

*Gwyneth Walker*

# **TESTIMONY**

*for Amnesty International*



*for Two Pianos and Readers*

## PROGRAM NOTES

TESTIMONY, scored for two pianos and several readers, was composed as a tribute to Amnesty International USA. The readings are adapted from letters about and by the prisoners of conscience with whom Amnesty has been concerned. The music is derived from the spiritual, "Go Down Moses," especially the final refrain of 'let my people go.'

The work opens with a statement of "Go Down Moses." Readings of letters are then interspersed with variations of the song. Each variation is a musical reflection upon the reading which precedes it.

The final section focuses upon the reading of a letter from a Soviet prisoner confined against his will to a psychiatric hospital. During this reading, the pianists play reiterations of the 5-note rhythmic pattern 'let my people go' -- on the keys, strings and body of the pianos. As this rhythmic activity increases, the song "Go Down Moses" reappears and is sung by the readers.

TESTIMONY was commissioned by pianists Samuel and Nancy Bent of Hanover, New Hampshire. The work was specifically intended for performance on a benefit concert for Amnesty International on October 4, 1987 in Rollins Chapel on the Dartmouth College campus.

## PERFORMANCE NOTES

TESTIMONY is a somber and dramatic work requiring a minimum of 2 to a maximum of 6 readers. The maximum is preferred.

It is recommended that at least some of the readers be able to sing. The ability to read music is not required of the readers/singers.

The readers should sit or stand at the side of the stage, coming forward to center stage when reading, returning to the side after reading.

The style of reading of the first 5 readings should be natural and straightforward, in the manner in which you or I might read these passages aloud to ourselves. Any instinctive shadings of shock, revulsion, tenderness, etc. are appropriate. Highly dramatic reading is not.

The final reading (bottom of p. 14) is that of an actual letter from a prisoner of conscience. The reader in this case should be a man of approximately 30 years of age who can project an identification with the writer of the letter. This is a dramatic reading.

The pianists should play their parts strictly as written. The interaction between the pianists and readers is expressed musically, not through overt contact. The pianists are not themselves prisoners, yet the music they play speaks for the prisoners and for our anger at unjust and inhumane imprisonment. Only in the final gesture do the pianists also become prisoners.

*This work is dedicated to prisoners of conscience  
held against their wills  
throughout the world*

# INTRODUCTION: "Let My People Go"

$\text{♩} = 88$  somberly,  
but with motion

The score is written for two grand pianos (I and II) in a 2/4 time signature. It begins with a *pp* dynamic and includes performance instructions such as "Ped. stays — Soft Ped." and "Ped. ad lib. (Soft Ped. still down)". The piece features a variety of textures, including sustained chords, moving lines, and a section marked "loco" with a *gva* (glissando) effect. Dynamics range from *pp* to *mf*, with a *cresc.* (crescendo) marking. The score concludes with a *Con gva* (con glissando) instruction.

**Handwritten Annotations:**

- Staff I (Piano I):** *pp*, Ped. stays — Soft Ped., *pp*, Ped. stays Soft Ped., *p*, \* Ped. ad lib. Soft Ped. off, *gva* — — — — — *loco*, \* Ped. ad lib. (Soft Ped. still down) *gva* — — — — — *loco*, *cresc.*, *mf*, *p*, *mf*, *Con gva* ↑
- Staff II (Piano II):** *pp*, Ped. stays Soft Ped., *gva* — — — — — *loco*, *cresc.*, *mf*, *p*

Strictly

Congra  $\uparrow$

Congra  $\uparrow$

Hand I

Hand II



loco

Hand I

Hand II



rit. . . . ) Faster  $\text{♩} = 60$

Hand I

Hand II

Ped. stays

Handwritten musical score for two staves, I and II. Staff I contains a melodic line with eighth notes and a final chord marked "ff". Staff II contains a bass line with chords and notes, including markings "8va" and "loco". Pedal markings "(Ped. stays)" and "hold through reading" are present.

FIRST READING:

MALAYSIA

Ong Loong Sheng, a 24-year-old trade unionist, was arrested on May 16, 1967, and detained without trial under the provisions of Malaysia's Internal Security Act, which allows the government to detain people for two years at a time without trial, and to renew the detention order as many times as it likes.

Although Mr. Ong was being held for allegedly posing a threat to Malaysia's national security, Amnesty International was concerned because his detention continued for several years despite the fact the Malaysian government never publicly presented evidence of any description which suggested that Mr. Ong posed a threat to national security, or that he used or advocated violence at any time.

# VARIATION I (music to follow First Reading)

$\text{♩} = 60$  starkly/plaintively

I

II

I

II

I

II



Handwritten musical score for two staves, I and II. Staff I contains a treble clef, a key signature of one flat, and a common time signature. It features a melodic line with a slur over the first two measures and a fermata in the third measure. Staff II contains a bass clef, a key signature of one flat, and a common time signature. It features a bass line with a 'Ped. stays' instruction and a 'rit. ....' instruction. Both staves have a 'hold through reading' instruction with a fermata symbol at the end of the piece.

SECOND READING:

URUGUAY

Brenda Ines Rovetta Dubinsky was a student of education at the time of her arrest on February 19, 1979. She was charged with Attack on the Constitution at the level of conspiracy, and also with false documentation. She was married to Antonio Morelli, a Uruguayan political prisoner, who was released in 1978, before Brenda herself was arrested.

As a result of the above charges, Brenda was sentenced to seven years' imprisonment and was reported to have been brutally tortured.

# VARIATION II (music to follow Second Reading)

slap RH on side of PNO.

I

II

$\text{♩} = 44$  Slowly Pounding  
with intensity

I

II

I

II

THIRD READING:

URUGUAY

Mario Julio Baffico was arrested on March 8th, 1976, and sentenced to nine years' imprisonment under the Law of National Security, which placed civilians convicted of political offenses under military justice. He was charged with 'Subversive Association,' allegedly because of his membership in the banned Uruguay Communist Party.

At the time of his arrest, Mario was married, with two small children.

VARIATION III (music to follow Third Reading)

playfully, ad lib.

pp

pp

quickly  $d. = 132$

mf

mf

$d. = 132$

quickly

mf

mf

mf

mf

Ped.

a tempo (Somewhat humorously)

I

a tempo (Somewhat humorously)

II

I

II

I

II

Handwritten musical score for two staves, I and II. Staff I contains a melodic line with notes, slurs, and dynamic markings (p, pp, (pp)). It includes handwritten annotations "8va" with a dashed line and "Sadly" above notes. Staff II contains a bass line with notes and a dynamic marking "p". It includes the annotation "Ped. stays t:l end" and "Sadly" above notes. The score ends with an asterisk.

FOURTH READING:

SOUTH KOREA

Lee Shim-bom, a law student at Seoul National University in the Republic of Korea, was arrested in June, 1980, and sentenced by a military court to nine years' imprisonment for organizing student demonstrations.

Taken to prison, he was in great pain, attributed to the beatings inflicted on him during interrogation. He was said to be unable to move his neck and one arm.

The authorities, however, denied him medical treatment on the grounds that the prison did not have the necessary facilities.

## VARIATION IV (music to follow Fourth Reading)

*angrily*  
*rapidly*  
*in a regular pulse (somewhat nervous)*

*f* *p*

*Ped. stays* *(Ped. stays)*

## VARIATION V (music to accompany Fifth Reading)

FIFTH READING:

*(Ped. stays) Soft Ped. on* *\* Ped. \**

*enter ad lib. (strings muted inside piano w/R.H.)* *P furtively tempo + rhythm ad lib.*

*Ped.* *\* Sim.*

*Sim.* *Sim.*

*(Ped. stays)*

READER: APPEAL FROM A PRISONER OF CONSCIENCE IN A SOVIET PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITAL -- Nizametdin Akhmetov is a prisoner of conscience held against his will in a special psychiatric hospital in Soviet Central Asia.

Akhmetov's case first came to light in 1979 when a note he had written with another prisoner was discovered in a cargo of lumber exported from Central Siberia to the Federal Republic of Germany.

READER: Called "People We Need Your Help!" the note asked for international support for Soviet political prisoners.

Since then, Amnesty International has been able to piece together a more detailed history of Nizametdin Akhmetov's case.

Dolce

I

READER: Now in his thirties, he has spent over 15 years as a prisoner in psychiatric confinement and in the camps and prisons of the country's corrective labor system.

II

less muting . . . . . emphasize 8ve harmonic

(Ped. stays)

I

begin a gradual crescendo (Soft Ped. still on)

READER: Akhmetov was first arrested in the 1960s, apparently on a criminal charge, and then given a fresh sentence of at least 10 years' imprisonment for conducting "anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda" in conversations with other prisoners in his labor camp.

II

continue in this manner . . . exploring and emphasizing a variety of harmonics (meper pater)

rhythm and tempo may also vary

(Ped. stays)

with increasing urgency - accel . . . . . etc.

I

(cresc.)

READER: There is no evidence that Nizametdin Akhmetov had used or advocated violence in the activities that led to his arrest, nor is this implied by the charge of "circulating anti-Soviet slander" brought against him. Yet, though there was no

II

increase urgency - cresc., accel., bring patterns closer together

(Ped. stays)

etc. etc.



quickly

rit . . . . .

I

Soft Ped. off

II

(Ped. stays) etc. etc.

READER: indication that he was dangerous to himself or to others, a court ordered him confined against his will for an indefinite period to a special psychiatric hospital.

I

very angrily

Ped.

II

(Ped. stays)

\*

I

Ped. stays

II

READER resumes reading (next page)

I

forceful gliss. on lowest strings inside PND. using fingertips of R. H. (v)

ff

Ped. stays

READER: Nizametdin Akhmetov was sent to Alma-Ata special psychiatric hospital in Kazakhstan, where it is believed he now remains. Amnesty International has frequently reported on the difficulties facing prisoners of conscience in psychiatric hospitals where they are held virtually incommunicado, and so are particularly at risk of cruel treatment.

These psychiatric hospitals are designed by law for the criminally insane who represent a "special danger to society" and, as such, are maximum-security institutions where inmates are held under close surveillance, mostly in locked wards. Prisoners of conscience, and others confined there, are allowed visits only with close relatives, and then solely at the doctors' discretion.

They have no rights to correspondence, and may receive paper and pencil only with the permission of the doctors. All their letters are censored.

Amnesty International knows of numerous prisoners of conscience who have been punished with drug treatment, or beatings, after they were caught keeping a diary of their confinement, or trying to smuggle letters out of the hospital.

Soviet law, however, offers inmates of psychiatric hospitals no formal procedure to lodge complaints about their treatment.

(music stops)

(another)

(PNO strumming begins)

READER: "I am afraid to write to you, my friend. I fear that you may read my letter like a letter from a madhouse...but I have no-one else I could write to, to whom I could express my most basic human need. But I fear even more that they will use the extra strong drugs on me and turn me into an idiot, who will not even be able to die with all his senses intact.

So listen to your friend.

(strumming stops)

(music to accompany reading on previous page)

I  
(mute w/ R.H. inside PNO.)  
pp unobtrusively, ad lib., vary rhythm  
+++++                      +++++                      etc.  
8↓ - - - - -                      8↓ - - - - -  
Ped. stays

II  
pp answers PNO. I  
+++++                      +++++                      etc.  
(loco) Ped. stays

I  
/:  
(Ped.)

II  
/:  
(Ped.)

I  
pp strum upper strings inside PNO. w/ R.H., front + back of hand  
(Ped.)

II  
pp strum lower strings inside PNO. w/ L.H., front + back of hand  
gently  
(Ped.)

READER: I am in a very bad way, my friend.  
Never have I suffered so much,  
never was my situation so hopeless.  
I have dropped out of society,  
from the scope of its laws.  
I am absolutely without rights,  
depersonalized,  
indeed dehumanized.



Of course I am not ill.  
Yet I am in an institution which has  
all the means of making me ill.  
This is no exaggeration:  
psychiatry has now reached the limits  
reached by physics when it split the  
uranium nucleus.

It is not just this one man with the  
white coat over his uniform whom  
I have to face -- he has the entire  
State behind him.

There is no doubt I am being ground  
to pieces.

It is horrible --  
an unbearable continuous torment,  
this so-called "treatment."

The medicines they feed and inject  
me with Satan would have loved to buy  
for his Hell.

Such suffering I have never known.

And I am afraid of not holding out.  
My will-power is not unlimited.



tap on PNO. lid above keyboard . . . vary rhythm, ad lib.

I

p o o o o o

Ped.

II

answer PNO. I

answer + overlap, ad lib.

p o o o o o

Ped.

III

Continue non-pitched tapping interspersed with  $\xrightarrow{\text{gva}} \text{-----}$

o o o o o o

(Ped.)

IV

Continue non-pitched tapping, answering PNO. I, interspersed with  $\xrightarrow{\text{(loeo)}} \text{-----}$

o o o o o o

(Ped.)

V

(Ped.)

READER: The worst thing that can happen to a person  
may happen to me.

In any case,  
whether I die or whether they drive me mad,  
that will be the end.

The end of a human being.

Even if it does not happen in a human way,  
as with human beings,  
it will happen to a human being --  
that's what I wanted to stress.

And I would like to be spoken of,

and to be remembered,

as a human being.



# CLOSING THEME (played during the end of the reading)

$\text{♩} = 72$  somberly, unobtrusively

Handwritten musical score for the first system, measures 1-4. The score is for two staves, I and II, in 7/8 time. Staff I has a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. It begins with a *pp* dynamic marking. Staff II has a bass clef and a key signature of one flat. It begins with a *pp* dynamic marking and includes the instruction "Ped. stays Soft Ped." with a wavy line. A second wavy line is present in measure 3. The instruction "continue tappings ad lib. from p. 17" is written above the staff with a wavy line. The system ends with a double bar line.

(Ped.)

Handwritten musical score for the second system, measures 5-8. The score is for two staves, I and II, in 7/8 time. Staff I has a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. It begins with a *pp* dynamic marking. Staff II has a bass clef and a key signature of one flat. It begins with a *pp* dynamic marking and includes the instruction "Ped. Soft Ped." with a wavy line. The instruction "pp gently" is written above the staff. The system ends with a double bar line.

Ped. Soft Ped.

Slightly Faster, rhythmically

$\text{♩} = 80$

Handwritten musical score for the third system, measures 9-12. The score is for two staves, I and II, in 7/8 time. Staff I has a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. It begins with a *p* dynamic marking. Staff II has a bass clef and a key signature of one flat. It begins with a *p* dynamic marking. The instruction "Faster  $\text{♩} = 80$ " is written above the staff. The instruction "\* Soft Ped. off" is written above the staff. The instruction "rhythmically" is written above the staff. The system ends with a double bar line.

\* Soft Ped. off

Faster  $\text{♩} = 80$

rhythmically

\* Soft Ped. off

I

II

READERS:

Let my peo-ple go ----- Op - pressed so hard they could not stand -----



II

poco rit . . .  $\text{♩} = 88$

II

poco rit . . .  $\text{♩} = 88$  8down

(f) mf

READERS:

----- Let my peo-ple ----- go! -----





ALL  
READERS: And I would like to be spoken of  
(overlapping)

And I would like to be spoken of

And I would like to be spoken of

And I would like to be spoken of



and to be remembered

and to be remembered

and to be remembered

and to be remembered

as a human being

as a human being

as a



human being  
as a human being

| [Cross wrists,  
| raise arms to eye level,  
| lower eyes]

PIANISTS:

| [Cross wrists,  
| raise arms to eye level,  
| lower eyes]