

2025 Composing Competition: Liquid Architecture

Winners' Concert
Sunday 28 September, 6pm
The University of Auckland
School of Music Theatre

Haere mai and welcome to the 2025 Winners' Concert of NZTrio He Taonga Wairere's 6th biennial tertiary Composing Competition. The brief this year was for applicants to create a new work inspired by Goethe's quote "Music is liquid architecture, architecture is frozen music" and its connotations. Once again we have been heartened by the enthusiastic response by all levels of tertiary composing students and lecturers from up and down the country.

The overall standard and variety of voices within the 29 entries received was impressive, and the resulting works are truly explorative, evidencing each composer's distinct musical language. Twelve scores were selected to progress to the second stage, for which we held workshops in person at the University of Auckland, Victoria University of Wellington

and the University of Canterbury. The works were presented and discussed, and feedback was offered, at which point the candidates had the opportunity to tweak and adjust their works before final submission. In collaboration with New Zealand composer Janet Jennings, we selected the seven winning works that you will hear this evening.

For us, this competition is a way of having meaningful interaction with some amazingly talented students early in their careers and simultaneously offering Aotearoa's best emerging composers invaluable exposure to a professional ensemble. As proud supporters of New Zealand music, we look forward to watching the careers of tonight's winners (and indeed, all those who submitted works) truly blossom and flourish.

Amalia, Callum & Somi

Lauren Doherty

Victoria University of Wellington

Clouds // Coastline

Inspired by the intricately complex repeating fractals found in the natural world, in particular the architecture of clouds and coastlines. The repetition of self-similar patterns {fractals} within both clouds and coastlines create an appearance of stasis from afar, and liquid dynamism when perceived more closely. Whilst not being derived from straight lines or euclidean geometry, fractals' recursive nature represents dynamic systems inherent of a universal chaos, whilst simultaneously existing in order through larger patterns. This piece was born from time spent at the cliff edges in Pukerua Bay, watching clouds and the coastline stretch out and blur into ocean swell.

Justin Villaflores

University of Auckland

On second thought

I attributed Goethe's quote to the temperaments and conditions of which both "liquid" and "architecture" can be in. The materialistic comparison between fluid and solid states informs the flow of the piece, which is often stark and ever-changing. I was particularly drawn to the concept of auditory perceptions in a particular space, or piece of architecture, and how this informs the way we experience music. Some passages nod to particular musical and acoustical phenomena (doppler effect, microtonal/equal temperament relationships, harmonic interpolation of stacked fifths and just intonation, etc.) and are explored vastly throughout the piece.

Estella Wallace

Victoria University of Wellington

In the Light of

When I first heard this quote, I immediately thought of the Sagrada Familia in Barcelona Spain. I visited there in 2019 and was captivated by the architecture. I found the use of light and colour in the building to be so beautiful, which Gaudi used to bring out the splendour of his architecture. The Sagrada Familia is an architectural masterpiece and is in my opinion the best representation of "architecture is frozen music". The piece starts with 12 bell tones to represent the 12 bell towers with light peeking through. The piece grows as the light dances around in the semiquavers until it explodes into a light show and truly reveals the grandness of the architecture. Different colours were used to represent different aspects of faith like the Passion of Christ which is captured through dark cello lines.

Milutin Jovic

University of Auckland

Porous Pavilions

Inspired by Goethe's idea of "liquid architecture," *Porous Pavilions* seeks to embody this provocatively oxymoronic concept by creating structure from languid, ambiguous gestures. Like water molecules, musical ideas bleed into each other and change positions to make new shapes. Time does not progress in seconds or beats, but in moments. Even at the music's most rhythmic, its beat sounds like water drops from a leaky faucet – weak and irregular, though persistent. In short, the music, like liquid, is ever-changing and never stable. However, despite this instability, the work is also highly structured. Like a river between different worlds, the end of the piece is connected to the beginning.

Mallory Elmo

Victoria University of Wellington

Dreamhouse / reißend verteilte Dreamhouse

The liquid architecture of music creates intangible structures of feeling. Its listeners move through these structures, as they would move through the rooms of a building. *Dreamhouse / reißend verteilte Dreamhouse* is grounded in the unique physical aspects of the instruments, which are emphasised through flexible intonation in the strings, densely resonant piano voicings, and techniques that produce harmonic and inharmonic noise. In exploring these fragile sounds, I mean to evoke the long histories in which queer life has been continually repressed and continually, joyously, lived. These histories are marked by structures of vitality and grief, through which disparate moments and places melt into each other. The title references the Barbie® Dreamhouse™ and sonnet I, 26 of Rilke's *Sonette an Orpheus*.

Wayne Gao

University of Auckland

Gothic

Gothic portrays the emotional architecture that has been built over the last few centuries, which originated from Gothic architecture. The megastructures that were conceived as means to inspire reverence had extensively inspired many Gothic literature with themes of terror, mystery, and darkness. The unique design of Gothic architecture: pointed arches, ribbed vaults and flying buttresses inspires both admiration and fear with its formidable structure. This work is a direct response to the themes that have been inspired by Gothic architecture, where the abstract sonic exploration is in the form of "liquid" to describe the "frozen" nature of the architecture. Thus, the work draws connections between architecture and music through the medium of emotions as a response to the world around us.

Cameron Monteath

University of Otago

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This piece explores two aspects of the Goethe quote: first, the transition between "frozen" and "liquid", and second, by incorporating architectural/structural forms into the work. The work begins in a frozen landscape, with an icy cello melody developing out of the first piano chord. This gives way to a passacaglia pattern, also in the cello, establishing the first of the "structural" forms found in the work. As part of this, there is a chorale-like section, which gradually expands into a lush climax. The music then "liquifies" - becoming a shimmering soundscape, with blurred textures and ambiguous harmonies. This gives way to a final, quirky, scherzo-like fugal section, which eventually builds to a mighty and fierce climax. The very end of the piece suddenly and humorously "freezes" once again with the piano chord from the beginning, sweeping everything back into icy form once more.

Programme notes are students' own words, abridged.

Ngā mihi nui!

The 2025 NZTrio Composing Competition is generously supported by the Freemasons Foundation. We're also hugely grateful to guest judge Janet Jennings, and to all the music school staff from the Universities of Auckland, Waikato, Wellington, Canterbury and Otago for their support, advice and enthusiasm.

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