

COMPOSERS

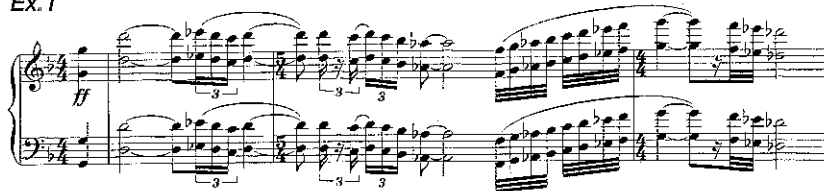
Dances from Crete

Adam Gorb

This work was commissioned by Timothy Reynish as part of a series of commissions to commemorate his son William Reynish who tragically died in a mountaineering accident in 2001. The world première took place at the Royal College of Music in London in November 2003.

Dances from Crete is in four movements and is intended to celebrate the good things in life, drawing much of its material from the dance music from the Greek island of Crete, where many of the ancient Greek myths took place. The first movement, *Syrtos* is intended to serve as a portrait of the Minotaur, the famous creature that was half bull, half man, and fed upon young men and women who were sacrificed to him every year before he was eventually killed by the hero Theseus. The character of this movement is harsh and ruthless. The work opens with a grandiose 'Motto' theme *Ex. 1* in the full band which reoccurs throughout the work. This speeds up into the main theme of the

Ex. 1



Ex. 2



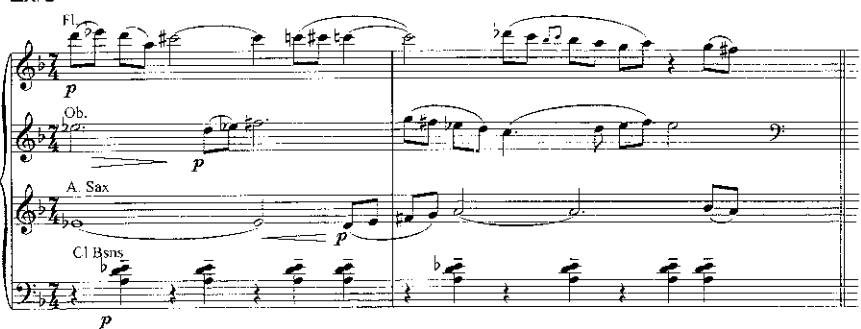
Ex. 3



Ex. 4



Ex. 5



movement *Ex. 2*, which has clear links with the motto theme. The harmonic language of this movement, and indeed most of the work is elemental, with modulations almost always occurring stepwise (e.g. F to G). Later in the movement there is a

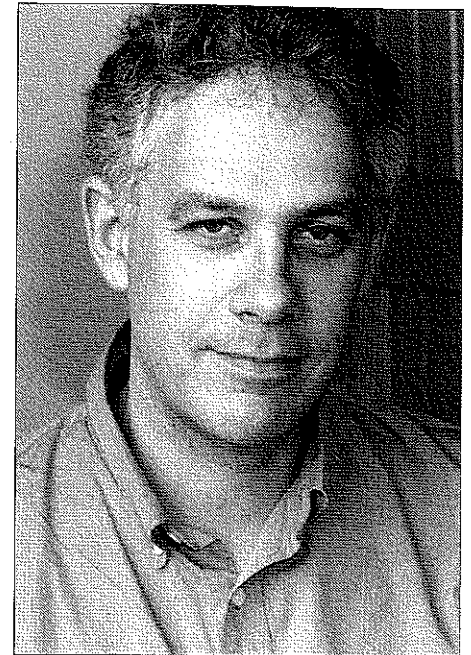
direct transcription of a poignant and mournful Cretan theme played on the alto saxophone and accompanied by a sped-up version of itself - a common practise in music from this island *Ex. 3*. There is a restatement of the motto theme at the end of the movement before it is abruptly cut off.

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Ex.6



Ex.7



Adam Gorb was born in 1958 and studied Music at Cambridge University and Composition at the Royal Academy of Music. His compositions are performed frequently in the UK and abroad. Notable works include *Metropolis* for wind band, which won the Walter Beeler Memorial Prize in the USA in 1994, *Prelude, Interlude and Postlude* for piano, which won the Purcell Composition Prize in 1995, *Kol Simcha*, a ballet given over fifty performances by the Rambert Dance Company, a Violin Sonata premiered at the Spitalfields Festival in 1996 and *Elements*, a Percussion Concerto for Evelyn Glennie and the Royal Northern College of Music Wind Ensemble which was released on CD in 2001. Since 1999 premieres have included a *Clarinet Concerto* for Nicholas Cox and the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, a string quartet for the Maggini Quartet, *Towards Nirvana* which received its first performance by the Tokyo Kosei Wind Ensemble in October 2002, and *Diaspora* for eleven strings which was given its premiere by the Goldberg Ensemble in 2003. Adam Gorb is Head of School of Composition and Contemporary Music at the Royal Northern College of Music.

The second movement, **Tik** is a more graceful dance based on the sinuous movements of young women, but it is also characterised by a certain roughness; and is in 5/8 time. Tim Reynish writes that 'in this movement the whole orchestra should feel the pulse like a Cretan peasant on the threshing floor.' The main melody is another transcription *Ex. 4*. At the very end of the movement a reappearance of the motto theme, this time on offstage trumpet, leads into the next movement: **Samaria Gorge**. The music is now in a slow 7/4 time, darker in mood and inspired by a steep and perilous walk down this famous Cretan gorge; one of the most spectacular of all walks, featuring houses and churches that have long been deserted. I wanted to depict a sense the sadness of time passing inexorably. The mood is reflected in the more sombre orchestral colours, with prominent cor anglais and low flutes; and

melodies dominated by augmented and diminished seconds *Ex. 5*. The movement eventually rises to a triumphant peroration, depicting a welcome plunge into the Libyan Sea at the culmination of the walk.

Following distant offstage fanfares, the finale, a modern Greek dance, **Syrtaki**, bursts in with the offstage trumpeters swaggering back on stage playing a deliberately vulgar theme *Ex. 6* (which is again related to the motto theme.) The music soon becomes very fast and eventually ends in total festive anarchy complete with plate smashing, although before the final apotheosis the ghost of the Minotaur can briefly be heard in the euphonium joining the party *Ex. 7*.

Dances from Crete lasts about eighteen minutes and is published by Maecenas Music