

668

Master's Thesis Recital:

the works of

Robert Aszmies



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University of Alberta**

The Composer

Why do I compose? Sometimes I wonder. All of the hassles that a student composer has to cope with during their time at school are enough to drive one to the brink of lunacy. I compose because I love it - because musical composition is my outlet for my thoughts and ideas. It is the way for me to reveal to the world who I am - to "bare my soul". Music is art and, for me, composition is like painting. I must know what came before me in order to develop a mature voice for the present. I am still working on developing this voice and I hope to for some time to come. I have a lot to learn. It is through continuous learning, experimentation, trial and error, patience and perserverence that I will hope to emerge into the future as a relevant composer for my generation. I must be true to myself as a composer - not academia! The resources that I use must suit the purposes of each piece in which they are used. I refuse to be complex or clever or devious or academic unless it is suited to the piece I am writing at the time. I want to be me. I have a unique personality created by my own experiences and if it is suppressed in the creation of my music, my music ceases to be art.

PROGRAMME

1. Six Short Impressions FIRE
 ICE
 SKY
 WIND
 EARTH
 WATER

The only thing you need to listen to this piece is an active imagination. The titles of the sections are very self-explanatory.

Pianos: Roger Admiral, Mikolaj Warszynski, Chrissie-Jane Cronjé
Keyboards: Leonor Rondeau, Carmen Ouellette, Jamie Burns
Harpichords: Leanna Regehr, Cedric Abday
Percussion: Tammy Morrison, Tyrn Armstrong, Nicholas Jacques
Harp: Keri Zwicker

2. "For You" A Miniature Song-cycle for Soprano,
Percussion & String Quartet
(Text by Carl Sandburg)

Soprano: Kathy Wallace
Violins: Kristin Dahle, Ken Heise
Viola: Jared Samborski
Violoncello: Sarah Tunland
Percussion: Tammy Morrison, Nicholas Jacques
CONDUCTOR: David Mitchell

"For You" by Carl Sandburg*

The peace of great doors be for you.
Wait at the knobs, at the panel oblongs;
Wait for the great hinges.

The peace of great churches be for you,
Where the players of loft pipe-organs
Practise old lovely fragments, alone.

The peace of great books be for you,
Stains of pressed clover leaves on pages,
Bleach of the light of years held in leather.

The peace of great prairies be for you.
Listen among windplayers in cornfields,
The wind learning over its oldest music.

The peace of great seas be for you.
Wait on a hook of land, a rock footing
For you, wait in the salt wash.

The peace of great mountains be for you,
The sleep and the eyesight of eagles,
Sheet mist shadows and the long look across.

The peace of great hearts be for you,
Valves of the blood of the sun,
Pumps of the strongest wants we cry.

The peace of great silhouettes be for you,
Shadow dancers alive in your blood now,
Alive and crying, "Let us out, let us out."

The peace of great changes be for you.
Whispers, oh beginners in the hills.
Tumble, oh cubs - to-morrow belongs to you.

The peace of great loves be for you.
Rain, soak these roots; wind, shatter the dry rot.
Bars of sunlight, grips of the earth; hug these.

The peace of great ghosts be for you,
Phantoms of night-gray eyes, ready to go
To the fog-star dumps, to the fire-white doors.

The peace of great phantoms be for you,
Phantom iron men, mothers of bronze,
Keepers of the lean, clean breeds.

*from the collection *Smoke and Steel*
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3. Grayness Falling Upwards: The Metamorphosis of Dorian

17905
Corns: Richard Lobb, Al Petersen
Flugel Horn: Kathy Wallace
Euphonium: Brian Venables
1796
Tubas: (Eb) Shawn Way, (BBb) Brian Gallimore
Trombones: Mark Wallace, Chris Lobb, Jeff Simmons, Bruce Coley
Bass Trombones: Ian Mackenzie, Rod MacGillivray

NOTES: The piece moves through 15 very short sections tracing Dorian's change from naive youth to ruthless Hedonist. The sections are outlined below:

1a) Dorian: Young, handsome, naive, innocent, vain. Aside from being incredibly good-looking, Dorian is not overly intelligent or virtuous. The ideas that govern his outlook on life are not even his own; they belong to his "friend" Henry Wotton. He is interested in no person but himself. He may appear to have a complex, multi-faceted personality that excites everyone who meets him but we, the readers, quickly realize that he is not much more than an empty shell. Dorian's character changes very little through the first part of the novel. Dorian the man is represented by Group 1 (the cornets, flugel, euphonium and tubas)

1b) The Picture: ultimately, a representation of his soul (and its metamorphosis). This is where the paradox lies. A painting of a person is truly unable to portray just "who" that person was or is. It is merely a visual representation of the outward appearance. It is the "man but not the man", one moment frozen in time revealing nothing of the inner self. The material from 1a) remains the same except for a rhythmic shift in the tubas. The trombones (representing Dorian's soul) emerge with the same superficial material in 1a) before being interrupted.....

2a) Jealousy of the Picture: Dorian has a small moment of neurotic behaviour after coming to the realization that the picture cannot age - already he is older and more faded than the picture. It isn't fair! The picture will remain beautiful while his present beautiful

will disappear rapidly. He muses, "If only....it could be the other way around!"

2b)A Taste of Hedonism: Dorian is heavily influenced by Henry and, against the wishes of Basil (the painter), is steered into a life of hedonistic principles where pleasure is life's aim. Living life to the fullest is what matters despite the consequences.

3a)Unrestricted Pleasure: This new lifestyle found, Dorian begins to bask in its carnal sunshine. His soul commences its metamorphosis. The first of the trombones changes position and becomes independent from the others. The erosion is under way!

3b)Cruel Smile: Dorian can't believe his eyes! The picture seems different somehow! There seems to be a cruel smile about the lips now! That's impossible! Soon he is positive that he isn't imagining it after all - so much so that he hides the picture behind a screen and disallows anyone from viewing it. Even the painter is not allowed to gaze upon his craft. At this point, can Basil detect a change in Dorian's being? Does Dorian think Basil senses something different in him?

4a)Desperate Realization: Dorian realizes what is happening to himself and the picture. He is bewildered and frightened but he refuses to give up his hedonistic lifestyle. He continues on his path towards destruction. The man in the picture becomes more and more black, gnarled and disfigured. The change in the picture is so noticeable that Dorian hides it in his old nursery under lock and key.

4b)Confessions of Vulnerability: Dorian takes Basil up to the "forbidden" room and shows him the picture. He bares his soul. Basil is horrified, shocked, sickened and wonders how something like this could ever have happened. Dorian blames Basil for his character flaws and thinks that he should never have shown the picture to Basil. His secret MUST remain a secret.

5)The Murder: Dorian murders Basil and leaves his corpse alone in the room with the picture. There is no turning back.

6a)Collapses: Dorian's world is collapsing around him. There is blood on his hands (and the picture's). Rumours are spreading, friends are turning on him - only Henry remains steadfast.

6b)Wide is the Road: His soul is black as black can possibly be. His scruples have disintegrated. His morals have dissolved.

6c)Regrets & Reminiscences: Dorian is tired. His friends are gone. Despite his eternal youth and beauty, he is still an empty shell just like he was at the beginning. He begins to regret the choices he has made.

7a)Dorian Stabs the Picture: Racing upstairs, Dorian plunges the knife deep into the heart of the picture. There is a sudden cry of pain and everything goes black.

7b)The Man is Destroyed: Dorian is found dead - disfigured, bloodied, twisted, old and ugly. Only in death was the true man revealed.

7c)The Picture - Unblemished?: The picture has returned to its original state of purity, beauty and naiveté. Or has it? The picture of Dorian Gray stands ready to preserve the memory of the man who once was. Is the picture the same picture as in the beginning or do we look at it differently after knowing all that has transpired?

4. "The Winds of Flanders"

University of Alberta Wind Ensemble
Dr. Fordyce Pier, director

*Symphonic
Wind Ensemble*

Program notes are printed on the reverse of this page.

Notes for "The Winds of Flanders"

I cannot begin to imagine what it would be like to never be able to erase vivid personal memories of war. To have horrific images of death and pain permanently imprinted on one's mind would undoubtedly transform one's life. The brave souls who lost their lives were not the only people who sacrificed everything. Only now do I begin to realize that even by participating and surviving, countless men and women really gave up the rest of their lives in the effort to combat the memories in their own minds while at the same time trying to instill understanding in the hearts of later generations that war is the worst of nightmares.

With the help of the media, younger generations learn about, see pictures of and analyze from every angle the reasons, causes and ultimate consequences of war. Yet we are removed from the reality by what was accomplished in war. Interviews with veterans always amaze me. The few who are willing to verbalize their memories have almost always wondered about the reasons they were there; they thought about their families and wondered if the man they had just shot had a wife and children too. They remember living in uncertainty and fear, seeing suffering and death first-hand and now decades later try to live amongst an ever increasing population that will never fully understand what they have endured. The images never have left them. Some veterans say they still have nightmares 80 years after the fact. I do not want to experience what they have experienced. Who would want to? Only a fool.

The Winds of Flanders is my experience with war. I have none first-hand. I only have what the media presents me with and what I have learned in history class - so, in fact, I have no experience whatsoever. I thank God for that! I also thank those who fought so I would not have to. In one way, this piece is for them: an attempt to understand their lives. Ultimately, this piece is for later generations: It is my attempt to imagine the reality of being there.

The listener must visualize a peaceful, European countryside: trees rustling in the light, cool summer breeze, the sun shining, birds singing....are you picturing it? The listener is not really a part of the picture, they are removed, they are only a shadow that seems to be present but can never truly be unless they have actually been there themselves. Interspersed with this picture of serenity are images of the horrors of war. They will be different for everyone. The images get progressively worse as the piece moves along culminating in the ultimate horror but ending with victory - peace, quiet, stillness, just as the piece began and attempted to return to several times throughout its duration - the wind blowing through wind chimes.

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Jared Samberski
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