## Music for Orchestra in Eleven Incarnations

Before I answer what the title of this symphony means, why I decided to write an elevenmovement symphony, and how a popular icon informs the structure of this entire work, I want to discuss this notion of seriousness. I concede from the outset that I have only just recently begun to ruminate over these ideas of serious and popular and the wider issues these terms create, especially this imagined opposition between the two constructs. In short, however, I feared that if I unveiled that I decided to use a popular icon to inform not only the title of this symphony for orchestra, but also the music's overarching structure, that this might cause certain people (critics, colleagues, my own dissertation committee) not to take this music seriously. So, for a time, I decided that I would not unveil the symphony's roots in a popular icon. In fact, I even started to plan a grandiose and overly complicated scheme involving eleven-tone rows to inform an eleven-movement symphony to create a work of music that would somehow embody an inherent "unfinished-ness." That is, until my cousin Audry Wolters suggested that I should just tell everyone what this music's title means, why I decided to write a symphony in eleven, short movements, and what the inspiration behind each of the eleven movements actually is.<sup>2</sup> Ultimately, though, all my worries stemmed from this notion that when something becomes popular (a band, a television show, certain clothes, really anything), its value or its seriousness decreases—as if *the masses* have poor taste, and *the elite* do not.

So, why all this fuss? What is so horrible about what inspired not only the title of my symphony, but also the over-arching structure of each of the eleven movements? So "horrible" that I considered veiling it? People may laugh—and they have—but the reason why this question of my symphony's seriousness concerned me is because I will base each movement of this music off of each of the eleven

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Susan C. Cook, "R-E-S-P-E-C-T (Find Out What It Means to Me)': Feminist Musicology and the Abject Popular." *Women & Music: A Journal of Gender and Culture* 5 (2001): 140.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Audry Wolters, Facebook message to author, 30 June 2010.

personalities who inhabited or currently inhabit the character of the Doctor in the longest-running science fiction television program of all time, the British Broadcasting Corporation's *Doctor Who.* <sup>3</sup> If I kept this all a secret, then, and called the symphony something suitably modernistic, abstract, and Second-Viennese-Schoolian like *Elf Orchesterstücke* (and devised some sort of complicated scheme, but used this as a cover for the music's true inspiration) I felt that more people would take the symphony seriously, and rather less would take it seriously if they knew about the music's roots in a popular, sometimes bizarre, but ultimately quite British television show that millions of viewers—including me—around the world love and adore. Much like how it seems some musicians have a difficult time taking popular music seriously, I worried that musicians would write off this symphony as "for the masses" (as if that's a bad thing), or "not serious," and "not art." For the purposes of this proposal, then, I want to discuss a few of these details. I will share my thoughts on what *being serious* means, why I think the term *serious music* is something musicians might want to reconsider, and how I might counter claims that some might consider *Doctor Who* unworthy of a DMA final project. Then, I will reveal how I will use each of the eleven personas of the Doctor from the program to organize an entire symphony.

Reviewing the literature, I discovered that certain musicians really do find little value in popular music, and a tension exists—or musicians imagine a tension to exist—between what musicians consider art music and what they do not. <sup>4</sup> For example, Richard Middleton and Peter Manuel seem to have no qualms condemning popular music as somehow lower than art music in their entry for popular music in *Grove*:

[Popular music is] a term used widely in everyday discourse, generally to refer to types of music that are considered to be of lower value and complexity than art music, and to be readily accessible to large numbers of musically uneducated listeners rather than to an

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> I cannot claim full credit on this idea. It actually occurred to a friend of mine, Christopher Bahn, over brunch on a lazy Sunday morning in May 2010.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Cook, 141.

First of all, I would like to know who, exactly, considers popular music to be all these things that they suggest it is. I need look no further than Peter Maxwell Davies who argued at an April 2007 conference of the Incorporated Society of Musicians in Torquay that popular music has no place in music education. Davies's position on this matter changed very little over his lifetime; in 1963 for an interview with Murray Schafer, he decried popular music as "debased beyond serious consideration."

I noticed, too, that opponents of popular music seem to suggest that popular music somehow lacks something or does something that art music does not. For example, Simon Frith points out that in 1936, BBC controller Cecil Graves wanted to abolish crooning from the airwaves because—since crooning involved singing softly through a microphone—this technological component made the music "unnatural." Conversely, Graves considered opera singers legitimate because they are able to fill a concert hall without the aid of a microphone. In a similar vein, the United Kingdom's Musicians' Union objects to drum machines (in part to defend a union musician's job), but this stance also reflects the union's opinion that a drummer is a musician, and that a drum machine programmer is not. 8

Beyond this technological aspect, though, I think a larger issue is this notion of a music's commercial success. Davies himself claims that musicians manufacture popular music only for commercial gain. Although musicians throughout history made decisions about their music in order to make money (Handel and his oratorios, for example, or Beethoven finding the highest bidder to publish his *Missa Solemnis* of hor some reason critics have allowed a work's commercial success to color their

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Grove Music Online, s.v. "Popular music," (by Richard Middleton and Peter Manuel), http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/ (accessed 21 September 2010).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Piers Spencer, "Opinion: Taking All Musics Seriously: A Response to Peter Maxwell Davies." *Music Teacher* 86, no. 8 (August 2007): 56.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Simon Frith, "Art vs. Technology: The Strange Case of Popular Music," in *Taking Popular Music Seriously* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2007), 77-78.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> Frith, 79.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> Spencer, 57.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> Ibid.

appreciation of the music. As Luke Howard points out regarding the commercial success of Górecki's *Symphony No. 3:* "Perhaps in direct response to its overwhelming popularity and commercial success, the symphony also attracted a new critical backlash." He quotes David Mellor's review: "There is less to this music than meets the ear"; and Alexander Waugh's positively scathing comment: "During this ecstatic back-slapping everybody has conveniently forgotten what pretentious piffle Górecki's Third Symphony really is." Fritz Spiegl even commented that "the taste of the majority is usually suspect," proving my point earlier that some people really do think the masses have bad taste. Howard also points out that CD labels found Górecki's name alone marketable, often giving him top billing even though his music represented mere minutes of music on the entire disc. It is no secret that when something is recognizable, it tends to be easily marketable. Take, for example, all of the recent revivals in cinema of the past few years: *Star Trek, Star Wars, Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, Alvin and the Chipmunks*, and so on.

In many ways, then, some might point out that I decided to use *Doctor Who* for its popularity, its recognizability, its status as a British icon, and that no matter how serious I insist I am, critics might charge me with using a popular artifact as a springboard merely to help "the masses" understand my modernistic aesthetic. However, when pop artists decided to use popular artifacts like toaster ovens or images of Marilyn Monroe in their art, curator Henry Geldzahler thought the question, "Is it art?" a bit silly. He referenced Marcel Duchamp who "had demonstrated that artists define what art is by their action." Luciano Berio remarked once, too, on what, exactly, he thought music was: "Music is everything that one listens to with the intention of listening to music." I can transform this marvelous little gem of a quote into various other permutations to answer any skeptic's questions. For example: "Art is everything that one looks at with the intention of looking at art." And in a similar vein:

<sup>11</sup> Luke B. Howard, "Motherhood, *Billboard*, and the Holocaust: Perceptions and Receptions of Górecki's Symphony No. 3," *The Musical Quarterly* 82, no. 1 (Spring 1998): 145-46.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> Howard, 148.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> Siegel.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> Friend and fellow composer David Dies brought this quote to my attention.

"Something is serious when one considers something with the intention of considering it seriously." Or, as Piers Spencer writes, asking Peter Maxwell Davies to re-think his use of the word *serious*: "Seriousness' is not a quality inherent in music; it is inherent in *people* [emphasis his] and their engagement with musical sounds, heard or imagined." Conversely, however, re-wording Berio's quote allows the possibility to argue that something is *not* music or art or serious. For example: "This symphony is not serious because I'm not going to listen to it with the intention of listening to it seriously." Either way, as with Duchamp, my actions will define what serious means (hopefully this proposal demonstrates my seriousness); and I can only hope that people who listen to my symphony will choose to listen to the music with their own inherent seriousness.

If I named this symphony *Elf Orchesterstücke* and kept the music's scheme a secret, I may not have needed to spend the previous pages discussing these notions of *seriousness*. Still, even if I ask listeners to find their inherent seriousness as they listen to this music, I now feel I must defend why I chose *Doctor Who* as a guiding force behind the music in the first place. I could cite my fanatic devotion to this show (I own copies of all the extant episodes of *Doctor Who* that ever aired on television; I subscribe to *Doctor Who Magazine*; I can name in order not only all the actors who have portrayed the Doctor, but also in order the producers of the show; and so on), and that this whole endeavor exists merely to satisfy my inner fanboy—a kind of Id, I suppose. While I must concede that this is partly true, I have other reasons for choosing *Doctor Who* as a source of inspiration.

Outwardly, *Doctor Who* tends to sport a somewhat shabby appearance, and spoofs of *Doctor Who* are commonplace:<sup>16</sup> they tend to make fun of the program's miniscule budget, wobbly sets, cheap special effects, and so on and so on.<sup>17</sup> I find this partly unfair (as do Piers D. Britton and Simon J.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> Spencer 56.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> See: French and Saunders, Crackerjack, Dead Ringers, et al.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> Examples within the show do exist. See: *The Dominators, Underworld, Time-Flight, Timelash,* among others.

Barker<sup>18</sup>) as certain serials do boast tremendous production values. <sup>19</sup> But, I would argue that because viewers tend to remember the show's outwardly shabby appearance (although the makers of the revived 2005 series managed a considerably more polished and glossy look), people miss how many of the show's serials address important issues: the dangers of pollution (*The Green Death* is the clearest example), racism (*Remembrance of the Daleks* in particular, but almost any Dalek serial), imperialism (Kinda and The Mutants), and religious upheaval (The Massacre of St. Bartholomew's Eve). On the other hand, countless examples do exist where *Doctor Who* really does fall quite short of less than superb. Pantomime villains make periodic appearances as in *The Horns of Nimon* or nearly any serial but not all serials—with the Doctor's arch-nemesis, the Master. Overt sexism clearly exists in the show's long run, as in the second Doctor serial, *The Moonbase*, where the Doctor tells his companion Polly to make the coffee while he tries to think. Later in the Pertwee years, producer Barry Letts axed the Doctor's equal and scientist Elizabeth Shaw (admittedly, she wanted to leave the show anyway) in favor of companion Josephine Grant who provided Jon Pertwee's Doctor with someone to whom he could explain things.<sup>20</sup> And—I must be honest—there are just all-around bad episodes where the direction, music, story, and acting fail to impress (*The Twin Dilemma* oft-cited, but *Fear Her* an example from the revived series). That said, I find it quite difficult naming a television show that never once falls quite short of expectations.

Ultimately, though, a simple fact outweighs all of *Doctor Who's* triumphs and its shortcomings. Paul Magrs nicely sums this fact up when he provides an answer to why he writes *Doctor Who* stories, novels, and scripts in addition to—what he calls (and note how his choice of words suggests that even

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> Piers D. Britton and Simon J. Barker, "Worlds Apart: Originality and Conservatism in the Imagery of *Doctor Who*," in *Reading Between Designs: Visual Imagery and the Generation of Meaning in* The Avengers, The Prisoner, *and* Doctor Who (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2003), 132-133.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> See, for example: *The Crusades, The Talons of Weng-Chiang, The Caves of Androzani, Ghost Light,* among others. <sup>20</sup> Barry Letts (producer, 1970-1974), interview for *More Than 30 Years in the TARDIS,* VHS, directed by Kevin Davies (1993; [Beverly Hills, CA]: CBS/Fox, 1995).

Magrs feels he needs to apologize for his *Doctor Who* writings)—his more "mainstream" and more "literary" output:

I write these things because I have always written them. I've always been right in the middle of *Doctor Who*: as viewer and reader and writer. Another very good reason I give is that *Doctor Who* is the longest piece of continuous prose narrative featuring one ongoing character. In the world. Ever. Seriously. The longest story in the world. Longer and more outrageously complex than any other story cycle in any culture. *Doctor Who* keeps the same lead character: the stories don't fritter off into arabesques like the 1001 nights, or into portmanteau form like *The Decameron*. The Doctor is always the Doctor, with a cumulative and capacious memory of all his adventures. All of this stuff has happened to him: to all of him. His are regenerations—not reincarnations or reinventions. He is always he.<sup>21</sup>

So, this symphony will contribute to an already massive institution, an epic tale, a saga, of one man. And even though *Doctor Who* may not be a great television show, it is—at the very least—a good television show with some great stories. Or, as David Butler writes in defense of his academic study of a television show with "wobbly sets and clunky special effects": "*Doctor Who* merits study as a source of a considerable body of stories 'told' to several generations of children in Britain and beyond." In short, how can some people ignore such a popular program that affected generations? And why would I deny myself the opportunity to write an entire symphony to express my love of a childhood hero, who was and is an inspiration to so many other children? To think that I almost *did* deny myself this opportunity because *too many people* liked something...

Moving on, then, to the logistics of the symphony itself. In order to provide focus to each of the movements, and to define more accurately each of the eleven personalities of the Doctor, I decided to find a description of each of the eleven Doctors, either from secondary literature or interviews. This decision helped provide a balance to each of the Doctor's characters, as the actors who played the Doctor spent sometimes radically different amounts of time on screen. Tom Baker, the fourth Doctor,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> Paul Magrs, "My Adventures," afterword to *Time and Relative Dissertations in Space*, edited by David Butler (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), 301.

David Butler, introduction to *Time and Relative Dissertations in Space* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), 2-3.

played the role for seven seasons, notching up a total of 172 broadcasted episodes. Unfortunately, Paul McGann, the eighth Doctor, appeared in only an American-made TV movie in 1996, and he spends most of his time on screen recovering from post-regenerative amnesia. So, about a mere half-hour or so of this 90-minute movie provides the only insight into this Doctor's character. <sup>23</sup> Furthermore, the current Doctor, Matt Smith, still plays the role today, so, in a sense, his character is incomplete, unlike the ten other Doctors before him.

The following chart lays out in order each actor who played the Doctor with their dates on television; the second column is a quotation describing their character; and the third column provides a citation of the course material.

	Description:	Source Material:
First Doctor William Hartnell 1963-1966	The Doctor was a mysterious and complex character. He had a child-like quality, was unpredictable, sometimes crochety [sic], very knowledgeable about some things and completely ignorant about others. He could be frightening but was also stalwart and kind. Above all, he was an outsider who did things in his own individual way.	Verity Lambert, preface to <i>Who's There?</i> The Life and Career of William Hartnell, by Jessica Carney (London: Virgin Books, 1996), ix.
Second Doctor Patrick Troughton 1966-1969	[Troughton] performed the role as a kind of cousin to Buster Keaton's sad-faced clown, muddling his way through adventures in a way that was anything but conventionally authoritative. Nor did his clothes straightforwardly evoke authority—he was actually rather scruffy. His outfit was, in fact, a hobo-ish parody of Hartnell's dapper attire.	Piers D. Britton and Simon J. Barker, "Worlds Apart: Originality and Conservatism in the Imagery of <i>Doctor Who</i> ," in <i>Reading Between Designs: Visual Imagery and the Generation of Meaning in</i> The Avengers, The Prisoner, <i>and</i> Doctor Who (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2003), 147.
Third Doctor Jon Pertwee 1970-1974	[Pertwee] had gone full throttle to play [the Doctor] as a dashing daredevil with a love of thrill and spills, a scientific mind and not a little knowledge of martial arts. [He] was never going [to] be a comedy song-and-dance man; he was always going to be a strong symbol of security for those peeping through open fingers from behind the settee.	Bernard Bale, "Doctor Who," in <i>Jon</i> Pertwee: The Biography (London: Andre Deutsch, 2000), 125.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> As much as I appreciate the audio plays for the eighth Doctor that the Big Finish started producing in the early 2000s, I restricted myself to what other fans (but not all) and I consider canonical *Doctor Who*. This means, then, that only the television version of the program is canon, whereas everything else is not. For a more detailed discussion on this thorny issue, see: Lance Parkin, "Canonicity Matters: Defining the *Doctor Who* Canon," in *Time and Relative Dissertations in Space* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), 246-262.

Fourth Doctor Tom Baker 1974-1981	[Baker] produces a character that isn't human in his reactions. He shows little concern for human life, although he will occasionally stop narratives to produce great paeans to the sanctity of it. He does not make small talk. He is delighted and interested in the world around him, but it is entirely on his own terms. His performance is unpredictable, suggesting a number of powerful forces driving this character—curiosity, outrage at injustice, delight at the interesting things the universe has produced.	Alan McKee, "Why is 'City of Death' the Best Doctor Who Story?" in Time and Relative Dissertations in Space: Critical Perspectives on Doctor Who (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), 240.
Fifth Doctor Peter Davison 1982-1984	The Fifth Doctor presents a more straightforwardly heroic figure, inclined to believe the best of every situation until circumstances prove otherwise. His optimistic, often headstrong nature has a tendency to lead him into tight spots. The Fifth is perhaps the most vulnerable incarnation yet: in a crisis he can become rash, desperate and even reckless, with results that are sometimes catastrophic.	The Watcher [pseudo.]. "The Watcher's Guide to the Fifth Doctor." <i>Doctor Who Magazine</i> 411 (19 August 2009): 48.
Sixth Doctor Colin Baker 1984-1986	Given the fact that this guy is supposed to be 900 years old, have two hearts, travel through time and space, I thought he may not be exactly like suburban man [sic]. So I wanted him to be a bit kind of spiky and unpredictable, and maybe not likeable until you get to know him better.	Colin Baker, interview for <i>Prime Living</i> , Prime TV, [2001?], http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bqqVUUC-J70 (accessed 11 October 2010).
Seventh Doctor Sylvester McCoy 1987-1989, 1996	The Doctor seems mysterious and powerful now—verging on the awesome—which is the way he always should have been.	Andrew Cartmel, "A Doctor-ish Doctor," in Through Time: An Unauthorised and Unofficial History of Doctor Who (New York: Continuum, 2005), 167.
Eighth Doctor Paul McGann 1996	His wild schoolboyish enthusiasm and recklessness come rushing to the fore as he gladly volunteers the answers to questions he avoided during the life of the TV series. He's filled with a lust for life and experience, an incredible joy and vigour, [sic] like a man recovered from some terrible illness who sees beauty in everything. The Eighth Doctor on TV remains a tantalizing enigma. Is he really that crazy—or was he just settling down?	Gareth Roberts, "Guess Who?" Doctor Who Magazine 329 (30 April 2003): 15-16.

Ninth Doctor Christopher Eccleston 2005	I do feel a little bit that I am different from all the previous Doctors—there is a line between all of them in that they speak in RP, received pronunciation. And the fact that he's heroic and very intelligent, I think it's good that we say to kids, 'Actually, people who sound like this [emphasis his] can also be heroic and very intelligent'. It's a good message to send As a child, I felt a little bit that the Doctor was too authoritarian for my tastes.	Christopher Eccleston, quoted in "Fantastic," by Benjamin Cook, <i>Doctor Who Magazine</i> 363 (7 December 2005): 18.
Tenth Doctor David Tennant 2005-2010	All that stuff about not breaking the Laws of Time—suddenly he realises [sic]: who says so? Why not?! The rebel, reborn! He's the only Time Lord left. He is [emphasis his] the Laws of Time! He can do what he wants! It's like the grief is over and he realises who he is now. It's arrogance, it's the Doctor extending his powers until [he is called] to his death at the end. Pride, then a fall. The Doctor is dangerous on his own. He needs a human with him.	Russell T. Davies, "Mr. Smith and the Runaway Train," in <i>The Writer's Tale: The Final Chapter</i> (London: Random House, 2010), 528.
Eleventh Doctor Matt Smith 2010-present	Matt is magnificent. Inventive. Unrestrained. His Doctor swings from giddy incredulity to a last-of-the-Time-Lords swagger, from a gangly gaucherie to an intoxicating <i>joie de vivre</i> , and back again—making him both childlike and ancient at once.	Benjamin Cook, "If You Don't Let Me Go Right Now, Then Everything You've Ever Known is Over!" <i>Doctor Who Magazine</i> 420 (28 April 2010): 7.

So, although these quotes come from secondary sources, they all comment on each of the Doctor's personalities as they appear in the television show itself—a personality that actors, directors, writers, producers, costume designers, and so on helped to create. If ever I feel I lose track of the personality as I write the movement, I will have this chart to return to as a memory aide. And although some Doctors exhibit similarities to the others (the first and sixth, the fourth and tenth, the fifth and eleventh), when presented in chronological order, each movement will sound strikingly different from the two movements that immediately surround it. The second movement's playful, unpolished quality will contrast with the brashness of the first and the adventurousness of the third. Similarly, while I find it tempting to label each personality as a variation on the same man, I will compose the music in a way that allows the movement to stand alone, separate from the other movements, while at the same time still functioning as a slice of a larger work. Furthermore, each movement will not recycle material from a set

theme. But, whether these eleven movements will function as variations without a theme, an eleven-movement symphony, or *Orchesterstücke*, I enjoy looking forward to discovering which way listeners will choose to listen to this music. In some ways, the idea of this symphony (or music for symphony orchestra) resembles or mirrors Elgar's *Enigma Variations*: writing a work where each movement acts as a character sketch. Rather fitting, actually, in more ways than one. A British composer who wrote a work about his friends, all the while maintaining the secret of the tune to which the music for the theme acts as a counterpoint—a secret that Elgar never revealed.<sup>24</sup> In my case, though, an American composer writing a work about the personalities of his fictional idol who—in the end, despite all that we know about him—still remains an enigma: doctor who, exactly?

I feel I must clarify one last point, which is that this symphony might disappoint *Doctor Who* fans' expectations about what a symphony about *Doctor Who* might sound like, because—although I decided to use a popular television show—I will compose the music in an unpopular aesthetic. For example, I would argue that Michael Daugherty not only uses a popular institution—in his case, *Superman*—as the subject of some of his music, but he also composes in an aesthetic listeners might expect; a popular aesthetic that reflect a popular source. Daugherty's first movement, "Lex," from his *Metropolis Symphony* not only contains markings in the score like *diabolical*, the music very clearly sounds diabolical. Furthermore, the last movement, "Red Cape Tango," draws from immediately recognizable and famous musical elements from Bizet's *Carmen* and Carlos Gardel's *Por una cabeza*. Conversely, however, I will compose my *Music for Orchestra in Eleven Incarnations* in the modernist aesthetic in which I always compose my music—a sound world that I enjoy for its musical qualities (its "controlled consonance," as it were), not for its unfortunate (but perhaps deserved<sup>25</sup>) connotations of elitism and snobbery. In short, the symphony will not sound like, for example, the music Murray Gold composes for the revived *Doctor Who* series. At times, in fact, listeners may find that the music sounds

<sup>25</sup> Milton Babbitt, "Who Cares If You Listen?" High Fidelity 8, no. 2 (February 1958): 38-40, 126-27.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> "Elgar's Friends and a Remaining Enigma," in *Enigma Variations: Variations on an Original Theme*, by Edward Elgar, adapted from texts first published by the Elgar Society (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2002), viii.

more like the music Dudley Simpson composed for the old series. In the end, I suppose that the words I avoided just now are these ideas of tonality's immediate intelligibility (the popular) verses freetonality's elusive intelligibility (the unpopular). Perhaps—in addition to an eleven-movement character sketch—my symphony will act as a juxtaposition of two poles. The unpopular: modernism, the symphony orchestra, freetonality; with the popular: *Doctor Who*, television, and childhood heroes.

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