AND THEN I REMEMBER

by

Lembit Lepasaar Beecher

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Musical Arts (Music Composition) in The University of Michigan, 2009

Doctoral Committee:

Associate Professor Evan K. Chambers, Chair
Professor Thomas E. Fricke
Professor Andrew W. Mead
Associate Professor Erik R. Santos
Assistant Professor Christi-Anne Castro
# Table of Contents

Instrumentation.................................................................................................................................................. iii  
Performance Notes.............................................................................................................................................. iv  
Program Notes................................................................................................................................................... v  
Text Translations................................................................................................................................................ vi  

Movement  
I.   Opening.................................................................................................................................................... 1  
II.  Corn Blue Shirt............................................................ ................................................................. 11  
III. It Was Like a, Like a Lightning.................................................... ..................................................... 14  
IV. March, 1940.................................................................................................................................................. 24  
V.   And Then It All Began to Change............................................................... ........................................ 25  
VI. Learning to Play the Piano.......................................................... ......................................................... 33  
VII. The Quiet Snow Fell Down.......................................................... .................................................... 34  
VIII. The Last Ship................................................................................................................................. 37  
IX. January, 1945............................................................................................................................................ 52  
X.   Slow Memory............................................................... ................................................................. 53  
XI. Coming to America.......................................................... ................................................................. 57  
XII. Closing...................................................................................................................................................... 58
Instrumentation

Solo Soprano
Solo Double Bass

Soprano
Mezzo-Soprano

Male Chorus (4 – 5 on a part)

Recorded Audio (Laptop Triggered)

Flute
B♭ Clarinet

Percussion
triangle
bell tree
crash cymbal
ride cymbal
sizzle cymbal
china cymbal
hi-hat
small gong (B♭ is suggested but not necessary)
tam-tam
tambourine (mounted)
2 bongos
snare drum
floor tom (or other low tom)
medium bass drum

Piano
Violin
Cello

Amplification for all players and singers is desirable though not necessary.
Performance Notes

Audio Triggering

Most of the audio cues are approximate (triggering within a second or two of the cue is satisfactory). However, the cues in the fourth movement are fairly frequent and need to be carefully coordinated with the music.

Bass Scordatura

The harmonics in movement VII assume the following bass tuning:

E B E A (bottom to top)

Percussion Key

tam-tam small gong china cymbal sizzle cymbal hi-hat crash cymbal triangle bass drum low tom snare tambourine bell tree brake drum bongos

Duration

50 minutes
Program Notes

My grandmother, Taimi Lepasaar, was born in Estonia in 1922. Four years earlier, in the aftermath of World War I, Estonia had achieved independence for the first time. During World War II, Estonia was occupied first by the Russians (1940 – 41) and then the Germans (1941 – 44). In 1944, as the Russians were encroaching once more, my grandmother escaped Estonia along with her mother and father, husband Ants and 2-year old daughter, Merike (my mother). My grandmother left on the last ship out of Estonia before the Russians returned and sealed the borders. The boat brought her to Germany and as the war was ending, she gradually made her way west. After the end of the war, she spent four years in displaced person camps before immigrating to the United States and beginning a new life here. She found work in the United States as a church organist and later also as a music teacher. For 35 years she taught music to middle school students in Providence, RI, where she still resides.

My grandmother has often told me stories about these experiences. She is a marvelous storyteller. Several years ago I asked my grandmother if I could begin recording her stories with the idea of possibly using them in a piece of music. She kindly agreed to many interviews over several years as the project gradually took shape. Last summer, as I was beginning to work intensely on this piece, I traveled to Estonia to conduct interviews with family members and old friends of my grandmother’s, and do archival research. My original intent was to emphasize the documentary side of this piece, including text from newspaper clippings and war time documents (like the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact). But as I thought more and more about the piece, I began to feel that what was really important was my grandmother’s voice and her way of telling stories to me, not the historical details of these events. The text of the interviews is the core of the piece. Portions of the interviews are played back as recorded audio and other parts are sung by the solo soprano.

To supplement the English language interviews texts, I have set portions of the Estonian national epic, Kalevipoeg, for the duo/trio and chorus to sing. Both Kalevipoeg and my grandmother’s stories are about a wandering journey of epic nature and the Kalevipoeg texts seem to respond directly to the intense love of homeland and sense of rumination on fate, memory, storytelling and the passage of time that lie just beneath the surface of my grandmother’s stories.
Text Translations

from the Estonian National Epic, Kalevipoeg

Mov. I, VII
Kiirest kaovad meie päevad
Tuhatnelja elu tunnid,
Ruttes kalmu küngastelle,
Lendes rahulepikusse,
Kolletava kolja sängi.
Kaduval ei kodupaika,
Rändajal ei rahurüngast
Põrnumõlvesta pärida.

Mov. I, XII
Rõõm ja mure kaksikvennad
Kaksiklapsed looduskojas,
Kõnnivad kässi käessa,
Rändavad sammu sammussa.

Mov. I, V
Ohu-kate kattab kaugelt,
Mure-vaip see matab musta,
Pead pilve pimedasse
Lauliku päevaterada.

Mov. V
Tuleb hoogsalt tuule tuhin,
Kostab kaugelt lahte kohin.
Vaimuvajjud udupilves,
Kaste-hõime kerkimisel,
Argsel sammul astudessa
Näitavad verist võitlemist.
Mässamiste mõõgamängi,
Tapja tapperi tantsisid,
Sõja-aegse surma suitsu,
Näljapõlve nääsimisi.
Katku kurnamise jälgi,
Toovad kurbi teadusida,
Ohupäevast ohkamisi,
Piinapõlve pisaraida,

Mov. I, VII
The days of our lives go quickly by,
at full speed the hours pass,
hastening toward the graveyard mounds,
toward the aldergrove of peace,
to death’s bed, to waste away.
Mortals find no lasting homeland,
wayfarers, no peaceful hillock,
in this earthly life.

Mov. I, XII
Joy and sorrow are twin brothers,
children in the house of nature,
where they walk, they’re hand in hand,
where they go, they walk in step.

Mov. I, V
From afar the looming menace
cloaks the sun of the singer’s day
beneath a blanket, black, of care,
hides it in a cloud of darkness.

Mov. V
The wind comes in a rush of sound,
from far away the waves resound.

As the dew begins to lift,
shades of spirits in the fogbanks,
stepping forward timidly,
reveal scenes of bloody battle,
clash of swordplay in rebellions,
dance of deadly battle axes,
smoking death-pyres during wartime,
shriveled victims of the famines,
haggard victims of the plague.
The tidings that they bring are doleful:
sighs of sorrow from times of peril,
tears from seasons of suffering.

-Translation by Merike Lepasaar Beecher

Note: The choir and duo also sing small parts in Estonian in movements VII and VIII. These are simply Estonian translations of the English language text sung by the solo soprano.
Audio Cue #1
2. Corn Blue Shirt

Straightforward; with just a little rubato \( \mathcal{f} = 42 \)

Except where dotted lines show specific sync points, don't worry about synching to the audio. Feel by itself - a kind of slow, rolling dance.

Tape

And then, was the summer of nineteen forty
And I was in a A-lat-ski-vi with my grand pa- rents

Even and simple; brushed and thoughtful

Double Bass

I remem-ber when I was waiting he came from the farm

And I was waiting then I saw how he came on the bi-cy cle
And then, was the summer of nineteen forty

Sop. I

Poco Rit. A Tempo

And then

D.B.

A tempo

And then

Vc.

pp

Recorded voice continues
(it does not need to be synced with the instruments)

Recorded voice continues and fades

And how he came up up

And then

And then

And then

And then

Recorded voice continues and fades

And then

1.

And then

And then

And then

1.
then I remember Corn blue shirt, Light grey pants, and a blond hair and how he came up up. I remember today when he came.
And he was on a bicycle, I had a bicycle and about 6 o’clock we left the farm we on the highways we went to the castle to dance together. And we were there, it was a program, it was about... 9:30, the music stopped... and announcer came... that... the Russian army has come over the Peipal sea, and they—the Russian army is coming towards this castle, towards us. We ask you all to take your bicycles and go home. And then was Estonia was conquered.

1940 that summer. It was like a, like a lightning, like somebody had hit you on the back. And then we all drove quietly, it was a... June night.

The moon was lighting the road, but the hearts were heavy. And we... uh... drove home and went to the farm, but the farm was far away from the highway up on the hill. Next morning we were all standing there on the fence under the big linden trees, watching...

You know, it seemed that all the dreams were broken... all the dreams were broken... all the dreams were broken...
III. It was like a, like a lightning

Intense (♩= 126)

Flute

Clarinet in B♭

Violin

Cello

Piano

(3+2)

(3+2+3)

A

Fl.

B♭ Cl.

Vln.

Vc.

Pno.

(3+2+2)

(2+3)

Fl.

B♭ Cl.

Vln.

Vc.

Pno.


Audio Cue #3:

Each year, Teacher’s College was celebrating its anniversary and there was a big program in the concert hall of Vanemuine and then we performed and then I remember it was the last, last.. 1940 it was there in March.....

Something I don’t know was in the air that life became very dangerous and we all don’t know what the future is going to be, I always remember. It was a celebration of the anniversary of the foundation of the Estonian Teacher’s College and each March we had the celebration – the school gave a program in the same concert hall on the stage.....

And then I remember I went to the stage and I played there that Revolutionary Etude–very technical piece–and then after the program was over then came the dance and the chairs were all cleaned up and then orchestra began to play and then the hall began to.. and then I remember, I went then to the door and there he was on the other side of the hall. And whenhe saw me, he came all across toward me at just a lightning and we began to dance, began the waltz, tead. This was the most beautiful waltz in my entire life. Then he was just holding and we are just dancing and dancing and dancing. He didn’t let me go, he didn’t even look at me. He was just holding me, and that holding was so wonderful…. [sigh]... Then I was in heaven. When you think one is in heaven is rising above that grey world – just a waltz, just a dance, dancing and then is it really true, is it really true, he picked me, and only me! [laugh] oh...

IV. March, 1940
V. And Then It All Began to Change

Dignified; with the hint of a Sad, Slow Dance (\( \approx 52 \))

soft and misty; without rubato

\( \approx 52 \)

a ghostly halo around the flute's sound

And then it all began to change

The Russian red flags with hammer and sickle were lifted

The school program was changed; everything changed

And then it all began to change

Brushed, a ghostly halo around the flute's sound

And then it all began to change
One student burst in and said, you know. They were already taken out of their homes at night, and there are thousands of Estonians who have already been taken to the railroad station in the middle of the texture (non-solo).

They were tu keen. Then it all
taken out of their homes at night
And then at night Ants came to my parents' house, knocked at the door and said, you know, Tante's on the list. Tante's going to be sent to the Siberia too.

It was night. It was like two'clock in the morning.

Ants knocked at the door and said, you know, we have to escape, we have to escape to the country.
We went through the woods and along the ditches and we arrived at a lake, and Ants rowed to a small island. Next morning we saw the Russian soldiers on horseback riding around the lake, combing the bushes and meadows. And after that my father began to teach me how to play the piano.

Audio Cue #5: We were four?" [sings]...this was the song when they sang and we came – we all cried – and we came back to Tartu, to our home, and I remember I went to the piano – I was a tiny girl, I was four or five years old – and I began to look for that melody. This was the first melody that hit me so because that was the first loss of my life and I played that melody. I found it out on the piano (and even the black keys) and then I began to harmonize it. ["You were four?"] Ja, and I could play – I was alone there, I remember – and suddenly, the door to the dining room opened and there was standing my father looking at me and my mother came; my mother was shorter. I never forget the look in their eyes and I thought suddenly – did I do something wrong? Yeah, but my father said, no no, go on. I just had to – I remember now that melody, that was the first melody I remember. I began to pick up myself on the piano. And after that my father began to teach me how to play the piano.
**Tempo I** (*q = 92*)

Sop. I

We came out of the church and it was snowing. Going in it was not snowing but coming out...

D.B.

The quiet snow came down. The quiet snow came...

**Tempo II** (*q = 52*)

Sop. I

but coming out but coming out...

D.B.

...The quiet snow came down.

**Distant; Foreboding** (*q = 46*)

We walked through snow home then, after the ceremony, but it was a...

**Audio Cue #6**

Tape

beautiful... Next morning, the sky was dark blue but everything was covered with untouched white snow. You can't imagine; each time it is like the first time snow is coming...
...down, [sigh] this happiness goes through me.
VIII. The Last Ship

Angry, Biting and Forceful (♩=76)

Flute

Clarinet in B♭

Percussion

hand felt mallet

Piano

describing

Soprano Solo I

We were on the last ship

We were on the last ship

We were

Violin

Cello

Double Bass

ff

We were on the last ship

We were on the last ship

We were on the last ship

Soprano Solo I

on the last ship

Septem-bear nine-ton four

We were on the last ship

Vln.

Vc.

D.B.
We were on the last ship

We were on the last ship the day

Fl

Bb Cl.
Perc.
Pno.

Sop. I
Vln.
Vc.
D.B.

Quietly Transfixed

Fl

Bb Cl.
Perc.
Pno.

Sop. I
Vln.
Vc.
D.B.
41

Fl.

B. Cl.

Perc.

Pno.

Sop. I

Vln.

Vc.

D. B.

45

Fl.

B. Cl.

Perc.

Pno.

Sop. I

Vln.

Vc.

D. B.
in the Baltic Sea.

solo - a tender response to the soprano

brash
in the morning
the Russian torpedo
the Russian torpedo
tore through the ship

intrigue but don’t cover the soprano

and pulled无助 refugees into the sea
Lost in Thought \( (q = 72) \)

poco a poco accel.

sink
And there was dead silence
And the water was so high
so close
And there was dead silence. And the water was so high, it was a grey.


And there was dead silence. And the water was so high, it was a grey.
The glissandi should be played with an energetic, wild abandon.
The written starting and ending notes are approximate.
IX. January, 1945

Straightforward \( (\frac{j}{2} = 52 - 54) \)

Audio Cue #7

When we arrived in Gottenhafen, ahhh, first time, stepping on the country that, on the grounds, I really can understand when people are come and kiss the group, such a feeling that I am on the land again pp from a distance

We had, this kind of, like Red Cross points there in the harbor, that they took very good care of the refugees.

And we were saved in that wrecked ship on the stormy sea. It took us 5 days and nights but the ship pulled us still to Germany, to Gottenhafen.

Let sound decay naturally (never dampen)

Well that was our last Christmas actually in that Polish farm.

That was the last time I saw him

That must have been 20th or 21st of January

And even in Bible is said that there is a greater gift or

Audio Cue #7 continues:

And then, even went I came – I went to an astrologue [sic], and an astrologue told me that you think that your husband is dead but he is not; he is searching for you and suddenly he is there. And this has been in my mind all my life, even when I came to America, I thought that after the Second World War ended, he hadn’t come, that maybe he was imprisoned, maybe the... But he was not a soldier, I thought if he suddenly, he knows that I am expecting Ülle and he has my address and he will come. Because in Estonia, he could have gone to Finland, but he said, I am not going to leave you alone, you and Merike alone. So I have to tell you, Lembit, that... he gave, he loved so much that he gave his life so that Merike and I would live. And even in Bible is said that there is a greater gift or proof of love than one is willing to give his life for another person and he did that. He did that.

[Pause for ~ 5" before proceeding to mvt. X.]
X. Slow Memory

Plaintive; Working Through Resistance (Like Swimming Through Honey)  \( \approx \)

\((3+2)\)

\(\text{Flute}\)

\(\text{Clarinet in B}^\flat\)

\(\text{Violin}\)

\(\text{Cello}\)

\(\text{Piano}\)

\(\text{B-Cl.}\)

\(\text{Vln.}\)

\(\text{Vc.}\)

\(\text{Pno.}\)

\((2+3)\)

\(\text{Fl.}\)

\(\text{B-Cl.}\)

\(\text{Vln.}\)

\(\text{Vc.}\)

\(\text{Pno.}\)

\(\text{Fl.}\)

\(\text{B-Cl.}\)

\(\text{Vln.}\)

\(\text{Vc.}\)

\(\text{Pno.}\)

\(\text{Fl.}\)

\(\text{B-Cl.}\)

\(\text{Vln.}\)

\(\text{Vc.}\)

\(\text{Pno.}\)

\(\text{Fl.}\)

\(\text{B-Cl.}\)

\(\text{Vln.}\)

\(\text{Vc.}\)

\(\text{Pno.}\)
allarg.  With a Gently Aching Lilt  

poco rit.  A Tempo

una corda

with a little pedal

una corda with a gypsy moment

very distant and without emotion

with a little pedal into coda
XI. Coming to America

Audio Cue #8:
And then you begin to question, why did it happen this way? Why? Fate is so strange that I feel… when I look back now, everybody is facing difficulties but it still… there is like a guiding hand that has let me experience the horrible, everything that happened so terrible but still like an onlooker who exactly wasn’t destroyed by it. Just like, being like a little bit above, a little bit touched but not quite in that soup. Jah… so… in spite of everything… this has been the journey. What moments.. I remember the sounds, you know, I remember the stormy seas, the sound, and the fog, and I remember the crushing of the ice under your boots, you know, on that icy highway… yeah, how much a person can take. And then I think I came to America; I was 27 years old, like you, and I was the only bread winner and I received by Lutheran welfare office one dollar and I was the only breadwinner and I had to feed my mother and father and Merike and Ülle and I was asked what can you do, well, in an orphanage I went to the piano and poured my pain in to the music and the door opened up and the orphanage director came in and asked me, “Can you play the organ too?” and I said, “Of course.” Biggest lie I have ever made. Well, he said, “Next Sunday I will go to, in Arlington Street is the Lutheran Ministers’ Conference – about 200 ministers. I will take you with me and play them the organ and maybe one of them will need an organist…” And that’s the beginning.