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Benjamin Potts ................................ 04/08/10
Date
Ex Tenebris Lux: Senior Honors Recital in Composition

by

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An abstract of
A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Emory College of Arts and Sciences
of Emory University in partial fulfillment
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Bachelor of Arts with Honors

Department of Music

2010
Abstract

Ex Tenebris Lux: Senior Honors Recital in Composition
By Benjamin Potts

The title of this thesis identifies the feature component of Benjamin Potts’ honors recital in composition, which took place on April 3, 2010. The audio file of the entire recital is entitled Potts_04-03-10.mp3 and can be accessed at Emory University’s Woodruff Library. Ex Tenebris Lux is a thirty-minute, five-movement musical work for string quartet, vocal octet, piano, and electronics. It aims to capture the universal human experience of pain, suffering, and the desire for a better world. Through the employment of both modern and traditional compositional techniques, the composer illuminates the perpetual cyclical process of creation, corruption, and renewal that characterizes the development and evolution of life in our universe. The first movement depicts the formation of the Earth out of chaos. Musical ideas slowly revolve and merge closer and closer together, until they finally achieve one body in unison. The second movement chronicles a “descent into darkness,” from primeval energy and optimism into a distorted, heavy, and oppressive reality. The third movement features the human voice, crying out against this darkness, unable to escape it. Amidst the sorrow, there is a faint plea for mercy in the form of a Latin prayer. Movement four is a transitional section that portrays the ascent from a place of sorrow and darkness into joy and light. The piano begins by playing a single note each second, signifying the passage of time in the depths before a gradual breaking away. The final climax of the fourth movement leads directly into the fifth movement, which embodies a common hope for glory, paradise, heaven, or simply a more perfect world. The Latin prayer from the third movement is fully developed into a contrapuntal passage, which then gives way to an ostinato that gains energy and momentum until the work’s climax. The final echoes of the “Lux Aeterna” instill a sense of renewal, rest, and repose. After the long journey and struggle, joy is found—Ex Tenebris lux: from darkness, light.
Ex Tenebris Lux: Senior Honors Recital in Composition

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Department of Music

2010
Ex Tenebris Lux
A five-movement work for string quartet, vocal octet, piano and electronics.

By: Benjamin Potts

April 3rd, 2010
Ex Tenebris Lux

Movement I – Prima Luce

String quartet, vocal octet, piano, electronics. Electronics should be a low, non-pitched rumble. All instruments and singers should be amplified. Heavy reverb can be used on the singers’ microphones until mm. 63. Light reverb is appropriate for the rest of the movement.

Movement II – Descensus

String quartet, amplified.

Movement III – Despero

Cello, two soprano soloists, TTBB. The vocalists should be amplified with moderate reverb. The cello needs only minimal amplification with very little reverb.

Movement IV – Ascension

Amplified piano, electronics. The electronics are in the form of a track that should be started when the pianist begins the movement. The track is approximately three minutes long and finishes as the pianist completes the opening section of the movement.

Movement V – Lux Aeterna

String quartet, vocal octet, piano, electronics. All instruments and singers should be amplified. Light reverb should be used on the singers, and little to none on the strings.

*General Notes: The amplification is not intended to draw attention, but merely enhance the balance and overall sound quality. The electronic tracks do not require synchronization with performers; they must simply be started at the right time in order to end within an acceptable margin.

Total run time: approximately 30:00.
I. Prima Luce

Adagio e sostenuto

$\mathfrak{d} = 62$

SOPRANO

ALTO

TENOR

BASS

PIANO

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Violoncello

$\mathfrak{d} = 62$

Electronics

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Lux aeterna domine

S.

A.

T.

B.

Pno.

Vln.

Vln.

Vla.

Vc.
II. Descensus

brilliante y spiritoso

\( \text{\textcopyright} \text{Benjamin Potts} \)

\( J = 164 \)

Violin I

\( f \) \hline \( \text{mp} \) \hline \( f \)

Violin II

\( f \) \hline \( \text{mp} \) \hline \( f \)

Viola

\( f \) \hline \( \text{mp} \) \hline \( f \)

Violoncello

\( f \) \hline \( \text{mp} \) \hline \( f \)
167

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

170

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

173

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.
```
\begin{align*}
Vln. I & \quad \text{poco decresendo y diminuendo al fine} \\
Vln. II & \quad mf \\
Vla. & \quad mp \\
Vc. & \quad mp
\end{align*}
```
III. Despero

Adagio doloroso

SOPRANO 1

SOPRANO 2

Violoncello

Tenor

Bass

6

the silver moon glides slowly down the rail-

Vc.

Piu mosso

I can-not e-scape it

I feel it pres-sing pres-sing

I can-not e-scape it

when I strug-gle a-against it

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S. 1

pres-sing hard
upon me

but no-one hears me

S. 2

i cry out
in de-sper-a-tion

but no-one hears me

Vc.

rubato y expressivo

chant-like

lux ae-ter-na lu-ce-at e-is do-mi-ne cum san-ctis tu-is in ae-ter-num

Vc.

chant-like

S. 1

we try to con-trol this dark-ness a-round us and in-

S. 2

we try to con-trol this dark-ness a-round us and in-

Vc.

qui - ah pi - us es
S. 1
side us

S. 2
side us building tem por ar y lan terns with fl i ck ring

Vc.

T.
lux ae ter na lu ce at e is do mi ne cum san eis tu is in ae ter num

B.
lux ae ter na lu ce at do mi ne cum san c tis in ae ter num

41
mp

44
a tempo

We make fires and tor ches to pe ne rate the

We make fires and tor ches to pe ne rate the

mf

mp

mf

mf

We make fires and tor ches to pe ne rate the

mf

mp

mf

mf

mf

We make fires and tor ches to pe ne rate the

mf
But they do not give comfort—only burn us

there is no power in me against this darkness

sha-dows surround me and I can-not breathe!

piu mosso
chant \( j = 68 \)

T.

lux aeterna luceat eis domine

B.

lux aeterna luceat eis domine

72

cum sanctis tu is in aeternum qui ab p i us es

B.

cum sanctis tu is in aeternum qui ab p i us es
\( q = 120 \)
V. Lux Aeterna

Benjamin Potts

SOPRANO

ALTO

TENOR

BASS

PIANO

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Violoncello
S.
\[ \text{Lux aeterna luceat domine cum sanctis in aeternum} \]

A.
\[ \text{Lux aeterna luceat eis domine cum sanctis tuuis in aeternum} \]

T.
\[ \text{Lux aeterna luceat eis domine cum sanctis tuuis in aeternum} \]

B.
\[ \text{Lux aeterna luceat do-mine cum sanctis in ae-ter-num} \]
s. a. t. b. vln. i

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

\( - \text{ter-} - \text{na lu-ce-at e-is do-mi-ne} \)

\( - \text{ter-} - \text{na lu-ce-at do-mi-ne} \)

\( - \text{ter-} - \text{na lu-ce-at e-is do-mi-ne} \)

\( - \text{ter-} - \text{na lu-ce-at e-is do-mi-ne} \)
S.\n\begin{music}\n\begin{align*}
S. & \quad \text{lux} \quad \text{ae} \quad \text{ter} \quad \text{na} \\
\end{align*}
\end{music}\nA.\n\begin{music}\n\begin{align*}
A. & \quad \text{lux} \quad \text{ae} \quad \text{ter} \quad \text{na} \\
\end{align*}
\end{music}\nT.\n\begin{music}\n\begin{align*}
T. & \quad \text{lux} \quad \text{ter} \quad \text{na} \\
\end{align*}
\end{music}\nB.\n\begin{music}\n\begin{align*}
B. & \quad \text{lux} \quad \text{ter} \quad \text{na} \\
\end{align*}
\end{music}\nPh.\n\begin{music}\n\begin{align*}
\text{Ph.} & \quad \text{p} \\
\end{align*}
\end{music}\nVln. I\n\begin{music}\n\begin{align*}
\text{Vln. I} & \quad \text{p} \\
\end{align*}
\end{music}\nVln. II\n\begin{music}\n\begin{align*}
\text{Vln. II} & \quad \text{p} \\
\end{align*}
\end{music}\nVla.\n\begin{music}\n\begin{align*}
\text{Vla.} & \quad \text{p} \\
\end{align*}
\end{music}\nVc.\n\begin{music}\n\begin{align*}
\text{Vc.} & \quad \text{p} \\
\end{align*}
\end{music}\n