Peter Meechan

Letters for Home

Songs of War and Love

for Wind Band

2014

Duration: c13’

Instrumentation

2 Flutes, Oboe (optional), Bassoon (optional)
E♭ Clarinet (optional), 3 Clarinets, Bass Clarinet
2 Alto Saxophones, Tenor Saxophone, Baritone Saxophone (optional)

3 Trumpets, 4 Horns (3rd & 4th optional), 2 trombones, Bass Trombone, Euphonium, Tuba

Percussion (3 players)
Bass Drum, Glockenspiel, 2 Snare Drums, Suspended Cymbal, Tenor Drum, Timpani,
3 Triangles (low, med, high), Tubular Bells, Vibraphone

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Letters for Home

Songs of War and Love

For Wind Band

2014

Duration: c12 minutes

Instrumentation

2 Flutes, Oboe (optional), Bassoon (optional)
E♭ Clarinet (optional), 3 Clarinets, Bass Clarinet
2 Alto Saxophones, Tenor Saxophone, Baritone Saxophone (optional)

3 Trumpets, 4 Horns (3rd & 4th optional), 2 trombones, Bass Trombone, Euphonium, Tuba

Percussion (3 players) – Bass Drum, Glockenspiel, 2 Snare Drums, Suspended Cymbal, Tenor Drum
Timpani, 3 Triangles (low, med, high), Tubular Bells, Vibraphone
Programme note

Letters for Home is a three movement work, commissioned by East Lancashire Concert Band with support from Arts Council England, to commemorate the start of the First World War, and the role played in the war by the ‘Accrington Pals’. Before each movement a reading should be made – these may be a letter sent from The Front, WW1 poetry, thoughts and reflections recorded elsewhere, or new words, written by local poets, school children or others.

Whilst specifically concerned with the First World War, each of the work’s movements broadly outlines emotions that would form part of any soldiers lives during any war – and as such, performances of this work can easily be adapted to reflect other wars both modern and historical, and locally sourced words for the readings is highly encouraged.

The first movement, “The Bittersweet Love Song” is the story of a soldier saying goodbye to his loved one before leaving for war. The opening passages are of the soldier, perhaps putting to the back of his mind the danger he is facing, singing a love song to his wife or girlfriend. In the following passages we hear his loved one singing “I love you”, played by the flute section.

We again hear the soldier singing – this time with more of a sense of what lies ahead for him, but now the response is further away as they gradually move more distant from each other. The movement ends without conclusion, but with chords for the soldier’s song played hauntingly over the percussion.

The second movement, “The Trench”, is more self-explanatory. It combines bravado in the percussion opening with the whole band coming together as one – as a unit, before again we hear fear and trepidation in the brass, once more failing to reach a resolution. Perhaps the thoughts of the soldier are interrupted as the percussion once more calls the men to arms. The movement ends with gun shots in the percussion.

The final movement, “In Memory”, opens with a repetition of the love song from the opening movement, before a slow lament, again never resolving, is heard. It keeps finding a new key, a new place, intending to represent the cyclical nature of war, and again without resolution, suggesting that war is also often that way.

Letters for Home is dedicated to Ian McGuinness, who’s support, enthusiasm, and shear hard work led to this work being commissioned and performed, and to the East Lancashire Concert Band, who gave the premiere on 27 September 2014, at the Town Hall, Accrington, home of the Accrington Pals.

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with sorrow
Piccolo (optional)

Flute 1+2

Oboe (optional)

Bassoon (optional)

Clarinet in E♭ (optional)

Clarinet 1 in B♭

Clarinet 2+3 in B♭

Bass Clarinet in B♭

Alto Saxophone 1+2

Tenor Saxophone

Baritone Saxophone (optional)

Trumpet 1 in B♭

Trumpet 2+3 in B♭

Horn 1+3 in F (3rd optional)

Horn 2+4 in F (4th optional)

Trombone 1+2

Bass Trombone

Euphonium

Tuba

Percussion 1

Tubular Bells

Percussion 2

Percussion 3

q = c.52 - 60

T

f express.}

p

pp

f express.

pp

f express.

Tubular Bells

Tuba

Percussion 1

Percussion 2

Percussion 3

pp

PP

pp

espress.}

f

espress.}

f

espress.}

f

espress.}