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Grandad’s Letters

For 5 Instrumentalists and Recorded Voice
(2009)
Grandad’s Letters

A composition as part of a portfolio submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

By
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Performance Notes

Bassoon
Trumpet in Bflat
Viola
Piano
Percussion
Recorded Voice

Duration: c. 14-15 minutes

Score in C

This score illustrates how the parts relate to one another through the use of aural cues. Therefore, it should not be seen as an exact representation of how the parts will overlap one another in performance. Each performer should choose their metronome marking from within the stated range, which should be adhered to for the whole piece.

All of the parts should be equally audible throughout and amplification may be used to achieve this. If so, then all of the parts should be amplified and mixed (so of equal volume) and routed to two speakers on stage (one either side of the ensemble). The volume of the ensemble should always be just below that of the recorded voice, which is only played back on the portable tape machine (not through the speakers with the rest of the ensemble). See the diagram on the opposite page for the ideal disposition of performers on stage.

The Letters spoken by Gerald Scantlebury should be played back on a portable tape machine on stage, situated near the pianist.

The Bassoon and Trumpet parts should feel free to breathe momentarily outside of their instrument at any point of the piece, if required.

Commas used from Page 9 indicate audible breathing points (both inhale and exhale); these should sound natural and as similar as possible to the breathing on the recording. The dynamic of these breaths should be slightly quieter than the recorded voice.

Grandad’s Letters is dedicated to my Grandad, Gerald Scantlebury.

Nicholas Peters, June 2009
**Programme Text**

**Grandad’s Letters** uses letters of an ancestor of mine called John Edward Pearn, who ran away from his home in Plymouth Dock (now named Devonport), via Liverpool, to Brazil in the year 1822. There were four letters that he sent home spanning a period from 1822 to 1840, only the third and fourth letters survive and these are the ones used in this piece. My Grandad introduced me to these letters, hence the title, which he has photocopies of as well as an article about the letters from a Plymouth newspaper that interviewed his Mother (who inherited the letters from her Mother). I transcribed the text from my Grandad’s photocopies of the originals and the idea of transcription of material is explored throughout the piece. The recorded voice belongs to my Grandad, Gerald Scantlebury, and was recorded at his home in Okehampton in May 2009. The piece is dedicated to Gerald Scantlebury and lasts around 14 – 15 minutes.
**Bassoon** The stave consists of three lines, each represent a fingering chosen by the performer in the middle to upper register. Number three should be the lowest pitch and number one should be the highest. The performer should breathe through the instrument (with reed) to create a ‘wheezy’ continuous sound. The rhythms mark changes from inhaling to exhaling, the performer may start with whichever they wish.

**Trumpet** The stave consists of three lines, each represent the three valves on the instrument. The performer should breathe through the instrument to create a ‘wheezy’ continuous sound. The rhythms mark changes from inhaling to exhaling, the performer may start with whichever they wish.

**Viola** The stave consists of five lines, from the top to bottom line they represent the: I, II, III and IV string and finally the body of instrument. The viola should be placed flat on the performers lap and the right hand should be positioned so that the thumb can strike the body of the instrument and the other fingers can each ‘hammer’ an individual string on the fingerboard. The left hand should be used to steady the instrument and must not be used in the conventional manner.

**Piano** The stave is conventional throughout. From Page 1 – 10 the left hand should be used to mute the relevant string completely so that when the right hand plays the key, barely any pitch sounds at all. For Page 11 – 19 (the end), prior to performance blue tak should be attached firmly to the strings of the specified pitches directly in front of the hammer on the keyboard side. This is so that if by accident the performer presses the key down fully, instead of halfway as notated, then no clear pitch will sound.

**Percussion** The stave consists of five lines for both hands. Each line represents a finger to be used to strike the requested surface.
- From the top to bottom line for the **right hand** they represent the: 5th, 4th, 3rd, 2nd and 1st finger.
- From the top to bottom line for the **left hand** they represent the: 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th finger.
Grandad's Letters

Nicholas Peters

c. \( \frac{4}{4} = 56-59 \)

Bassoon

[1 second after TPT INHALE ends]

Right Hand Percussion

[Resonant Surface]

Left Hand Percussion

[Non-Resonant Surface]

[3-5 seconds after VLA begins]

Breathe through instrument (Inhale and Exhale)

Inhale

Hammer’ strings using right hand fingers

Muted with Left Hand, barely any pitch

Vla.

[3-5 seconds after TPT begins]

[3-5 seconds after BSN begins]

[3-5 seconds after PERC begins]

Piano

[3-5 seconds after PERC begins]

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[3-5 seconds after PNO begins]

Breathe through instrument (Inhale and Exhale)

Inhale

Hammer’ strings using right hand fingers

Muted with Left Hand, barely any pitch

Piano

[3-5 seconds after PERC begins]

[3-5 seconds after PNO begins]

Tpt.

[1 second after PNO ends]

Breathe through instrument (Inhale and Exhale)

Inhale

Vla.

[3-5 seconds after BSN begins]

[3-5 seconds after PNO begins]

[3-5 seconds after VLA begins]

[1 second after TPT INHALE ends]

[1 second after VLA ends]
[3-5 seconds after TPT begins]

[3-5 seconds after TPT begins]

[3-5 seconds after BSN begins]

[3-5 seconds after BSN begins]

[2-4 seconds after PNO begins]

[1 second after TPT INHALE ends]

[1 second after PNO begins]

[2-4 seconds after VLA begins]

[4-6 seconds after BSN begins]
7th of May 1829    For Father and Mother        I have now taken this favourable opportunity of writing to you at this time.    The first and second letters I have not received an answer, which makes me very uneasy in my mind.    The first time which I wrote to you since I left England, I was in Rio de Janeiro Brazil on board of a man of war frigate called the Wetheroy,
under the command of Lord Cochrane, in the year 1822. That second time I wrote to you I was in the taking of Pernambuco where I got rounded in my right foot by a musket ball and a cut of the sword in my left leg but thank God Almighty I got cured of my wounds in six months and after this I sailed for Maranhao, for Para, for Surra, for Portugal, turned for Maranuco, where I ran away from a frigate called the Peranga, which I am now living in a village called Anagatuba in the Brazil, about 40 miles
from Maranhao, I have got a little cottage house, likewise a plantation where I plant tobacco,
cotton, rice, and thank God Almighty I am going very well. This comes with my kind love to you
brothers and sisters, uncles, aunts, grandmother is living likewise my cousins and nephews
because I think my sisters have got children. Dear Father I hope you will not forget to write to me
for my ingratitude which I have shown you. My honourable Father and Mother do not remember
nothing of this that is gone and past, but write to me as quick as possible, give me all particulars of England and please my remembrances to all friends. Please to excuse my letter if it is not right because I speak Portuguese better than English, I am forgetting of my country tongue. So no more at present from your undutiful son and humble servant, John Edward Pearn
[4-6 seconds after TPT/VLA end]

[Same time as BSN]

[4-6 seconds after BSN/TPT end]

[Same time as VLA]

[3-5 seconds after VLA/RH PERC end]

[3-5 seconds after TPT/PNO/LH PERC end]

[Same time as VLA]

[Same time as VLA]
Perc.

Pno.

Bsn.

Tpt.

Pno.

Tpt.

Vla.

[Same time as BSN]

[Same time as VLA]

[Same time as VLA]

Bsn.

Pno.

Pno.

Vla.

Tpt.

[4-6 seconds after BSN/TPT/PNO end]

[3-5 seconds after TPT/VLA end]

[3-5 seconds after TPT/VLA/PNO end]

[4-6 seconds after TPT/VLA/PNO end]
9th of July 1840   For Father and Mother   I have now taken this favourable opportunity of writing to you hoping to find you all in good health as it leaves me at present.

This is to give you some satisfaction of my life.

This makes four letters that I have written to you, which makes me very uneasy in my mind.
It is true that I have been a very undutiful son to you but I now beg your pardon for all what I have done and I hope you will forgive me.

Dear Mother and Father it was a very good thing that I done of leaving old England,

when I left my country it was in the month of April in the year 1822 and I sailed in a Brig called the Alice, arrived in this country in the month of June 1822
I then went on board a man of war 74 Gunship commanded by the noble Lord Cochrane in this services of Brazil

I sailed five years, then ran away up the country in the woods on the cotton plantations.

I am now overseer of the slaves in one plantation, belonging to a Joaquin Antonio Pinto Lisboa

I am doing very well thank God.
Dear Mother and Father I've almost forgotten the old English tongue I knows more better the language Portuguese.

Remember me to all friends and relatives uncles, aunts, brothers, sisters and cousins.

I hope you will not forget to write to me when you write to me direct in this manner,

No more at present, Your most obedient son John Edward Pearn
Tell my brothers and sisters I shall like to hear from them all
The reason I put Taos Francisco is because of the Frigate I run away