

kris lennox



dedication

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Dedication

This piece is very much a 'modern' work – strong, memorable melody, simple harmony – I have stripped away all indulgencies, and left only the necessities

Lost Melodies

These pieces are nostalgic reflections on the days of Romanticism, and the sense of longing that the Romantics expressed to us with their music. They hark back to what we think of as being 'a simpler time', yet a contemporary outlook can still be heard

Kyoto Nightflower

This work is difficult to describe accurately with words. It represents universal freedom and openness; this same feeling is touched upon when we read 'Taoist' philosophy. In the final bars, the music 'transcends' all sense of the earthly, and drifts into the world of the spirit



Two Daydreams

These pieces were also Japanese inspired, – they describe the feeling we all remember, and some of us still know, where all sounds and states of reality become 'distant', and we enter the world of thought and reflection – sense of time vanishes, and awareness of our surroundings also disappears – all externals have vanished, leaving us with a strong awareness of our true, inner self

1-Yin Yang Daydream

This piece represents the Eastern concept of 'yin', and 'yang', or we could say 'being' and 'non-being' (also sometimes referred to as male and female). The piece has two distinct voices – high for female, and low for male. The piece begins purely female, but the melody slowly descends to introduce the male melody – both voices speak together in a gentle duet (in concepts of yin and yang, the female voice is always 'downward seeking', aspiring for the sense of the male, whereas the male voice is always 'upward' seeking, aspiring for the sense of the female. I have tried to musically describe this as best as possible).

We are left with only the male voice, with a sense of questioning and wonder – the lack of the female voice can be heard in the music – there is a want and a need for the female voice in order to achieve a sense of unity.

2- Floating Through a Daydream

This is a journey through a daydream – the piece is meant to sound as free as possible (this is easy to capture when improvising, but terribly difficult when actually sitting down and composing!) – in certain places the music just drifts away – the overall feel of the piece is one of deep introspection and reflection, which, for me, is the essence of Eastern thought

Healdsburg Elegies

When I was younger I visited the US, and went to a small place in the Sonoma valley called Healdsburg. The area left a profound impression on me, in its' sense of calm and stillness – there is a peaceful sense of contentment that can be felt in this area of America. I try to demonstrate this sense of calm through the music. The pieces also represent a journey of time, beginning from night, through morning, to dusk, with the final piece being a return to night – they, for me, represent the perfect day to be had in the Sonoma valley

Healdsburg Elegy No. 1 – 'Sonoma Stars'

I remember being near a very still lake or river one night whilst I was in the US – the stars were reflecting off the surface of the water, and occasionally something would disturb the surface of the water – this can be heard as 'ripples' in the music. When I was sitting at the water's edge, I remember putting my hand in the water, and playing with it, to cause the pattern of the light to break – (this can be heard in the middle of the piece). From the central section onwards, the music represents the return of the water to its' previous state of stillness (occasional ripples can still be heard), where we can once again see the reflected light of the stars on the surface

Healdsburg Elegy No. 2 – 'The Old Shaker Song'

A representation of old world, rural America. This piece is prefaced by the words of Walt Whitman, which I feel describe the music in words far more poetically than I could manage:

'Through the ample open door of the peaceful country barn,
A sunlit pasture field with cattle and horses feeding,
And haze and vista, and the far horizon fading away'
(Walt Whitman)



Healdsburg Elegy No. 3 – ‘Song of the Skylark’

I tried with this piece to represent a skylark high above the earth, looking down on the stillness below. The piece is built of only two chords, and the melody is the voice of the skylark. Towards the end, we can hear the voices of two birds – the skylark has met its true counterpart, and the birds fly harmoniously on, together above the earth. We leave the birds behind, and see them gliding towards an amber horizon



Healdsburg Elegy No. 4 – ‘The Heavens’

This piece is difficult to describe – it is a return to night, and is more a description of the effect of glimmers of light contrasted with darkness, rather than a particular time or place. The piece ends the same way that the first ‘Healdsburg Elegy’ began (bringing the set full circle) – a sparkle of light from distant stars



Heaven Eternal

I spent one night not too long ago in the Scottish highlands, and was in a very quiet valley, miles from any town. The sky was perfectly clear, and due to the pureness of the air, all that could be seen were stars everywhere in the night sky. I had never seen the sky look so beautiful – usually, living in towns and cities, such a sky cannot be seen, as lights obstruct the natural light of the stars. This piece tries to give the impression of the luminance of the sky on that night

Manhattan Water Melody

One very rainy day, I was sitting in a coffee house in NYC, watching everyone going about their business, trying to avoid the downpour – I drifted into a daydream inspired by the sound of the rain falling – this is where the arpeggio pattern for this tune came from. I literally wrote the idea for this tune down on the back of a napkin whilst in the coffee shop!! There are breaks in the tune at certain points – these breaks represent drifting out of the daydream

Piano Sonata – ‘The Craig’

This sonata, in terms of grandeur of sound, is certainly my ‘largest’ work to date. ‘The Craig’ is an island off the west coast of Scotland (Ailsa Craig) – a huge lump of rock rising out of the ocean. This island has an imposing, threatening presence, and is a landmark that everyone on the west coast knows of, as it can be seen from most west coast towns. I thought it would be fitting to write a piece of music about The Craig – a tribute to the area in which I grew up. The piece needed to convey the sense of the swelling sea, and of the ferocity of the weather that is experienced on and around The Craig. The piece is very technical – it has to be, to convey a true sense of power and strength – I studied all the great technical piano pieces as models before writing my own technical ‘tour de force’ (e.g. Ravel’s ‘Scarbo’, the Ligeti etudes, the Rautavaara etudes, etc). The piece took over 9 months to compose – I was happy on the day when the score was finished!!



1st movement – 'The Waves'

This piece is the journey to the island, and represents the constant swelling of the sea. At the end we encounter the island itself, and can hear the waves crashing off the cliffs, and the foam spraying high up into the air

2nd movement – 'The Ascent'

In the 2nd movement we are now on the island, and slowly struggle up to the summit. We suddenly break out on to the summit plateau, and the waves can still be heard far below (now sounding far more gentle), washing against the island's edge

3rd movement – 'The Storm'

We return to the sea, and a terribly violent storm breaks – all we can sense is the power and destructive forces of the elements. There are little breaks in the storm, giving hints of calm, but the storm always returns to engulf us in its' fury. At the very end, we eventually leave the scene behind – this is represented by three rumbles of thunder, each becoming more distant than the previous one – we are leaving the vicinity of The Craig, where the storm continues its elemental onslaught

Distant Lands

This piece acts as an expression of reflection – it has a feeling of ‘looking back’ on things that have passed, and brings the album to a gentle conclusion

Kris Lennox, 25, has been composing since he first sat at the piano, and has always found performance and creativity as two aspects of the one art. Kris says himself: ‘I have always considered self-expression to be equally important as interpretation when at the piano. With interpreting the works of the masters, there is only so much of ourselves we can put into the piece before we risk being disrespectful to the intentions of the composer – hence I always feel the need to compose my own works – only in our own works can we truly express our musical intentions to their fullest’.

Kris progressed rapidly at the piano, and by the age of 17, was performing works such as Liszt’s ‘Transcendental Etudes’, Rachmaninoff’s 1st piano sonata, to the more modern works such as John Adams’ ‘Phrygian Gates’, and Lowell Liebermann’s ‘Gargoyles’. With such ability, he always wondered where the performance of the music of others would ultimately take him: ‘When you eventually reach the stage where you can perform such piano music, then and only then do you ask yourself where it will lead, as before you have the ability play such music, the only goal is to climb ever higher, and conquer more and more difficult works – when this goal is reached, sometimes we sense how detached from the actual communication of an art form, rather than demonstration of technique, that our playing has become’.

Kris’ music can be seen as a natural reaction to such a background at the piano – his music is almost ‘anti-technical’; expression is given free reign in the compositions, and technical demonstration is only employed when considered necessary: ‘I always remember hearing piano music before I ever played the piano – even the simplest of pieces sound horrendously difficult, as they are in a language beyond the understanding of the average listener – what is communicated is the expression, rather than the technique or harmonic complexity, as all piano music sounds difficult to the non-pianist!! I try to keep this in mind – I write music that I would like to hear, and as such, the result is usually compositions that the general public also like to hear. Then again,

sometimes a little showmanship is necessary!! I have shown this in certain sections of my sonata 'The Craig', where the music describes a sea storm – as such, it has to be fierce and powerful.



Kris' style is somewhat difficult to pinpoint. His music lies somewhere between Romanticism (Chopin/Liszt), Modernism/Minimalism (Einaudi/Nyman/Glass), with a strong 'movie' feel (we can hear Barry, Silvestre, Elfman, and Williams in the music), and a little hint of jazz. 'My music is the natural product of everything I have ever heard before – rather than trying to shy from certain styles and emphasise others, I let them all speak through my pieces – yet, as with all composers, it has taken me a long time to develop my own 'voice', hence I have shied from public performance of my own music in the past'.

When asked about musical influences, Kris is typically philosophical in his answer: 'Anything I have ever heard has influenced my style – even what we would personally consider 'bad' music is not necessarily 'bad' – when you are a composer, there is something to learn in everything – with music we don't like, we learn more about what we don't like about certain musical elements, and as a result, we will avoid those things in our own writing. Consequently, we become surer of ourselves through the works of others, regardless of our personal opinions of the works'.

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