

Leave To Live
for
solo soprano saxophone
and backing

John Gourlay

In the spring of 2019 the composer was taken ill with a subdural haematoma. Thanks to quick-witted and on-the-ball GP and to the nursing and surgical staff at the Department of Clinical Neurosciences at the Western General Hospital, Edinburgh, the condition was dealt with successfully.

Lying in bed after the operation (a mini-craniotomy) the composer conceived this piece as a way of marking his deliverance and recovery from his first serious illness and as a way of expressing gratitude for the outcome. Consequently the piece is dedicated to the above medical staff and in general to NHS Scotland.

Although the piece is not a musical portrayal of events, there are references to the onset of the haematoma, the craniotomy and an MRI scan (in itself a very sonic experience). The solo saxophone part is sometimes written to be played 'in tempo', sometimes 'senza misura'. Some passages are written in skeleton form and are intended to be elaborated by ornamentation and/or improvisation. The backing was devised using GarageBand software.

First performance - Fife Festival of Music on Thursday 6 February 2020 in the auditorium of the Adam Smith Theatre, Kirkcaldy, with the composer borrowing his daughter's soprano saxophone for the occasion.

Duration 10 minutes.

Leave To Live

"It's a grand thing to get leave to live." - Nan Shepherd

John Gourlay

Very freely
ca.35"

Soprano Saxophone in Bb

improvise, repeat ad lib.
pp

Backing guide

ca.12" ca.7"

ca.12" ca.7"

ca.15"

Quite freely

The first system of music is marked "Quite freely". It consists of three staves: a treble clef staff at the top, and a grand staff (bass and tenor clefs) below. The treble staff contains a whole rest in the first measure and another whole rest in the second measure. The grand staff features a complex texture with multiple overlapping notes in both the bass and tenor clefs, some of which are beamed together and have long horizontal lines above them, suggesting sustained or glissando effects.

(senza misura)

The second system is marked "(senza misura)". It features three staves. The treble staff begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic and contains a few notes in the first measure, followed by a wavy line indicating a glissando, and then a few more notes. The grand staff continues with the complex, overlapping textures seen in the first system.

in tempo

The third system is marked "in tempo". The treble staff shows a sequence of notes, starting with a half note and followed by quarter notes, with a mezzo-forte (*mp*) dynamic marking. The grand staff continues with the complex textures from the previous systems.

The fourth system continues the piece. The treble staff features a melodic line with a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic, followed by a crescendo leading to a forte (*f*) dynamic. The grand staff continues with the complex textures.

The fifth system concludes the piece. The treble staff has a melodic line with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The grand staff continues with the complex textures.