

At Summer's End

for string orchestra

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At Summer's End (2018)

Program Notes

If spring brings relief at the end of winter (with the reappearance of leaves, animals coming out of hibernation, birds migrating back from their haunts away from the cold), the season remains one of fledgling youth and preparation. Summer is the culmination: light, warmth, confidence, a time to harvest abundant and delicious fruits. Be it in New England or on the Atlantic coast of France, where I grew up, the end of the summer is in many ways an ideal time. The heat abates, the season still displays all of its glorious and lush trappings, but none of its harshness. Yet, there is something bittersweet about this comfortable, pleasant moment, as the thought of the upcoming cold, darkness, scarcity, and renewed hardships of winter gradually looms. During the last week of summer vacation (in France, school might resume as late as September 10), I also remember the waves signaling this change, increasing in height as the equinox neared, making the water muddier as the rougher ocean picked up more sand.

In life too, we may experience a moment like this, when we know – from watching the life cycles of others – that we are at a moment of height, that we can take in what we have gleaned, but that an inevitable descent is due. As we brace for this, at the end of this summer of sorts, we can still indulge for a few more days in the dream of a world that is warmly disposed toward us.

Although *At Summer's End* involves serious moments, thanks to their brevity and frequently propelling motion, the mood never become too ponderous: the connection to a youthful spirit is kept and the piece ends in a moment of optimism.

Descriptive Notes

The piece begins with the low strings in unison introducing a melodic motive that will return throughout.¹ The grave tone of this chant evokes a spoken pronouncement, a prayer, an incantation by

a religious leader, or perhaps a ballad – a bard's retelling of a national epic. The higher strings take over the narration (m. 10), now evoking how the identity of this people is tied up with a history of plight and vulnerability, a keen sense of the wounds of history, and the expectation of more hardships to come. The continued presence of the bass suggests strength and resilience as well as the richness and depths of this people's cultural roots.

This swiftly transitions to a new section with pizzicato (plucked) strings (m. 32), creating a new mood, somewhere between playfulness and mystery. To me, the athletic sound of a *tutti pizzicato* texture such as this also suggest travel by horse, which reinforces the imagery of an epic narrative set in early medieval times. Over this, a solo violin playing *arco* (bowed, not plucked) reprises the plaintive, melancholic idea of the beginning (m. 39). While the solo continues, a harmonically-complex chorale is introduced in the background, softly, in a high, icy register (m. 73). The chorale gradually takes precedence, acquiring the characteristics of an anthem (m. 88). Its concluding Picardy cadence (ending with a major chord instead of the expected minor chord) emphasizes once more the medieval setting (m. 98-99).

The next section (m. 100) uses the opening melodic theme once more, but this time in a very different, Baroque guise, perhaps reminiscent of Handel. The leisurely affect (mood) of this light, elegant, stylized aristocratic dance is short-lived, as first violins and basses bring back the opening chant (m. 104) and then the anthem (m. 113). The anthem is at first stated using tentative-sounding chalky harmonies, before gradually coming back to life as it returns to the Picardy cadence (m. 125). The sprightly Baroque music and the chant alternate, resolving in favor of clarity and weightlessness, with the strings evaporating (m. 146) like dew in the sun

steps of shorter rhythmic value. In subsequent iterations of the motive, the size of the intervals may be modified, but the shape remains.

¹ The motive begins with an anacrusis (a pickup) consisting of ascending leap, followed by two ascending skips. The anacrusis leads to a metrically accented note which is held longer, followed by two descending

AT SUMMER'S END

for string orchestra

Francis KAYALI

Like an old folk song ♩ = 96

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Cello

Contrabass

nostalgic and a little solemn

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

nostalgic and a little solemn

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

10

5

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Cello

Contrabass

mf

mp *f* *mp* *f* *p*

mp *f* *mp* *f* *p*

11

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

16

espr. *f* *mf* *mp* *mf* *mp* *p* *calm*
espr. *f* *mf* *mp* *mf* *mp* *p* *calm*
espr. *f* *mf* *mp* *mf* *mp* *p* *calm*
mf *mp* *mf* *mp* *mp* *p* *calm*
mf *mp* *mf* *mp* *mp* *p*

21 *rit.* *a tempo* 25

mp

mp

mp

26

mp

31

very light

p *pp*

pp very light

very light

p *pp*

pizz. *pp*

pizz. *pp*

34 Playful and a little faster ♩ = 112

pizz. *f*

pizz. *f*

pizz. *f*

f

f

40

f p $f >$

46

45

bouncy, athletic

mp f f $mp < f$

bouncy, athletic

bouncy, athletic

bouncy, athletic

bouncy, athletic

mp f f $mp < f$

mp f f $mp < f$

49

Violin Solo
gradually emerge into the foreground

espr.

Solo

Musical score for measures 49-52. The score is written for six staves: Violin I, Violin II, Viola, Cello, Double Bass, and a second Double Bass. The Violin I staff begins with a measure of rest, followed by a half note G4, a dotted half note G4, and a half note G4, all marked *mp* (arco). The other staves contain rhythmic accompaniment with various articulations like accents and slurs.

53

meditative

Solo

Musical score for measures 53-56. The score is written for six staves: Violin I, Violin II, Viola, Cello, Double Bass, and a second Double Bass. The Violin I staff features a melodic line with a half note G4, a dotted half note G4, and a half note G4, marked *meditative*. The other staves provide accompaniment with various articulations like accents and slurs.

58 *lyrical*

Solo

mp *f*

f

64

Solo

66

f *p* *mp*

p *mp*

p *mp*

p *mp*

70

Solo

mp

f

arco

p in the distance ³

mp

f

arco

p in the distance ³

mp

f

arco

p in the distance ³

mp

f

mp in the background

74

Solo

p

mf

p

mf

p

mf

p

mf

p

mp in the background

mp \rightarrow *f*

p

mp \rightarrow *f*

p

p

molto espr.

78

Solo

mp

p

mp

f

p

mp

f

p

mp

f

arco

(sempre pizz.)

Like an icy draft

82

mp

mp

mp

mp

arco

mp

88 **Elegant and refined**

short break

espress.

Musical score for measures 88-92. The score is written for five staves: two treble clefs, one alto clef, and two bass clefs. The time signature changes from 4/4 to 3/4, then 2/4, then 3/4, and finally back to 4/4. The music features a prominent triplet in the first measure of each staff. Dynamics include *p* (piano), *mf* (mezzo-forte), and *espress.* (espressivo). The tempo/mood is 'Elegant and refined'. A 'short break' is indicated above the first measure of the second system.

93

playful

with intensity

Musical score for measures 93-96. The score is written for five staves: two treble clefs, one alto clef, and two bass clefs. The time signature is 4/4. The music is characterized by a 'playful' and 'with intensity' mood. Dynamics include *p* (piano), *mf* (mezzo-forte), and *f* (forte). The tempo/mood is 'Elegant and refined'.

97 **Playful** **Assertive, confident**

mp *f* *mf*

mp *f*

mp *f*

mp *f*

mp *f*

100 Light and playful, like a Handel Bourrée

mf

mf

103

Musical score for measures 103-105. The score is written for five staves: Treble 1, Treble 2, Bass 1, Bass 2, and Bass 3. The key signature is one sharp (F#). The tempo/mood is indicated as *ff* massive, powerful, inexorable. Dynamic markings include *p* and *mf*. The music features complex rhythmic patterns and melodic lines across the staves.

106

Musical score for measures 106-109. The score is written for five staves: Treble 1, Treble 2, Bass 1, Bass 2, and Bass 3. The key signature is one sharp (F#). The tempo/mood is indicated as *mf*. Dynamic markings include *f* and *p*. The music features complex rhythmic patterns and melodic lines across the staves, with changes in time signature from 3/4 to 4/4.

117

Musical score for measures 117-119 in 4/4 time. The score consists of five staves. The first four staves contain musical notation for the upper voices and bass. The fifth staff is empty. The music features a mix of eighth and quarter notes, with some rests and dynamic markings.

Richer (come back to life, restore vib.)

122 Playful and a little faster ♩ = 112

accel. -----

120

Musical score for measures 120-122 in 3/4 time. The score consists of five staves. The first four staves contain musical notation for the upper voices and bass. The fifth staff is empty. The music features a mix of eighth and quarter notes, with some rests and dynamic markings. The tempo is marked as 'Playful and a little faster' with a metronome marking of ♩ = 112. The score includes dynamic markings *p*, *f*, and *mp*.

Assertive, confident

Musical score for measures 123-125. The score consists of five staves. The first two staves are in treble clef, the third is in alto clef, and the last two are in bass clef. The time signature changes from 3/4 to 4/4 and back to 3/4. Dynamic markings include *mp* and *f*. The music features a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes, with some measures containing rests.

126 Nostalgic

Musical score for measures 126-130. The score consists of five staves. The first two staves are in treble clef, the third is in alto clef, and the last two are in bass clef. The time signature changes from 3/4 to 2/4 and back to 4/4. Dynamic markings include *pp*, *mf*, *p*, and *f*. The word "nostalgic" is written below the first staff in the first measure. The music features a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes, with some measures containing rests.

131 *molto espr.*

molto espr. $f > mp$ mf mp mf

molto espr. $f > mp$ mf mp mf

molto espr. $f > mp$ mf mp mf

mf mp mf

mf mp mf

135 **136** **Playful** *calm*

calm mp p *lead in* mp

calm mp p *calm* mp

mp p *calm* mp

mp p *calm*

mp p

139

f

f

f

141

$\frac{2}{4}$

$\frac{2}{4}$

$\frac{2}{4}$

$\frac{2}{4}$

$\frac{2}{4}$

143

f *p* *very light* *p* *very light* *p* *very light* *p* *very light* *p*

f *poco pesante* *p* *calm and warm*

147

pp *pp* *pp* *pp*