

# **“It’s Dark Here”**

Dialogue for Brass Quintet, Timpani, Strings and Harp

## **Programme Note.**

The working title of the piece began as “Solitude Among Others”, dealing with, as it does, the difficult illness of depression. My wife came up with the present title having listened to the work, which is unashamedly program music. While it is definitely not a musical analysis of clinical depression, nor a musical account of any personal experience, it does try to portray in musical terms some of the emotions that are known to be felt by sufferers of this debilitating illness.

The use of the Brass Quintet and the quintet of stringed instruments has no special significance except that there are always opposing and contrasting feelings in these situations as there are ways of dealing with them. The addition of Timpani and Harp are purely for musical reasons.

The work is in three movements, played without a break and each with a heading as follows:

1. Desolation and Anger
2. Analysis, Despair and Acceptance
3. Resolution and Inner Peace

The string strength should balance with the strength of the Brass Quintet. The composers preferred string strength is 16, 14, 12, 10, 8

## – Thematic Analysis.

### Desolation and Anger.

The opening pizzicato quarter notes, in G minor, are a recurring theme throughout the piece and represent pure Depression. Bar 2 introduces the Desolation theme with the recurring Timpani and Harp motifs signifying a heartbeat, the passage of time and the relentlessness of the situation. The Desolation theme is carried by the Horn and Viola. In bar 24 (with upbeat), a cry is first introduced by the Trombone, preceded by the Depression motif, this time in eighth notes. This motif is repeated throughout the following bars in different instruments with the Harp finally changing its preceding ostinato to equal the theme. A silent bar (26) gives way to total confusion, with the Desolation theme recurring in the original instruments, surrounded by chaos in the other instruments. The repeated F sharp in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Trumpet adds to the futility of the situation while the glissandi in the Harp and Double Basses, along with the ad lib pizzicato doits in the Cellos add to the overall confusion. This confusion is further aided by the out-of-time Desolation theme in the 1<sup>st</sup> trumpet, running against the original. Bar 43 sees the return of the Trombone cry, this time in the open and totally alone. Letter D sees the first occurrence of the Anger theme, where opposing thoughts are rampant and raging. These occurrences are for the most part one-sided with little contribution from the other musical family. Letter G returns to some normality with frequent less aggressive statements of the Anger theme, now in muted Trumpets, and some extended Cries in the French Horn. The relentlessness of the situation is portrayed by the repeated Harp phrase while the rest of the Brass and Strings move in contrary motion. Some progress is indicated by the running pizzicato Bass line. Letter K re-introduces the Anger theme, this time a little more animated, and Exhaustion is suggested by the diminuendo pizzicati in the last 2 bars of the movement.

### Analysis, Despair and Acceptance

The theme introduced by the solo Cello at the beginning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> movement is a forward view of the despair that is to come towards the end of the movement and is in the form of an introduction to Analysis, which starts at Letter N. This section again emphasises the dialogue aspect of the piece with the full instrumentation not playing together until letter Q while at the same time, the inexplicable rhythm of the Timpani signifies that time is now disjointed and during Analysis, unimportant. Bar 53 sees both sections working in similar motion, suggesting that progress is being made while at the same time, this is also the introduction of Despair. The plateau of Despair comes in bar 61 where yet again, the sections move in contrary motion. This reaches a climax in bar 71 with the soaring Trumpet but suddenly gives way to the beginning of the Despair theme proper.

This is as low as depression gets and is represented by the tutti Strings in unison on the dominant chord of the key. Letter R introduces a soulful melody in the Strings, representing self pity, before Acceptance appears at letter S. A suggestion of anger precedes this in bar 111. Letter S sees the return of a normal passage of time in the Timpani and real progress is flagged by the flowing 16<sup>th</sup> notes in the 1<sup>st</sup> Violins, beginning in bar 122. The 3<sup>rd</sup> bar of letter T sees a progression, started by the Celli and Tuba that begins a suggestion of a major chord in the offing. While this does not materialise at this time (the movement terminates with an open 5<sup>th</sup>) the repeated stretching of the original pizzicato Depression theme, bar 138 through bar 142 signifies real and significant progress of the condition.

### **Resolution and Inner Peace**

A slow and simple if somewhat self-indulgent melody, in the major key, intones the Resolution of the trauma. Scored for strings alone, this melody is the first relaxed moment of the entire work. Letter V returns to the minor key with the melodic content being taken by the brass, suggesting that some questions still remain but these are minor in comparison to what has gone before. Letter W sees a return of the resolution theme, in the original orchestration except for the Tchaikovsky-style yearning in the French Horn and at letter X, both sections work in total harmony for the first time. The mood becomes more sombre at letter Y when a return to Despair is stated signifying that the experience will always be in the mind of the sufferer. But Acceptance finally rules and the movement is terminated in a final F major chord. Inner Peace has eventually arrived.

Fergus O'Carroll