

Explanation

The central theme of the work is human communication, more specifically communication between two partners in a love relation. The two persons are represented by the two solo-instruments; the piano fulfills the role of friends, family or other persons near to the couple, who are involved, - sometimes closely, sometimes at a distance - , in the relationship between the partners.

The dialogues are characterised by the titles of the four movements: Discussion, Dispute, Reflection and Celebration.

In the first movement, "Discussion", the dialogue starts animated-friendly, but gradually the tone becomes sharper, the partners interrupt each other, and the phrases become shorter and lose their coherence. Eventually, the communication ends in a grumpy silence which even well-meaning friends can not break.

In the second movement, "Dispute", the conflict escalates further: the partners shout reproaches at one another, friends become involved in the dispute and thus become part of the problem. The dispute ends in a slamming door.

The third movement, "Reflection", represents the core of the work: the partners have quieted down and reflect over their relation: what do the partners expect from themselves and from each other?

This situation is expressed most effectively in the poem "*Quiero*" from the collection "*Cuentos para pensar*" (1999) by the Argentine poet Jorge Bucay (*1949, Buenos Aires) which poem was used as the literary basis of this movement. The originally Spanish text can be reproduced in English as follows:

*I want you to listen to me without judgment,
to give me your opinion without counsel,
to trust me without provisions.
I want you to help me without deciding for me,
to take care of me without oppressing me,
to see me without seeing yourself in me.
I want you to embrace me without choking me,
to give me courage without stifling me,
to hold me without hanging on to me.
I want you to protect me without shielding me,
to get close without forcing yourself upon me.
I want you to know what you don't like about me,
and accept, not try to change.
I want you to know that you can count on me,
unconditionally.*

At first reading, the text of the poem seems rather lapidary, spoken by an unlikeable, commanding, and egocentric person. Still, it is likely that the first-person narrator realises that the person he (or she) addresses would justifiably make equally high demands. In essence, therefore, the speaker is making these demands on himself. While they may be noble and worthy of pursuit, they seem hardly easy to fulfil in everyday life. As such, they might evoke sympathy after all.

Thus, every demand or wish put forward by the speaker evokes a virtual reflection,

confronting him with his own self and measuring his worth. This results in a dialogue between the flesh-and-blood narrator and his idealised, dreamed counterpart about their mutual relationship: by its abstract form an interesting basis for a musical piece, providing the listener food for thinking about his/her own relationship to others in general and his/her partner in particular.

By calling his collection "*Stories to reflect on*", the author implicitly indicates that making people stop and reflect, if necessary by provoking them with lapidary statements, was an important incentive for him in his creative work. The mirror is used here as a metaphor for the process of mental reflection and confrontation.

The last movement, "Celebration", elaborates on the last line of the poem mentioned above: "*I want you to know that you can count on me, unconditionally*". This commonly reached conclusion is celebrated in an extravert feast, leading to a solemn confirmation of the relation.

Remarks for performers:

(1) The music is meant to create space between the lines and to evoke a mood which allows the expressed thoughts to ripen and grow. The action takes place in the audience's imagination.

It is important that the spoken text tightly joins with the music and vice versa, in order to enable a continuous stream of thoughts to arise. The lines should be pronounced calmly and clearly, without pathos or raising the voice.

The metronome indication represents the basic tempo, allowing for rubati during the entire piece, depending on the desired expressiveness. The half note tactus should, however, remain noticeable throughout.

(2) The text of the poem is also available in Dutch (cf the Dutch part of this website under cat.nr.15). The music is the same for both versions.

(3) The third movement also exists as a separate version for narrator and pianosolo (cf cat.nr. 14). This version can be used in meetings with a religious or psychological background.

(4) If so desired, the work can also be performed without narrator. In that case, it is advisable to hand out the text to the public in advance.

The composer