



PHOENIX 2013

THE LITERARY AND ARTS ANNUAL OF IMPERIAL COLLEGE LONDON



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THE ANNUAL LITERARY
AND ARTS MAGAZINE
OF
IMPERIAL COLLEGE
LONDON

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Imperial is a science-focused university, but look beneath the surface and the depth of artistic, musical and literary talent to be found among our staff and students is truly astonishing. We have a contemporary art gallery, the Blyth Gallery in the Sheffield building, that regularly features work by Imperial students alongside other emerging London artists. Our symphony orchestra is considered one of the finest university orchestras in the UK, and exists alongside an array of other musical groups and societies as well as an award-winning dance company. Several academic departments have artists-in-residence working

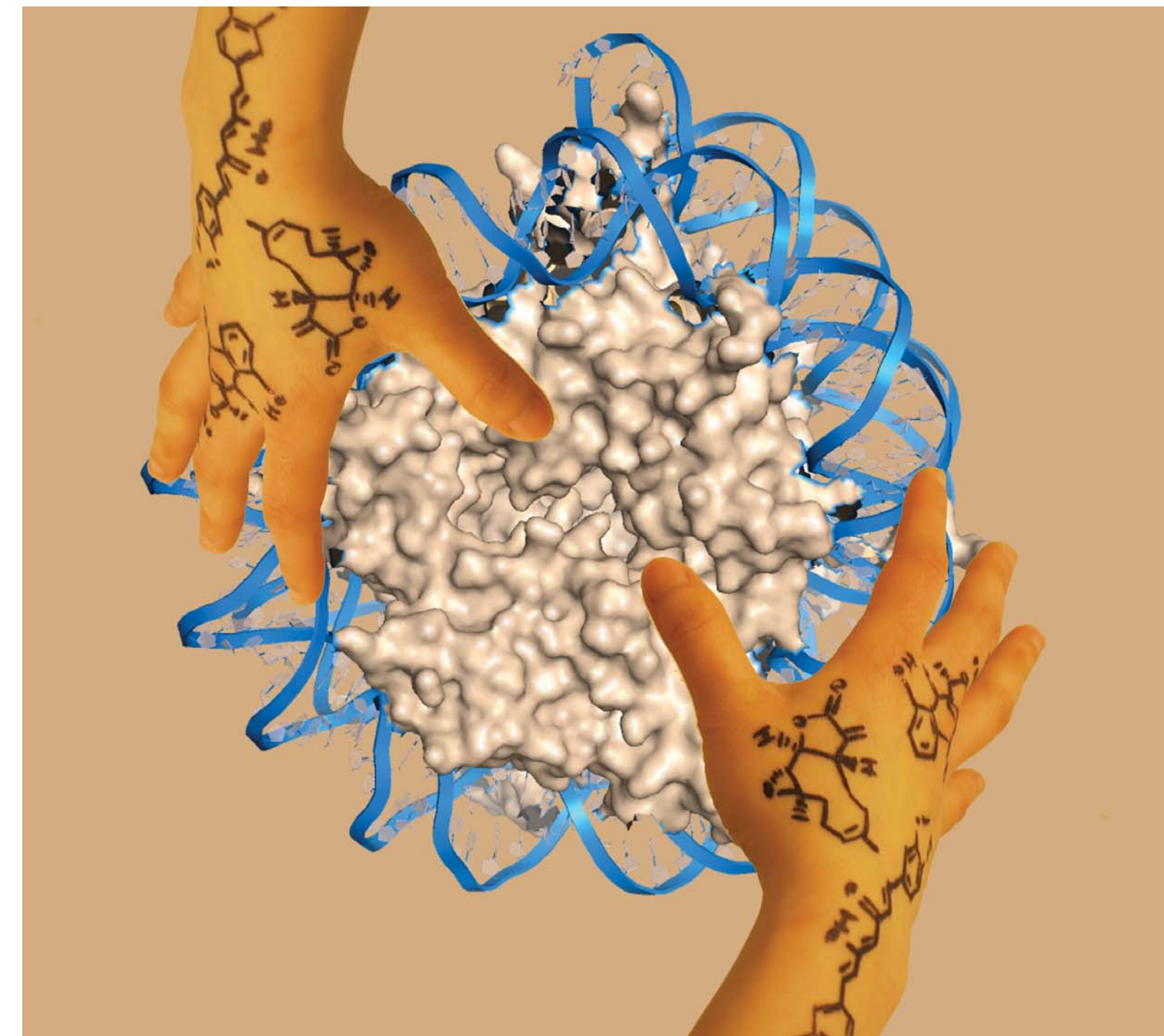
alongside researchers. The Humanities Department (yes, we do have one, well-hidden though it is in the depths of Sheffield) runs a creative writing course led by an Orange-prize longlisted novelist. Imperial defies the 'two-cultures' divide. That a world-class institution in scientific research and education can simultaneously have such a thriving creative culture proves that art and science are not incompatible opposites. Instead they can co-exist — in the same person, the same place, the same endeavour — and perfectly complement each other. This edition of *Phoenix* then is all about those intersections: the way an individual balances their creative and scientific accomplishments within their own life, how different cultures and influences come together to inspire original art, the

use of art in communicating and visualising science, how scientific fact meets literary flair in speculative fiction, and even the merging of creative expression with physical strength and discipline in dance. In the following pages, features focusing on these intersections are interwoven with submissions from across the Imperial community (from undergraduates to support staff to academics), including poetry, short stories and visual art. I hope this goes some way towards demonstrating the diversity and the quality of the artistic accomplishments achieved here, and gives a glimpse into the complex reality that exists behind Imperial's official scientific face.

— Sarah Byrne, *Phoenix* Editor



DESIGN MEETS *SCIENCE COMMUNICATION*



Ben Miles and Ken Srimongkolpithak are PhD students in Imperial's Institute of Chemical Biology. They use their artistic talents to create visualisations of their nanoscale research, and both have had their work featured on the covers of scientific journals.

“Epigenetics is something beyond or above genetic control. For example, identical twins may look significantly different when they have grown up in different conditions. Likewise, a bee and a bee pupae also have the same genetic code but look totally different during their life time. These differences may stem from epigenetic control. Here the hands represent control or manipulation, and small molecules are natural products which can modulate the epigenetic process.”

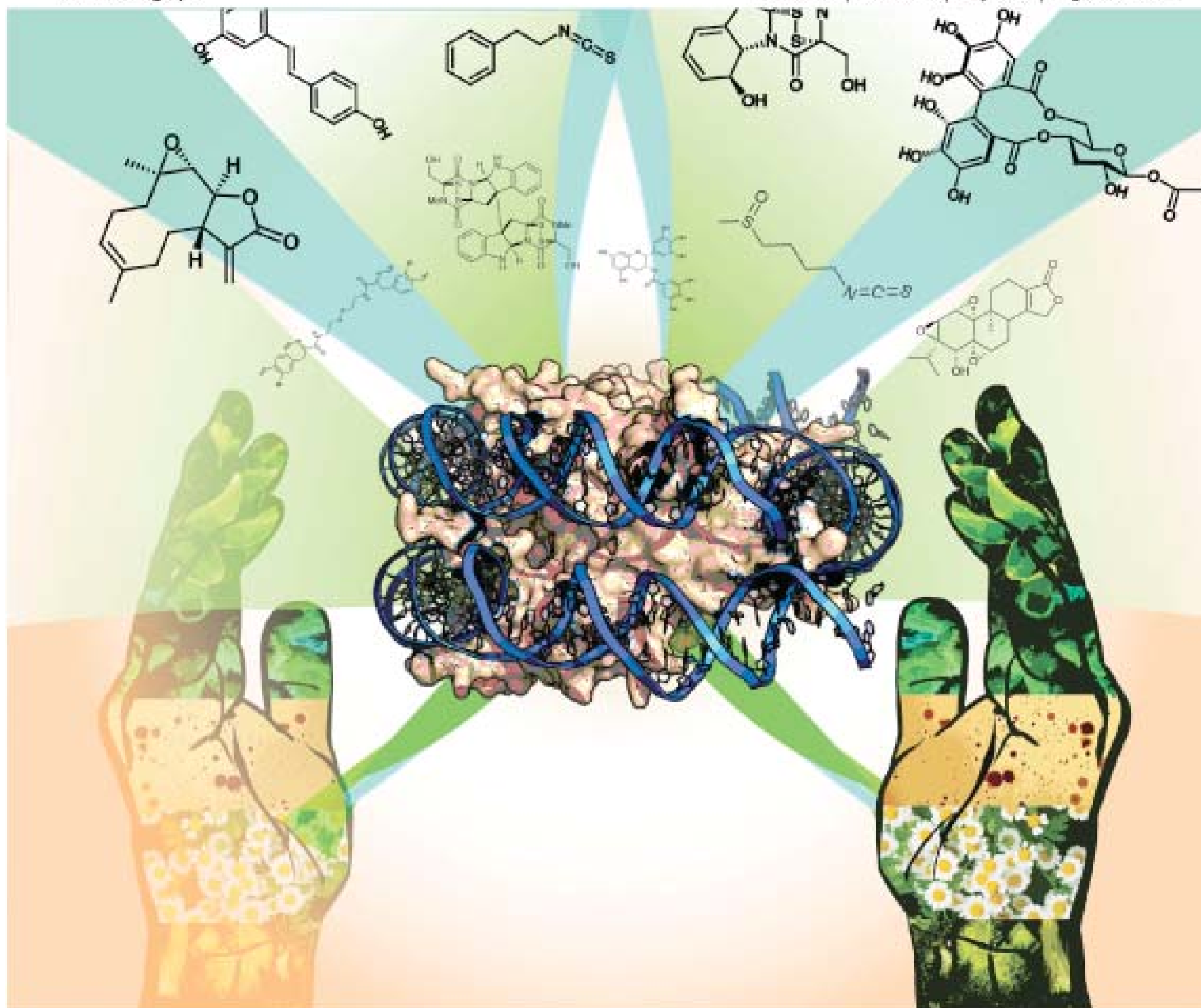
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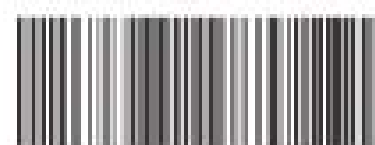
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RSC Publishing

REVIEW ARTICLE
Matthew J. Fuchter *et al.*
Perspectives on natural product epigenetic modulators in chemical biology and medicine



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Translation

“

Translation is the process by which life produces proteins from genes. A complex of proteins called the ribosome reads a transcribed molecule of DNA called mRNA. As it reads the mRNA it sequentially assembles amino acids into proteins with the help of molecules called tRNA.”

Cover by Ben Miles

BEFORE THE DAWN

by Cosmin Badea

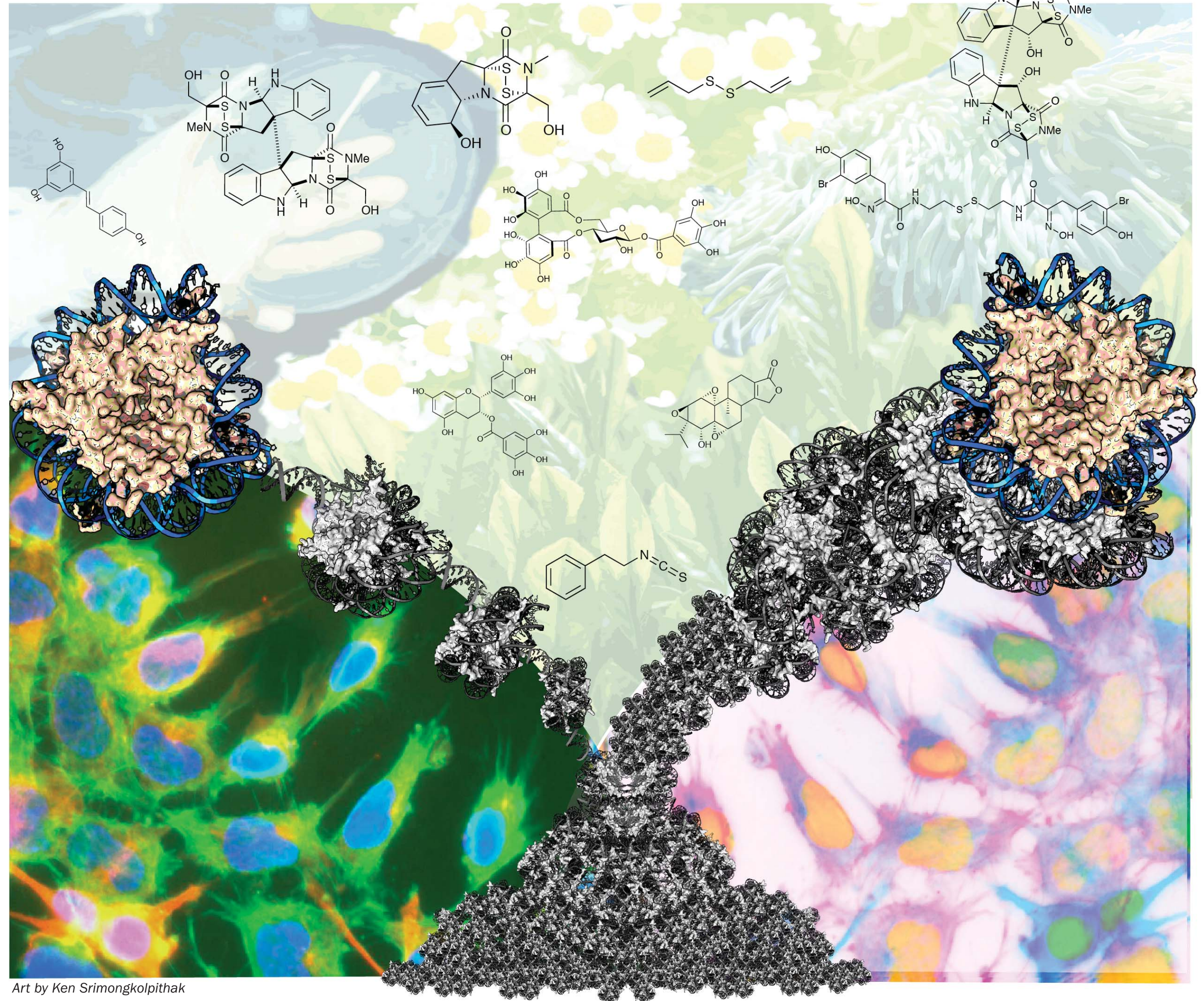
I slept alone last night
I dreamt of your last smile.
I hoped I'd see it shine
Again.

I slept alone all winter
I dreamt of what we were.
I woke to find the world
Aflame.

I slept alone all year
I dreamt of how we lost.
I hoped I'd not wake up
Alive.

I slept alone for sixty years
I dreamt of all the life we'd
have
I have been falling all my life
Alone.

I have been sleeping since
you left
I feel I'll soon wake up.
I hoped I'd see your face
again
Before the dawn.



Art by Ken Srimongkolpithak

SUNDAY DRIVER

FOLLOWING IN HG WELLS' STEAMPUNK FOOTSTEPS

“

My first postdoc was in the Antarctic. I didn't hear a female voice for three months, I think that might be why I started singing...

”

“

Steampunk's very scientific...the wonder and passion the Victorians had about science was one of the best things about that time

”

Imperial alumnus and parliamentary science advisor Chandu Nath talks about her other life as lead singer and songwriter with steampunk/fusion band Sunday Driver, and traces her influences back to Phoenix magazine's founder HG Wells.

Phoenix: What's it like being a scientist and a musician, is it difficult to switch between the two?

SD: Sunday Driver: That bit's not actually that difficult, it's really easy to just switch, I think because I've been doing both for so long. But the difficult bit is finding the creative space, so when everything gets busy at once it's really difficult to decide whether to think about music or think about science and sometimes they push each other out.

P: And is it difficult to find the time to devote to music?

SD: It has been in the past. When I was a research scientist it was really difficult, because you can't choose your timings with research. I guess the job I've ended up in...it lends itself much more to allowing the space. Parliamentary recess is exactly when the festival season starts. But it can be a bit of a nightmare, it's very hard to explain to people that you're going to miss a meeting because you've got a gig.

P: Do you think your science inspires your music?

SD: Yes, totally. A lot of my early songs were actually inspired by things I did because of science. I'm not actually sure if I'd ever have started doing music if I didn't do science, it's symbiotic. My first postdoc was as a glaciologist and I spent four or five months in the Antarctic: that was when I really started writing my own songs, really decided I wanted to form a band. I kind of took a vow to myself... it's quite funny, I loved being in the Antarctic but the work itself was so dull, it was so monotonous, and I just swore to myself that when I got back I'd surround myself with noise and colour and people and sounds, because you hear the same sounds over and over again, the pop of explosives in the ice and the chugging of the snowmobile and the sound of the shovel on snow... a hundred days with three blokes, even as a female physicist I wasn't prepared for that. I didn't hear a female voice for three months, I think that might be partly why I started singing to myself!

P: And do you think it works the other way round?

SD: It's a more subtle thing, it's more that the creativity and the performance gives me a lot more conviction, more confidence in what I'm saying. I think that if I've stood up on a stage and I've gigged to a thousand people, I can definitely write a report about nuclear security. So, yeah, it's a confidence thing really. And I think the science helps with the music, partly because I'm so desperate to get away from it! By the time I get to band practice, it's such a massive relief. Sometimes I leave work really stressed, and then after half an hour of singing practice I feel in a completely different place. So yes, it helps me focus on everything else.

P: When you were at Imperial, were you in any of the musical or creative societies?

SD: Well no, it's funny but actually I wasn't involved in anything musical at the time. I did creative things, but not as part of clubs. I tried to write poetry, drew pictures... one of the things I did get into at Imperial was playing the piano. There was a gorgeous grand piano in the Mechanical Engineering building that anyone could go along and play, I used to drag friends along and make them sit in an empty lecture theatre

and play to me for an evening, it was magical. I'd love to know if it's still there, because I loved that piano

P: Did you know about Phoenix?

SD: I have to admit I didn't at the time. But I'd have loved to know about it, because HG Wells is linked to the whole steampunk thing which is a big inspiration for the band. And one of the not-so-good things about Imperial was the absence of any kind of arts or humanities, I really missed that. When I was at Oxford I hung out with people who were doing humanities, it's really good to interact with people with different mindsets, it opens your mind up a little bit.

P: If you had the opportunity, would you give up your day job to be a musician full-time?

SD: No, if I had the opportunity, I would do science, but I'd do it on my terms. In some ways it would be nice to try escaping from the routine. But in other ways I think it's what's allowed me to do what I've done: Sunday Driver is completely creative, we're not governed by any need to appeal to a market, we just write the songs and make the music that comes to us. We've all had opportunities at one time or another to make that transition, and we've chosen not to. It used to tear me up a lot more, but now I'm really happy with the balance I've got. That's one of the reasons I left research. I don't think I could have done research and been a singer, which is a shame, but it doesn't allow you to have another passion.

P: When Sunday Driver started out, did you intentionally set out to create such a diverse band, in terms of the different cultural and musical backgrounds you all have?

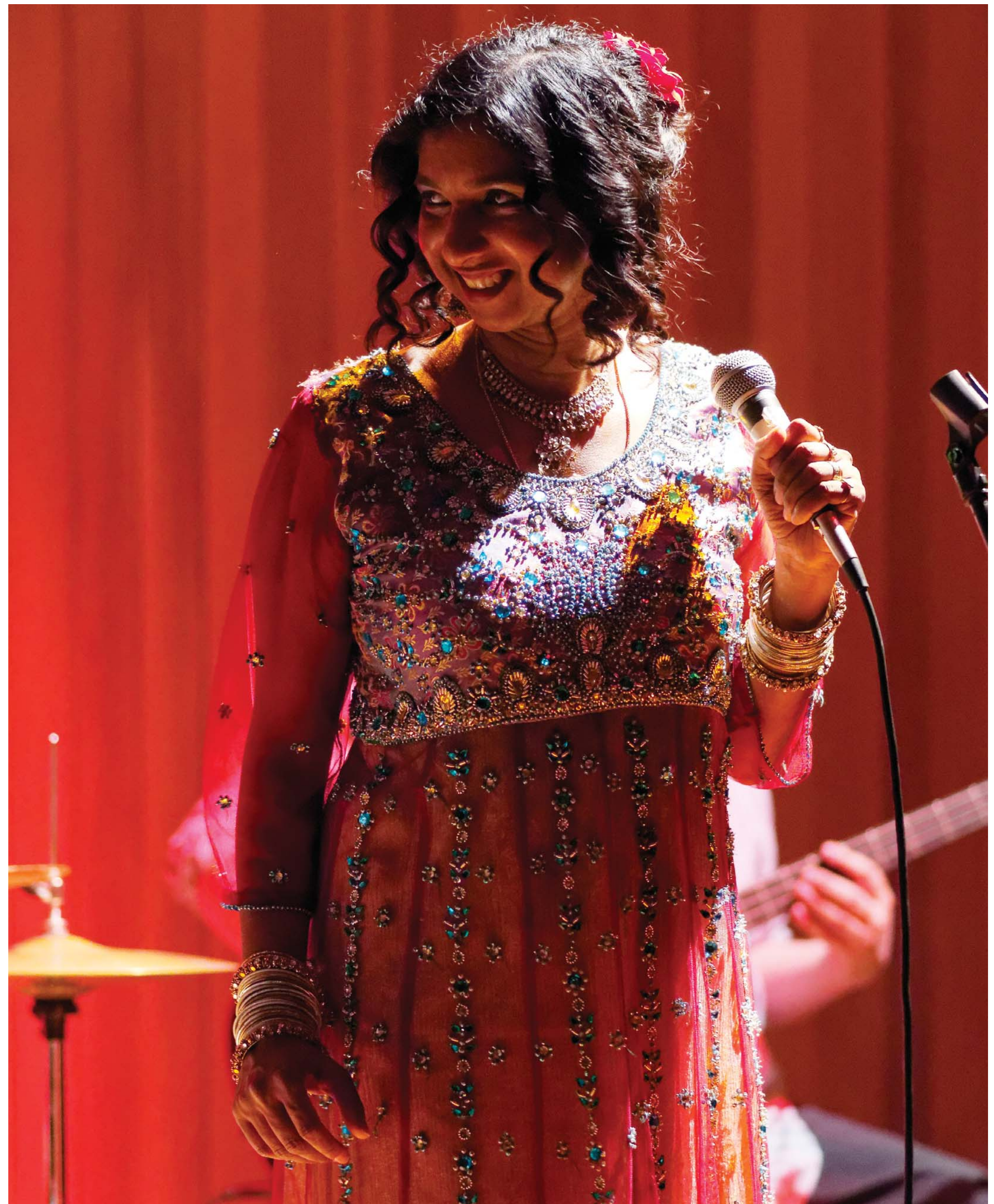
SD: Well, I always wanted to do that. I don't really think the other people in the band were that bothered, they just wanted to make beautiful music, and because of the sorts of people we were, and our backgrounds, it ended up being really diverse. And that was always what I wanted, so I probably steered it in that direction, by bringing random tabla players along to band practices and forcing band members to play instruments they'd never heard of.

P: What about the steampunk influence?

SD: We never set out to be a steampunk band, but the steampunk scene has adopted us to some extent over the past few years, because the last couple of albums we've done have very much drawn on the interface between the Victorians and the British Raj. And steampunk's very scientific. That's something that really appeals to me, because I think a lot of the wonder and the passion the Victorians had about science was one of the best things about that time, just the amount of excitement that science inspired, things like the Royal Institution and the Great Exhibition in the 1850s, and I like to take myself back to that era to be excited about science again sometimes.

P: What advice would you give Imperial students with an interest in music or art?

SD: Totally go for it. I'd say anything is possible, and I really think you don't have to choose between music and science. Don't push yourself into categories because you think that's what you are or that's what people want. Try everything. If you're into world fusion, make sure you listen to heavy rock. If you're into heavy rock, make sure you go to the ballet. It's about throwing different forms of art — different sounds — at yourself from all angles. And have fun with it really!



Sunday Driver play at
The Forge, Camden,
10th May 2013.



PHOTOGRAPHY BY SARAH BYRNE

FIRE

by Cosmin Badea

The flames burn — orange and yellow.
All that we have lived, in flames.
Black is the sky, black the future
Only this moment burns lively
Orange and yellow.

Fire has now touched
The memory of that moment
When we met.
What we once felt, in flames.
White were we once, black is the ash
Only a corner of the sad reflection is still burning
Orange and yellow.

Catching fire now
That kiss
Which alone stopped the eternal.
Sweet was your mouth, black is the pain.
My seared lips taste the death of ages
Still the fire rages...

Fire on the forest
Of our own dreamt dreams
Fire on the lake, the house,
Fire in our house...
Fire on the hearth
Fire on the hearth...

Alone and afraid
In a lonesome corner
A lost, wasted child.
Crying and attempting
To put out with teardrops
Such a fire wild.

Somewhere, far away,
Alone and forlorn
A girl that he haunts.
Her eyes shut and teary,
No more tears to cry
No more hope she wants.

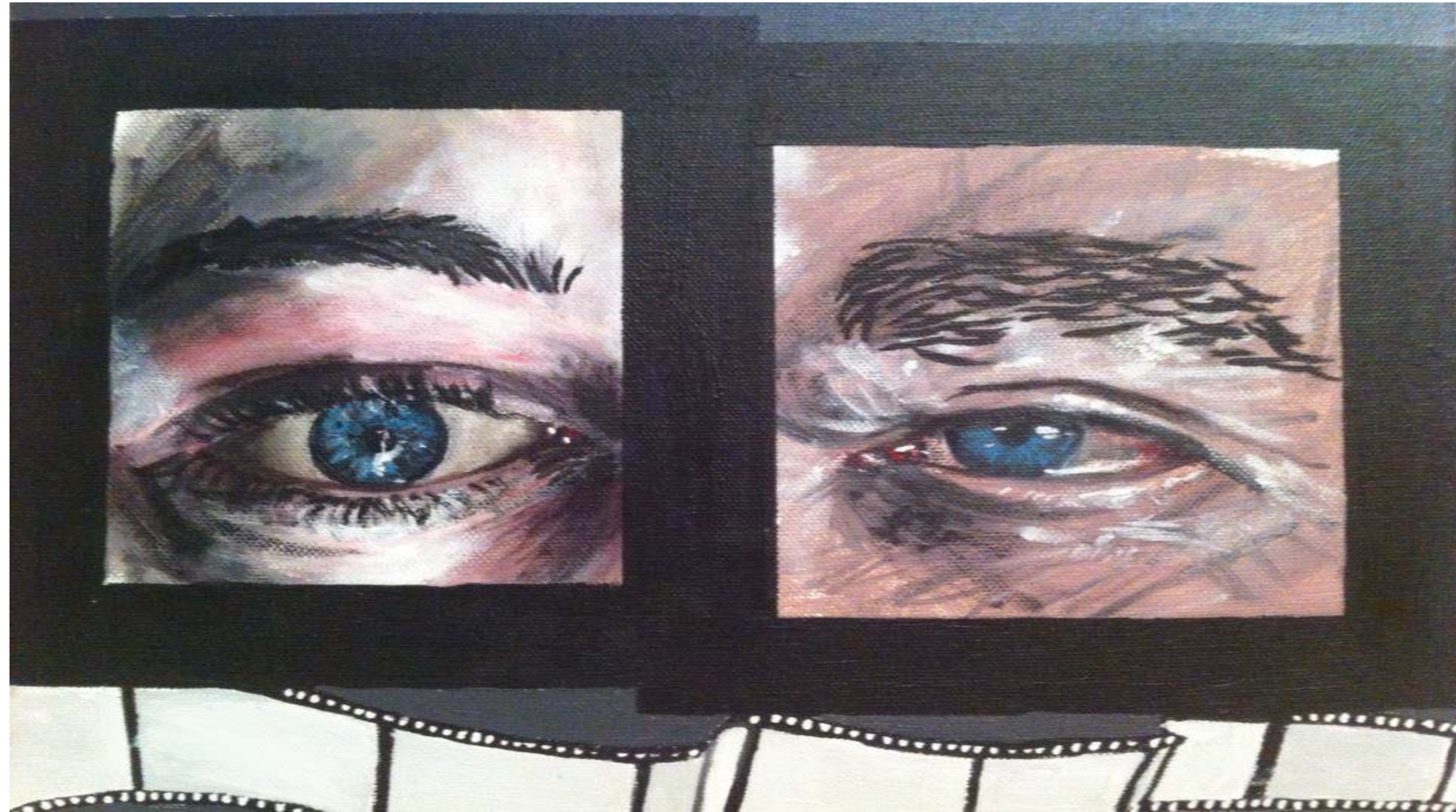
But the fire only
Lives while it has feed
Hope as oxygen,
It has starved completely my
Lungs already starving.
The last drop of hope falls burning
Orange and yellow.

After infinity comes infinity.
(Anything burns, everything!)
For an eternity the cold fire's been rising
But it has even burned its flames
Which it had as wings in its flight
From me, towards me.

After it, the silence.

RETROGRADE *Progression*

by Ioanna Kalogeraki



Ioanna Kalogeraki is a 3rd year Greek, female EEE Engineer, and will be leaving Imperial this year for an exchange in Singapore:

“ This piece was made for the 2013 LeoSoc Exhibition, the title of which was “Retrograde Progression”. When I heard this phrase, I wanted to experiment with the connection between the past and the future in our lives, as I believe that our present is formed by the continuous interaction of these two. The eye on the left is the eye of my sister, symbolizing the future, while the one on the right belongs to my grandmother, symbolizing the past.”

LAST OF GUERRILLA THE GARDENERS

by David L. Clements



David L. Clements is an astrophysicist at Imperial College London. This story was inspired by an art-science collaboration at Imperial (see interview on page 21), and originally appeared in *Nature Futures*, *Nature* magazine's science fiction feature.



“
Scientific sense
was never going
to stand up to
irate politicians
shouting
“Something must
be done!”
”

They came for ‘Percy Thrower’ last night. I was on my way to deliver some Pink Brandywine tomato seeds when I saw the first police car. I turned the corner and saw a fleet of them parked outside her house, complete with sniffer dogs and a space-suited forensic team heading for her potting shed.

I averted my eyes and walked past on the opposite side of the road, feeling the envelope of illegal seeds in my pack broadcast my guilt. As I left her road, the sterilization van arrived, its flame throwers ready to destroy ‘Percy’s’ irreplaceable collection of plants.

I got away. The others weren’t so lucky.

As I waited for the bus I checked our secure server and realized they were rolling up the whole network. ‘Monty’ had been the first, but in catapulting a package of herb seeds into Buckingham Palace gardens he’d gone too far. His arrest had been the trigger for raids across the country. ‘Bob’ had sent out a warning as they smashed down his door, but they’d been ready for us all. If I hadn’t been on a delivery run they’d’ve caught

me as well.

I couldn’t go home. Most of the people I trusted had been picked up. I stayed on the bus as it passed my stop and headed into central London. The clean-up crews were obvious, torching collections of wild flowers in the roadside beds that I’d seeded from bus windows while commuting.

All the hard work, all the beautiful, irreplaceable diversity, stamped out by commercial greed. If I’d’ve had the machinery with me I’d’ve leapt off the bus and seeded the palace gardens myself.

‘Percy’ had started the whole thing with a few prophetic words:

“Biology is the biggest peer-to-peer

copying system on the planet. Now they’ve eliminated file sharing they’ll come for the seed sharers.”

She’d been a university botanist for years but left when it became clear that all the grants were controlled by big agribusiness. We knew we were in trouble when Kew was sold off and Henry Doubleday broken up. Their vast seed collections became the intellectual property of a few huge corporations. Unlicensed seeds were already illegal to sell, but once companies owned the rare strains, they stopped collectors sharing them for free. They wanted to control it all.

At first we tried to stop them. There were protests, lobbies and mass march-

PHOTOGRAPHY BY SARAH BYRNE

es. *Gardener’s Question Time* became such a political hot potato it was cancelled by the BBC. And then came the Chelsea Flower-Show Riots.

When I got off the bus I saw the police at the station. But it was just the usual patrols, not yet a manhunt. Maybe word of my escape had yet to reach them. I headed for Left Luggage.

We were called economic terrorists, threatening profits from high-cost, highyield, terminator-gene strains that would feed the world and soak up excess CO₂. But we just wanted tasty vegetables from our own gardens, unusual

purple carrot. Serious action only came when self-propagating super-plants were found growing by a road in Norfolk.

“Businessmen don’t understand that biology is a lot messier than digital copying,” ‘Percy’ had said as we talked in her potting shed. “There’s a dozen perfectly natural ways the terminator gene might have failed. One cosmic ray taking out the right base pair would be enough!”

But scientific sense was never going to stand up to irate politicians shouting “Something must be done!”

Fines became prison sentences, the Seed Squads were established and we

were forced underground. Home gardens were no longer safe, so we became guerrilla gardeners — a secret society sharing seeds and planting contraband crops in public spaces.

We tended them at night or just scattered seeds far and wide to let nature take its course. That’s when the network started and we adopted our noms de vert.

We were too successful. Nature was indeed the great copier. Our wilder strains could fend for themselves and started to spread.

The gloves finally came off when the director of Smaxo’s agricultural division found a clump of illegal Afghan

Purple carrots growing at the bottom of his garden and carpeted the Prime Minister. Of course, ‘Monty’ and his catapult didn’t help.

Now the only guerrilla gardener left is me.

I collected my escape stash from Left Luggage along with Monty’s seed catapult. The wig, hat and glasses helped me slip past the tighter police patrols and onto the sleeper to Fort William. Locked in my cabin I shaved my distinctive beard and used clippers so that I’d match the fake ID in my stash.

The train would go through a lot of isolated country. The clean up crews couldn’t cover all that ground in one

season, so some of my seeds were going out of the window.

As for the rest...

There are islands off the Scottish coast contaminated by bioweapons testing from the Second World War. People are forbidden and there are no sheep or rabbits. But their climate is ideal. The seed catapult has enough range to reach them from a boat offshore.

Or I could land and make certain they’re properly planted. The seeds will do well on the islands, even if I don’t. In a few years they’ll become a reserve for natural, noncommercial diversity no matter what happens to me, the last guerrilla gardener.

Art meets Sport

WITH IMPERIAL'S
DANCE COMPANY



PHOTOGRAPHY BY DUNCAN MARTIN

PHOENIX





D

ance is about creative expression. Dance can be narrative art and storytelling. Dance can be about structure, discipline and perfection in every detail, or it can be about improvisation, spontaneity and exploration. There aren't many forms of art that are so versatile or that so well illustrate the intersections between different types of creativity. Especially when the dancers themselves are also scientists and engineers. That's why on a bright but cold Sunday morning this May, members of the Imperial

College Union Dance Company gathered on campus to help create a photo-shoot for this magazine. From the historic backdrop of the Queen's Tower to the blue-glass mirrored exterior of the Faculty building, Imperial's campus — with its contrasts and contradictions — provided the ideal location. The dancers demonstrated graceful classical ballet poses alongside dynamic contemporary techniques. The images we created show how beautiful the different forms of dance can be. They also speak of the

strength, flexibility, balance and athleticism required, developed through many hours of dedicated practice.





SCIENCE MEETS LITERATURE

DAVE CLEMENTS ON SCIENCE FICTION AND FACT



Dr Dave Clements is an astrophysicist in Imperial's physics department and is involved in several ESA and NASA observational projects including the Planck mission. He also writes short fiction, and his hard science fiction stories have appeared in various publications including Analog Magazine and Nature Futures (see story on page 14).

Phoenix: Where do you get your ideas, and are they inspired by your science?

Dave Clements: Where you get your ideas is one of the cliché questions people get asked, especially if you're writing science fiction. The answer is, ideas are everywhere. It's not that people writing science fiction are particularly good at ideas — it's taking an idea, a concept, and turning it into a story that's the hard thing. Some of it is inspired by

my research, some of it isn't. So for example, there's a story I had published in *Analog* that's set around a neutron star, I don't actually do any work on neutron stars but the basic concept of the story came while I was sitting in a seminar on neutron stars. But another one is the story I had published in *Nature*, *Last of the Guerilla Gardeners*, that arose from an art-science collaboration with Vanessa Harden from the Royal College of Art, who did an exhibit on guerilla gardening.

P: Do you find that being a writer, being a creative person, affects the research you do?

DC: Research is creative. The creative muscles used in research and in writing are much the same, you're just pushing them in a different direction, that's the way I feel it. You can say things in fic-

tion that you can't say in research, and vice versa. I think one of the things that motivates me, at least in the hard science fiction that I write, is that I'm trying to put a human scale, or human interaction into what I do research on. Because I'm an extragalactic astronomer, that makes putting it on a human scale rather difficult. But showing somehow that the vast distances, the vast gulfs of time involved, comparing those to a human span — that's what I try to do. And also, at some level, reflect the — how do I say it without sounding depressing? — the insignificance of us on cosmological scales.

P: What inspired you to first start writing?

DC: Reading. I guess the first thing I wrote that could be described as science fiction was when I was about nine or ten

at school. It's always been there in the background at some level. Sometimes it gets more attention, and now that I've got a reasonably secure position here, I'm writing more.

P: If you had the opportunity, would you give up your day job to be a writer full-time?

DC: I've thought about that. In the unlikely event that I do get some level of success with novel-writing, I think I would still want some connection to the real science. The two feed off each other, in my mind at least.

P: Which writers do you most admire, or aspire to be like?

DC: Who I admire and who I'd like to be like are somewhat different questions. There are writers out there, like William Gibson, or China Miéville,

“Research is creative. The creative muscles used in research and writing are much the same, you're just pushing them in a different direction”



who are just astoundingly good, and I could never be like them. But people like Al Reynolds, Charlie Stross, Paul McAuley, Stephen Baxter, they are more in the department of what I'm trying to do. But they've spent a lot more time building up their writing careers, and I've spent my time building up an academic career.

P: Do you have any plans to write a novel for publication?

DC: I am writing one at the moment, going through the revisions at this stage. We'll see how that goes!

P: Why did you choose to write science fiction rather than another genre or more mainstream fiction?

DC: I've been in the science fiction world for a long time. When I was a student here I ran the science fiction society, and from that I got involved in what's known as the science fiction

fandom. I've run conventions, and it's also what I read. But that doesn't mean I haven't got the ideas for some more mainstream stories, novels, floating around in my mind.

P: What do you think about the "lablit" genre? Do you think that's going to become a big thing?

DC: I've published a few things on the Lablit.com site. I know Jenny Rohn, who runs it, and I like what she's doing, but I feel she draws the line between science fiction and "lablit" a little bit too rigidly, and there's a lot more commonality between the two. The problem, at least in the UK, with science fiction is the old "two cultures", where frankly literature-based literary critics are scared of science. They can't tell what's made up and what's not. They don't like science very much, so they don't have a basis to understand it, and so they denigrate the whole thing.

P: Do you think modern science fiction is becoming more literary, especially in the short fiction world, with places like Clarkesworld publishing work quite literary in style?

DC: There's always a space for that. Maybe the fact that I've never managed to get anything into Clarkesworld demonstrates that perhaps they are more literary! There's always been a spectrum, with people like Jeff Ryman, who were much more literary than people like Arthur C. Clarke, even though they were writing at the same time. It's not a hard solidly delineated "you're one thing or the other" — there's a shading.

P: What would you say was your proudest achievement as a writer?

DC: If I was wearing my science fiction fan hat, it would be the *Analog* story [*A War of Stars*, published in *Analog* magazine]. But bearing in mind that I'm sitting in my office here at Imperial, it

would be the *Nature* story [*Last of the Guerrilla Gardeners*, published in *Nature*]. I came this close to having my *Nature Futures* story in the same issue that I had a paper that I co-authored. Unfortunately we didn't manage to swing it, but that would have been fun.

P: Finally, what advice would you give to students or young scientists who want to combine writing or other creative pursuits with a scientific career?

DC: Keep doing it. Writing, whether it's a scientific paper, a piece of fiction, a nonfiction article, or a lab report, the more you practice communicating in the written form, the better you will get at it. I imagine that's also true for visual arts, for acting, for, well, for doing science! If you want to do something, you get better at it by doing it. Not by reading about doing it, not by watching movies about people who are doing it, but by doing it. So keep on keeping on.

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I came this close to having my *Nature Futures* story in the same issue that I had a paper that I co-authored... that would have been fun
”

Photography from the Urban Sputnik project, an art-science collaboration with Imperial's Astrophysics group.

urbansputnik.com

Photos courtesy of Vanessa Harden



A WALK IN HYDE PARK

by Evangelos Venieris

How calm the gladsome branches
in the solemn breeze that stirs
the untenanted silence of the footpaths
that slink away from the engines' clamour
to a wild patch of grass
in deep oaken shades!
H to He,
and my shadow absorbs
whichever frequency dare fall
into its cavernous black-hole.
That same shadow trails my steps,
slung as a seditious aura
of sedation
of figurative mechanical motions
of circuitous circulating inhibitions
as if some mercurial potion
sought to release its portents
to the unsuspecting air,
to the astonished ghosts
that in the foggy hours
cluster like frayed electrons
around the magnetic pull
of a life-brimming meadow
whose edges, held to place
by unseen dwarfs heavily
heaving the burden of the sky,
are electrified with the strange reactions

“The main inspiration for my poetry is and always has been an innate yearning for freedom, whether it be lodged in world mythology, in the silence of the forest or in the energy of a rock band, as well as the endless possibilities of language, which, if correctly wielded, may open the floodgates to the blurring of all known boundaries between reality and the imperceptible.”



“My name is Evangelos Venieris, Evan to friends. I completed the EEE MEng degree at Imperial College and have recently started a PhD in the field of sensor array communications in the same department.

of cells breathing in unison,
of pores singing dioxic songs,
of radiation scorching untrodden carpets,
and high aloft on full and plump clouds
a fortress proud and tall,
towers and wide gates
that inebriate with mesmeric legends
of obscure rivalrous destinies
are set up in quantum leaps by the giant hands
of some atemporal subspectral
power of imagining.
And with the ambitions of crumbling empires
dying in the distance,
I keep measuring my shadows
stemming from an oaken frame
as I still plod the silent footpaths
in a giddy mood
the heaven's wines invoked
with persistent libations
from the subconscious crevices
the ground and each consecutive heatwave
unseal in their maddening
and violent full bloom
as they summon the fluttering of unwinged
scents of revolving roulettes of seasons,
painting quaint vignettes
of the fleeting dream
that was Spring.

hands

by Denis Hyka



Denis Hyka is from Albania and currently works for Imperial College in catering.

“I started to draw and paint when I was in kindergarten. Since then it has always remained as a hobby, with a desire to do and create more, and I'm always trying to stay true to my style hoping to reach a wider audience.

I like to draw hands and bring them into focus as they play an important part on the way we express our feelings in different situations. In this drawing I wanted to capture some fleeting moments of different people while focusing on their hands. With their strength, elegance, shapes hands say a lot about someone's personality.”

TRUTH

by Cosmin Badea

Truth
Can be most painful
Right when it brings the end
Of the belief in evil.
Right when it brings the death
Of cruelty.
Because it suddenly uncovers
The cruelty
That you allowed to be born
Believing in evil
And to trickle down
As burning tar to hurt
All the open heart
Which won't close, depart,
Till it brings about
Truth.



DAWN

by Cosmin Badea

I know that life is but a dream
That never comes again
And some just want to set their hearts
Aflame,
But all I wanted was to keep
To keep us two alive.
Before it ends and we wake up,
Before the dawn,
I look around, I seek inside,
But find I die alone.

FAITH

by Arthur Fox



Arthur Fox is a 4th year MEng Computing (Games, Vision and Interaction) student, and will be starting a graduate job at Sony's London Studio after his degree. His interest in games has always been predominantly on the creative side: gameplay, design, music and story, and in order to explore this he took Music Technology and Creative Writing as humanities options in his final year. Faith is an extract from one of the pieces he submitted for the Creative Writing course. It was inspired by his insatiable curiosity about mythology and a desire to humanise the Gods, with a view to expressing their struggle in gathering followers in our modern society.

“

Back in the Golden Age, Hades always had first pick of the most interesting people, he was so down with pop culture...

”

“I'm bored! This just isn't fair, humans suck!”
“Now, now my dear, calm down, there's no need to be upset. You know your father has been formulating a plan for some time now, we'll get over this slump.” Hera smiled at her son across the table; it was a very comprehending smile.

“It's just, I don't know what to do with myself, mother. Before, when I wanted entertainment I just started wars or killed things. The Spartans loved me for it! Do you remember that time I came down and slew the Ekhidnades — it was

awesome, there was blood and gore everywhere!”

“Be patient son. You know the saying 'patience is a virtue'; well your father invented it. It was through it that we earned our place here to begin with — without it Olympus would still be ruled by that oaf Kronus, I mean could you imagine that?”

“True, from all I've heard grandfather must have been a real bore.” Ares lifted his chalice off the table and took a swig of the violet liquid. Glancing down at the ground he spotted his spear lying there lifelessly, the once golden weapon had now turned a dull shade of copper.

“But still, what's it all worth now? Look at this place, it's in ruins! I'd rather

be in Eden — even after Eve ate that damn apple!”

Ares was right. Olympus was a mess. The once crystal blue waters that had run through the Acropolis were now a misty grey and the fountains that had once showered the lush fields were barely able to form a dribble. Hera remembered how the grass had once been so vibrant and green that even Yaweh had commented on it. “The grass is always greener on the other side,” she had sneered. Of course, Hera knew very well that it wasn't, nobody's grass was as green as theirs. But those days had long passed, now the grass was patchy and in some places wilted. Mother Nature had far better gardens to tend to.

Ares looked up at the dilapidated columns and sighed. “They used to reach so high you couldn't even see where they ended. I remember racing Hermes to the top — of course he cheated and used his sandals.”

“Ha! I remember that day. You kids were always up to mischief.”

“What's he up to now, mother? I haven't seen my dear brother in centuries.”

“Well you know what Maia and those Pleiades whores are like, his mother never gave him the guidance he deserved. I heard he travelled East, got himself involved with Vishnu's lot. They have so many deities over there that he was able to slip in without any-

one really noticing. I've even heard he's having an affair with one of the Devas. I'm happy for him.”

Hera paused for a second, and pondered about what it would be like to move away herself, start afresh, meet someone new and fall in love all over again. The thought excited her, but then came that same old realisation, here she was Queen — if she left she would be a nobody.

“Now that Hermes has gone, poor Hades has nobody to guide all the souls to the Underworld,” she continued, trying to distract herself. “Although it seems that few want to go there nowadays, most are heading to that dreaded place Satan calls his home. Have you been?

It's vile! The flames aren't properly looked after and they don't even allow pets in, poor Cerberus had to wait outside when we visited.”

“Hades was so upset when we left,” she sighed “Not because he couldn't afford all the glamour, flashing lights and bohemian lifestyle that Hell offered — he was never into that kind of décor, he preferred the more traditional haunted look he gave the Underworld. No, it was the sheer volume of people that saddened him. Back in the Golden Age, Hades always had first pick of the most interesting people, he was so down with pop culture.

“Even when Cerberus did that trick where he licks him with all three

tongues at once it still didn't cheer him up. I think... I think I may have even seen him shed a tear for the first time.” A high pitch squeal escaped her lips as she struggled to contain herself.

Ares stood up and rushed over to his mother, his bronze armour squeaking like a rusty bicycle chain. He wrapped his arms around her, squeezing them tightly.

“Don't cry mother, I'm still here for you.”

These past couple of millennia had been hard, so many had deserted their ranks. But they couldn't leave. They ruled Olympus. If they left what would there be?

“We are strong,” Zeus had reminded

them. “We have beaten our forefathers and we will rise again” — he just needed to think up a plan. Centuries had passed and he had yet to formulate one.

“Oh, we were so happy back then,” sobbed Hera. She remembered sitting by Zeus' side. He was the man of her dreams, so strong and wonderful, her lover and her own brother! All those sappy humans had worshipped them unconditionally.

How things had changed. Zeus' once resplendent white beard was now straggly and grey. Hera wasn't one to talk either, her once soft skin had grown so hard and cracked that she had gone as far as removing all the mirrors from her room. Yet, the thought of Athena's

words provided her with solace:

“To earn their faith we must first have faith in ourselves.”

“Hey look on the bright side, at least we're not in Valhalla!” Ares exulted. Hera chuckled and a smile formed on her face again.

“I hear Valhalla is so empty nowadays you could mistake Odin for one of the statues! You know, apparently they're so short on Valkyries, that they've even begun accepting cross-dressers!”

Their laughter filled the air — laughter was always the best medicine.

“I love you son,” she said smiling. “At least we still have each other.”

“Love you too mother — yeah, at least we'll always have that!”

AND YOU ARE NO SAINT

by Shoaib Rizvi



“I’m Shoaib Rizvi, a 3rd year medical student at Imperial. I am no miracle and you are no saint is a mixed media self portrait created by combining different doodles I made throughout the year. It is an introspective look at my experiences with two different worlds and how they come together in my mind.”

soap

by Emilie Sylvia Stammers



Being a bar of soap is far from a glamorous life. My home is a dish encrusted with slime from my predecessors, placed next to a bath covered in grimy tide marks. My companions include the forlorn-looking sponge, the snooty shower gel and the toothbrush, who appears to be in a state of permanent shock. I can’t say I’m surprised: the human mouth must be a disgusting place, if their feet are anything to go by. The only bathroom implement worse off than me or the toothbrush is the toilet paper. No wonder he always looks

so pale. He doesn’t talk to us much. I wish he did, because that might shut the shower gel up. He’s always lording it over us because he cost more and apparently smells nicer. But am I the one who contains chemicals blamed for causing cancer? No! That shut him up nicely. Humans are stupidly obsessed with being thin, I noticed the other night as one of them peered into the toothpaste-

spattered mirror to examine herself. Us bars of soap get thinner with every passing use, but this is far from a good thing. It means we’re dying. Once we get too thin, we are thrown into the bin which lives underneath the sink, to join the empty bottles and bits of wet cotton wool. I’m not sure what happens after that, but I have heard rumours to do with burial and burning.

I try to escape from the sweaty grip of human hands by exuding a slippery foam, but they are not deterred. They simply grip me more firmly and continue to clean themselves. That’s surely the worst part of being a bar of soap, but they’re merciless. Damn, here comes one now. Not shower time already, surely? Crap.

“Emilie penned the above for a friend’s band. Emilie was a fellow cupcake worshipper, particularly of the hummingbird variety. She was oft-clad in colourful tights; a niche she dominated firmly pushing me out early on. I’m convinced words were what rushed through her veins, often spilling out as a well put-together blog post, Felix article or who knows what else. One memory which sticks is from an ecology lecture, where we were asked to think up of an analogy for scramble competition. On the spot, without a moment’s hesitation, Emilie created a scene of women fighting in the Boxing Day sales. This mistress of metaphor is sorely missed by oh-so-many and her sweet-kindness will not be forgotten.” – J. Humphries

MUSIC

MEETS

PHYSICS

RYOTA ICHINOSE TALKS ABOUT HIS DOUBLE LIFE AT IMPERIAL AND THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF MUSIC



“ You're developing your artistic and your analytical mind at the same time, and I believe in the future that will help me. It gives you an edge ”

Ryota Ichinose is a violinist and a final year undergraduate on the 4-year BSc Physics and Music Performance programme, taught jointly by Imperial and the RCM. He told us about how he balances two demanding disciplines in the same time most of us take to study one subject!

Phoenix: So you're a student on the joint Physics and Music course at Imperial. That's quite an unusual combination to study. Can you tell me a bit about why you chose it?

Ryota Ichinose: Well, the violin has always been a big part of my life. I started playing when I was five years old, and it helped me a lot as I grew up. For example, when I first came to England, when I was ten, I couldn't speak any English. But when I played the violin, I could get some respect from other people. I wasn't just this person who can't speak English. So the violin's always been part of my life. In terms of physics, I've always excelled at physics during school, I really enjoyed it. So when I heard about this course, it just seemed perfect.

P: Has it been difficult to find the time to devote to both music and physics?

RI: To some extent, yes, because physics itself requires sole concentration, so when I'm revising for physics exams I don't practice much violin, and when I'm preparing for a music exam I don't do much physics. At the RCM [Royal College of Music], I have to compete with people who study solely music, who practice about 8 hours a day, and that's something I just can't do because I don't have the time. So it is difficult, yes.

P: Do you have any plans for when you finish your degree? Do you want to continue with music, or physics, or try to combine both somehow?

RI: I'm going on to a Masters next year, but in nanotechnology, which is kind of unrelated to music. I chose it because of my final year project, which I really enjoyed. I do think it's a bit of a shame that I won't actually be studying music any more, but I won't just quit the violin. I'll try to join some orchestras, or maybe even organise some solo concerts if I can.

P: Did you consider doing postgraduate studies in music?

RI: Well, if you want to become a professional violinist, that requires a lot of

practice, and despite the fact that I really enjoy playing the violin, and I actually enjoyed preparing for my last violin exams, I don't think I can live under that kind of stress for my entire life. So no, perhaps not for me.

P: Do you ever find it difficult to switch between the very logical and analytical kind of mindset you need for physics, and the more expressive and creative musical side?

RI: Yes, I find that I have difficulty in interactions with friends at Imperial — because their brains work so logically, sometimes I can't convey my musical and artistic thoughts to them. And it's actually vice versa with music. In music lessons, some of the things they say are more about feelings than logical thought processes, and how you can use music to convey those feelings. With physics it's more about logical steps, one after another. So they're very different.

P: Can you tell me a bit about the course, about how much time you spend on the different aspects of it? Is it about 50/50 between physics and music?

RI: In the first year it was mainly phys-

ics, but as you progress it gets to be more and more music, and I believe this year it's 70% music and 30% physics. It's actually quite tough, because you're essentially doing two bachelor degrees at once. I complete all the usual physics modules that a BSc student would do in three years, but for me it's four years because of the music. So time management is really key.

P: So is it a good course? Would you recommend it?

RI: I'd definitely recommend it. If you're like me, if you work harder you feel better about yourself afterwards. And you're developing your artistic and your analytical mind at the same time, and I believe in the future that will help me in some ways. It gives you an edge basically, because not many people have that sort of background.

P: It is quite unusual. Do you feel there's any connection between the two things? Does being a musician make you a better scientist in any way, or does being a scientist make you approach your music differently?

RI: I think there have been studies that often found that people who are good

musicians are also good mathematicians. But I haven't really thought about it to any deep extent. But there's some kind of connection there, maybe.

P: Who's your favourite composer, or favourite style of music?

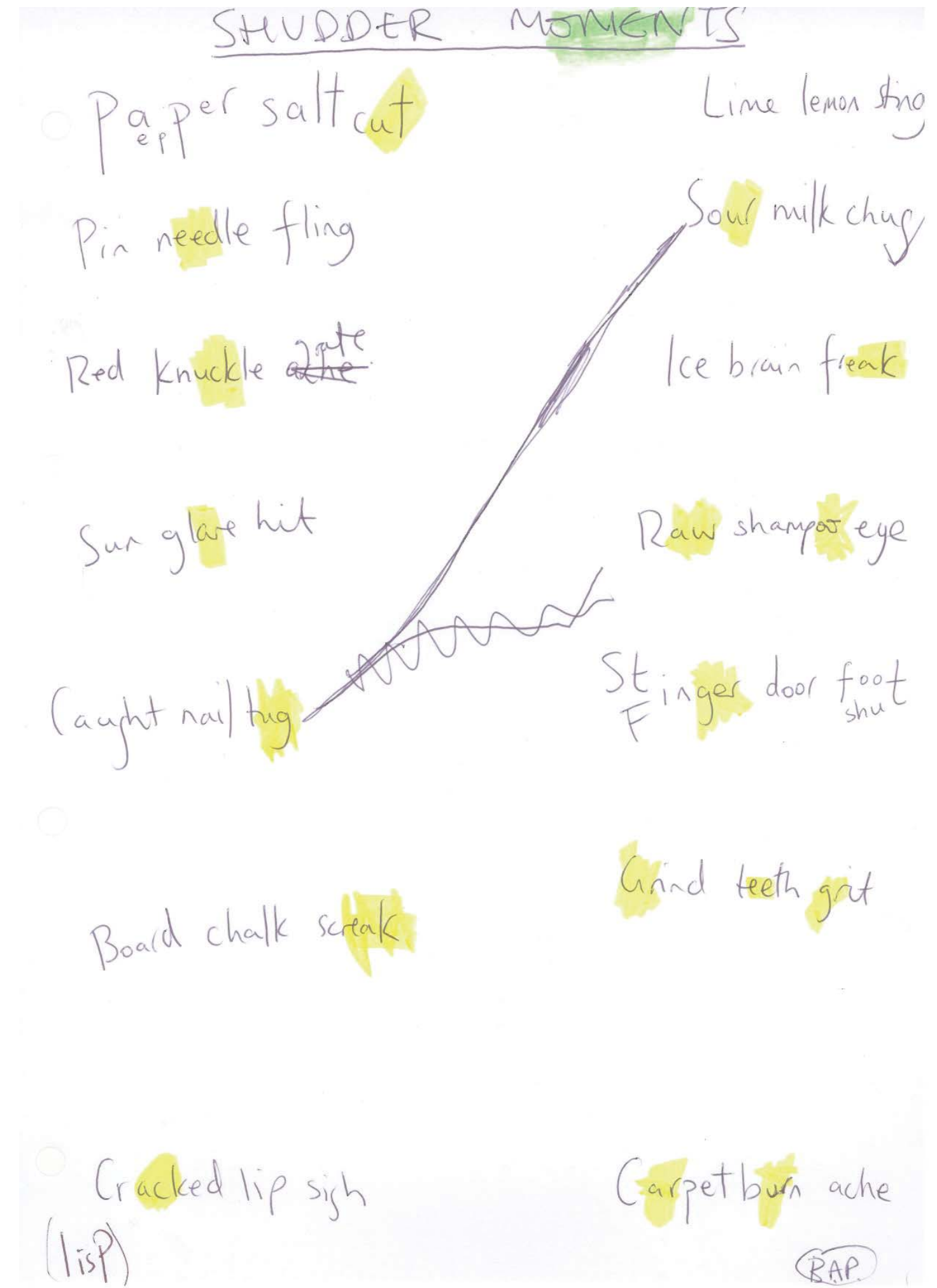
RI: Within the framework of the kind of classical music you learn at the RCM, I'd say I like the Romantic music the best. I regard myself as quite an emotional guy, I like conveying my feelings when I'm playing my violin, and I like it when other people do that too. So that's why I find the modern stuff a bit pretentious. But I listen to other kinds of music as well.

P: Do you think Imperial's a good place for people interested in arts and music? Do you think there's a good community for that kind of thing?

RI: If you regard music as a hobby, not a profession, then Imperial provides a good environment. You can have a lot of fun. There's a very good symphony orchestra, which I'm a part of, and I think it's been rated as one of the top in the UK, some time ago. I think Imperial has the most societies out of any universities in the UK — there's lots of stuff going on!

shudder moments

by J. Humphries



fairy cakes

by J. Humphries

Soull bits unful in flour mist,
abound the bowl,
sugar crush bozpectacted,
pelched atop the ^{herry} current tops,

spirit flecks twist n' swirl
abound the bowl,

butterly toil be ~~smir~~ched,
sinking beneath the egg drops,

sifted, stirred, enfolded so,
bun tray a ^dropped,
broken, risen and cooled so,
spirit, soull (hopefully) settled &

(isp)

B.A.P.



by J. Humphries

