



4-23-2022

Refuge: Seeking Solace Amidst Chaos

Andrew Deur

Western Michigan University, drewdeur@gmail.com

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/honors_theses



Part of the Other Music Commons

Recommended Citation

Deur, Andrew, "Refuge: Seeking Solace Amidst Chaos" (2022). *Honors Theses*. 3547.
https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/honors_theses/3547

This Honors Thesis-Open Access is brought to you for free and open access by the Lee Honors College at ScholarWorks at WMU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Honors Theses by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks at WMU. For more information, please contact wmu-scholarworks@wmich.edu.



REFUGE: Seeking Solace Amidst Chaos

Andrew Deur's Senior Recital // April 23, 2022

Faith Quashie, vocals // Grayson Nye, keyboard // Ben Crino, guitar // Owen Cramer, bass // Andrew Deur, drums

In the human condition, or at least my experience with it, pain is unavoidable. Physical, mental, societal, and relational struggles define our culture and can define my life. Within the storm, I desire peace. But my attempts to create that peace most often fail and leave me with more questions than answers. Where do I go for refuge? Luckily, I'm not the first one to ask. Throughout the book of Psalms, David and the other psalmists explore that question, and in this program of original compositions and arrangements, I wrestle with their conclusions and with my own experiences as I seek a fuller understanding of the answer.

Where does my help come from?

I. Wonder

Psalm 8

O Lord, our Lord, your majestic name fills the earth!

Your glory is higher than the heavens.

You have taught children and infants

to tell of your strength,

silencing your enemies

and all who oppose you.

When I look at the night sky and see the work of your fingers—

the moon and the stars you set in place—

what are mere mortals that you should think about them,

human beings that you should care for them?

Yet you made them only a little lower than God

and crowned them with glory and honor.

You gave them charge of everything you made,

putting all things under their authority—

the flocks and the herds

and all the wild animals,

the birds in the sky, the fish in the sea,

and everything that swims the ocean currents.

O Lord, our Lord, your majestic name fills the earth!

Psalm 14:2-3

The Lord looks down from heaven
on the entire human race;
he looks to see if anyone is truly wise,
if anyone seeks God.
But no, all have turned away;
all have become corrupt.
No one does good,
not a single one!

This piece is centered around the Cameroonian rhythm *mangambe*, and the drum groove is particularly based off of Will Kennedy's pattern on the Yellowjackets tune "CapeTown". In Psalm 8, David expresses awe over God's creation and his charge of dominion to mankind. The peace and harmony is not for long, though, as brokenness creeps in and corruption overwhelms the human race, separating them from God.

II. Gibeah

Psalm 59:1-5, 14-17

Rescue me from my enemies, O God.
Protect me from those who have come to destroy me.
Rescue me from these criminals;
save me from these murderers.
They have set an ambush for me.
Fierce enemies are out there waiting, Lord,
though I have not sinned or offended them.
I have done nothing wrong,
yet they prepare to attack me.
Wake up! See what is happening and help me!
O Lord God of Heaven's Armies, the God of Israel,
wake up and punish those hostile nations.
Show no mercy to wicked traitors.

...

My enemies come out at night,
snarling like vicious dogs
as they prowl the streets.
They scavenge for food
but go to sleep unsatisfied.

But as for me, I will sing about your power.
Each morning I will sing with joy about your unfailing love.

For you have been my refuge,
a place of safety when I am in distress.
O my Strength, to you I sing praises,
for you, O God, are my refuge,
the God who shows me unfailing love.

David wrote Psalm 59 while escaping King Saul's attempts to ambush him in his house at Gibeah (1 Samuel 19:11-12). At this moment in David's life, the chaos he faced presented immediate mortal danger. The rhythmic uncertainty, dynamic intensity, and textural density of the piece seek to reflect the predicament David found himself in at the time.

III. Senchant

Fortunately, I have never found myself hiding in a cave with enemies hot on my trail seeking to kill me. That does not mean, however, that life is free of difficulty. Everyone's journey is unique, and recently mine has included struggles to preserve my mental health. Everything got harder for a season, but it was especially difficult to get out of bed in the mornings. I would find myself lying there half asleep listening to my iPhone alarm, trying to count the beats of rest between jingle repetitions and playing imaginary drum fills once I figured it out— that's certainly a lighter example, but it paints the picture well. I became frustrated and angry as I processed what I was going through and why I was going through it, unable to find a satisfactory answer. While I wasn't quite running for my life like David, I related to his frustrations and his cries and wrote this piece with that inspiration.

IV. Eloi

Psalm 22:1-2

My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?
Why are you so far away when I groan for help?
Every day I call to you, my God, but you do not answer.
Every night I lift my voice, but I find no relief.

When my cries and groans for help seem unanswered and my needs seem unmet, it becomes easy to feel forsaken. Feelings of frustration and anger turn into sadness and loneliness. Even Jesus, fully aware of the human experience, quoted the first line of this psalm in Aramaic on the cross: "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" In my experience, this loneliness only serves to magnify the pain I feel: all along I thought God was my refuge and now he, too, abandons me?

V. Solo

It seems, then, that in his absence I must become my own savior. I must create my own solutions, provide my own protection, be my own refuge. Here, I try to create, but only worsen my position: more questions, no answers. In the quest for perfection I can only fail. There is no refuge; there is only more chaos.

VI. Petition

Psalm 57:1-3

Have mercy on me, O God, have mercy!

I look to you for protection.

I will hide beneath the shadow of your wings
until the danger passes by.

I cry out to God Most High,

to God who will fulfill his purpose for me.

He will send help from heaven to rescue me,
disgracing those who hound me.

My God will send forth his unfailing love and faithfulness.

With every other option exhausted, again I cry out to God Most High, holding onto the hope that he will fulfill his purpose for me. This petition echoes the same pain felt earlier, which seems even more intense now; this is mirrored by the reappearance of the harmonic structure from the fourth movement. The psalmist is confident that God will send help, love, and faithfulness; at this moment I share in that hope because it's all I have left.

VII. Answer

Psalm 3:4

I cried out to the Lord,
and he answered me from his holy mountain.

Psalm 4:3

...the Lord will answer when I call to him.

The Lord answers, and there is peace. This peace is not based on the outcome or tangible components of the response, but on the fact that when I called to the Lord, he answered. Interestingly, this same concept appears in both Psalm 3:4 and Psalm 4:3, which inspired the use of the simple yet effective 4:3 polyrhythm as the foundation of this piece.

VIII. Doxology

Old 100th – music: Louis Bourgeois, lyrics: Thomas Ken, arrangement: Andrew Deur

Psalm 150:5-6

Praise him with a clash of cymbals;

praise him with loud clanging cymbals.

Let everything that breathes sing praises to the Lord!

Praise the Lord!

Throughout my highs and lows, my ups and downs, the Lord proves faithful in his promises. He is my refuge, my place of safety when I am in distress. His majestic name fills the earth. He sends forth his unfailing love and faithfulness. What is there to do but praise him? Praise him with loud clanging cymbals— I think I can take care of that!

Psalm 121:1-2

I lift up my eyes to the mountains—

where does my help come from?

My help comes from the Lord,

the Maker of heaven and earth.