

## ***“Droning Falsities (for one’s self)”*, a collaborative exploration into the use of voice and contrabass clarinet**

*Droning Falsities (for one’s self)* for contrabass clarinet and live stereo playback was developed through the collaborative research between composer Mark Dyer and I, Jason Alder. The piece uses the 15<sup>th</sup> Century compositional technique of parallel harmony ‘fauxbourdon’ and moves through a structure based on Guillaume Dufay’s antiphon *Ave Maria Stella* by utilising singing while playing multiphonics on the contrabass clarinet, combined with pre-recorded fixed media created through the manipulation of a recording of the original work. Over the course of 2018, Dyer and I met on several occasions to explore the contrabass clarinet through a mutually collaborative effort. The key questions I intended to evaluate from these collaborations were: ‘what new sonic possibilities could we discover on the contrabass clarinet’, ‘in what innovative ways could they be used in music making?’, and ‘in what ways could the collaborative process be mutually beneficial’, while Dyer was exploring ‘musical ruins’ through processes of destruction, disassembly, and degeneration.

Our initial meeting took an exploratory course experimenting with various ideas Dyer had, but the main focus of our work centred around the idea of singing through the contrabass clarinet, particularly while playing multiphonics. We have referred to this in our sessions as compound multiphonics as no previous documentation on this particular method of multiphonic production exists.

Multiphonics, or multiple sonorities, are produced on the clarinet using two primary and one secondary method. The two primary ways involve either changes in embouchure (Type 1) or fingers (Type 2) to create multiple pitches at once. The secondary way involves singing while playing a note, which can have varying effects depending on the notes which are played and sung, and the manner in which the performer is singing.

In our first session, Dyer presented me with the score of a polyphonic work, Dufay’s *Ave Maria Stella*, and asked if I could play something similar to it by combining the multiphonic techniques. We made several discoveries in how my singing affected certain multiphonics and how playing certain multiphonics affected my singing, and explored these in different contexts, for instance with varying dynamic ranges and attacks. From the data observed, Dyer created a series of chords produced from Type 1 and 2 multiphonics combined with sung pitches. As we worked through the series in subsequent sessions we noted the attributes of each chord such as effectiveness, unique characteristics, or whether it simply did not work, prompting efforts to discover alternate possibilities to use instead. We also discussed the best ways to use the material in a composition, accounting for factors like response and articulation, and the ability to move between sung pitches, multiphonics, and compound multiphonics. By the fourth session, Dyer had manipulated a recording of my playing compound multiphonics from a previous session to produce a new sound, created from artifacts that occurred in the digital processing. This new digital sound was used as inspiration of something to achieve acoustically, which drove our explorations further resulting in the discovery of an acoustic phenomenon that occurs when singing pitches while closing certain keys on the instrument. This new-found technique was not used in the composition but provided me with further areas for independent research.

The final score is a culmination of the new discoveries in compound multiphonics made during our sessions and also includes the integration of the manipulated recording of the Dufay. Through a collaborative process of experimentation, reflection, and revision, the completed piece emerged. <https://soundcloud.com/mark-dyer-22/droning-falsities-for-ones-self>



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Jason Alder is a low clarinet specialist and holds degrees in clarinet performance (Michigan State University- US), bass clarinet performance (Conservatorium van Amsterdam- NL), creative improvisation (Artez Conservatorium- NL), and has undertaken post-graduate study in the application of the advanced rhythmic principles of South Indian Karnatic music to Western music. He is currently conducting PhD research on the sonic possibilities of the contrabass clarinet (Royal Northern College of Music- UK). He is well-established as a performer of contemporary music and frequently works with composers to develop and premiere new works both as a soloist and in various ensembles. He is often found performing, lecturing, or on panel discussion at festivals around the world, including the International ClarinetFests, European Clarinet Festivals, Istanbul Woodwind Festival, American Single Reed Summit, Netherlands Gaudeamus New Music Festival, Ultima Oslo Contemporary Music Festival, Havana Festival of Contemporary Music, and Leeds International Festival of Artistic Innovation.

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