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An Analysis of Luigi Dallapiccola's *Sicut Umbra*

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Oral Presentation 02.1

AN ANALYSIS OF LUIGI DALLAPICCOLA'S *SICUT UMBRA*

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Luigi Dallapiccola (1904 – 1975) was one of the most accomplished Italian composers of the twentieth century. Dallapiccola was the first Italian composer to adopt the twelve-tone method of composition for his own music (a method created by the Austrian composer, Arnold Schoenberg). While Dallapiccola employed the twelve-tone method of composition, he was also influenced significantly by many of the stylistic characteristics in the music of Alban Berg and Anton Webern. Dallapiccola composed several operas and chamber music, but he is best known for his exceptional output of music for voice in combination with various orchestral instruments. He was also an influential teacher of several generations of Italian and American composers.

Sicut Umbra, one of Dallapiccola's later works, is a twelve-tone non-tonal composition for mezzo-soprano and instrumental ensemble (on poems by Juan Ramón Jiménez). Composed in 1970, this primarily through-composed four-movement work is an example of Dallapiccola's fully developed compositional technique. The composition is written for mezzo-soprano voice, piccolo, flute, alto flute, clarinet in Eb, clarinet in Bb, bass clarinet, violin, viola, cello, vibraphone, celesta, and harp. Each movement is scored for a different combination of these instruments, similar to Schoenberg's approach in *Pierrot lunaire*. It is not until the final movement that all of the aforementioned instruments are used. This composition exhibits many of the compositional characteristics common to much of Dallapiccola's music; for example: a highly sensitive and effective setting of the text; imitative polyphony (exact and varied); numerous changes in meter; frequent changes in tempo; many proportionate rhythms and polyrhythms, which create a sense of improvised music and ametric music; carefully balanced and varied textures; and precise instructions for performance (in addition to the musical notation).

My paper focuses primarily on the second movement, which is entitled *El olvido* (Forgetfulness) and is scored for mezzo-soprano, clarinet in Eb, clarinet in Bb, bass clarinet, violin, viola, and cello. Included in my paper are: a complete analysis of the twelve-tone structure of the second movement; a discussion of some of Dallapiccola's unique contributions to twelve-tone composition; descriptions of the some of structural properties unique to this composition; and explanations of the "structural mysteries" that I encountered when I first began my study of this music.