TRANSCENDENCE TOWARD PARADISE

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A Thesis
Submitted to the Graduate College of Bowling Green State University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF MUSIC

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Committee:
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Burton Beerman
ABSTRACT

Elainie Lillios, Advisor

*Transcendence toward Paradise* is a thirteen-minute, five-movement piece for mezzo-soprano, flute, harp, and viola. The selected text was excerpted from an Italian sonnet written by Michelangelo Buonarroti (1475-1564), which was set in its original language. William Wordsworth provided a beautiful poetic translation, which I chose to guide my text setting.

Dolce è ben quella in un pudico core,  
che per cangiare di scorza o d’ora  
estrema non manca,  
e qui caparra il paradiso.

In chaste hearts uninfluenced by the power  
of outward change,  
there blooms a deathless flower,  
that breathes on earth the air of paradise.

The text appears in its entirety only in the last movement, with earlier movements exploring a gradual reconstruction of the text from its component parts. To accomplish this, the text was deconstructed into various syllables represented in the score with the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA). The first movement’s text contains only the shortest durations of syllables, denoting the highest level of text abstraction. As each subsequent movement progresses, the abstract syllables gradually merge together and expand to form words and phrases of the text.

The thematic material for *Transcendence toward Paradise* originates from the fifth movement of the piece. Salient characteristics from the last movement were shaped into variations based upon these features, which also reflect the evolving characteristics of the text setting. This was accomplished through variation techniques including motivic and rhythmic deconstruction, augmentation, diminution, and registral displacement, among others.
Dedicated to Pinotage.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my advisors, Dr. Elainie Lillios and Dr. Burton Beerman for their guidance and patience in helping me to complete this piece. I would also like to thank the following people for providing me with valuable information: Dr. Jane Schoonmaker-Rogers for her assistance in vocal diction, Mariella Zucchi-Bingman for kindly providing a literal translation of the Italian text, Claudia Lasareff-Mironoff for her kindness in providing an extensive repertoire list and advice on writing for this ensemble, Julia Bentley for her expertise on vocal writing, and Julie Buzzelli for her guidance on writing for harp.
Performance instructions:

General:

**Intonation**
- quarter sharp
- quarter flat
- three-quarters flat
- three-quarters sharp

**Feathered beaming**
- speed up
- slow down
- staccatissimo

**Mezzo-soprano:**
- rrr rolled r

\[\text{indicate pitch; Follow the contour of the line when indicated. In most cases, the “X” note heads generally reflect rhythmic duration only, not inflection. Inflection must then be added according to the performer’s taste.}\]

**Acting directions**

I. *The Awakening*

You are an instrumentalist, not a “soloist” in this movement. Forced whisper means that syllables are heavily annunciated, using lots of air. The softest point must be subtle yet audible enough to be heard by the audience.

- **spoken** - normal conversational tone
- **creaky** - rather evil sounding, rickety; use lots of inflection!
- **continue in this manner until directed to change**

II. *Illusions*

general state of agitation; fluctuates from angry to reserved

follow mood indicators as directed using performance instructions located underneath the mood indicators

- **whisper** - not as heavily accented syllables
- **forced whisper** - louder, much more heavily accented
- **speak** - normal talking voice
- **shout** - as if angry, still holding back
- **freak out** - immediately and extrovertly angry
- **sigh** - as if annoyed; disapprovingly
bickering- interaction between you and instrumentalists very important here; you are reacting to what they are playing; your tone of voice should be sarcastic, as if making fun of the instrumentalists

frantic- this direction does not apply to you so much, you are still reacting to the instruments; your anger becomes introverted, turns to sadness

must use facial expressions- “acting out” the part through body language will also help

bewildered, puzzled- show confusion, shock of being hurt

whining- childlike, stomping; think: “I want….are we there yet…etc;” not getting your way, impatient

exasperated- with frustration, almost as if giving up

whimper- as if starting to cry, but holding back

cry- use inflection, audible inhaling and exhaling

sob- as if stricken with grief

inhale as if caught off guard- not voiced or spoken, airy sound, as if being pricked by a needle (gasping)

same as before, but louder- as if running into someone you didn’t expect to see there at that moment, or hearing a loud noise all of a sudden that scares you

angry- forceful, especially with the accents

mockingly- sarcastically, as if to oneself

holding back sadness- almost as if in denial

swell of emotion- vocalize the degree of intensity with which you feel this sadness inside yourself

excited- suddenly the clouds lift

with resolve- determined, encouraged

gathering strength- fighting back

clap- hold up hands so audience can see you doing this (introducing anger back into the scene)

irritated- take time, be deliberate almost as if bickering

frustrated- short burst of anger, forceful

release- almost as if walking away, “whatever” sort of attitude

trying to calm down- moving on so as to distract oneself from what you were feeling

irritation- anger won’t go away

forced whisper- hiss- evil, as if at someone walking past you that you despise

introverted anger- as if walking off again, arms folded

burst- the most intense point of anger in this movement; explosive; scream; use your voice
III. *The Promise of Sweetness*
distantly- ghostlike

no facial expression- as if removed from reality

quivering- slow tremolo, not like mvts. I and II, rather shaking with fear

questioning- use inflection

creaky voice- evil, tempting

with doubt- tremolo like first two mvts.; almost scared

reluctance- saying yes but indicating otherwise through facial expression/body language

with acceptance- not liking what is happening but doing it anyway

gingerly moving forward- being very careful not to get hurt; on guard

enlightened- sudden flash of hope

filled with joy, longing- discovering a new desire

enthralled- overjoyed

quivering with joyful tears- bittersweet, mixed emotions

ecstatic- overflowing with joy

hauntingly- as if an echo from another world

IV. *The Battle of Purification*
tacet

V. *Sanctification of Hope*
with certainty and trust, being brave, accepting, peaceful

International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA)

vowels
\(\text{ʌ}\) as in mud
\(\text{ɪ}\) as in nickel
\(\text{ɑː}\) as in father
\(\text{ɛ}\) as in bet
\(\text{eɪ}\) as in ate
\(\text{u}\) as in boot
\(\text{iː}\) as in seen

consonants
\(\text{ʃʌ}\) as in shu
\(t\text{ʃ}\text{ɪ}\) as in chick
\(\text{paːr}\text{r}\text{r}\) as in part with rolled r

*all other consonants in movements I and II are to be pronounced as written in the English language*
Flute:

**Percussive sonorities**

- **key click** - use G-key or A-key as striker
- **(T)** tongue slap – close embouchure hole with both lips, strike percussively with tongue while exhaling quickly and intensely
- **flutter tongue**

**Fingerings**

for timbral trills, multiphonics

- open
- closed
- **trilled**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>C key</th>
<th>A key</th>
<th>G key</th>
<th>F key</th>
<th>E key</th>
<th>D key</th>
<th>D# key</th>
<th>C key (both lines)</th>
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*Fingerings will appear above effected notes, unless the same fingering is repeated in close proximity to its first appearance.

* Thumb Bb is not used in this diagram

* The lines at the end of the diagram represent two of the three lowest pitches of the flute. These lines will appear as shown only if these keys are being used (one line for the c# key, and 2 lines for the c key).

* The b key, g# key, d trill key (abbreviated as tr in the diagram) and d# trill key will not appear unless they are to be used.

**Natural harmonics:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>harmonic on low c</th>
<th>pitch of harmonic</th>
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**Angle of flute:**

- **Normal**
- **slightly turned out**
- **slightly turned in**
turned in as far as possible

turned out as far as possible

Harp:
all damping left up to performer unless indicated otherwise

\[ \text{damp} \]

\[ \text{damp with both hands (all sound)} \]

\[ \text{damp at specific time} \]

\[ \text{l.v.} \]

\[ \text{let vibrate} \]

\[ \text{pluck all at once} \]

\[ \text{arpeggiate deliberately from bottom up} \]

\[ \text{arpeggiate deliberately from top to bottom} \]

\[ \text{arpeggiate simultaneously in each hand as the arrows indicate} \]

\[ \text{pluck all notes simultaneously within bracketed chord before following the direction of the arrow in the other hand} \]

\[ \text{arpeggiate with fingernail; applies to both hands when placed about treble clef} \]

\[ \text{semper non arp. or non arp.: pluck all strings simultaneously until directed to do so otherwise} \]

\[ \text{p.d.l.t. (près de la table) play near the soundboard} \]

\[ \text{slap on soundboard} \]

\[ \text{slap on soundboard with open hand} \]

\[ \text{Détachée (leave each string after being plucked, do not damp)} \]

\[ \text{harmonic written octave lower than is to sound} \]

\[ \text{hand-slap: chord to be struck with left hand and let ring unless indicated otherwise} \]

\[ \text{pedal diagrams are written below bass staff at beginning of each movement} \]

\[ \text{pedal changes are indicated as letters: ex: G} \]

\[ \text{note cluster: play all pitches in range indicated by outer notes} \]
Viola:

Bartók pizz

knock on body

all harmonics are touch 4 harmonics,
resulting sound is two octaves higher
than lowest traditionally notated pitch

tremolo and gliss at same time
Program Notes

My objective in creating this piece was to find a small amount of text and use it in various ways, including traditional and non-traditional text setting. I wanted to find a way to reveal the text throughout time without giving the whole thing away all at once. In doing so, I found a text by Michelangelo that I felt appropriately expressed the philosophical nature of this piece. His sculpture the Pieta (in Rome) has always been a great source of consolation for me, and this quote from his sonnet is something that I felt best described what the Pieta is about, namely that is one who possesses purity within one’s heart will not whither away with the passing events in this world. Instead, those who possess purity on earth foreshadow the beauty of heaven. I used what he is best known for (sculpting) as a process to reveal both text and music throughout time. This piece is a theme and variation in retrograde. In this way, the music represents the process of sculpting. The final product is not revealed (nor is the complete text) until the final movement, just as the final version of a sculpture is not revealed until all chiseling, refining and polishing is completed satisfactorily to the artist’s original vision.
Text for Transcendence toward Paradise

Original by Michelangelo Buonarroti (1475-1564)

Dolce e ben quella in un pudico core,
che per cangiar di scorza o d’ora
estrema non manca,
e qui caparra il paradiso.¹

Translation by William Wordsworth (1770-1850)

In chaste hearts uninfluenced by the power
of outward change,
there blooms a deathless flower,
that breathes on earth the air of paradise.²

Transcendence toward Paradise
I. The Awakening

Hauntingly $j = 62$

Amy Bell

Mezzo-soprano

Flute

Harp

Viola

M-S.

Fl.

Hp.

Vla.
M-S.

Fl.

Hp.

Vla.

Floating  $j = 72$

17
II. Illusions

**Agitated** $\frac{j}{j} = 152$

- Mezzo-soprano: *whisper* $p$ cresc. poco a poco

- Viola: *pizz.*

- M-S.
  - *irritated* forced whisper $mp$

- Vla.
  - *annoyed* speak $mf$

- M-S.
  - *livid* shout $f$

- Vla.
Bickering  \( \frac{j}{4} = 86 \)

M-S.

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Fl.

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Vla.

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Fl.

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Vla.

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<td>p(\text{m\text{p}})</td>
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\text{freak out}
\text{indefinite pitch,}
\text{still shouting}
\text{ff}
Frantic $= 186$

bewildered, puzzled
use facial expressions
improvise freely

whining
improvise freely

exasperated
improvise freely

mp sub.

mf sub.
whimper
improvise freely

sob
improvise freely

inhaled as if caught off guard

ibid, but louder

p sub.
sul tasto

f sub.
f sub.
p sub.

mp sub.
sul pont.

mf
III. The Promise of Sweetness

Rustling, contemplative, with awe  \( \text{\textit{j} = 72} \)

Flute

Harp

Viola

M-S.

Hp.
15

M-S. sung with doubt

Fl. flz.

Hp. sfzp

Vla. sfzp

questioning

18

M-S. sung reluctance

Fl. flz.

Hp. sfzp

Vla. sfzp
quiver with joyful tears
creaky voice
mf

mf
IV. The Battle of Purification

Sneakingly, with caution  $\dot{=} 62$

Harp

Viola

Fl.

Hp.

Vla.
Mysterious  =  72
singing, pure little vibrato

Fl.
Hp.
Vla.

sempre non arp.
sul pont.
pizz.
arco sul tasto

mp
mf
mp
p

p
mp

ord.

mf

mp
p

ord.

mp
p

mp
V. Sanctification of Hope

Freely $j = 60$

Introspective $j = 72$

Mezzo-soprano

Flute

Harp

Viola

Hp.

Vla.
A bit slower $\dot{=}$ 68

M-S.

Fl.

Hp.

Vla.