

Collectress: Mondegreen

By Rebecca Waterworth



PERFORMED BY COLLECTRESS
s Brushes

Book Ocarina
Keys

(Mouseclover)

1. WHITECHAPEL FLINT WALL	1:12	7. WHITECHAPEL TEAL	4:04
2. SPELL	2:46	8. MOVEMENT	0:40
3. HARMONIUM	2:10	9. MOUSECLOVER	3:36
4. PUMPHOUSE	4:48	10. HAT IN THE RING WHITECHAPEL	1:51
5. OWL	5:08	11. GOODBYE	2:57
6. WOODEN HEART	3:32	12. BEFORE AND AFTER	7:56

COLLECTRESS
Mondegreen

Recorded by Rob White @ Little St Peter's
apart from Goodbye and Owl recorded at
Mixed by Joe Watson
Mastered by Ade Emsley

MUSIC BY COLLECTRESS (C) & (P)
Thanks to James Hawkins Peter Buckley
Mary Hampton Jo Burke Pam Mann Arthur
Sooty and Michael Kemp Adem



Project Details

Name of Researcher:	Rebecca Waterworth
Name of Output:	Collectress: Mondegreen
Co-researchers:	Collectress is a multi-instrumentalist chamber music collective that includes Waterworth, Caroline Weeks, Alice Eldridge and Quinta
UCARO link:	https://research.uca.ac.uk/4333/
Output Type:	T – Other; multi-component output comprising published recording and further performances of collaboratively-composed musical compositions, developed through improvisation and accompanied by visual artwork
Key Words:	Music, collaboration, composition, improvisation, collective, female, folk, classical, visual work
Funding:	PRS Foundation Women Make Music Award: £1600
Year and mode of dissemination:	2014, CD Mondegreen, Peeler Records Released as CD and digital download accompanied by Waterworth's visuals 2014-, ONLINE Disseminated globally via Spotify, Bandcamp, Tunecore and Apple Music

Project Details

Year and mode of dissemination (cont.):	2014-2016, PERFORMANCES
	07.03.14 - Women of the World Festival, Southbank, London
	23.03.14 - Mondegreen album launch, The Vortex, London
	28.03.14 - St John's Church, Totnes
	30.03.14 - Mondegreen album launch, Little St Peter's Church, Brighton
	03.05.14 - Crosswires Festival, Deptford, London
	09.09.14 - Sonic Imperfections, New Cross, London
	06.02.15 - Orchestra Tout Puissant Marcel Duchamp support, Hanover Centre, Brighton
	30.05.15 - Dear Serge, De La Warr Pavillion (bandstand), Bexhill-on-Sea
	10.10.15 - Oxford Contemporary Music Event, Quaker Meeting House, Oxford
	22.11.15 - The Feast of St Cecilia at the End Festival, Earl Haig Hall
	02.12.15 - Brighton Dome Studio Theatre supporting Sam Walker, Brighton
	30.03.16 - Folk Rising Cecil Sharpe House with Spectral Chorus, London
	29.04.16 - supporting Kathryn Tickell & SuperFolkus, Kings Place, London
	30.04.16 - Shhh Festival. Heath Street Baptist Church, Hampstead, London
	11.08.16 - Beatabet Season 1, Rose Hill Arts Hub, Brighton
	19.08.16 - National Theatre Riverstage, Southbank, London
	20.08.16 - At the Edge of the Sea Festival, Concorde 2, Brighton

Synopsis

Mondegreen is a research output by Rebecca Waterworth comprising experimental music and accompanying visual work created as part of the collective Collectress. It has been disseminated via live recording, CD and performances.

Coined by Sylvia Wright in an essay in Harper's Magazine in 1954, a 'mondegreen' is the mishearing or misinterpretation of a phrase resulting in a near homophony, in a way that gives it new meaning. Within collaboration, mishearing is an inevitable part of the process which allows for a common understanding.

Mondegreen is a recording of collaborative hearings and mis-hearings, which has been collectively shaped through a range of experimental, improvisational and traditional recording techniques working with sound and music. This has been accompanied by artwork by Waterworth including the album cover, costumes and backdrops. The research seeks to explore the notion of what the researcher has

termed 'Collective Hearing', in order to extend methods of composing, in addition to exploring how such concepts in music can be communicated through visual work.

The research also aims to challenge the boundaries between classical and folk music. Waterworth draws upon techniques for writing music to explore happenstance and collaboration within the tradition of Aleatoric Music, in combination with exploring methods of the oral tradition of folk (music often learned through hearing rather than reading i.e. knowledge expressed via graphical or textual 'score') which seeks to develop ways of expressing narrative through sound and composition.

This portfolio includes evidence of the research aims, context and processes which led to new insights. It is illustrated with images of Waterworth's artwork and Collectress recording and performing *Mondegreen*. It is accompanied by audio files of the music.



*Development of composition:
Waterworth's process of visual
notation drawing whilst
improvising pencil on paper
(sound of the drawing was also
amplified as a process of
creating composition)*

Handwritten musical notation for three staves. Each staff begins with a dynamic marking *p* and a slur over a triplet of notes, with an *x3* above the slur. The notation includes various rhythmic values and repeat signs.

p pitched triplets following the Violin notes

Handwritten musical notation for two staves. The first staff has a dynamic marking *p* and a slur over a triplet of notes with an *x3* above. The second staff also has a dynamic marking *p* and a slur over a triplet of notes with an *x3* above. The notation includes various rhythmic values and repeat signs.

IMPROV

f *ff*
IMPROV

as above

f *ff*
IMPROV

as above

f *ff*
IMPROV

into *f* *ff*
x4

E MINOR CHORD || E MAJOR | G MAJOR

f *ff*

Handwritten musical notation for five staves. Each staff begins with a dynamic marking *ffff*. The notation includes various rhythmic values and repeat signs.

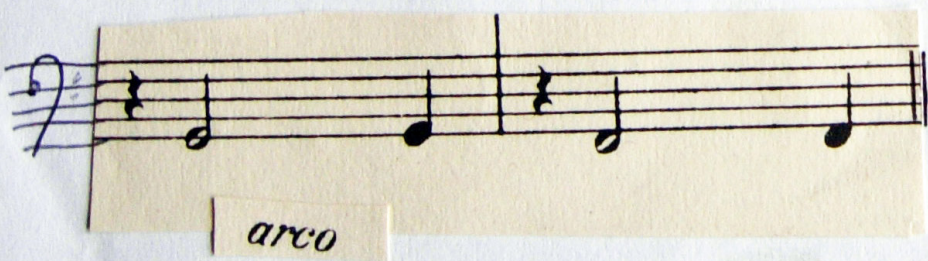
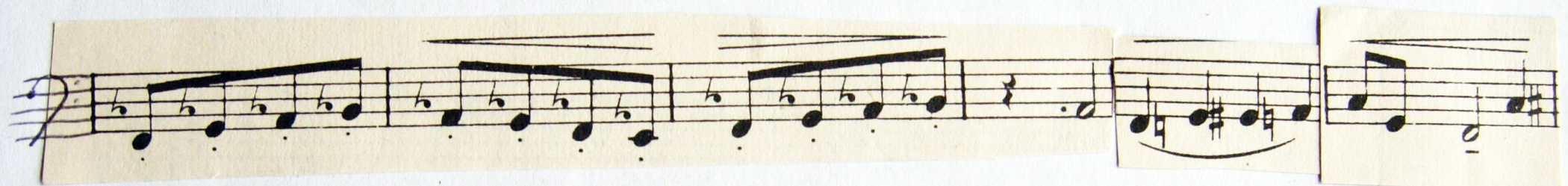
Return to beginning



Development of composition: Waterworth's notation for 'Owl' detailing the call and response notation for each instrument and the repeat variations



Repeat and
imp. forte



Development of composition: cut
up music techniques to experiment
with chance

Context

Collectress have been developing an agenda for creating compositions for over 15 years. The group fuse disciplines to explore the parameters of their fields within the context of the collective, allowing them to challenge what music can be. As well as contributing to the composition and performance of the music, Waterworth contributes the perspective of a visual artist, while other members of the collaboration include an eco-acoustic specialist, a dance performer and a composer.

The research situates itself at the threshold of intricate and organic sound production, acknowledging a wide range of experimental composers such as John Cage, Karlheinz Stockhausen, Terry Riley and Philip Glass. The compositions have also been collectively developed within the context of improvisors like The Necks and lo-fi chamber groups such as The Rachels. These are all examples of music production and composition applying strategies that break with the frames of their context and encourage a greater sense of 'sociability' within their work.

Mondegreen is grounded in this approach to the relational development of audio work as opposed to the dictatorial method of 'playing a given score'. This enables Collectress to expand listening – metaphorically conceived as being 'in tune' with another – as a discourse in which subjectivity gives agency. Where Johann Wolfgang von Goethe described chamber music as being 'four rational people having a conversation', the context for *Mondegreen* folds in a more intuitive approach to the collusion of being performers and composers. Such an intuitive approach may be perceived as 'less rational', and as a group of female artists this also connects the research to discourses on feminism.

Central to *Mondegreen* is the notion that being 'misheard' is

not a failure or indicative of someone with a lack of power but is instead a container for the possibility of a powerful construction. This concept builds upon the work of Meredith Monk. In 'Memory Song' (1987) fragments of language and sound move entropically towards a series of sounds and utterances that speak of loss (of language) but also provide a powerful experience for the listener (being both descriptive of ancient sounds and contemporary music). A similar context applies to *Mondegreen*, however in this instance the intention is not to cause a breakdown into chaos but rather to demonstrate that the outcome is often far more beautiful than could ever have been planned.

Waterworth's research into painting installation and performance from her parallel practice also informs her approach to both sound and image within Collectress. The compositions in *Mondegreen* stem from the artists' own experiences and stories, creating collective 'soundscapes' that are inherently filmic and conjure up narratives of storytelling. These soundscapes explore Kendall L. Walton's (1990:21) notion that 'representational works of art contribute to social imaginative activities by assisting in the coordination of imaginings'. Moreover, Waterworth's visual responses, such as the costumes she creates, are often 'anchored in the real world' (Walton, 1990:21) as they utilise objects and artefacts from the artists' environments. Through both composition and visual artworks, the research is thus an exploration of the relationship between sound and image, art and reality.

REFERENCES

Walton, K.L. (1990) *Mimesis as Make Believe: On the Foundations of the Representational*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Research Questions and Aims

Research questions:

How is collaboration possible through a process of mishearing and the problem of subjective interjection in the building of sound and composition?

Can the notion of 'Collective Hearing', through the frameworks of chamber music and folk traditions, extend new ways of composing?

How can 'Collective Hearing' be furthered through an iterative process of performances?

How can these same themes be explored through visual work such as album art and costumes?

Research aims:

To explore the potential of collaboration and cross-disciplinary responses in the construction and completion of a recording

To unite participants and reach an understanding via common strategic practices



*Recording location 1: Lightship
Trinity, Buoy Wharf, London*



*Recording location 2: Warehouse,
Willsden, London*



*Recording location 3: La Roque
Farmhouse, Normandy, France*

Research Methods: Audio Work

COLLABORATION AND CONTRIBUTION

As Collectress is a collective, there is a unification of the members' contributions; all decisions are made collectively and they have entirely shared ownership of the outcomes. Some of the tracks are produced collaboratively with equal contribution from all members, and these are often those created purely through improvisation. There are also distinguished tracks that each member had the responsibility for writing, and Waterworth was responsible for 'Owl' and 'Wooden Heart'.

COMPOSITION

The compositions for *Mondegreen* developed over a number of years using a range of approaches including: musical notation; responding to text and visuals; aleatoric and indeterminate methods of composing (chance music) using call and response experiments; as well as cut up music techniques to experiment with chance. These methods enabled the collaborators to transition through some of the musical parameters of modern classical minimalism and folk music, allowing a new and very different musical world to be created. The 'music making' thereby occurred through improvised 'cadenza' like approaches to notation, themes and visual prompts alongside aleatoric approaches to constructing compositions, following the tradition of experimental composer/performer John Cage and the practice of indeterminacy.

Making this sonic world allowed Collectress to use new approaches to technology, applying experimental recording techniques to both rehearsals and improvisational sets and

using the 'tools' of sound production in new ways so as to open up further chance possibilities during rehearsals. Notes, documents, drawings and photographs were retained after rehearsal, meetings and communication so as to record this process, becoming a 'chaotic archive' through which only those elements and fragments that persisted during this process made it into the final practical outcome.

The final recording was the result of a number of recording opportunities that allowed experimentation with place and space and the structure of the compositions. Rehearsals and improvised sessions were recorded to listen back to and refine. Some compositions ('Whitechapel') were designed to be recorded as a motif that was improvised around, other pieces were more structured ('Owl') as a set piece, with the only changes being the instruments or number of times each section was, or could be, played by each performer.

The final unfolding of the research was to produce a series of live performances to further allow for exploration of the research question without being tied to a specific object, i.e a recording. Liveness therefore plays an important part in the work. The performances included elements of improvisation as the album allowed Collectress to explore and discover a way of working which informed their performances. The performances were also important in that audiences often respond to the pictorial or filmic quality in the music and in a live performance there is an active construction of hearing and mishearing.

Research Methods: Visual Work

Through recording their worlds both individually and as a group, a consideration for performance began to develop, manifesting itself through visual exploration of the developing works. This occurred through discussion and drawings of ideas which allowed Collectress to develop a visual agenda for the recording. As the visual artist within the group, Waterworth's role developed as the visualiser of the compositions both in terms of visualising through sound to create narrative, developing a new way to compose music, and in the creation of visual aesthetics.

For example, Waterworth created the album cover by photographing each of the members and drawing together their features. Depictions of their eyes appear to be taped into place and evoke collage in such a way as to draw attention to both the individuals and the collaborative approach to the composition, for both the music and the images draw from different sources and bring them together to make a whole. Where in some musical work the role of the artist might be downplayed or reduced, in *Mondegreen* images of the artists are central throughout the artwork for the album booklet, including photographs of their rehearsals and performances, constantly drawing attention to their (varying) roles in the production of the music.

These photographs have also been used by Waterworth to

create background images for the performances, including a backdrop depicting the members' shadows. The ambient background films add to the sense of the music being a soundscape, inherently filmic and narrative and thus fittingly accompanied by images. Waterworth also used experimental film as part of her process when creating the track 'Owl'. These films were not resolved or disseminated but instead acted as a space for Waterworth to clarify her ideas, for example using a split screen to work through the call and response nature of the song.

For both these videos and the performances Waterworth created a number of costumes and artefacts. Many of these emphasised the 'folk' context of the music due to their use of felt, wool and canvas, materials which can take on folk properties as they are associated with craft and 'making do'. They can also evoke the aesthetic of Cottagecore, particularly when combined with embroidery by Waterworth, and this is a reflection of the implicitly gendered nature of Collectress. Particular items have included embroidered ties for the performance at Crosswires Festival in Deptford or painted tabards worn at the National Theatre. The latter returns to the centrality of the artists as each member wore a tabard illustrated with a member's portrait. Waterworth's visual work thus furthers the themes explored within the composition, often in similarly organic or improvisational ways.

Insights and Contribution

Research insights:

The engagement with the process of call and response (chance music) in creating the compositions allowed for a reciprocal multimodal type of outcome that offered up many alternatives for development. The process of recording many of their improvisational sessions and rehearsals allowed Collectress to listen together and individually, and to make decisions regarding the development of each piece. As decisions were made collectively the ‘mishearings’ gave rise to a sense of a gap between the mishearings, the subjective interjections and the compositional structures that developed. This is where things became correct, decisions made collectively, intuitively, decisions that allowed them to transform their experience into a collective hearing that allowed them to make very identifiably ‘Collectress’ compositions. Mishearing is about understanding, mishearing is inevitable.

Interview:

Collectress have been interviewed by Lara Cory for *Fifteen Questions*, an online music magazine, where they expand on the approach and insights within their work:
<https://15questions.net/interview/fifteen-questions-interview-collectress/page-2/>



Album launch at Vortex, London

*Waterworth in performance at
Vortex, London*





Performance at Vortex, London

Research Dissemination and Recognition

Dissemination:

ONLINE

Figures from top 5 countries:

Country	Releases Sold	Songs Sold	Streams
Great Britain	36	41	178754
USA	14	90	175723
Germany	1	10	39000
Canada	1	8	28386
Spain	0	8	26344

RADIO

On completion of the album the work was played out via a number of major UK and international radio stations including those that support experimental approaches to music i.e. Radio 3 Late Junction on which compositions from the recordings were played as part of curated radio shows dealing with improvisation, cross over music, experimental music and folk:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b03y3ggq>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b071d22v>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b07yb7jc>

In the US, New York City Radio also played a selection of recordings as part of an event exploring folk and chamber music titled Chamber Music (of a sort), alongside others in the field such as Penguin Café Orchestra, Poppy Ackroyd and Max Richter:

<http://www.wnyc.org/story/3846-chamber-music-sort/>

Research Dissemination and Recognition

Follow-on activities:

REVIEWS

“Collectress – literary, knowing, witty, arch, while being sincere and very, very talented – composing angelic ditties with a slight hint of malice, and a keen ear for experimentalism. Their willingness to mix traditional musicality with musique concrete is what makes them stand out from the pack, and such field recordings and found sounds make their music all the more like the soundtrack to some forgotten TV series than it would anyway.” Rob Batchelor, Roobla (2014)

“The free-thinking with which Collectress write and improvise is informed by their own sensitive absorption of surroundings, making multi-faceted but single-minded sounds. Collectress play chamber music without constraint” Line of Best Fit (2014)

”[Mondegreen] boasts the kind of rich sense of space where the cello bowing seems to have pulled dust motes from narrow sunbeams and flute timbres are bathed in long, deep shadow ...” Abi Bliss, The Wire (2014)

“This is what the sky of 2014 looks like, seen through the musical telescope of Cast the Dice. These 15 albums shine the brightest because of the immense pleasure we consistently have listening to them over and over again. Whilst all different, original and unique, they share qualities that firmly puts them on our sky map. We hope that now that we’ve pointed them out to you, you’ll always be able to easily spot them with the naked eye.” Cast the Dice Online, New Music Magazine Albums of the Year (2014)

Research Dissemination and Recognition

Follow-on activities:

PROJECTS

In the project 'Light Dial' (2016-2018), Collectress collaborated with Rambert Dance Company and artists Chris Rutter and Evelyn Bennett to create a new choreographic and compositional work for the Rambert New Choreography Season 2016, a process which enabled Collectress to explore further music, performance and visuals.

In 2020 Collectress released their second album, *Different Geographies*. This work builds upon the new insights gained from *Mondegreen*, particularly its approach to collaboration and improvisation, in order to explore the creation of work when drawn together from a widening map of overseas residencies, research projects from the Arctic to the Amazon, international tours with other groups, and motherhood.

Influence of research:

FURTHER USE

In 2014, animator Tom Beg worked with the composition 'Owl' to create a 3d digital animation of abstract forms and structures exploring the narrative within the composition:
<https://vimeo.com/112996987>

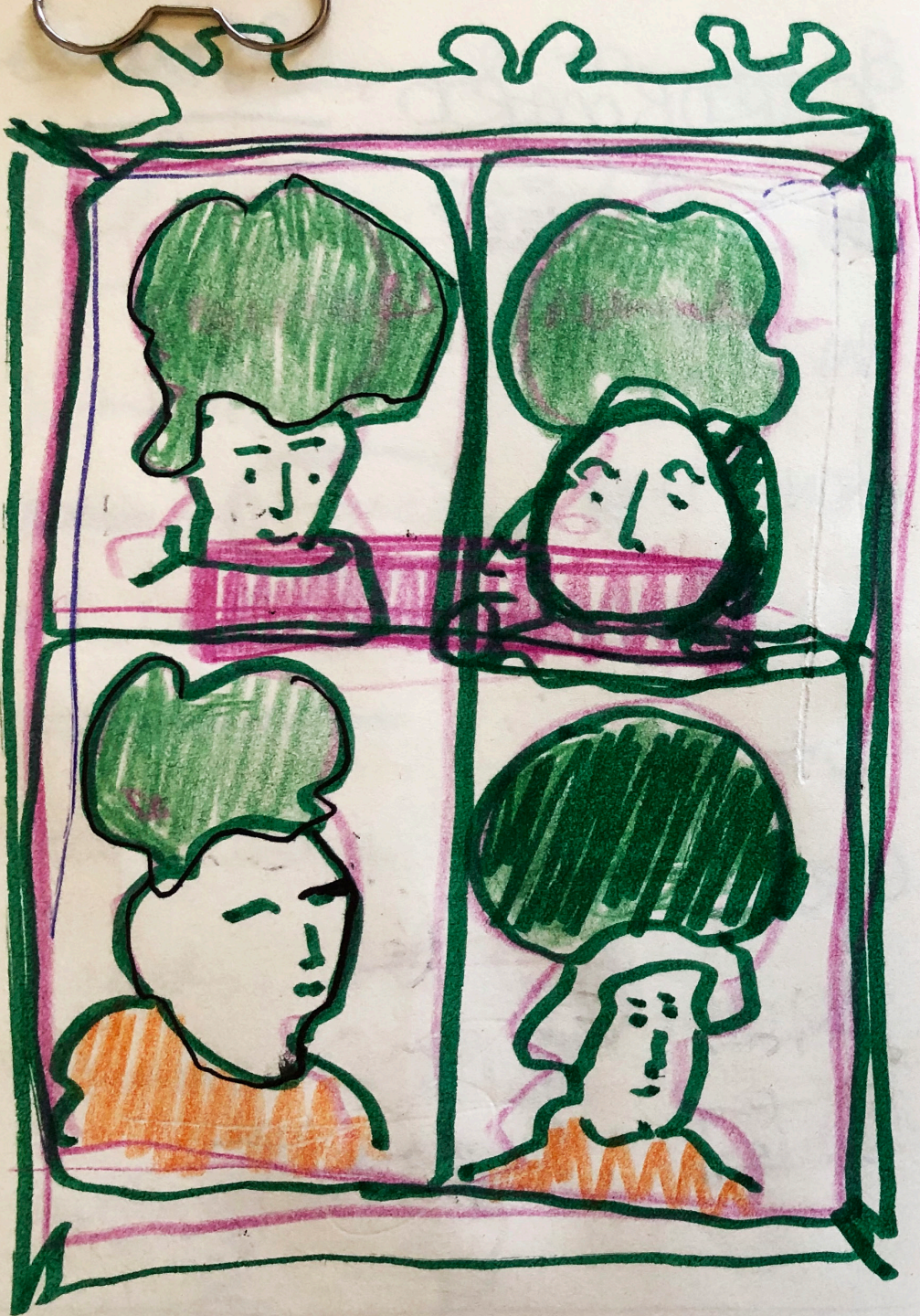
A track from *Mondegreen* was selected as part of FRoots yearly compilation release in 2014.

The research has also been taken up for use within commercial settings, in particular, applied to Gucci Cruise (2016). Directed by Glen Luchford, compositions from the recording were used for the 2016 Gucci Spring collection promotional film and for the catwalk show (played in all Gucci retail outlets):
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pZJmSeaYUIM>

Visual Artwork

A record of the development and finalisation of artwork created by Waterworth to accompany Mondegreen





four frames.
with cutouts of
us all

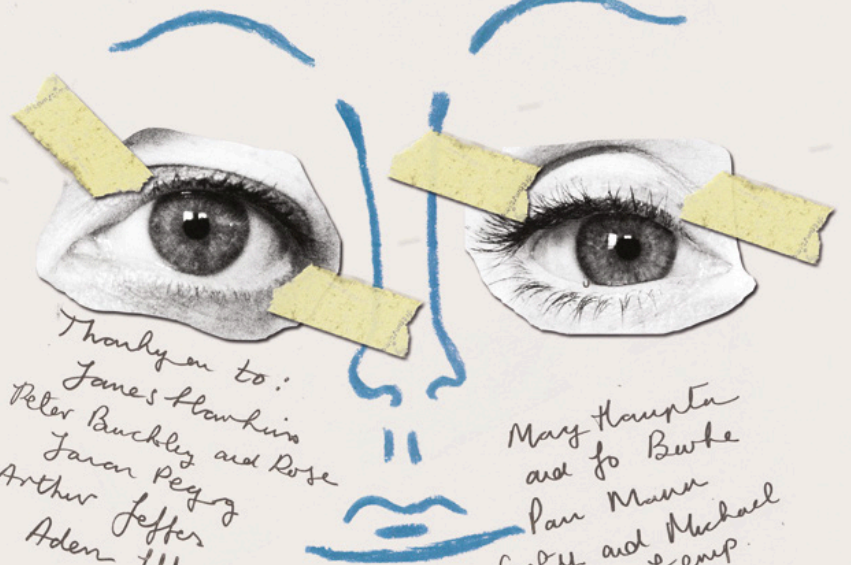
*Development of album artwork:
initial sketches centring the artists
within the visual work*



*Development of album artwork:
photographs of each Collectress
member*

COLLECTRESS

Mondegreen



Recorded by: Rob White
 at Little St Peter's Church
 Brighton in August 2012
 apart from Goodbye and
 Owl recorded at
 Na Roque France in January
 Mixed by: Joe Watson 2011
 Mastered by: Ade Emery

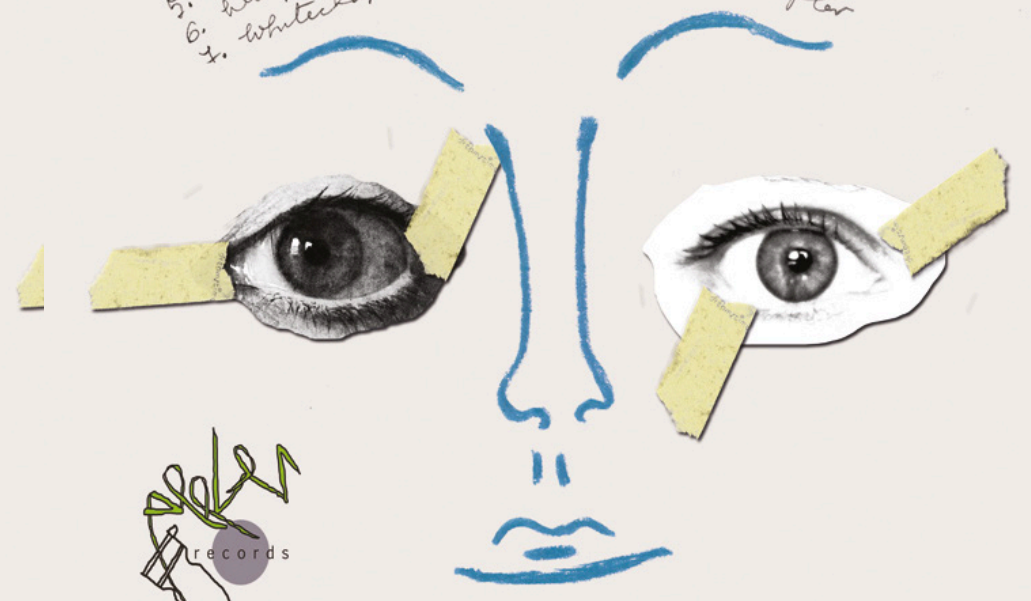
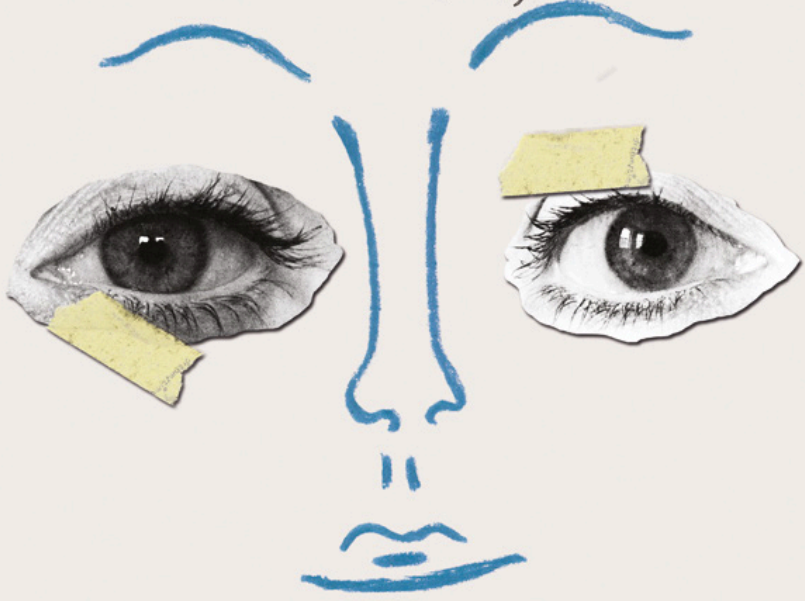
Thankyou to:
 James Hawkins
 Peter Buckley and Rose
 Jaran Pegg
 Arthur Jeffers
 Aden Uton

Mary Hampton
 and Jo Burke
 Pam Mann
 Sooky and Michael
 Kemp.

All pieces written
 and performed by
 Collectress:
 - Alice Kaldridge -
 Cello Laptop Samples Found
 - Quinta Keys -
 Violin Keys -
 Recorder
 Cello -
 Keys -
 Piano Recorder
 Keyboard
 - Caroline Weeks -
 Ocarina
 Voice flute guitar keys

Also ~ Mary Hampton and Jo Burke - Voice (Mancunian)
 Arthur Jeffers - Percs (Owl)

1. Whitechapel flitted ball
2. Spell
3. Hammond
4. Purplehouse
5. Owl
6. Bloodstain Heart
7. Whitechapel Teal
8. Monocore
9. Monocore
10. White chapel Hall in the Ring
11. Goodbye
12. Before and After



Development of album artwork:
 different forms of collage with
 digital work and hand drawn
 elements

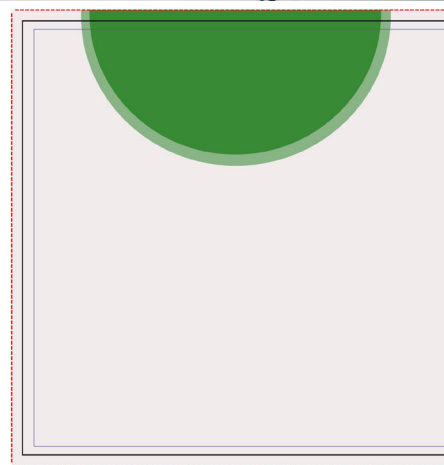


FLINT RECORDS
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COLLECTRESS MONDEGREEN

COLLECTRESS Mondegreen

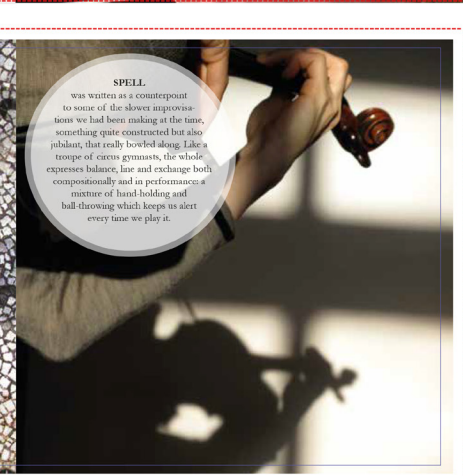
1. Whitechapel (Flint Wall)
2. Spell
3. Harmonium
4. Pumphouse
5. Owl
6. Woodenheart
7. Whitechapel (Teal)
8. Movement
9. Mouseclover
10. Whitechapel (Hat in the Ring)
11. Rolling
12. Goodbye
13. Before and After



WOODENHEART
celebrates practice. It grew from a way Rebecca had of warming up her fingers in the morning, of finding notes and enjoying their resonances. It is named for the four oak hearts, hand-carved by a talented friend that we were given whilst recording at La Rocque in Normandy.



Don't be tricked by the melodramatic start, **MOVEMENT** is an absurdist exercise in movement. It relies on getting just the right chairs so that they don't fall over when you tip onto two legs.



SPELL
was written as a counterpoint to some of the slower improvisations we had been making at the time, something quite constructed but also rubious, that really howled along. Like a troupe of circus gymnasts, the whole expresses balance, line and exchange both compositionally and in performance: a mixture of hand-holding and ball-throwing which keeps us alert every time we play it.

We first played **WHITECHAPEL** at a lovely gig at the Whitechapel Gallery featuring our dear friend, Francesca Simonous. The theme which Quints waste stuck fast, but the structure would never so still. So we improvise around it and watch it change character each time. **Flint wall, Teal and Hat in the Ring**



ROLLING was written and recorded very quickly at Alice's house as a soundtrack for some movement experiments which Caroline had been doing. We like the sudden change of focus from the space of the church.



MOUSECLOVER (a spoonerism of closenover) plays with movement in space, physical and harmonic. The field recording at the start is Alice walking into Little St. Peter's church, Brighton.

The change in ambience from a summer's day by the A23 to the spacious still silence of the medieval church is what made us want to record the album inside these old stone walls.



HARMONIUM
is a slow, quiet entrance ... sssshhh.

PUMPHOUSE was written for a gig in the Pumphouse Gallery in Battersea park. It was a beautiful summer's evening and we played outside at dusk. The song evolved into a Blake-like reflection on the industrial versus pastoral.



OWL is about communication and miscommunication. The repeated call and answer speaks of an intimacy of purpose, but also the sadness felt if our lingers in the forest too long listening and calling out, listening and calling out.



GOODBYE was inspired by a Katherine Mansfield short story, *The Wind Blossoms*: *Now the dark stretches a ring over the building water. They can't see these two any more. Good bye, good bye.*



BEFORE AND AFTER was spawned in a moment of procrastination many moons ago and got lost in the postal system of south London. Years later the strange parts came out during an interval game. The slowed down the blimp arrived in the track on a very long snowy train ride across Sweden. Meditation through performance.

Final album artwork employing collage, photographs, drawing and digital design (including booklet)



*Development of wearable tabards:
initial sketch by Waterworth*



*Development of wearable tabards:
Wearable tabards created for
performance at NPG*



Portrait featuring eye motif, part of a collection of four wearable and interactive images for a performance



*Mask for performance featuring
recurring eye motif*



*Headwear for album launch
performance at Vortex London
designed and made by Waterworth*



*Scarves for album launch
performance at Vortex London
designed and made by Waterworth*



*Embroidered Felt Ties portraits for
performance at Crosswires Festival
Deptford*



*Development of 'Owl':
felted artefact connected to 'Owl'
composition, worn in the
performances to hold the mints
that were used to throw at the
interactive sound carpet*

Owl ideas



Development of 'Owl': visualisation through sketches and video work



*Development of 'Owl':
stills from 'Owl' video work*



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Research Portfolios

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Graphic Design:

Studio Mothership

FRONT COVER
Artwork from the Mondegreen
album

BACK COVER
Waterworth in performance at
Vortex, London

