Gwyneth Walker

TESTIMONY

for Amnesty International



for Two Pianos and Readers

PROGRAM NOTES

TESTIMONY, scored for two pianos and several readers, was composed as a tribute to Amnesty International USA. The readings are adapted from letters about and by the prisoners of conscience with whom Amnesty has been concerned. The music is derived from the spiritual, "Go Down Moses," especially the final refrain of 'let my people go.'

The work opens with a statement of "Go Down Moses." Readings of letters are then interspersed with variations of the song. Each variation is a musical reflection upon the reading which precedes it.

The final section focuses upon the reading of a letter from a Soviet prisoner confined against his will to a psychiatric hospital. During this reading, the pianists play reiterations of the 5-note rhythmic pattern 'let my people go' -- on the keys, strings and body of the pianos. As this rhythmic activity increases, the song "Go Down Moses" reappears and is sung by the readers.

TESTIMONY was commissioned by pianists Samuel and Nancy Bent of Hanover, New Hampshire. The work was specifically intended for performance on a benefit concert for Amnesty International on October 4, 1987 in Rollins Chapel on the Dartmouth College campus.

PERFORMANCE NOTES

TESTIMONY is a somber and dramatic work requiring a minumum of 2 to a maximum of 6 readers. The maximum is preferred.

It is recommended that at least some of the readers be able to sing. The ability to read music is not required of the readers/singers.

The readers should sit or stand at the side of the stage, coming forward to center stage when reading, returning to the side after reading.

The style of reading of the first 5 readings should be natural and straightforward, in the manner in which you or I might read these passages aloud to ourselves. Any instinctive shadings of shock, revulsion, tenderness, etc. are appropriate. Highly dramatic reading is not.

The final reading (bottom of p. 14) is that of an actual letter from a prisoner of conscience. The reader in this case should be a man of approximately 30 years of age who can project an identification with the writer of the letter. This is a dramatic reading.

The pianists should play their parts strictly as written. The interaction between the pianists and readers is expressed musically, not through overt contact. The pianists are not themselves prisoners, yet the music they play speaks for the prisoners and for our anger at unjust and inhumane imprisonment. Only in the final gesture do the pianists also become prisoners.

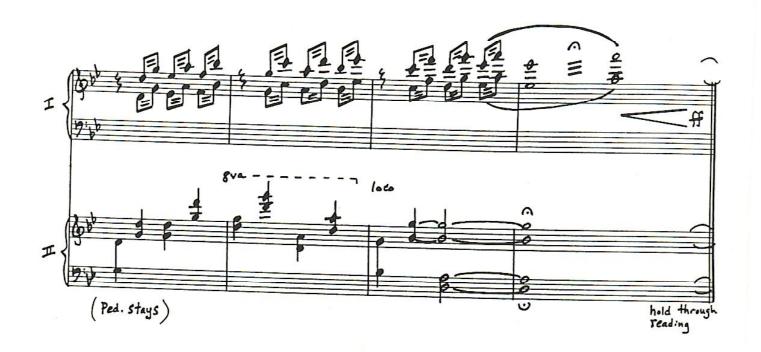
This work is dedicated to prisoners of conscience

held against their wills

throughout the world







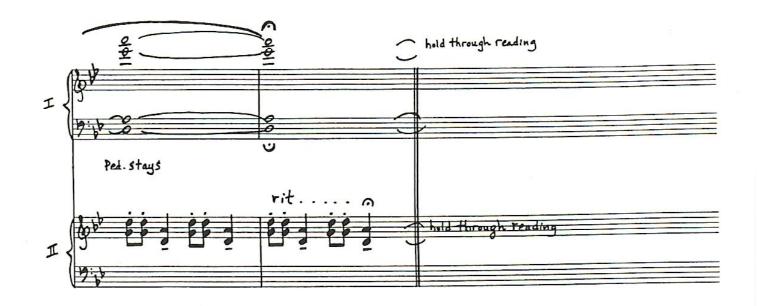
FIRST READING:

MALAYSIA

Ong Loong Sheng, a 24-year-old trade unionist, was arrested on May 16, 1967, and detained without trial under the provisions of Malaysia's Internal Security Act, which allows the government to detain people for two years at a time without trial, and to renew the detention order as many times as it likes.

Although Mr. Ong was being held for allegedly posing a threat to Malaysia's national security, Amnesty International was concerned because his detention continued for several years despite the fact the Malaysian government never publicly presented evidence of any description which suggested that Mr. Ong posed a threat to national security, or that he used or advocated violence at any time.



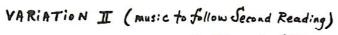


SECOND READING:

URUGUAY

Brenda Ines Rovetta Dubinsky was a student of education at the time of her arrest on February19, 1979. She was charged with Attack on the Constitution at the level of conspiracy, and also with false documentation. She was married to Antonio Morelli, a Uruguayan political prisoner, who was released in 1978, before Brenda herself was arrested.

As a result of the above charges, Brenda was sentenced to seven years' imprisonment and was reported to have been brutally tortured.





THIRD READING:

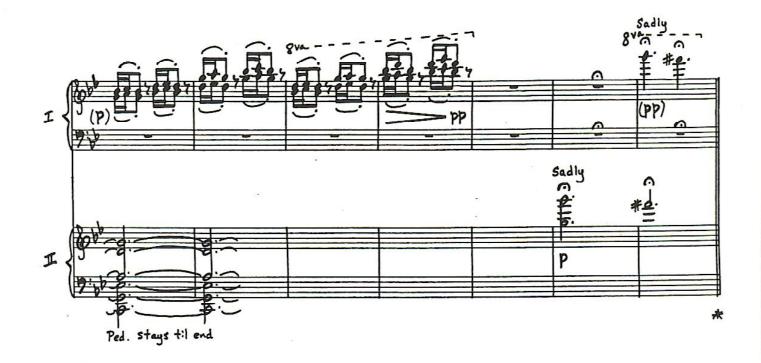
URUGUAY

Mario Julio Baffico was arrested on March 8th, 1976, and sentenced to nine years' imprisonment under the Law of National Security, which placed civilians convicted of political offenses under military justice. He was charged with 'Subversive Association,' allegedly because of his membership in the banned Uruguay Communist Party.

At the time of his arrest, Mario was married, with two small children.







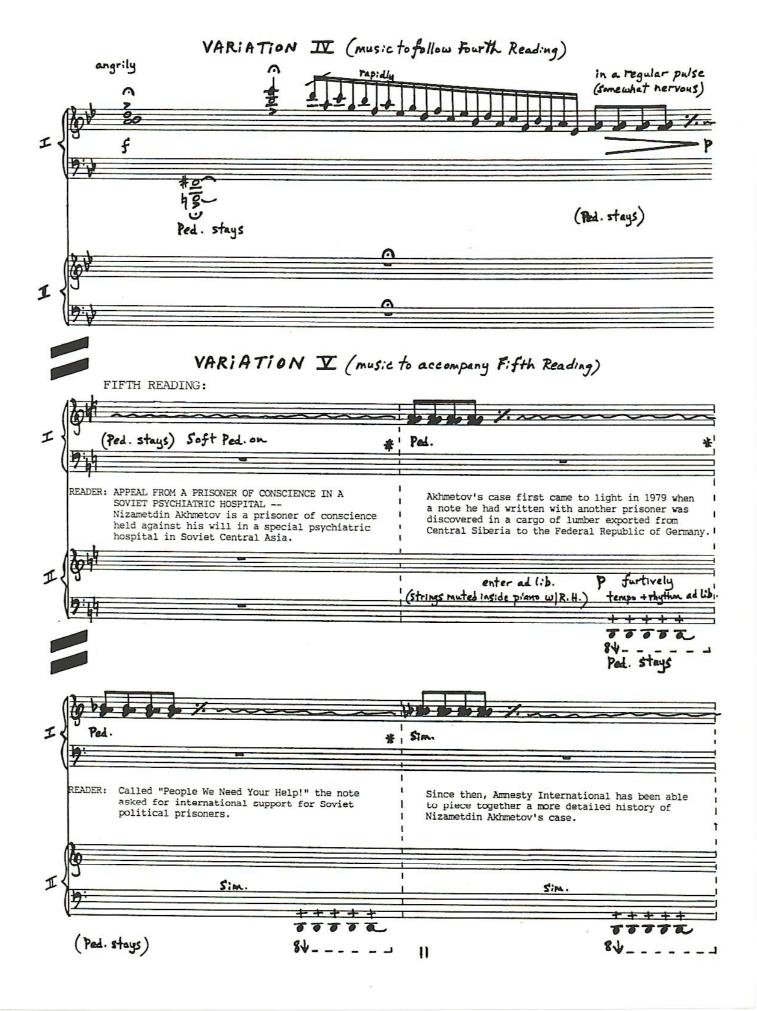
FOURTH READING:

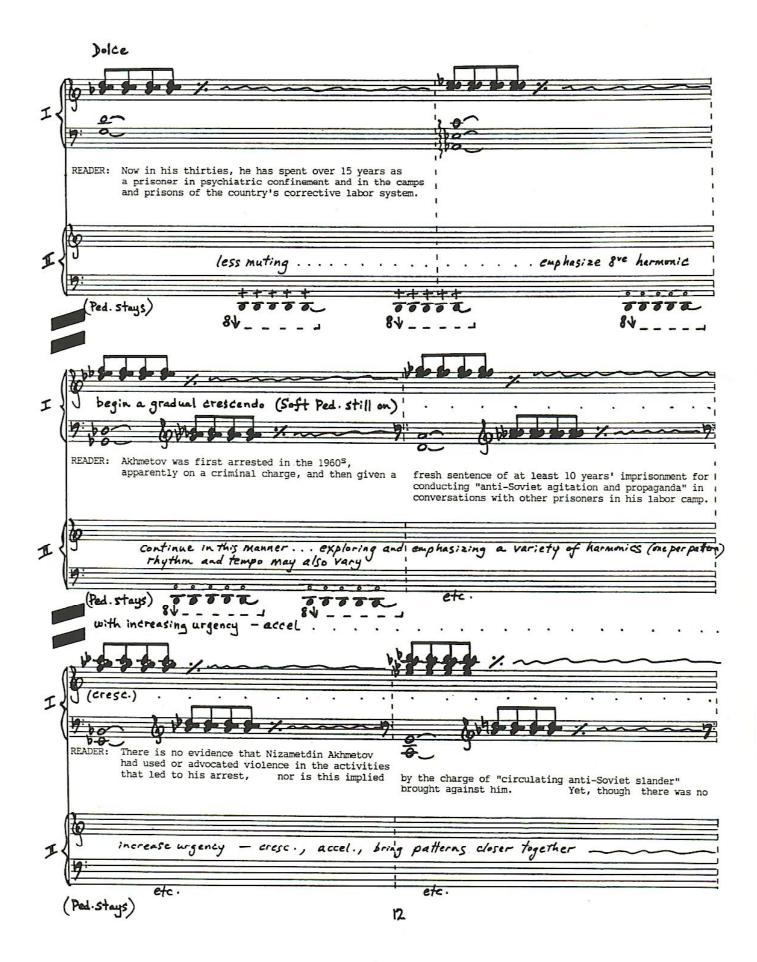
SOUTH KOREA

Lee Shim-bom, a law student at Seoul National University in the Republic of Korea, was arrested in June, 1980, and sentenced by a military court to nine years' imprisonment for organizing student demonstrations.

Taken to prison, he was in great pain, attributed to the beatings inflicted on him during interrogation. He was said to be unable to move his neck and one arm.

The authorities, however, denied him medical treatment on the grounds that the prison did not have the neccessary facilities.







READER: Nizametdin Akhmetov was sent to Alma-Ata special psychiatric hospital in Kazakhstan, where it is believed he now remains.

Amnesty International has frequently reported on the difficulties facing prisoners of conscience in psychiatric hospitals where they are held virtually incommunicado, and so are particularly at risk of cruel treatment.

These psychiatric hospitals are designed by law for the criminally insane who represent a "special danger to society" and, as such, are maximum-security institutions where inmates are held under close surveillance, mostly in locked wards. Prisoners of conscience, and others confined there, are allowed visits only with close relatives, and then solely at the doctors' discretion.

They have no rights to correspondence, and may receive paper and pencil only with the permission of the doctors. All their letters are censored.

Amnesty International knows of numerous prisoners of conscience who have been punished with drug treatment, or beatings, after they were caught keeping a diary of their confinement, or trying to smuggle letters out of the hospital.

Soviet law, however, offers inmates of psychiatric hospitals no formal procedure to lodge complaints about their treatment.

(music stops)

(another)
READER:

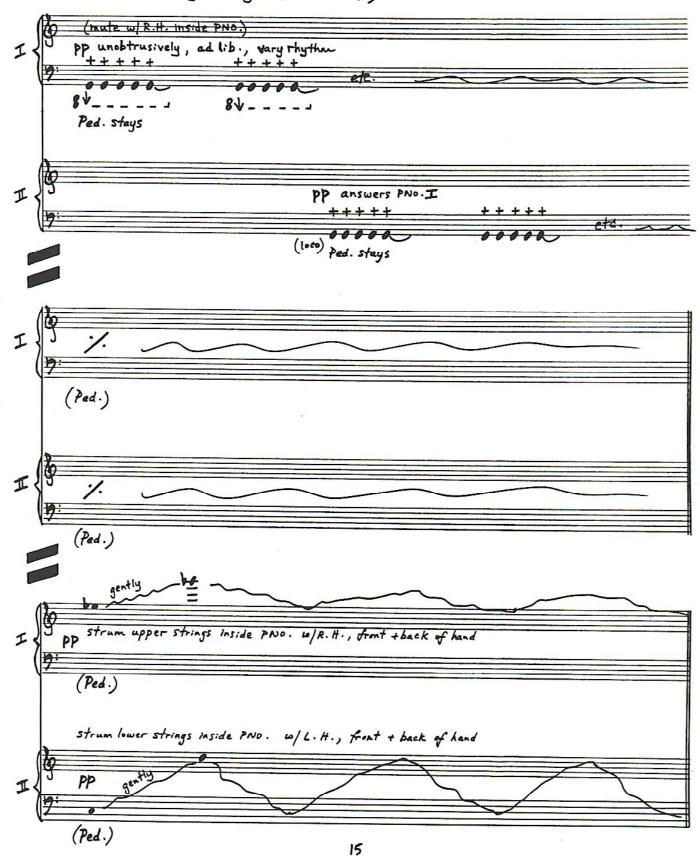
(PNO strumming begins)

"I am afraid to write to you, my friend. I fear that you may read my letter like a letter from a madhouse...but I have no-one else I could write to, to whom I could express my most basic human need. But I fear even more that they will use the extra strong drugs on me and turn me into an idiot, who will not even be able to die with all his senses intact.

So listen to your friend.

(strumming stops)

(music to accompany reading on previous page)



READER: I am in a very bad way, my friend.

Never have I suffered so much,
never was my situation so hopeless.
I have dropped out of society,
from the scope of its laws.
I am absolutely without rights,
depersonalized,
indeed dehumanized.

Of course I am not ill.
Yet I am in an institution which has all the means of <u>making</u> me ill.
This is no exaggeration:
psychiatry has now reached the limits reached by physics when it split the uranium nucleus.

It is not just this one man with the white coat over his uniform whom I have to face -- he has the entire State behind him.

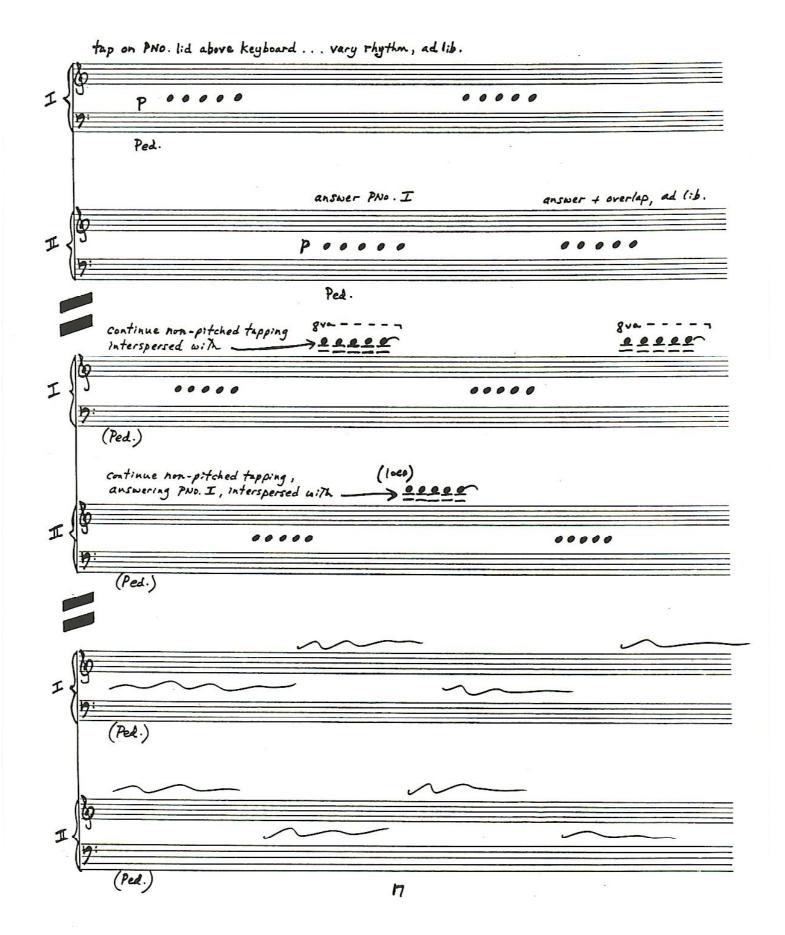
There is no doubt I am being ground to pieces.

It is horrible -- an unbearable continuous torment, this so-called "treatment."

The medicines they feed and inject me with Satan would have loved to buy for his Hell.

Such suffering I have never known.

And I am afraid of not holding out. My will-power is not unlimited.



READER: The worst thing that can happen to a person may happen to me.

In any case,

whether I die or whether they drive me mad, that will be the end.

The end of a human being.

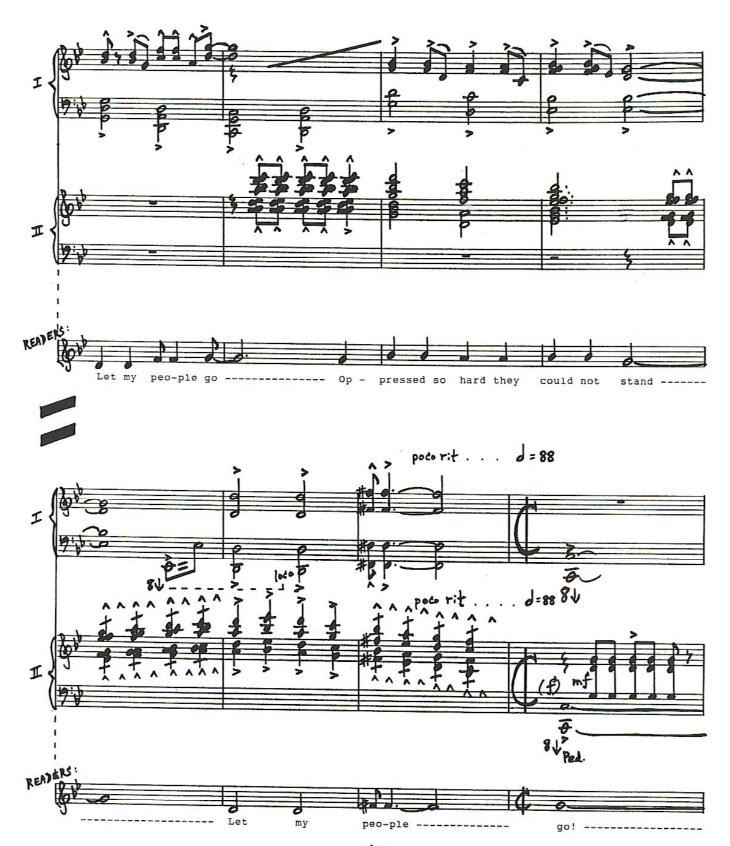
Even if it does not happen in a human way, as with human beings, it will happen to a human being -- that's what I wanted to stress.

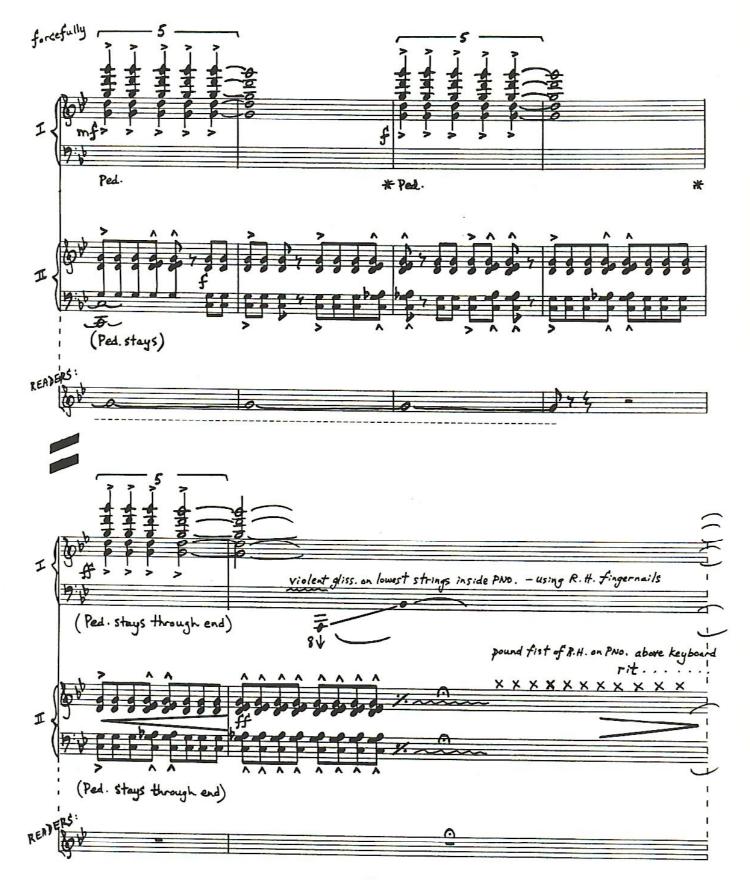
And I would like to be spoken of,

and to be remembered,

as a human being.







ALL READERS: And I would like to be spoken of

(overlapping)

And I would like to be spoken of

And I would like to be spoken of

And I would like to be spoken of

and to be remembered

and to be remembered

as a human being

as a human being

as a

and to be remembered

and to be remembered



human being

as a human being

[Cross wrists,

raise arms to eye level,

lower eyes]

PIANISTS:

[Cross wrists,

raise arms to eye level,

lower eyes]

23

Duration: 16 minutes August 30, 1987 New Cancan, Ct.