

This Little Island of Me

for baritone & piano

PERUSAL

Joshua Ballance & Georgina Lloyd-Owen

2021

Programme Note

This Little Island of Melores the experience of depression. The fourth of the five stages of depression is in many ways the emotional abyss of the cycle. Exhausted from the preceding lacking the hope of bargaining or the resolution of acceptance, one is devoid of optimism, or hope. In our reading, depression is characterised by a wide gamut of emotions, but perhaps sense of immobility and despondency.

The libretto is emphatically intertextual, and is greatly inspired by the work of American poet Lawrence Ferlinghetti, whose own explorations of memory and the suffering of humanity are to its text. There is a certain Beckettian minimalism to the libretto's circular structure, achieving mirroring of text between the first and the last verses, as well as its reliance on repeating structures such as 'Is this it?' and 'Is this all?'. These qualities feel particularly poignant in illustration of entrapment one may feel when suffering from depression.!

This feeling of inertia characterises much of the song: from the limping, repetitive piano figure to initial fragmentary vocal utterances, the protagonist is wracked by introversion and uncertainty even when they try to imagine a possible future, their lyricism quickly splinters. The peak is as our central character works themselves into a more emotional state, reaching a moment of panic. And yet, once the dust has settled, they remain stuck, singing against a muted backdrop again, until they are left totally alone, held on their final note.

We are aware that depression and its symptoms can be incredibly complex, and would encourage anyone feeling in need of help to reach out to those you trust, and/or a mental health charity or helpline.
More help and information can be found here: Mind www.mind.org.uk (03 0122 3956) / Mental Health Foundation www.mentalhealth.org.uk / CALM www.thecalmzone.net (0800 58 58 58 - Nationwide; 0808 802 58 58 - London)
You can also find a more comprehensive list of mental health charities from the NHS here: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/mental-health-helplines/>

The relative length of fermatas is as follows:

Triangular: short

Round: medium

Square: long

*This Little Island of Me was commissioned by Oxford Contemporary Opera for their 'Opera for One' series.
It was first performed by Edwin Hughes & Toby Stanford in March 2021.*

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♩ = c. 50

First system of the musical score, measures 1-3. The bass line is mostly rests. The piano accompaniment features a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with accidentals. Measure 1 is in 5/4 time, measure 2 is in 3/4 time, and measure 3 is in 4/4 time. Dynamics include *p lethargic* and *sim.* (sostenuto).

Second system of the musical score, measures 4-7. The bass line has rests in measures 4, 5, and 6, followed by a whole note in measure 7. The piano accompaniment continues with rhythmic patterns. The word **PERUSAL** is written in large orange letters across the middle of the system. Measure 4 is in 5/4 time, measure 5 is in 3/4 time, measure 6 is in 4/4 time, and measure 7 is in 5/4 time.

Third system of the musical score, measures 8-11. Measure 8 is in 5/4 time and contains the vocal line starting with "Is this it?". Measure 9 is in 4/4 time. Measure 10 is in 4/4 time and contains the vocal line starting with "This li - ttle is - land of". Measure 11 is in 4/4 time. Dynamics include *p breathless, unsure* and *pp* (pianissimo). A triplet of eighth notes is marked in measure 10.

9

me_ A lone - ly con - scious - ness ^(poco) Wai - ting Wai - ting

11

p legato

For the storms_ To be o - ver_ Is this all? This,

cresc. poco a poco

Red.

14

the time Of ten - sion Be - tween dy - ing and birth Is that

mf *pp sub.* *f* *pp*

17 *p* *mp*

it? Is that the way it al - ways is? Is that the way it

19 *mf*

al - ways ends? Where it all be - gan and

21 *fp* *ff* *tempestuous*

so be - gins a - gain A -

23

- lone with my - self Be - neath Blood - shot eyes Be - tween spas - mic_ breaths

25

Un - mo - ving Ve - ge - ta - tive pa - nic

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Red.

28

pp leggiero

I do not

p

Red.

32

p weightier

legato

hope I can not hope These wings no

ppp even, expressionless
p cantabile

34

lon - ger, no lon - ger wings to fly _____ mere - ly

8va

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36

p resigned

vans _____ to beat the _____ air Yes,

p still, expressively muted
Red.

39

that's it. That's the way it al - ways

(Led.)

41

is. That's the way it al - ways ends. —

(Led.)

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43

pp deliberate

Where it be - gan and so be - gins a - gain

pp weighted