STORM SURGE
(WATERSNOODRAMP)

An Elemental Portrait for Concert Band

‘Storm Surge’ was commissioned by the Marinierskapel der Koninklijke Marine (Marine Band of the Royal Netherlands Navy) and is dedicated to their Director of Music, Major Peter Kleine Schaars and the band. The first performance was given in De Doelen, Rotterdam, the Netherlands, on 6th November 2013.

Composer’s Note:

‘Storm Surge’ is a musical representation of the devastating North Sea storm surge (in Dutch, Watersnoodramp) of 1953. The surge left 2,551 dead - 1,836 from the Netherlands alone, together with fatalities in Scotland, England and West Flanders in Belgium. Nine percent of farmland in the Netherlands was flooded, over 30,000 animals were drowned and tens of thousands of properties were damaged or destroyed. The destruction was certainly comparable to that caused by Hurricane Katrina in 2005 which resulted in 1,833 fatalities in the southern United States of America and the Caribbean as well as Eastern North America. Mostly recently the Philippines experienced a storm surge with Typhoon Haiyan (2013) with winds of up to 270km/h exacerbating flooding. In today’s world we increasingly reassure ourselves that we control our environment but the truth is that we are not, and never will be, immune from the forces that nature can unleash upon us.

The storm of 1953 began during the night of 31 January and continued through the morning of 1 February. The devastating event resulted from a combination of a high spring tide, heavy wind and rain and a massive storm over the North Sea.

Following on from this catastrophe, the Netherlands built a formidable system of storm surge barriers known collectively as the ‘Delta Works’. The American Society of Civil Engineers named this engineering feat to be one of the Seven Wonders of the Modern World!

In my musical depiction ‘Storm Surge’ starts off with calm waters, while we hear the steadily growing sounds of the wind and sea. A specially commissioned poem written by Martin Westlake and spoken over these sounds warns of the dangers of ignoring the storm. An off stage trumpet is heard playing a fragment from ‘Wilhelmus van Nassouwe’ - the National Anthem of the Netherlands. Slowly, the storm starts to take hold and the sea begins to swell. The violence of the storm then erupts but before it reaches its climax the music returns briefly to the Dutch National Anthem giving a sense of the calm in the ‘eye of the storm’. Then it returns to the storm surge and depicts the sea breaking through and ravaging the coastline. Eventually the storm-surge recedes until a lone trumpet is left quoting broken fragments of ‘Wilhelmus van Nassouwe’ – the piece closes with a calm breeze mournfully revealing the devastation left behind by this natural disaster.

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Storm Surge

By Martin Westlake

Now hear this, ye denizens of false land;
Beware the heaving back of the sleeping giant!
Yay, you may tame and train docile waters,
Build your dykes and your levees,
Channel the flows and gutter the rains.

But when the oceans stir,
When the winds and the tide and the cloudbursts combine,
When the waters mass and the storms drive shoreward,
Then you will learn a terrible truth.
For there is no such thing as a level sea,
Only the inexorable surge of the storm tide,
Wave after wave, slurping at your crumbling defences,
Nibbling at the chinks, pouring through the breaches,
Swirling through and down, washing away homes and souls,
Swamping, drowning, engulfing pasts and futures,
And only then receding, slowly, to reveal soaked and shattered ruins.

Oh ye of faith or of no faith, remember this;
No man may rebuke the winds and the sea;
No man may still the storm.

Performance Directions (Narrator)

The poem should be declaimed almost as if from a pulpit. It is a stern and passionate warning, especially the first stanza (`Beware'). The middle section is a description of what happens when you do not heed warnings. It should reflect the music that follows, and build slowly (`But when.....'), rise to a crescendo (`Wave after wave', `nibbling', `swirling', `swamping', `drowning' ....) before subsiding, like the flood waters (`to reveal soaked shattered ruins'). There should be a beat, a contemplative silence, (with the sound-design howling in the background), before in the final stanza the preacher (or the prophet) returns with his admonition; `No man may still the storm.', which is deliberate echo of the Bible.

‘Storm Surge': A storm surge is a combination of a low pressure system combined with high tides and high winds. The surge can be exaggerated by the funnelling effect of land masses, shallow water off coasts, heavy rainfall and freshwater flooding. When all combine, the effects can be devastating, breaching coastal defences and causing extensive flooding.

‘Ye denizens of false land’: Storm surges are particularly dangerous when they occur near low-lying coastal plains, river estuaries, and reclaimed land, especially land that is already below normal sea level (for example, the Netherlands, Belgium and the UK in 1953, Bangladesh repeatedly, New Orleans in 2005, New York in 2012 and the Philippines in 2013).

‘Wave after wave’: Wind-driven waves typically find weaknesses in coastal defences and then rapidly widen the breach, enabling catastrophic quantities of water to pour through.

‘No man may rebuke the winds and the sea’: Matthew, 8:26 – `He replied, “You of little faith, why are you so afraid?” Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the waves, and it was completely calm.'
Watersnoodramp *(vert. Beatrix Pratley)*

Luister goed, gij bewoners van kunstmatig land;
Kijk, de deinende rug van de slapende reus!
Ja, je mag dan wel gedweeë wateren onderwerpen en onderrichten
En jouw dijken en dammen bouwen,
De stromen leiden en de regens sturen.

Maar als de oceanen ontwaken,
Als de wind en de wolken en het tij samenspannen,
Als de wateren één zijn en stormen kustwaarts jagen,
Dan kom je de verschrikkelijke waarheid te weten.
Want er is geen sprake van een vlakke zee,
Slechts de zich meedogenloos opdringende stormtij,
Golf na golf, knabbelend aan jouw verbrekkende versterkingen,
Kolkend aan de kieren en stromend door de dijkgaten,
Verder en verder, huizen en mensen meevoerend,
Overspoelend, verdrinkend, heden en verleden van velen verzwegend
En dan pas terug, langzaam, bouwvallen vernietigd en verwaterd blootgevend.

O, gij gelovigen en ongelovigen, onthoud dit;
Geen mens kan de wind en de zee vermanen;
Geen mens kan de storm bedaren.

Déferlante *(trans. Godelieven Vandamme)*

Ecoutez bonnes gens, peuple des fausses terres
Prenez garde au soulèvement du géant endormi !
Certes ! Vous pouvez apprivoiser et dompter les eaux dociles,
Construire vos digues et vos écluses
Canaliser les courants et diriger les pluies.

Mais quand l’océan gronde
Quand vents, marées et orages s’unissent
Quand les trombes d’eau et les tempêtes prennent d’assaut les rivages
Alors vous saisisrez l’implacable vérité.
Il n’existe rien de tel qu’un niveau de la mer
Seul l’inexorable surgissement d’une marée démente
Donc les lames répétées enfoncent de frêles défenses,
Assiègent les fissures, s’engouffrent dans les brèches,
Tourbillonnent, engloutissent, emportent âmes et maisons
Submergent et anéantissent passé et avenir
Et n’abandonnent que ruines trempées quand enfin elles se retirent

Oh vous ! Croyant ou non, souvenez vous
Personne ne blâme les vents et les vagues
Personne ne dompte l’orage.
—Performance Directions—

**General**

- All instruments in the score are transposed.
- Timpani should avoid beaters that are too soft. The Timpani part should always sound clear and not muffled.
- All trills in the score are to be treated as half-tone trills unless otherwise stated.
- Make much of dynamic contrasts, this will add to the drama and atmosphere of the work.

I have tried to design *Storm Surge* to sound uniquely different depending on the band that is performing it. This idea is not new – it is for me a truly fascinating characteristic of Igor Stravinsky’s *Le Sacre du Printemps* (Rite of Spring). Stravinsky’s work seems to force the orchestra to create its own individual and personal sound, which is exciting for both performer and audience alike. I have given the conductor and band much scope in *Storm Surge* to be creative and imaginative in their interpretation. My aim in this is to avoid the performance becoming too “safe” and lacking a sense of atmosphere and gravitas.

To help create the mood of this devastating storm, the orchestra could use (occasional) flashing lights to emulate lightning strikes. The use of video or slide project could also enhance the performance.

**Sound Design CD and additional effects**

It is indicated in the score when each track on the provided CD should start and where it should be faded out. The sound design track on the CD has about 15 minutes of silence at the end of each track to avoid the CD accidently moving forward to the next piece of sound design. Special care should be taken to balance the sound design with the orchestra. A spare percussionist could also add a ‘Thunder Sheet’ in appropriate places in the music.

**Performed Sound Effects**

From the beginning of the work to the letter A (Bar 10), I would encourage the conductor to be as imaginative and creative as possible in setting the mood of the piece, for example to use additional or alternative effects to denote the beginning of the storm. Several seconds into the work the poem by Martin Westlake should start. There are instructions in the score as to how the poem should be read during the opening bars of the music.

The symbol in the score (Bars 266–285) denotes that the players should snap fingers constantly (with both hands raised above the music stand in full view of the audience) to create a light rain effect. The American composer, Eric Whitacre, first used this effect in his wind orchestra work *Cloudburst*. The conductor can experiment with this idea to create the best effect.

**Approximate Duration: 14 minutes**
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1. "Now hear this, ye denizens of false hope"

NIGEL CLARKE

SENZA MISURA (to bar 10) Conductor Note: There is plenty of scope for creativity between bar 1 through to bar 10

Report until conductor moves to bar 10

repeat until conductor moves to bar 10

Performance Directions (Narrator)

The poem should be declaimed almost as if from a pulpit. It is a stern and passionate warning, especially the first stanza ('Beware'). The middle section is a description of what happens when you do not heed warnings. It should reflect the music that follows, and build slowly. But when..., rise to a crescendo ('Wore after wave', 'nibbling', 'swirling', 'roaring', 'drowning') before subsiding, like the flood waters ('to reveal soaked shattered ruins'). There should be a beat, a contemplative silence, (with the sound-design howling in the background), before the final stanza the preacher (or the prophet) returns with his admonition; 'No man may still the storm.', which is deliberate echo of the Bible.

Written and dedicated to Majoor Peter Kleine Schaars and the Marinierskapel der Koninklijke Marine

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Wind Band Score - ISMN: M-050-09171-4
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A. Allegro

Ter. 1.2

Wind 1.2

Wind 1.2

Fl. 3

Perc. 1

Eng. Hn.

Cl. 2

Br. Ten. Flute

Br. Ten. Fagott

Br. Ten. Fagott

Br. Ten. Tenor

Br. Ten. Tenor

Br. Ten. Tenor

Cl. 2

Perc. 1

Eng. Hn.

Cl. 2

Wind 1.2

Wind 1.2

Perc. 1

Eng. Hn.

Cl. 2

[Note: Trumpets are marked with an asterisk (*).] It is not practical to use off-stage Trumpets, the ensemble should play using straight notes.

Conductor Note: Piccolos, Flutes, and Oboes to play in a staccato style to create a rain shower.
### Conductor Note:
The brass section from bar 69 onwards should not diminish on long notes (tied minims) but sustain the dynamic.
2. "Yay, you may tame and train docile waters"

Scherzando (L'istesso tempo)

Approximate Exit Point
3. "But when the oceans stir"
molto rall. .... lunga accel. ........................................ M Vivacissimo, con rubato
4. "When the waters mass and the storms drive shoreward"
Meno mosso, con molto rubato

Vivacissimo, Energico

Conductor Note: Bar 188 through to bar 192 should have the feel of two beats in a bar (as if in 2/2).
Conductor's Note: Try to depict at this point a bear or a powerful deep sea swarm.
5. "Then you will learn a terrible truth"

**V** Mezzo movimento [half tempo] \( \left( \text{a} = \frac{2}{3} \right) \)

Conductor Note: This section is a mixture of half-time articulations on some instruments and legato in others.
Allegro, con rubato

poco accel.
Meno mosso, con rubato

rall.
6. "Only the inexorable surge of the storm tide"

Vivacissimo, Energetico
SOUND DESIGN: 1M3  Approximate Entry Point (to end of track)
Meno mosso, con rubato
7. "Swamping, drowning, engulfing pasts and futures"
8. "And only then receding, slowly, to reveal soaked and shattered ruins"

Conductor Note: This section is a mixture of bell tone statements in various instrument and legato in others

Mezzo movimento [half tempo](\(\text{\textit{\textit{\textbullet}} = \text{\textbullet}}\))
Blow air through the instrument and waggle keys to emulate the wind. It is important that the air always goes to the edge of the hole. Some flutes use this technique to emulate fire and smoke. Try to emulate the harmonic effects under and as created.

Waggle keys to emulate light rain.
Conductor Note: Though there is plenty of scope for creativity between bar 391 through to 394, anyone who is not engaged in the performance at this point, should remain as still as possible so not to break the atmosphere.