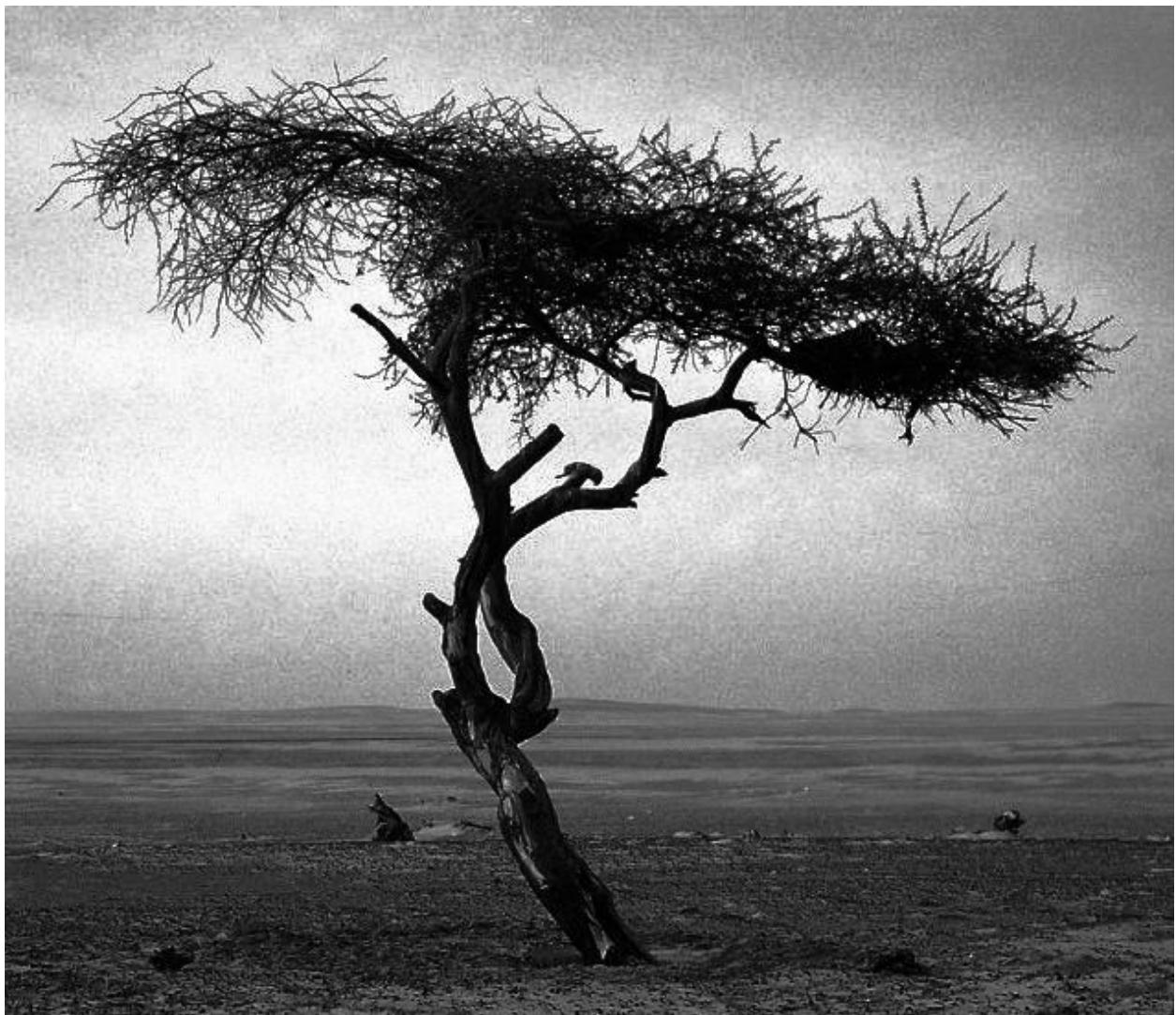


L'arbre Solitaire du Ténéré

for bassoon quartet



Thomas J. Dempster (BMI)

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Visit the composer's website at www.thomasdempster.com

L'arbe Solitaire du Ténéré

for bassoon quartet

Thomas J. Dempster

Greensboro, NC / West Columbia, SC / Hot Springs, AR

May 2010 / June-July 2017

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L'arbre Solitaire du Ténéré (2010/2017/2019) – duration: ca. 8:30

Program Notes

I have wanted to complete this piece since May 2010, when I first began to sketch the work. I had then just completed my dissertation and could write music again. (Pause for laughter!) Numerously over the intervening years, I attempted to complete the work, but never knew who would perform it, and other commitments took precedence. In Summer 2017, I decided to just rip off the band-aid, dig out the sketches and finish. I finally finished the thing in 2019, half a country and a quarter of a lifetime away – with the planet still in peril. Fully engraved and revised in 2023, the planet is still in peril – but the voices wanting to claw it back from calamity are a lot louder now.

The lonely tree of Ténéré was, until a drunk driver apparently knocked it over in 1973, the most isolated tree on Earth. It was the last of a grouping of xerophytic (desert-friendly) acacias in a small area, but over time, as the Sahara grew and pushed most vegetation out, the "lonely tree" became the last sentinel standing guard over an expanse of desert that, for more than 250 miles in any direction, was totally devoid of landmarks and nearly vacant of any other vegetation life. The Lonely Tree was used by caravaners and nomads for generations – perhaps hundreds of years - to find their way; it was the only tree listed on large-scale maps of North Africa, and likely the only landmark tree ever used on a map in the modern age.

The Sahara desert is the result of a vast, long-term climate change that pushed the once semi-arid and almost-tropical Sahara region into that of desert. The Lonely Tree stood guard against desertification and weathered the changes brought on by the climatic shift. The fact that the tree was killed – how does someone hit a tree surrounded by nothing but sand except on purpose? – is a sardonic, if representative, token of humankind's general view of nature; that I pulled the sketches of this piece out and began to seek performers for it a few days after the disgraceful 45th American President invoked the USA's separation from the Paris Climate Agreement is no coincidence at all. That it took so long to engrave and complete is a testament to how much pain this episode in American and world life has brought me.

The powerful and corrupt, literally and figuratively drunk on their own power, are destroying the planet, and all the powerless among us can do is create and utter lamentations. And stand in revolt.

The work begins as a grouping of four "trees," a complete and small forest, but a wood speaking through a series of lamentations. The piece continues on as a series of episodes and flashbacks: the loneliness of one entity; the flourishing and unfurling of an ancient forest; one entity calling out for its brother and sister, hearing echoes. Eventually the other performers begin disappearing, leaving only one performer left. The finalist plays an extended soliloquy before being abruptly stopped in the score.

-- June 2017, West Columbia, SC

Engraved/corrected/revised, July 2019 and September 2023, Hot Springs, AR

Performance questions? Please contact me at tom@thomasdempster.com

Score

L'arbre Solitaire du Ténéré

for bassoon quartet

Thomas J. Dempster

Plaintively $\text{♩} = \text{c. } 60 - 63$

The musical score consists of four staves, each representing a bassoon. The top section (measures 1-4) is labeled "Plaintively" and has a tempo of $\text{♩} = \text{c. } 60 - 63$. The bassoons play eighth-note patterns with various dynamics: **Bassoon 1:** starts with *f*, followed by *mf*, *mp*, and *mp* with grace notes. **Bassoon 2:** starts with *f*, followed by *mf*, *mp*, and *mp* with grace notes. **Bassoon 3:** starts with *f*, followed by *mf*, *mp*, and *mp* with grace notes. **Bassoon 4:** starts with *sfs*, followed by *sfs*, *mf*, and *mp* with grace notes. The bottom section (measures 5-8) shows a crescendo from *cresc.* to *f*, followed by a dynamic change to *fp*. The bassoons play sustained notes with grace notes. Measure 9 begins with *mf* and the instruction "chanting, freely". Measures 10-11 show a return to eighth-note patterns with *f dim.* and *p* dynamics. The bassoons play sustained notes with grace notes in measures 12-13, with dynamics *f dim.* and *p*.

L'arbe Solitaire du Ténéré

10

Bsn. 1

Bsn. 2

Bsn. 3

Bsn. 4

11 More in time (l'istesso tempo)

barely articulating

mf lirico; misterioso

mfp >

mfp >

mfp >

mfp >

13

Bsn. 1

Bsn. 2

Bsn. 3

Bsn. 4

within mp

mfp >

mfp >

mp >

mf dim.

p

17

Bsn. 1

Bsn. 2

Bsn. 3

Bsn. 4

p

p

mp

subito f

subito f

f

L'arbe Solitaire du Ténéré

3

21 Stricter $\text{♩} = \text{c. } 66 - 69$

Bsn. 1

Bsn. 2

Bsn. 3

Bsn. 4

Bsn. 1

Bsn. 2

Bsn. 3

Bsn. 4

28 Suddenly Faster $\text{♩} = 84 +$

Bsn. 1

Bsn. 2

Bsn. 3

Bsn. 4

4 [31] Senza Misura

L'arbre Solitaire du Ténéré

Bsn. 1  Hold as long as possible, breathing and reentering where needed.
Terminate once bassoon 3 plays sforzando B3.

Bsn. 2  Hold as long as possible, breathing and reentering where needed.
Terminate once bassoon 3 plays sforzando B3.

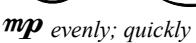
Bsn. 3 * G2 --RH1 (low D may stabilize)

Bsn. 4

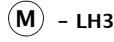
32 Bsn. 1  As before Hold as long as possible, breathing as needed

Bsn. 2  Hold as long as possible, breathing as needed

Bsn. 3 Hold as long as possible, breathing as needed

Bsn. 4  

33 Bsn. 1

Bsn. 2  cue 3rd, 4th

Bsn. 3  RH thumb

Bsn. 4 RH thumb

[35] L'istesso tempo

$\text{♩} = \text{c. 88}$





36

Bsn. 1

Bsn. 2

Bsn. 3

Bsn. 4

41

Bsn. 1

Bsn. 2

Bsn. 3

Bsn. 4

46

Bsn. 1

Bsn. 2

Bsn. 3

Bsn. 4

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48

Bsn. 1

Bsn. 2

Bsn. 3

Bsn. 4

50 $\text{d} = \text{c. 76 - 80}$

51

Bsn. 1

Bsn. 2

Bsn. 3

Bsn. 4

55

Bsn. 1

Bsn. 2

Bsn. 3

Bsn. 4

59

Bsn. 1

Bsn. 2

Bsn. 3

Bsn. 4

(M)

rit.

f

dim.

mf

mp

mp cresc.

62 Poco meno mosso; Poco Grandioso

$\text{♩} = \text{c. } 140 - 144$

Bsn. 1

Bsn. 2

Bsn. 3

Bsn. 4

mf cantabile

p

mp dolce

67

Bsn. 1

Bsn. 2

Bsn. 3

Bsn. 4

dim.

f

mp

mf

poco f

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8

71

flourishing

Bsn. 1 *f* 5 *mf* *dim.*

Bsn. 2 *mp* *mp* *mp*

Bsn. 3 *mp* *mp* *mf*

Bsn. 4 *mp* *strong*

Bsn. 1 *mf* 5 *f dolce* 2 *dim.* *subito ff*

Bsn. 2 *mf* *mf cresc.* *p*

Bsn. 3 *mf* *p*

Bsn. 4 *mp*

80 As though a breeze strengthens...

Bsn. 1 *mp*

Bsn. 2 *mp* *mf*

Bsn. 3 *mp* *mf*

Bsn. 4 *mp* *mf*

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9

...and then recedes through the leaves

82

Bsn. 1

cresc.

ff dim.

Bsn. 2

ff

dim.

Bsn. 3

ff dim.

Bsn. 4

ff dim.

repeat pattern and accelerate
remain independent of other players
4th maintains tempo

85

Bsn. 1

p

repeat pattern and accelerate
remain independent of other players
4th maintains tempo

ca. 10"

Bsn. 2

p

repeat pattern and accelerate
remain independent of other players
4th maintains tempo

ca. 10"

Bsn. 3

p

repeat pattern and accelerate
remain independent of other players
4th maintains tempo

ca. 10"

mp ad lib; out of time

Bsn. 4

p

repeat figure in tempo for time marked
1st, 2nd, and 3rd all accelerate and <>

ca. 12"

pp

cue 3rd

L'arbre Solitaire du Ténéré

88 Bsn. 1 *p hurriedly; repeat ad lib* 8" 2" **90** 6" 2"

Bsn. 2 *p hurriedly; repeat ad lib* 8" 2" *ad lib; out of time* 2" *p* 2"

Bsn. 3 *p hurriedly; repeat ad lib* 8" 2" *hold 3-4"; no reentry* 6" 2"

Bsn. 4 *hold; breathe as needed* 2" *mf* *hold 3-4"; no reentry* 2"

93 Bsn. 1 5" 2" **96** Ominous; slightly more in time $\text{♩} = \text{c. } 112$

Bsn. 2 *p* 5" 2" *pp* with 3rd *cresc.*

Bsn. 3 *p tenuous* 2" *pp* with 2nd *cresc.*

Bsn. 4 *mp* 2"

97 Bsn. 1 *mf cantabile; freely* *echo p* 2"

Bsn. 2 *p pp* *mf dim p* sustain as long as possible; no reentry

Bsn. 3 *p pp* *mf dim p* sustain as long as possible; no reentry

Bsn. 4 *mf dim p* sustain as long as possible; no reentry

L'arbre Solitaire du Ténéré

11

cue others

Bsn. 1

Bsn. 2

Bsn. 3

Bsn. 4

100

105 Tempo Primo $\text{♩} = \text{c. } 60 - 63$

Bsn. 1

Bsn. 2

Bsn. 3

Bsn. 4

110

109

accel.

cresc.

$\text{♩} = \text{c. } 88$

f

f dim.

ff

cresc.

f

pp

mp *horn-like* *dim.*

mf *cresc.*

cresc.

p *dim.*

114

Bsn. 1

Bsn. 2

Bsn. 3

Bsn. 4

117 Not rushed; no meter $\text{♩} = \text{c. } 72-76$

Bsn. 1

Bsn. 2

Bsn. 3

Bsn. 4

a final flowering

a final flowering

a final flowering

a final flowering

118

Bsn. 1

Bsn. 2

Bsn. 3

Bsn. 4

Senza Misura

As a chant; gregarious -- alone.

breathe and reenter as necessary

breathe and reenter as necessary

pp

pp

pp

dim. al niente...

At this time, leave the stage.
Do not appear rushed or hurried.

L'arbe Solitaire du Ténéré

13

Bsn. 1

121

Bsn. 2

Bsn. 3

dim. al niente...

*At this time, leave the stage.
Do not appear rushed or hurried.*

Bsn. 1

124

Bsn. 2

*At this time, leave the stage.
Do not appear rushed or hurried.*

*Repeat several times, varying tempo and dynamics.
On last few repeats, steady the tempo and get louder.*

Bsn. 1

126

In memory of all who have gone before us.