

# *Stratum under Milton: I and II* - About the Compositions

The work is in two movements, named *Stratum under Milton* in respect of the hard work the archaeological has put in while also acknowledging the class divide that existed while the ironworks was in service. The concepts of social and geological stratification is present between the two movements: one written for those who have the skills to read notated music and the other written to be instantly accessible for all.

*Stratum under Milton: I* is a piece for four-part choir of no more than 16 performers. Written for voice, the aim of the movement is to bring out soft and ethereal musical textures and work them against harder and heavier moments. These moments reflect the type of employment ironworkers were involved with at the Milton site, as seen from the excavation.

*Stratum under Milton: II* is an audio mix of field recordings made during the excavation of the Milton site in July. They include:

- Trowel on sandstone
- Trowel in grit
- Shovel on sandstone
- Shovel in grit
- Footsteps through grit
- Pickaxe cutting through the earth
- Various voices of the volunteers

All sounds were recorded live at the excavation site. Once the sounds were edited and cleaned up, they were categorised and arranged as if they were traditional instruments (wind, strings, percussion), using a database. This allowed me to begin composing *Stratum under Milton: II* using traditional notation techniques on five-line staff before inputting these ideas into a computer program to hear my composition come to life.

I approached the second movement with influences from popular culture, particularly hip-hop, which brought these familiar and ancient sounds of human construction and destruction to life in a very different way to that of the choral movement *Stratum under Milton: I*.

## The Composer

Working as a composer, I try to find ways of challenging my understanding of music and how I perceive sound. This current work presented several challenges, not only in how to convey my experiences with the excavation but also with several compositional techniques as well.

For more of my compositions and writing, please visit my website: [musicalmrfox.co.uk](http://musicalmrfox.co.uk)

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