

12-2020

My Mind and Me

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Powell, V. (2020). My Mind and Me. *Theses and Dissertations* Retrieved from <https://scholarworks.uark.edu/etd/3874>

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My Mind and Me

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Music in Music with a concentration in Composition

by

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University of Arkansas
Bachelor of Music in Music Theory, 2018

December 2020
University of Arkansas

This thesis is approved for recommendation to the Graduate Council.

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Abstract

“My Mind and Me” is a three-movement musical work written by Van Powell that was based off of a poem written by his grandmother Joyce Beshears. The piece contains many aspects of classical music such as instrumentation and form yet has more of a modern feel regarding aspects such as harmony and vocal style. The piece is written for a female alto vocal, guitar, two violins, viola, cello, and double bass. The poem that the piece is interpreting gives incite into the disassociation of a woman’s mind and body. While analyzing herself the author comes to terms with her strengths and weaknesses, seeks what changes she needs to make, and develops a positive attitude of her past and future. The three-movement work is the musical interpretation of this text composed by Van Powell.

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My Mind and Me

The poem “My Mind and Me” gives insight into disassociation of a woman’s mind and body. While analyzing herself the author comes to terms with her strengths and weaknesses, seeks what changes she needs to make, and develops a positive attitude of her past and future. Needing insight, the author looks back to “the pit” where she “lurked”. The pit represents sinking into despair and lurked represents the despair with no hope of escape.

The Author “possesses” her past, distinct from owning it. “This mind has position” shows her mind is strong, but “all part of me, my mind is it strange” suggests weakness. The author acknowledges these differences but sees them as abilities “...my mind, is it strange? To me even - yes - the extent of its range”. The author’s desire is the “precipice” and the dance flaunts her emotional insecurities while drawing her into that dance. The “emotions forever directing the strain” is about her emotions controlling her life and the parody in “part of a parody of past life’s refrain” is the life once dreamed of while continuing to repeat the same mistakes. The mood changes and her outlook changes at “But wait, something different from life course here” as the tone of the poem changes. The text is shorter and more concise as she tries to identify what her needs are and are not. She has grown but now seeks to find where she stands in her emotional world and struggles to define her needs as old repetitive ways of dealing with her needs are failing her. The author refers to her mind a “constant host” and asks it for “new air to breathe, another quest”. Her mind is her entertainment and keeps her company, but she needs to seek a new way of being. Although Her life is a parody, she sees the change as a positive adventure. She is meshing her mind and body so she can embrace this change, ergo... “My Masterpiece”.

Musically the poem is set to three movements. The first movement is an instrumental introduction that begins in A minor and has a ternary form. The rolling pizzicatos being passed around at the beginning represents the atmosphere the woman in the poem was in when she first began this thought process. The opening melody in the first violin represents the woman's state of mind or perspective of her situation. The first introduction is minor, but this melody reappears in glimpses throughout the three movements in A major instead of minor to depict the change of perspective the woman goes through from the beginning of this thought process to the end. These major reappearances occur six measures before rehearsal marker C in movement one, as well as rehearsal markers M and P in the third moment in 3/4 time.

The "B" section of the first movement outlines a "I-iii-vi-ii-V" progression in the bass then goes up a half step from V to create the next "I". However, the "I-iii" of each progression has a sharp four while the "vi-ii-V" of each progression has a natural four. The effect of this ever-changing harmony creates a sense of chaos. However, this chaos is interrupted by an A major recurrence of the opening theme followed by a group lick that results in a grand pause. This grand pause takes us to the final "A" section and back to the key of A minor. The movement ends with a picardy third resulting in an A major chord that sets up the key signature of the next movement.

The next movement has a 5/4 time signature and is the slower more lyrical movement of the two that have vocals. The movement starts with the strings and is primarily alternating between F#-9 and A major. Just before the vocals come in for the first time the tempo picks up and the texture drops to just guitar and pizzicato from the first violin alternating between F# minor and G# minor. The first few vocal phrases have examples of word painting such as "down from the bottom" having the lowest vocal note of the piece, and "I pause" having a recognizable

pause after it. The sections between vocals are the same as the beginning of the movement but at the new tempo. This section is also what ends the movement on an A major chord.

The third movement is in 3/4 time and is reminiscent of a minuet and trio form, although it is a bit varied. The first “minuet” section is primarily all in F# minor and is a dance with a gypsy influence. The vocal parts of this section are very tonal and flow easily over the instrumentation. It is not until “But wait, something different” that the tone of the music and vocals change. I would consider this point the mark of the “trio” section of the movement. The harmony was created using what I call common tone contextual inversion.

With common tone contextual inversion, you are able to take any two notes of a dominant 7 chord and invert them around the other two notes of the chord. The result is a half-diminished chord regardless of what two notes you choose, although picking different notes will result in different half-diminished chords. The inverse of this statement is also true. If you take any two notes of a half-diminished chord and invert them around the other two notes of the chord, the result is always a dominant 7 chord. With this method there will be six possible lines of symmetry; one with the root and the 7th of the chord, one with the 3rd and 5th of the chord, one with the root and 5th of the chord, one with the 3rd and 7th of the chord, one with the root and the 3rd of the chord, and one with the 5th and the 7th of the chord. Many of these options end up sounding similar to the ideas of Armenian theory, as well as closely resembling the Tristan chord.

The way I applied this method to my trio section was by inverting each dominant 7 chord around the 3rd and 5th chord tone, creating a half diminished chord a half-step higher. Then inverting that half-diminished chord around the 1st and 7th chord tones to create a dominant 7 chord with the same bass note as the half-diminished chord. I start on C#7 because it is the V

chord of the previous F# minor section, making the first chords C#7-Dø-D7-Ebø-Eb7 and so on and so forth. I use this pattern to creep up to A until the opening melody from movement one reappears in its major form. The “B” section of the trio is in E minor and utilized a chromatic descending bass line. The lyrics of the poem are always spoken word in these sections.

When deciding what key to return to the minuet section, I considered the heavy usage of F# minor and A major. However, at the end of the poem, the woman has a different perspective on her past and future, and I thought the music needed to reflect that in a positive way. This led me to D major due to a D major chord containing both F# and A. The major return of the minuet section is musically very similar to its opening version in F# minor, but with major coloring and a new key to represent the new perspective of the woman from the poem.

Works Cited

Beshears, Joyce (1986). *My Mind and Me*. Unpublished Manuscript.

Lyrics by Joyce Beshears

My Mind and Me I, II, and III

Composed by Van Powell

I. $\text{♩} = 95$

Musical score for the first system, measures 1-11. The score includes staves for Alto, Classical Guitar, Violin, Violin (Pizz), Viola, Violoncello (Pizz), and Double Bass. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/4. The tempo is marked $\text{♩} = 95$. Dynamics include *mp* and *mf*. The Violin and Violoncello parts feature pizzicato (Pizz) markings.

Musical score for the second system, measures 12-19. The score includes staves for A., Guit., Vln., Vln., Vla., Vc., and Db. The key signature changes to two sharps (F# and C#) and the time signature remains 4/4. Dynamics include *pp* and *f*. The Vln. part features an Arco marking. A rehearsal mark 'A' is placed above measure 12.

Musical score for the third system, measures 20-27. The score includes staves for A., Guit., Vln., Vln., Vla., Vc., and Db. The key signature remains two sharps (F# and C#) and the time signature remains 4/4.

28

A.

Guit.

Vln.

Vln.

Vla.

Vc.

Db.

35 **B**

A.

Guit.

Vln.

Vln.

Vla.

Vc.

Db.

41

A.

Guit.

Vln.

Vln.

Vla.

Vc.

Db.

47

A.
Guit.
Vln. *ff*
Vln. *ff*
Vla. *ff*
Vc. *ff*
Db.

51 C

A.
Guit.
Vln. *mf* *ff* *mf*
Vln. *mf* *mp*
Vla. *mf*
Vc. *mf*
Db.

60

A.
Guit.
Vln. *f*
Vln. *f*
Vla. *f*
Vc. *mf* *f*
Db.

II. $\text{♩} = 58$

Alto

Classical Guitar

Violin

Violin

Viola

Violoncello

Double Bass

5

A.

Guit.

Vln.

Vln.

Vla.

Vc.

Db.

9

A.

Guit.

Vln.

Vln.

Vla.

Vc.

Db.

13

A. _____

Guit. _____

Vln. *f* *p* *f* *pp*

Vln. *f* *p* *f* *pp*

Vla. *f* *mf* *mp* *p* *f* *pp*

Vc. *f* *mf* *mp* *p* *f* *pp*

Db. *f* *mp* *pp*

D

17 *♩* = 92

A. _____

Guit. *mp* pizz let ring

Vln. *mp* pizz let ring

Vln. _____

Vla. _____

Vc. _____

Db. _____

21 *mf*

A. _____
How can I push My - self up to look

Guit. *p*

Vln. *p*

Vln. _____

Vla. _____

Vc. _____

Db. _____

25

A. *Down to the bot - tom this place where I lurked I pause*

Guit. *p*

Vln. *p*

Vln.

Vla.

Vc.

Db.

30

A. *and re-fresh This place where I was Cre - ate yes it did.*

Guit. *p*

Vln. *p*

Vln.

Vla.

Vc.

Db.

35 **E**

A.

Guit. *f*

Vln. *p*

Vln. *p*

Vla. *p*

Vc. *p*

Db. *f* *Pizz*

40 **F** *f* *mf* *f*

A. *pizz* let ring My mind has po - si - tion It's been bro - ken down torn in - to pie - ces It still

Guit. *pizz* let ring *p*

Vln. *p*

Vln.

Vla.

Vc.

Db. *Pizz* *f*

47 *mp* *mf* *f*

A. is not sound All part of me My mind is it strange to me ev - en yes

Guit.

Vln.

Vln.

Vla.

Vc.

Db.

53 **G**

A. the ex - tent of it's range

Guit. *f* *f* *f* *f* *3* rit.

Vln. *p* *p*

Vla. *p* *p* *p* *p* *p* *p*

Vc. *mp* *mp*

Db. *3* rit.

III.

♩ = 60

Alto

Classical Guitar *mf*

Violin

Violin

Viola

Violoncello *mp*

Double Bass *mp* Pizz

13

A.

Guit. *mp*

Vln. *p* pizz

Vla. *pizz*

Vc. *mp* *mf* *f*

Db.

25

A.

Guit. *mp* F#- B- E7

Vln. *f* Arco

Vla. *pizz*

Vc. *mf*

Db.

38

A.

Guit.

Vln.

Vln.

Vla.

Vc.

Db.

49 *f* **I**

A.

Guit.

Vln.

Vln.

Vla.

Vc.

Db.

59 **J**

A.

Guit.

Vln.

Vln.

Vla.

Vc.

Db.

70

A.

Guit.

Vln.

Vln.

Vla.

Vc.

Db.

81 K

A.

Guit.

Vln.

Vln.

Vla.

Vc.

Db.

94 L

A.

Guit.

Vln.

Vln.

Vla.

Vc.

Db.

108

A. *mf* *f*
 from life's course here must come a - round to change to clear to put what I

Guit.

Vln.

Vln.

Vla.

Vc. *D#7* *Eø* *E7* *Fø* *F7* *F#ø*

Db.

120

A. *f* *mf* *f* *mf*
 my thoughts and me think might be need ne - ces - si - ty

Guit.

Vln.

Vln. *f*

Vla.

Vc. *F#7* *Gø* *G7* *G#ø*

Db.

129 **M**

A.

Guit.

Vln.

Vln. *ff* *f*

Vla.

Vc. *f*

Db. *Arco* *p < mf >* *p < mf >* *p < mf >* *p < mf >* *p < mf >*

145 N Spoken: Is it hurt? Sometimes, yes Not often now I've grown from this New love?

A.

Guit.

Vln.

Vln.

Vla.

Vc.

Db.

159 Who knows? I may be blind O

A.

Sprechstimme: There's none a - round with per - fect time

Guit.

Vln.

Vln.

Vla.

Vc.

Db.

171

A.

Guit.

Vln.

Vln.

Vla.

Vc.

Db.

183 **P**

A. *[Musical notation]*

Guit. *[Musical notation]*

Vln. *[Musical notation]*

Vln. *[Musical notation]* *ff* *ff* *f* *pizz* *p*

Vla. *[Musical notation]* *f*

Vc. *[Musical notation]* *p* *mf* *p* *mf* *p* *mf* *p* *mf*

Db. *[Musical notation]* *p* *mf* *p* *mf* *p* *mf* *p* *mf*

197 **Q**

Spoken: I've searched to find what fills this need in me

A. *[Musical notation]*

Guit. *[Musical notation]* *mp*

Vln. *[Musical notation]* *p*

Vln. *[Musical notation]* *p*

Vla. *[Musical notation]*

Vc. *[Musical notation]* *p* *mf* *p* *mf* *mf* *p*

Db. *[Musical notation]* *p* *mf* *p* *mf* *mf* *p*

209 that sucks the air I breath but search sometimes leads to the state of fantasy old dreams

A. *[Musical notation]*

Guit. *[Musical notation]* *f* *p*

Vln. *[Musical notation]* *f* *p*

Vln. *[Musical notation]* *Arco* *f* *p*

Vla. *[Musical notation]* *f* *p*

Vc. *[Musical notation]* *f* *p*

Db. *[Musical notation]* *mf* *f* *p*

224 **R**

A. *f*

Pass to me some new ap - proach oh mind of mine my con - stant host

Guit. *mp*

Vln. *pp*

Vln. *pp*

Vla. *pp*

Vc. *mp*

Db.

232

A.

Search the depths find a breath new air to breathe an - oth - er quest

Guit.

Vln.

Vln.

Vla.

Vc.

Db.

240 **S**

A.

DA7 GA7 C#o/G F#-7 DA7

Guit. *mf*

Vln. *f*

Vln.

Vla.

Vc.

Db. *mf*

250

A. *f* T

Guit. *GA7* *A7* *DA7* *dim.* *mf*

Vln. *f* *p* *pp*

Vln. *pp*

Vla. *pp*

Vc. *mp*

Db. *mf* *p*

an ad - ven - ture of this

260

A. Spoken: We are by ourselves

par - o - dy this life we live is now you see

Guit.

Vln.

Vln.

Vla.

Vc.

Db.

269

A. but soon to reach our pinnacle rit. my masterpiece

Guit. rit.

Vln. *f* rit. *ff*

Vln. *f* rit. *ff*

Vla. *f* rit. *ff*

Vc. *f* rit. *ff*

Db. *f* rit. *ff*