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Ballade

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Ballade

for solo guitar

Sean Clarke

Written for Nathan Bredeson and the 2019 Canadian Music Centre Class Axe program.

Biography

Sean Clarke is an Ottawa-based composer, flutist and theorist originally from Calgary. He completed a doctorate in composition at the University of Montréal under the guidance of Ana Sokolovic and Jonathan Goldman, generously supported by a SSHRC Joseph-Armand Bombardier Doctoral Scholarship. Previously, he studied flute and composition at the Royal Northern College of Music under Peter Lloyd and Anthony Gilbert, and the University of Calgary under Allan Bell and David Eagle.

His works have been performed in France, America, and across Canada, by the National Youth Orchestra, Quatuor Bozzini, Robert Aitken, Land's End Ensemble, Ensemble Mise-En, Ensemble Arkea, and Project Iso, as well as featured in the World Saxophone Congress and the Canadian University Music Society annual conference. Sean has presented his theory research, which focuses on the music of Pierre Boulez and formal function in contemporary music, at national and regional conferences.

As a freelance flutist, Sean has performed in contemporary music festivals in Montréal, Calgary and Saskatoon, with the Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra and the Red Deer Symphony, and in concert series including the Société de Musique Contemporaine de Québec's Série Hommage and McGill University's Schulich Professional Concert Series.

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Program Notes:

In the tradition of Chopin's *Ballades* for piano, this work depicts a wide range of emotions across a narrative form. While there is no extra-musical plot, the sequence of musical events evokes an emotional journey. It is a narrative made up of subjective conscious experiences rather than external events; an inner narrative, a story stripped of details, leaving only the emotional effects of the absent outer events.

Several musical tropes appear throughout, slowly building in intensity before retreating into silence: an intimate Ayre (traditionally a song with lute accompaniment), a short Dirge (mourning song), a florid Rhapsody, an expressive Reverie, a questioning Signal, and a Lament.

Duration

7 minutes

Performance Notes:

Rubato

- Expressive *rubato* should be used throughout, particularly in the Rhapsody and Reverie sections. Notes with accents and legato markings should be emphasized and placed rhythmically.
- As a general rule, the simpler the rhythm, the more *rubato* can be used (for example, the constant triplets in the Reverie sections); the more complex the rhythm, the less *rubato* should be used. In other words, simple rhythms will still be intelligible when *rubato* is applied. Rhythms that are varied and precise should be played quite accurately, since the *rubato* and expressivity is already 'built into' the rhythms themselves.

Tempi

- Tempo markings are meant as suggestions only. Depending on their interpretation of the piece, the performer can decide on slightly slower or faster tempi, as long as the relative tempo changes between sections are still observed.
- In the Rhapsody passages, the performer can either begin in the new tempo immediately, or ease into it gradually.

Sustaining pitches

- Unless otherwise stated, notes should be sustained as much as possible. In general, the three or four most recent pitches should be sustained, with older pitches gradually dropped. If it becomes too awkward to keep a given pitch sustained, however, the performer should drop it; the overall goal is to create an acoustically wet effect with harmonies ringing through each phrase. Pitches do not have to be sustained dogmatically, but rather only as long as they fit comfortably under the fingers.

Largo espressivo

Ayre ♩ = ca. 84

Ballade

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Sean Clarke

Guitar

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

Dirge

5

p *simile*

Rhapsody ♩ = ca. 68

7

mp *p*

9

mf *mp* *mf* *p*

rit. (not sustained)

Reverie ♩ = ca. 60 *accel. poco a poco* *simile*

12

mp *mf* *f*

Signal ♩ = ca. 68

16 Lament $\text{♩} = \text{ca. } 56$ Ayre $\text{♩} = \text{ca. } 68$ *accel. poco a poco*

p *mp* *pp* *p* *mp*

20 $\text{♩} = \text{ca. } 84$

p *mp* *mf* *p*

24 Dirge

mp *simile* *f* *mp*

rit.

26 Rhapsody $\text{♩} = \text{ca. } 68$

mp *mf*

28 *mp* *mf*

30 *rit.* *f* *mf* *simile*

Reverie ♩ = ca. 60 *accel. poco a poco*

32 *f* *ff*

34 *ff* *sfz* *sfz* *p*

Signal ♩ = ca. 76 *rit.*

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38 Lament $\text{♩} = \text{ca. } 68$

mp *mf* *p*

41 Rhapsody $\text{♩} = \text{ca. } 76$

mp *simile* *mf*

42

mp *mf*

43 (Dirge)

mp *mf*

44 $\text{♩} = \text{ca. } 72$

f *ff* *f* *ff* *f* *ff* *rit.* *(ossia: C Bb)*

(not sustained) (l.v.) (not sustained)

Reverie $\text{♩} = \text{ca. } 60$ *rit. ----- a tempo* *accel. poco a poco*

46 *pp* *simile* *p*

49 *mp* *mf*

$\text{♩} = \text{ca. } 76$ *accel. poco a poco*

52 *f* *ff* *f* *ff* *f*

Signal $\text{♩} = \text{ca. } 90$

55 *ff* *fff* *p*

57 Ayre $\text{♩} = \text{ca. } 84$

XII XII XII VII

pp *mm. 57-61: little or no rubato*

62 $\text{♩} = \text{ca. } 80$

rit. ----- a tempo

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

67 Lament $\text{♩} = \text{ca. } 72$

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

71 Coda

Musical notation for measures 71-73. The system is in 6/8 time. Measure 71 starts with a *pp* (pedal note) dynamic. Measures 72-73 feature a melodic line with a *simile* marking and dynamics of *p*, *mp*, and *p*. A large slur covers the melodic line across all three measures.

74

Musical notation for measures 74-76. The system is in 7/8 time. Measure 74 starts with a *p* dynamic. Measures 75-76 feature a melodic line with dynamics of *mp* and *p*. A large slur covers the melodic line across all three measures.

77

Musical notation for measures 77-80. Measure 77 starts with a *pp* dynamic. Measure 78 has a *ppp* dynamic and a *poco rit.* marking. Measure 79 has a *p* dynamic. Measure 80 is marked with XVI and a *p* dynamic. The system includes time signature changes from 9/8 to 3/4 and a key signature change to one sharp (F#).