

# SCHINDELPR

## The Art of the Miniscule

Micro-compositions by Graham Lack

There's hardly a plane in the sky. And hardly a car on the streets. The day feels somehow unusually long. Which raises the question, what exactly should one do with that day? How should we, as composers, use our time in a responsible way? We should, I suppose, make art. For that is what we do. But we must be realistic. Now that so many recent commissions have been pushed back to a later season, maybe two or even three years from now, it has become quite a challenge to place a new and extensive work for very large orchestra in a programme. Concert planning, moreover, continues to change daily.

This got me thinking, and I chanced upon the name of Muhammad Yunus. Now he is a Bangladeshi social entrepreneur, banker, economist, and civil society leader who was awarded in 2006 the Nobel Peace Prize for founding a new kind of bank and pioneering the concepts of microcredit and microfinance. Perhaps this could be applied to music I thought. Maybe the idea of micro-commissioning would be an attractive way to work with a composer. What if the new piece were under one minute in terms of performing time? And supposing the commissioner offered an open-ended fee commensurate with perceived value in an ideal sense?

Well, I can say at this stage, that the concept met with an immediate positive response from performing artists, presenters and promoters. And I now have quite enough to be getting on with. The motivation to compose has returned, after what I must admit was a fallow period, and the partners with whom I have the privilege to cooperate are also quite fired up. For we all have high hopes that there will be live audiences even in extenuating circumstances.

The works to come cover a gamut of styles; the forces range from a single instrument to chamber music, and from vocal ensembles and choirs to, yes, chamber orchestra and large orchestra. Exactly when and where and under what circumstances the new micro-commissions will see the light of day obviously remains to be seen. And if one new work or the other turns up in a programme more than once, then so much the better.

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