

In Memory

(2017)

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PROGRAMME NOTE

Eventually composed in a single afternoon in January 2017, 'In Memory' was broadly conceptualised in the summer of 2014 following a visit to my Grandparents' farm. It is a memory that sticks with me to this day as the severity of my Grandad's Alzheimer's became much more apparent to me. On this occasion, the peculiarity of his social interactions, while in some ways intriguing, had become difficult to respond to and, subsequently, reciprocate in a natural, meaningful and sustaining manner. It was not so much that the syntax and grammar of his speech or even that the quality of his speech was affected, although such factors were creeping in at this point. Rather, the subject matter of his utterances was contextually out of place, as though he was experiencing a different situation, with different company. It was as though he was living the present situation as a memory that was relatable in some way: he was in his rocking chair, with my Nanny taking up the seat next to him at the end of their three-person sofa; I had taken up the single person chair across from them and my wife (then girlfriend) had taken up the seat at the other end of the sofa nearest to me, on my left. This was a layout that will doubtless have occurred many, many times before then with different people on different days. It came across as though he was misinterpreting who I was, where and when he was. At least, that's what it felt like from my perspective and is the conceptual stimulus for 'In Memory', which tries to encapsulate my Grandfather's wandering presence of mind on this occasion. On a broader scale, the work also outlines a deterioration of mental and more general health that many dementia sufferers, sadly, succumb to. My Grandfather was no exception, dying the following year and the work reflects this. It is more elegiac in quality than I initially conceptualised. I believe the decision to utilise a diatonic harmonic language rather than my prevailing use of pitch set, atonal harmony, like in preceding works, is a reflection of this and was a reason why I was suddenly able to compose the work so efficiently on that January afternoon.

To achieve the initial concept, 'In Memory' uses Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's 'Piano Sonata No. 16' ("Facile Sonata", in C-Major, K.545) as its source material. This is a choice I made for its balance, lightness and graceful qualities, which are common in the Classical Galant Style, but possibly the features of Mozart's work that goes unmatched by any other classical composer. At least, that is the subjective and irrational rationalising behind this decision.

The reason for using source material at all lies within my own experiences. As a listener of other composers' works that also make use of source material and musical quotation, I had experienced a kind of larger-scale, juxtapositional counterpointing to the original works they were based upon. For example, around the time of conceptualising 'In Memory' I was studying Luciano Berio's 'Rendering', which takes Franz Schubert's 'Unfinished' 10th Symphony and fills in the gaps like a builder might fill in the cracks of a structure with mortar. If one perceives the work as a kind of stream of consciousness the passages where Berio takes over, using fragments of the Schubert, we can sense a sliding away from the thought we were originally thinking about. It is as though the person has lost their focus and has slipped into a kind of daydreaming that has been stimulated by the initial idea. I experienced a similar effect when listening to André Ristic's 'Variations psychogéographiques sur «Tannhäuser»', which slides in and out of a setting, for piano quintet (piano and traditional string quartet), of the Overture/Pilgrim's Chorus from Wagner's Opera, Tannhäuser. This is particularly potent and climactic in

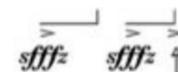
the works ending where the Tannhäuser slides back into focus after substantial portions of indeterminate notation that leads to a predominantly atonal harmonic structure.

'In Memory' tries to replicate my experiences with Berio and Ristic by deploying the 'stream of consciousness' idea I allude to above. Taking its own, almost immediately detached trajectory, 'In Memory' is counterpointed with Mozart's K.545 through its musical referencing. If we perceive K. 545 as the trajectory of a healthy mind and 'In Memory' as the mind of a dementia sufferer then one can perceive the trajectory of the work moving progressively further and further away from the Mozart. Of course, the trajectory of a sufferer is not solely downhill and one will often hear those close to and/or caring for the sufferer that they have 'good and bad days'. 'In Memory' considers this by suddenly moving closer to the work through closer borrowings and fragmentations of the original work. However, much like with the experience I had with my Grandad, on the occasion outlined above, the sufferer might misinterpret or misperceive the situation. They might be having a bad day. To parallel this I take sudden developmental and thematically detached steps away from the source and even input quotations from other well known classical works such as Beethoven's 14th "Moonlight" piano sonata, 7th and 6th ("Pastoral") Symphony--reflecting my Grandparent's country/farming background. Weighted more towards the close of the work, I also quote the Mannheim Rocket from Beethoven's 1st Piano Sonata in F-minor merging it with the inverted Mannheim Rocket from Haydn's 'Symphony No. 45', known as "Farewell".

PERFORMANCE NOTE

The use of four staves is to differentiate the notation types more potently. The top pair are used solely for spatial notation, which should be interpreted proportionally within their individual bars, which are outlined by ticks as opposed to bar lines. Do not over-rehearse the materials in these pair of lines, there should be a spontaneity to the performance of these materials that further draws out the indeterminate rhythmic notation across different interpretations of the work.

Sustain pedal resonance is important and, although not marked throughout, should be used for large proportions of the composition. There are passages where the sustain pedal is used for effect via abrupt, accented depressions and sudden releases these are marked like so:



Una corda should also be used liberally, particularly, for delicate passages.

c. 2" between ticks hands independent, accelerating to as quickly as possible

Musical score for the first system. It consists of four staves. The top staff is a treble clef with notes and a dynamic marking of *p*. The second staff is a bass clef with notes and a dynamic marking of *p*. The third and fourth staves are treble clefs with notes and a dynamic marking of *p*. A tempo marking of $\text{♩} = \text{c. } 86$ is present. A bracket above the top staff indicates a distance of "c. 2" between ticks" and "hands independent, accelerating to as quickly as possible".

Musical score for the second system. It consists of four staves. The top staff is a treble clef with notes, dynamics (*f*, *fff*, *pp*), and performance instructions: "(out of sync with left hand)", "as quickly as possible", and "between ticks c. 5". The second staff is a bass clef with notes and dynamics (*ff*, *fff*). The third and fourth staves are treble clefs with notes and dynamics (*ff*). Performance instructions include "(out of sync with left hand)", "8va", "(abrupt transition)", and "8va".

Musical score for the third system. It starts with a section marked "E" in a box. The top staff is a treble clef with notes and dynamics (*mp*, *p*, *mf*, *mp*, *p*). The second staff is a bass clef with notes and dynamics (*ppp*, *mp*, *mf*, *f*, *pp*). The third and fourth staves are treble clefs with notes and dynamics (*ppp*, *mp*, *mf*, *f*, *pp*). Performance instructions include "Molto rubato $\text{♩} = 100-120$ ", "sim. with feeling", and "A tempo (5" between ticks)".

F

sffz *mf* *p* *subito mf* *p* *ppp* *cresc. each note* *f*

mp detached *tre corda* *una corda*

Push and Pull: ♩=60-80

pp

3

4" silence

G **H**

pp *mf* *p* *mf* *pp* *pppp*

mf *pp* *pppp* *mf* *pp* *pppp*

rit. - - - - *rit. - - - -*

♩=146 (♩=73)

I **J**

p *mp* *mf* *p* *pp*

sffz *sffz* *sffz*

pp *throughout*

♩=50 ♩=73 ♩=50 *rit. - - - -*

♩=100 (♩=50) ... : ♩=146 (♩=73)

K

mf darkly

$\text{♩} = 100 (\text{♩} = 50)$ $\text{♩} = 146 (\text{♩} = 73)$ (molto rubato)

mp plainly *subito p dreamlike*

pp sostenuto

$\text{♩} = 100 (\text{♩} = 50)$

L

M

p mp mf p mf dim pp

fffz fffz fffz fffz

$\text{♩} = \text{c. } 73$

pp pp mp

tre corda

Musical score system 1, first system. It consists of three staves. The top staff (treble clef) contains the main melody with dynamics *mf* and *pp*, and includes trills (*tr*) and a *ppp* section marked "very gently". The middle staff (bass clef) includes the instruction *una corda*. The bottom staff (bass clef) contains a bass line with a *mp* section and a triplet of eighth notes. Performance markings include *mf darkly*, *pp*, *lightly*, *p*, *mf*, *pp*, and *ppp* very gently.

Musical score system 2, second system. It consists of three staves. The top staff (treble clef) features a *ppp* section marked "very gently", followed by *p*, *mf*, *p sub.*, and *mf*. A box containing the letter "N" is positioned above the staff. The middle staff (bass clef) includes the instruction *tre corda* and *una corda*. The bottom staff (bass clef) contains a bass line with dynamics *p* and *mf*. Performance markings include *ppp* very gently, *p*, *mf*, *p sub.*, *mf*, *tre corda*, and *una corda*.

Musical score system 3, third system. It consists of three staves. The top staff (treble clef) contains dynamics *p*, *mf*, *p*, *pp*, *mf*, *p*, and *pp*. The middle staff (bass clef) includes the instruction *una corda* and *tre corda*. The bottom staff (bass clef) contains a bass line with a *pp* section. Performance markings include *p*, *mf*, *p*, *pp*, *una corda*, *tre corda*, *una corda*, and *pp*.