

## Cry For Help

For Bb Clarinet and Piano

Cry For Help is included in this portfolio as an example of a relatively small-scale work for two instrumentalists which could be used as part of a clarinet recital. Although the music has “For Bb Clarinet and Piano” as its sub-title, Cry For Help should not be seen as, or performed as, a clarinet solo; the music has been conceived to give equal prominence to both of the players. Rests in the clarinet, dovetailing between the instruments and motifs first introduced in the piano line emphasise this point.

The title of the piece was chosen after the first draft was written – the music, its form, rhythmic structure and melodic range inspired the title.

One aim in writing a piece for clarinet and piano has been to produce a piece that presents both instruments idiomatically, so that performer and listener alike know that the piece was conceived for clarinet and piano and that it has been written so that it can be performed only on those instruments. The devices used to achieve this include the careful use of legato marks, thought of phrasing and the use of the different characteristics of the registers of the clarinet to contrast the mood between the various sections of the piece. Another aim was to write a piece which journeys through a number of moods and styles.

The clarinet part is transposing (sounding a tone lower than written), though neither it nor the piano part has a key signature. Having no key signature allows the tonally to move freely.

Both performers will need to be of an accomplished standard. The clarinet part is technically demanding since the need for an evenness of tone between and across the registers that are characteristic of the clarinet provides a challenge for the performer. Furthermore, the clarinet part encompasses a range that is large, though it is not excessive. The highest note is a crotchet high G in bar 24, and there are four high F<sup>#</sup>s. There are also no extended phrases above the staff, so the demand on the clarinet player’s stamina is also acceptable.

The number of large leaps in the clarinet has been kept to a minimum; this is for both musical and practical reasons. These large leaps create a dramatic effect when they appear in this piece since they occur sparingly, for example the leap of a perfect twelfth in bar 22. The perfect twelfth is a characteristic of the clarinet; the interval is easily playable on that instrument, so there is no need to avoid the use of such a large interval, as one would need to on a brass instrument, for example. The ease of production of a perfect twelfth comes from the intrinsic features of the clarinet. Brymer (1976: 71-72) tells us that the clarinet’s odd overtones are stronger than its even ones, the third overtone being an interval of an octave and a perfect fifth (that is to say a perfect twelfth).

The clarinet style should be legato throughout, except where the part is explicitly marked *marcato*, for example at bar 72. The use of legato allows the clarinet’s sound to flow more smoothly within phrases.

Cry For Help is in an ABCA structure, with a brief reference to the ‘B’ material after section ‘C’ before the recapitulation of the material of section ‘A’ at 72.

There is no introduction. Section 'A' starts at the first bar with an octave C<sup>#</sup> in the piano's right hand which is held (and dies away) as the clarinet enters (Figure 1). This first section centres on the interval of a perfect fourth, its inversion, the perfect fifth and on occasions the augmented fourth. These intervals appear right at the start with a trumpet call presented in the opening three notes of the clarinet. This call is formed from two perfect fourths, a motif that forms much of the material that the work is derived from both melodically and rhythmically. Against this, the right hand of the piano features a rising figure where a syncopated rhythm contrasts with the 4/4 in the clarinet (Figure 2).



Figure 1. Clarinet bars 1-4



Figure 2. Piano (left hand) bars 1-6

After a short bridging passage that starts at bar 18, the piano opens section 'B' at bar 28 (Figure 3). This section consists of entirely new material.



Figure 3. Piano bar 28

Section 'B' includes a number of semiquaver passages, for example in bar 34, where the clarinet and both hands of the piano are in unison. These unison passages give a sense of urgency and help to drive the music forward. This section also includes many examples of dovetailing between the instruments, for example bars 29-31 (Figure 4) and bar 33. While the use of dovetailing primarily produces thematically and musically balanced music, its use also underlines the equality between the instruments.

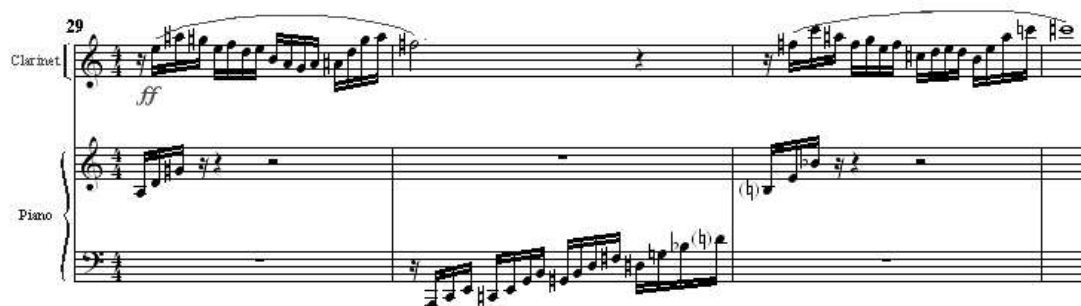


Figure 4. Bars 29-31

Section 'C' (Figure 5) is a calmer section than both 'A' and 'B'; it includes a number of extended legato phrases. The section begins one beat before bar 41 with new material in the clarinet. This anacrusis and the first note of section 'C' combined cover a perfect fourth. The use of a perfect fourth again here underlines its importance as the dominating interval of the work and, by recalling the opening trumpet call, gives a sense of symmetry to the work that ensures that the music does not sound as if it were a series of unrelated ideas. In bars 45-47 the piano plays sustained notes against the flowing clarinet line, which is reversed in bars 49-51 as the clarinet has a sustained line against the legato piano.

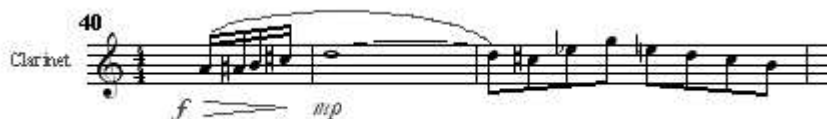


Figure 5. Clarinet bars 40-42

In addition to presenting new material, this section also draws from, and develops material found in, section 'A'. For example, bars 59 and 60 in the clarinet further recall and develop the material from bars 1 and 2, with the piano recalling the same opening bars in inversion in the left hand in bar 58.

The tonality abruptly drops a tone at bar 56 to give a sense of relaxation through the middle passage of the piece, thereby reinforcing the calmer mood of the 'C' section. The tonality rises back, via a short reference to section 'B' at bar 69, to the original, ready for the recapitulation of section 'A', which begins at bar 72. This change of tonality also helps to strengthen the macro-structure of the work. It achieves this first by emphasising the overall structure and giving a sense of completion at the large scale, and second by avoiding the danger of monotony if the tonality were to have been too rigid. The bridge passage, bars 69-71, serves a dual purpose: first, it re-establishes the initial tonal centre and, second, it develops and reuses material to contribute a sense of balance and completeness to the work.

The final two bars form a brief coda opening on an augmented fourth in the clarinet.

Is the cry for help answered? The marking "*pochissimo rall.*" in the coda, indicates that the listener should decide whether the music answers the cry, and if it does what that answer is. There probably is an answer, and that answer is probably yes. The final unison note hints at this, but the reply is not emphatic.

## Bibliography

Brymer, Jack. 1976; repr. 2004. *Clarinet – (Yehudi Menuhin music guides: no. 1)* (London: Kahn & Averill)