

NOTES ON THE MUSIC

EVERYTHING THAT GROWS

Inspired by William Shakespeare's Sonnet 15

When I consider everything that grows
Holds in perfection but a little moment;
That this huge stage presenteth nought but shows
Whereon the stars in secret influence comment;
When I perceive that men as plants increase,
Cheered and checked even by the selfsame sky,
Vaunt in their youthful sap, at height decrease,
And wear their brave state out of memory,
Then the conceit of this inconsistent stay
Sets you most rich in youth before my sight,
Where wasteful time debateth with Decay
To change your day of youth to sullied night,
And all in war with Time for love of you,
As he takes from you, I ingraft you new.

MY INTERPRETATION OF THE POEM

This is not a learned interpretation based on known scholarship of Shakespeare's sonnets so much as a new reading. I heard my music in the first few lines. Shakespeare is making analogies between humanity and nature, and ascribes to both a fleeting existence, both equally mysterious. He acknowledges the sorrow and struggle of what a conscious memory cannot keep forever. We are finite. BUT we are like nature prolific in our reproduction(of art). Finally, in the last couplet, which like all Shakespeare sonnets acts as both summary, and, how can I say ... a transcendental monkey wrench, which adds a little something at the end to push the reader's mind into another realm, he binds together art with love to ease the passing of our brief time here on earth. He is speaking about this poem, his poem, and I am proposing music, my music. This is how I see my connection to this sonnet. The inventiveness of the music eases the knowledge that it too is temporary, because there is a new idea just around the corner, in the next phrase.

HOW I APPROACHED THE MUSIC

I created a little quasi-Elizabethan ensemble of eleven players: Soprano recorder, oboe, bassoon, harp, harpsichord, guitar, violin, cello, bass and percussionist. I think that this small ensemble is suited for the contrapuntal lines to speak clearly.

The iambic pentameter is a little off putting at first because of the odd number of beats. But after reading several sonnets, after one adjusts to it, it begins to actually sound symmetrical. So I started off with short-long melodic gestures, then used staggered entrances and exits along with mixed meters to produce the asymmetrical feel throughout the piece. I tried to achieve symmetry within this asymmetry.

Basically, it is a diatonic piece, but there many modulations to a plethora of keys. This gives it a sort of tonal asymmetry, if you will. That's why it is written without a key, even though it begins and ends in G. Consideration of the harp and it's tuning, made this decision the proper one. Flat keys are favored over sharp keys because the harp's strings resonate best at their full length (flat). But for keys like A and E, sharps were necessary. Longer stretches of F# and C# become Gb and Db, and the harpist's pedaling is thus considered.

As I am also a guitarist, I verify that the guitar part is playable as well.

Thank you for your consideration, Judges.