The Silent Trumpet

A micro-oratorio for two-part choir and soprano/kazoo soloist

Michael Winikoff

"One upon a time, a long time ago, there was a city. It knew good times, and it knew troubled times. But in times of trouble, the people would be warned by a trumpet, a silent trumpet, that only could be heard in your soul. If you listened.

Can you hear it? The silent trumpet? It is calling, calling in your soul. Warning. Warning in your soul. Can you hear it, the silent trumpet?

The people prospered and grew comfortable. Comfort led to confidence. Confidence to arrogance. The people grew confident and arrogant. And they stopped listening to the trumpet.

Weep for the people who will not listen, who will not hear the trumpet. For trouble follows them, all the days of their lives. Will *you* listen to the trumpet? Will *you* hear the trumpet when it calls to your soul? Will you hear it? Will you hear it, the silent trumpet, calling to your soul? Calling to your soul ..."

Program Notes

In this age of text messages and twitters, it seems appropriate to consider "micro-oratorios" as an art form. *The Silent Trumpet* is a micro-oratorio, written for choir and soloist. The text, by the composer, tells a parable, about a "silent trumpet". This can be seen as a metaphor for many things. A topical interpretation might involve scientists and climate change.

In composing *The Silent Trumpet*, a key constraint was that I wanted to write a piece that ROCS would be able to perform, and perform well. For the sake of safety, that meant sticking to fewer parts than the traditional SATB. After thought (and realising that the ROCS songbook had a number of two-part pieces), I settled on trying to see what I could do with only two parts. Now, two part writing tends to be quite sparse, which lends itself to a somewhat medieval feel. So, I played on this in the opening procession, adding percussion (in the form of stamping), and using the medieval-sounding Dorian mode. Two-part writing also lends itself naturally to canons, and these are used in a few places in the work.

As one might expect from a "micro-oratorio", the work is quite brief, with a simple structure. The opening procession is followed by a recitative presenting the parable. The central movement, *Can you hear it?*, goes beyond two part, adding a solo part which alternates between singing and playing the kazoo (representing the trumpet). This is followed by a short choral recitative (in unison), and then the work concludes with a lament (in canon).

Performance Notes

The women and men respectively should divide evenly between "High" and "Low". Men should sing an octave lower than notated (pretend it's in tenor clef). The solo part is for a soprano. Perhaps a long-standing ROCS member, with a penchant for kazoos and a PhD in computer science might be interested?

The text "silent trumpet" should be pronounced as "silentrumpet", that is, with only a single "t" (and definitely should not be misread as "strumpet"!). Consonants should generally be placed on the following rests, so for instance, in bar 82, the "nce" of "confidence" comes on the last quaver in the bar (the "and" of "four and").

The movements should run into each other without any gaps.

Procession: The choir should process on, stamping the rhythm while singing (this will take a little practice!). Ideally this work should come at the start of the concert, or after an interval. The repeated part of the procession (bars 6-9) should be repeated as many times as needed. As each choir member reaches their on-stage position they should stop stamping. Once there is no more stamping, then the choir should proceed to bar 10.

Can you hear it: The climax of the movement is bar 58, which represents sirens (think ambulance, not mythological singers!).

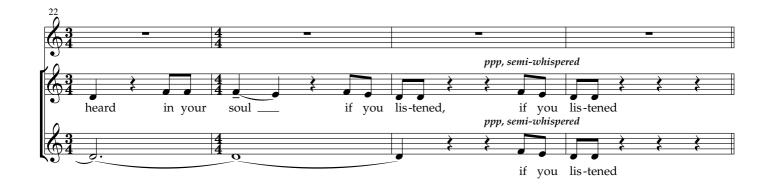
I. Procession



II. Recitative



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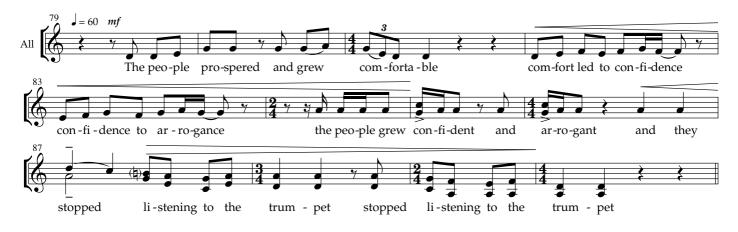
III. Can you hear it?







IV. Recitative



V. Lament



