

COMPOSITION

I Dance Myself to Sleep

Joseph Twist

In the work I wanted to explore both sleep and innocence as general, extra-musical concepts. Sleeping has long been a fascinating and frustrating activity for me. I am a very light sleeper, if not a frequent insomniac and, when I do sleep, I often have bizarre and surreal dreams, which I assume most of us experience at some point. Sleeping is a mysterious activity: a strange altered state of consciousness that may involve sleepwalking, nightmares and fantasies, while also being an essential part of living that provides rejuvenation, relaxation, escape and peace. The power of sleep may go further. As Walt Whitman suggested, sleep is a democratising force: even murderers sleep like the rest of us, young and old, black and white.

I Dance Myself to Sleep explores the general idea of sleep but, more specifically, it relates to a perplexing recurring dream that involves the central ‘female companion’ characters from some of my favourite childhood movies, including *Superman*, the *Indiana Jones* films and the *Star Wars* saga. Representing this is a romantic melody (my Old Love Theme), written in homage to the enchanting love themes in film scores by John Williams, Jerry Goldsmith and Max Steiner. This recurring dream developed over several years, becoming less whimsical and naive, allegorically suggesting this loss of innocence. I chose, therefore, a very innocent title, ‘I Dance Myself to Sleep,’ taken from an adorable Sesame Street song sung by Ernie; it is one of my favourite childhood memories.

Appropriately, the genesis of this piece dates back to my childhood. In the end I'm really just a kid from the Gold Coast who was a bit obsessed with John Williams soundtracks, which were the impetus for studying music in the first place. When I was twelve, I wrote my own film-music-style 'love theme,' having been fascinated by the melodic and harmonic language associated with such characters as Princess Leia and Lois Lane in Williams's scores. Now, over a decade later, I decided to use the same melody I had composed at twelve because I thought it had a lot of potential. However, with greater musical knowledge and more years of experience behind me, I found myself dabbling with all sorts of alternative harmonies, various options for an obbligato counterpoint, unusual orchestrations and textures, and other more 'sophisticated' elements to combine and fuse with this melody, or I would chop it up and use it in a whole new context.

The original melody for *I Dance Myself to Sleep* draws on a particular idiosyncrasy of John Williams's love themes: they often begin with a rising major sixth. In fact, this interval is used for two different themes associated with Princess Leia and Han Solo in both *Star Wars* and *The Empire Strikes Back*. Marion's theme from *Raiders of the Lost Ark* also begins with this rising motive, even though the overall melody is quite different. For my own work, I used a descending major sixth, preceded by a falling semitone to begin the melody (see Fig. 1).

Figure 1. *I Dance Myself to Sleep*, Old Love Theme



The overall compositional technique was one of variation, particularly with regard to harmony and rhythm. As mentioned, the central melody used in this work was composed at the age of twelve. The harmonisation of this melody that I wrote as a twelve-year-old was very simple compared with the harmonic language employed in *I Dance Myself to Sleep*, which is suffused with jazz-based 'extra-tertain' harmonic structures, as well as other elements of dissonance that shroud and taint the original unadorned melody. The use of this rich and subtly dissonant harmony is a musical reflection of a loss of innocence, or a disturbing nightmare, as explained above. Despite this, some elements of the core harmonic structures remain simple, often based on simple diatonic harmonic structures, particularly the ii-V-I harmonic progressions that permeate many styles of jazz.

However, combined with these simple harmonic structures is the use of added dissonances. Throughout the work a descending chromatic motive is used, usually featuring the pitches C \flat (sometimes spelled as B \natural), B \flat and A \natural . The melody appears for the first time in bar 22, beginning on the A \flat at the top of the chord on the second minim beat. Given that the melody appears here in E \flat major, the use of the chromatic motive featuring C \flat , B \flat and A \natural throughout imbues this passage with elements of dissonance. As the harmonies change, the dissonances from these and other pitches sometimes result in jazz-based sonorities, such as the dominant chord with an added flattened ninth (B \natural) and thirteenth in the final minim beat of bar 32. This chord is particularly striking because of the voicing of the flattened ninth (B \natural) below the B \flat in the right hand. The voicing is also conceived bi-tonally, as the right hand plays a B \flat -major triad over a

G-major triad in the left hand. The same voicing appears throughout the work, such as in the fortissimo chords in bar 115. As well, the juxtaposition of the chromatic C \flat -B \flat -A \natural figure creates some striking dissonances that do not relate directly to jazz-based harmonic structures. In bar 27, the figure is played softly above a simple C-minor-ninth chord, clashing with the B \flat which functions as the seventh of this chord. The addition of the A \natural from this chromatic figure creates further dissonance. This chromatic figure also creates dissonance over the tonic chord at both the beginning and the resolution of this passage. At this point in bar 34, the C \flat -B \flat -A \natural chromatic figure then features as a rising scale, portions of which had appeared previously throughout this passage, further blurring the otherwise simple, consonant, harmonic structure.

The analysis given in Figure 2 shows the general harmonic functions employed in this section of the work. The inversions of each chord are analysed according to traditional figured-bass models, however the added dissonances and 'extra-tertian' harmonic elements are considered separately and described in parentheses throughout. This highlights the juxtaposition of traditional harmonic procedures with the added dissonances employed throughout this section and the work as a whole.

Figure 2. Harmonic analysis of *I Dance Myself to Sleep*, Old Love Theme exposition

The figure displays a musical score for the 'Old Love Theme' exposition, divided into three systems of measures. The first system (measures 21-23) is marked 'poco meno mosso (♩ = 62)' and 'p più mosso (♩ = 84)'. The piano part features dynamics of *p* warmly, *pp* *leggiero*, and *poco*. The harmonic analysis below the piano part shows: *sempre con Ped.* I add 9 (add ♯13, C \flat), V $\frac{4}{2}$ / V), ii $\frac{4}{2}$ (add ♯11), V $\frac{6}{5}$ (add ♯11 and 13), and I $\frac{4}{4}$ (add ♯11). The second system (measures 24-26) includes dynamics *ppp* *leggiero* and *mp*. The analysis shows: ii $\frac{6}{5}$ (add ♯13), V $\frac{4}{2}$ (add ♯9 and ♯11), I $\frac{4}{4}$ (add ♯11), *sempre con Ped.* (add ♯13, C \flat , and ♯11, A \flat), and V $\frac{7}{4}$ (add ♯9 and ♯11). The third system (measures 27-29) features dynamics *mf* and *mp*. The analysis shows: VI $\frac{7-9}{9}$ (add C \flat , and ♯11, A \flat), V $\frac{1}{II}$? (used in use of C \flat and ♯9), V $\frac{1}{1}$ (add ♯11), and ii $\frac{1}{1}$ of ii.

Figure 2 (cont.)

Figure 2 (cont.) shows two systems of musical notation. The first system (measures 30-32) features a piano staff with a melody and a bass staff with arpeggiated accompaniment. Dynamics include *f*, *p delicatiss.*, and *pp*. A *rall.....* marking is present above the piano staff. Chord symbols below the bass staff include ii^7 (of $\flat VII$), V_6^9 (odd 11), vi^9 , ii^{\flat} , and V_4^7 (add 9 and 13). The second system (measures 33-35) is marked *poco meno mosso* ($\text{♩} = 62$) and *p warmly*. It includes a *sempre con Ped.* instruction and a chord symbol I add 9 (odd $\flat 13, C$, and $\flat 11, A$). The piano staff has a *sfz* marking, and the bass staff has *mp* and *ppp* markings. Fingerings of 6 and 5 are indicated.

Later in the work, rhythmic variation of the original melody is employed, particularly in bars 67 to 88. Throughout this dancing, rhythmic passage, the contour of the original melody is retained, despite the constantly changing time signatures and rapid arpeggio textures, with the motive of a descending semitone and falling major sixth heard frequently in the upper register (see Fig. 3).

Figure 3. *I Dance Myself to Sleep*, bb. 83–84

Figure 3 shows two systems of musical notation for measures 83 and 84. The piano staff features a melody with a descending semitone and falling major sixth motive, marked *sf* and *L.H.*. The bass staff has a rapid arpeggiated accompaniment marked *mf*.

The development and performance of this work by the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra was certainly one of my greatest musical experiences. I am extremely grateful for such wonderful performances of my work by the orchestra conducted by Brett Kelly, and later by Brett Dean in his Metropolis series. I first sketched the work as a piano piece, which I dedicated for performance by the astounding, ARIA Award-winning pianist Sally Whitwell, and I orchestrated the work later. My hope is that, following the example of many works by Ravel, *I Dance Myself to Sleep* works just as well as a solo piano piece as it does for chamber orchestra.

for Sally Whitwell
I Dance Myself to Sleep...

FOR PIANO

(Variations on an Old Love Theme)

JOSEPH TWIST

Lento, molto rubato (♩ = 62)

First system of the musical score, measures 1-4. The piece is in common time (C) and begins with a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The tempo is marked 'Lento, molto rubato' with a quarter note equal to 62 beats per minute. The dynamics are 'p leggiero'. The bass line features a steady eighth-note accompaniment with 'l.v.' (left hand) markings. The right hand has a melodic line with a triplet of eighth notes in measure 3. The system concludes with a fermata over a whole note chord.

con molto *♩*.....

poco più mosso.....

Second system of the musical score, measures 5-9. The tempo is marked 'poco più mosso'. The right hand features a melodic line with a triplet of eighth notes in measure 9. The bass line continues with eighth-note accompaniment. The system ends with a fermata over a whole note chord.

rall.....

rit.....

Third system of the musical score, measures 10-13. The tempo is marked 'rall' and 'rit'. The dynamics are 'pp leggiero' in the right hand and 'p warmly' in the bass line. The right hand has a melodic line with a triplet of eighth notes in measure 11. The bass line has a steady eighth-note accompaniment. The system ends with a fermata over a whole note chord.

sempre con *♩*.

Fourth system of the musical score, measures 14-17. The dynamics are 'f' in the right hand and 'rfz' in the bass line. The right hand has a melodic line with a triplet of eighth notes in measure 15. The bass line has a steady eighth-note accompaniment. The system ends with a fermata over a whole note chord.

15 *// più mosso (♩ = 120)*

pp *p* *mp*

con molto Ped.

19 *rall. poco più mosso rit. poco meno mosso (♩ = 62)*

mf *p warmly*

sempre con Ped.

23 *più mosso (♩ = 84)*

pp leggiero *poco*

26 ** ppp leggiero*

mp *ppp leggiero* *mf*

sempre con Ped.

* play small notes very lightly and at about half the volume

29

mp *f* *p delicatiss.*

Musical score for measures 29-32. The piece is in 4/4 time with a key signature of two flats. The right hand features a complex chordal texture with some triplets, while the left hand plays a steady eighth-note accompaniment. Dynamics range from mezzo-piano to piano.

33

rall. *pp* *poco meno mosso (♩ = 62)* *p warmly* *pp* *sempre con Ped.*

Musical score for measures 33-35. The tempo changes to 62 quarter notes per minute. The right hand has a triplet in measure 33 and sixteenth-note runs in measures 34 and 35. The left hand continues with eighth-note accompaniment. Dynamics include piano-pianissimo and piano.

36

sfz *mp* *ppp* *pp* *p delicatiss.* *tempo giusto (♩ = 78)*

Musical score for measures 36-38. The tempo changes to 78 quarter notes per minute. The right hand has a five-measure rest in measure 36 followed by a melodic line. The left hand has sixteenth-note accompaniment with sextuplets. Dynamics include fortissimo, mezzo-piano, piano-pianissimo, and piano.

39

Musical score for measures 39-42. The right hand features a melodic line with triplets and sextuplets. The left hand has a continuous sextuplet accompaniment. Dynamics are piano.

Musical score for measures 41-42. The piece is in a key with two flats (B-flat and E-flat) and a common time signature. Measure 41 features a treble clef with a triplet of chords and a bass clef with a sixteenth-note pattern. Dynamics include *mf* and *mp*. Measure 42 continues the bass clef pattern with a triplet of chords in the treble clef.

Musical score for measures 43-44. Measure 43 features a treble clef with a triplet of chords and a bass clef with a sixteenth-note pattern. Dynamics include *mf* and *mp*. Measure 44 features a treble clef with a sixteenth-note pattern and a bass clef with a sixteenth-note pattern. A dynamic marking of *8^{vo}* is present in the treble clef.

Musical score for measures 45-46. Measure 45 features a treble clef with a triplet of chords and a bass clef with a sixteenth-note pattern. Dynamics include *p*. Measure 46 features a treble clef with a sixteenth-note pattern and a bass clef with a sixteenth-note pattern.

Musical score for measures 47-48. Measure 47 features a treble clef with a triplet of chords and a bass clef with a sixteenth-note pattern. Dynamics include *mf*. Measure 48 features a treble clef with a sixteenth-note pattern and a bass clef with a sixteenth-note pattern. Dynamics include *pp delicatiss.* and a *rall.....* marking.

49 8^{va}

ppp *p espress.*

* *con Ped. ad lib.* *mp* *ppp*

51

sf *p*

53

mp *p*

55

pp molto delicatiss.

57

6

ppp leggiero

6

6

6

6

Detailed description: This system contains measures 57 and 58. Measure 57 features a treble clef with a sixteenth-note triplet in the right hand and a sixteenth-note triplet in the left hand, both marked with a '6'. Measure 58 has a bass clef with a sixteenth-note triplet in the right hand and a sixteenth-note triplet in the left hand, both marked with a '6'. The dynamic marking *ppp leggiero* is placed above the right-hand staff.

59

6

6

6

6

6

7

fp

Detailed description: This system contains measures 59, 60, and 61. Measure 59 has a treble clef with a quarter-note triplet in the right hand and a sixteenth-note triplet in the left hand, both marked with a '6'. Measure 60 has a treble clef with a quarter-note triplet in the right hand and a sixteenth-note triplet in the left hand, both marked with a '6'. Measure 61 has a treble clef with a quarter-note triplet in the right hand and a sixteenth-note triplet in the left hand, both marked with a '6'. The dynamic marking *fp* is placed above the right-hand staff.

62

7

fp

p cresc.

6

6

6

6

Detailed description: This system contains measures 62, 63, 64, and 65. Measure 62 has a treble clef with a quarter-note triplet in the right hand and a sixteenth-note triplet in the left hand, both marked with a '6'. Measure 63 has a treble clef with a quarter-note triplet in the right hand and a sixteenth-note triplet in the left hand, both marked with a '6'. Measure 64 has a treble clef with a quarter-note triplet in the right hand and a sixteenth-note triplet in the left hand, both marked with a '6'. Measure 65 has a treble clef with a quarter-note triplet in the right hand and a sixteenth-note triplet in the left hand, both marked with a '6'. The dynamic marking *fp* is placed above the right-hand staff, and *p cresc.* is placed below the right-hand staff.

64

8^{va}

mf

6

6

6

6

Detailed description: This system contains measures 64, 65, 66, and 67. Measure 64 has a treble clef with a quarter-note triplet in the right hand and a sixteenth-note triplet in the left hand, both marked with a '6'. Measure 65 has a treble clef with a quarter-note triplet in the right hand and a sixteenth-note triplet in the left hand, both marked with a '6'. Measure 66 has a treble clef with a quarter-note triplet in the right hand and a sixteenth-note triplet in the left hand, both marked with a '6'. Measure 67 has a treble clef with a quarter-note triplet in the right hand and a sixteenth-note triplet in the left hand, both marked with a '6'. The dynamic marking *mf* is placed below the right-hand staff. An 8va marking is placed above the right-hand staff.

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66 *f* *ff* *p* *ff* Same Tempo (♩ = 78)

69 *p* *ff* *p* *ff*

73 *p* *sfp* *leggero* L.H. L.H.

76 *f* *p* *ff* *sfp* *leggero* L.H. L.H.

Musical score for measures 79-82. The piece is in a key with two flats and a 7/8 time signature. Measure 79 features a piano (*p*) dynamic. Measure 80 features a fortissimo (*ff*) dynamic. Measure 81 features a *sub. pp* dynamic. Measure 82 features a fortissimo (*ff*) dynamic. The score includes a variety of chords and melodic lines in both the treble and bass staves.

Musical score for measures 83-84. The piece is in a key with two flats and a 12/8 time signature. Measure 83 features a fortissimo (*sf*) dynamic. Measure 84 features a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic. The score includes a variety of chords and melodic lines in both the treble and bass staves. A "L.H." marking is present above the treble staff in measure 83.

Musical score for measures 85-86. The piece is in a key with two flats and a 12/8 time signature. Measure 85 features a mezzo-piano (*mp*) dynamic. Measure 86 features a mezzo-piano (*mp*) dynamic. The score includes a variety of chords and melodic lines in both the treble and bass staves.

Musical score for measures 87-90. The piece is in a key with two flats and a 12/8 time signature. Measure 87 features a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic with a crescendo (*cresc.*) marking. Measure 88 features a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic. Measure 89 features a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic. Measure 90 features a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic with a ritardando (*rit.*) marking. The score includes a variety of chords and melodic lines in both the treble and bass staves.

89 *ff* *8va* *rfz*

90 *meno mosso, molto rubato (♩ = 120)* *p* *pp* *mp* *con molto Led.*

94 *rall. poco più mosso rit.* *mf*

97 *poco meno mosso (♩ = 62)* *sfz* *rit.* *p warmly* *sempre con Led.* *6*

più mosso, molto rubato (♩ = 84)

98

mf *pp*

p delicatiss.

più mosso *poco stringendo*

102

mp *f*

molto rit. *meno mosso* (♩ = 62)

107

fff *mp*

rit. *a tempo* (♩ = 72)

110

pp *mf* *sfz*

112

sfz

f

p

3

5

Detailed description: This system contains measures 112, 113, and 114. Measure 112 starts with a forte *sfz* dynamic. The right hand features a complex melodic line with a triplet of eighth notes and a quintuplet of sixteenth notes. The left hand has a bass line with a quintuplet of sixteenth notes. Measure 113 continues the melodic development. Measure 114 shows a dynamic shift to piano (*p*) and includes a triplet of eighth notes in the right hand.

115

rit...

a tempo ($\text{♩} = 52$)

f

sffz

mf warmly

pp

sempre con Q&D.

Detailed description: This system contains measures 115, 116, and 117. Measure 115 begins with a forte (*f*) dynamic and a *rit...* marking. Measure 116 features a *sffz* dynamic and a *mf warmly* instruction. Measure 117 ends with a *pp* dynamic and the instruction *sempre con Q&D.*

118

rall...

molto lento ($\text{♩} = 38$)

p leggiero

p warmly

poco á poco dim. al niente

Detailed description: This system contains measures 118, 119, 120, and 121. Measure 118 starts with a piano (*p*) dynamic and a *leggiero* instruction, followed by a *rall...* marking. Measure 119 continues with a *p warmly* instruction. Measure 120 and 121 show a gradual dynamic decrease, with the instruction *poco á poco dim. al niente*.

122

allargando

ppp

una chorda

Detailed description: This system contains measures 122, 123, and 124. Measure 122 begins with a *ppp* dynamic and an *allargando* marking. The music consists of sustained chords in both hands. Measure 124 ends with the instruction *una chorda*.