"Soul Reflections"

An Honors Creative Project (HONRS 499)

By

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Abstract

Having played a musical instrument since I was seven, I never realized how much a part music is in my life until college. Throughout the four years of college, I have learned a lot about who I am. I wanted to create a project that would reflect who I was both inside and out. Although I am a communication studies major, I felt that I should do a project that included music since it is my passion. However, this idea does incorporate some communicative ideals in that it attempts to communicate nonverbally through sound, tempo, and dynamics. These elements combined help to construct the meditative and reflective atmosphere that words would not be able to do.

The final product will be sold to raise money for my church and donated to the sanctuary's building fund. Thus, the goal of this project was to record a compilation of songs that promote reflection, meditation, and solitude.
Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Elizabeth Richter for her guidance and help with creating the type of CD I envisioned, Justin Foerster for taking the time to help me produce this CD, Brock Stechman for designing the cover to my CD, and my family for all the love and support they have given me.
Some might wonder why it has taken me four years to figure out what I was going to do for a final project. It was not that I have not been thinking about it, or that I was putting it off because I simply did not want to do it; I really had no idea. I took a lot of things for granted and it was not until I went home last semester for an internship that I realized what my project could be.

I have been playing the harp for many years and often do not think of it as a talent, a gift, or anything special because it is such a big part of me. I play the harp to release stress, express my emotions, and to zone out into my own world. However, after playing for church one Sunday last January, I was again overwhelmed with the amount of people who came up to me after the service to praise and thank me for playing. Many of them expressed how much they were soothed by the notes and melodies and wished that I would play every Sunday since it was such a wonderful way to begin the week. This is when the idea for my thesis began to form. I began thinking about how I felt after I played the harp for an hour. I felt energized, relaxed, totally at peace with myself, and rejuvenated to continue with the daily stresses of my life. I then thought of all the compliments and requests I received, after playing from church members and other people, for a CD of my harp music because it was so tranquil. These reflections created the basic design of my honors thesis.

Later, I thought about how this concept related to my major. Being a Communication Studies major, I focus on verbal and nonverbal communication. The main components of nonverbal communication such as tone, pitch, and tempo are also very prominent in music as well which is why it is one of the most influentially nonverbal ways of communicating. Because of music's ability to construct and maintain a specific ambiance, I chose a selection of songs that
would form a feeling of tranquility and relaxation to my audience. Through the song selections of this CD, I created this certain mood by having quiet, meditative arrangements instead of loud, fast-tempo songs.

**Songs and Cover Design**

The cover of this CD does have a specific meaning for me. I wanted the CD to reflect my personality and self image. By having a loud, vibrant, and colorful outside, I feel this is how the “outside” world views me. However, I also have a quiet, meditative inner-self that not many people see. Thus, I wanted to symbolically portray the person I am, both outside and inside.

1. Prelude by Skaila Kanga

I decided to include this piece because I liked how it started out joyfully and then changed in its style in middle of the song. I also like the constant movement of both hands throughout the song. The eighth notes in this piece created a dependence on both hands in order to produce the proper beat and sound for the song. Thus, I liked how essential it was to have both hands proficient at their part.

2. Solitude by Skaila Kanga

I love this song because of the ethereal tone. When I heard this song, I thought of floating on clouds in the night sky, surrounded by stars. I also wanted to include this song because I liked how it allowed me to be so expressive because of the continual movement in both hands. The dynamics and pedal changes also contribute to the airy melody; however, the left hand’s lower notes still give structure to the piece.

3. Pie Jesu by Andrew Lloyd Weber: arranged by Sylvia Woods

The beautiful melody of this composition is made only more heart-wrenching when the lyrics are added to it. Although the piece includes only a few Latin phrases, the repetition of these simple words are able to emote the intense feelings for God and, at the same time, display the tenderness of His love. The melody sings and emits beauty and love while the lyrics beg God for His mercy and help. I picked this song because of the words and tune. I feel that often we, as humans, are in a similar state where we try to see the beauty in the world, but can not help but also notice the suffering and pain others are experiencing. By beginning the song quietly and slowly and gradually building, I wanted to create two emotional states. The first one was the feeling of crying softly to making a fervent plea to God for His peace. The second feeling I wanted to generate was the opposite of the previous one. I wanted to have a feeling of a love that barely flickers, but manifests quickly into a burning flame of joy, compassion, and thanksgiving. These two ideas mixed, to me, express how God works in my life. I notice His presence and love
when I am in my darkest hour. Thus, I chose to include this song because of the inner reflection the words and melody enabled me to do.

Pie Jesu, pie Jesu,
Qui tollis peccata mundi
Dona eis requiem, dona eis requiem
Agnus Dei, Agnus Dei
Qui tollis peccata mundi
Dona eis requiem, dona eis requiem
Sempiternam, sempiternam requiem

Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy
You who take away the sins of the world
Grant them peace. Grant them peace
Lamb of God, Lamb of God
You who take away the sins of the world
Grant them peace. Grant them peace
Peace everlasting, everlasting

4. Evening Prayer by Skaila Kanga

This song is special to me because, ever since I was small, I have always said my prayers every night before I go to sleep. This song gave me the image of a small child kneeling and praying before going to bed. I thought of this piece to be more of a lullaby than just another pretty song. I also thought this was different from other pieces because the melody comes from the fourth finger notes and then finishes with the notes played by the thumb, unlike most songs where the melody stays in the notes played by the thumb. Finally, I feel this song creates a peaceful, quiet mood because the dynamics never get above mezzo-piano.

5. Conte de Noël by Henriette Renié

This song is unique and when I first played this song, I did not even like it. However, the more I played this song, the more I found I enjoyed the dynamics and different beats it created. The triplettes in the second section of this piece are my favorite part because it gives me the vision of birds flying and I find that incredibly soothing. I also like the ritard in the final measures of the song coupled with the glissando because gives resonance to the end and completes the song.

6. Angélus by Henriette Renié

This selection was chosen because of Renié's story about her inspiration for this piece. Renié wrote this piece about a church on a cliff overlooking the ocean. The song begins with the left hand imitating the ringing of church bells while the right hand imitates the ocean waves with the glissando that comes in and then recedes as the waves do. Throughout the piece one can hear the distant church bells while it mingles with the ocean waves and sounds. To me, this song paints that serene picture of sitting in a church listening to the bells ring while looking out onto a big, blue ocean, and helps me to continue constructing the meditative mood.

7. Air: "Portrait Charmant" by Robert Nicolas Charles Bochsa

I love this song. This piece has many of the aspects I like about playing the harp. It has an arpeggio left hand with a strong right hand, it has triplettes that counter the left hand and give a "delayed" sound, and, finally, it contains a trill and harmonic at the end of the song. All of these components help to produce a song that is light and create a feeling of floating on air. I think of
walking through a field covered in fog where you are not sure if your feet are touching the ground or not.

8. Danse d’autrefois by Henriette Renié

With this piece, I liked how it was more upbeat than the other pieces in the CD. Although it is more buoyant than the others, it still is able to maintain the reflective tone being made. The dynamics and low left hand add weight to the song and gives it a more meditative feel. However, I also like how the right hand allows the song to

9. Greensleeves arranged by Samuel Milligan

I put this piece in the CD because it is one of my favorite Christmas carols (What Child is This?). However, many people do not know that it is actually a folk song and was not originally a Christmas carol. In this piece, I really enjoyed playing the large chords and down by the sound board to produce a different sound on the harp. The second part of this song is played down by the sound board which gives it a more “tingy” sound. I like that, because like many people do not know the original title of this tune is “Greensleeves” many do not know that the harp is able to make many different types of sounds; thus, this was another way to “show off” the harps versatility and abilities beautifully.

10. To a Wild Rose by Edward MacDowell: arranged by Betty Paret

I originally played this song on the piano and fell in love with it then. This song is so delicate and so tender that I felt one could actually imagine the rose in a glen. Although the notes and melody are simple and repetitive, it allowed me to experiment with the dynamics of the piece from pianissimo to mezzo-piano. I also experimented with different tempos. By speeding up or slowing down, I am able to control the emotions and create anticipation or resolution. Because of the versatility this song enabled me to do; but, at the same time, still sing a beautiful song; I felt it augmented to my objective.

11. Les Pifferari by Charles Francois Gounod

I wanted to include this piece because, to me, it is so soothing and quiet. The beginning is reminiscent of Angelus with the bell-like left hand. The title of this song translates into “The fifers” which I think it reflects with the right hand being higher in pitch. The dynamics also play a major role in this song because they remind me of a sort of parade where the fifers begin quietly from being far away and gradually get closer and louder. At the end of the song, it becomes apparent that the fifers are moving away as the dynamics get quieter again. This song, as a result, generates a happy mood without affecting the CD’s overall theme of contemplation and meditation.

12. Finlandia by Jan Sibelius: arranged by Dewey Owens

I included this composition in my CD because I knew it first as a hymn. The words of this song are just as beautiful as the melody. I wanted to include this piece because I felt the
words add just as much to the song as the chords and different ways of playing the song. The words of the song are as follows:

The love of God is broad like beach and meadow,
Wide as the wind and an eternal home,
God leads us free to seek him or reject him;
He gives us room to answer yes or no.
We long for freedom where our truest being is given hope, and courage to unfold.
We seek in freedom, space and scope for dreaming,
But there are walls that keep us all divided;
We fence each other in with hate and war.
Fear in the bricks and mortar of our prison.
Oh cometh, judge us, Lord,
And in your judgment, free us.
The love of God is broad like beach and meadow,
Wide as the wind and an eternal home.

These lyrics to this hymn were very poignant and gave me a lot to think about. As with Pie Jesu, the melody of the song was only augmented by the inclusion of the hymn’s lyrics; which is why I felt it necessary to include them in this piece.

13 and 14. Shendoah and The Water is Wide arranged by Daniel Burton

I chose the two songs above because I love that they are folk songs. I decided to have them seem like one song because I think both pieces’ melodies complimented each other so well. I always have felt that this song could easily be one song and so I wanted to put them consecutively. I felt these two songs ended the CD in the most appropriate way as they both complimented each other with the same keys and tempo. I also liked how these songs had the theme of water and was mirrored in the melodies. The motion of the left hand reflects the movement of water that helps to create a peaceful vibe. Finally, the dynamics of these pieces maintained the quiet atmosphere; however, the lighter tone of the right hand gives the end of the CD a less internal, contemplative mood and enables the listener to be less stressed and more focused.
SARAH HUMMEL
SOUL REFLECTIONS

EVERYONE HAS TALENT. WHAT IS RARE IS THE COURAGE TO RECOGNIZE IT, FOLLOW IT AND LET IT LEAD YOU WHEREVER IT MAY LEAD.

- ERICA JINGO

SPECIAL THANKS TO...

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THE TYPE OF CD I HAD ENVISIONED

PRODUCED BY J. DOERSTLER & S. HUMMEL