

NICKY SOHN

TOAD, TOAD

FOR B \flat CLARINET, VIOLIN, VIOLA, AND CELLO

(2020)

PROGRAM NOTES:

Toad, toad was written from June 1st to June 10th, 2020. The COVID-19 pandemic and the deep and prolonged isolation that followed gave me the opportunity and space to participate in a special competition called “Rapido!”, a platform where composers are assigned a specific instrumentation, duration and theme for a chamber piece. This year’s required theme was to create a piece that expresses the sea-change the virus brought to everyone’s personal and professional lives.

This has been a difficult time for me as it has been for everyone. With the endless and harrowing solitude, I was unable to continue my career as an artist in the way that had been second nature to me. The possibility of reaching my family back in South Korea was entirely out of the question, and the human ties I strongly depended on were largely severed. I was timidly looking down the long barrel of a seemingly endless summer. With a thoroughly unfulfilled longing for home, for a return back to my eternal resting place, the theme for this piece was instantly apparent.

The Korean folk song, “Toad, Toad”, despite its simplicity and popularity as a nursery rhyme, struck something within me and painted the feeling of my separation from home. Offering a new house for toad’s old house felt like something I would dream about during my quiet quarantine.

Translation:

Toad, toad
Toad, toad
I’ll get you a new house,
so give me your old house.

Toad, toad
bring me some water
and I’ll build you a new house.

Toad, toad
your house is on fire,
come on down with a pitchfork.



두꺼비

두 겹 아 두 겹 아 현 집 줄 게 새 집 다 오

두 겹 아 두 겹 아 물 길 어 오 너 라 너 희 집 지 어 줄 게

두 겹 아 두 겹 아 너 희 집 에 불 닳 다 쇠 스 량 가 지 고 쫓 레 쫓 레 오 너 라

Focusing on the isolation and repetition of my life in quarantine, the piece is structured around 12 measure long phrases. The melody from the folk song is the main source of the piece, and each phrase is treated as a variation from the main theme.

The beginning of this decade has already been incredibly unpredictable, and all these unusual events estrange us from life as we had known it. Anger, despair, grief, frustration, and regret to a degree we don’t often see are becoming a daily occurrence. This abrasive world has calloused us in what feels like a single moment. Nevertheless, like toad I look to build my home again, clearing the debris and wreckage and finding a new place to rest.

Toad, toad

Nicky Sohn

♩ = 104

Clarinet in B \flat

Violin

Viola

Cello

4
B \flat Cl.

Vln.

Vla.

Vc.

7
B \flat Cl.

Vln.

Vla.

Vc.

10 *tr*

B♭ Cl.

Vln.

Vla.

Vc.

p

A 13

B♭ Cl.

Vln.

Vla.

Vc.

p

f

p

f

p

f

16

B♭ Cl.

Vln.

Vla.

Vc.

ff

sub. p

pizz.

sfz

p

slap

arco

ff

pizz.

sub. p

fp

arco

ff

pizz.

sub. p

fp

arco

ff

sub. p

fp