

Victory over violence – Why I became a composer and the story behind composing Göreme

Göreme for guitar and electronics was written for guitarist Patrik Kleemola back in 2009. Having collaborated with him since the early 2000's, we came up with an idea to combine the sound of a classical guitar with electronic soundscapes. While having a background in electronic music since my teenage years in 1990's, I had for years concentrated in composing for acoustic instruments and ensembles. Bringing together these two sonic worlds felt intriguing so I was delighted to work on this project.

Since its first performances given by Kleemola in Helsinki and Milan in September and October 2009, I have been delighted to witness Göreme being performed – in addition to several performances by Kleemola – by guitarist including Petrit Çeku and Kimmo Rahunen at various festivals and events around Europe, including Zagreb Music Biennale, REBUS Festival, Festival Muzyki Nowej and Turku Guitar Festival.

During the composition process of Göreme I was strongly affected by the landscapes and history of Göreme region in Cappadocia, Turkey. The region might be first settled back in the Hittite era between 1800 and 1200 BC. The vast underground buildings carved in stone over the course of several centuries have served as an asylum for people of many cultural backgrounds, escaping from turmoil and oppression. The touching history of the region with its countless stories over the course of several thousands of years made a strong impact on me.

Why did this all resonate with me in such a fundamental way? How did a person from somewhat different cultural background and era feel so deeply of the turmoil and oppression witnessed in the Göreme region so long time ago? When I think of the history of humanity, one recurring feature throughout the times is, sadly, the ongoing presence of violence in our lives. At some stage in our lives, in a way or another we all come across with the presence of violence, be it physical, non-physical, structural or everyday violence. Violence is tightly woven together with power. Whatever the context, whenever power is in jeopardy, violence is bound to appear. Violence is a sign of weakness and fear.

Looking back, at the time I was composing Göreme, I was going through a rough time (or, to be honest, one of the rough phrases) in my life. On the surface, things probably seemed to be quite well – I was finishing up my composition studies at Sibelius Academy in Helsinki and eventually graduated a year later, I had (and still have) good friends around me and I had decent possibilities to concentrate on my strongest passion, composing music.

However, I also had to struggle with my personal history that still had a hang on me. Having been a victim of violence in its many forms including physical, non-physical and structural for the most of my life, I was struggling with the devastating feelings of fear, shame, incompetence, lack of vision and insecurity to name a few. The physical violence I have suffered from since my early childhood for well over a decade has been life-threatening at its worst. It has recently come to my attention that it is very likely the violence in question has even resulted in certain permanent injuries. The non-physical violence coming my way has aimed to break my self-esteem and personality. Having lived under this oppression and turmoil, I dare to say I had the ability at least to some extent to relate with the stories and history of Göreme region.

Violence affects everyone's lives in a way or another. We can't escape it. Having experienced it in the hard way myself and still continuing to survive from it, I would like to say that even though violence can destroy lives, it is possible to get out. Whether you are a victim of violence, perpetrator of violent acts or merely a bystander, violence will always have some kind of part in

your life. So, I would say it is of an utmost importance to learn to live and love life in itself despite the omnipresence of violence. It might be easy to close your eyes from it, especially in the case of structural violence found in pretty much any given society in this world.

The tricky feature about violence is that in addition to the devastating and horrible effects it has on the lives of the victims, there's always someone benefiting from it. This is very much the case especially with the structural violence which appears to be predominantly invisible even in our modern societies. Since violence is in very close connection to power, many people usually on the higher levels of the society benefit from the ongoing oppression. It is vital in their quest for holding on to their power. The fear of losing the power and status you have in the society might make it very easy to close your eyes.

Around the time I was composing *Göreme*, I was very lucky to have a couple of good friends and music in my life. Previously in my life during the hardest times lasting for several years, I had no one to trust, no one to speak to. As cliché as it might sound, I felt being totally alone in the world. Luckily enough, even then I had the chance to escape into the world of music. It somehow kept me going and nowadays my life is what I have been wishing it to be. However, the violence is still very much with me in my life. The feelings of insecurity and incompetence, among others, have never gone away, although I slowly seem to get better at dealing with them. Those feelings don't control or define me anymore. I'm still in the middle of a healing process and will continue to do so until the rest of my life. I am very happy that the basis for my healing is better now than ever before in my life.

When asked "how or why did you become a composer", I have answered by telling how music has always been in my life and composing has been a calling for me since my early years. While this is totally true, never before I have had the courage to publicly tell about my history and how music has not only been the driving force in my life but also a way to survive through life. When I compose, these aforementioned and other fundamental questions about life, humanity, our existence and experiences of time and world around us come into my mind in a way or another. They always affect the music I deliver into this world. Composing is a vital part of my personal healing process. This is why *Göreme* holds a special place in my heart, as it was written during the time of turmoil in my life. It kept me going.

The names of the four movements of *Göreme*, entitled "The Dark Hallway", "The Abyss", "The Mirror" and "Away" represent the thoughts and feelings I went through during the composition process. My aim for the dialogue of guitar and electronics in music was to represent the ever ongoing process between harmony and chaos in the world throughout the times. From the rough and dark beginning, the music gradually ascends away from the turmoil, still reminding of its existence in the aggressive and loud outburst from the electronic part in the third movement "The Mirror" before slowly fading away in the last movement.

This version of *Göreme* published now is a live recording of a performance by Patrik Kleemola on May 20, 2010 at Sigyn hall of Turku Conservatory of Music in Turku, Finland. Hopefully we get to do a studio recording of *Göreme* soon.

– Markku Klami, work commentary for the release of *Göreme* on streaming platforms, February 2019