Thirty for Grace

for speaking pianist

Ian Pace

For Grace Hom

Composed in 2019
Performance Instructions

The pianist is required to speak throughout, reading a series of numbers (from 0 to 29) in Cantonese. These should be delivered in an audible ‘stage whisper’, always clear.

The piece should be played in a generally hushed manner throughout, though with care taken in terms of the small dynamic variations and momentarily louder material, which may be imagined as akin to the sounds of sirens over the music, while in bars 15 and 25, the accented chords should be played in a ‘spikey’ manner, protruding from the texture.

First Performance: City, University of London, 13 May 2019. Ian Pace, piano.
Programme Note

Thirty for Grace, which was written to celebrate Grace Hom’s 30th birthday, is a direct response to Skempton’s One for Molly, which I knew through William A.P.M. was one of Grace’s favourite pieces, alongside Campanella 3, Finnissy’s arrangement of ‘Love is here to stay’, and Pascal Dusapin’s Sixth Étude for piano. Permutations, re-arrangements and mutations of the pitch material in the Skempton pieces are used to generate a basic ‘thread’ which runs through the piece, during which the pianist also counts from 0 to 30 in Cantonese, Grace’s language and a homage to Walter Zimmermann’s piano piece When I’m Eighty-Four, which employs a similar strategy in Japanese. Part of the piece also configures some of this material in the manner of the verse of the Finnissy (with ‘inserts’ derived from potent moments in the chorus), together with some rather urgent overlays alluding to Dusapin.

Happy Birthday Grace – I hope you enjoy this!

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Hushed but with some motion, $\frac{d}{d} = 60$

Spoken/whispered: lihng  yat  Ian Pace

Ped ad lib, with a halo to the sound, but not muddy

yih  såam

sei
ngh

(lower line only)

luhk

(sempre ppp)

chat

baat
gáu

(p marc.
(very slight emphasis on circled notes,
not like a Hauptstimme)
Accents here and in bar 25 should be somewhat 'spiky' and jar with the line.
A tempo **ppp** (as before)

17

*tre corde*

Change of texture again

18

**(pp)** (both parts)

*mpz* (both parts)

**una corda**

As before

20

*tre corde*
Change of texture again

As before

Change of texture again

As before

A tempo

Change of texture again
yihsaiphcat
(can be spoken slightly earlier
for audibility)

yihsaiphbaat  yihsaiphgáu

una corda

sáamsahp