

## COMPOSITION

# I Dance Myself to Sleep

*Joseph Twist*

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In the work I wanted to explore both sleep and innocence as general, extra-musical concepts. Sleeping has long been a fascinating and frustrating activity for me. I am a very light sleeper, if not a frequent insomniac and, when I do sleep, I often have bizarre and surreal dreams, which I assume most of us experience at some point. Sleeping is a mysterious activity: a strange altered state of consciousness that may involve sleepwalking, nightmares and fantasies, while also being an essential part of living that provides rejuvenation, relaxation, escape and peace. The power of sleep may go further. As Walt Whitman suggested, sleep is a democratising force: even murderers sleep like the rest of us, young and old, black and white.

*I Dance Myself to Sleep* explores the general idea of sleep but, more specifically, it relates to a perplexing recurring dream that involves the central ‘female companion’ characters from some of my favourite childhood movies, including *Superman*, the *Indiana Jones* films and the *Star Wars* saga. Representing this is a romantic melody (my Old Love Theme), written in homage to the enchanting love themes in film scores by John Williams, Jerry Goldsmith and Max Steiner. This recurring dream developed over several years, becoming less whimsical and naive, allegorically suggesting this loss of innocence. I chose, therefore, a very innocent title, ‘I Dance Myself to Sleep,’ taken from an adorable Sesame Street song sung by Ernie; it is one of my favourite childhood memories.

Appropriately, the genesis of this piece dates back to my childhood. In the end I'm really just a kid from the Gold Coast who was a bit obsessed with John Williams soundtracks, which were the impetus for studying music in the first place. When I was twelve, I wrote my own film-music-style 'love theme,' having been fascinated by the melodic and harmonic language associated with such characters as Princess Leia and Lois Lane in Williams's scores. Now, over a decade later, I decided to use the same melody I had composed at twelve because I thought it had a lot of potential. However, with greater musical knowledge and more years of experience behind me, I found myself dabbling with all sorts of alternative harmonies, various options for an obbligato counterpoint, unusual orchestrations and textures, and other more 'sophisticated' elements to combine and fuse with this melody, or I would chop it up and use it in a whole new context.

The original melody for *I Dance Myself to Sleep* draws on a particular idiosyncrasy of John Williams's love themes: they often begin with a rising major sixth. In fact, this interval is used for two different themes associated with Princess Leia and Han Solo in both *Star Wars* and *The Empire Strikes Back*. Marion's theme from *Raiders of the Lost Ark* also begins with this rising motive, even though the overall melody is quite different. For my own work, I used a descending major sixth, preceded by a falling semitone to begin the melody (see Fig. 1).

**Figure 1.** *I Dance Myself to Sleep*, Old Love Theme



The overall compositional technique was one of variation, particularly with regard to harmony and rhythm. As mentioned, the central melody used in this work was composed at the age of twelve. The harmonisation of this melody that I wrote as a twelve-year-old was very simple compared with the harmonic language employed in *I Dance Myself to Sleep*, which is suffused with jazz-based 'extra-tertain' harmonic structures, as well as other elements of dissonance that shroud and taint the original unadorned melody. The use of this rich and subtly dissonant harmony is a musical reflection of a loss of innocence, or a disturbing nightmare, as explained above. Despite this, some elements of the core harmonic structures remain simple, often based on simple diatonic harmonic structures, particularly the ii–V–I harmonic progressions that permeate many styles of jazz.

However, combined with these simple harmonic structures is the use of added dissonances. Throughout the work a descending chromatic motive is used, usually featuring the pitches C $\flat$  (sometimes spelled as B $\natural$ ), B $\flat$  and A $\natural$ . The melody appears for the first time in bar 22, beginning on the A $\flat$  at the top of the chord on the second minim beat. Given that the melody appears here in E $\flat$  major, the use of the chromatic motive featuring C $\flat$ , B $\flat$  and A $\natural$  throughout imbues this passage with elements of dissonance. As the harmonies change, the dissonances from these and other pitches sometimes result in jazz-based sonorities, such as the dominant chord with an added flattened ninth (B $\natural$ ) and thirteenth in the final minim beat of bar 32. This chord is particularly striking because of the voicing of the flattened ninth (B $\natural$ ) below the B $\flat$  in the right hand. The voicing is also conceived bi-tonally, as the right hand plays a B $\flat$ -major triad over a

G-major triad in the left hand. The same voicing appears throughout the work, such as in the fortissimo chords in bar 115. As well, the juxtaposition of the chromatic  $C\flat-B\flat-A\flat$  figure creates some striking dissonances that do not relate directly to jazz-based harmonic structures. In bar 27, the figure is played softly above a simple C-minor-ninth chord, clashing with the  $B\flat$  which functions as the seventh of this chord. The addition of the  $A\flat$  from this chromatic figure creates further dissonance. This chromatic figure also creates dissonance over the tonic chord at both the beginning and the resolution of this passage. At this point in bar 34, the  $C\flat-B\flat-A\flat$  chromatic figure then features as a rising scale, portions of which had appeared previously throughout this passage, further blurring the otherwise simple, consonant, harmonic structure.

The analysis given in Figure 2 shows the general harmonic functions employed in this section of the work. The inversions of each chord are analysed according to traditional figured-bass models, however the added dissonances and 'extra-tertian' harmonic elements are considered separately and described in parentheses throughout. This highlights the juxtaposition of traditional harmonic procedures with the added dissonances employed throughout this section and the work as a whole.

Figure 2. Harmonic analysis of *I Dance Myself to Sleep*, Old Love Theme exposition

The figure shows a musical score for the 'Old Love Theme' exposition, divided into three systems of measures. The first system (measures 21-23) starts with a tempo marking of *poco meno mosso* ( $\text{♩} = 62$ ) and a dynamic of *p warmly*. The second system (measures 24-26) has a tempo marking of *più mosso* ( $\text{♩} = 84$ ) and a dynamic of *pp leggiero*. The third system (measures 27-29) has a dynamic of *mf*. The figured-bass analysis below the piano part identifies chords and their inversions, including added dissonances in parentheses. For example, in measure 21, the chord is  $I$  add 9 (and ♯13, C♯). In measure 24, the chord is  $ii^{\flat 6}$  2 - 3 (add 13). In measure 27, the chord is  $VI^{\flat 7-9}$  (add ♯C♯, and ♯11, A♯).

Figure 2 (cont.)

Figure 2 (cont.) shows two systems of musical notation. The first system, starting at measure 30, features a piano part with a treble clef and a bass clef. The treble clef part begins with a *f* dynamic and a *p delicatiss.* dynamic, followed by a *rall.....* marking and a *pp* dynamic. The bass clef part includes chordal textures with figured bass notation:  $ii^7$  (of  $\flat VII$ ),  $V_6^9$  (odd 1 11),  $vi^9$ ,  $ii^{\flat}$ , and  $V_4^7$  (add 9 and 13). The second system, starting at measure 33, is marked *poco meno mosso* ( $\text{♩} = 62$ ) and *p warmly*. It includes a *sempre con  $\text{Ped.}$*  instruction and figured bass notation:  $I$  add 9 (odd  $\flat 13, C$ , and  $\flat 11, A$ ). The treble clef part features a *sfz* dynamic, a *mp* dynamic, and a *ppp* dynamic. The bass clef part includes a *6* figure and a *5* figure.

Later in the work, rhythmic variation of the original melody is employed, particularly in bars 67 to 88. Throughout this dancing, rhythmic passage, the contour of the original melody is retained, despite the constantly changing time signatures and rapid arpeggio textures, with the motive of a descending semitone and falling major sixth heard frequently in the upper register (see Fig. 3).

Figure 3. *I Dance Myself to Sleep*, bb. 83–84

Figure 3 shows a musical score for measures 83–84. The score is in 12/8 time and features a treble clef and a bass clef. The treble clef part begins with a *sf* dynamic and includes a *L.H.* marking. The bass clef part begins with a *mf* dynamic. The score includes various rhythmic markings and dynamics, such as *sf*, *mf*, and *ppp*.

The development and performance of this work by the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra was certainly one of my greatest musical experiences. I am extremely grateful for such wonderful performances of my work by the orchestra conducted by Brett Kelly, and later by Brett Dean in his Metropolis series. I first sketched the work as a piano piece, which I dedicated for performance by the astounding, ARIA Award-winning pianist Sally Whitwell, and I orchestrated the work later. My hope is that, following the example of many works by Ravel, *I Dance Myself to Sleep* works just as well as a solo piano piece as it does for chamber orchestra.

for Sally Whitwell  
***I Dance Myself to Sleep...***

FOR PIANO

(Variations on an Old Love Theme)

JOSEPH TWIST

Lento, molto rubato (♩ = 62)

First system of the musical score, measures 1-4. The piece is in common time (C) and begins with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The tempo is 'Lento, molto rubato' with a quarter note equal to 62 beats per minute. The dynamics are 'p leggiero'. The bass line features a steady eighth-note accompaniment with 'l.v.' (left hand) markings. The right hand has a melodic line with a triplet of eighth notes in measure 3. The piece concludes with a fermata over a whole note chord in measure 4.

con molto *♩*.....

*poco più mosso*.....

Second system of the musical score, measures 5-9. Measure 5 is marked with a '5'. The tempo increases to 'poco più mosso'. The right hand features a complex melodic line with many beamed notes and a triplet of eighth notes in measure 9. The bass line continues with eighth-note accompaniment.

*rall*.....

*rit*.....

Third system of the musical score, measures 10-13. Measure 10 is marked with a '10'. The tempo slows to 'rall' and then 'rit'. Dynamics include 'pp leggiero' in the right hand and 'p warmly' in the bass line. The right hand has a triplet of eighth notes in measure 11. The piece ends with a fermata over a whole note chord in measure 13.

sempre con *♩*.

Fourth system of the musical score, measures 14-17. Measure 14 is marked with a '14'. The dynamics are 'f' (forte). The right hand has a melodic line with a '8va' (octave) marking and a fermata over a whole note chord in measure 15. The bass line features a steady eighth-note accompaniment with '7' and '6' markings. The piece concludes with a fermata over a whole note chord in measure 17, marked 'rfz' (ritardando forzando).

15 *// più mosso* (♩ = 120)

*pp* *p* *mp*

con molto *Ped.*.....

19 *rall.*..... *poco più mosso*..... *rit.*..... *poco meno mosso* (♩ = 62)

*mf* *p warmly* *p*

*Ped.*  
sempre con

23 *più mosso* (♩ = 84)

*pp leggiero* *poco* *poco*

26 *\* ppp leggiero*

*mp* *mp* *ppp leggiero* *mf*

*sempre con Ped.*

\* play small notes very lightly and at about half the volume

Musical score for measures 29-32. The piece is in 4/4 time with a key signature of two flats. Measure 29 features a complex chordal texture in the right hand and a rhythmic bass line. Dynamic markings include *mp*, *f*, and *p delicatiss.* A triplet of eighth notes is marked in measure 30.

Musical score for measures 33-35. The tempo changes to 3/4. Measure 33 starts with a *rall.* and *pp* dynamic. Measure 34 is marked *poco meno mosso (♩ = 62)* and *p warmly*. Measure 35 features a sixteenth-note run with a dynamic of *p*. The instruction *sempre con Ped.* is present. Fingerings of 3, 6, and 6 are indicated.

Musical score for measures 36-38. The tempo is *tempo giusto (♩ = 78)*. Measure 36 has dynamics *sfz*, *mp*, and *ppp*. Measure 37 has *pp* and *p delicatiss.* Fingerings of 5 and 6 are shown. Sixteenth-note runs are marked with a '6'.

Musical score for measures 39-42. Measure 39 features a sixteenth-note run with a dynamic of *p*. Measures 40-42 continue with similar rhythmic patterns and dynamics. Fingerings of 3 and 6 are indicated.

Musical score for measures 41-42. The piece is in a key with two flats (B-flat and E-flat) and a common time signature. Measure 41 features a treble clef with a triplet of chords and a bass clef with a sixteenth-note pattern. Dynamics include *mf* and *mp*. Measure 42 continues the bass clef pattern with a triplet of chords in the treble. A fermata is placed over the final note of measure 42.

Musical score for measures 43-44. Measure 43 features a treble clef with a triplet of chords and a bass clef with a sixteenth-note pattern. Dynamics include *mf* and *mp*. Measure 44 continues the bass clef pattern with a triplet of chords in the treble. A fermata is placed over the final note of measure 44, with an 8-measure rest indicated above it.

Musical score for measures 45-46. Measure 45 features a treble clef with a triplet of chords and a bass clef with a sixteenth-note pattern. Dynamics include *p*. Measure 46 continues the bass clef pattern with a triplet of chords in the treble. A fermata is placed over the final note of measure 46, with an 8-measure rest indicated above it.

Musical score for measures 47-48. Measure 47 features a treble clef with a triplet of chords and a bass clef with a sixteenth-note pattern. Dynamics include *mf*. Measure 48 continues the bass clef pattern with a triplet of chords in the treble. Dynamics include *pp delicatiss.*. A fermata is placed over the final note of measure 48, with an 8-measure rest indicated above it.



49  $8^{va}$

*ppp* *p espress.*

\* *con Ped. ad lib.* *mp* *ppp*

51

*sf* *p*

53

*mp*

55

*pp molto delicatiss.*

57

*ppp leggiero*

59

*fp*

62

*fp* *p cresc.*

64

*mf*

8va

(8)-----|

66

*f*

3 6 6

6

6

6

♩ = ♩

Same Tempo (♩ = 78)

*ff*

*p* *ff*

69

*p*

*ff*

*p* *ff*

73

*p*

*sfp* *leggero*

L.H

L.H

76

*f*

*p* *ff*

*sfp* *leggero*

L.H

L.H

79

*p* *ff* *sub. pp*

83

L.H.

*sf* *mf*

85

*mp*

87

*rit. ....*

*mf cresc.* *rit. ....*

89

*ff*

8va

*pff*

90

*meno mosso, molto rubato (♩ = 120)*

*p*

*pp*

*mp*

*mf*

con molto *Led.*

94

*rall. .... poco più mosso .... rit. ....*

*mf*

*mf*

*mf*

*mf*

*rit. ....*

97

*poco meno mosso (♩ = 62)*

*sfz*

*rit. ....*

*p warmly*

*sfz*

*sfz*

*sfz*

*rit. ....*

sempre con *Led.*

6

*più mosso, molto rubato* (♩ = 84)

98

*mf* *pp* *p delicatiss.*

*più mosso* ..... *poco stringendo* .....

102

*mp* *f*

*molto rit.* ..... *meno mosso* (♩ = 62)

107

*fff* *mp*

*rit.* ..... *a tempo* (♩ = 72)

110

*pp* *mf* *sfz*

112

*sfz*

*f*

*p*

3

5

Detailed description: This system contains measures 112, 113, and 114. Measure 112 starts with a forte-sforzando (*sfz*) dynamic. The right hand features a complex melodic line with a triplet of eighth notes and a quintuplet of sixteenth notes. The left hand has a bass line with a quintuplet of sixteenth notes. Measure 113 continues the melodic development with a forte (*f*) dynamic. Measure 114 concludes with a piano (*p*) dynamic and a triplet of eighth notes in the right hand.

115

*rit...*

*a tempo* ( $\text{♩} = 52$ )

*f*

*sffz*

*mf warmly*

*pp*

*sempre con Q&D.*

Detailed description: This system contains measures 115, 116, and 117. Measure 115 begins with a piano (*f*) dynamic and a piano (*pp*) dynamic. The right hand has a chordal texture, while the left hand has a bass line. Measure 116 features a fortissimo-sforzando (*sffz*) dynamic and a mezzo-forte (*mf warmly*) dynamic. Measure 117 ends with a pianissimo (*pp*) dynamic. The tempo marking is *a tempo* with a quarter note equal to 52 beats per minute. The instruction *sempre con Q&D.* is present.

118

*rall...*

*molto lento* ( $\text{♩} = 38$ )

*p leggiero*

*p warmly*

*poco á poco dim. al niente*

Detailed description: This system contains measures 118, 119, 120, and 121. Measure 118 starts with a piano (*p leggiero*) dynamic. The right hand has a chordal texture, and the left hand has a bass line. Measure 119 continues with a piano (*p warmly*) dynamic. Measure 120 and 121 show a gradual decrescendo (*poco á poco dim. al niente*) to a piano (*p*) dynamic. The tempo marking is *molto lento* with a quarter note equal to 38 beats per minute. The instruction *rall...* is present.

122

*allargando* .....

*ppp*

*una chorda*

Detailed description: This system contains measures 122, 123, and 124. Measure 122 begins with a pianissimo (*ppp*) dynamic. The right hand has a chordal texture, and the left hand has a bass line. Measure 123 and 124 continue with the *ppp* dynamic. The tempo marking is *allargando*. The instruction *una chorda* is present.