

(H A R M O N Y)

The title — taken from Paul Griffiths's text — is about an experience of longing, and recollected love. Though it is harmony that constitutes the object of this recollection, what harmony means turns out to be complicated: the lover, the beloved, memories of place, perhaps the act of remembering itself.

I asked Paul Griffiths to write a new text for this project because of the beautiful ways that his poetry and prose disappear into each other. Griffiths's writings for other composers combine astonishingly images according to a richly combinatorial way of working, composerly in itself. I wanted to compose with text that moves in these ways — geometric and fantastical — that immediately suggest new ways that music can start, stop and loop back on itself.

I hope listeners hear several different stories being told in the music at the same time. The text tells a story of remembering at the same time that it tells a story about the way that memory works. The sounds in the music tell a story about discovering the beautiful-but-strange at the same time that the sounds tell a story about forgetting what we have discovered. When the words and the sounds wrap around each other, I hope you can hear flashes of a world that houses our loves, our sadnesses and our strange stories together.

The most exciting parts of the piece are a series of moments when the narrator has just begun to speak and — just as suddenly — surrenders back to the music. Perhaps the most beautiful parts are alien chords that appear from darkness — the harmonies. The most surprising part of the piece comes at the end.

(H A R M O N Y) caps a series of pieces I've written over the past five or six years that have helped me explore ways that memory and narrative and storytelling can twist around each other in complicated, but beautiful, ways we can hear. The treasure chest of the frequently thorny achievements of concert music after WWII — of musical modernism — is a wonder where time flows in impossible directions, sounds appear from instruments like magic, and musical logic is free to bewilder. But the treasure chest of modernism isn't where the story ends. What's needed now — what's been missing for decades — is a musical answer to the magic realisms of the 20th- and 21st-century novelists and storytellers who found ways to transfigure recognizable versions of the world with a strange, beautiful, difficult inheritance of literary modernism — Gabriel García Márquez in Colombia, Naguib Mahfouz in Egypt, Orhan Pamuk in Turkey, the list is long. What is needed is an engagement with musical inheritance that finds space to accommodate beauty, difficulty, and the transfiguration of the one by the other, since that seems, inescapably, to be the world we live in. I hope whatever pieces come next for me will find a way to answer to this need. And I hope that visitors to the world of these pieces will feel welcome and able, somehow, to imagine themselves amid the storytelling.