



Ben Heneghan, *From Summer to Autumn* for flute and piano, (2006)

Background information

The following materials are essential for use with this resource:

- Complete score. Fieldgate: [2025 https://fieldgatemusic.com/from-summer-to-autumn-flute-and-piano-ben-heneghan-1105-p.asp](https://fieldgatemusic.com/from-summer-to-autumn-flute-and-piano-ben-heneghan-1105-p.asp)
- Recording with Catherine Handley and Andrew Wilson-Dickson on the album *Ariel* (released by HAL records in 2006) <https://fieldgatemusic.com/ariel-32-p.asp>

These notes are intended to assist music teachers in their preparation and delivery of the set work. They are offered as outline guidance and contain suggestions regarding the necessary musical content and background for study, but they are not meant to be an exhaustive resource.

Note that there is no published analysis of this work or of other works by this composer.

Studying this piece will require an understanding of:

- harmony and tonality
- modes
- motifs and their transformations.

Ben Heneghan

Ben Heneghan (born 1957) studied composition with Alun Hoddinott in Cardiff and continues to live and work in Wales. He has worked extensively in the field of film and television music, usually in collaboration with Ian Lawson. They are particularly known for their work on animations for children, the most famous being the music for the *Fireman Sam* series. They have also worked on a number of feature films, including *The Proposition* in 2003. Heneghan and Lawson released an album titled *Walking the Wild Rhondda*, featuring their compositions performed by the Heneghan and Lawson Virtual Orchestra.

Heneghan's work beyond television is eclectic, ranging from writing for instrumental and choral ensembles to performing with an eleven-piece rock outfit The Boo-Hooray Theory. *From Summer to Autumn* is one of a number of works for flute, including several for flute ensemble. He has also written extensively for choir, including *Winter Legends* for soprano, choir and orchestra.

Welsh music began to gain an international reputation in the 1950s with composers such as David Wynne (1900–83), Grace Williams (1906–77), Daniel Jones (1912–93), Alun Hoddinott (1929–2008) and William Mathias (1934–92). These composers brought influences from London and the continent to a country that had a rich folk and choral tradition but only a limited history of professional classical composition. They emerged at a time when classical music in Wales was undergoing rapid growth, with the formation of the Welsh National Opera, its many festivals, the development of Welsh television, and the expansion of music departments at the university colleges of Bangor and Cardiff, as well as at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama.



Ben Heneghan kindly read through an early draft of these notes and offered some further comments that have been incorporated. The occasional 'Composer Insight' boxes are taken from this exchange. It is an advantage of studying the works of living composers that we can ask them what they were thinking!

From Summer to Autumn

The inscription at the head of Heneghan's *From Summer to Autumn* references the Japanese idea of Mono no Aware (無常) which centres on a bittersweet acknowledgement of the transience of things. The significance of cherry blossoms in Japanese culture provides a good example of this concept. They are a symbol not only of spring, but also of the importance of celebrating and appreciating fleeting beauty.

From Summer to Autumn unfolds through a series of whimsical arcs, beginning with a gentle, almost minimalist opening and progressing through several impassioned climaxes to an ending that avoids traditional closure by effacing its motivic and tonal identity before literally fading away. The form is episodic, developing the initial material through extensive motivic treatment rather than formal repetition.

Harmony and tonality

While the tonality of this piece is sometimes clear, with functional harmonic progressions broadly establishing the main centres of A and E, there are also many passages, such as at the beginning and end, where tonal resolution appears to be suspended. These passages are by no means atonal, but neither do the harmonic progressions functionally confirm a tonic. At other times, the piece takes whimsical and unexpected turns, most notably at the end of the first section, but also in the overall trajectory from a modally inflected A through to a pandiatonic cloud around B minor at the close.

The transience of the tonal centres is underlined by the fact that passages with the most energetic sense of arrival or resolution, for example at bars 51, 83 and 93, invariably land on unstable tonal ground. The most long-lasting tonal centres, on the other hand, such as at the opening and the close, are presented with gentle fragility and a general lack of traditional tonal resolution.

Melody

The melody of *From Summer to Autumn* unfolds organically from its opening material. An extensive network of motivic links brings coherence to a piece in which the style of melodic writing is quite varied. These links range from very clear surface-level transformations to more subtle developments that underpin the entire musical trajectory.

Three main motivic groups are introduced within the first twenty or so bars and are then intensively developed and recycled throughout. Their melodic identity is at its strongest in the unstable central climaxes of the work and weakens as the music settles, particularly at the end. At times, the melody has a strong sense of forward propulsion, reminiscent of the Romantic style, while at others it becomes minimalistic and static.



Composer insight

Heneghan comments more generally about motivic links in his work: "I have certainly been surprised more than once by the discovery of unintended connections between widely separated moments within a composition. My compositional method is like rowing a boat, not very energetically, on a lake in a thick fog. The subconscious is doing most of the work."

Rhythm and metre

From Summer to Autumn establishes a clear tactus that persists throughout almost the entire piece, maintaining a continuous tread that is interrupted only once, in the brief pause at bar 93. Within this underlying pulse, however, there is considerable flexibility, with subtle changes of tempo as well as brief *rallentandos* and *tenutos*.

The tactus alternates between crotchets and dotted crotchets, yet always at *l'istesso tempo* (i.e. the pulse is preserved despite changes of time signature). This is evident in the example below, where the music moves from 9/8 in bar 29 to 6/8 and then to 3/4, the new crotchet beat continuing at the pace of the previous dotted crotchet. The use of duplets in the compound bars (e.g. bar 29, beat 2) and triplets in the simple bars (e.g. bar 31) further blurs the distinction between the two types of metre.

Metre and rhythm in bars 29–32

There is also fluidity in the number of beats per bar with regular changes of time signature preventing higher-level rhythmic groupings from emerging beyond that of the tactus. In addition there are two subtle stutters to the otherwise uniform pulse where Heneghan introduces bars with irregular time signatures, the first at bar 27 and the second at bar 41. In both cases, he shortens the final beat from a dotted crotchet to a crotchet. This is shown particularly clearly in bar 42 of the example below where the 9+2/8 is articulated as three longer dotted crotchet beats followed by one shorter crotchet.



Metre in bars 40-42

Brief overview

Section 1 (Bars 1–20)

The opening is gentle and tonally static, introducing the main triplet X motif and the more elusive descending stepwise span of Y, a stepwise motion to the tonic that becomes more explicit later in the piece. It begins in A minor with first Aeolian and then Dorian inflections. However, it unexpectedly dissolves into a chromatically inflected dominant of C (via a G♯ moving enharmonically to an A♭ as b9) while introducing the more urgent Z motif that begins the next section.

Section 2 (Bars 21–64)

The second section begins with a lilting 9/8 figure that accompanies the development of the Z motif. The harmonic rhythm is faster and the tonality more fluid, generally centred around A and E but with some passages in D♭, reinforcing the enharmonic shift at the end of Section 1.



A new repeated-note idea at bar 38 marks the most dramatic of the enharmonic shifts to D_b, after which the X idea re-emerges at bar 46. This leads to the first climax at bar 51, a decorated statement of Y (Y2), which was first introduced a few bars earlier.



From bar 59, the repeating X ideas are gradually becalmed, and by bar 62, the texture has thinned to a repetitive semiquaver figuration, with descending Y motifs, which contract further into a two-note oscillation at bar 64.



Section 3 (Bars 65–93)

The third section continues the piano figuration from the end of the previous section, accompanying a new round of developments of motif Z. After the lull at the end of the previous section, the harmonic pace picks up, initially centred on F \sharp , before touching on G, and finally coming to a halt on an E minor chord in bar 93.

There are two further climaxes, driven by the decorated Y2 figure from the previous section, first in the flute at bar 83, and even more emphatically in the piano at bar 92, the highpoint of tension from which the rest of the piece gradually unwinds.

Section 4 (Bars 94–119)

The final section gradually returns to the much slower harmonic rhythm of the opening. The thematic material begins to lose its identity, and by bar 106, the repetitive semiquaver figurations from the end of Section 2 have returned, with only the merest hints of the main motivic ideas remaining in the melody. The piece ends with the flautist sustaining their final note until they run out of breath, while the pedal is held to allow the last reverberation of the piano to fade to silence.



Detailed analysis

Section 1 (Bars 1–20)

The piece begins with a triplet figure (X) in the piano that evolves throughout the first section. A range of permutations emerges organically as the piece unfolds. The first change to X is an expansion of its second interval in bar 4 from a fifth to a sixth (later this interval will be contracted to fourths and thirds).

The prominence of the initial X motif at the beginning invites us to understand all triplets in this section as related. Instances of the X motif are traced in Figure 1, showing the evolution of this figure. Some of the derivations are straightforward, as with the inversion (I) at 15, while others are more convoluted. The first entry of the flute, for example, is a retrograde inversion of X (RI), meaning that the motif is both reversed and inverted. The opening of bar 10 is more distant, introducing a figure that could either be understood as a rotation of RI (i.e. the first note is shuffled to the end) or simply as a displacement of the final E up the octave.

Figure 1: X motif transformations in bars 1–19

The triplet X motifs make up a gentle, rippling surface beneath which the much slower motif Y emerges. Various instances of motif Y are shown in Figure 2 where it is first found in the left hand of the piano. It traces a falling minor third from C to A over the first five bars. As with the faster moving X motif, Y is subject to a series of transformations and developments. It is also this motif that centres the tonality, suggesting A minor, which is further strengthened by the addition of the dominant note of that key (the E in bar 6).

Figure 2: Y motif transformations in bars 2–17

The tonal centre in the first five bars is clearly Aeolian (i.e. A natural minor). However, when the bass line finally lands on A in bar 6, the Aeolian inflections are undercut by the addition of F#s which give a more Dorian flavour. This persists until bar 10, where the bass lands again on A and the Aeolian inflections return.



In bar 17, some G naturals are replaced by G♯s. Sharpening the leading note is common in modal music at cadences as a way of emphasising the arrival on the tonic. Here, however, it is simultaneously undercut by the clashing G♭ in the bass. From bar 17, the Aeolian mode is further undercut by a G dominant minor ninth. A cloud of chromaticism hovers over bars 18 and 19, gradually occluding both the Aeolian mode and the G⁷ dominant preparation. Interestingly, section 2 begins ambiguously with C in the bass (resolving the G dominant seventh) but with an A minor flavour.

The tonal arc of Section 1 embodies transience, moving from the gentle ambiguity at the opening through a fragile establishment of a modal A to dissolution at the end. A miniature exercise in at least one element of the Japanese *mono no aware*.

Figure 3: Z motifs into Section 2

Section 2

17

Z1

Z1 Y

Z1

Z1

9 C: V^b Z1 Z2 Z2 (a:) VI⁶ 5

22 (a:) VI 7 ii⁶ 5 V⁹ 8 Ab



Section 2 (Bars 21–64)

Section 2a (Bars 21–37)

Section 2 immediately re-establishes A minor, although not very emphatically or for long. Out of the new Z1 motif that emerged at the end of Section 1, a new family of melodic ideas arises. If the melodic material in the first section had a simple, embryonic quality, consisting of ostinato-like triplet repetitions and the slow-moving stepwise motion of Y, the melody in Section 2 is more rhythmically defined with a stronger sense of direction.

As shown above, the arpeggiated motif Z1 is first combined with the decorated falling third of Y in bar 20. This figure will return in various guises throughout the central section of the piece. In bar 22, Z1 appears in another permutation so ubiquitous that it is worth giving it a separate label. Z2 begins with the second two notes of Z1 (a descending third) and then rises a fourth before continuing in a variety of ways. In bar 22, this is followed by a descending arpeggiation, but in bar 24 it has a stepwise continuation.

The beginning of Section 2 is also marked by a lilting chordal figure in the piano that initially emphasises the change to a compound time signature. Neither A minor nor the lilting accompanying figure lasts much beyond the first few bars, but the music does remain significantly more harmonically and tonally active compared with Section 1. Melodically, motif Y and the new motif Z continue to predominate in the sustained flute melody, which is more flamboyant than before.

As shown in the example above, the underlying tonal progression in bars 21–23 is clearly functional. Although somewhat obscured by both inversions and chord extensions, the overall circle of fifths progression from VI through II to V is evident. At the end of bar 23, Heneghan again substitutes G♯ enharmonically for A♭, which this time heralds a much longer diversion into flatter tonal territory.

From bar 26, the flute melody threads a number of motivic fragments into a more continuous line, parts of which are shown in Figure 4. The harmony moves more quickly than before, with many passing chords. The underlying scale is D♭, but the progressions do not clearly function to confirm that key.

Figure 4: Melodic and harmonic outline from 26–32

26

29

32

Z2

Y

Db: I

ii

As shown in Figure 5, the harmonies become increasingly functional, setting up a ii – V progression in D♭. This is the key into which the music cadences for the next section. However, in bars 36–37, there are hints of E minor as the music diverts enharmonically out of D♭ for a few bars. At the same time, the Z1-Y melodic combination from bar 20 at the



beginning of this section returns. On the surface, the harmonic context is the same (outlining an A minor chord), but it is only a fleeting reference to this key followed by an emphatic landing (if not a conventional cadence) in D_b. The chromatic lines in the bass lead onto this tonic arrival and it also fulfils the harmonic implications from the previous bars.

Composer insight

The composer says of this return of the Z1-Y motif: 'The flute melody in bar 36 is obviously the same as in bar 20, but the context and role is different here, so it's a sort of pun - it's summing up this section whereas in bar 20 it launched it'.

*He also comments on the cadence into D_b at bar 38: 'The ground is prepared even earlier with the G_b-E_bm harmonies of bars 31-33, part of a II-V dominant preparation for bar 38's D_b. Of course, the relationship has been disrupted somewhat by the intervening harmonies, but to my ears there still lingers some *fern hören* link [i.e. heard over a distance].'*

Figure 5: Lead into Section 2 (harmonic outline until bar 36, then reduced score)

D_b: ii V₂⁴ (e: iv V⁷) I

Section 2b (Bars 38–50)

Although the arrival on D_b in bar 38 is emphatic, it nevertheless turns out to be fleeting. The music shifts enharmonically again in bar 39 and returns to E. There is another circle of fifths progression (ii–V–I) in this key, shown at the beginning of Figure 6, landing unambiguously on the E tonic in bar 40. However, the harmony is still only poised on the edge of functionality. Although it is easy to show that the passage is largely in a modally unstable E major/minor, this is not always strongly projected. For example:

- The most distinctive harmonic detail of this passage is the progression in bar 42 (in square brackets), but this is an enharmonic diversion outside of the E major.
- The tonic chord at 43 (and to a lesser extent at 40) has a tendency for the E to fall to D_#, making a G_# minor chord (iii) and undermining the tonic.
- The progression from B_b minor to E major in bars 42–43 has a slightly Neapolitan feel (i.e. B_b as \flat II of A) that presages the shift to A minor that is to come at bar 50.



Figure 6: Harmonic outline bars 38–43

From a melodic perspective, Section 2b begins in bar 38 with a new repeated-note melodic figure (motif W) shown in Figure 7. The last three notes echo those of the Y motif heard in bars 36–37, but these pitches are also part of the wider network of references to X.

Composer insight

Heneghan points out the motivic relationships between derivations of the X motif shown in Figure 7, noting the way in which 'the characteristic semitone and larger interval of X crops up'. It is interesting to see how subtle motivic relationships are an important part of the composer's thought processes. As shown below, the relationships include various retrogrades, inversions and even octave displacement within those permutations (for example the X motif in bar 43). Also included in his observations is the X(RI) emerging between the hands in bar 38, and even an example in bar 40 where the G♯ appears simultaneously with the E and D♯.

Figure 7: Motivic relationships between sections 2a and 2b



The flute picks up motif W in bar 42, but as we approach the climax of Section 2 the X motif begins to reassert itself more obviously. Initially it takes the familiar form of descending triplets from the beginning (see bar 46 in the piano part in Figure 8). However, from bar 48 a more loosely related melodic idea (building on the rising figures in bars 44–45) emerges in the flute (X') in the shape of a duplet retrograde inversion against the prevailing triplets, as the flute climbs into its upper register.

This final part of Section 2b also introduces Y2, a new variant of the Y motif with a demisemiquaver auxiliary note embellishment (see flute in bars 46–47). This figure will become increasingly important at climactic moments of the piece.

From bar 48 into Section 2c, the underlying scale is A Dorian (i.e. A natural minor with F♯). In the first two bars of Figure 8 (bars 46–47), however, C♯s persist from the previous tonal centre of E major. C naturals take over in bar 48 with the first of two III–i progressions.

Figure 8: Annotated score from bars 45–54

Figure 8 shows an annotated musical score for Flute and Piano. The score is divided into three sections: Section 2b (bars 45-47), Section 2c (bars 48-50), and a concluding section (bars 51-54). The Flute part features motifs X, Y2, and X'. The Piano part provides harmonic support. Annotations include measure numbers, section labels (v, III, i, IV⁴), and measure numbers 51-54. The score shows the transition from E major to A Dorian.



Section 2c (Bars 51–64)

The beginning of Section 2c is both the loudest and the highest passage so far. The flute marks this climactic moment with the decorated Y2 in bar 51. Up to this point, the Y motif has outlined a span from the third note of the scale down to the tonic (i.e. C-B-A or 3-2-1), with some extensions and expansions shown in Figure 2. At bar 51, however, Y2 spans G-F♯-E in the context of A minor (i.e. 7-6-5). This undercuts the sense of resolution onto the tonic that has so far been associated with Y.

A minor is established more clearly two bars later (from bar 53 in Figure 8). Bar 53 begins as chord III but morphs into a i6/4-V-i cadence by the end of the bar. The leading note (G♯) is also raised, so the V-I in bar 54 sounds much more final. This time the piano plays the decorated Y2 and it is transposed back to 3-2-1 (C-B-A) in A minor. However, as the melody arrives on A, the harmony shifts to chord IV in bar 55, again undermining the sense of resolution.

This is followed at the end of bar 55 by convulsing *fff* repetitions of motif X in the flute. These begin on a high G, and from this point the music gradually subsides both in register and in dynamics. After the perfect cadence in bar 54 the harmonic progressions become less obviously functional, although the overall Dorian-inflected A minor remains clear. The music settles, rather than cadences, on A in bar 58 via a first-inversion chord IV.

As shown in Figure 9, the flute signs off in this section with a version of X in bar 60 that takes on the duplet rhythm of X. At the same time the piano continues to descend in register and begins a repetitive, harmonically static semiquaver figure in the left hand. Although this initially settles on a clear A minor, the harmony shifts to a more ambiguous combination of A minor and a second-inversion, Dorian-inflected chord IV on the second beat of bar 61.

The piano repetitions of the X motif then stop, replaced by a very plain version of the Y motif that spans 5-4-3 in A minor. This in turn peters out into a repetition of the final two notes. Whereas the first section ended in chromatic dissolution, the second ends in stasis. In both cases this follows a tonal and melodic resolution in A minor that has been undermined in some way. It seems that the more the music tries to hold onto A minor, the more it seems likely to slip away.



Figure 9

60

X

X X X X

Y Y

a: I IV $\frac{6}{4}$

Section 3

65

Z1 Y

Z2

F#:

Section 3 (Bars 65–93)

Section 3 continues the left-hand semiquaver figuration from the end of the previous section as an accompaniment to motif Z1–Y (see Figure 9 above). As at the beginning of Section 2, this leads straight into Z2, the melodic idea that is the most immediately memorable of the piece, with a wistful, nostalgic quality. As well as repeating the same initial melodic combination as Section 2, Section 3 follows the same broad trajectory: it begins with Z1–Y and then builds up to the climactic decorated Y2 figure.

As shown in Figure 10, the harmonisation of the melody at bar 65 has a clear Dorian flavour (i.e. minor chord V followed by major chord IV). In the final part of the Z2 motif the harmony slips by a semitone, with B major (IV) shifting down to B♭ minor. This sort of modal, shifting harmony is not always easy to pin down, but it comes across as broadly functional, the semitone shift at the end underlining the whimsical feel of the music.

Figure 10

65 66 67

i v VI⁷ IV \flat IV^{6/4}



Figure 11a traces the main melodic content of the first part of Section 3. After the piano entry at bar 65, the flute continues with a more improvisatory melodic idea which leads into a repeat of the Z1–Y idea at bar 72, this time in B♭ minor (a tonicisation of the bIV from bar 67).

Figure 11a

65 Z1 Y
66 Z2
72 Z1 Y
73 Z2

(pf.) (fl.)

From bar 76, flute and piano build in dynamics and rhythmic activity. At the same time, the harmony tracks a descending series of triads in various inversions, as shown in Figure 11b. This is perhaps the most freely flowing passage in the piece, with rhythm, metre, melody and harmony seemingly untethered, streaming into the climax at bar 83.

Figure 11b

76 77 78 79

D₄⁶ f#⁶ c#₄⁶ b₄⁶ c#⁶ d#⁶ G₄⁶

As in Section 2, the X motif reappears, this time in bar 81, as part of the ratcheting up of dynamics and tension. As shown in Figure 12, we hear clear motivic (if not quite rhythmic) echoes of X and, as in Section 2, this leads to the decorated Y2 appearing as we reach *ff* in bar 83.

Figure 12

81 X
82 ff
83 f
ff

Flute
Piano

X
X
X
X
Y2



The span from G to E in Y2 suggests E minor, which agrees with the harmony, even if there is no clear functional confirmation of this key. A few bars later (see Figure 13) Y2 appears in the piano, again descending onto an E. The harmonies consist of an A major chord resolving onto E minor, which suggests a Dorian plagal cadence. In previous sections, emphatic tonal arrivals have been both immediately undercut and followed by retreat or collapse. The paused E minor chord in bar 93 therefore represents the strongest sense of resolution so far. There are several factors, however, which weaken this arrival on E minor:

- There is no clear dominant, only the Dorian plagal cadence.
- The persistent Ds in the flute turn the E minor chord into a minor seventh.
- A minor has been the tonic to which the piece generally turns, so E minor perhaps does not feel like 'home'.

Figure 13

Flute

91

X X X

ff

X

Piano

X X X

Y2

ff

e: III⁶

IV

i

Section 4 (Bars 94–119)

The beginning of Section 4 at bar 94 (see Figure 14) feels like an echo of the arrival on E:

- The last two notes of the Y2 motif (F♯-E) are repeated multiple times (although this is followed by a leap down to A in all but one instance).
- the left hand of the piano outlines a V-I bass progression, although it is not fully supported harmonically.
- The tempo and the dynamics are both reduced.



Figure 14

94

Flute

Piano

X X(I) X(I) X X(I)

X(RI)

In the bars that follow, X motifs in various configurations continue to predominate, but the tonal centre of E is slipping away despite the B-E bass progressions. By the time we get to bar 100, the E is feeling more like the subdominant.

The sense is of a progressive weakening of both melodic direction and tonal stability as the music shifts through gentle dissonances towards the final tonality of B. In what is perhaps the most whimsical turn of the piece, we alight on this tonal centre and the melodic material is reduced to mere echoes of earlier motifs.

A snapshot of this final section can be seen in *Figure 15*. Fragments of X and Y motifs can just about be identified and the various figures together create a cloud of diatonic dissonance (pandiatonicism) that effaces any real sense of harmonic change over the B pedal.

Figure 15

111

Flute

Piano

Y?

Y?

Y?

X(RI)? X(I)?

Hold as long as possible, ending gracefully

To the extent that there have been melodic and tonal certainties in this work, they are now slipping peacefully away. Melodically, harmonically and dynamically, all elements of the music are in gentle retreat.



This is underlined further by the performance instructions to both players. The flautist begins a potentially tonally resolving 3-2-1 (Y motif) in B but stops on the 2 (C♯), instructed to hold this note as long as possible while still ending gracefully. Meanwhile, the motoric repetitions of the piano, already heavily blurred by multiple bars of sustain pedal, suddenly stop and the pianist is instructed to let the sound ring until it disappears entirely.

It is a surprising and beautiful conclusion to the piece, one that replaces traditional resolution with a composerly acceptance of the impermanence of the entire musical edifice.