Abstract

*The Tale of Rowan O’Shea* is a musical drama for solo violin, chamber ensemble (percussion, harp, classical guitar, viola, cello, double bass), choir (including solo alto and solo tenor), and sound files. The libretto was written by the composer with the exception of the text in *Angus Dei* (Movement 7), which uses the traditional Latin text. This drama is divided into eight movements with each being a different step on the journey of the main character, Rowan O’Shea, who is represented by the solo violin. The narrative follows Rowan as he leaves his hometown of Dunlea (a fictional town invented for this work) and faces adventures and hardships. Finally, he realizes that his peace and identity lie in Dunlea and he travels home. Pitch material for the first and last movement was derived from the bird calls that are included in the first sound file and compiled into what has been dubbed as the *bird scale.*

Keywords

21st c. Music, Composition, Musical Drama, Sound Files, Solo Violin, Fiddler, Solo Voice, Choir, Rowan O’Shea, Chamber Ensemble, Bird Scale, Messiaen
Brief Summary

The Tale of Rowan O’Shera is a musical drama that follows the story of a fiddler named Rowan O’Shera. His home is the fictional town of Dunlea, but he finds himself discontent with the quiet life there and departs to find adventure in the world beyond. He experiences frivolity, love, heartbreak, danger, and loneliness until finally, he realizes that his peace and identity lie in Dunlea and he travels home. This work is written for solo violin which represents Rowan, chamber ensemble (percussion, harp, classical guitar, viola, cello, double bass), choir (including solo alto and solo tenor), and sound files. It is divided into eight movements with each being a different step in Rowan’s journey. The libretto was written by the composer with the exception of the text in Angus Dei (Movement 7).
Acknowledgements

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A deep thank you to all of my friends and family, especially Jessica and Radine, who encouraged me throughout the creation of this work. The past two years have been challenging, but they have been supportive and kind even when I was feeling discouraged.

Finally, thank you to my savior Jesus Christ who has walked beside me every step of the way. Soli Deo Gloria.
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The Tale of Rowan O’Shera
A Musical Drama

by
Emma Theresa Lucy Verdonk
INSTRUMENTATION

1 Percussion
   Castanets (mov. 2)
   Cymbals (mov. 5)
   Djembe or frame drum (mov. 5)
   bass drum (mov. 5)
   mark tree (mov. 3, mov. 8)
   crotales (mov. 1a, mov. 8)
   tubular bells (mov. 7)

Harp

Solo Tenor
Solo Alto
SATB
dishes/kitchen utensils (SATB)
shaker (1 chorister)

Classical Guitar

Solo Violin
Viola
Cello
Double Bass

Sound Files
   (mov. 1a, mov. 3, mov. 4, mov. 5, mov. 6, mov. 8)

DURATION

28 minutes
PERFORMANCE NOTES

AMPLIFICATION

Amplification is desired for the voices and instruments and for the projection of the sound files. The solo violin should be amplified preferably with a wireless or clip-on microphone to allow freedom of movement as the violinist should stand at the forefront of the stage. It is desirable that the guitar have a microphone and there should be two microphones at the front of the stage for the vocal soloists. For the latter, amplification is essential to attain the desired singing style—I would like them to sing in a folk-like style with little to no vibrato—and still be heard above the choir and ensemble. Ideally, hanging microphones would be used for a slight amplification of the choir, but 2-3 microphones could also be placed behind the ensemble and in front of the choir. If technical resources are limited it is not detrimental to the production if the instruments do not have microphones. However, amplifying will allow for optimal balancing in sound especially in relation to the sound files.

Recommended List of Gear

- Wireless clip-on mic (violin)
- 2-3 hanging microphones (choir). Alternatively 2-3 microphones on stands may be used
- 1 microphone (guitar)
- 2 microphones placed at the front of the stage (soloists)
- Cables as appropriate
- 2 identical speakers
- 1 computer for playback of the sound files
- 1 audio interface

STAGING

The choir should be positioned in a one-row semi-circle around the ensemble since this spread out arrangement creates a more encompassing sound. For Movement 1, “Home,” the sopranos and altos will form a semi-circle around the instrumentalists with the tenors and basses two paces behind. Directly following Movement 1, “Home,” the sopranos and altos will take a step backward while the tenors and basses will take a step forward and position themselves between the sopranos and altos. If the stage does not allow for a single row, then the tenors and basses may remain in a second row behind the sopranos and altos. The soloists should move to a microphone at the front of the stage, preferably to the right of the viola, for their sections.

The speakers for the sound files should be placed behind the choir, spaced approximately two meters on either side of the center of the ensemble. The sound files are intended to be an immersive texture that is part of the ensemble. Avoid any setup that makes the sounds come from a location away from the live ensemble (e.g. avoid house audio systems that have speakers directly above the audience, or speakers placed in front of the ensemble).

CHOIR

Preferred 24-person choir. Minimum 12-person choir.
Included in the choir: 1 alto soloist, 1 or 2 tenor soloists.

Over the duration indicated by the arrow, transition from “ay” to “ah” while continuing to vocalize.

La Esmeralda (Movement 2) suggested “instrumentation for choir”: plates, cups, cutlery, mop & bucket, pan/skillet & serving spoon/wooden spoon, steel wool, tongs.
Each chorister should have something to “play.”
HARP

Flutter Glissando - Draw open hands back and forth across strings in register and direction indicated to create a rustling effect.

Thunder Effect - Open hand strikes the strings in the lower register, then bounces off allowing strings to resound.

Thunder Glissando - A fast and loud glissando played by the left hand on the lowest strings of the harp. The strings must be played forcefully so that they rattle against one another creating a metallic thunder-like sound.

PERCUSSION

Bass drum
- To be played with medium-soft mallets for optimal rolls

Crotales
- To be played with a bow

Suspended cymbals
- To be played with wooden end of bass drum mallet or hard cymbal mallets for optimal attack

VIOLIN

Increase Bow Pressure (inc. B.P.)
- Push bow harder against strings

Distorted Bow Pressure (dis. B.P.)
- The melody becomes distorted because of the extremely heavy bow pressure

Ord. Bow Pressure (ord. B.P.)
- Return to ordinary bow pressure

inc.B.P ————> dis. B.P.

- An arrow between two technique indications directs the player to gradually transition from one technique to the next over the duration of the arrow.

SOUND FILES

Fade in
- The sound technician must use their discretion to gradually fade in the sound file over the duration indicated by an arrow.

Fade out
- The sound technician must use their discretion to gradually fade out the sound file over the duration indicated by an arrow.

Mute
- At the point where mute is indicated, the sound technician must ensure that the sound file is inaudible.

“Full Volume”
- This indicates that the sound file should be at the optimal level where it balances with the ensemble and choir. In some cases, it may mean that the sound file must be at full volume, but in others, it may mean that “full volume” indicates the level that the sound technician and conductor have agreed upon.
SYNOPSIS

Movement 1 (Home & Rowan O’Shera) - In the tiny fictional town of Dunlea, lives a fiddler named Rowan O’Shera. All through the town, he is well-known and adored for his skill on the violin. One of his favourite past times is to go out in the morning while the birds are singing at their fullest and dialogue with the feathered creatures using his own interpretations of the bird calls played on his violin. However, Rowan grows discontent with his little country town and is persuaded by dreams of adventure and fortune to leave Dunlea.

Movement 2 (La Esmeralda) - On his first night away from home, Rowan stops at a tavern. In the corner, a small band is playing and Rowan cannot help but join them and show off his skills as a violinist. As he plays, he sees a castanet player, a woman named Esmeralda, and immediately falls in love.

Movement 3 (The Meadow) - In a meadow by a little brook, Rowan woos Esmeralda with a love song for violin that he wrote especially for her.

Movement 4 (Lonely Ride) - Despite Rowan’s beautiful music, Esmeralda grew tired of him and left. Now the fiddler travels aimlessly down the road, playing his fiddle and wondering how many broken hearts the stars have looked down on.

Movement 5 (My Only True Love is the Deep Blue Sea) - Rowan’s travels bring him to the sea where he joins a crew aboard a merchant ship. He sets off on this new adventure, determined that from now on his only true love will be the deep blue sea. The crew sings a sea shanty and Rowan merrily accompanies them on his violin. Before long, a storm builds up. There is chaos upon the ship as the sailors attempt to stay afloat amid the crashing waves and howling wind. Their attempts are futile, though, and the ship is lost.

Movement 6 (Wanderer) - Rowan awakes washed up on the shore with nothing but the clothes on his back and his weathered violin. As he has no money, he goes to the nearest town and wanders about playing his violin and remembering his past adventures. One by one, the string on his violin break.

Movement 7 (The Church) - Without a functioning violin, he is in his lowest state yet and desperately stumbles into a church. He collapses in a back pew where he hears a choir, or perhaps angels, sing about the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of this world and grants peace. Rowan realizes suddenly that he had been searching everywhere for something more, while in fact, his identity lies in Dunlea. Consequently, he decides that it is time to go home.

Movement 8 (Homeward Bound) – As he journeys home, he is gifted strings for his violin, and upon reaching home, his violin is fully intact and he joyfully plays along with the sounds of nature from his tiny hometown of Dunlea.
LIBRETTO

Movement 1b (Rowan O’Shera)

There once was a fiddler named Rowan O’Shera
They say he was born with a fiddle in hand.
He was well-loved in tiny Dunlea
By all who heard his song.

Many days did Rowan look out to the mountains,
Longing for adventures dangerous and great,
Dreaming of fortune and fame in the lands
Outside his tiny Dunlea

Then one morning he packed his knapsack and fiddle.
His mother wept a fierce storm of tears,
But his father bid him well
As he left his tiny Dunlea

So Rowan O’Shera travelled down the road
On his fiddle playing a merry old tune.
Full of treasure and beauty was the world
As he left tiny Dunlea.

Movement 4 (Lonely Ride)

On a road far from Dunlea
Travels a wanderer through the night.
A fiddle his only friend
On this lonely way without her.

Oh stars!
How many broken hearts have you seen?
How many songs of melancholy?
Just sing one more with me.
Oh stars!

Smiled the moon down on the dreamer,
Humming to the sweet tune of the fiddle.
To the sea leads the trav’ler’s road
And great adventure left to be told.

Oh stars!
How many broken hearts have you seen?
How many songs of melancholy?
Just sing one more with me.
Oh stars!

Movement 5 (Off To Sea)

Verse 1
I love a lass with eyes of blue,
She’s the prettiest girl I ever knew.
I’ve a’sailed the world around,
But none like her I’ve found.

Chorus 1
Ho! Hey!
And this I’ll say,
“My only true love
Is the deep blue sea.”

Verse 2
My heart is broke when I’m a’shore,
I long for her and miss her sore.
In her arms I am content
And forget all my torment.

Chorus 1

Verse 3:
Now mark me, sailors, mark me well,
When her temper’s black the tides do swell.
Her embrace will hold and keep
Her lovers in the deep.

Chorus 1

Verse 4
I’ve followed her to the setting sun,
But always further she does run.
I’ll a’go till the sea runs dry,
Till my true love is nigh.

Chorus 2:
Wind and rain
Will not part me
From my only true love
The deep blue sea.

Movement 8 (The Church)

Latin
Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis.
Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis.
Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, dona nobis pacem.

English translation
Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, have mercy on us.
Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, have mercy on us.
Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, grant us peace.
opening, brightening like the sun reaching over the horizon
The lure of the world completely consumes Rowan
alto soloist move to microphone
Rowan O'Shera
Movement 1b

\( \frac{3}{1} = 80 \sim 84 \)

with forward movement

Harp

Solo Alto

Soprano

Alto

Tenor

Bass

Viola

Cello

Double Bass

Sol.A.

Vla.

Vc.

D.B.

There once was a fiddler named Rowan O'Shera.

They say he was born with a fiddle in hand.
He was well loved in tiny Dunleavy by all who heard his song.

like a foreboding chant

Rowan Rowan Rowan O'Shera

Rowan Rowan Rowan O'Shera

Rowan Rowan Rowan O'Shera

Rowan Rowan Rowan O'Shera
Many days did Rowan look out to the

mountains longing for adventures dangerous and great,
Rowan O'Shea

35

Hp.

Sol.A.

dreaming of fortune and fame in the lands.

T

B

oo

oo

Vla.

Vc.

D.B.

35

p

Hp.

Sol.A.

outside his tiny Dunleavy pp

T

B

outside his tiny Dunleavy pp

39

outside his tiny Dunleavy

Vla.

Vc.

D.B.
Then one morning he packed his knapsack and fiddle.

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His mother she wept a fierce storm of tears,

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but his father smiled and bid him well as

as

dm dm dm dm dm dm dm as

as

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---

Rowan O'Shea
he left tiny Dunleavy
Rowan O'Shea
down the valley.

So Rowan O'Shera travelled down the valley.

So Rowan O'Shera travelled down the valley.

So Rowan O'Shera travelled down the valley.
road

On his fiddle playing a merry old

Sher-a

Ro-wan

O’-Sher-

road

On his fiddle playing a merry old

Sher-a

Ro-wan

O’-Sher-

road

On his fiddle playing a merry old
tune. Full of treasure and beauty was the world

a Roman O'Shea

tune. Full of treasure and beauty was the world

a Roman O'Shea

tune. Full of treasure and beauty was the world

out - side his ti - ny Dun -
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out - side his ti - ny Dun -
out - side his ti - ny Dun -
La Esmerelda

Movement 2

\( \frac{\text{Bar: 66-70}}{,} \)

\( \text{Rowan enters a tavern for the night and sees a band playing in the corner} \)

\( \text{Castanets} \)

\( \text{Shaker} \)

\( \text{Harp} \)

\( \text{SATB} \)

\( \text{Guitar} \)

\( \text{Solo Violin} \)

\( \text{Viola} \)

\( \text{Cello} \)

\( \text{Double Bass} \)

\( \text{6} \)

\( \text{Hoi, Dennis! Pass the ale!} \)

\( \text{Who hired this band?} \)

\( \text{Rowan walks over to the band and conducts them} \)
La Esmerelda

You cheated! I had a full house!

The band finally gets the music right and Rowan joins in

confident and flashy violin

This fiddler knows his tune.
Choristers independently transition from arhythmic ambience to notated rhythm using utensils and dishes.

In groups of two or three choristers at time per beat, transition from ambience to stomped rhythm.
32  \textit{a tempo}  \textit{merrily and with gusto}

c.

Sh

Hp.

S.A.

T

B

Gtr.

S.Vln.

Vla.

Vc.

D.B.

All sopranos \& altos on rhythm

All tenors on rhythm

All basses on rhythm

mf

mf

mf

mf

mf

mf
Rowan woos Esmeralda
with a sweet melody
The Meadow

Movement 3

Rowan and Esmeralda are in a meadow where Rowan tries to woo her with what he thinks she wants to hear: a romantic song exceedingly passionate and romantic

Mark Tree

Harp

Solo Violin

Viola

Cello

Double Bass

stream, birds, and the rustle of meadow grass fade in "full volume"
Rowan becomes so focused on showing off and playing his lovesong that he doesn't even notice Esmeralda becoming bored and leaving.
Rowan finishes his piece with a flourish feeling very pleased with himself and is dazed when he sees that Esmeralda is gone.
Lonely Ride

Movement 4

(\(\text{d} = 100-108\)) Feeling despondent after Esmeralda's rejection, Rowan plods wearily down a lonely road

fluidly, sadly

Solo Alto

Solo Tenor

Guitar

Solo Violin

Sound Files

Recording of night sounds

"full volume"

5

Sol.T.

far from Dun-le-a travels a wanderer

Gtr.

S.F.

9

Sol.T.

through the night

Gtr.

S.F.

13

Sol.A.

A fiddle

Gtr.

S.Vln.

S.F.
Lonely Ride

Sol.A.

his only friend on this lonely way

Gr.

with out her Oh stars!

S.Vln.

How many broken hearts have you seen? How many songs of

S.F.

me lan choly! Just sing one more with me
Lonely Ride

Sol.A.

Gtr.

52
leads the trav'ler's road and great adven-
tures

S.Vln.

S.F.

56
left to be told. Oh stars!

Sol.T.

Gtr.

56

Oh stars!

S.Vln.

S.F.

62
My Only True Love is the Deep Blue Sea

Movement 5

(♩ = 114-120)

As Rowan approaches the sea, he hears the music of a ship’s crew

Percussion

Harps

Solo Tenor

Soprano

Alto

upper staff indicates clapped rhythm for alts

Tenor

upper staff indicates clapped rhythm for tenors

Baritone

upper staff indicates stomped rhythm for baritones

Bass

upper staff indicates stomped rhythm for basses

Solo Violin

Viola

Cello

Double Bass

calm waves that transition to storm waves

fade in

“full volume”

Sound File
My Only True Love is the Deep Blue Sea
love a lass with eyes of blue, she's the pretti-est girl I e-ver knew. I've a' sailed the world a-round, but none like her I've found.

Ho! Hey! And this I'll say, "My on-ly true love is the deep blue sea."
long for her and miss her sore. In her arms I am content and forget all my torment.

And forget all my torment.

miss her sore mm

And forget all my torment.
Ho! Hey! And this I'll say, "My only true love is the deep blue sea."

Ho! Hey! And this I'll say, "My only true love is the deep blue sea."

Ho! Hey! And this I'll say, "My only true love is the deep blue sea."

Ho! Hey! And this I'll say, "My only true love is the deep blue sea."

Ho! Hey! And this I'll say, "My only true love is the deep blue sea."
My Only True Love is the Deep Blue Sea

(\textit{\textbf{U}})

Fr.De.

Sol.T.

Now mark me sail-ors, mark me well, when her tem-per’s black the tides do swell.

independently mimic wind sounds with “sh” and “airy” whistle sounds

\textbf{S}

\textbf{A}

\textbf{T}

\textbf{Bar.}

\textbf{Bs.}

\textbf{S.Vln.}

\textbf{Vc.}

\textbf{D.B.}

\textbf{S.F.}

\textbf{46}
Her embrace will hold and keep her lovers in the deep.

Ho! Hey! And this I'll say,
"My only true love is the deep blue sea."
My Only True Love is the Deep Blue Sea

Fr.Dr.

H.p.

Sol.T.

S

A

T

Bar.

Bs.

S.Vln.

Vc.

D.B.

S.F.
I've followed her to the setting sun, but

Ho! Hey! Ah

Doom ba da doom

Ho! Hey! Ho! Hey!
al-ways fur-ther she does run. I'll a-go till the sea runs dry till my true love is nigh. Wind and rain will not partne

doom ba da doom doom ba da doom doom da doom Wind and rain will not partne

Ho! Hey! Ho! ba da keep her lo- vers in the deep. Wind and rain will not partne

doom ba da doom doom ba da doom doom da doom Wind and rain will not partne
My Only True Love is the Deep Blue Sea

from my only true love the deep blue sea.
Rowan finds himself washed up on on shore with nothing but his violin. He wanders about playing memories from his adventures and one by one the strings on his violin break.
Not even able to play his violin, Rowan settles in the back pew of a church.
Agnus Dei

20

T.B.

S

ca - ta mun - di, mi - se

A1

ca - ta mun - di, mi - se

A2

ca - ta mun - di, mi - se

T

ca - ta mun - di, mi - se

B1

ca - ta mun - di, mi - se

B2

ca - ta mun - di, mi - se

23

T.B.

S

re - re no - bis

A1

re - re no - bis

A2

re - re no - bis

T

re - re no - bis

B1

re - re no - bis

B2

re - re no - bis
Agnus Dei
Homeward Bound

Movement 8

(p = 52-58)

building, with forward movement

crotales
arco

Percussion

Harp

Soprano

Alto 1

Alto 2

Tenor

Bass

Classical Guitar

Solo Violin

Viola

Cello

Double Bass

Cardinal

Bird Calls

"full volume"

faded in

Sound File
Homeward Bound
# Curriculum Vitae

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name:</th>
<th>Emma Theresa Lucy Verdonk</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Post-secondary Education and Degrees:</td>
<td>Wilfrid Laurier University Waterloo, Ontario, Canada 2016-2020 B.Mus (Community Music)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The University of Western Ontario London, Ontario, Canada 2020-2022 M.Mus (Music Composition)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Honours and Awards:</td>
<td>In-course Scholarship Wilfrid Laurier University 2016-2020</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Western Graduate Research Scholarship The University of Western Ontario 2020</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Don Wright Graduate Entrance Award The University of Western Ontario 2020</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Arcady 2021 Emerging Artist Arcady Ensemble 2021-2022</td>
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<tr>
<td>Related Work Experience:</td>
<td>Violin Teacher Paris Academy of Music Paris, Ontario, Canada 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Composition of the chamber opera <em>The Shoemaker’s Orphans</em>, commissioned by Vera Causa Opera Company (FUSE) Cambridge, Ontario, Canada 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Composition of the chamber opera <em>Refracted</em>, commissioned by Vera Causa Opera Company (FUSE) Cambridge, Ontario, Canada 2019</td>
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</table>
Community Music Facilitator for Composition Workshop
Vera Causa Opera Company (FUSE)
Waterloo, Ontario, Canada
2019-2020

Composition of the work *My Love Went Home On Christmas Morning* commissioned by Arcady Ensemble
Brantford, Ontario, Canada
2021

Composition of material for *Musical Safari* Children’s program commissioned by Queen Street Music School
Cambridge, Ontario, Canada
2021-2022

Assistant to the Director
Arcady Ensemble
Brantford, Ontario, Canada
2021-2022