

Selah Meditations Volume One Composers Notes

Selah #25... This piece evolved out of the family camaraderie of Christmas... My sister Marie and her husband had spent the night with us and late into the night of Christmas Eve I was doodling as I often do, and this piece emerged. It plays with the transitory nature of Minor and Major key...with the melody being originally in A minor, then transforming into A major. I love to do this compositional trick with a lot of my music. It brings a sense of JOY to the sadness that a minor key evokes as if God is saying, "It's okay... I know that you have pain at times, but I will always comfort you..."

Selah #31... The melody came to me as I was driving through the beautiful landscape of Oregon several years ago with my wife, Carole. This was one of those mathematical formulas that music can be for me when I am away from the piano...when I can sense a specific structure of notes that I know will sound nice. The arching fifths soaring and falling in the melody were impressions of the huge forests of trees that we were driving through. When we reached our destination, there was a grand piano in the parlor of the bed & breakfast, and once unpacked, I went directly there and allowed God to pour out this "mathematical structure" into the music that became this song.

Selah #32... The year of 9-11 was a sad year for many Americans, and for me there were several days that I went to the piano for solace. This piece was written on Pearl Harbor Day, 12-07-01, which was also my brother's birthday. Much of the media during the 9-11 aftermath was comparing that event as the "Pearl Harbor" event for this generation. It seemed to bond our wonderful country together in a powerful way...at least for a time.

Selah #34... This haunting melody was composed the night before the 9-11 event in America. As if by premonition, the melody switching between major and minor keys seems to present a message of foreboding. I had no idea that the next days' events would impact us all so much. The melody slides between two minor keys of D minor and B minor, then morphs into the brighter major key, Bb. Eventually at the end, the strain between the two minor keys becomes the strain between D minor and D major.

Selah #53... This piece along with the next three pieces was compiled for background music to a documentary film about the book 40 Days of Purpose by Rick Warren. Though this project did not come to fruition for me, the music has remained with me. The beginning melody of this first piece was actually composed in 1980 when I was on a farm in Nacogdoches, TX with some college friends. There was no piano there...only a guitar of one of my friends. The six note melody is a series of various harmonics of the six strings of the guitar. The melody of F#-G-E-D-E-B is generated by playing the harmonics of the strings and letting them ring. I originally recorded myself doodling on these harmonics along with the sounds of nature late in the day as the sun set and the birds were settling down for their rest. I later added the other two melodic sections specific for the movie project.

Selah #54... I have always wanted to compose music for films, and have had on my website the phrase of "Movies Without Songs" as a play on the Mendelssohn music, "Songs Without Words." Again there is the richness of the Minor and Major keys playing against each other. However, in this case, the play is not with the relative key changes (i.e. E minor to E major), but rather with the more complex harmonic structures of the E Minor eleventh with the C Major eleventh chords.

Selah #55... A simple melody that I imagined as a simple waltz. There is a scene in the movie You've Got Mail where the main character (played by Meg Ryan) is remembering waltzing on her mother's toes as a young child. At a later date, I actually put words to this song and used it at CrossPointe Church as an offering. It was one of those God things that the words just happened to fit exactly to this melody. The words from that song referenced Mark 2:17 and Luke 19:10 where Jesus states that "He has come to save the lost," and at the end flowed into the John Wesley hymn "Come Sinners To The Gospel Feast."

Selah #56... Originally inspired by the son of one of our dear friends, the melody was a simple and childlike. The structure of this melody was situated primarily on the black notes of the piano. It was part of a compilation of songs along with an essay called "Meditation on the Black Notes." One of the points of the essay was that I shared with him how I had always feared the black notes on the piano, and was anxious about playing classical pieces with lots of sharps and flats. Yet as I overcame this fear and grew in knowledge about music theory and harmony, I now understand that all these different keys are really all just the same...it is just a variance of relativity. I also discovered in a personal meditation one day that playing on the black notes is actually physically easier because the distance between the notes is just a hair less than the white notes. This young boy, Russell, has grown to a young man now and is a very accomplished drummer!

Selah #217... This piece came as a response to the many blessings my wife and I have had over the years. The house that we now live in is truly a beautiful space that allows us to just BE. We have a wonderful sunroom where we can have coffee together... where I can play on our grand piano... where friends can gather... As we "just be" in this space we observe the nature in our yard and garden through six large windows. There is a special time of day as the sun is setting, and the tiredness of the day lies upon the walls of the sunroom in growing shadows. During one of these special times in June, God gave me the melody for this song.

Selah #58-61... These last four songs were composed for our dear friends, the Taylors. They have four wonderful children, and their oldest began taking classical guitar lessons. She learned very quickly, and unlike most guitar players actually read the notes on the page rather than just chord sheets. Like an impressionist painting, in each one of these pieces I tried to evoke the essence of the family characters. The first one is for her parents, Scott & Kim, who share an amazing love and the ability to make every person (regardless of their background or circumstances) *truly loved*. This is not an easy task in our busy lives today, and especially with the chaos that four kids can bring! Again, I am reminded of the amazing strength of love and patience that my own mother had with six kids. The second song was for the next oldest daughter, and was called "Rebecca's Smile" as a reminder of the joy this unique daughter brought into the room whenever we met them! The next song was for their one son, and was just a "bouncy boy" of four at the time and was called "Nathan's Frolic." I really wanted to have a playful flute on this one!! The last song was for their youngest who was going through the "terrible twos" at the time. We prayed often for Kim and her "sassy Sarah," and this song was originally called "Sarah's Spanish Passion" to capture that two year old attitude! It is done in the Spanish Phrygian mode similar to the popular "Maleguena."