

Radiant Shadows, Julie Giroux
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Recording: University of North Texas Symphonic Band Giroux: Shine © 2018 Klavier Released
on: 2018-04-20 Conductor: Dennis Fisher Ensemble: University of North Texas Symphonic
Band

This is movement I of Heartland Portraits by Giroux. Heartland Portraits was commissioned by
Pete Poletti for the St. Louis Wind Symphony.

The composer writes: “*Radiant Shadows was composed during a seventy-three day journey, including a daily bucket list; the last seventy-three days I had with Sadie, who died of bone cancer. Sadie was my Great Dane, my companion and my loving innocent baby. She was only five years old. This is my Adagio for Strings. Sounds nothing like it of course, but the emotional journey is the same. Those are not my words; those are the words of people who heard its premiere. I can hardly listen to it and I don’t think I am capable of holding it together while conducting it so that may never happen either. Hearing it was the longest eight minutes of my life.*”

From the composer’s notes and based on harmonic and melodic material I have assigned adjectives that helped describe the many emotions associated with the loss of someone close. See the Flow Chart for my thoughts on how I feel the music expresses these emotions.

There are many tempo suggestions throughout this composition. The composer is very detailed as to the tempo for phrases, transitions, and melodic motifs. I interpreted her tempo indications to be suggested rubato.

The first 9 measures are scored in the woodwinds. Alto saxophone has the main melodic line till measure 9.

Meas. 1 – 7 bring out the moving eighth notes that are in the clarinets and bassoon. They add color and direction to the harmony.

Encourage the alto soloist to add dynamic contour to melodic line.

The sax parts are marked optional meas. 8 through meas. 15. I only had the bari tacet till 15.

Meas. 10 euphonium solo is the balance point. This is also in bassoon 1.

There is a ritard beginning in meas. 15 with a tempo indication of MM=44. Balance the chord in meas. 16 to low reeds for a dark resonant sound. Clarinet should bring out the moving quarter notes in meas. 16.

I pull the time back through the release on 3 in meas. 17.

I push the tempo a little beginning meas. 21, to at least MM=60.

With the trumpet melody in 25 the tempo wants to move slightly. Then pull back on the ritard in meas. 32 to the release in 33.

Stretch the quarter note pick-up in the flute...low searches for high!

I feel this is the main melody in the flute at 34. There is a beautiful counter line in the Alto sax.

Bassoon adds to this wonderful polyphonic texture in meas. 38.

At meas. 43 I balanced to the flute, oboe, clarinet melody. Trumpets played flugels meas. 43 – 56. The addition of flugelhorn gave this section a darker timbre.

I move the ritard from meas. 48 to beat three of 47 to highlight the A flat augmented to the D flat major chord of 48.

Molto ritardando meas. 49 & 50. I subdivided beats three and four of 50 to get the most out of the crescendo to the fortissimo in meas. 51.

Meas. 51 tempo marking is MM=46. I agree. Maestoso in approach to the accented quarter notes. This section is anger and despair in grief.

I pick up the pulse a bit into 57 and continue till meas. 59 where I pulled the tempo back in preparation for the composer's indication of MM=36.

Meas. 62 – 70 may be my most favorite section of the piece. It is reflective and scored with dark WW register and timbre.

A variation of the theme from 34 returns at Meas. 71. Let this move!

Meas. 76 – 83 is a return of the meas. 43 – 50. I don't use as much rubato for this second statement.

Meas. 84 is a return to fortissimo. I treated this section as a dialogue of sorts between the dominant themes. In meas. 84 I balance to the clarinet, saxes, horn; meas. 85 the balance point was trumpet, flute, oboe; 86 is clarinet, alto, horn; 87 & 88 is trumpet flute, oboe; meas. 89 horn, clarinet, alto have the lead through 92.

Meas. 94 – 96 leads melodically and harmonically to a wonderful unison A flat concert. A release point emotionally.

Meas. 98 – 101 has to be one of my most favorite harmonic closing sections of any piece I have ever conducted. Let the euphonium sing and sit ever so slightly on top of the texture. Your audience will thank you!

What a thrill it was to learn and conduct this piece. Thank you, Julie, for a delightful musical journey.