

*The Work of Michael J King  
Towards a Synthesis of Sculpture and Sound*

# Tacitus



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*The Synthesis of Sculpture and Sound*

Music written down has its own limitations that are understood to the player, it is dead until life or spirit is given to it. There must at some point be a transfer of energy, whether it is by thought, feeling, hearing or touch. Sometimes a leap is required, as during improvisation when the musician leaves the music page and, working within the rules and limitations of his music synthesises a response that could only come from his subconscious.

It is the rich texture of overlaid sounds, harmonically connected that are my main interest— the way such sound can be felt and heard to contain within one note, a symphony. My Sound Sculptures make use of sympathetic vibrations, not only those due to adjacent strings of the same note, but from other outside features too.

*Trinitas*, my installation in a corridor at Pittville campus was tuned to the same pitch as the national grid, i.e.; 50 Hertz — G. Sharp, this vibration reflected in the visible flicker of the fluorescent lighting nearby.

My ensemble piece, *Quintet* in its last incarnation, was tuned to the Alpha range of frequencies found in the brain during prayerful meditation. All of these pieces were made specifically for the spaces and to varying degrees used the natural acoustics present in the building.

The present work in the Degree Show *Hearing Place*, and *Quintet*, have as their fundamental tone the pitch of the earth's magnetic field — just nominally flat of concert pitch C natural. In *Hearing Place* creating sound and hearing are to a certain degree isolated, the sound chamber, and bronze hearing piece acting as a focus for the sound played and triggered outside. One of the sounds is created by eight strings struck by a hammer-type mechanism hidden beyond the dome, the activation of which, is made by a bell pull. The sound is heard to ebbs and swells back and forth in an almost magical manner.

*Quintet* is tuned to an ancient Greek Pentatonic scale attributed to Olympos, a 7th Century philosopher, which has an eerie nature rarely heard in western music, but sometimes found in traditional Korean music. These pieces are in music instrumental terms, Bowed Monochords, the Monochord, an instrument used by Pythagoras to work out the ratios of sound pitch mathematically. I first made these pieces to be bowed attached to the wall in the balcony of the Main Gallery, while I conducted from below, but have now made them portable to be more flexible. For my performances I have been using anyone who wants to partake, I wanted to make my work as accessible as possible—music too often being too elitist and complicated, the skill needed is actually very basic, and the bowing far simpler than violin techniques, the bows themselves based on an early mediaeval types.

The music I have composed for *Quintet* needs some mention too, as its inspired by the Scottish Classical Music known as Pibroch —the music of the Great Highland Bagpipe . The basic format of the Pibroch isn't too different from other Air and Grounds, themes and variations, of the period , the main difference lies in the theme tune , or should I say,

the Absence of one. In Pibroch, the Piper plays an echo of the original tune, that isn't the tune but which points towards the original theme, and, to confuse things further, the variations that follow are like musical Chinese Whispers of the first part played. The idea of the original tune being so close yet veiled has been so inspirational to me, so too is the feeling that the original theme can be found in the many variations.

Through my work I am trying to make these pieces less about music and more about the essence of sound