

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!).

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Duration approx. 7-7:30 minutes

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I. Procession

Musical score for 'I. Procession'. It features three staves: High Trumpet, Low Trumpet, and Stamping. The tempo is marked *mp* (mezzo-piano) and the time signature is 4/4. The score includes a first ending (1.2.) and a second ending (2.3.) leading to a 3/4 time signature. The stamper part consists of a steady eighth-note pattern.

II. Recitative

Musical score for 'II. Recitative'. It features a Solo voice line and piano accompaniment. The tempo is marked *Freely (recitativo)*. The lyrics are: "once u-pon a time, a long - time a - go there was a ci - ty, it knew good times and it knew trou-bled times trou-bled times but in times of trou-ble the peo-ple would be warned by a trum - pet, a sil - ent trum - pet that on-ly could be". The score includes dynamic markings *sf* (sforzando) and *pp* (pianissimo). The time signature changes from 4/4 to 3/4 and back to 4/4.

22

heard in your soul — if you lis-tened, if you lis-tened
if you lis-tened

ppp, semi-whispered

III. Can you hear it?

26 $\text{♩} = 67$ *p*

High *p* can you hear it, can you hear it, the si - lent trum-pet the si - lent

Low *p* can you hear it, can you hear it, the si - lent trum-pet the si - lent

30 *gradual cresc.*
trump - et, can you hear it, can you hear it, the si - lent

gradual cresc.
trum - pet can you hear it, can you

33 trum-pet the si - lent trump - et, trump-et it is cal - ling cal-ling

hear it, the si - lent trum - pet the si - lent trum - pet it is cal - ling

37 *(kazoo)* *mf* 3 3 3

Solo *f* cal - ling cal - ling cal-ling cal - ling in your soul in your

f cal - ling cal - ling cal - ling in your soul in your

42 *pp, echo*

soul ————— *p* can you hear it *gradual cresc.* can you hear it

p soul ————— *gradual cresc.* can you hear it, can you hear it the sil - ent

46 (sung) *mf*

can you
the sil - ent trum - pet the sil - ent trum - pet can you hear it
trum - pet the sil - ent trum - pet, can you hear it can you hear it

49

hear it, can you hear it the sil - ent trum - pet the sil - ent
can you hear it, the sil - ent trum - pet the sil - ent trum - pet the
the sil - ent trum - pet the sil - ent trum - pet the sil - ent trum - pet

52

trum - pet cal - - - - ling in your soul soul
sil - ent trum - pet cal - - - - ling in your soul in your soul in your
the sil - ent trum - pet cal - ling in your soul in your soul in your

56 (kazoo)
ff, siren-like

soul soul
soul in your soul *ff, siren-like* war - ning war - ning war - ning
soul in your soul *ff, siren-like* war - ning war - ning war - ning

61

war - ning war - ning war - ning war - ning in your soul
war - ning war - ning war - ning war - ning in your soul

66

cal - ling in your soul soul

cal - ling in your soul in your soul in your soul

72 *gradual dim to end in all parts*

High Women

Low Women

High Men *ppp (semi whispered)*

Low Men *ppp (semi whispered)*

can you hear it can you hear it

can you hear it, can you hear it, the sil - ent

75 *slower, freely*

the sil - ent trum - pet the sil - ent trum - pet

trum - pet the sil - ent trum - pet

IV. Recitative

79 $\text{♩} = 60$ *mf*

All

The peo-ple pro-spered and grew com-forta-ble com-fort led to con-fi-dence

83 con-fi-dence to ar-ro-gance the peo-ple grew con-fi-dent and ar-ro-gant and they

87 stopped li-stening to the trum-pet stopped li-stening to the trum-pet

V. Lament

91 *mp*

High

weep for the peo-ple the peo-ple who will not li-sten, who will not hear the

Low

weep for the peo-ple the peo-ple who will not li-sten, who will not hear the

94 trum-pet, for trou-ble fol-lows them, for trou-ble fol-lows them all — the

trum-pet, for trou-ble fol-lows them, for trou-ble fol-lows them all — the

97 days, the days of their — lives. weep for the

days, the days of their — lives.

100 peo-ple the peo-ple who will not li-sten, who will not hear the trum-pet, for trou-ble

103 fol-lows them, for trou-ble fol-lows them all — the days, the days of their —

weep for the peo-ple the peo-ple who will not li-sten, who will not hear the

106 lives. will you li-sten to the trum-pet will you hear the

trum-pet, for trou-ble fol-lows them, for trou-ble fol-lows them all — the

109

trum - pet when it calls, calls calls to your soul

days, the days of their — lives. will you li - sten to the

112

to your soul, will you hear it? will you hear it, the si - lent trum-pet cal - ling

trum - pet will you hear the trum - pet when it calls, calls

115

cal-ling to your soul will you hear it, will you hear it, the si - lent trum-pet

calls to your soul to your soul, will you hear it? will you hear it, the

118

the sil - ent trum - pet cal - ling to — your soul

si - lent trum-pet cal - ling cal - ling to — your soul

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