Edward Nesbit

Songs for a Dying World
SONGS FOR A DYING WORLD

EDWARD NESBIT

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INSTRUMENTATION

2 Clarinets in B♭ (II = Bass Clarinet in B♭)
2 Horns in F
Harp
Soprano
2 Violins I
2 Violins II
2 Violas
2 Violoncelli
1 Double Bass

Duration c. 27’
Score in C

CONTENTS

I - p. 1
II - p. 2
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PERFORMANCE NOTE

Grace notes should be played before the beat.

PROGRAMME NOTE

*Songs for a Dying World* is a set of six songs which explore the passing of time and the destruction that time brings. The first, third and fifth songs set extracts of Isaiah 24, and present apocalyptic visions of the end of the world. The remaining three songs, all settings of Percy Bysshe Shelley, describe ruins and reflect on the lost glory of fallen civilisations. The fourth song sets the famous poem 'Ozymandias', which depicts the shattered remains of a statue of a once-great king. The second and sixth songs set extracts from Shelley's long poem 'Queen Mab', including a passage about Palmyra, chosen in order to explore its obvious contemporary resonances.

The world in which we live is a precarious one, and it is the insecurity of human existence - above all the looming threat of climate catastrophe - which prompted me to write *Songs for a Dying World*. The piece does not deal with these threats directly, however, and is rather a meditation on the transience of all human endeavour written in a time of uncertainty.
Behold, the Lord maketh the earth empty, and maketh it waste, and turneth it upside down, and scattereth abroad the inhabitants thereof.

I met a traveller from an antique land
Who said: Two vast and trunkless legs of stone
Stand in the desert... near them, on the sand,
Half sunk, a shattered visage lies, whose frown,
And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command,
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read
Which yet survive, stamped on those lifeless things,
The hand that mocked them and the heart that fed:

And on the pedestal these words appear:
'My name is Ozymandias, king of kings:
Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!'
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare
The lone and level sands stretch far away.

The new wine mourneth, the vine languisheth, all the merryhearted do sigh.
The mirth of the tabrets ceaseth, the noise of them that rejoice endeth, the joy of the harp ceaseth.
They shall not drink wine with a song; strong drink shall be bitter to them that drink it.
The city of confusion is broken down: every house is shut up, that no man may come in.
There is a crying for wine in the streets; all joy is darkened, the mirth of the land is gone.
In the city is left desolation, and the gate is smitten with destruction.

Fear, and the pit, and the snare, are upon thee, O inhabitant of the earth.
And it shall come to pass, that he who fleeth from the noise of the fear shall fall into the pit; and he that cometh up out of the midst of the pit shall be taken in the snare: for the windows from on high are open, and the foundations of the earth do shake.
The earth is utterly broken down, the earth is clean dissolved, the earth is moved exceedingly.
The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, and shall be removed like a cottage; and the transgression thereof shall be heavy upon it; and it shall fall, and not rise again.

Where Athens, Rome, and Sparta stood,
There is a moral desert now.
The mean and miserable huts,
The yet more wretched palaces,
Contrasted with those ancient fanes
Now crumbling to oblivion,—
The long and lonely colonnades
Through with the ghost of Freedom stalks,—
Seem like a well-known tune,
Which in some dear scene we have loved to hear,
Remembered now in sadness.

Isaiah 24:1, 7-12, 17-20 (King James Version)

Ozymandias
Queen Mab: Part II (extracts)
(Percy Bysshe Shelley)
Songs for a Dying World

I

EDWARD NESBIT

Soprano

Be- hold, the Lord mak- eth the earth emp- ty, and mak- eth it waste, and

Vc.

a broad the in-

Segue

1. arm. nat. sul I (change bow freely)
II - Palmyra

Wherever possible throughout this movement.

Note: Use open string for pizzicato notes.
where pleasure smiled.

What remains?

(pizz.)
No-thing - it stands to tell A me-lan-cho-ly
1. to give An awful warning; -

The remnant of its fame.

2. Bass Clarinet

Soon Oblivion will steal silently The remnant of its fame.

Monarch and conquerors there Proud o'er pros-trate mil-lions trod.
The earthquakes of the human race.

Like them, forgotten when the
That marks their shock is past.
The mirth of tabrets ceaseth, the noise of the harp ceaseth.

2. SOLO strike body of instrument
They shall not drink wine with a song.
strong drink shall be bitter to them that drink it.
The city of confusion is broken down...
every house is shut up, that no man may come in.
There is a crying for wine in the streets; all joy is darkened, the mirth of the
land is gone.
In the city is left desolation, and the gate is

smitten with destruction.
I met a traveller from an antique land,

Who said:

Two vast and trunkless legs of stone

Stand in the desert...
Near them, on the sand, Half sunk,
Cl.
Hn.
Vla.
Vc.
Db.

24

p

mp

mp


Vla.
Vc.

S.

Vln. II

Cl.

Hn.

Vla.
Vc.

S.

Vln. II

Cl.

Hn.

Vla.
Vc.

S.

Vln. II

Cl.

Hn.

Vla.
Vc.

S.

Vln. II

Cl.

Hn.

Vla.
Vc.

S.

Vln. II

Cl.

Hn.

Vla.
Vc.

S.

Vln. II

Cl.

Hn.

Vla.
Vc.

S.

Vln. II

Cl.

Hn.

Vla.
Vc.

S.

Vln. II

Cl.

Hn.

Vla.
Vc.

S.

Vln. II

Cl.

Hn.

Vla.
Vc.

S.

Vln. II

Cl.

Hn.

Vla.
Vc.

S.

Vln. II

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Hn.

Vla.
Vc.

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Vln. II

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Vln. II

Cl.

Hn.

Vla.
Vc.

S.

Vln. II

Cl.

Hn.

Vla.
Vc.

S.

Vln. II

Cl.

Hn.

Vla.
Vc.

S.
3 + 2 2 + 2 + 3

those passions read Which yet survive

S.

Vln. I

Vln. II

(muted)

(muted)

(muted)

(muted)

Vla. (muted)

Vc.

2. muted, arco

stamped on those lifeless things,

The hand that mocked them.
And on the pedestal these words appear:

My name is Ozymandias, King of kings:
Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!

Nothing beside remains.
Round the brow of Time you shall read
"My name is Ozymandias, King of kings:"
"Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!"
the decay Of that colossal wreck, bound

less and bare The lone and level sands

stretch far away.
Fear, and the pit.
and the senn, are upon thee, O in-hab-i-tant

B
of the earth.

And it shall come to pass,
that he who fleeth from the noise of the fear shall fall into the
that cometh up out of the midst of the snare:

shall be taken in the snare:
for the windows from on high are open, and the foundations
of the world do shake.

The earth is
utterly broken down, the earth is
Cl.
Hn.
Hp.
S.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.

`f`

clean dissolved, the earth

p
ff
p
ff
p

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ff
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ff
The earth shall reel to and fro.
like a drunk-ard, - and shall be removed,
and the trans
VI - Desert

\( \frac{1}{4} \) = 72

3 + 2 + 2

2 + 3

Horn in F

Soprano

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Violoncello

Double Bass
Where Athens, Rome, and

remove mute

sul tasto

sul tasto

(muted)
Sparta stood. There is a moral desert now. The mean and miserable...
huts, The yet more wretched pa - la ces,
Contrasted with those
ancient fates, Now crumbling to oblivion, - The long and lonely
Through which the ghost of Freedom stalks!
Seem like a well-known tune,
Which in some dear scene we have
loved to hear,

Re-membered now in sadness.