

The Military Cemetery

for three speakers and organist,
with optional harmonica player

Anthony Skilbeck

Notes

The right hand part in bars 5 to 12; 19 to 26; 49 to 50 and 52 to 53 are best played on a harmonica (or a sound module's harmonica imitation), the intention being to evoke the image of a soldier playing the instrument.

For reference, the composer used a M.Hohner chromatic harmonica, the numbers given indicating the holes through which to blow. There are no "sucking" notes.

A harmonica could be used just for the top notes of each chord, the organ playing the remaining notes. In the first performance, the composer played the harmonica whilst seated at the organ. The l.h. part of the organ score was omitted during the harmonica passages, but the pedal part was played.

The chords in bars 27 to 34 should set up strong, slow pulses of sound.

The speakers should be placed apart from each other, at different places in the auditorium.

Bars 35 to 47 were written at Alpe d'Huez in August, 2007, before the composer knew that he would be visiting a military cemetery.

The words are the composer's own, except for the quotations from headstones and the Bible.

The first performance was given in St Paul's Church, Worksop, on Saturday, November 24th. with the composer at the organ (and playing the harmonica). The Speakers were Roy Smalley (1st Speaker); John Marsden (2nd Speaker) and Hayden Lee (3rd Speaker).

Duration ca.

The Military Cemetery

Except for the quotations from
headstones and the Bible,
words & music by Anthony Skilbeck

1st Speaker

This piece was inspired by a visit to the British Military Cemetery at Grand-Seraucourt in northern France, made when the composer was tent-camping in that town.

The remains of one thousand, three hundred and fifty-eight British, and two Canadian soldiers and airmen who fought in the two world wars of the twentieth century are buried in this cemetery. Of these, most fell in March 1918.

From the cemetery, in the near-distance can be seen wind turbines - just one of the many inventions those whose young lives had been sacrificed would not have been able to foresee.

Gt. Clarabella 8' Sw. Lieblich Gedackt 8' & Salicional 8' Ped. Bourdon 16' Cop. Swell to Ped.

♩ = 80

attacca

Hold each chord for the duration of the spoken line, **and then change *legato* to the next chord.**
The speakers are to wait for each new chord to sound for four beats before uttering the sentences.
 In line 7b, do not prolong the chord unduly after the word "fate."

Line 1b follows 1a; line 2a follows 1b - and so on.

Registration unaltered

11 Chord for "a" lines

Without Pedal

2nd Speaker

- 1a It is cold in the tent tonight
- 2a So I lay awake,
 planning what to do the next day
- 3a Which will add to my accumulated
 knowledge and memories
- 4a An insect bite irritates me
 'til I use some soothing cream
- 5a I have some homely comforts with me
- 6a And if need be, I could drive home
- 7a Abandoning the adventure

Chord for "b" lines

Without Pedal

3rd Speaker

- 1b It is cold in the trench tonight
- 2b So I lay awake,
 thinking of the murderous bullets
- 3b Which will destroy my accumulated
 knowledge and memories
- 4b An insect bite irritates me
 but I have no soothing cream
- 5b I have no homely comforts with me
- 6b And there is no means of escape
- 7b Except by the deserter's fate.

After a brief pause:
Registration as before

♩ = 80

After a brief pause:
Registration as before (no 4's)

♩ = 69 (previously 80)

1st Speaker

The following are quotations from headstones:

"To live in the hearts of those we leave behind is not to die."

For a 23-year-old:
"Earth changes but thy soul and God stand sure."

All Speakers: let the final chords sound for four beats before speaking.
Organist: after each spoken part, let there be a brief pause before playing the next chord.

27

1st Speaker

For a 20-year-old:
 "A boy in years, a man at heart who, despite all fears
 played a hero's part."

For another 20-year-old:
 "O Jesus open wide thy heart and let him rest therein."

As before (see instructions at the bottom of page four).

29

1st Speaker

In the many cases where bodies were unidentified,
 headstones bear the phrase "Known to God."

As before

30

2nd Speaker

"Known to God."

(... followed by chord &
 3rd Speaker):

As before

Sw.

3rd Speaker

"Known to God."

As before

32

1st Speaker (now more measured)

"Known to God."

Let the chord sound for some seconds after the Speaker has finished - as if in meditation.

Then, after a brief pause, continue:

"CHORALE WITHOUT WORDS"

6 Gt. Dulciana 8' Sw. Lieblich Gedackt 8' & Salicional 8' Ped. No stops Cop. Swell to Ped.

♩ = 80 (Tempo primo)

33

40

L'istesso tempo

rallentando

To left

To left

47

1st Speaker (after the last chord has ended)

Jesus said:

"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."