

COMPOSITIONS OF CARLO MOMBELLI

**A Portfolio of Sixty Works for Live
Performance and an Animation Film Score**

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
DMus (Composition)

Carlo Mombelli
University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg
February 2007
Student no. 0316684N

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my mom for introducing me to music through the ballet at the age of eight. Thanks also to Mrs Loveday, my piano teacher and Johnny Fourie my mentor and jazz guru who taught me throughout the years that we performed together, as well as Andre Steenkamp who introduced me to so much music.

Thanks to my mom in-law for all your encouragement and help.

Thanks also to Wits for enabling me to do this degree.

Once again thanks to Gwen Ansell who hooked me up with Dr. Michael Blake who then hooked me up with Professor Christine Lucia who then hooked me up to WITS.

A special thanks to Professor Lucia for all your valuable insight, input, and help. You turned my sketches and notes into a work that I am truly proud of. Thanks also to Professor Rossi for your input in my Portfolio.

And as always, the biggest thanks go to my wife Sandra who has always supported and believed in my artistic quests even in the bleakest of financial times, as well as to my other two little inspirations, my daughters Gina and Maria.

CONTENTS

The works are arranged in the order of recordings, and individual works are listed and numbered (1-60). The date given next to the works is the date of the composition.

Some compositions are found on more than one CD, and I have chosen my favourite recording of the work to accompany the scores so that each composition thus appears only once.

Acknowledgments	i
Preface	vi

Scores (CD 1)

Abstractions – ‘The unreleased tapes’

Recorded at Shifty Studios, Johannesburg in 1986 to document my band ‘Abstractions’. These pieces are unreleased at this present time.

1. Bara. 1981	27
2. As I turned my head 1985	28
3. Places people go to. 1986	32
4. Johnny the Guru. 1986	33
5. Dear Music Lover. 1986	34

Abstractions – ‘On the other side’

(Shifty records - shift 20, recorded and released 1986.)

6. Princess. 1982	35
-------------------	----

‘Carlo Mombelli’s – Abstractions’

(ITM records - 2024 CD, recorded and released 1989)

7. It’s For You. 1983	37
8. My Inspiration. 1985	40
9. It’s Cold, I said. 1986	43
10. On the other side. 1986	46
11. Journey of my dreams. 1986	47
12. Dancing thoughts. 1986	49
13. Wailing 1986	51

Scores (CD 2)

Carlo Mombelli – ‘Happy sad’

(ITM Pacific - 970057, recorded and released 1990)

14. a. Deep impressions part 1. 1987	52
b. Deep impressions part 2. 1987	53
15. Happy sad. 1985	55
16. I drank my coffee and dreamt. (Version one) 1985	56
17. My friends and I. 1984	58
18. Somewhere out there. 1990	59
19. Remember Lucia. 1987	60

Carlo Mombelli – ‘Dancing in a museum’

(ITM Pacific - 970078, recorded and released 1992)

20. Dancing in a Museum 1992	63
21. The art of slow motion. 1992	65
22. Untitled stories 1992	66
23. Sad Vincent 1992	68
24. The marathon runner. 1991	69
25. Gina. 1992	71
26. My cousin James. 1992	74
27. I stared into my head. 1992	75

Scores (CD 3)

Carlo Mombelli and the Prisoners of Strange – ‘Bats in the Belfry’

(Baobab Art Records - BACD 001, recorded 1996 released 2000)

28. Requiem. 1992	76
29. The hurricane of silence was the author of my tears. 1993	80
30. Battery powered life. 1995	84
31. Untitled prayer. 1996	85
32. Comma. N, Punctuation mark (,) used to separate smallest parts of a sentence. 1996	86

Scores (CD 4)

Carlo Mombelli and the Prisoners of Strange – *When serious babies dance*

(Instinct Africaine - INS 004, recorded 2002 released 2004)

33. Basil, Roses, Lemons, Love. 1996	87
34. Unlock the wisdom door. 2002	89
35. Bass Spirits. 2000	92
36. Sunlove. 2002	94
37. Observations from the hideout – short version. 2002	96
38. Maria are you dreaming again? 1998	102
39. 87/99. 1999	104
40. Zambezi. 1990	107
41. Me, the mango picker – vocal version. 1998	108
42. Surdo. 2000	116
43. Gismonti. 2000	117
44. When serious babies dance. 1990	125
45. Mombellibutton sketches. 1984 (reworked 2000)	130

Scores (CD 5)

Carlo Mombelli and the Prisoners of Strange – *I stared into my head*

(Instinct Africaine – INS011, recorded 2005/2006 released 2007)

46. Soi. 2004	133
47. Solo bass for Gina. 2005	140
48. Gito 2005	141
49. Ethical Sam's cookery school. 2003	143
50. Sonic design: meditations in my back yard. 2006	149
51. Malunde – street child. 2003	150
52. Sonic design: volcanic eruptions in slow motions. 2006	160
53. The silence of a storm 1987 (reworked 2003)	161
54. Mr Battiss. 2004	164
55. The procession march of King Ferd the 3 rd . 2004	168
56. Sonic design: the rights of springs 2005	170
57. a. Trance by chance – part one 2002	171
b. Trance by chance – part two 2004	179

Scores (CD 6)

58. Mnet television - Dwarsklap theme music 2001	180
59. Observations from the hideout (full versions) 2002	
part 1	181
part 2	190
part 2	202
60. The mime artist 2006	212

Scores (DVD 1)

The Devolutionaries – episode one. 2005	219
i) theme	220
ii) just one more day	225
iii) scene one	226
iv) the toilet role pencil holder	233
v) can you see what it is?	235
vi) come in grey squirrel	236
vii) motivation	243
viii) cracker groove	244
ix) cracker attack	248
x) final scene	251
xi) outro theme	257

DVD 2 - The roads to restitution 2003 (no score)

DVD 3 – A retrospective recital of selected work for the degree of DMus at Wits University, Johannesburg, performed on the 26 January 2007.

PREFACE

This Portfolio comprises 61 compositions drawn from my works between 1981 and 2006. It includes the most significant works for all the ensembles I have directed, as well as music for saxophone quartet, solo piano, and film. Besides the saxophone quartet *Observations from the hideout* and the solo piano piece, *The Mime artist*, all the pieces have been recorded and released commercially. (I have recorded an edited version of *Observations from the hideout* using other instruments besides saxophones. I have left out many works that I have composed because even though I play them live with my ensemble, I have not yet recorded them. The film *The roads to restitution* on DVD contains three films, therefore I left out other films: *Story of a beautiful country*, *Conversations on a Sunday Afternoon*, *Moving the spirit*, and *Ummemo*, that I also composed music for.

Copies of the recordings of the works found in this Portfolio are included at the back as CD's 1 – 6 as well as three DVD's. DVD 1 is the documentary film, *The roads to restitution* and DVD 2, the animation series *The Devolutionaries – series one*. I have submitted *The roads to Restitution* without a score as it was composed and recorded directly without a score. The score for *The Devolutionaries* is included in this Portfolio. DVD 3 is a film recording of the concert at Wits University Johannesburg, on Friday the 26 January 2007, when I performed a selection of the works found in this Portfolio.

Most of my music is simple in nature and not that difficult to play as a lot of the pieces flow out of improvisations or melodies I hear. Trying to analyse or discover why these pieces exist however is a far more difficult task and sometimes I have no idea why I composed certain things. It just happened to come out that way. I do not use formulas but compose and feel the balance as the music comes to me. This process is explained in the accompanying Thesis. What I can do is explain the inspiration and give some commentary and insight. In some cases I cannot remember this information so I have left it out.

Because I sometimes compose using unconventional instruments that I have found or made, as well as different electronic gadgets, it is important to understand what these instruments are when I talk about them. I use many different things but below are the

ones found in the compositions in this Portfolio. (The word 'soundscapes' used below means free sound painting, usually with odd percussion instruments.)

Mombellibutton box

My child brought home a thrown-out broken school marimba with the wooden blocks missing. I attached nylon string guitar machine heads on the one end, put three nails and a wooden bridge on the other end and strung 3 guitar strings from one end to the other. I tuned them all to the note D. This instrument is played by striking the string with a thin stick like a berimbau. It makes a sort of sitar drone sound. I use this instrument on the recordings of *Remember Lucia*, *Me the Mango Picker* from the CD *When serious babies dance* (CD 4) and *Soi* from the CD *I stared into my head* (CD 5). I first used this idea with a guitar that I strung only with D strings and then struck it with a drum stick in the early eighties on my composition *Johnny the Guru* (CD 1).

Desk lamp

I have always loved the sound of the desk lamp springs when stroked with my nails. I found little clip-on pickups that are meant for attaching an acoustic instrument like an acoustic guitar or horn to an electronic tuner for tuning purposes' However they sound good when attached to odd objects like the desk lamp. I use this instrument on *Sonic design, the rights of springs* from the CD *I stared into my head* (CD 5).

Springs

I love the sound of springs so I went down to a spring factory in Johannesburg and bought a box of assorted springs which I have been experimenting with.

Remembering my school experiment of attaching a piece of string between two tins and listening how the sound travelled between them, I did the same with a long flexible spring, The tins amplify the overtones of the springs creating thunderstorm effects. I use this on the composition *Sonic design: the rights of springs* found on the CD *I stared into my head* (CD 5).

Manipulated springs

By attaching the clip pick-ups to the tins I can send the sound of the springs through effects and amplify the sound through an amplification system. What I do is send the spring signal through a Boss digital delay pedal and by tweaking the buttons I can

change the pitch and sound. The result is an ‘outer galactic’ effect. I then send the signal into a Boss loop station, looping the sound with the possibilities of reversing the sound captured. I use this on *Volcanic eruptions in slow motion*, found on the CD *I stared into my head* (CD5).

Bottle Udu

Any bottle that has a wide opening can be played with a flat hand striking the opening creating a sound with the pressure of the air. Each bottle has a different sound. I use this sound on *Gito*, also on *I stared into my head* (CD 5).

Metal sheets, also known as ‘Security boards’

In Johannesburg the security industry is booming and on everyone’s walls the security company responsible for the security of the property has their sign displayed. The security company looking after my property changed their name and their metal sheets signs were no longer valid. I went around collecting these old boards and experimented getting different sounds out of them. The drummer Lloyd Martin who plays in my band *The Prisoners of Strange* made cymbals out of the boards. By cutting them to different sizes to change the pitch, and attaching them to microphone stands horizontally you get amazing rhythmic qualities when striking them with a stick. Lloyd plays them on *87/99* found on the CD *When serious babies dance* (CD 4).

Marble and mixing bowl

By rolling a marble around the inside of a metal mixing bowl (roulette wheel style), it is possible to make the sound of a train moving, when looped. Once looped, I drop the marble looping this to create a rhythmic pattern. I use this effect on ‘The silence of a storm’ found on *I stared into my head* (CD 5).

Baby toys

I use baby toys in a number of my compositions. One example is the plastic baby trumpet I use at the end of *Sunlove* recorded on *When serious babies dance* (CD 4). I loop the toy trumpet to create the sound of a baby crying.

Scrap bell tree

I don't like those lovely tuned bell trees that every percussionist has and uses on a ballad. I feel that percussionists have the most possibilities of discovering new sound combinations without buying professional percussion toys from a music shop. I made my own bell tree which I call the scrap bell tree because it consists of, amongst other things, brass candle stick holders, antique silver sugar bowl lids, metal coffee table legs, and hollow brass balls from an old Victorian four poster bed. I use it on the recordings of *Malunde – street child* and *Sonic design – the rights of springs* found on the CD *I stared into my head* (CD 5).

Loop station

Musicians that use loops are sometimes referred to as 'loopheads'. I have been a loophead since the mid nineties and have composed a number of pieces using loops such as *Sunlove* and *Surdo*. To create a loop one must have a machine or device called a 'loop station'. The basic principal of looping is to record live on the spot something for a certain length and then digitally repeat it using a looping device. The external part of a looping device usually consists of two switches that one taps usually with the foot. ('ON' 'OFF') Here is the order of events for setting up a loop:

Step 1: Tap ON and record mode begins – play something.

Step 2: Tap ON and record mode ends and goes into play mode playing the event from step 1 to step 2 repeatedly.

Step 3: Tap ON again and overdub mode begins – one can now record an addition to the loop already playing. The length of the loop will stay the same as determined by step 1 to 2.

Step 4: Tap ON again and overdub mode stops.

To cancel or stop the entire process - tap OFF.

Some devices such as the Roland Boss Loop station can reverse a loop. I use one of these as well as two Lexicon Jam Man loop stations that are very accurate for time loops.

Event record:

Besides the repeated loops a loop gadget can also sample an event without looping it, which can be recalled when tapping the ON switch. On my piece *Ethical Sam's cookery school* found on the CD *I stared into my head* (CD 5) the first bass phrase

heard is an event being recorded. I then tap it back in reverse mode with my foot in time with the music while playing a forward motion bass groove.

A/B box

This is a pedal with two inputs and one output. In other words two signals are blended into one: for example two guitars plugged into the A/B box sending one signal to an amp. It can also be used in reverse i.e. one in and two outs. In other words it splits the signal in two. This is how I use it sending my bass signal to two loop stations using two channels for my bass. Using an A/B box enables me to overlay different ‘out of time’ soundscapes all at the same time. I use this technique on *Sonic design: meditations in my back yard* found on the CD *I stared into my head*. By using this technique I can play and record pieces that would usually only be possible by overdubbing in the studio, or in a live situation have more than one bassist play the music.

Ebow

This is a battery-operated hand device that when placed over the strings above the pickups, creates a non-stop sound signal. This is done by creating a magnetic field that feeds the sound back into the pickup in a sort of loop mode. By using a volume pedal together with an ebow on the bass, one can get a cello-like quality sound. The overdrive sound on *Surdo* is created with the aid of an ebow and a volume pedal.

Waldorf Micro Q Sound Module.

A sound module is a midi device that has preset sounds created by a person or persons where it was made. For example, preset sound 1 could be a piano, preset 2 a ‘honky tonk’ piano, etc. I found a Waldorf sound module in a music shop that could not be sold because it did not have any of the standard presets and even the shop assistant was surprised when I said I’ll take it (he felt guilty selling it to me). Besides the unusual preset sounds on this module, the sound parameters can all be changes allowing you to mutate the original sound, creating your own. I use the Waldorf on *Soi* and *Trance by chance* (*I stared into my head*).

CD 1

‘ABSTRACTIONS – ‘The unreleased tapes’

Recorded 1986 at Shifty studios by Lloyd Ross. Recorded on to two tracks as a documentation and never released.

Musicians – Carlo Mombelli: fretless bass, Johnny Fourie and Jo Runde: guitars, and Neill Ettridge: drums.

1. Bara 1981

Instrumentation: fretless bass, guitar and drums.

Commentary and insight: This is an important piece to me as I feel it is the first composition that moved in the direction that I was searching for. I composed this while I was in the service of the South African Army’s Entertainment Unit. I was twenty-one at the time and interested in the combined free ensemble playing, giving all the musicians in the ensemble a canvass to add their voice freely. I used it for the first time I feel successfully here. Besides having a composed structure with an interesting chromatic chordal and melodic movement with expressive dynamics, it also has a free section

Compositional tool: piano.

2. As I turned my head 1985

Instrumentation: two guitars, bass and drums

Inspiration: Eberhard Weber

Compositional tool: guitar

3. Places people go to 1986

Instrumentation: two guitars, fretless bass and drums

Commentary: One needs stamina to play this piece

Inspiration: Ornette Colman

Compositional tool: bass

4. **Johnny the guru** 1986

Instrumentation: two guitars, bass, drums and a D drone from an acoustic nylon string guitar strung with three D strings played with a stick falling on the strings, not plucked.

Compositional tool: guitar.

5. **Dear music lover** 1986

Instrumentation: guitar, bass and drums.

Compositional tool: guitar

‘ABSTRACTIONS - ON THE OTHER SIDE’,

(Shifty records - shift 20, released 1986.)

6. **Princess** 1982

Instrumentation: two guitars, bass, and drums.

Commentary: This is not such a great recording however I have included it in my portfolio as it is one of my earlier compositions that I feel has the maturity and quality of what I was searching for – the ECM sound.

Compositional tool: Guitar

Recording info:

Recorded where and when: Shifty studios, Johannesburg. 1986.

The musicians: Johnny Fourie: guitar, Jo Runde: synth guitar, Neill Etheridge: drums, Carlo Mombelli: fretless bass.

CD title: ‘On the other side’

Record label and year of release: Shifty records, 1986

CARLO MOMBELLI’S - ABSTRACTIONS

(ITM records - 2024 CD, released 1989)

Recorded and mixed Sept. 23 and Oct 20, 1988 at Tonstudio Bauer, Ludwigsburg, Germany by Carlos Albrecht

The musicians – Carlo Mombelli: fretless and fret bass; Jürgen Seefelder: tenor and soprano saxophone; Peter O’Mara: guitar; Billy Elgart: drums.

**Note: the majority of the compositions for this album were originally recorded on the Shifty records album 'On the other side' in 1986 with Johnny Fourie and Jo Runde: guitars; and Neill Ettridge, on drums but the German recording is my favourite of the two takes.*

7. ***It's for You** 1983

Instrumentation - fretless bass, horn, guitar, drums.

Commentary - this composition was also one of my earlier pieces where I composed for ensemble 'time and changes' as well as free. I also started using musical cues instead of visual to cue the ensemble out of the free section into the head. The cue on this composition is a melody of four bars long given by the guitar.

Compositional tool - Guitar.

8. **My inspiration** 1985

Instrumentation - Jazz quartet.

Inspiration - Sandra, my wife

Compositional tool - piano

9. ***It's cold, I said** 1986

Instrumentation - guitar, saxophone, bass, and drums.

Commentary and insight - When composing using a guitar, because it is a shape based instrument one can arrive at interesting chord progressions and voicings by using open strings and moving individual or multiple notes up the neck of the guitar in semitones or tones. I use this concept in the build up of the saxophone solo at letter G. The harmony for the saxophone solo before this build up has a written out chord accompaniment, however this is an example of the sound I am looking for and the guitarist is allowed to create his or her own chord substitutions around this concept. Through out my composing career I have found a way in a lot of my music to present the soloist unlimited freedom, not bound by any key or scale even though I have composed harmonic accompaniment.

Compositional tool - guitar

10. ***On the other side**

Instrumentation - guitar, horn, bass and drums

Commentary - This piece has a sort of blues feel however the soloist is free to play any notes they wish.

Compositional tool - guitar.

11. ***Journey of my dreams** 1986

Instrumentation - guitar, horn, bass and drums

Compositional tool - guitar

Composing process - found the first four bars on the guitar.

12. **Dancing thoughts** 1986

Instrumentation - guitar, horn, bass and drums.

Compositional tool - guitar.

Score - guitar chords outline the melody as well as the bass part.

13. **Wailing** 1986

Instrumentation – fretless bass, drums and any instrument that can play the melody.

Commentary and insight - The Christmas of 1985 saw the South African police detain many young children for many days. Their parents did not know where they were and the anti-apartheid movement, the United Democratic Party (UDF) started a “free the children” campaign. I wrote this piece about what was happening, the confusion and the pain. I composed this after the New Year.

Compositional tool - piano

CD 2

CARLO MOMBELLI – HAPPY SAD.

(ITM Pacific - 970057, released 1990)

Recorded August 18, 1990 at Studio Hiltpolstein in Hiltpolstein, Germany and mixed August 24, 1990 at Charisma Studio in Munich, Germany by Michael Muller.

Musicians – Carlo Mombelli: fret and fretless basses, Charlie Mariano: alto saxophones and Indian flutes, Peter O'Mara: acoustic and electric guitars, Bill Elgart: drums.

14 a. Deep impressions – part 1 1987

Instrumentation - fretless bass, Indian flute, horn, guitar, drums.

Commentary - This piece starts with Indian flute played over wind pipes that I found in a toyshop as well as glissando harmonics played on the fretless bass. The first music composed for this piece was the four bars of guitar chords that repeat. The bass hit at bar 15 is created by a glissando bass harmonic moving up rapidly and an overdubbed low bass note detuned rapidly both notes placed on top of one another. Compositional tool – guitar then bass.

14 b. Deep impressions - part 2 1987

Instrumentation - bass, horn, guitar, drums.

Inspiration - I listened a lot to the music of the Eberhard Weber and Ralph Towner and this piece has a very similar style. One of my favourite compositions.

Compositional tool – nylon string guitar.

Score information - The score is also the guitar part. The bass plays the accents as a melody the first time around then the horn enters with the same melody the second time with the bass playing the harmony.

Sketch: The plucking style of this piece dictated the melody as well as the bass line.

15. Happy sad 1985

Instrumentation - Jazz trio or quartet.

Compositional tool - piano.

16 I drank my coffee and dreamt 1987

Instrumentation – Horn, guitar or piano, bass and drums.

Commentary –I heard the bassist Barre Phillips play a sequenced type of bass line on an Alfred Harth album called ‘Earth’ (ECM 1264). Hearing this I decided to create a 12 tone sequenced bass line that improvisers could be totally free to choose any notes they wanted. Strangely I used the piano to compose the bass line and the bass to compose the piano/ guitar part. This bass part requires a fair amount of stamina to keep the tempo steady as soloists could improvise from two to twenty minutes. If my hand gets tired I have a plan B which is the rhythm at letter F, to rest the hand while keeping the momentum flowing before I take off again into the 12 tone pattern.

Compositional tool – piano then bass.

Composing process –

17. My friends and I 1984

Instrumentation - Folk trio feel

Commentary - This is another favourite pieces because of the simplistic folk harmonies. I composed it as I improvised on a piano. On the Happy Sad recording this is the only track where I left out the horn.

Compositional tool - piano improvisation

18 Somewhere, out there 1990

Instrumentation - horn, guitar, fretless bass, and drums

Compositional tool - Guitar

19. Remember Lucia 1987

Instrumentation - alto saxophone, guitar, fretless bass, and drums.

Inspiration - My sister Lucia is mentally retarded and was put in a special home before I knew her. This song is for her.

Compositional tool - Guitar

CARLO MOMBELLI – DANCING IN A MUSEUM.

(ITM Pacific - 970078, released 1992)

Recorded July 28, 1992 at Studio Yemaya in Munich, Germany and mixed August 19, 1992 at Charisma Studio in Munich, Germany by Michael Muller.

Musicians – Carlo Mombelli: fret and fretless basses, Charlie Mariano: alto saxophones, Mick Goodrick: electric guitars, and Bill Elgart: drums.

This album was recorded in six hours. Mostly first takes without listening to playbacks.

20. Dancing in a museum 1992

Instrumentation - saxophone, fret bass, guitar, mallets on drums

Compositional tool - bass and piano

21. The art of slow motion 1992

Instrumentation - three fretless basses.

Commentary and insight - The American magazine 'Bass Player' once commented on my playing, "Once in a while an artist comes along who produces music unlike anything you've heard. His lines sound as if they were recorded backwards", (Bass player May/June 1991 Volume 2, number 3, page 79). I get this backward sounding effect by shaving off the attack of the note with a volume pedal while playing the notes using a lift-off hammer-on technique in the left hand. This piece was recorded for 3 basses and will only sound right if I personally play them or someone else copies my stylistic approach.

Compositional tool - bass.

22. Untitled stories 1992

Instrumentation - saxophone, guitar, fretless bass, drums

Compositional tool - bass, guitar and piano.

23. Sad Vincent 1992 (Dedicated to Vincent van Gogh)

Instrumentation - saxophone, Guitar, Bass, Drums.

Compositional tool - piano

24. The marathon runner 1991

Instrumentation - fretless basses and consistent breathing.

Inspiration - Jaco Pastorius, the marathon runner.

Commentary and insight - A few years after the great bassist/ innovator Jaco Pastorius died in 1987, the European record label Hot Wire Records released a tribute Cd called *Basstorius - Music inspired by the Genius of Jaco Pastorius* (Hot 9008 C - released 1993). I was one of the bassists that were asked to contribute a track and this piece is my contribution that I composed and played on. I have never wanted to copy Jaco even though he has had a big influence on my life. This piece is my tribute to him using my artistic voice, a lesson that I learnt from Jaco. I decided to also release this track on my CD 'Dancing in a Museum'.

Recording information - Recorded on 23 November 1991 at Charisma Studio in Munich, Germany by Michael Muller. I first recorded the breathing to a click track and then because of the complex chords I overdubbed the bass 10 times.

Compositional tool - piano

25. Gina 1992

Instrumentation - saxophone, guitar, bass and drums

Compositional tool - Heard the biggest portion of this piece in my head (melody and chords) and then went to a piano to complete the composition.

26. My cousin James 1992

Instrumentation - saxophone, guitar, bass and drums

Compositional tool - bass and piano

27. I stared into my head 1992

Instrumentation - fretless bass

Commentary and insight - I had worked out the triplet bass slap groove using open strings and semitones, went to the studio and recorded it. (I use this triplet groove in another piece as well for a television title music track.) I then just improvised the rest of the composition.

Compositional tool – bass and bass improvisations.

CD 3

CARLO MOMBELLI AND THE PRISONERS OF STRANGE – BATS IN THE BELFRY

(Baobab art records - BACD 001, released 2000)

Recorded 31 July 1996 at the Bayerischer Radio Studios, direct on to two digital tracks for Joe Kieneman's jazz radio programme, 'Buhne frei im Studio 2'. Recording engineer: Gunther Hess. Edited by Guido Hieronymus.

Musicians – Carlo Mombelli: fretless acoustic bass guitar and vocals, Roberto Di Gioia: acoustic piano and analogue synthesizer, Adrian Mears: trombone, and Wolfgang Haffner: drums. All musicians play paper flapping and body percussion.

Inspiration - The music for this concert was inspired by an oil painting I own done by the Czech artist Petr Paulistir. It depicts a crazy but beautiful girl that gives the impression of being mentally disturbed as a huge bat flies over her head. I used the painting on the CD cover.

28. Requiem 1992

Instrumentation - trombone, piano, bass, and drums and paper flapping.

Commentary and insight - I originally recorded this piece in 1992 on the CD

'Dancing in a museum' with the alto saxophonist Charlie Mariano, guitarist Mick Goodrick and the drummer Bill Elgart. In 1996 my band The Prisoners of Strange consisted of the German drummer Wolfgang Haffner, the Italian pianist Roberto di Gioia and the Australian trombonist Adrian Mears. Adrian has a warm trombone sound and can play melodies above the normal trombone range. On the score you will notice that the trombone melody goes right up to Eb octave above middle C.

Roberto's piano solo is totally improvised. His brief was to play a church hymn style solo. All cues to move on are musical notes that can be heard - no visual cues.

Compositional tool - bass and piano

29 The hurricane of silence was the author of my tears 1993

Instrumentation – trombone, wind, body percussion, bass, piano and analogue synthesizer, and drums.

Insight - the wind sound on the recording is from the trombone. Body percussion at the end of the piece is created with hand claps and tongue and mouth sounds.

Compositional tool - bass and piano

30. Battery powered life 1995

Instrumentation - piano, bass, trombone and drums using mallets.

Inspiration - The robotic life of the human race. This piece has to be played with little emotion.

Compositional tool - piano.

31. Untitled prayer 1992

Instrumentation - voice, trombone, piano, bass, and drums.

Wrote the lyrics first then composed music for the prayer.

32. Comma N, Punctuation mark (,) used to separate smallest parts of a sentence.

1996

Instrumentation - solo bass

Commentary and insight - I needed a piece to end the album *Bats in the Belfry*. As the recording turned out to be about a life cycle the composition had to end on a comma that one may get a sense that life continues with each generation. This is the only piece on the album that was not recorded at the live concert.

Recording information - Recorded in my studio on a DAT cassette player in 1996 in Munich, Germany.

Compositional tool - acoustic bass guitar.

CD 4

CARLO MOMBELLI AND THE PRISONERS OF STRANGE – WHEN SERIOUS BABIES DANCE

(Instinct Africaine - INS 004, released 2005)

Recorded August and September 2002 at Joe's Garage in Johannesburg by

J.B.Arthur.

Musicians – different on each track.

33. **Basil, roses, lemons, love** 1996

Instrumentation - voice and electric fret bass.

Inspiration - I wrote these lyrics at a time where I was thinking about the things that we teach our children. With this piece I say, "Teach our children about the good things that we love". I love the smell of basil, roses and lemons.

Musicians - Nontuthuzelo Puoane: voice, Carlo Mombelli: bass.

Compositional tool - Bass.

Sketched the lyrics first, then the music.

34. **Unlock the wisdom door** 2002

Instrumentation - voice, flute, trumpet, tenor saxophone, bass clarinet, electric bass, and drums.

Commentary and insight - I needed a piece that flowed out of 'Basil, roses, lemons, love.' I had sketched out 'Unlock the wisdom door' but was having a difficult time gluing the two pieces together. The original key of 'Basil, roses, lemons, love' was G minor but the moment I changed the key to F minor, 'Unlock the wisdom door' became a perfect match. I played in a Brazilian band for eight years while living in Europe, even touring Brazil with them. I was always fascinated by the offbeat chordal rhythms the guitarist played in their music and started to experiment using this style on the bass, playing the upper chord on the offbeat but still playing the low bass note on the down beat. I composed a number of tunes using this technique ('Gismonti', 'Maria are you dreaming again?') that are on this CD 'When serious babies dance'. This piece revolves around the bass and will only sound right if played on an electric fret bass guitar.

Musicians - Nontuthuzelo Puoane: voice, Carlo Mombelli: bass, Marcus Wyatt: trumpet, Sydney Mnisi: tenor saxophone, Kevin Davidson: flute, Allan Thomson: bass clarinet, and Lloyd Martin: drums.

Compositional tool - bass and piano.

35. **Bass spirits** 2000

Instrumentation: trumpet, tenor saxophone, cello, bass, bass loop, drums, and percussion soundscapes (springs, bowls, BBR boards and scrap bell tree).

Commentary and insight: The recording on the CD 'When serious babies dance' is a good take, however I prefer the version of 'Bass Spirits' recorded at a concert we did at the 'Fort West heritage festival'. This recording is for a DVD that is still going to be released. I have included that recording into this portfolio.

Inspiration: The first time I heard the bassist Jaco Pastorius play was with the group Weather Report on the album Heavy Weather. His tone and melodic and rhythmic spirit had a major influence on why I stopped playing piano as my first instrument and started studying the electric bass. This piece of music is dedicated to him. The first two bars of letter (A) has a sort of Weather Report Jaco melodic influence to it. Compositional tool - bass and jamman loop sampler.

Recording info:

Recorded at – The 'Fort West heritage festival', Pretoria. 2004.

Musicians - Marcus Wyatt: trumpet, Sydney Mnisi: tenor saxophone, Siya Makuzeni: voice and trombone, Lloyd Martin: drums, Jessica Bailey: cello, and Carlo Mombelli: fretless bass and percussion soundscapes.

DVD title – 'Carlo Mombelli and the Prisoners of Strange, live at the Fort West heritage festival'.

Record label – Melt 2000

Year of release – not yet released.

36. **Sunlove** 2002

Instrumentation - voice, trumpet, saxophone, bass, bass loops and agogo bells.

Inspiration - my wife Sandra.

Commentary and insight - One day I sat in my car waiting for the traffic light to turn green listening to the rhythmic click of the indicator, when I heard the melody. At home I imitated the indicator with bass harmonics and looped them. I then created another bass loop in sync with the harmonics. The loop ended up being G minor and the melody in the key of G major unintentionally. However, the first note of the melody comes out so strong because it's the major third against the minor third. The improvisations that consist of both horns in conversation are key-centred minor or any sound they feel. I learnt how to play the Afoxe groove (type of rhythm) on agogo bells from my Brazilian friends and found this groove suitable this piece.

Musicians - Siya Makuzeni: voice, Marcus Wyatt: trumpet, Sydney Mnisi: tenor saxophone, Carlo Mombelli: fretless bass, and Lloyd Martin: agogo bells.

Compositional tool - bass and Jam-man loop sampler.

37. Observations from the hideout – short version 2002

Instrumentation - flute, trumpet, tenor sax and bass clarinet.

Inspiration - Watching the animals from the hide out in the African bush.

Commentary and insight - This piece was originally commissioned for the 'Stockholm Saxophone Quartet' which is included in its full version of over eight minutes in this portfolio. I wanted to have a recorded version of this piece on my album but it was much too long. I then rearranged it and ended up with this edited version and used different instruments. The musicians sweated playing this piece but in the end I am satisfied with the recording.

Musicians - Kevin Davidson: flute, Marcus Wyatt: trumpet, Sydney Mnisi: tenor saxophone, and Allan Thomson: bass clarinet.

38. Maria are you dreaming again? 1998

Instrumentation - two horns, guitar solo, fret bass, drums, and pre-recorded dialogue.

Commentary and insight - My wife is Afrikaans and therefore my children speak both English as well as Afrikaans. I asked my daughter Maria at the age of five what she wanted to for her birthday and not only did she reply to that question but she also told me her future plans, and all in Afrikaans. I recorded this and then composed this music for her using the bass as the chordal instrument.

Compositional tool - bass and much later, piano.

Musicians - Johnny Fourie, guitar solo, Marcus Wyatt: trumpet, John Davies: trombone, Lloyd Martin: drums, Carlo Mombelli: bass and voice.

Dialogue - Maria Mombelli

39. '87/99' 1999

Instrumentation - trumpet, soprano saxophone, guitar, bass, prepared drum kit.

Commentary and insight - This piece has exactly the same four bar chordal movement as the piece 'Deep Impressions – part one' that I composed in 1987. I wrote a completely new melody with a counter melody over these chords in 1999, hence the title of the composition. This composition needed a very wacky drum sound so I used

prepared drum kit with BBR security signs used as cymbals as well as tiny cymbals placed on the snare drum but still played in the conventional way with the cymbals vibrating against the drum skin.

Musicians - Johnny Fourie: guitar, Marcus Wyatt: trumpet, Sydney Mnisi: soprano saxophone, Carlo Mombelli: fretless bass, and Lloyd Martin: prepared drum kit.

Compositional tool - Guitar, bass, piano

40. **Zambezi** 1990

Instrumentation - Voice, flute, bass clarinet (optional), bass, acoustic guitar, trumpet, trombone effects (optional), and drums.

Inspiration - I once took a trip with my wife up the Zambezi River in a small boat. I try to capture the atmosphere of that experience with this composition by assigning different aspects of the experience to different instruments. The bass and guitar have a steady pulse and represents the boat moving along the water. The voice, flute and bass clarinet play the melody rubato representing the spirit of the water. The drums and trumpet improvise freely. They are the animals that inhabit the banks of the river and are later joined by another animal – the trombone.

Commentary - I sometimes re-use ideas from other compositions of mine as in the case with the guitar part of '87/99' and 'Deep impressions – part one'. The melody of this piece Zambezi is identical to the melody of 'I drank my coffee and dreamt' found on the CD 'Happy sad'.

Musicians - Nontuthuzelo Puoane; voice, Johnny Fourie: guitar, Kevin Davidson: flute, John Davies: trombone, Allan Thomson: bass clarinet, Marcus Wyatt: trumpet, Carlo Mombelli: bass, and Lloyd Martin: drums.

Compositional tool: Bass and guitar

Composing process – I first composed the complex bass line and then added the melody.

41. **Me, the mango picker** 1998

Instrumentation - Voice, trumpet, tenor saxophone, bass clarinet or trombone, bass, and drums.

Inspiration - Living in Munich for eleven and a half years the time finally arrived for my family and I to return home. A Brazilian friend of mine Marcio once told me that when an explorer leaves the port, his journey of discovery is only complete once his

ship has returned home. This piece treats me as a mango picker as I am told that the mangos in South Africa are ripe and its time to go home and pick them.

Commentary and insight - I wrote this piece as an instrumental in 1992 and actually recorded it as such on the CD 'Dancing in a Museum' with Charlie Mariano, Mick Goodrick and Bill Elgart. Closer to the month of our return, December 1998, I wrote the lyrics and music verses and added it to the existing piece. The lyrics were written before I decided to come home.

Musicians - Siya Makuzeni: voice, Johnny Fourie: guitar, Marcus Wyatt: trumpet, Sydney Mnisi: tenor saxophone, Allan Thomson: bass clarinet, Carlo Mombelli: fretless bass, and Lloyd Martin: drums.

Compositional tool: Bass and piano

42. **Surdo** 2000

Instrumentation - Bass, Jam-man loop sampler, distorted E-bow

Inspiration - I try to imitate the vibe and groove of the Brazilian Surdo drum on a slow samba groove.

Commentary and insight - This piece is played in one take, built on five loops. Loop one is the most critical as it sets up the tempo, feel and Surdo groove. The time has to be accurate. The last loop makes use of the E-bow through distortion and builds to an absolute climax and can either fade or end abruptly.

Musicians – Carlo Mombelli: fretless bass and loops recorded in one take with an overdubbed bass drum hit on the last note.

Compositional tool: Bass

43. **Gismonti** 2000

Instrumentation - trumpet, tenor saxophone, electric fret bass, drums, Jam-man loop sampler, pre-recorded school choir, and scrap tree.

Inspiration - I was very fortunate and honoured to record with the great Brazilian musician, Egberto Gismonti on the album Raiz de Pedra, Diario de Bordo (Enja records – tip 888 822 2). This piece is dedicated to him.

Commentary and insight - Brazilian pianists have an amazing ability to play left hand chords on the offbeat while playing the melody (many times double notes like flute double tonguing) in the right hand. In this piece I am Gismonti's left hand and the

trumpet is his right hand. The saxophone plays a second melody in between all the beats. This composition is in two parts, the bouncy first section and the free section. In free music I like to have glue that holds the spaces together. It could either be a ride cymbals as in the compositions 'It's for You' found on the CD 'Carlo Mombelli's Abstractions', or wind as in the composition 'Deep impressions – part one' found on the CD 'Happy Sad', or it could be a loop as in the bass loop on the free section of this composition 'Gismonti'. On top of the loop at letter (H) I have taken a drum groove from Brazil called Partido Alto and arranged it at three different levels of pitch. To create a more rhythmic sound without any recognizable pitch I put the horns together in semitones with the bass and guitar playing any note as long as the note falls within the notated level, high, middle and low. The effect I achieve is not centred on hearing the pitch of the notes, but more of an event or sound experience.

Musicians - Sydney Mnisi: tenor saxophone, Marcus Wyatt: trumpet, Johnny Fourie: guitar, Carlo Mombelli: electric fret bass and percussion soundscapes, Lloyd Martin: drums and crying cymbals, Parkview Junior school choir: soundscape.

Compositional tool: Bass

44. When serious babies dance 1990

Instrumentation: two horns, guitar, bass, drums and ebow loop

Musicians – Johnny Fourie: guitar. Marcus Wyatt: trumpet, Sydney Mnisi: soprano saxophone, Carlo Mombelli: bass, Lloyd Martin: drums.

Compositional tool: Bass and piano

45. Mombellibutton sketches 1985 (reworked 2000)

Instrumentation - Fender Rhodes, electric guitar (Hendrix style), drums and horns.

Commentary and insight - I sketched this piece in 1984 but never really tweaked it. In 2002 I decided to finish it for this recording. This has a bit of an old school feel and I needed to break that so I used total free Hendrix style guitar and drums improvisations at places in the music where the piano pauses.

Musicians – Carlo Mombelli: electric piano, Johnny Fourie: guitar, Sydney Mnisi: soprano saxophone, Marcus Wyatt: trumpet, and Lloyd Martin: drums.

Compositional tool: piano

CD 5

CARLO MOMBELLI AND THE PRISONERS OF STRANGE – I STARED INTO MY HEAD.

(Instinct Africaine – INS011, released 2007)

The band ensemble recordings were done in February 2005 and the strings, and voice overdubs were recorded in drips and drabs over 2005/ 2006. Recorded at Joe's Garage in Johannesburg by Jo Arthur and mixed at Blue-wav studio in Johannesburg September 2006 by Peter Pearlson.

Musicians – Siya Makuzeni: voice, Marcus Wyatt: trumpet, Sydney Mnisi: soprano and tenor saxophones, Lloyd Martin: drums and prepared drum kit, and Carlo Mombelli: bass, acoustic and manipulated springs, nylon string guitar, trance loops using the Waldorf Micro Q, and percussion sound designs. On the compositions using strings the musicians are string players of Johannesburg Music Initiative Orchestra (J.M.I.).

The solo bass pieces as well as the sound design on 'sonic design – the rites of springs' were done in 2006 at Carlo's studio in Johannesburg.

46. SOI 2004

Instrumentation - Voice chant, mombellibutton box, trumpet, tenor sax, cello, bass, drums, and electronic trance loop

Commentary and insight - My trumpet friend Marcus asked me to stand in for him at a regular jazz gig he had in a restaurant called Soi. My regular group 'The Prisoners of Strange' was not available on the night so instead of just going in and playing standards with a telephone band, I put together a new group which I called 'Project Soi' using cello, guitar and drums. It was a once off gig but I wrote some music for the band and one of the pieces I wrote was this piece called Soi. This was the first time I wrote for the cello and after this gig I decided to incorporate the cello into my regular band 'the Prisoners of Strange'. I originally composed this music using a guitar but decided to play the piece with the prisoners giving each instrument a different guitar string part. The original guitar part started off with a D note drone. For the Prisoners I found a loop on a Waldorf sound module, tuned it to play D, adjusted the tempo and recomposed the piece using the loop. I got Siya to sing the drone note

while playing an instrument I put together called the mombellibutton box that is also tuned to D. She plays it in unison with her singing.

Compositional tool - acoustic bass guitar and guitar.

47. Solo bass for Gina 2005

Instrumentation - acoustic bass guitar.

Commentary and insight- Teenage girls are complex at times, experiencing depressions in their confused sort of way. Mine are no exception. I heard someone say once that the only thing worse than being a teenager is being a parent of one. When your children are going through a rough time as they grow up, it affects the parents as well. Even though the parents have to be strong, relaxed, and peacefully show loving guidance, strength and acceptance, it still makes the parent sad deep down to watch their pain and confusion. This was composed during one of those moments.

Compositional tool - acoustic bass guitar.

Composing process - Started the composition by only playing an E low and an octave E for a long period of time listening to the sound it created. I then played an octave F against the low E then down a tone and back to the octave. The composition evolved from there.

48. Gito 2005

Instrumentation -Voice, acoustic nylon string guitar, cello, trumpet, soprano saxophone, bottle udu.

Inspiration - The Mozambican musician Gito Baloi was one of the most peaceful, gentle, kind hearted and generous men that I knew. I always thought how fantastic it would be if his spirit was found in more people. It was definitely evident in the rest of his family, his South African wife the artist Erika Hibbert and their two daughters. When Gito was murdered in the late evening in down town Johannesburg after returning back from a gig, it shocked and angered many people. I knew Gito very well and at the time just before this senseless murder, I spent time at his house rehearsing with him as I wanted to add him to the line up of the Prisoners of Strange, having two vocalists. Gito played bass and sang in a great South African trio called Tananas, as well as leading his own group. In his own band he sometimes played acoustic nylon string guitar. I wrote this piece of music for Gito, one of the great spirits of this planet.

Commentary and insight - I decided I wanted to write a piece on nylon string guitar with a gentle melody until the trumpet solo. Even though the guitar line, which is doubled by the pizzicato cello is tonal, the trumpet solo had to forget about the harmony and create the anger and hurt of Gitos' death. A little into the trumpet solo I bring back a melody that is a semi-atonal melody sung and played on the cello and the saxophone. The melody had to be asking the question, why? There are no drums but I use a thin bottle I call the 'bottle udu', with a wide neck playing the opening like a clay pot udu with the hand making use of wind and the sound of suction.

Compositional tool: Acoustic nylon string guitar and voice.

49. Ethical Sam's Cookery School 2003

Instrumentation - voice, trumpet, tenor saxophone, bass, drums, jam-man loop sampler, and pre-recorded sirens made on the Waldorf Micro Q.

Inspiration - The so-called global war on terror semi-instigated by the modern Roman Empire. This piece is about Ethical Sam who travels the world telling everyone how to cook their traditional food.

Commentary and insight - I recorded a rhythmic bass loop on the loop sampler and then reverse the loop. With a foot switch I am able to control the backward loop's tempo, making each loop start at the beginning of the bar. On top of this loop I play the bass groove. The opening groove has no fixed length but once the horns cue themselves into letter (A) the singer knows where she is.

Compositional tool - bass and piano.

50. Sonic design: meditations in my back yard 2006

Instrumentation - Solo fretted bass

Inspiration - This piece was composed in a meditative state.

Commentary and insight - The bass on the CD recording is mainly the original first take improvisation when this composition was conceived so what you hear on the recording is the actual original composition being composed.

Compositional tool - I composed this piece on a fretted bass and two loop stations running through an A/B box to two channels going into Protools on my computer.

51. Malunde - street child 2002

Instrumentation - voice, 1st violins, 2nd violins, viola, cello, trumpet, tenor saxophone, acoustic bass guitar, and drums.

Inspiration: Malunde is the Zulu word for street child. I was asked to pitch a piece of music by a German film company for a film they were filming in South Africa called Malunde. In this song I ask, “Malunde, where is your home?” They didn’t like this music so I added it to my repertoire and recorded it.

Compositional tool – piano

52. Sonic design: volcanic eruptions in slow motion 2006

Instrumentation - Fret bass, loop station and manipulated springs.

Inspiration - I stood one morning eating a bowl of muesli and yoghurt when suddenly due to circumstances I saw red, lost my temper and smashed the bowl on the floor. I live in an old house with extremely high pressed ceilings and spent the afternoon on a ladder cleaning the muesli and yoghurt off the ceiling. I felt embarrassed and ashamed for losing my temper like this. That night I could not sleep so at four in the morning I went to my studio, plugged in my bass and started to play. This composition came out of that. The impression of this composition is of a National Geographic documentary of the beginning of time, volcano’s erupting in slow motion with red lava everywhere. Compositional tool - fret bass, loop station, and manipulated springs.

53. The silence of a storm (1987) reworked 2003

Instrumentation - voice, trumpet, soprano sax, cello, bass, and drums.

Inspiration – Johannesburg has very loud electric thunderstorms in the summer. When this happens there is a strange silence that fills the house.

Commentary and insight - This music has a totally free soundscape improvisation at the top and is different each time it is performed. On the recording I loop a marble swirling around the inside of a metal dish. It then goes into the bass and drum groove with improvisations on top. If a soloist has an open solo he or she usually gives the cue to move on. If it’s an ensemble improvisation the cue comes from one of the instrumentalists in the form of a musical cue that all the musicians can recognise. In this case it’s the bass that gives the cue.

Compositional tool - piano

54. Mr Battiss 2004

Instrumentation - four 1st violins, four 2nd violins, four violas, 3 cellos, 2 contrabass (pizzicato), and shakers.

Commentary and insight - This piece has its seed in another composition of mine called 'Sunlove'. In 2004 I was asked to do an orchestral string arrangement of 'Sunlove' for a concert featuring the South African musician Zim Ngqawana. Using the bass loop from Sunlove I composed this pizzicato 3 against 2 feel introduction to the piece. After the concert I reworked the intro, developing it into a piece of its own and added the shakers. I gave it the title Battiss as this piece has a wacky African flavour like the South African artist Walter Battiss.

Compositional tool - Midi piano and computer using the programme Cubase SX 3 and pizzicato string samples in the programme Reason.

55. The procession march of King Ferd the 3rd 2003

Instrumentation: voice, trumpet, tenor saxophone, cello, bass, drums.

Commentary and insight - In the seventies the South African artist Walter Battiss created Fook island, an island in your imagination, and invited Norman Catherine, another South African artist to become involved with his concept.

When Karin Skawran asked Norman Catherine in an interview for the Battiss catalogue 2005 how this concept originated, he replied,

"Walter was disillusioned by the glut of conceptual art that he'd been seeing during his travels to Europe and the USA in the late 'sixties. He thought that he could come up with something more user-friendly and fun for everyone to participate in. This led him to create a new world. There would be a new language and a Fook 'alphabatt'. There would also be new poetry, new art, stamps, coins and currency, passports, driving licences, fauna and flora, a special cuisine, and so forth.

Karin Skawran: What exactly was this island. Was it a myth, a fantasy, a reality?

Norman Catherine: The myth was that Ferd III searched the earth for a suitable abode where he and his followers could live in peace and harmony with the cosmos. He 'discovered' Fook island which was, at the time floating somewhere near the Comores or the Seychelles. But Fook is not stationary. It moves with the tides and goes where Ferd III desires. Ferd declared that anyone could be anything they fancied on the island. The only pre-requisite was to have freedom of thought to become a Fookian, and to do no harm to any other inhabitants, creature or plant on the island. It's artistic utopia. A

place where Fookians' can indulge their fantasies. And by doing so, the island became a reality.

(Walter Battiss: the gentle anarchist, Standard Bank catalogue 2005, pages 49 and 50).

In 1982 King Ferd (Walter Battiss) passed away and Norman King Norman (Norman Catherine) now rules Fook Island. In 2003 Norman was approached to do a film, internet site and merchandise on Fook and he asked me to write a procession march for King Ferd the 3rd. Unfortunately the project fell through but I recorded this piece on 'I stared into my head' and Norman Catherine did the art work for the CD cover.
Compositional tool: Bass and piano

56. Sonic design: the rights of springs 2005

Instrumentation: Desk lamp, springs, voice, cello, tenor saxophone, trumpet, detuned roaming bass string, balloon, mombellibutton box, scrap bell tree.

Commentary and insight - While recording the music for 'I stared into my head' at Jo Arthur's studio, I recorded individual musicians playing sounds on their instrument. For example, I told Jessica our cellist to smack the strings with the bow and pluck randomly and Sydney to blow wind through his tenor saxophone. I then took all the random recordings that by themselves were useless, to my home studio and sculptured this composition adding my soundscapes, springs, balloons etcetera.
Score information – There is no score due to the improvisation process.

57 a. Trance by chance – part 1 2002

Instrumentation: Two 1st violins, two 2nd violins, two violas, cello, voice, tenor sax, trumpet.

Commentary and insight - Composed this music for a concert in 2004 that featured Zim Ngqawana and a 42 piece band consisting of jazz musicians and 25 string players. I reworked this piece from film documentary music I composed in 2002 that was rejected, and have again reworked this piece since then into the current form of which I am now satisfied. This composition serves as an introduction to 'Trance by chance - Part 2'.

Compositional tool - piano as well as midi keyboard and a computer using Cubase SX 3 score programme

57 b. Trance by chance – part 2 2004

Instrumentation: voice, tenor saxophone, trumpet, cello, bass, drums and electronic trance loop.

Commentary and insight - The melody for this piece of music has been floating around inside my head for many years and it was only once that I decided to write it down on paper that I started to work on it. Why it took me so long is a mystery to me. It was also only when preparing the music for the CD 'I stared into my head' that I realise how Part 1 could flow into this piece.

Compositional tool - Inspiration heard in my head and finally a piano.

CD 6

58. Dwarsklap theme music - Mnet television 2001

Instrumentation - fret and fretless basses, human whistles, radio samples, voice, piano strings, and floor tom.

Recorded at – Carlo's home studio.

Insight - I was asked by an advertising agency to pitch a piece for a new television show. I reworked the bass groove from 'I stared into my head'. When the agent heard the music he told me it was too over the edge and would probably shock the client. To my pleasant surprise the client loved it and confirmed my belief that the audience is not as artistically dumb as the record labels and agencies make them out to be.

59. Observations from the hideout 2002

Instrumentation: Saxophone quartet – Soprano, alto, tenor and baritone.

Recorded at - the Beethoven Room, Rhodes University at the Grahamstown Arts Festival 2002

The musicians – The Stockholm Saxophone Quartet with Sven Westerberg: soprano saxophone, Jorgen Pettersson: alto saxophone, Leif Karlborg: tenor saxophone and Per Hedlund: baritone saxophone

Inspiration – You are in a hideout somewhere in the African bush close to a waterhole. The sun starts to set and the sky slowly turns orange. It's hot. In the distance a familiar bird call, 'Piet my vrou' and the bustle of a million insects break

the early evening silence. There runs a warthog with tiny offspring in hot pursuit, “the meetings at the waterhole” they seem to say.

Commentary and insight - I was asked to write this piece for the Stockholm saxophone quartet. As they play works from all over the world I wanted to do something with a South African theme. I decided to write a piece that depicts what happens when a person sits in one of those observation hideouts usually found at a waterhole in a game park. This piece has three parts, the first being a little atonal and all over the place. I listened to bird sounds and tried to bring that into this section. On the recording the (Swedish) musicians played the first part a little too fast. I had thought that anyone would find this music challenging but the Swedes just flew through it like butter. Part two, which begins at bar 92, has a swing feel and a typical South African sound – mainly so that the Swedes could get a taste of South Africa. Part three is a section requiring improvisation, but as this was written for a classical rather than jazz quartet and being under the impression at the time that so called classical musicians do not improvise, I decided to write out the solo for soprano saxophone. The coda starts at letter (Q), bar 223. I do the same thing here that I did in ‘Gismonti’ by trying to create a rhythmic sound rather than pitch by using a lot of semitones together, which makes the rhythm rise and fall all over the place.

Compositional tool - midi piano into Cubase SX score. I recorded myself improvising and then reworked the harmony.

60. The mime artist 2006

Instrumentation - Piano

Commentary and insight - I was asked to compose music for the Mozart festival held at the Grahamstown Arts Festival in 2006 using piano and wind ensemble. The brief was that I use one of his pieces and rework it. What I did was I put on a CD recording of Mozart’s wind ensemble no 10 and recorded myself improvising on the midi keyboard to his music. Having the music recorded into the computer I was now able to tweak it. After the performance at the festival I put away Mozart’s part and reworked and extended the music that I had composed till I had ‘the mime artist’.

Compositional tool - Midi piano and Cubase SX.

Recording info:

Recorded at - Carlo’s home studio in Johannesburg, 2006.

The musicians - Carlo Mombelli: piano programming.

DVD 1

THE DEVOLUTIONARIES 2005

(ANIMATION FILM)

Producer – Luma Studios

Comment and insight – I have watched this film many times on the screen and in my head with my eyes closed. My brief was an electronic jazz score. I tried that but somehow it was not right. I wrote some country type of slide guitar music but that too did not feel good. I then worked on the theme music and after a few different ideas I arrived at the banjo style strumming with the tuba and the plunger trumpet melody. I played the banjo guitar by using a steel string guitar muted with a cloth. Once the producers were happy with the theme I started work on the story assigning a sound to each character. The film is about three robots, the very clever and modern looking ‘Mod Bot’ which I wrote semi big band jazz style music for, the 2nd robot, the clumsy ‘Fat Bot’ which made me use the tuba, and the 3rd robot, ‘Small Bot’ which I assigned pizzicato strings or bluesy piano to portray his character. It is difficult to use only the assigned instrument for a scene so much overlapping takes place between the characters plus extra mood music. The general instrument that dictates the mood and unifies the film is the double bass.

Compositional tool – midi keyboard with Reason samples recorded onto Cubase SX score programme. I then recorded the live instrument together with reason samples on Protools.

DVD 2

THE ROADS TO RESTITUTION

(Documentary)

This South African film is in three parts. Part one takes place at Kosi bay in Northern KwaZulu Natal. Part two is about the Makuleki people that got their land back in the northern part of the Kruger National Park. Part three takes place in the Richtersveld desert. For the transition between the first and second part, I got samples of their singing and used it together with trance grooves. For the third film, I use a bushman mouth bow on all the pieces giving the film a sense of space and silence. The film ends with a local person walking off singing a traditional tune, which I orchestrated with strings.

DVD 3 – DMUS RECITAL AT WITS UNIVERSITY (26/01/2007)

Here is the order of compositions found on the DVD 3

1. Deep Impressions
2. My friends and I
3. Wailing (Segue)
4. Requiem
5. The mime artist
6. Bass spirits
7. Sunlove
8. Zambezi
9. Dancing in a museum
10. Mr Battiss
11. Meditations in my back yard
12. Malunde
13. Ethical Sam's cookery school
14. Trance by chance