A Brussels Requiem

Bert Appermont

The attacks in Brussels on 22 March 2016 created a shockwave throughout Belgium and the rest of the world. Equally, the attacks in Paris and Nice led to great public indignation, fear and disbelief. What has happened to the western world? Why have innocent people been killed? Have cultures grown apart to such an extent that we do not understand each other anymore?

Creating a piece of music in relation to this theme is no sinecure; I didn't want to musically depict what happened in Brussels. Instead, I wanted to voice certain emotions that these acts of terror caused; particularly fear, grief, anger and helplessness, but also hope and faith in another world. In addition, the work was meant to pay homage to all victims resulting in a dignified remembrance.

To accomplish this, I have used the French children's song 'Au Clair de la Lune' as a connecting thread throughout the work. Although it is generally considered a lullaby for children, the end of the song features a slightly more adult theme, 'the door closing itself behind them'. The door symbolizes the entrance to the empire of love, and behind it lives the Dieu d'Amour (God of Love).

Within four through-composed parts, this children's song undergoes various transformations.

The work opens with a simple tune, that, in all of its pureness and innocence, is played by bells and vibraphone in response to an elegant and lyrical solo melody (Part 1). It then turns into a tuneful hymn, played by the band.

Suddenly, the lullaby is shattered by a hammering and almost military-like motif. In Part 2, all hell breaks loose. The tension slowly builds towards a dramatic climax that leads to a performance of the children's song in a minor key - this is written in the form of a chorale theme.

Then, from afar, echoes of the song are played by muted trumpets, accompanied by the snare drum and timpani in an atmosphere of remembrance (Part 3). Having just created a deep feeling of meekness, a tuneful theme emerges, attempting to transcend the sorrow and sing the praises of hope. It is hope that gives us strength to rise again and overcome our fears.

Part 4 contains elements of all the previous parts, and it begins in stirring turbulence. The music finds its way through agitated passages and then develops into a grand tutti, in which a humble melody from Part 3 is now highlighted exuberantly. After a moment of stillness, 'Au Clair de la Lune' is featured again as an evaluation of what has taken place. Various motifs and thematic elements return one last time in an effervescent finale.

The musical development is presented in four through-composed parts, titled:

1. Innocence

2. In Cold Blood

3. In Memoriam - We Shall Rise Again

4. A New Day

This work was commissioned by the Brassband Oberösterreich (Brass Band Upper Austria) to be played at the European Brass Band Championships in 2017.

West Wind - Metamorphoses for Brass Band

Oliver Waespi

"West Wind" is structured in three parts, each bearing a subtitle drawn from poems by Emily Brontë (1818–1848). Poetry of the Romantic period—and Brontë's in particular—often presents a gentle, almost innocent surface, beneath which lie the most elemental and volatile emotional forces, capable of erupting at any moment.

Accordingly, the opening movement, *"West-wind, in thy glory and pride!"*, begins with a mellow, warm soundscape, underpinned by lightly pulsating patterns, almost like an aquarelle. Gradually, however, the music transitions into far rougher, forward-driven gestures—turbulent, restless, and at times unpredictable, much like the west wind itself.

The ensuing Adagio reflects on the poem *"Stars"*, in which a fundamental tension between exaltation and regret—another recurring feature of Brontë's poetry—is palpable throughout. Introspective solo and chamber music statements give way to a broad ecstatic sound field involving the full ensemble, before finally receding into a solitary euphonium soliloquy.

The final movement, *"Wild words of an ancient song"*, takes the form of an extended rondo-scherzo, driven by virtuosic, perpetual motion. The sense of relentless pursuit bears a nod to *"The Boy on the Moor"* by the German poet Annette von Droste-Hülshoff, a contemporary of Brontë who explored similar narratives, albeit from a different perspective.

Although certain core musical elements recur—pulsating patterns, a chorale, a tone row—the work is guided less by systematic symphonic development than by an intuitive stream of variants. These generate a sequence of metamorphoses that illuminate the material from shifting vantage points, projecting the emotional landscapes of Romantic poetry into the present day.

"West Wind" was commissioned for first performance at the 2026 European Brass Band Championships in Linz (A).

Metamorphosis on a Balkan Theme

Bert Appermont

This composition is based on the melody of *Gankino Horo*, a rousing Bulgarian dance. Various elements from this melody form the material from which the composition is constructed.

Short motivic cells recur in various ways and undergo all manner of metamorphoses throughout three contrasting movements (Lament – Fury – Hope). After extensive development throughout the movements, the theme reappears in its original form in a dazzling finale (Dance) in Balkan style with funk elements.

Just as the Horo melody undergoes a metamorphosis, the world is changing at breakneck speed. There is a great deal of tension, conflict, individualism and fear. World leaders are causing chaos and uncertainty.

On a deeper level, the music touches upon these aspects: the dark, dramatic atmosphere in the first movement and the tense, furious presto in the second movement are, as it were, mirrors of our times. In movement 3, the music seeks tranquillity, hope and transformation in troubled times. The piece concludes with a rousing dance (movement 4) that celebrates life despite all the diRiculties.

The Turing Test

Simon Dobson

A test for intelligence in a computer, requiring that a human being should be unable to distinguish the machine f rom another human being by using the replies to questions put to both.

Alan Turing is considered the 'father of modern computational science' and much, if not all of the modern computer technology and connectivity that we now take for granted is born of the work of this one great, but troubled man.

Turing spent his early life pioneering and developing the exciting new theories and advancements that now power our world, but one of the most interesting parts of his work came after the war when he developed his theories on artificial intelligence and ultimately created the modern rules, which govern how we discern the legitimacy of an Al.

Alan Turing devised theoretical machines that could provide mathematical answers to theoretical problems. There is no doubt that his incredible mind ultimately saved millions of lives during the end of WWII, when he famously began his tenure at Bletchley Park working as a code breaker and ultimately cracking the greatest encoding machine of all time, the Enigma Machine.

My work, The Turing Test is essentially non-programmatic (and runs as one long movement) but does seek to show something of the emotion and colour of Turing's life. The first section (A-F) of the work attempts to portray both the eventual imagined beginnings of bio-digital life forms (Al) and Turing's entry into the academic and scientific community. At a young age his mind was on fire and a great deal of the compositional material used here is created using the algorithmic outputs from some of his own theoretical 'machines', the binary forms of his name and even his own handwritten signature to provide rhythms.

The second section (F-P) seeks to show Turing's race against time to create ever more complex solutions to ever more deadly problems. Turing was an unsung hero of WWII, and the pressure on him must have been immense. Turing lived in a time in which homosexuality was still seen as a crime. After the war, he was arrested for'indecency' and given the choice between jail time or the unbearably cruel punishment of chemical castration. So that he could continue his work, he opted for the latter, a choice that would ultimately end his life with his apparent suicide; this is the subject of the third section of the work (P-T). The last section of the work deals more holistically with the subject of Turing's post-humous royal Pardon and the tragedies that are born from ignorance. It isimpossible to calculate the worth of Turing's work to our modern world, but one thing is for sure, without the ignorance and intolerance that ultimately led to his

death, he could have done immeasurably more. This sense of sadness is why the work ends in chaos rather than triumphantly.

The work is composed using apposing sets of material, often based on Turing's own mathematical 'machines. It is my hope that the continued battles between the hard, robotic, digital sounding alien landscapes and the more rare displays of warm, organic sounding textures are representative of the complexities at play in an actual Turing Test. I have attempted using bi-tonality and complex rhythms to show apposing worlds colliding. At the end of each test, we have to decide, has true Al been born?

HorrorShow

Simon Dobson

“On November 13th, 2015, the world looked on in terror as Paris was attacked. Within days France displayed a defiant outlook and its people became unified in hope.

Almost exactly one year later a Facist was elected President of the US. Once again, despite the overwhelming feeling that those in charge are not working in our best interests, hope endures.

As a word the first time I heard the word ‘HorrorShow’ was when I read ‘A Clockwork Orange’ by Anthony Burgess. Again the theme here is senseless violence. I have taken inspiration from this imagined world and used distorted quotes from both Beethoven and Bach which feature heavily in the book and film.

HorrorShow is my tribute to those who died at the Bataclan last year and to the unbreakable spirit of both France and its people. It also serves as my statement that humanity IS good and capable of change.”

1). La Vie

We start from nothing. Life in the modern world is difficult and now more than ever, fraught with danger, regardless we live the best lives we can. This movement shows the difficulties of living in a changing world and attempts to portray (through chorals to portray the belief of humanity, minimalism to invoke modern cities and gypsy dances to as a celebration of different peoples living together) the often scary and fast paced world we live in.

2. La Mort

We return to nothing. On November 13th 2015 gunman opened fire at a heavy rock concert in Paris. After a choral and lament (euph solo) we hear the heavy rhythms and bass lines of a night at a rock gig. Soon after the music descends into chaos as lives are taken.

3. “…Mais nous avons des fleurs…”

This movement is inspired by the kindness and gentle nature humanity is capable of. I watched a video of a very young french boy, scared and confused after the violence and his father so very gently helped him to understand the fear and described how mourners in Paris used flowers to act against guns, and to keep them safe. It is a very beautiful moment. The movement starts with solos passed around the band and builds quickly to a huge, gothic and yet ambiguous finale.

Other Lives

Oliver Waespi

The dark chords at the beginning of the piece are derived from “Der Doppelgänger”, one of Franz Schubert’s late songs which is a haunting memorial to things past and lost. After a short development my music soon begins to accelerate and to find its own shape, gradually moving away from its point of departure. The entire first part entitled “Rage” has an intensely agitated character. The ensuing “Reflection” turns back to the initial chord progression, before a series of soloistic interventions explore time and space at a slower pace. After yet another uproar, the music almost sinks back to silence and gives way to the third part, “Redemption”. Here, a widely spaced sound field unfolds and culminates in a short, luminous reference to another song by Schubert, “Rückblick”.

After this last moment of farewell, an abstract musical transformation also triggers an emotional change, as the initial, gloomy motives, mostly in extended minor keys, are now presented in their inversed form, which leads to a much brighter harmonic landscape. Moreover, in the last part of the piece, “Renewal”, the grim, tense atmosphere of the first part is being transformed into an energetic exuberance, thereby presenting another face of the same musical material.This piece is as much a tale of imaginary lives – or maybe certain stages of a single life in its timeline – as it is an exploration of how opposed emotional states can be expressed by morphing the same basic musical material into different shapes.

“Other Lives” was commissioned by the Valaisia Brass Band and was first performed under the baton of Arsène Duc at the 2019 Swiss National Brass Band Championships at the Auditorium Stravinsky in Montreux.

Midnight's Butterflies

Maurice Donnet-Monay

Composed in 2017, this work presents the mystic figure of the moth. A music which describes its strength, colors, elegance, fragility, and its sensibility.

The harmony is built on a modal (personal approach) and tonal esthetics. A mixture allowing a combination of present 271 hamonious colors in the work. This technique was inspired by the work of Olivier Maessiaen (1908-1992) on the report of sounds and colors.

The five movements have to be played "attacca". This movements present characteristics of the moths and their fascinating behavior:

I. "Light attraction"

II. "Fragility"

III. "The hunting of the moth"

IV. "The mating"

V. "Dance of moths"

The main theme introduced by the Flugelhorn at D, inspired all the work as the first material. This theme undergoes variations, metamorphosis, and restructuring to offer a surprising music in constant evolution.

Eclipse

Maurice Donnet-Monay

This composition expresses my fascination for the astral phenomenon and explores various axes of reflection:

- The evolution of the concept of the eclipse over time (from antiquity to the present).
- The impact of an eclipse on Nature (fauna, flora, tide, temperature).
- What are the effects of an eclipse on the human psyche?
- The beauty and the incredible precision of this phenomenon (contemplation, admiration, mathematics, coincidence, God).

MUSICAL LANGAGE

My starting point was only 2 notes, a black key of the piano close to a white key, which already symbolizes in itself an eclipse. From there, I searched in numbers to establish melodies and various accompanying rhythms, which act as mathematical codes governing the balance of the universe (ex: bar 23 - bar 30).

For the first and third movements, I worked with a certain type of free and own harmonic langage, with personalized modes, aiming to valorize the play of shadows between the sun and the moon, and the different luminosities during the eclipse.

In the second movement, even if the idea of the total eclipse would have suggested the harmony of the 1 2 tones in my logic, it seemed important to me to disregard certain rules that I imposed on myself, in order to create a music more mystical, contemplative, and floating among the stars.

DESCRIPTION

1st Movement:

The introduction (start-C) is inspired by the mystical vision that the civilization of ancient China had. The eclipse was a scary event and

perceived as a dragon trying to devour the sun. In order to scare away the beast, people were shouting, warriors were shooting arrows into

the sky, and drums were ringing (toms, timpani, bass drum). The continuation of the movement refers to the impact of the eclipse on

Nature. Animals panic, flee and hide (C-G). The tide rises (G-I). Some plants slow their pace until they die (I-K). Suddenly time speeds up (KN).

The perfect alignment of the Sun, Moon and Earth is approaching. The landscape is dazzling (N-O)! Finally, darkness takes its place (OP),

despite a few tiny rays of Sun. Calm is gradually setting in...

2nd Movement:

Time stops. The eclipse is total, offering a cosmic fresco that aspires to meditation and contemplation (P-T). A mysterious and silent

phenomenon, floating among the stars... And yet so powerful (T-W).

3rd Movement:

Humans, even having lost a large part of their instinct, can experience side effects, which vary according to their temperaments:

-Euphoria (W-CC).

-Laziness (CC-DD).

-Disorientation (DD-GG).

Coda (GG-End):

I can't stop wondering. Is it chance if the distances Earth-Moon / Moon-Sun, combined with their perfect diameters, allow the exact

realization of the eclipse? Yet in an element as vast as the universe. Is there a message?...God?

Goldberg 2012

Sven H. Giske

Composed in 2011 originally for brass band (and later transcribed for concert band in 2018), the ~20-minute work draws loose inspiration from J.S. Bach's *Goldberg Variations* alongside personal family milestones.

Composer's Synopsis & Concept

- **Musical Dialogue.** Giske describes the piece as a meeting between classical and jazz musicians improvising together, each speaking in their own musical dialect while the composer tries to transcribe their interaction.
- **Layered Rhythms.** The music is built from parallel layers that float freely, bound by a shared basic pulse. Rhythms are frequently notated on unusual subdivision levels (moving away from standard eighth- or sixteenth-note grids) to create a transparent, detached sound.
- **Harmonic Foundation.** Rather than copying Bach's strict theme-and-30-variations structure, Giske uses favorite fragments of Bach alongside pop/jazz references. His own foundational material consists of two core chords—heard purest in the opening movement—from which he derives scales, harmonies, and motifs that unify the work.

Movements & Personal Dedications

The work is structured into six movements:

1. **Aria 2** – Dedicated to Giske's third son, Olav (born April 21, 2011), introducing the work's foundational two-chord material.
2. **Toccata**
3. **Aria 1**
4. **Transmogrifying Bach**
5. **From Long Ago** – Dedicated to the memory of the composer's father, Svein J. Giske (who passed away on June 6, 2011).
6. **Rhapsody on Bach & Brecker** – Referencing both J.S. Bach and jazz saxophonist Michael Brecker.

Simulacrum

Wim Bex

Simulacrum is the second part of the composer's intended trilogy, following *The Forest for the Trees*.

It is the score for a non-existing science-fiction film set in the dystopian world of Philip K. Dick, the prolific writer whose stories have been adapted into films such as *Blade Runner*, *Total Recall*, *A Scanner Darkly*, *Minority Report* and recently the TV-series *The Man in the High Castle*.

The work opens with a fast-paced action-scene where a group of rebels is being chased by the government's androids. The musical spirit of Dmitri Shostakovich (of whom Dick was a great admirer and who he imagined as sharing his own visions of life under a totalitarian state) is being used throughout *Simulacrum*.

The chase is followed by a rather comical scene with malfunctioning androids, hallucinating AI systems amid the 'kipple', and a strange message delivered by a dark haired girl.

The chase continues, the rebels nearly get caught by the androids and the full weight of the empire is shown for a first time, the black iron prison as a metaphor for the oppression and invisible false reality of political tyranny, social control, materialism, and demiurgic deception that overlays the true world.

The group of rebels (all the soloists throughout the whole piece) manage to escape to the rainy slums of the city. Little did they know that they had been infiltrated by the enemy (the solo euphonium) from the very beginning. By accident, he exposes his double role to the soprano cornet, is forced to kill her by stabbing her in the back, and then betrays the group's hiding place to the empire.

In the third and final part of the piece, the inevitable clash between the rebels and the empire is being prepared musically, with one extra layer added: the hidden message delivered by the dark haired girl. Dick also used a pink beam as a similar metaphor for an undestroyable message from outside the fabricated reality, reaching inside to whoever is capable of receiving it.

For this, the composer employs Shostakovich’s own musical signature (D-Eb-C-B).Shostakovich spent his career under a regime that could and occasionally tried to destroy him, composing on two levels at once: an official surface that satisfied the censors, and a hidden truth encoded beneath it. This four-note theme is the message from outside that has been succesfully delivered and is multiplying rapidly.

The inevitable clash happens. The rebels fight hard and are ultimately defeated by the vast machine the empire has become, but it fails to destroy the message from outside. Its core remains: empathy and love, the one thing a robot is incapable of showing, the one thing that still separates the real from the simulacrum.