

Remembering

David Wong (2025)

Analysis

Preamble

Title

"Remembering" consists of 3 pieces. Each piece lasts 3-4 minutes. Given their brevity, it is over the top to refer to them as "movements". The individual pieces are addressed as, for example, "Remembering: Them" is "Remembering Them".

It is "Remembering", rather than "remembrance"; firstly, to focus on the act and effort of remembering, and secondly to differentiate it from events such as a "Remembrance Service". While "remembering" shifts the focus to us, away from those we are remembering(!), it in fact puts the focus on the relationship and/or the reasons we remember.

The consequences of this suggest that remembering is not a "passive" undertaking: it does not take away what we understand and feel about people who have put themselves in harm's way (specifically, in conflicts between nations) to protect the greater good of societies (countries).

Though we may not remember specific individuals, incidents, or the causes and effects of actions in war, the enormity of wars and other conflicts drains tremendous energy from each of us. It is this ground of considering and reflecting on ourselves and those who sacrificed themselves for the good of others that gives rise to this piece.

Remembering: Them

The piece makes use of materials that resonate with themes of tensions, suffering, and loss. The sense of abandonment and hopelessness is not far away, but the enduring perseverance remains, even if it is no longer seen

or felt in the body and mind; the sheer determination (“doggedness”) remains in our spirit.

Beginning with an F# in the bass, the notes rise up to a D harmony, but without any attempt at arriving at D major (or B minor). There are probably more hints of “darkness” in the C# and Bb than the more positive feel of D major.

The opening 6-bar leads to a B minor 7th; however, given that so far, the only F# is in the bass, which is in bar 1, it is conceivable that the feeling of F# is already lost. And the B minor 7th here could be taken as B diminished with a sharp 7th. Ironically, it then resolves to E minor: note that the harmony 2 bars back is E diminished on G bass (or even C# diminished).

When A section begins, it continues with an E minor harmony left at the end of bar 6. The motif in the R.H. recurs throughout the piece. It sounded like a “question statement”, e.g. “Shall I proceed?” when we know the response is “yes”. Or that it is a verbalised intent constructed as a conversation opener. Here, the harmony gets from E minor to D, almost unnoticed.

The melody and the harmony together construct a kind of yearning pain, almost like a breathless wailing: with 5 notes based on E, F# and G, the phrase rising a major second. Also, the first phrase began on a weak 2nd beat, and the second phrase begins on the weakest beat of the bar.

The occurrence of Em the second time takes on a different feel from the first, giving a sense of uncertainty where the next harmony (destination) is. That following harmony turns out to be F# minor with a 5th (C#) bass.

There is a fifth relation with the rhythmic figure in bars 16-19, the G – D is repeated:

Figure 2

While this is happening, the harmony has shifted from D major (bar 16) to D minor (bar 18) almost with little effort and attention, proceeding briefly to its relative major, F (bar 19), followed by a minor second of F major (G minor 4th specifically), leading to D minor. Necessary or not, the transition is repeated in bar 20, E diminished harmony, which sounds like C 7th, leading to D minor in bar 21. The 4-note motive returns there, leading to, or emphasising D minor harmony.

You are welcome to analyse the piece further. For example, what would you say about the passage in bars 39-44?

Figure 3 Bars 39-44

The repeat of the 4-note motif in bars 60-62 and 63-68 also sees the shift in harmony. As a start, the first note B in the motif is accompanied by the semiquaver motif on D and F#, therefore suggesting a B minor triad with the R.H. However, what is the harmony for R.H. B note in bar 63, and the rest of the motif (63 to 68)?



Figure 4 Closing bars

Remembering: Us

The opening 4 bars is a deliberate recalling of the Regent Square tune used by several hymns.

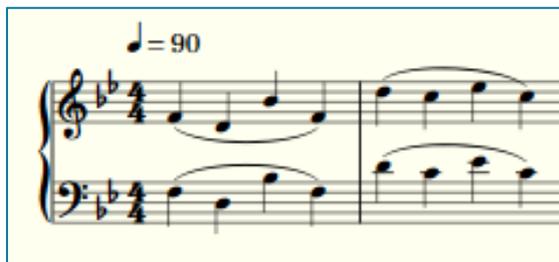


Figure 5 Bars 1-2, also in 5-6; the first resolving to dominant (F major), the second coming to A 7th over C#.



Figure 6 "Regent Square" tune. Source:

https://hymnary.org/tune/regent_square_smart, last accessed November 2025.

It remains uncertain (and unexplainable) why this piece begins this way, and that it is performed with a bright, joyful pace.

However, things turn darker with the harmony going through a D minor section (relative minor of Bb) for bars 9 to 20.

There is a contrast of chordal passages and melodic motifs in bars 8 to 21 (and continues on). In fact, the bars 8-11a ("2A") are counter-balanced by bars 11b-14 ("2B"). Phrase 2A resolves from G minor (via Bb) to F, and phrase 2B goes from E diminished to A. The L.H. in 2A is mirrored in 2B with some interval changes. 2A foreshadows 2B: the former leading to the latter.

The second triplet figure in bar 14 is repeated, twice as fast, in bar 18. It is one of a handful of "fast" (hurrying) motifs in the 3 pieces.

Figure 7

The harmony in bars 15-18 (2C) is treated in a similar way to the phrases 2A and 2B above, but the second phrase in bars 19-22 (2D) is at higher intervals compared to C, when phrase B above is lower than phrase 2A. Further, in phrase 2C, the L.H. echoes the R.H. a bar later, in 2D, the delay

is half a bar, and the pedal half a bar after the L.H. There is a delayed A on the bass going from bars 21 to 22, resolving on B major harmony.

Section B begins with a triplet motif that might sound like a trumpet call. The passage then leads on to a bright and forward-looking section, momentarily touching on D minor (bar 41) but principally in Bb major. A pivot passage starts section C, which then builds further on materials in B. The closing bars (bars 54-61) are strongly in Bb.

Figure 8

Note the 4-note motif in bars 56-57a (2E), and 57b-58 (2F), the first is in 5 crotchet beats, the second in 7. Each note of the motif is harmonised with a different harmony: 2E goes from Bb (2nd inversion) to Eb, and 2F goes from F to dominant 7th in 3rd inversion (lowest note being G). This harmony is designed to descend to the supertonic (C) of Bb, resolving to Bb: the F bass is probably not that prominent when the ears follow the descending G-F-Eb-D. The resolution is perfect cadence, though the supertonic can sound equally (or more) prominent than the F, making the cadence a “slide” from supertonic to tonic with the help of a dominant–tonic movement in the bass.

Figure 9

Remembering: All

A remembrance motion presented in a sprightly, joyous manner feels like putting on a pair of mismatched shoes, of all different sizes. With the second piece (Remembering: Us) launching in a positive manner, this 3rd piece continues even further with a rhythmic motif far from disciplined soldiers keeping step together, more like a game, a dance, or anything that involves joyfully skipping around.

Far from prophetic or bearing as something acting or being regarded as an “influencer” (which requires others who regard themselves as the “influenced public”), it is perhaps better to cast the act of remembering with a cloud of positivity. It is because of the price paid that we can be, and are, comfortable and happy. We cannot be “happy” about the outcome of what our forerunners did for us by being “solemn”.

“Remembering: All” takes a different compositional approach compared to the first two pieces. The opening leads into a tune on the L.H., this tune might be familiar to those in the more “modern” type of worshipping community. The tune reminds worshippers that God not only cares but also loves us; he, in fact, reveals the truth about all that is in the world. He is like a torch, a light, that clarifies our surroundings, from which better judgments are made.

Figure 10 Section A, tune in the L.H. with counterpoint on the R.H.

The beauty of this aspect of God is far from an afterthought or an accident. For each of the bars in 17 to 22 is a reference to a decisive shaping of all that is to become our world. The seventh step, in bar 23, goes into what many regard as a lullaby tune.



Figure 11

The two sections (B and C) in 5 crotchet beats form a cohesive idea that evaporates into thin air when the lullaby enters our senses. The L.H. “skip” makes this comical, leading to section D, a contrasting skip, with further elaboration into the tune we first heard in section A.

The piece ends (H) with the opening rhythmic motif. Care might be needed to maintain the required pace when the left hand is in crotchet beat.



Figure 12 Bars 60-62

<https://allegretto.top/>