

# L'arbe Solitaire du Ténééré

for bassoon quartet



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# L'arbe Solitaire du Ténééré

for bassoon quartet

Thomas J. Dempster

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## *L'arbe 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!) Numerous 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 45<sup>th</sup> 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](mailto:tom@thomasdempster.com)

# L'arbe Solitaire du Ténére

for bassoon quartet

Thomas J. Dempster

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

The score is divided into three systems. The first system (measures 1-4) features four bassoon parts. Bassoon 1 has a melodic line with dynamics *f*, *mf*, and *mp*. Bassoon 2 and 3 have similar melodic lines with dynamics *f*, *mf*, and *mp*. Bassoon 4 has a more rhythmic accompaniment with dynamics *sfz*, *mf*, and *mp*. The second system (measures 5-7) shows a crescendo in measures 5 and 6, with dynamics reaching *f* and *fp*. Bassoon 1 and 2 have melodic lines with triplets and sixteenth notes. Bassoon 3 has a long note in measure 6. Bassoon 4 has a rhythmic accompaniment. The third system (measures 8-12) features a *mf* 'chanting, freely' section for Bassoon 1, while Bassoons 2, 3, and 4 play sustained notes with dynamics *f dim.* and *p*.

11 More in time (l'istesso tempo)

10

Bsn. 1 *port*

Bsn. 2 *barely articulating*

Bsn. 3 *mf* *lirico; misterioso*

Bsn. 4 *mf*

13

Bsn. 1 *p*

Bsn. 2 *p*

Bsn. 3 *within mp*, *mf dim.*, *p*

Bsn. 4 *within mp*, *mf dim.*, *p*

17

Bsn. 1 *p*

Bsn. 2 *p*, *subito f*

Bsn. 3 *mp*, *f*

Bsn. 4

L'arbo Solitaire du Ténére

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

Musical score for measures 21-23, featuring four bassoon staves (Bsn. 1-4). The music is in 4/4 time and includes various dynamics and articulations:

- Bsn. 1:** *mf* (measures 21-22), *mf* (measure 22), *f dim. mp mf mp* (measure 23).
- Bsn. 2:** *mf* (measures 21-22), *mf* (measure 22), *f dim. mp mf mp* (measure 23).
- Bsn. 3:** Rests in measures 21-22, then rests in measure 23.
- Bsn. 4:** *f* (measure 21), *f* (measure 22), *mf* (measure 23).

Musical score for measures 24-26, featuring four bassoon staves (Bsn. 1-4). The music is in 3/4 time and includes various dynamics and articulations:

- Bsn. 1:** *f* (measure 24), *mf* (measure 25), *mp* (measure 26).
- Bsn. 2:** *f* (measure 24), *mp* (measure 25), *mf* (measure 26).
- Bsn. 3:** *mf* (measure 24), *mp* (measure 25), *mp* (measure 26).
- Bsn. 4:** *f* (measure 24), *mp* (measure 25), *mf* (measure 26).

28 Suddenly Faster  $\text{♩} = 84 +$

Musical score for measures 27-29, featuring four bassoon staves (Bsn. 1-4). The music is in 3/4 time and includes complex articulations and dynamic markings:

- Bsn. 1:** *ff* (measure 27), *f* (measure 28), *mf* (measure 29).
- Bsn. 2:** *p* (measure 27), *fp* (measure 28), *mf* (measure 29).
- Bsn. 3:** *ff* (measure 27), *f* (measure 28), *mf* (measure 29).
- Bsn. 4:** *p* (measure 27), *fp* (measure 28), *mf* (measure 29).

4 **31** Senza Misura

L'arbo Solitaire du Ténére

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

Bsn. 1 **M** Lip down after attack

Bsn. 2 **M** \* G2 --RH1 (low D may stabilize)

Bsn. 3 *mp* evenly; quickly *sfp*

Bsn. 4

32 **M** As before

Bsn. 1 *sfp*

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

Bsn. 2 *sfp*

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

Bsn. 3 (*p*)

Bsn. 4 *mp* evenly; quickly

**35** L'istesso tempo

$\text{♩} = c. 88$

Bsn. 1 *ff*

Bsn. 2 *f > p*

Bsn. 3 **M** - LH3  
RH thumb

Bsn. 4 **M** - RH1  
RH thumb

Bsn. 4 *ppp*



36

Bsn. 1

Bsn. 2

Bsn. 3

Bsn. 4

*ff*

*ppp*

*f*

*ppp*

41

Bsn. 1

Bsn. 2

Bsn. 3

Bsn. 4

*f*

*mp quasi belltones*

*pp*

*f*

*mp*

*mp just softer than 2nd*

*pp*

*p*

*ff*

46

Bsn. 1

Bsn. 2

Bsn. 3

Bsn. 4

*pp*

*f espress.*

*f*

*p*

*ff*

*pp*

*ff dim.*

*p*

*mf*

*mf*

*subito mp*

*ff dim.*

*p*



59

Bsn. 1

Bsn. 2

Bsn. 3

Bsn. 4

*f* *dim.* *mf* *mp* *mp cresc.*

*rit.*

62 Poco meno mosso; Poco Grandioso

$\text{♩} = \text{c. } 140 - 144$

Bsn. 1

Bsn. 2

Bsn. 3

Bsn. 4

*p* *mp dolce* *mf cantabile*

67

Bsn. 1

Bsn. 2

Bsn. 3

Bsn. 4

*mf* *mf* *dim.* *f* *poco f*

71

*flourishing*

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

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

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

Bsn. 4 *mp* *f strong*

75

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

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

Bsn. 3 *mf* *p*

Bsn. 4 *mp*

80 As though a breeze strengthens...

79

Bsn. 1 *mp*

Bsn. 2 *mp* *mf*

Bsn. 3 *mp* *mf*

Bsn. 4 *mp* *mf*

L'arbo Solitaire du Ténére

...and then recedes through the leaves

82

Bsn. 1 *cresc.* *ff dim.*

Bsn. 2 *ff dim.*

Bsn. 3 *ff dim.*

Bsn. 4 *ff dim.*

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* *ca. 12"* *cue 3rd* *repeat figure in tempo for time marked 1st, 2nd, and 3rd all accelerate and <> pp maintain p dynamic*

88

90

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

Bsn. 2 *p* hurriedly; repeat ad lib 8" 2" *p* ad lib; out of time 6" 2"

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

Bsn. 4 hold; breathe as needed 8" 2" *mf* hold 3-4"; no reentry 6" 2"

93

96 Ominous; slightly more in time ♩ = c. 112

Bsn. 1 5" 2"

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

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

Bsn. 4 *mp* 2"

97

Bsn. 1 *mf* cantabile; freely *mf* *mf* dim. *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'arbe Solitaire du Ténére

cue others

100

Bsn. 1

Bsn. 2

Bsn. 3

Bsn. 4

*mf* > *p*

*mf*

*f* *mf* *f* *sfz* *dim.* *mp* *dim.*

*f* *mf* *f* *sfz* *dim.* *mp* *dim.*

*f* *mf* *f* *sfz* *dim.* *mp* *dim.*

*f* *mf* *f* *sfz* *dim.* *mp* *dim.*

5

5

5

5

105 Tempo Primo ♩ = c. 60 -63

Bsn. 1

Bsn. 2

Bsn. 3

Bsn. 4

*f*

*f*

*f*

*f*

*mf*

*mf*

*mf*

*mf*

*mf* <sup>3</sup> <sub>3</sub>

*mf* <sub>3</sub>

*mf* <sub>3</sub> <sub>3</sub>

*mf* <sub>3</sub> <sub>3</sub>

110

109 *accel.*

♩ = c. 88

Bsn. 1

Bsn. 2

Bsn. 3

Bsn. 4

*cresc.*

*cresc.*

*cresc.*

*cresc.*

*f*

*f*

*mp* horn-like *dim.*

*f* *dim.* *ff*

*pp*

*mf* *cresc.*

*p* *dim.*

114

Bsn. 1

Bsn. 2

Bsn. 3

Bsn. 4

*mp*

*pp*

*f*

**117** Not rushed; no meter ♩ = c. 72-76

Bsn. 1

Bsn. 2

Bsn. 3

Bsn. 4

*mf*

*a final flowering*

*mf*

*a final flowering*

*mf*

*a final flowering*

*mf*

*a final flowering*

118

**Senza Misura**

Bsn. 1

Bsn. 2

Bsn. 3

Bsn. 4

*pp*

*pp*

*pp*

*pp*

*pp*

*dim. al niente...*

As a chant; gregarious -- alone.

breathe and reenter as necessary

breathe and reenter as necessary

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



L'arbo Solitaire du Ténére

121

Bsn. 1

Bsn. 2

Bsn. 3

*lunga*

*tr* RH thumb  
LH E (5)

Lip down for multi.

*M*

*lunga assai*

*mf* *dim. al niente...*

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

124

Bsn. 1

Bsn. 2

*lunga assai*

*tr*

unevenly, trill:  
RH thumb  
LH E (5)

*mf* *dim.* *mf*

This figure can be repeated ad lib

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

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

126

Bsn. 1

*sfz* *as long as needed*

*ff* Deliberately

In memory of all who have gone before us.