

DIALECTIC (II) FOR SOPRANO,  
FLUTE, AND  
PIANO

by

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## ABSTRACT

*Dialectic (II)* is a multi-movement chamber piece for soprano, flute, and piano that is set to a poem of the same name, written by writer and musician Kelvin Tan and published as the lyrics to one of his songs in *Alone, descending—Sisyphus*, an album released in 1999. My thesis draws only on his text and makes no reference to his own musical setting.

The voice part was written for a specific soprano in her late-twenties. She is most comfortable in her middle and lower-middle registers, and the timbre is generally strong and bright. While I kept in mind the strengths and limitations of her voice, I also used the piece to explore its different vocal qualities.

The text is shown on pages iv-v. The poem recounts a conversation from the past, a dialogue between the narrator and Love. The title reveals a conflict; dialectic in classical Greek philosophy is a method of rational argument between two people who disagree about a subject, but ultimately arrive at the truth. Love can be understood to be an individual with whom the narrator is conversing, but Love also represents another (and better) part of the narrator's self. The narrator undertakes a journey to search for truth and to come to terms with himself.

The piece comprises three major sections. The first section sets the first two stanzas; the second and third sections set the third and fourth stanzas, respectively. Three main motives are used and developed throughout the piece: a four-note figure G#-A-F-B introduced with the first four words of the poem, the (026) figure, and the interval of a minor 3rd introduced as C#-B-A# in measure 23. Sub-sections in the music often correspond to alternations of speaker in the

dialogue, at other times such alternations are marked in the music by changes in texture, pacing, rhythmic counterpoint between instruments, or register.

## DIALECTIC (II)- Text

Love said to me, you don't know what it's like to hate

I said yeah maybe you could show me

He said it's all part of loving

The doubts that turn to lies

He told me you were turning everything into romance

He said you were turning everything into pure chance

That's why there's such a thing as a broken heart

There's such a thing is lies

There's such a thing as war, and sickness

And breaking up inside

And hurting the ones you say you love

Loving the ones that you should hate

That's what love said to me

Love said to me, you're dominating and jealous

You say things to hurt people and you do it for pleasure

Love said to me, you have no reason to live

I said I try to love her the best I can

I fail because I was doing something impure and unjustifiable

Those thoughts in my head irreversible

It takes hate, it takes darkness, it takes struggling for truth, it takes strife

You're too cowardly, you're too cowardly for death

You can't face yourself to love someone

You can't face your own ugliness, the horror of yourself

You can't love until you plunge into the abyss of your soul

That's what love said to me

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# DIALECTIC (II)

## Part 1

Text by Kelvin Tan

Ten Yeen Chong

Tempo giusto, meccanico ♩ = 72

The musical score is divided into two systems. The first system includes staves for Flute, Voice, and Piano. The Flute and Voice parts are mostly rests. The Piano part begins with a *mp* dynamic and features a complex rhythmic pattern with a 5-measure rest in the second measure. The second system includes staves for Flute (Fl.), Voice, and Piano (Pno.). The Flute and Voice parts are mostly rests. The Piano part continues with complex rhythmic patterns, including triplets and quintuplets, and ends with a *mp* dynamic.

8

Fl.

*mp* 3 *mf*

Love said to me, Love said to

*mf secco*

*sfz* 3 *p* *f* *p* 5 *p* *mf* 5 *mp* 6

11

Fl.

me, You don't know what it's like to

*p* 5 *mf* *mp* *cresc.*

13

Fl.

hate! I said, "Yeah!"

*mf* *mf* *f*

16

Fl.

Pno.

*f*

Show me! You could show me!

18

Fl.

Pno.

Sing as close to the notated pitch as possible

May be you could show me!" "Show me! Show me show me! Show me show me show me show me

20

Fl.

Pno.

*p*

show me show me show me!" "Show me!"

23 *calando*  
 Fl. *mp* *p* 3  
 Pno. *calando* *mp* *pp* *mp*  
 He said, "It's all a part of li - ving,

27 *mp*  
 Fl. *mp*  
 Pno. *mp* *pp* *p* *mp* *mf*  
 Li - ving, li - ving, li - ving,

31 *p* 3 5  
 Fl. *p*  
 Pno. *mp* *mp* *pp* *mp*  
 The doubts that turn to lies, lies,

34

Fl. *overblown*

lies, *mf* lies, lies, lies, lies.

Pno. *loco*

36

Fl.

Pno. *f*

38

Fl. *mf*

Pno. *f* He told me you were *sf* *ff*

Detailed description of the musical score: The score is for Flute (Fl.) and Piano (Pno.). It consists of three systems of music, each with two staves. The first system (measures 34-35) features a vocal line with lyrics 'lies, lies, lies, lies, lies.' and a piano accompaniment. The second system (measures 36-37) continues the vocal line and piano accompaniment. The third system (measures 38-39) includes a vocal line with lyrics 'He told me you were' and a piano accompaniment. The score contains various musical notations including triplets, slurs, and dynamic markings such as *mf*, *f*, *sf*, and *ff*. There are also performance instructions like 'overblown' and 'loco'.

40

Fl. *tr* (#) *mf* *p*

Pno.

tur - ning ev - ery - thing in - to

42

Fl. *tr* (#) *mf* *p*

Pno.

ro - mance He said you were

44

Fl. *mf*

Pno.

tur - ning ev - ery - thing in - to pure chance

46

Fl. *mf* 6 *mp* 3 *mf*

Pno. *mf* 3 *f* 3

48

Fl. *f* *f* 7 *p* = 62

Pno. 6 6 6

50

Fl. *mp* 3 *p*

Pno. 5 *mp* 3

56

Fl. *p*

Piano: *pp* *(mp)*

That's why there's such a thing as a

62

Fl. *pp*

Piano: *p* *3* *5* *5*

bro - ken heart, heart.

64

Fl. *mp* *pp* *mp* *mf*

Piano: *pp* *mf* *(mp)*

There's such a thing as



67

Fl. *mp*

lies, as lies. There's such a thing as war, and sick-ness and brea-king up

Pno.

70

Fl. *f* *mp* *sfp* *mf* *p*

in - side. And hur - ting the ones you say you love,

Pno. *ff* *p* *mp*

73

Fl.

Lo - ving the ones that you should hate.

Pno.

76

Fl. *fr* (#) *mp* *f* *mp*

Pno. *fr* (#) *mp*

79

Fl. *p* *p* *mf* *p* *mf* *p* *mf* *flz.*

Pno. *delicately* *p* *p*

86

Fl. *ord.* *p* *mp*

That's what love said to me.

Pno.

# DIALECTIC (II)

## Part 2

$\text{♩} = 60$

Flute

Voice

Piano

*legato*

*p*

*mp* Love said to me, —

5

Fl.

*mp*

*pp*

*mp*

You're do-mi-na-ting and jea lous.

Pno.

9

Fl.

Pno.

You say things to hurt peo - ple — and you do it for plea - sure.

*pp* *mf* *mp*

11

Fl.

Pno.

Love said to me, You have no rea - son to live!

*mf* 5

13

Fl.

Pno.

*mf* I said,

$\text{♩} = 64$

15  $\text{♩} = 64$

Fl.

Pno. *p* *legato*

16

Fl.

Pno.

17

Fl.

try to love her the best I can. *mp*

Pno. *mp*

19

Fl.

Pno.

23

Fl.

*mp* I fail, I fail \_\_\_\_\_ be - cause \_\_\_\_\_ I was do - ing some - thing \_\_\_\_\_ im -

Pno.

27

Fl.

pure and un - jus - ti - fi - a - ble. \_\_\_\_\_

*p*

Pno.

31

Fl.

Pno.

36

Fl.

*mp* Those thoughts, those thoughts!

Pno.

39

Fl.

*mf* Those thoughts, those thoughts! Those

Pno.

41

Fl.

thoughts in my head \_\_\_\_\_ ir - re - ver - si - ble,

Pno.

*simile*

44

Fl.

ir - re - ver - si - ble. \_\_\_\_\_

Pno.

*ppp*

48

Fl.

*mp* *mf* *p* *f* *p* *ff* *mf* *mp* *f*

*molto crescendo*

Pno.



55

Fl. *mp* *p* *mf* *p* *mp* *mf* *p* *mp* *pp*

Pno.

The image shows a musical score for a Flute (Fl.) and Piano (Pno.) ensemble. The Flute part is in 6/4 time and begins at measure 55. The melody starts with a triplet of eighth notes (G4, A4, B4) marked *mp*. This is followed by a half note (C5) marked *p*, a dotted half note (D5) marked *mf*, a half note (E5) marked *p*, a dotted half note (F5) marked *mp*, a half note (G5) marked *mf*, a dotted half note (A5) marked *p*, a half note (B5) marked *mp*, and a final dotted half note (C6) marked *pp*. The Piano part is in 6/4 time and consists of rests in all measures.

# DIALECTIC (II)

## Part 3

♩ = 100

Flute

Voice *mf*

"It takes hate, It takes dark ness, It takes strug - - -

Piano *mf*

4

Fl.

- - gling for truth, It takes strife. - - -

Pno. *mp* *f*

8

Fl.

Pno.

*legato*  
*p*

You are too co - ward - ly,

10

Fl.

Pno.

*f*

*pp*

You are too co - ward - ly for death!

13

Fl.

Pno.

*mp*

*legato*  
*mp*

You can't face your - self to love some-one. You can't

16

Fl.

Piano

face your own \_\_\_\_\_ the hor - ror \_\_\_\_\_ of your-self.

*mp*

20

Fl.

Piano

You can't love un-til you plunge in - to the a -

*p* *mf*

25

Fl.

Piano

byss of your soul." That's what

*mf* *pp* *mf* *pp* *pp*

30

Fl.

love \_\_\_ said, \_\_\_ Lovesaid to me. \_\_\_

Pno.

36

Fl.

Pno.

8<sup>vb</sup>