

About the Piece:

Benediction

Composed by: Sara Woo-Sam

Original Text by: Paul Cornell

Conducted by: Sara Woo-Sam

Soprano: Rosie Lomas

Flute: Hannah Watts

Piano: Hannah Gill

Harp: Katie Flanagan

Double Bass: Aileen Marshall

'He's like fire and ice and rage. He's like the night, and the storm in the heart of the sun. He's ancient and forever. He burns at the center of time and he can see the turn of the universe. And he's wonderful.'

This powerful, emotive, beautiful piece of text, which I set for Benediction, is in fact an extract of dialogue from Doctor Who. Now at this point I am sure there are a vast number of you thinking, 'but that's just a silly children's Sci-fi show.' However I would like to state that noting could be further from the truth. Doctor Who is very much written on two levels. Yes, there are fantastical worlds and bizarre monsters, an inordinate amount of running and explosions; frenetic action. But there is also a much more contemplative, adult dimension. Shown almost in its entirety through allusions, symbolism, and recurring motifs, it delves into the characters, and explores them as three-dimensional beings, dealing with both their emotions and motivations.

The text above, is an example of this darker, adult side of 'Who.' It is a poignant description of whom the Doctor is at his essence, by a child who has literally glimpsed into his soul. The title of the piece 'Benediction' is an allusion to the way the text itself alludes to the doctor as having the qualities of a god, a recurring motif in the new series. 'Fire, ice and rage,' is representative of the immense power and also violence often associated with the God of the Old Testament. 'He is ancient and forever' is the idea of him as an eternal being,

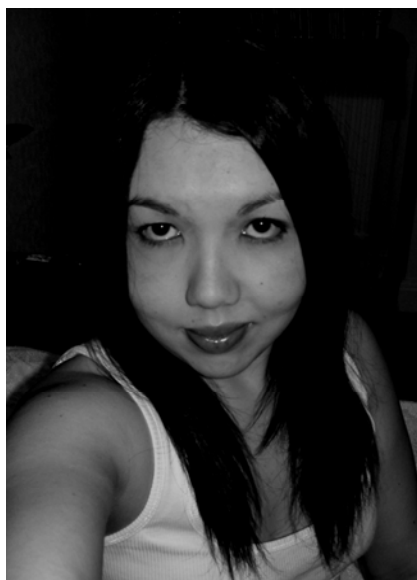
stretching across time. 'He burns at the centre of time, sees the turn of the universe,' is the idea that he is at the centre of creation, acutely aware of its every movement. But perhaps most revealing is the final line - 'he is wonderful,' a simple statement of reverence and awe.

What attracted me to this text artistically, was the juxtaposition between raw violence and delicate beauty. I liked the idea of writing a piece with two conflicting musical ideas. However when writing, I came to introduce a third, the idea of contained violence, a still surface of passivity beneath which turmoil and anger churns, another aspect integral to the Doctor's character. The piece as you will hear, is a through-composed exploration of these ideas.

In terms of the sound world I wanted to create, I took inspiration from Ravel's Chansons Medecasses, and Debussy's Sonata for Flute, Viola and Harp. There is also a reference to the opening of Holst's Saturn from the Planets Suite. I used this partially because I felt it created perfectly the atmosphere of stillness with a more unsettling undercurrent beneath. However I also used it for the sake of irony. Saturn is of course the 'Bringer of Old Age,' the opening motif sounding eerily like a clock ticking, symbolizing the passing of time. As The Doctor is a Time lord, it seemed highly appropriate to make reference to time in some form. The irony stems from the fact that as a time traveler, he lies almost in antithesis of the linear conception of time that a clock represents.

It was wonderful to write this piece, as (in case you had not guessed by now) I am such a massive fan of the show. To be able to incorporate one's personal interests into one work is simply a pleasure.

About the Composer:



Sara Woo-Sam, born 1988, is a first year composer at Guildhall School of Music and Drama. Raised in Hertfordshire she now lives in London. Her musical education began with recorder lessons at the age of eight, from which she quickly progressed to studying saxophone, piano and singing. Throughout, she actively participated in the musical life at school, a member of the choir, orchestra, wind band, and regular performer in concerts and musical productions. It was while studying for her music A-level, alongside French and English Literature, that she discovered a love of writing music. Composition offered far greater scope for creativity than performance and she was drawn to the idea of the representation of images and

themes through music. One of her passions is music for film and television and it is her aspiration to work in this industry at the end of her degree.