Lost Content

for SATB choir and piano

Martin Humphries

Performance note:

The work concludes with a series of mobile phones playing back pre-recorded samples. Four to six people should be 'planted' around the audience with the files loaded onto their phones. On cue (rehearsal mark 'P') the 'plants' should hit play and leave the track to run. All tracks being with silence and slowly fade in and out. The samples are pre-recorded voices (ideally from the performing ensemble) singing singular pitches (Eb, Ab, Bb) with the start and end of each note removed. This creates an otherworldly, almost digital sound created entirely from the human voice.

The opening requires four vocal soloists (SATB) taken from the choir. These may be selected in advance or may be chosen spontaneously in each rehearsal/performance via a cue from the conductor.

Programme note:

Lost Content makes use of an A.E. Housman text taken from No. 40 of his famous cycle of poems, A Shropshire Lad (1896). Written before World War I, the words of Housman's poem are certainly prescient, and serve as both reflective and foreshadowing amidst such current international insecurity. The text also holds strong personal reverence, as its quotation in Dennis Potter's radio play Blue Remembered Hills (1979) made a lasting imprint on my perception of war during my childhood. The work began life as a very simple setting of the Houseman text but quickly developed into a far more immersive and, hopefully, rewarding choral experience for both performer and audience.

Into my heart an air that kills From yon far country blows: What are those blue remembered hills, What spires, what farms are those?

That is the land of lost content, I see it shining plain, The happy highways where I went And cannot come again.

Duration: variable (6-7 minutes)

Lost Content

for SATB choir and piano

A E Houseman Martin Humphries

A

В

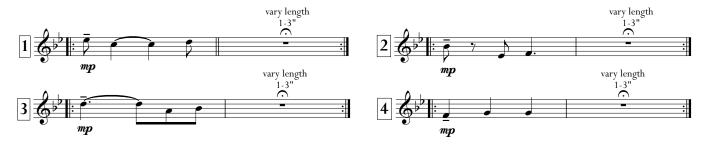
C

A Strike a key win an sfz accent, wait, then repeat varying pause on each repetition; Centre around Bb, F and C, but occasionally add other notes from the Bb major scale; 10-15 seconds Use any octaves within the singing range of the choir (SATB); Sustain pedal always pressed; Perform free of tempo and coincidence with other performers; Continue repeating this event until directed to stop (rehearsal mark 'F'). $|\mathbf{B}|$ Chorus: Do the following when cued by conductor: On the sounding of a piano note wait 1-3 seconds before singing the same note (at any comfortable octave); Each note should be sustained for the length of one comfortable breath; Each note can either be sung 'forte, dim. piano' or 'piano, cresc. forte'; Perform free of tempo and coincidence with other performers; You do not need to sing a note for every piano note; Repeat this event until instructed to stop by conductor; 20-30 seconds When instructed to stop, complete the note you are currently singing; Do not stop abruptly. **Conductor:** Cue singers to join or leave this event sporadically; Any number of singers can be singing at any one time; Strive for variety of texture and timbre. \mathbf{C} Four soloists (SATB): Sing the numbered fragments below in any order, repeating freely; Sing at any comfortable octave; Vary the text on each repetition (given text can be applied to any fragment); 20-30 seconds Perform independently of one another but try to retain an independent crotchet=c.40 pulse; Do not begin together or try to synchronise in any way;

Text: from yon far / are those blue / high-ways where / come a-gain

Character: lilting.

Repeat until directed to stop (rehearsal mark 'F');



D

Conductor:

Clear the texture by cueing singers to stop;

This does not include the four soloists who continue through this event;

Stagger exits to create a textural 'fade out';

If there are a large number of singers performing a 'conductor's sweep' may be employed.

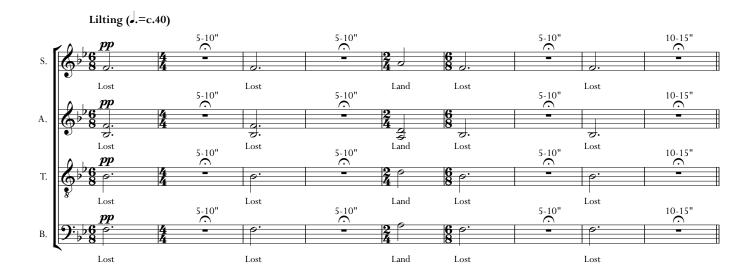
D 20-30 seconds

E

Chorus (except four soloists):

Sing the following in tempo on conductor's cue:

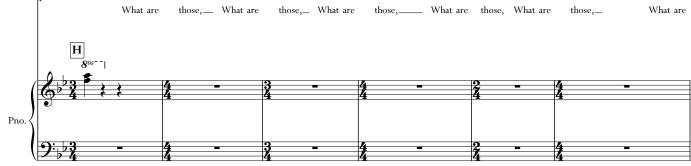
E



.....

В.

В.

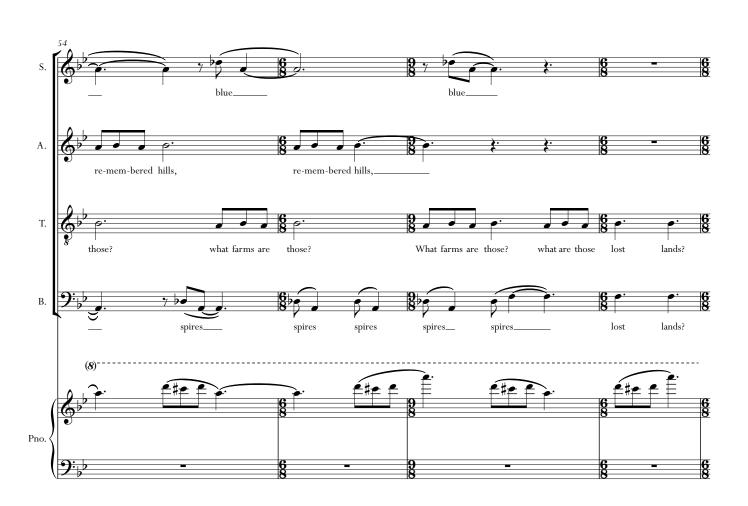




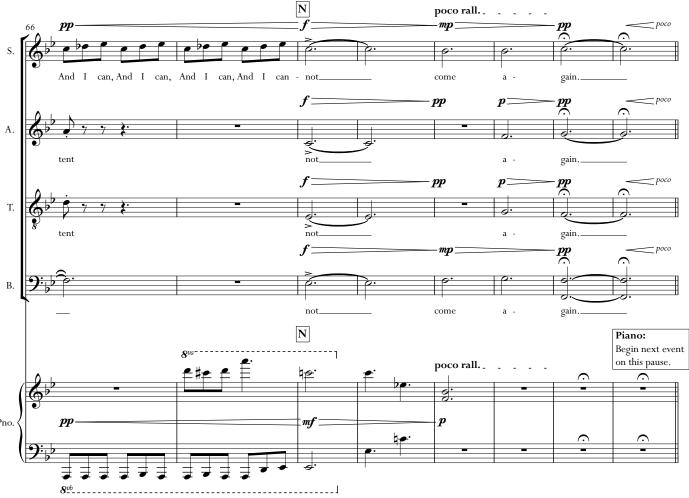












Piano: \mathbf{O} Play as at start of piece until cued to stop (rehearsal mark 'Q') with the following changes: 10-20 seconds Play consistently at a piano dynamic instead of with an sfz as at the start; Centre around C, F and G, but occasionally add other notes from the C major scale; Chorus: P Independently select any fragment from this piece (from one note to two bars in length); Repeat the fragment freely, varying rests between repetitions Do not synchronise with other singers; Maintain a static pianissimo dynamic throughout; Stop when directed by conductor at rehearsal mark 'Q'. **Mobile Phones:** 'Planted' participants should press play on their phones at the start of rehearsal mark 'P'. 10-20 seconds Before the performance prepare 4-6 mobile phones with pre-recorded audio; Brief the owners of these phones to press play at rehearsal mark 'P'; The tracks will fade in over the final gesture and remain playing for a subsequent c.60 seconds; The piece concludes when the last phone has gone silent. The samples played by the phones are pre-recorded voices, ideally from the performing ensemble. The voices are singing singular pitches (Eb, Ab, Bb) at any comfortable octave but with the start and end of the note removed. This creates an otherworldly, almost digital sound created entirely from the human voice. Conductor: Q Cue individuals to drop out of the texture; This may be done individually, through a conducting sweep, or as a combination of both; The order of this gesture is at the conductor's discretion. Until phones are silent

Tutti:

Maintain silence and stillness until final mobile phone has gone silent.

(40-60 seconds)