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Songs for a Dying World
SONGS FOR A DYING WORLD

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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

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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.
Songs for a Dying World

Behold, the Lord maketh the earth empty, and maketh it waste, and turneth it upside down, and scattereth abroad the inhabitants thereof.

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.

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.

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.

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

S

turn-eth it up-side down, and let-ter-eth a-broad the in-

A

ha-bi-tants there of.

Be-hold, be-hold,

Vc

PP

Segue
II - Palmyra

Wherever possible throughout this movement.

NB Use open string for pizzicato notes wherever possible throughout this movement.

Clarinet in B

Vln. II

Violin I

Violin II

Violoncello

Harp

Soprano

Hn.

Hp.

S

Cl.

Be hold,

Viola

(pizz.)

(pizz.)

(pizz.)

(pizz.)

(pizz.)

(pizz.)

= 152
la - ces! (s) Be hold where grand

where pleasure - - smiled!

What now remains? - -
No-thing it stands to tell A mel-an-cho-ly
1. to give An awful warning; -

2. soon Oblivion will steal silently The remnant of its fame.

3. Monarchs and conquerors there Proud o'er prostrate millions trod.
The earthquakes of the human race.

That marks their shock is past.

(muted)

(muted) remove mute

(pizz.)

(remove mute)
The noise of the strings ceases, and the joy of the harp ceases.
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
and is gone.
In the city is left desolation, and the gate is重中之重

smitten with des- truc-tion.

arm. nat. sol 1

arm. nat. sol 1
IV - Ozymandias

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,
24

24

27

27

32

32

S

S

Vla.

Vla.

Vc.

Vc.

D.

D.

D.

Db.

Db.

Hn.

Hn.

Cl.

Cl.

\[ \text{a shattered visage lies, whose frown, And wrinkled lip, and sneer,} \]

\[ \text{Tell that its sculptor well had copied} \]

\[ \text{of cold com- mand,} \]

\[ \text{muted, arco} \]
those passions read Which yet survive

F

stamped on those lifeless things, The hand that mocked them.
and the hour that fed:

\[ \text{mf - f mp} \]

\[ \text{mf} \]

\[ \text{f mp} \]

\[ \text{f mp} \]

\[ \text{mf} \]

\[ \text{cresc. poco a poco} \]
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

and despairs.
Fear, and the pit.
and the squire, are upon thee, O inhabitant

(dfz.) (pizz.)

(dfz.)

(dfz.)

(sul pont.)

(sul pont.)

(sul pont.)

(dfz.) (pizz.)
And it shall come to pass,
from on high are open, and the foundations,
of the world do shake. The earth is
utterly broken down, the earth is off off

39
cl. | hn. | hp. | s. | viol. i | viol. ii | vc. | db. 

(clean dissolved, the earth)
The earth shall reel to and fro.
like a drunk-ard, and shall be removed.
Like a cottage; and the trans
VI - Desert

Horn in F

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Viola
tone III

Violin I

Double Bass
Where Athens, Rome, and
There is a moral desert now. The mean and miserable.
huts. The yet more wretched pa - la ces. Con - tras - ted with those
ancient fates, Now crumbling to oblivion, -
The long and lonely

(pizz.)

Vln. I

(pizz.)

Vln. II

arm. nat. sul IV

arm. nat. sul I

Vla.

Vc.

Db.
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.