4).

2. Public Awareness of contemporary classical composition and current debates on music's role in society

International commissions such as *Hibiki* (2014) for the 30th anniversary of Suntory Hall, Tokyo, have contributed significantly to the visibility of British contemporary music on the global stage.

In the UK, this work was paired with Ravel's jazz-inspired piano concerto in a 2017 BBC Proms programme (Prom 39) built around non-western classical influences in music (5.3). *Maya*, commissioned by the Swedish Chamber Orchestra, formed part of a new 'music cycle' for the BBC Proms in 2018 to bring contemporary music into dialogue with a key work in the concert canon: J.S. Bach's Brandenburg Concertos. Soloist Maya Beiser describes how Turnage's work "depicts the cello singing a delicate, soaring aria amidst shifting harmonies which stretches and expand the skeletal outline of Bach's Concerto No. 1" (5.5). *Speranza* (2014), commissioned by three major international orchestras (London Symphony, Boston Symphony and Swedish Radio Symphony) demonstrates Turnage's use of the symphony orchestra and non-western instruments to engage with a pervasive general contemporary concern with intercultural negotiation. (5.5). His works frequently engage with current socio-political issues. His song cycle *Refugee* for tenor and chamber orchestra, a threnody for the victims of the current refugee crisis, encourages the audience to reflect on their journeys and struggles as part of a larger human, trans-historical condition by setting topical poetry from the last 100 years to modern sounds; Turnage explains "The trigger for my piece was the photo of the drowned three-year-old Syrian boy on a Turkish beach. People were rightly shocked at the time and we need to feel the same outrage again today" (5.6).

Turnage's critical engagement with genre has impacted wider public debates about the contemporary status of opera, its subject matter, its relationship with other theatrical art forms, and its audience. He has contributed four major works to what many understand to be an elitist art form, each of which has shone a new and different light on opera's history and heritage, as one of his principal singers says: "he writes music about the people we live next door to or went to a football match with. (...) the themes are universal, and the characters are familiar" (5.7). The debates he has sparked are documented in press reviews as in the many international productions, both unusually numerous for contemporary opera. There have been 44 performances of *Anna Nicole* to date; 62 performances of *Coraline* (2018) were given or planned by opera houses internationally: Royal Opera House (2018); Theater Freiburg (2018); Opera de Lille (2018/19); Staatstheater Saarland (2019). Further runs at Folkoperan Stockholm (2020); Opernhaus Zürich (2020); Victorian Opera Melbourne (2020) were cancelled due to Covid-19. Public debates around contemporary opera also reintroduced earlier works onto the international stage: *Anna Nicole*, first performed in Germany in 2013 (Staatstheater Dortmund), has recently been performed at Staatstheater Nürnberg (2019) and Staatstheater Wiesbaden (2020). His opera, *Greek* (1988) was revived at the Arcola Theatre, London (2018); Brooklyn Academy of Music, New York, NY (2018); Munich Postpalast (2017); Edinburgh Festival Theatre and Glasgow Theatre Royal (2017), Emerson/Paramount Center Boston, MA (2016); Theatersaal National Bern, Switzerland (2015); and at Tongyeong Concert Hall, South Korea (2015).

Extensive international media coverage testifies to their contribution to wider debates about the subject matter for operatic treatment and the genre's target audiences. Polarised reviews of *Anna Nicole* in the national broadsheets, for instance, illustrated clearly that the opera had overstepped the boundaries of expectations of the genre by pulling the world of reality TV, with its own stardom cult, into the realm of the opera diva, causing discomfort to some and excitement to others. Descriptions of a "tacky sense of a misfiring musical" (*Guardian*), and an "irresistibly visceral punch" (*Telegraph*), document the forceful impact of this transgression of the comfort zone of operatic hero-worship.

3. Bringing new audiences to classical music, nurturing young audiences, and broadening the modes of engagement with classical music culture

Turnage's collaborations with non-classical artists, his cross-over explorations and his direct address to young people have widened opera audiences to include large cohorts of under 18s, documented by the unusual uptake of *Coraline* at international opera houses. Mary Bevan, who created the title role at ROH, explains that there were many "who didn't know anything about opera come to watch who totally "got it", and "there were so many children who would have had their first operatic experience or classical music experience there," explaining that what it showed her was that "people don't need an accessible or simple tune or orchestration to understand (opera)." (5.7; 3.4) Turnage's inclusion of younger performers – children's choirs are required in *Hibiki* (BBC Proms, 2017) and *The Silver Tassie* (Barbican, 2018), for instance –

provides young musicians with high profile performance experiences and musical challenges. Children “liked the fact it was challenging to sing, and this gave them a strong bond in rehearsals,” explains their choral director; Turnage “doesn’t “play safe” when writing for youth choirs” and “the more complicated the music, the more time they spend around the orchestra in rehearsal! They benefit so much from this experience, and clearly love the final run of rehearsals and being part of a bigger picture.” (5.8). One of the singers explained “the power of the music made me care about what happened to the characters;” the parents of another said: “Our son was totally absorbed by this music. He sang it around the house all the time – we all learnt it! He was moved by the themes too and even though he was only nine he realised the significance” (5.8).

Turnage’s collaborative approach, giving voice to those outside the usual art music remit, includes a long-standing commitment to work in prisons. He brought his interest in the processes of musical construction beyond boundaries of “classical,” “rock” or “jazz,” as well as his experimentation with music’s rehabilitating potential, to his collaboration with the Irene Taylor Trust. Most recently, in 2016, he contributed to the Trust’s 21st anniversary celebrations by leading a collaborative composition project with participants in three *Music in Prisons* schemes, working with them on creating and performing their artwork. One participant described the “Bridges” project as a unique opportunity that “helped in personal growth,” while another described in a radio interview how the projects “for the first time ever give [young offenders] confidence,” while the experience “lets them know that somebody cares about them (...) realising that all of a sudden, a door opens; they can see light at the end of the tunnel” (5.9).

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

5.1 Email testimonial from Sir Antonio Pappano, ROH Music Director [see folder]

5.2 Andrew Mellor, Review of *Shadow Walker*, Gramophone Magazine (09/2018):
<https://tinyurl.com/36mfhdn2>

5.3 Full list of Proms performances of Turnage’s music: <https://tinyurl.com/k892dfh5>
 Average audience figures at the BBC Proms: <https://tinyurl.com/4yauspm6>

5.4 Spotify data (*Ceres*) accessed 19.12.20 [see folder]; LSO trailer for *Remembering* premiere:
<https://tinyurl.com/yfapldxw>

5.5 Select representative announcements and reviews for commissioned works *Hibiki*, *Maya* and *Speranza*: <https://tinyurl.com/p2mkmcu>; <https://tinyurl.com/3v8rsbxr>; <https://tinyurl.com/53zbr8rw>

5.6 Reviews for and artist’s statement on *Refugee*: <https://tinyurl.com/2kfivbm7k>;
<https://tinyurl.com/399nkmwj>; <https://tinyurl.com/rxnc5csf>

5.7 Email testimonial from ROH title role singer Mary Bevan MBE [see folder]

5.8 Testimonials from Director, Finchley Childrens’ Music Group and young performers [see folder]

5.9 ‘Bridges collaboration with Mark-Anthony Turnage for #ITTturns21’ (24.11.2016):
<https://tinyurl.com/2wcnrdzn>; <https://tinyurl.com/yh4w8vbd>

(includes quote 1); <https://tinyurl.com/atf8bacf> (BBC ‘Music Matters’ feature, includes quote 2 at 9’59”)