

Union/Disunion

By Kirsten Johnson

Union/Disunion was inspired by the wonderful work the European Union does to further peace and the common good (the EU won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2012) and the UK referendum to leave the EU (which has been a source of tension).

Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz' (1646-1716) writings on Harmony/Disharmony are portrayed in this work by the more consonant harmonies heard in the 'Union' sections and the dissonances used in the 'Disunion' sections. The more harmonic 'union' sections reference the national anthems of the six founding members of the European Coal and Steel Community of 1950: Germany, France, Italy, Belgium, Luxembourg, the Netherlands*; as well as the UK's national anthem.

The more dissonant sections are based on a 12-tone row framed around the UK national anthem but with sets taken out and groups of pitches juxtaposed against one another.

Leibniz' writing on prime numbers, especially the number 7, have influenced the piece in several ways. Firstly, musical phrases are mapped out as 7-bar phrases. Secondly, the meter in the first section is 7/4 and then 7/8 in the faster section which follows. Thirdly, intervals of major, minor and diminished sevenths are used at all cadence points. Other prime intervals, such as 11ths and 13ths, also feature throughout. Lastly, seven national melodies are used.

*The Netherlands: *Wilhelmus van Nassouwe*

Germany: *Deutschlandlied*

Belgium: *La Brabançonne*

France: *La Marseillaise*

Italy: *Il Canto degli Italiani*

Luxembourg: *Ons Heemecht*

United Kingdom: *God Save the Queen*