Citation for published version (APA):
Edward Nesbit

Songs for a Dying World
SONGS FOR A DYING WORLD

EDWARD NESBIT

© 2017 by Edward Nesbit

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
III - p. 12
IV - p. 21
V - p. 31
VI - p. 53

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.

'Behold,' [the Fairy cried,]
'Palmyra's ruined palaces!
Behold where grandeur frowned!
Behold where pleasure smiled!
What now remains?—the memory
Of senselessness and shame.
What is immortal there?
Nothing—it stands to tell
A melancholy tale, to give
An awful warning; soon
Oblivion will steal silently
The remnant of its fame.
Monarchs and conquerors there
Proud o'er prostrate millions trod—
The earthquakes of the human race;
Like them, forgotten when the ruin
That marks their shock is past.'

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.

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.
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)
II - Palmyra

Cl.  
Hn.  
Hp.  
S.  
Vln.  
Vln. II  
Vla.  
Vc.
Cl.
Hp.
S.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.

Cl.
Hp.
S.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.

Where pleasure - - smiled?

What now remains? - -

Pizz.
The memory of senselessness and shame.
No thing - it stands to tell A me-lan-cho-ly
take Bass Clarinet

soon Obli- vision will steal si-lently The rem-nant of its fame.

(muted)

Monarchs and con-querors there. Proud o’er prostrate mil-lions trod.

a2, muted, arco
The earth quakes - of the human race;

Like them, forgotten when

The clarinet

Remove mute

Remove mute

Remove mute

Remove mute
Cl.
Hp.
S.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.

That marks their shock is past.
They shall not drink wine with a song.
drink shall be bitter to them that drink it.
The city of confusion is broken down.
Vln. II

Vln. I

S

ever y house is shut up, that no man may come in.

Vln. II

Vla

Vc

Db
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
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

Hn.

Vla.

Vc.

Db.

Vln. II

a shat-tered vis-age lies, whose frown, And wrink - led lip, and sneer

of cold com-mand, Tell that its sculp-tor well

2. muted, arco

2 + 2 + 3

2 + 3

3 + 2 + 2

Tell that its sculp-tor well
those passions read Which yet survive,

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!"

No thing beside remains. Round
Fear, and the pit,
and the sinner, are upon thee, O inhabitants
And it shall come to pass, of the earth.
from the noise of the fear shall fall into the
and he that cometh up out of the midst of the

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
of the world do shake. (k) The earth is
utterly broken down, the earth is
Cl.

Hn.

Hp.

S.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Db.

is moved
The earth shall reel to and fro.
like a drunk-ard, and shall be removed.
VI - Desert

\[ \text{Horn in F} \]

\[ \text{Harp} \]

\[ \text{Soprano} \]

\[ \text{Violin I} \]

\[ \text{Violin II} \]

\[ \text{Viola} \]

\[ \text{Violoncello} \]

\[ \text{Double Bass} \]
Where Athens, Rome, and
remove mute
sul tasto
sul tasto

(pizz.)
Sparta stood. There is a moral desert now. The mean and miserable

(pizz.)

without mute pizz.

remove mute pizz.

remove mute

pizz.

arco

arco arm. nat sul II

arm. nat sul II

arm. nat sul I
buts, The yet more wretched pa - la ces, Con - tras - ted with those
ancient fates, Now crumbling to oblivion.

The long and lonely...
Through which ghost of freedom stalks!
Seem like a well-known tune, Which in some dear scene we have