

Agon

for soprano, mezzo soprano, and string quartet

Abigail Richardson

Agon (2005)

This piece was commissioned by the Talisker Players with generous support from the Laidlaw Foundation.

Soprano
Mezzo Soprano
String Quartet

This piece is a vocalise without text. Except for a few marked exceptions, singers should sing to a combination of “Ah” and improvised syllables.

The title *Agon* refers to an ancient Greek verbal contest between two characters in a play. Instead of using words, this competition pits vocal capabilities. The piece begins hesitantly, as the soprano is unsure of the mezzo but gradually learns to trust her. Their relationship evolves into a competitive one, much like sibling rivalry, in which each tries to out perform the other. During this time, the soprano is often trying to steal lines from the mezzo. Eventually they arrive at a cadenza-like section in which each singer gets a chance to display their capabilities. From here, the singers battle it out briefly with the soprano appearing victorious. She gloats and the piece begins to wrap. The mezzo laments and manipulates the soprano, soon gaining control and winning the day.