

THRENOS



**a Rhapsody for Two Soprano Solos,
Mixed Choir (SATB) & Cello**

Phillip A. Cooke

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(2014)

PERFORMANCE NOTES

The solo sopranos can be placed independent of the main body of the choir or within the choir, moving to a prominent position for the solos

The *mmm* sound is a resonant humming sound, perhaps with a slightly open mouth if necessary to create a fuller sound.

The *Ah* sound is a generic 'A' sound such as one from the southern counties (of England) may say when pronouncing the word 'after'.

The *O* sound is a generic 'O' sound such as in 'O Little Town of Bethlehem' etc.

In the held chords, singers should breathe regularly and independently to achieve sustained notes.

The dotted arrows represent a gradual change of singing style from the conventional to humming. The speed of this change is entirely to the discretion of the choir master.

The solo cello sections are free and a sense of rubato should prevail.

For Paul Mealor and the University of Aberdeen Chamber Choir

First performed by the University of Aberdeen Chamber Choir, with Peter Davis (cello), conducted by Paul Mealor in King's College Chapel, Aberdeen on 25 November 2014

Duration: 9 minutes

Cover photograph: 'Skiddaw' (Cooke)

For more information: www.phillipcooke.com

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PROGRAMME NOTE

Threnos is a setting of the final five verses of William Shakespeare's surreal and possibly allegorical *The Phoenix and the Turtle* of 1601. This dramatic poem, which has long confounded scholars and intrigued other poets and composers is amongst Shakespeare's greatest and most unclassifiable works and shows the playwright and poet at the height of powers. Shakespeare himself subtitles the final verses 'Threnos' (from the Greek for a song for the dead) and these verses set a dark and subdued end to the poem.

My work is scored for solo cello, two sopranos and chorus and sets four of the five final verses (I omitted the verse beginning 'Leaving no posterity' as I felt it made little sense without the rest of the poem). The work is both a threnody and a meditation with the cello expounding upon some of the themes in the poem, often saying more than the choir and the text have said. *Threnos* is similar in design to my earlier work for trumpet and choir *Invocation* (2010) – but in this later work the cello has a more active role, rather than a pure commentary, often accompanying the choir, often using them as an accompaniment. I chose the cello for both its rich, dark timbre and range, but also the very human quality of its tone – unlike some of my other works for this instrument, the cello never reaches its highest range, sticking instead to the comfortable range of the human voice (both male and female).

Although I initially thought *Threnos* was one of my bleakest pieces, I think there is some warm, reflective music here which belies my initial thoughts. I wrote the work in the full heat of summer looking over the beautiful Skiddaw mountain range in the English Lake District (where I come from) – with this in mind, I included a quote from a song I wrote whilst a teenager which used the same hills as an awkward metaphor for unrequited love. It made sense to me.

PAC

TEXT

Beauty, truth and rarity,
Grace in all simplicity,
Here enclosed in cinders lie.

Death is now the phoenix' nest
And the turtle's loyal breast
To eternity doth rest,

[Leaving no posterity:
'Twas not their infirmity,
It was married chastity.]

Truth may seem, but cannot be:
Beauty brag, but 'tis not she;
Truth and beauty buried be.

To this urn let those repair
That are either true or fair
For these dead birds sigh a prayer.

William Shakespeare (1564 - 1616)

THRENOS

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE (1564 - 1616)

PHILLIP A. COOKE (2014)

a Rhapsody for 2 Soprano Solos, Mixed Choir (SATB) & Cello

Liberamente (senza misura) (♩ = c.52)

rit. - - - - -

Cello

f *molto espress.* *pp* *mf* *f* *pp*

Soprano

Alto

Tenor

Bass



A

Adagio misterioso e sostenuto (♩ = c.72)

sub. mf *pp*

pp *sempre*

* *mmm* *mmm*

pp *sempre*

Beau - ty, truth, beau - ty, truth, beau - ty, truth,
 Beau - ty, truth, beau - ty, truth, beau - ty, truth,
 Beau - ty, truth, beau - ty, truth, beau - ty, truth,

* *O*

* See preface for details. *pp* *sempre*

pp *sempre*

2 Soli

p *mp* *p* *mp*

Beau - ty, truth, and ra - ri - ty. Grace in all sim -

mmm *mmm*

beau - ty, truth, beau - ty, truth, beau - ty, truth, beau - ty, truth,
 beau - ty, truth, beau - ty, truth, beau - ty, truth, beau - ty, truth,

(O)

p *mp* *p* *mp*

9

p *mp* *p* *mp*

- plic - i - ty, Here en - clos'd in cin - ders lie, here en - clos'd.

mmm *mmm*

beau - ty, truth, beau - ty, truth, beau - ty, truth, beau - ty, truth,
 beau - ty, truth, beau - ty, truth, beau - ty, truth, beau - ty, truth,

(O)

p *mp* *p* *mp*

B

accel.

3

13

pp cresc.

p *Tutti* *pp cresc.*

in cin - ders lie, Here en - clos'd in Here en - clos'd in

pp cresc.

Here en - clos'd in Here en - clos'd in Here en - clos'd in

pp cresc.

beau - ty, truth, Here en - clos'd in Here en - clos'd in Here en - clos'd in

beau - ty, truth, *pp cresc.*

(O) Here en - clos'd in, Here en - clos'd in, Here en - clos'd in,

p *pp cresc.*

poco piu mosso (♩ = c.90)

rit.

17

f cresc.

f cresc.

ff

Here en - clos'd in cin - ders lie, in cin - ders lie, in cin - ders

f

Here en - clos'd in cin - ders lie, in cin - ders lie, in cin - ders

f

Here en - clos'd in cin - ders lie, in cin - ders lie, in cin - ders

f

Here en - clos'd in, cin - ders lie, in cin - ders lie, in cin - ders

f cresc.

ff

21

pp

pp

lie.

pp sempre

mmm *mmm*

pp sempre

Beau - ty, truth, beau - ty, truth, beau - ty, truth, beau - ty, truth,

Beau - ty, truth, beau - ty, truth, beau - ty, truth, beau - ty, truth,

O

pp sempre

pp

C

25

f *pp* *mf* *pp*

molto espress.

6

3 3

ppp sempre

ppp sempre

ppp sempre

ppp sempre

mmm *mmm* *mmm* *mmm*

* See preface for details.

D

Molto sostenuto (♩ = c.72)

26

mf pesante

fp Death, death, death, death,

fp Death, death, death, death,

fp Death, death, death, death,

fp Death, death, death, death,

mf Death is now *f* the Phoe - nix' nest;

pp

mf *f*

30

f *gliss.* *pp* *mf sim.*

fp death, death, death, death,

fp death, death, death, death,

fp death, death, death, death,

fp death, death, death, death,

p *mf* *f*

And the tur - tle's loy - al breast

p *mf* *f*

f *pp* *mf* *f*

fp *fp* *fp* *fp* *pp*

death, death, death, death, death,

fp *fp* *fp* *fp* *pp*

death, death, death, death, death,

fp *fp* *fp* *fp* *pp*

death, death, death, death, death,

fp *fp* *fp* *fp* *pp*

death, death, death, death, death,

p *mf* *f*

To et - ern - i - ty doth rest

p *mf* *f*

E

39 poco meno mosso (♩ = c.66)

pp *p* *mf*

p espress. *pp* *p* *ppp*

Soprano: 2 Soli Death is now the Phoe-nix' nest, Death is now the Phoe-nix' nest,

Soprano: gl. altri *ppp sempre* death.

ppp sempre death.

ppp sempre death.

ppp sempre death.

p espress. *pp* *p* *ppp*

ppp sempre

F

Liberamente (senza misura) - a tempo (♩ = c.66)

44

mp *f* *mp* *f* *pp* *sub. mf* *pp*

molto espress.

mmm

mmm

mmm

mmm

mmm

G

Dolcissimo e teneramente (♩ = c.52)

45

p *molto espress.* *p sim.*

pp *espress.*

Truth may seem, but can - not be; _____ Truth may seem, but can - not be; _____

pp *espress.*

Truth may seem, but can - not be; _____ Truth may seem, but can - not be; _____

pp *espress.*

Truth may seem, but can - not be; _____ Truth may seem, but can - not be; _____

pp *espress.*

Truth may seem, but can - not be; _____ Truth may seem, but can - not be; _____

pp *espress.*

poco a poco accel. - - - - -

50

p *mf*

p *pp* *p cresc.*

Beau - ty brag, but 'tis not she; Truth and beau - ty,

Beau - ty brag, but 'tis not she; Truth and beau - ty,

Beau - ty brag, but 'tis not she; Truth and beau - ty,

Beau - ty brag, but 'tis not she; Truth and beau - ty,

p *pp* *p cresc.*

Beau - ty brag, but 'tis not she; Truth and beau - ty,

p *pp* *p cresc.*

Beau - ty brag, but 'tis not she; Truth and beau - ty,

H

----- Subito a tempo Liberamente (senza misura)

55

p cresc. *f appass.* *pp*

f *ppp*

Truth and beau - ty, Truth and beau - ty, Truth and beau - ty, bur - ied be.

f *ppp*

Truth and beau - ty, Truth and beau - ty, Truth and beau - ty, bur - ied be.

f *ppp*

Truth and beau - ty, Truth and beau - ty, Truth and beau - ty, bur - ied be.

f *ppp*

Truth and beau - ty, Truth and beau - ty, Truth and beau - ty, bur - ied be.

f *ppp*

Truth and beau - ty, Truth and beau - ty, Truth and beau - ty, bur - ied be.

I

pochiss. rit. - - - - -

Lento (primo tempo) (♩ = c.52)

59

p espress.

sub. *mf* *pp*

2 Soli *pp* sempre, senza espress.

mmm

mmm

mmm

mmm

mmm

To this urn let those re - pair



62

mf *pp* *mf*

(Soprano)

pp sim.

mf

That are ei - ther true or fair;

J

67

pp

Soprano: 2 Soli *pp*

For these dead birds sigh such a prayer, For *pp*

Soprano: gli. altri *pp sempre, sospirando*

* Ah Ah

Alto *pp sempre, sospirando*

* Ah Ah

Tenor *pp sempre*

* Ah Ah

* See preface for details.

pp

pp sempre, sospirando



72

pp

these dead birds sigh such a prayer, sigh such a prayer,

Ah Ah Ah Ah Ah

Ah Ah Ah Ah Ah

Ah Ah Ah Ah Ah

pp

pp sempre, sospirando

rit. -

77 *ppp*

a prayer,

ppp

ppp

ppp

K

Liberamente (senza misura) - a tempo (♩ = c.52)

82

f *pp* *mf* *f* *pp*

molto espress.

rit. al fine.

82