Out Came the Sun

by

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A composition submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Musical Arts (Music: Composition) in the University of Michigan 2018

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COMPOSER’S NOTE

Since the time of Brahms, there has been a tradition among certain composers to write lullabies for young children, which I unavoidable did for my baby son Leo, during my recent pregnancy before he was born. Imagining sweet happiness, warm emotions and love at first sight, I weaved these fanciful thoughts into a lullaby. The first week of being a new mother was absolute bliss. What I did not anticipate were the dark emotions, which developed rapidly after Leo was born. Suddenly, tears overcame me for no reason and feelings of mourning, anxiety and loss suddenly appeared without warning.

After childbirth, according to the American Pregnancy Association, around 80 percent of women experience various postpartum mood swings often referred to as “baby blues.” Fortunately, these “blues” usually go away within two to three weeks. Gradually, my tears dried out and I started being able to trust the joy of being a new mother.

While the depression lasted for a short time (compared to the 40-week pregnancy, or to the longer process of raising a child), the experience was so profound the I felt compelled to compose a work about it. The music I have composed suggests the extreme bliss of childbirth, the melancholy and struggling thereafter and the mysterious transformative process which leads to final resolution and peace.

Shuying Li
PERFORMANCE NOTES

General

0
0

Cancel meter. Play relatively freely.

Box (or repeating barlines) with an arrow means play in a relatively free and independent tempo, then repeat the music written in it.

All trills are whole step unless indicated otherwise

Play ascending gesture(s) in a busy and intense pace, different than normal glissandos.

Play the exact rhythm indicated while going from the beginning pitch to the ending pitch smoothly and gradually. Microtones may be produced in the process of this “glissando”.

Woodwinds

Air tones

Key clicks

Timpani

Use hands

Use brushes

Use mallets

Strike the center of the drum to create almost non-pitched tones

Strings

Bartók pizzicato

Bow the body of the instrument to create a whisper of the bow hair moving over the wood

Alternate between two pitches as fast as possible (with rapid bowings)

Fingered tremolo
INSTRUMENTATION

Flute
Oboe
Clarinet in Bb
Bassoon
Horn in F

Timpani (Five drums)
Celesta

Strings

Score in C

Duration: ca. 12 minutes
Abstract

“Out Came the Sun” for chamber orchestra was commissioned and premiered by the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra at the Carnegie Hall on December 2, 2017. It is written for chamber orchestra consists of flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, horn, timpani, celesta, and strings. The commission offer came about during the Summer of 2016, only a few months after my son, Leo, was born. I immediately thought of composing a work about the profound and challenging experiences of birth-giving for women. The first week of being a new mother was absolute bliss. What I did not anticipate were the dark emotions, which developed rapidly after Leo was born. Suddenly, tears overcame me for no reason and feelings of mourning, anxiety and loss suddenly appeared without warning.

According to the American Pregnancy Association, around 80 percent of women experience various postpartum mood swings shortly after childbirth often referred to as “baby blues”. Fortunately, these “blues” usually go away within two to three weeks. Gradually, my tears dried out and I started being able to trust the joy of being a new mother. While the depression lasted for a short time (compared to the 40-week pregnancy, or to the longer process of raising a child), the experience was so profound that I felt compelled to compose a work about it.

Since the time of Brahms, there has been a tradition among certain composers to write lullabies for young children, which I unavowedable did during my recent pregnancy. Imagining sweet happiness, warm emotions and love at first sight, I weaved these fanciful thoughts into a lullaby, which became the foundation for my “Out of the Sun” for chamber orchestra. The music I have composed suggests the extreme bliss of childbirth, the melancholy and struggling thereafter and the mysterious transformative process which leads to final resolution and peace.

After the atmospheric opening, we hear a dreamy texture with rapidly moving octaves and arpeggios by the celesta and subtle string harmonics. Alluding to Shostakovich’s dark “Invasion Theme” from his “Symphony No. 7,” and to Ravel’s obsessive “Bolero”, the middle section features a somber melody accompanied by a pulsating rhythmic ostinato, which darkens harmonically, and intensifies rhythmically upon each repetition. This “slippery slope” into postpartum angst unfolds in precise design and calculation: individual parts, which are first carefully aligned, gradually fall apart in a semi-aleatoric manner. However, by the time the final melody/repetition is presented, the music has evolved from a painful and depressing undercurrent into an optimistic children’s “lullaby”, first heard in the celesta. Composed during my pregnancy, this childlike lullaby represents the peace, resolution, and joy I would eventually experience as a mother of newborn.
OUT CAME THE SUN
for Chamber Orchestra
Shuying Li

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gradually withdraw air tonal, leaving key clicks only

ff

dim.

arco

col legno battuto

mf

dim.

dim.

dim.
Starting losing the coordination with other instruments

Relatively free, do not coordinate, try to be precise within each part

poco accel...