

Gareth Churchill

Grey Matters

a song cycle for mezzo soprano and cello

(2021)

Commissioned by Mid Wales Opera through Music at Your Place
with the support of Arts Council of Wales.

Duration c. 7 minutes

A dramatic song cycle examining the experience of social distancing.
Based on the testimony of brain injury survivors and created,
in association with Headway Cardiff and South East Wales during the Covid 19 Pandemic.

Texts

I.

I suffer from fatigue, anxiety, loss of focus; many don't understand that.
My avoidance mechanism lessens stressful contact; loss of human interaction over shadows that.
Covid's reinforcement of negative mental habits will make re-connection difficult;
many 'normal' people now feel 'broken'.

II.

Always two steps behind, always chasing, chasing, chasing, never catching up with your
conversation. My covid bubble is my safety bubble, family gets me, family accepts me.
Can I remember how to be social? Please don't make me.

III.

Keep away! This Virus is a weapon of mass destruction! That's what I say!
Distance is my saviour, don't reach out your hand. What part of "Back Off" don't you understand.
A different kind of "Normal" whatever that is and I shall go forward avoiding the abyss.

IV.

Having a 'hidden disability' is a daily battle and I didn't want others to struggle like I had.
You have no control over your emotions, so to battle with the adaptation of the world is
very unnerving. The normal you wish for is something you'll never get back.
You feel like a stranger in your own head.

Grey Matters

Developed in association with Headway Cardiff
and South East Wales service users

Gareth Churchill
(2021)

I.

Vigoroso ♩ = 76

Violoncello

6

Voice

I suf - fer from

Vc.

mf

p

10

Voice

fa - tigue, an - xi - e - ty, loss of fo cus; ma -

Vc.

f *p* *mp* *mf* *mp* *mf*

f *p*

15

Voice

ny don't un - der - stand that.

Vc.

f *p*

A tempo ma più calmo

♩ = ♩

(♩. = c. 52)

19

Voice

My a - voi - dance me - cha - nism

Vc.

mp *mf* *mp*

mf *pp*

Rit.

2

Rit. **A tempo**

23 *mf* *p* *mp* *mf*

Voice

le' sens stress-ful con-tact; loss of hu-man in-ter (r)ac-tion

Vc.

Rit. **A tempo**

27 *p* *mf*

Voice

ov-er sha-dows that. Co-vid's

Vc.

$\text{♩} = \text{♩}$
(♩ = c. 78)

30 *mp* *mf* *mp*

Voice

re - in-force - ment of ne-ga - tive men-tal ha - bits will make

Vc.

Come prima (♩ = c. 76 subito)

33 *mf* *p*

Voice

re - co-nec-tion dif-fi - cult;

Vc.

f subito

37 *mf* *f* *mf* *f* (senza rit.)

Voice

ma - ny 'nor - mal' peo - ple now feel 'bro - ken'.

Vc.

p *sfz*

1 Voice *mp* *p*
Al - ways two steps be hind, —

Vc. *mp*

5 Voice *mp* *mf* *f* *Rit.* *mf* *A tempo* *mp*
al - ways cha-sing, cha-sing, cha-sing, ne-ver catch-ing up with your

Vc. *p* *f*
Rit. *A tempo; tenero*

8 Voice *pp* *mp* *p* *mp*
con ver - sa-tion. sul tasto My Co vid_ bub ble_ is

Vc. *pp*

13 Voice *mf* *p* *mp* *p* *cresc.* *Rit.* *mf*
my_ safe-ty bub-ble, — fam-'ly_ gets me, fam-'ly ac-cepts me.

Vc. *A tempo*

17 ord. Vc. *mf* *mp* *Morendo*

21 Voice *mf* *mp* *p* *(dim.)* *(pp)*
Can I re mem. ber how to be so - cial? Please don't make me.

Vc. *p* *pp*

Declamato ♩ = c. 108

III.

1 pizz. (sec.)

Vc. *f*

8 Voice *f* *ff*

Keep a-way! This vi-rus is a wea-pon of mass de-struction!

Vc. *p*

14 Voice *f* (♩ = c. 72)

That's what I say!

Vc. *f*

19 Voice *mf* *f* *mf*

Dis-tance is my sav-iour, don't reach out your hand.

Vc. *p*

24 Voice *f* *ff* **Largamente** **a tempo** *f*

What part of "Back Off" don't you un-der-

Vc. *f* *p*

A tempo
come prima (♩ = ♩)

28 *mf* **Rit.**

Voice *mf*
stand.

Vc. *f*

Measures 28-34. Voice part: *mf*, Rit. Vc. part: *f*. Time signatures: 2/4, 3/4.

35 *mf* *f*

Voice *mf* *f*
A dif-frent kind of "nor-mal"

Vc. *p*

Measures 35-40. Voice part: *mf*, *f*. Vc. part: *p*. Time signatures: 3/4, 2/4, 3/4.

41 *mf* *mf*

Voice *mf* *mf*
what - ev - er that is and

Vc. *f* *p*

Measures 41-45. Voice part: *mf*, *mf*. Vc. part: *f*, *p*. Time signatures: 2/4, 2/4, 3/4.

(senza rit.)

46 *f* *mf* *f* *mf*

Voice *f* *mf* *f* *mf*
I shall go for - ward I a - voi-ding the ab - (b)ys.

Vc. *f*

Measures 46-50. Voice part: *f*, *mf*, *f*, *mf*. Vc. part: *f*. Time signatures: 3/4, 2/4, 2/4, 3/4.

Lamentoso ♩ = c. 72

IV.

arco

Vc. *p*

54 *mp* *p* *mf* *p* *mf* *p* *mf*

Voice

Ha-ving a 'hid-den di(s) - sa-bi - li - ty' is a dai - ly ba(t)-tle

Vc. *pp* *p*

58 *mp* *p* *mf* *p*

Voice

and I did - n't want oth - (th)ers to strug - gle like I had.

Vc. *pp* *p*

'Stesso tempo, ma poco più intenso

61 *mf* *mp* *mf*

Voice

You have no con

Vc. *pp* *p* *pp*

67 *f* *mf* *mp* *mf* *f*

Voice

- trol ov-er your e-mo-tions so_ to bat - tle with the ad - ap

Vc.

p *pp*

73 *mp* *mf* *f*

Voice

ta - tion of the_ world_ is_ un - ner-ving.

Vc.

p

Più scoraggiato $\text{♩} = \text{♩}$.
($\text{♩} = \text{c. } 48$)

79 *mf* *mp* *mf* *f*

Voice

The_ nor - mal you_ wish for is some-thing you'll ne - ver get

Vc.

(♩ fisso)

(sempre *p*)

86 *mf* *f*

Voice

back. You_ feel like a stran-ger in your own_ head.

Vc.

($\text{♩} = \text{♩}$) (senza rit.)