

Three Preludes for Piano

Beginnings

Life-Stream

Finality

by

Ruth B. Gatrell

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When teaching a series of classes for Composers Guild, radio and TV commercial expert Vinnie Troth contended that any musical idea could be effectively portrayed in one minute or less. As the classes evolved, students were led to consider that even the concept of life itself can be reduced to the role of the Three Fates of mythology. The First Fate, Clotho, spins the thread. The Second, Lachesis, keeps the thread going (and Vinnie's word to the wise was, "Don't rock the boat!"). The Third Fate, Atropos, cuts the thread.

The assignment for the conclusion of the classes was the challenge for each composer to create a one minute composition portraying the musical idea represented by each Fate and her role.

In mythology, Clotho's spinning the thread is the beginning of each mortal life. In the first *Prelude*, titled *Beginnings*, the beginning of life, mentally compared to the sprouting seed in the warm, brown earth which pushes its brave seed leaf upward to break through the ground into the light, warmth and freedom of our wonderful world, where it can grow and expand into its true potential, starts with the opening single note of the *Prelude*, which grows with the addition of other notes of harmony and melody, until it expands into the haunting strains of *Beginnings*.

As keeping the thread of life going is the role of mythology's Second Fate, Lachesis, the second *Prelude*, titled *Life-Stream*, depicts the ebb and flow of life's journey as the headwaters of a crystal mountain stream rushing through life's exciting canyons, sometimes beset by swirling eddies, as it grows into the rushing torrent of a river, racing past the ever changing heights and depths of its shoreline as it sweeps unalterably towards the sea.

In the annals of mythology the precious thread of life is cut by the Third Fate, Atropos. Accordingly, the third *Prelude*, titled *Finality*, represents the abrupt, absolute, unalterable end of life, and the deep sense of loss and longing that follows.

Each *Prelude* was originally one minute long. After the classes were over, I could no longer ignore the deep emotions and poignant image of mythology's dread departure of the lost soul for it's ultimate crossing of the River Styx, that came with the thoughts of an untimely death--a life cut short at its prime and the void that follows. So *Finality* now goes beyond the one minute time frame.

Beginnings

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Andante con moto

The musical score is written for piano and consists of five systems of music. Each system contains a treble and bass staff. The key signature is two sharps (F# and C#), and the time signature is 4/4. The tempo is marked 'Andante con moto'. The score includes various dynamics and performance instructions:

- System 1: Treble staff starts with *pp* and *semplice*. Bass staff starts with *pp*. A crescendo hairpin is present. Dynamics include *pp*, *cresc. poco a poco*, and *mf*.
- System 2: Treble staff starts with *mp* and *con fiducia*. Bass staff starts with *mp*. A crescendo hairpin is present. Dynamics include *mp*, *cresc. poco a poco*, and *f*.
- System 3: Treble staff starts with *f* and *appassionato*. Bass staff starts with *f*. A decrescendo hairpin is present. Dynamics include *f*, *appassionato*, and *ten.*
- System 4: Treble staff starts with *pp* and *doloroso*. Bass staff starts with *pp*. A decrescendo hairpin is present. Dynamics include *pp*, *doloroso*, *ten.*, and *f*.
- System 5: Treble staff starts with *ff*. Bass staff starts with *ff*. A decrescendo hairpin is present. Dynamics include *ff*, *rit.*, and *pp*.

Life-Stream

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Allegro moderato

mp grazioso

poco rit.

mf a tempo

f affetuoso

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12

mp

Musical notation for measures 12 and 13. Measure 12 features a piano introduction with a treble clef and a bass clef. The key signature has two sharps (F# and C#). The melody in the treble clef consists of quarter notes, while the bass clef has a steady eighth-note accompaniment. Measure 13 continues the melody with a slight crescendo indicated by a hairpin.

14

poco rit.

Musical notation for measures 14 and 15. Measure 14 shows the continuation of the melody and accompaniment. Measure 15 features a decrescendo hairpin and a tempo marking of *poco rit.* (ritardando).

16

a tempo *poco allargando*

Musical notation for measures 16 and 17. Measure 16 is marked *a tempo*. Measure 17 features a decrescendo hairpin and a tempo marking of *poco allargando* (ritardando).

18

a piacere *p a tempo*

Musical notation for measures 18 and 19. Measure 18 is marked *a piacere* (ad libitum) and features a decrescendo hairpin. Measure 19 is marked *p a tempo* and features a crescendo hairpin.

20

poco rit. *a tempo* *poco rit.* *pp*

Musical notation for measures 20, 21, and 22. Measure 20 is marked *poco rit.*. Measure 21 is marked *a tempo*. Measure 22 features a decrescendo hairpin and a tempo marking of *poco rit.*. The system concludes with a final chord marked *pp* (pianissimo).

Finality

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Allegro agitato ♩ = 120

The first system of the musical score consists of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef and the lower staff is in bass clef. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat), and the time signature is 4/4. The music begins with a forte (*ff*) dynamic. The upper staff features a series of chords and some melodic fragments, while the lower staff provides a rhythmic accompaniment with chords and some moving lines.

The second system continues the piece. It features a melodic line in the upper staff with some grace notes and a sustained chord in the lower staff. The dynamics are not explicitly marked in this system, but the overall texture remains consistent with the first system.

Slowly *increasing tempo gradually to allegro*

The third system begins at measure 7. It features a melodic line in the upper staff and a bass line in the lower staff. The tempo is marked as *poco rit.* (ritardando) and the dynamic is *p* (piano). The system concludes with a *cresc. poco a poco* (crescendo) marking, indicating a gradual increase in volume and tempo.

The fourth system begins at measure 10. It features a melodic line in the upper staff and a bass line in the lower staff. The tempo is marked as *allegro*, and the dynamic is *p* (piano). The system concludes with a final chord in the upper staff.

13 **Allegro agitato**

f

16

poco rit. *a tempo*

19

poco rit. ***ff***

22

poco rit.

25 **Andante senza calore**

p *mp* *poco cresc.* *doloroso*

28

r.h. *r.h.* *r.h.* *r.h.*

31

cresc. *f* *pp subito* *p*

r.h. *r.h.*

34

pp *mf*

3 3 3

36

cresc. *allargando*

40 **Slowly increasing tempo gradually to allegro**

p subito cresc.

43 **Allegro appassionato**

f ten. rubato ten.

46

ten. mp f ten. rubato

49

ten.

52

ten. sim.
rubato

ff

55

mp *f* *rubato*

58

rit. ***fff*** **Tempo I**

61

fff *f* *allargando*

64

p *morendo* *pp* *ppp*

gua---