



Willard Zirk

Prayer

for Oboe & Piano

IMF1819
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Composer's Notes

Prayer originated as an interlude for flute and piano in my choral setting of Psalm 19, *Requiem*, written in memory of Marie Mountain Clark. She was a friend and former principal flute in the Ann Arbor Symphony Orchestra (and Congressional Gold Medal recipient for her service as a WWII Women's Air Service Pilot – WASP). Since the premiere of *Requiem* in 2009, several of my friends have asked me to transcribe *Prayer* for their instruments. It has been used for weddings, funerals, offertories, and preludes.

Prayer precedes the final verses of Psalm 19 in the *Requiem*, and it introduces the Psalmist's poignant text on the human weakness of willful transgression. "Cleanse thou me from secret faults.... Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer" (KJV).

I think the fact that I had a bad cold while writing this music added to its effectiveness, for I was feeling quite sorry for myself. The melody portrays my prayer rising ever higher, asking forgiveness for my sins. The plagal (Amen) cadence at the end acknowledges God's gracious forgiveness.

Difficulty level: College or advanced high school, requiring full control of intonation and long tones in all ranges.

Performance Time: 3' 40"

About the Composer

Willard Zirk was French horn professor at Eastern Michigan University, Ypsilanti, MI, from 1980–2007. With the onset of tinnitus, he began teaching music theory, counterpoint, and music literature at EMU, and found that he enjoys music composition. His music is melodious and is accessible to musicians and the general public alike.

Born in 1950, Willard Zirk began studying horn while in elementary school in Muskegon, Michigan, with Donald Roelofs. He studied horn with Douglas Campbell at Michigan State University and earned a Bachelor of Music Education degree in 1972. While in The United States Army Band (Pershing's Own), he studied with Lynden Mitchell at The Catholic University of America, earning a Master of Music degree in horn performance in 1975. He then studied with Louis Stout and Lowell Greer at the University of Michigan, earning a Doctor of Musical Arts in horn performance in 1989.

During Zirk's horn performing days, he was a member of The United States Army Band (Pershing's Own); the EMU Woodwind Quintet, "Eastern Winds;" and principal horn with the Ann Arbor Symphony Orchestra. He played extra horn with many orchestras including the Detroit Symphony Orchestra, and natural horn with Philharmonia Baroque, Tafelmusik, and Apollo's Fire. Zirk has recorded several discs including "A Horn Museum," Mozart's Horn Concertos 2 and 3 for Music Minus One, Mozart's "Quintet for Horn and Strings" with the Arianna String Quartet, and he can be heard in several orchestral recordings by Tafelmusik and Apollo's Fire.

Prayer

for Oboe and Piano

"Forgive my hidden faults...May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight..." Ps 19:12, 14 (NIV)

Willard Zirk

Andante

Oboe

mp

Piano

legato

mp *expressive and sustained*

Pedal as you please

Ob.

gradual cresc.

mf

Pno.

gradual cresc.

sim.

Ob.

p

mf

Pno.

mf

p

mf

* Give all pickups length and weight

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** Do not rush the triplet 16ths,
but play with weight and length

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