

junshi
殉死

for string quartet

Nikolaos-Laonikos Psimikakis-Chalkokondlyis

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in memoriam: remembering the Great War
for string quartet

Programme Note

“*Junshi*”, in the Japanese samurai culture, was the act of following your lord to the death (sometimes translated as “suicide through fidelity”), the suicidal ritual that samurai performed when their lord fell in battle or was murdered.

It only seems natural to talk about “suicides through fidelity” when it comes to wars, and especially wars such as the World Wars. No attempts have been made in any way to depict *junshi* in this composition; *junshi* is simply a word, an idea that brings together wars, Yamamoto Tsunetomo (a samurai who did not perform *junshi* when his lord died, and wrote “*Hagakure*” -also known as “*The Way of the Samurai*”-, a collection of writings describing the way a true samurai must be prepared to die at any moment, and to die for a higher ideal other than just himself), and John Burnside's poem “*A Myth on Narcissus*” (from “*The Good Neighbour*”, 2005), in which he quotes a phrase from the *Hagakure*, and which to me is an incredibly powerful poem, very directly connected to wars whether in the form of Samurai battles, the World Wars or the revolutionary riots currently taking place in Athens.

Concerning the writing of the piece, the piece itself is not emotional; it is not based on a motif; it is not written in a specific form; it is just the sounds, sounds which are created out of thin air only to end up being thin air again once they finish; sounds which die out and other sounds which follow them, until there is nothing else. As a composer I am very interested in memory and time, and consequently, the item that intrigued me the most out of the exhibition at the Museum was Edward Thomas' pocket watch, which stopped at the time of the shell-blast that killed him. That watch stopped at that exact moment due to the impact of war on that particular location, that particular time. In a way, it carries something with it from back then, it carries a bit of time that it has yet to release – and in a sense, it's as if that watch has performed *junshi*, following its master to his death.

“*The end is important in all things*” - Yamamoto Tsunetomo, *Hagakure*, tr. William Scott Wilson


This piece was written for the Imperial War Museum *In Memoriam* Composition Competition
Duration: 8 - 9 minutes


Performance Instructions


The players play non-vibrato throughout the piece. All Bartok pizz. must be let to ring on.


If available, the second violin and cello players must use a wooden mute instead of a plastic one. Otherwise, a plastic mute can be used, but the players must play a little bit more towards the board (*sul tasto*)


 x noteheads indicate finger taps on the board (no bowing)

 this indicates an approximate, continuous glissando for the duration specified by the beats above

 This symbol means that the note is to be raised by a quarter-tone

 This symbol means that the note is to be lowered by a quarter-tone

 This symbol means that the note is to be raised by three quarter-tones

 This symbol means that the note is to be lowered by three quarter-tones

G.R. _____, _____ means scraped (scratch tone)

 on a stem means fast, irregular bowing/tremolando (such as in m.114 and 117 of the violin part)

Any other non-traditional/standard actions not described above are explained in the score.

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without much emotion
with more distance from the music itself

♩ = 50-54

Violin I *p* *mf* *p*³ *mp*⁵

Violin II *p* *pp* *p*

Viola

Violoncello

Violin I and Violin II parts feature melodic lines with triplets and quintuplets. The Viola and Violoncello parts are mostly rests.

Vln. I 11 *mp* *p*³ *sfz p* *pizz.* *arco*⁵

Vln. II *pp* *mp* *mf* *mp* *pp* *mf* *p*

Vla. *pp* *p*³ *mf*

Vlc.

Violin I and Violin II parts continue with melodic lines, including a pizzicato section in Violin II. The Viola part has a triplet. The Violoncello part has a triplet. The score ends with a 3/4 time signature change.

19

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vcl.

f p

mp mf

p mp

p

pp

mf

pp ppp f

25

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vcl.

p mf

con sordino

mf pp

pp

col legno battuto

pizz.

arco

mf p mp pp mf

41

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vlc.

B

mf

pp

mf

p

pizz.

sfz

mf

p

48

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vlc.

p

sfz

p

sfz

mp

ppp

sfz

arco

sfz

arco

mf

pizz.

arco

ff

p

sfz

mf

p

mf

Musical score for measures 69-74, featuring four staves: Vln. I, Vln. II, Vla., and Vlc. The score includes various musical notations such as triplets, slurs, and dynamic markings. The Vln. I staff starts with a 5-measure phrase and includes dynamics *f*, *mp*, and *f*. The Vln. II staff includes dynamics *f*, *mf*, and *f*. The Vla. staff includes dynamics *mp* and *ff*. The Vlc. staff includes dynamics *sffz*, *mp*, and *sffz*. A 7:8 time signature change is indicated in measure 73.

Musical score for measures 75-80, featuring four staves: Vln. I, Vln. II, Vla., and Vlc. The score includes various musical notations such as triplets, slurs, and dynamic markings. The Vln. I staff includes dynamics *ff*, *mf*, *ff*, *fff*, *p*, *mf*, *pp*, *ppp*, and *mp*. The Vln. II staff includes dynamics *pp*, *f*, *mf*, and *p*. The Vla. staff includes dynamics *p*, *mp*, *p*, *f*, *mp*, *pp*, *mf*, and *fff*. The Vlc. staff includes dynamics *p*, *sffz*, *sffz*, *p*, and *ff*. A G.R. (Grand Ritardando) marking is present in measure 78, and a boxed 'D' marking is present in measure 79. Time signature changes to 6/16 and 5/16 are indicated in measures 79 and 80.

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82

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vcl.

pizz. *arco* *pizz.* *arco*

sfz *ff* *mf* *mf* *fff* *sfz > mf* *sfz > mp* *sfz > p*

mp *sfz* *f* *ff* *sfz > mf* *sfz > mp* *sfz > p*

p *mp* *f* *fff* *sfz > mf* *sfz > mp* *sfz > p*

mp *mf* *mp* *ff* *sfz > mf* *sfz > mp* *sfz > p*

G.R. E G.R.

91

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vcl.

G.R. F

sfz > pp *sfz* *sfz* *mf* *f* *mp*

sfz > pp *sfz* *sfz* *mf* *ff* *mf*

sfz > pp *sfz* *sfz* *f* *mp* *f* *p* *f*

sfz > pp *sfz* *sfz* *p* *f* *mp* *mf*

con sord.

101

Vln. I *f* *ff* *p* *mp* *< f* *p* *pp*

Vln. II *ff* *p* *mf* *p* *mf* *gliss* *3*

Vla. *mp* *f* *mp* *f*

Vcl. *(con sord.)* *p* *ff* *mp* *3*

107

Vln. I *ff* *ff* *ff* *pp* *mp* *tap* *5*

Vln. II *ff* *ff* *pp* *tap* *3* *p*

Vla. *ff* *ff* *fff*

Vcl. *(con sord.)* *col legno tratto* *pp* *(change bowing as seamlessly as possible)*

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116 *con sord.* arco G.R. tap arco G.R. tap arco G.R. G.R. [H]

Vln. I *fff* (any low pitch) (open strings) *p* *fff* *pp* *fff* *fff*

Vln. II *fff* frantically (any pitches) *fff sim.* *fff sim.* *fff sim.* *p* tap

Vla. *fff* (as quickly as possible) *fff sim.* *fff sim.* *fff sim.*

Vcl. *(con sord.)*

126 *senza sord. sul tasto* *pizz.* *arco*

Vln. I *mp* *pp normale*

Vln. II *arco* *sul pont.* *p* *mp*

Vla. *arco* *p* *pp* *mp*

Vcl. *(con sord.)* *p* *pp* *sul tasto* *normale*

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138

con sord. → *sul pont.* → *normale*

ppp (gliss. harmonics)

p *p* *mf* *p* *mp*

sul tasto → *normale*

pp *p* *pp* *mp*

sul pont. *col legno tratto*

normale sul tasto

mp

149

spiccato

I

pp *f* *p* *f* *pp* *ppp* *mf* *p*

p *p* *f* *pp*

pp *mp* *mp* *p*

senza sord.

f *p*

sul pont.

156 **J** *sul pont.* *normale*

Vln. I *mf* *pp* *pp*

Vln. II *p* *ppp* *pp* *sul tasto*

Vla. *pp* *pp*

Vlc. *sul pont.* *f* *pp* *normale* *p* *ppp*

165 **K** *sul pont.* *con sord.* *normale* *sul tasto* *normale*

Vln. I *pp* *p* *pp* *p* *p* *ppp*

Vln. II *normale* *p* *mp* *pp* *sul pont.* *ppp* *normale* *p*

Vla. *pp* *p* *p* *con sord.* *pp* *pp* *pp*

Vlc. *p* *pp* *pp* *p* *pp* *ppp* *sul pont.*