

BLISSFUL NIGHTMARES

Austin Ali

Blissful Nightmares began in November 2014, when I remembered a local Austin, TX newspaper advertisement that my aunt gave me earlier that year: “Austin Symphony Orchestra seeks young composers.” I approached my high school music theory teacher, Akira Sato, for some guidance. He told me he gained his compositional inspiration by taking a walk to clear his mind and recording himself humming a tune. Later, he would take this tune, jot it down, and begin to build a piece from it. I never ended up taking a walk, but later that week I was having trouble going to sleep and had a tune stuck in my head. So, I took out my phone and recorded myself singing it. Unsatisfied and still unable to sleep, I headed to my computer and scored the beginning to *Blissful Nightmares*, a work born literally in my bed—a dream. Throughout the next week, I tinkered on my new work at school during passing periods and lunch breaks, taking every spare bit of time left to finish the piece. I finally submitted it to the Austin Symphony. A month later, to my complete surprise, I was notified that I was the grand prize winner of the ASO’s Texas Young Composer’s contest. Since then, *Blissful Nightmares* has been performed by the Austin Symphony in January 2015 and April 2015 and by the Shepton High School Symphony Orchestra in December 2016. I even had the honor to conduct the wind ensemble transcription of the work at the Plano West Senior High School Spring Concert in 2016.

Blissful Nightmares is a symphonic work focused on bipolarity, thus the title is naturally an oxymoron. The piece begins with a rhythmic, percussive section, leading to a fierce brass melody. The strings transition the score to a woodwind feature in the “Flowing” Adagio interlude. The melody then recapitulates in the end with the return of the massive brass sound and $\frac{7}{8}$ time signature.

Instrumentation:

- Piccolo
- Flute I, II
- Oboe I, II
- English Horn
- Bassoon I, II
- Contrabassoon
- Clarinet in Bb I, II
- Bass Clarinet
- Horn I, III
- Horn II, IV
- Trumpet in Bb I
- Trumpet in Bb II, III
- Trombone I, II
- Bass Trombone
- Tuba
- Piano
- Timpani
- Percussion I (Snare Drum, Toms)
- Percussion II (Bass Drum, Tam-Tam)
- Mallet Percussion (Marimba, Xylophone, Vibraphone, Glockenspiel)
- Violin I
- Violin II
- Viola
- Cello
- Double Bass

10 11 (2+3) 12 13 14 15 16 17

Picc. *mp* a2. *mp*

Fl. *mp*

Ob. *p*

E. Hn. *p* a2.

B♭ Cl. *p*

B. Cl. *p* a2.

Bsn. *p*

C. Bn. *p*

Pno. *p*

xylophone

Mal. *p*

Vc. *p*

D.B. *p*

A (2+2+3)

19 20 21 22 (2+3) 23

Picc. *f*

Fl. *f*

Ob. *f*

E. Hn. *f*

B♭ Cl. *f*

B. Cl. *f*

Bsn. *f*

C. Bn. *f*

Hn. *a2.* *p* *f*

Hn. *p* *f*

B♭ Tpt. *f*

B♭ Tpt. *f*

Tbn. *a2.* *f*

B. Tbn. *f*

Tuba *f*

Pno. *f*

Timp. *f*

Perc. *snare* *p* *f*

Xyl.

Vln. I *p* *f*

Vln. II *p* *f*

Vla. *p* *f*

Vc. *f*

D.B. *f*

[illegible]

31 32 33 34 C 36 37 38

Picc.

Fl.

Ob.

E. Hn.

B♭ Cl.

B. Cl.

Bsn.

C. Bn.

Hn. a2.

Hn. a2.

B♭ Tpt.

B♭ Tpt.

Tbn. a2.

B. Tbn.

Tuba

Pno.

Timp.

Perc. bass drum toms

Xyl.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

D.B.

[illegible]

E

47 48 49 50 52 53 54

Picc.

Fl.

Ob.

E. Hn.

B♭ Cl.

B. Cl.

Bsn.

C. Bn.

Hn.

a2.

f

Hn.

a2.

f

B♯ Tpt.

3

B♯ Tpt.

3

Tbn.

B. Tbn.

Tuba

Pno.

Timp.

Perc.

pp

mf

glockenspiel

Glk.

Vln. I

3

Vln. II

3

Vla.

3

Vc.

mf

D.B.

This musical score page covers measures 55 through 62. The key signature has one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is common time (C). The instrumentation includes Piccolo, Flute, Oboe, English Horn, B-flat Clarinet, Bass Clarinet, Bassoon, Contrabassoon, Horns (two parts), Trumpets (B-flat, two parts), Trombones (three parts), Tuba, Piano, Timpani, Percussion (Toms), Glockenspiel, Violins I & II, Viola, Violoncello, and Double Bass.

- Measures 55-58:** Most instruments are silent. The Piano part features triplet eighth notes in both hands.
- Measure 59:** A dynamic shift occurs from *mf* to *f*. The Percussion part begins playing triplets on the toms. The Horns play sustained notes with accents.
- Measures 60-62:** The woodwind section (English Horn, B-flat Clarinet, Bass Clarinet, Bassoon) plays complex triplet patterns. The Brass section (Trumpets, Trombones, Tuba) provides harmonic support with sustained notes and some movement in the lower registers. The string section continues with rhythmic accompaniment.

This image shows a page of a musical score, likely for a symphony, covering measures 63 through 68. The score is written for a large ensemble, including woodwinds, brass, strings, and percussion. The instruments listed on the left are: Picc., Fl., Ob., E. Hn., B♭ Cl., B. Cl., Bsn., C. Bn., Hn., Hn., B♭ Tpt., B♭ Tpt., Tbn., B. Tbn., Tuba, Pno., Timp., Perc., Glk., Vln. I, Vln. II, Vla., Vc., and D.B. The music features complex rhythmic patterns, including triplets and sixteenth notes, and dynamic markings such as *f* (forte) and *mf* (mezzo-forte). A large, stylized watermark "NOTES" is visible across the page.

69 70 72 73

Picc. *ff*

Fl. *ff*

Ob. *ff*

E. Hn. *ff*

B♭ Cl. *ff*

B. Cl. *ff*

Bsn. *ff*

C. Bn. *ff*

Hn. *fff*

Hn. *fff*

B♭ Tpt. *ff*

B♭ Tpt. *ff*

Tbn. *ff*

B. Tbn. *ff*

Tuba *ff*

Pno. *ff*

Timp. *ff*

Perc. *ff*

Glk. *ff*

Vln. I *ff*

Vln. II *ff*

Vla. *ff*

Vc. *ff*

D.B. *ff*

H Flowing (♩=72)

76 77 78 79 80 81

Picc.

Fl.

Ob.

1. *p* *legato*

2. *mp* *legato*

E. Hn.

B♭ Cl.

2. *pp*

B. Cl.

pp

Bsn.

pp

C. Bn.

pp

Hn.

Hn.

B♭ Tpt.

B♭ Tpt.

Tbn.

B. Tbn.

Tuba

Pno.

Timp.

Perc.

vibraphone

Glk.

p

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

DB.

[illegible]

J

Picc.

Fl.

Ob.

E. Hn.

B $\flat$ Cl.

B. Cl.

Bsn.

C. Bn.

Hn.

Hn.

B $\flat$ Tpt.

B $\flat$ Tpt.

Tbn.

B. Tbn.

Tuba

Pno.

Timp.

Perc.

Vib.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

D.B.

95 **Molto Rit.** 96 97 98 99 **K** Tempo I: Horrific 101 102

Picc.

Fl.

mf

p

Ob.

mf

p

E. Hn.

mf

p

B♭ Cl.

mf

p

B. Cl.

mf

p

Bsn.

mf

p

C. Bn.

mf

p

Hn.

Hn.

B♭ Tpt.

B♭ Tpt.

Tbn.

B. Tbn.

Tuba

Pno.

mf

p

mp

Timp.

Perc.

Glk.

glockenspiel

mp

Vln. I

Vln. II

non. div

Vla.

mf

p

non. div

Vc.

mf

p

D.B.

mf

p

103 104 105 106 107 108 109 110

Picc.

Fl.

Ob.

E. Hn.

B♭ Cl.

B. Cl.

Bsn.

C. Bn.

Hn.

Hn.

B♭ Tpt.

B♭ Tpt.

Tbn.

B. Tbn.

Tuba

Pno.

Timp.

Perc.

Glk.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

D.B.

This image shows a page of a musical score, likely for a symphony, featuring multiple staves for various instruments. The score includes measures 119 through 126. The instruments listed on the left are Picc., Fl., Ob., E. Hn., B♭ Cl., B. Cl., Bsn., C. Bn., Hn., Hn., B♭ Tpt., B♭ Tpt., Tbn., B. Tbn., Tuba, Pno., Timp., Perc., Xyl., Vln. I, Vln. II, Vla., Vc., and D.B. The score includes dynamic markings such as *f*, *sf*, *sfz*, and *p*, and articulation markings like accents and slurs. A large, faint watermark "PREVIEW" is visible across the center of the page.

[illegible]

[illegible]

143 144 145 146

P

Picc.

Fl.

Ob.

E. Hn.

B♭ Cl.

B. Cl.

Bsn.

C. Bn.

Hn.

Hn.

B♭ Tpt.

B♭ Tpt.

Tbn.

B. Tbn.

Tuba

Pno.

Timp.

Perc.

Mrb.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

D.B.

a2.

f

ff

tam-tam

glockenspiel

This image shows a page from a musical score, likely for a symphony or concert band. The score is written for a large ensemble, including woodwinds, brass, strings, and percussion. The page contains measures 149, 151, 153, and 154. The notation is complex, featuring many triplets, dynamic markings (such as *ff*), and articulation marks. The instruments listed on the left include Picc., Fl., Ob., E. Hn., B♭ Cl., C Cl., Bsn., C. Bn., Hn., B♭ Tpt., B♭ Tpt., Tbn., B. Tbn., Tuba, Pno., Timp., Perc., Glk., Vln. I, Vln. II, Vla., Vc., and D.B. The score is written in a single system, with each instrument having its own staff. The key signature is one flat (B♭), and the time signature is 4/4. The page is marked with a large, diagonal watermark that reads "SAMPLE".

[illegible]

161 162 163 165

Picc. *p* *ff* *fff*

Fl. *p* *ff* *fff*

Ob. *p* *ff* *fff*

E. Hn. *p* *ff* *fff*

B♭ Cl. *p* *ff* *fff*

B. Cl. *p* *ff* *fff*

Bsn. *p* *ff* *fff*

C. Bn. *p* *ff* *fff*

Hn. *p* *ff* *fff*

Hn. *p* *ff* *fff*

B♭ Tpt. *p* *ff* *fff*

B♭ Tpt. *p* *ff* *fff*

Tbn. *p* *ff* *fff*

B. Tbn. *p* *ff* *fff*

Tuba *p* *ff* *fff*

Pno. *mp* *ff* *fff*

Timp. *mp* *ff* *fff*

Perc. *mp* *ff*

Xyl. *mp* *ff* *fff*

Vln. I *mp* *ff* *fff*

Vln. II *mp* *ff* *fff*

Vla. *mp* *ff* *fff*

Vc. *mp* *ff* *fff*

D.B. *mp* *ff* *fff*

tam-tam

(VII)

(VII)

6