

Bofan Ma

2014

If I Could Write Words

(Three Poems by Spike Milligan)

*create spirit explore
be Art be inspire Art
teach make grow Art
be share believe*

--- for solo clarinet, guitar, soprano, and violoncello

If I Could Write Words

--Dedicate to my beloved grandmother (1916 - 2014)

Programme Note

There has been an everlasting debate concerning the philosophical meaning of setting texts to music, and the relationship between words and notes - if one could write 'words' through music, or if one could write music in order to let it deliver the same emotional energy as straightforward as literature does. For which questions I had no courage to answer on my own behalf, however, this work produced many possibilities for me to think deeply, from a number of contrasting perspectives that I could ever imagine.

It was a shocking moment when I discovered these three poems written by Spike Milligan, right at the time when I was desperately seeking for something comforting yet 'mysterious'. The shock was referring to the question of how different a particular object could be observed by an individual under various circumstances, and how brilliant our mind is to make logical associations between random things - or words. My perception amplified the sadness hidden behind every letters here, and linked these superficially irrelevant lines with my own understanding from that specific instant. At this juncture, the terminology of 'randomness' represents unity, and the personally emotional attachment which makes contradicting things harmonious.

Based on all the above questionings, I finished this piece of music. I gave both contradictions and identity simultaneously, as same as the 'bitter-sweet' feeling I perceived from the first read of these texts. The loss one could possibly never get back, is also a part of randomness, or as has been mentioned, the harmony of life.

Three poems by Spike Milligan:

1. Omen of Emptiness

*The clock has turned enough,
to reach a planet.
Life is endless night.
I hear wings beating in the dark of my room.
A giant raven is waiting,*

for me to fall asleep.

2. A Silly Poem:

*Said Hamlet to Ophelia,
I'll draw a sketch of thee.
What kind of pencil shall I use?
2B or not 2B?*

3. If I Could Write Words:

*If I could write words,
like leaves on an autumn forest floor.
What a bonfire my letters would make.*

*If I could speak words of water,
you could drown when I said:
'I love you.'*

If I Could Write Words

--- FOR SOLO CLARINET, GUITAR, SOPRANO, AND VIOLONCELLO

J. Omen of Emptiness

Bofan Ma
May, 2014

Text: Three poems by Spike Milligan (1918 - 2002)

Expressive ♩ = 54

Clarinet in B♭

Guitar

Soprano Solo

Violoncello

ff pp subito ff pp

gliss. p pp

Cl.

Gtr.

S. Solo

Vc.

ff pp p pp < f > pp < p > pp ff ppp

(whisper percussively) pp

Tic, toc, tic, toc, tic toc tic toc tic toc tic toc tic, toc, tic, toc, tic. The

gliss. gliss. f p f pp

Cl.

Gtr.

S. Solo

Vc.

ff p subito ff ff p subito ff 7 pp

(whisper percussively) pp

Tic, toc, tic, toc, tic, toc, tic, toc, tic, toc, tic, toc, toc,

(shout) ff mp ff f ff 3 3

clock! has turned e- nough! e-nough to reach a plan - et. Life, life is

(speak) mp sf mf 3

B Curious ♩ = 66 ric. p ff

sul pont. (bow pressure) ff p 6 ff p

II. A Silly Poem

1 Emotionless ♩ = 76

Cl. *p* *ff* *sfzp* *ff*

Gtr. *ff* *p*

S. Solo Said Ham - let to O - phe - lia, —

Vc. *sfzp* *mp* *f* *sfzp*

A

7

Cl. *ff* *pp* *f* *sfzp* *f* *p*

Gtr. *p* *ff* *mp* *f*

S. Solo I, I, I, I, will draw a

Vc. *sfzp* *mp* *f* *sfzp* *pp* *f* *pp* *f*

sul tasto

12

Cl. *mf* *ff* *p*

Gtr. *pp* *p* *f* *p* *gliss.*

S. Solo sketch of thee. I will draw a sketch of thee.

Vc. *ord.* *mf* *ff* *pp* *p* *gliss.*

B

III. If I Could Write Words

Affectionate ♩ = 60

senza misura

Vc. *f* *p* *subito* *ff* *p* *f* *p* *più f* *p* *f*

A

Clarinet in A

Cl. *p* *f* *p*

Gtr. *p* *f*

S. Solo *mp* *f* *p*

Vc. *sf* *p* *subito* *ff* *mf* *ff* *f* *5* *p* *f*

If I could write words like leaves on an

B

Cl. *f* *p* *f* *5* *pp* *mp* *f* *sf* *pp*

Gtr. *p* *f* *p*

S. Solo *f* *p* *mp* *f* *p*

Vc. *f* *p* *subito* *f* *3* *sf* *p* *ff* *pp*

au-tumn for - est floor. What a bon - fire my let-ters would