

Portfolio Programme Notes

Samantha Fernando

Sense of Place

In a city the atmosphere is all around you and is ever changing.

New things become old things...Time is a great architect.

Àlvaro Siza (architect)

Written in response to Italo Calvino's *Invisible Cities*, *Sense of Place* has both the aura and the structure of this novel at its heart. The piece itself explores the reciprocal relationship that exists between us and the city and the multifarious ways in which we engage with our surroundings. It is a meditation on the panoply of interactions, journeys and memories which make up the urban existence.

Commissioned by the Philharmonia Orchestra and premiered at the Royal Festival Hall on 31st May 2014.
Conducted by Clark Rundell and performed as part of the Music of Today Series.

Positive/Negative Space

In architectural theory, space is considered positive if it has a definite shape and a sense of boundary between what is inside and what is outside. The unshaped space that results after the placement of objects is defined as negative space. People tend to dwell in positive spaces whereas negative spaces promote movement. I wanted to explore this architectural concept in composition:

What suggests movement and what suggests stasis?

When do we begin to perceive a repetitive figure as more static than active?

What is the nature of the boundary between positive and negative space?

Commissioned by the London Sinfonietta and premiered on 8th December 2013 at the Purcell Room, Southbank Centre.

Glimmer

After 'He wishes for the cloths of Heaven' By W. B. Yeats

Given how complete the poem felt to me on reading, I chose not to set it in a conventional manner; instead I have created a musical response which takes fragments of the text and builds upon them to create a musical world for the words, as I hear them. The words and structure of Yeats' poem are integral to the world of the piece but are not presented in their original form. It is hoped that the piece will afford the audience a different perspective on Yeats' poem through this musical response.

Commissioned by Maxime Tortelier and the Lux Orchestra, premiered at the Canterbury Arts Festival, October 2011.

Glimmer

After 'He Wishes for the Cloths of Heaven' by W. B. Yeats

Blue
The blue
The blue and the dim
The blue and the dim
The blue and the dim and the dark cloths of night
Of night
Of night
The blue and the dim and the dark cloths of night
And light
Golden and silver light
Golden and silver light
Of night and light and the half-light
Blue
Dim
Dark
Night
Enwrought with golden and silver light
And the half-light.

4 Illuminations

I. Panorama

II. Hero and Leander

III. Autumn

IV. Leaving Paphos Ringed with Waves

Each movement takes a painting by American artist Cy Twombly (1928-2011) as its focus. The way in which words can be used in art and music is central to the piece: word as sound, word as meaning, word as shape.

Commissioned by the Xasax Quartet and premiered at Royaumont Abbey, France in September 2012.

Shadows on Shadows

This piece was borne out of an exploration into the diverse timbral possibilities of the double bass. The string ensemble provides a soundscape within which the soloist traverses both the depths and heights of the instrument's voice.

Commissioned by Christ Church Music Society and Oxford Contemporary Music Society, premiered at Christ Church Cathedral by Billy Cole in May 2010.

Songs

Written over a span of two years, these songs have, inadvertently, acted as record of the way in which my music has changed over time. *Half Moon* is very lyrical and its musical message is direct. However, *Utterance* and *Recollection* use an extended vocabulary of vocal sounds to express something much more elusive. The compositional approach of each song was dictated by my response to the individual poems and as such each song inhabits a world very much its own.

Half Moon and *Utterance* (2012) were written for Gwen Martin and Zosia Jagodinska, and have been performed at numerous venues including St. Leonard's Church, Shoreditch and Pop-Up Circus.

Recollection was commissioned by Vocaallab and premiered at LOD MusiekTheater, Ghent, in December 2013.