

Lamentation
on
The Disasters of War

after etchings by Francisco de Goya
for string orchestra

Karim Al-Zand
(2006)

PROGRAM NOTE:

Francisco de Goya (1746–1828) produced the series of 82 etchings known as *Los desastres de la guerra* [The Disasters of War] during the period from 1812 to 1820, as a reaction to the events which followed Napoleon’s invasion of Spain. His work is both a response to the horrific conflict he witnessed in the Peninsular War and a commentary on the ravages of war in general. What distinguishes The Disasters of War from earlier artistic treatments of bellicose subjects is the unflinching realism of its portrayal (it almost serves as a kind of documentary, eye-witness account) and Goya’s refusal to see either side in the conflict as having absolute moral superiority. Its powerful imagery is dark and violent, its message profoundly pessimistic.

My piece *Lamentation on The Disasters of War* is an elegy. It is inspired by Goya’s work and its modern-day significance, though it makes no attempt to literally portray the events depicted in the etchings. The piece is dedicated to my late cousin Husam Al-Zand, who was tragically killed in Iraq in 2005; to his surviving wife and children; and to my courageous family still remaining in the region, both in Baghdad and in the growing Iraqi Diaspora. Peace be upon them.

LONG PROGRAM NOTE:

Francisco de Goya (1746–1828) produced the series of 82 etchings known as *The Disasters of War* during the period from 1812 to 1820. Napoleon’s incursion into Spain in the year 1808 had marked the beginning of a brutal and ultimately futile war. Though the French army was the world’s superpower, the following six years of bloody conflict proved that even “the most determined of invaders, equipped with strong armies and copious intelligence about its enemy, can make myopic blunders that seem close to madness.”¹

Napoleon’s ill-fated decision to march on Spain was in part a product of his own arrogance, which did not allow him to foresee the resistance his occupation would inspire. As he wrote to one of his senior officers, he found the Spanish people “vile and cowardly, about the same as I found the Arabs to be” and he was convinced that when he brought “the words liberty, freedom from superstition, destruction of the nobility, I will be welcomed...You will see how they think of me as the liberator of Spain.” Among other things, the war brought a new word into the military lexicon: *guerrilla*. Bands of insurgents operated out of the mountains, continuously sapping the French forces of both manpower and morale through kidnapping, torture, execution and public displays of mutilation.

The civilian population of Spain was brutalized by both sides in the conflict, caught in a cycle of “oppression and outrage, atrocity and counter-atrocity; pillage, marauding, starvation, maiming, torture and murder.”² The work is both a response to the horrific conflict he witnessed and a commentary on the ravages of war in general. What distinguishes *The Disasters of War* from earlier treatments of bellicose subjects is the unflinching realism of its portrayal (it almost serves as a kind of documentary, eye-witness account) and Goya’s refusal to see either side in the conflict as having absolute moral superiority. The imagery is dark and violent, its message profoundly pessimistic.

Lamentation on the Disasters Of War is an elegy. The composition is inspired by Goya’s work, and its many sad parallels in the US invasion of Iraq. The piece is dedicated to my late cousin Husam Al-Zand (1966–2005) who was tragically killed in Iraq last year; to his surviving wife and children; and to the rest of my courageous family in Baghdad. Peace be upon them.

1. Hughes, Robert, Goya, (2003), p. 261.

2. Geoffrey Best, War and Society in Revolutionary Europe, 1770-1870 (1982), p. 174.

Premiere performance: Lamentation on The Disasters of War received its premiere in its original sextet version on April 30, 2006 presented by the Enso String Quartet (Maureen Nelson, John Marcus, violin; Robert Brophy, viola; Richard Belcher, cello) with violist Katherine Lewis and cellist Valdine Ritchie. The string orchestra version was premiered by Fulcrum Point under conductor Stephen Burns.

Dani Al-Zand. May 2006

DURATION:

ca. 10'

PERFORMANCE NOTE:

Though it is not necessary, a selection of Goya’s etchings may be shown via projection prior to the performance, as was the case at the work’s premiere; however, they should not be shown during the performance itself. Digital versions of the Goya images may be obtained from the composer.

Lamentation on The Disasters of War

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Very Slowly; ominous $\text{♩}=72$ ($\text{♩}=36$)

Violin I

Violin II

Viola 1

Viola 2

Cello

Contrabass

pp *pp* *pp* *pp* *ppp* *pp*

pleading *pleading* *pleading* *pleading*

gliss. *gliss.* *gliss.* *gliss.*

mp *mp* *mp* *mp*

pizz. *pizz.*

solo

slightly faster; dirge-like $\text{♩}=92$ ($\text{♩}=46$)

Vln. I

Vln. II 1

Vln. II 2

Vla. 1

Vla. 2

Vc. 1

Vc. 2

Cb.

5

p *mp* *p* *mp* *p* *mp* *p* *mp* *p* *mp* *p* *mp*

gliss. *gliss.* *gliss.* *gliss.* *gliss.* *gliss.* *gliss.* *gliss.*

espres. sul IV *espres. sul IV* *espres. sul IV*

tutti

solo *pizz. sonorous* *pizz.* *the rest*

p *p* *p* *p* *p* *p* *p* *p*

(solo)

10

Vln. I

Vln. II 1 2

Vla.

solo

Vc.

the rest

Cb.

15

poco accel. - - -

Vln. I

Vln. II 1 2

Vla.

solo

Vc.

the rest

Cb.

20

slightly faster; doleful ♩=52 (♩=104)

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla. 1 2

Vc. (tutti div.) 1 2

Cb.

27 *slightly faster; melancholic* ♩=58 (♩=116)

Vln. I *mf*

Vln. II *mf* *sighing* *mf* *mf* *mf*

Vla. 1 *tutti*

Vla. 2 *solo*

Vc. 1 *mf* *poco f* *mf* *poco f* *mf* *poco f*

Vc. 2 *the rest*

Cb.

31

Vln. I *div.* *tutti*

Vln. II

Vla. 1

Vla. 2

Vc. (tutti div.) 1

Vc. (tutti div.) 2

Cb.

37 *poco rit.* - - - - - *slightly faster; tense* ♩=66 (♩.=44)

Vln. I *poco f* *mf* *cresc. poco a poco*

Vln. II *poco f* *mf* *cresc. poco a poco*

Vla. 1 *poco f* *mf* *cresc. poco a poco*

Vla. 2 *poco f* *mf* *cresc. poco a poco*

Vc. 1 *poco f*

Vc. 2 *poco f* *mf*

Cb.

accel. -----

41

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla. 1

Vla. 2

Vc. 1

Vc. 2

Cb.

mf

cresc.

tutti

arco

allargando a tempo; agitated $\text{♩} = 66$ ($\text{♩} = 132$)

44

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla. 1

Vla. 2

Vc. 1

Vc. 2

Cb.

f

unis.

heavy

f

47

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla. 1

Vla. 2

Vc. 1

Vc. 2

Cb.

f

70

Violin I: *f*, *pizz. forcefully*, *f*
Violin II: *f*, *pizz. forcefully*, *f*
Viola 1: *f*
Viola 2: *f*
Violoncello 1: *arco*, *arco*, *ff*
Violoncello 2: *arco*, *arco*, *ff*
Cello: *(unis.)*, *f*, *ff*

Measures 70-75. The score features a complex rhythmic pattern with eighth and sixteenth notes. The first violin and second violin parts are marked *f* and *pizz. forcefully*. The viola and cello parts are marked *arco* and *ff*. The cello part includes a *(unis.)* marking.

76

Violin I: *arco*, *pizz.*, *arco*
Violin II: *arco*, *pizz.*, *arco*
Viola 1: *f*
Viola 2: *f*
Violoncello 1: *ff*, *cresc.*
Violoncello 2: *ff*, *cresc.*
Cello: *ff*, *cresc.*

Measures 76-80. The score continues with similar rhythmic patterns. The first violin and second violin parts alternate between *arco* and *pizz.*. The viola and cello parts are marked *f* and *ff*. The cello part includes a *cresc.* marking.

81

Violin I: *cresc.*
Violin II: *cresc.*
Viola 1: *cresc.*
Viola 2: *cresc.*
Violoncello 1: *cresc.*
Violoncello 2: *cresc.*
Cello: *cresc.*

Measures 81-85. The score features a change in tempo and meter, indicated by the marking *♩. = ♩ as before*. The first violin and second violin parts are marked *cresc.*. The viola and cello parts are marked *cresc.*. The cello part includes a *cresc.* marking.

96 *Slowly; calm, placid* ♩=60

tutti *fff* *solo* *pp* *the rest* *pizz.*

Vln. I

tutti *fff* *solo* *pp* *the rest* *pizz.*

Vln. II

Vla. *fff* *pp* *sul tasto*

Vc. *fff* *pp* *sul tasto*

Cb. *fff* *pp*

105 *lightly*

solo *lightly* *p*

Vln. I

the rest *p*

solo *lightly* *p*

Vln. II

the rest *p*

Vla. 1 *ord.* *p*

Vla. 2 *ord.* *p*

Vc. 1 *ord.* *p*

Vc. 2 *ord.* *pizz.* *p*

Cb. *p*

111 *a little quicker* ♩=66 *poco rit.*

Vln. I *mp*

Vln. II *mp*

Vla. 1 *solo* *mp*

Vla. 2 *the rest* *mp*

Vc. 1 *tr* *mp* *solo* *arco* *mf* *3*

Vc. 2 *tr* *mp* *the rest* *mp* *3*

Cb. *mp* *3*

118 slightly slower; somber $\text{♩} = 58$ (with rubato)

Vln. I *mf*
 Vln. II *mf*
 Vla. *mf*
 solo Vc. *mp*
 the rest Vc. *mf*
 Cb. *mf*

poco rit. a tempo

stretto a tempo

Vln. I *cresc.* *f* *sub p* *ten.* *div.* *mp*
 Vln. II *cresc.* *f* *sub p* *ten.*
 Vla. 1 *cresc.* *f* *sub p* *ten.*
 Vla. 2 *cresc.* *f* *sub p*
 solo Vc. *tutti* *ten.*
 the rest Vc. *cresc.* *f* *sub p* *ten.* *mp*
 Cb. *cresc.* *f* *sub p* *ten.* *mp*

poco rit. a tempo

Vln. I *decresc.* *pp* *mf*
 Vln. II *decresc.* *pp* *mf*
 Vla. *pp* *mf*
 Vc. *div.* *pp* *mf*
 Cb. *pp* *mf*

154 rit. morendo

Vln. I *p sim. pp morendo n*

Vln. II *p sim. pp morendo n*

Vla. 1 *p gliss. pp morendo n*

Vla. 2 *p gliss. pp morendo n*

Vc. *p pp morendo n*

Cb. *p pp (arco) tutti morendo n*

