

Composer's Note

Competition pieces are always something of a dilemma for a composer. If you are not careful, the need to set an exacting technical test tends to predominate one's thinking. To avoid this, I have attempted to create a work that is as much of a musical challenge as a technical one.

I have structured *Triptych* in three compact movements (hence the title), each of which has its own musical characterisation. The movements are unified through the common reference to Greek/Roman mythological sources in their individual titles, which in turn give a clue as to their character.

'A Dionysian Dialogue' takes up the idea of the conflict of 'opposites' which exists within our make-up as human beings. The 'Dialogue' is really between Dionysus and Apollo, or the metaphorical representation of this within ourselves. Thus, the Dionysian music is raw, earthy, sometimes violent, often ecstatic; whereas the Apollonian is serene, dreamy, calm, assured. The musical quotations are meant to invoke a layer of subconscious memory (mainly for violinists it should be said), as well as underlining the 'opposites' (so for me, the Walton and Bach = Apollonian, whilst the Stravinsky and Shostakovich = Dionysian). Performers should try to realise the maximum potential in this movement for opposing musical characterisation.

'Song to Aphrodite' is a love song. The two variations are, in turn, reflective (or dream-like) and playful (or seductive). The reprise of the melody should create a sense of regret, or of a memory, half grasped, disappearing into the distance (perhaps love lost?).

'A Celtic Bacchanal' is really a musical romp, a tarantella-like scherzo, where sheer virtuosity is the order of the day. The use of 'Celtic' in the title simply alludes to the fact that towards the end of the movement the melodic character of the music becomes more akin to an Irish jig (chromatic elements are transformed into diatonic). As I am half Irish myself, there was nothing self-conscious about this gesture. Although the use of the bodhrán (Irish drum) is entirely optional in performance, some foot-stamping, in the manner of a folk fiddler, is to be encouraged – indeed, it would be entirely appropriate!

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