

Tom Armitage

Dear Cyrnus,

2019

For Two Flutes and Piano

Dear Cyrnus,

by Tom Armitage

Duration c. 6-7'

Cyrnus was the erômenos of Theognis of Megara, an influential Greek lyric poet in the sixth century BC. We know very little of Cyrnus, sometimes referred to as Kyrnos or Kurnos, other than he was the son of Polypas. What we know comes from Theognis' writings of their pederastic relationship.

The elegies of Theognis present him as a complex character, an exponent of traditional Greek morality and a tormented man who found much joy and despair in his love for Cyrnus. He was described by Isocrates as among "the best advisers for human life" and his work, although sometimes considered self-contradictory, was the fruit of a lifetime of experience and wisdom. The Theognid collection is so vast that it is suggested that Theognis, as an individual, may not have existed at all, and in fact the collection was a collaborative composition by many writers over an extensive period of time. The attribution of their feelings towards Cyrnus could, in fact, be an expression of love toward any hypothetical young male.

This is what attracted me most to the elegiac verses of Theognis addressed to Cyrnus. The mystery of its authorship and the accessibility of self-identification that we may all experience as Theognis or Cyrnus.

Not all of Theognis' writings to Cyrnus are amatory, but of those that are, his writings display his anxiety, his cynicism, his self-awareness of his mortality, his suspicions regarding Cyrnus' promiscuity - especially with men that Theognis considers to be less worthy - but most of all, his endless and unshakeable devotion to the young man. I have taken three elegies as inspiration for *Dear Cyrnus*,

*Boy, since the goddess Cypris gave you a lusty
Grace, and your beauty's every boy's concern,
Listen to these words and for my sake take them to heart
Knowing how hard it is for a man to bear desire.*

*My heart's in pain because of my love of you,
For I can't either hate or love,
Knowing it's hard when a man's your friend
To hate him, and hard to love him if he doesn't want.*

*Knowing in your heart that the flower of lovely youth
Is briefer than a footrace, loosen my chain.
For even you, mightiest of boys, may some day be compelled
And meet the hard work of the Love Goddess,
Even as I do now with you. Beware!
A boy's wickedness may one day conquer you.*

(Translated by Peter Bing & Rip Cohen, Games of Venus, pp. 94-109. © 1991 by Routledge, Chapman and Hall, Inc.)

The verses express much admiration for Cyrnus' beauty, paired with Theognis' regret that age has withered his own appearance. The demonstrable strength of his affection towards Cyrnus results in him stifling his desire to love him and his incapability to hate him for not returning his love. And in the final verse, whilst pleading with Cyrnus for pity and possibly gratification, he scorns him and reminds him that one day he will also grow old and will not be as attractive as other boys anymore. He chastises him for either being so beautiful or for using his beauty to inflict emotional torture.

The following music is at times fragmentary, as are the texts from which it was inspired. I present Cyrnus' youthful beauty in the opening bars of this piece. A 6/8 metre providing a playful, boyish lilt; mid to high register chords hinting at his adolescence; a bright major tonality and arching melodies expressing the beauty of clear lines in Greek art; additional harmony notes to add colour and to suggest charming imperfections, such as a freckles or perhaps a beauty spot; and a series of unrelated block chords and cubic structures suggesting an angled bone structure, such as high cheekbones or a strong jawline.

Dear Cyrnus, I.

Tom Armitage
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Bright and Graceful (♩=80)

Musical score for measures 1-6. The score is in 6/8 time and features three staves: Flute I, Flute II, and Piano. Flute I begins with a melodic line marked *mp*. Flute II enters in measure 4 with a melodic line also marked *mp*. The piano accompaniment consists of chords and moving lines in both hands, marked *mp* and including the instruction *con ped.* at the bottom.

Musical score for measures 7-10. The score continues with Flute I, Flute II, and Piano. Flute I has a melodic line marked *p*. Flute II has a melodic line marked *p*. The piano accompaniment continues with chords and moving lines, marked *mp* and *p*.

Un poco meno mosso

12

Fl. I

Fl. II

pp *ff*

pp *ff*

pp *ff* *p*

Detailed description: This system covers measures 12 to 15. The flute parts (Fl. I and Fl. II) are mostly rests. Fl. I has a dynamic marking of *pp* in measure 12 and *ff* in measure 13. Fl. II has *pp* in measure 12 and *ff* in measure 13. The piano accompaniment consists of two staves. The right hand plays arpeggiated chords in measures 12-14, with a fermata in measure 15. The left hand plays a melodic line in the bass clef, starting in measure 12 and ending with a fermata and a second ending (marked with a '2') in measure 15. Dynamic markings include *pp*, *ff*, and *p*.

Heavy; Regretful

(♩.=♩)

16

Fl. I

Fl. II

pppp

Detailed description: This system covers measures 16 to 19. The flute parts (Fl. I and Fl. II) are rests. The piano accompaniment is in 4/4 time. The right hand plays a melodic line in the bass clef, starting in measure 16 and ending with a fermata in measure 19. The left hand plays chords in the bass clef. The dynamic marking is *pppp*. The mood is described as 'Heavy; Regretful' with a tempo marking '(♩.=♩)'. The system ends with a double bar line.

II.

1 Red and Misty (♩=180)

Fl. I
Fl. II

pp cresc.

Ped.

4 Explosive! Restless...

Fl. I
Fl. II

fff 3

fff 3

p cresc.

con ped. normale

7

Fl. I

Fl. II

mp *mf* *f*

mp *mf* *f*

f

10

Fl. I

Fl. II

pp *ppp* *mp* *pp*

pp *ppp* *mp* *pp*

pp *ppp* *mp* *pp*

Affectionate ($\text{♩} = 60$)

Pulsing

accel.

A tempo

Suddenly despondent,

Bright and teasing

Musical score for measures 17-20. The Flute I part (Fl. I) features a melodic line with slurs and accents, marked *mp cantabile*. The Flute II part (Fl. II) is silent. The Piano accompaniment (Piano) is mostly silent, with a few notes in the bass clef in measures 19 and 20, marked *pp*.

Muffled

Musical score for measures 21-24. The Flute I part (Fl. I) has a melodic line in measures 21 and 22, then rests. The Flute II part (Fl. II) is silent. The Piano accompaniment (Piano) features a triplet in the bass clef in measure 21, marked *p*, and a triplet in the right hand in measure 23, marked *ppp*.

Expressive!

26

Fl. I

Fl. II

pp

pp

ff

Pulsing

accel.

A tempo

32

Fl. I

Fl. II

mp

mp

pp

ppp

mp

p

III.

Bright and Graceful

1 Loaded (♩=80)

Fl. I

Fl. II

mp

sim.

pp

(sempre pp)

Loaded

Bright and Graceful

Affectionate

7

Fl. I

Fl. II

mp

pp

pp

14 **Charged, Energetic** (♩=70)

Fl. I

Fl. II

mp

cantabile

17

Fl. I

Fl. II

18

Fl. I

Fl. II

mf

19

Fl. I

Fl. II

Fl. I

Fl. II

molto accel.

20

Fl. I

Fl. II

f

Fl. I

Fl. II

21

Fl. I

Fl. II

ff

pp

fff *lunga* *pp*

(♩=60)

Fl. I

Fl. II

Sinking with Desperation (♩=80)

25

Fl. I

Fl. II

Fl. I

Fl. II

Piano accompaniment with treble and bass clefs.

keep tempo and dynamic constant throughtout

28

Fl. I

Fl. II

Fl. I

Fl. II

Piano accompaniment with treble and bass clefs.

33

Fl. I

pp

Fl. II

pp

ppp

Detailed description: This musical score page, numbered 11, contains measures 33 through 36. It features three staves: Flute I (Fl. I), Flute II (Fl. II), and Piano. The Flute I staff begins with a treble clef and a *pp* dynamic marking. It contains a melodic phrase in the first measure, consisting of a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, and a half note B4, all tied to the first measure of the next system. The Flute II staff also begins with a treble clef and a *pp* dynamic marking. It remains silent for the first two measures, then enters in the third measure with a melodic phrase: a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, and a half note B4, tied to the first measure of the next system. The Piano part is written in grand staff notation (treble and bass clefs). It features a sustained bass line in the left hand, with notes G2, F2, and E2, and a melodic line in the right hand. The piano part concludes with a *ppp* dynamic marking in the final measure. The page ends with a double bar line.