

Full Notes on Composition: Reminiscence

Before proceeding further into the score, accompany me in this mental exercise:

If you are an adult, recall the burdens of the monotony of work, recall the stress of making ends meet, taking care of your family, recall competing with others to survive in a rat race...

Now imagine yourself back as a student. Re-imagine yourself as a jovial child carefree from the worries of life, re-imagine the ignorant and bliss, re-imagine yourself complaining about the endless piles of schoolwork on your table...

...and now bring yourself back in reality.

To many of us, we have a yearning for a time when life seemed a lot more simpler compared to what we experience now. Sometimes, we **reminiscence** about the many jovial and warm memories of our lives when we were still in school.

The danger of thinking of **Reminiscence** in an overly romanticized way is that the reality of remembering good memories is not a simple polarised dichotomy between a happy past and a sad future. This work aims to explore the emotional complexities of remembering past memories. The work is based on two ideas - a three note motif which to me represents emotional ambiguity, and a more lyrical theme representing emotional recollection.

The work opens very ambiguously, revolving around the pitch centre of F. The three note motif is first introduced which is briefly developed by the oboe. A musical pause happens, before a slightly similar motif is presented by the horns. This cycle repeats, albeit with slightly thicker orchestration, eventually leading to a dense chord which decays in a controlled and precise manner. The next main idea is then presented - a lyrical theme suggesting hints of melancholy and bittersweetness played by the bassoon, tenor saxophone and the euphonium. This theme gradually stops, before the first motif appears.

The next section is an exploration of the first motif, this time in a different modal centre with clashes between the fourth and sharpened fourth degree of the scale. There is some musical direction, though slow moving and draggy at times, symbolising the gradual recollection of the memory. The music then develops into a much faster moving section which becomes much more chaotic, a cross fade between two motifs with the first motif becoming less and less prevalent and the second corresponding more prevalent. One can think of this as a violent battle between the decay and recollection of memory.

The next few bars can be simply described as emotional turmoil - with moods ranging from tranquility to immense passion, changing every two to four bars. The music culminating in an incredibly powerful climax that perhaps is the most emotionally climatic moment of the work, with the music eventually dying down. The textures gradually become less and less complex which to me represents an increasing clarity of the memory. The emotional turbulence is heartwrenching, representing a complex concentrated concoction of nostalgia, anguish, optimism, and uncertainty.

Eventually, the music becomes serene. At this point, the musical lines become the clearest, with the mallet players complementing the corresponding solo wind instruments, referencing my earlier works when I was still in school. The music then moves away gradually but rapidly from the memory, and soon the two ideas come into great conflict which culminates in a very violent section where different layers (quite literally) clash with each other. The harsh juxtapositions of the textural layers are like streams of sound masses which interact in a non-metronomical sense. The music eventually dies down one final time, with a reinstatement (albeit more skeletal) of the first motif, returning to the sense of ambiguity in the opening section.

I wrote this work in a time of intense longing to return back to school. Having just graduated from school, I felt a deep unprecedented sense of vulnerability and uncertainty in handling the complexities of life. **Reminiscing** the memories I made became a central inspiration to this work.