

Detailed Elements Analysis By Section

Section: A

bars 1-12

Important note: The score references and bar numbers in this resource refer to the *Sleep* score included in the book “Light & Gold” published by Chester Music rather than the individual sheet music published by Walton Music.

Please note that the bar numbers in these two publications do *not* match! If using the *Sleep* sheet music, by Walton Music, please **start by renumbering the bars, treating the first bar as an upbeat only and numbering the second bar as bar 1 (thereby matching the Chester Music publication)**. In short, subtract one from each bar number in the score, e.g. b.5 becomes b.4. Also, the Chester score includes a piano reduction which will be of great benefit when studying the harmonic language of this work.

Tempo

- Marked “Lento, lontano e molto legato”, *Sleep* begins at a slow tempo, and is to be performed with a distant and very smooth sound.

Tonality

- The key signature suggests either Eb major or C minor, however
 - There are no Eb chords in the first five bars
 - The C minor chords in bars 1 and 2 are on weak beats and there are no B natural accidentals, as might be expected.
- Whitacre does not announce the tonality of *Sleep* in the traditional way, through tonic chords and cadence(s) in the opening phrase that clearly announce the key. Instead, there are several bars of unusual, wandering chord progressions and parallel movement that seem not to point to an obvious tonic.
- Let's examine the evidence that points to *Sleep* opening in the key of Eb major:
 - The first complete bar contains, amongst the four voices, all of the pitches of the Eb major scale, thereby attuning the ear towards the key of Eb (see fig.I, degrees numbered).

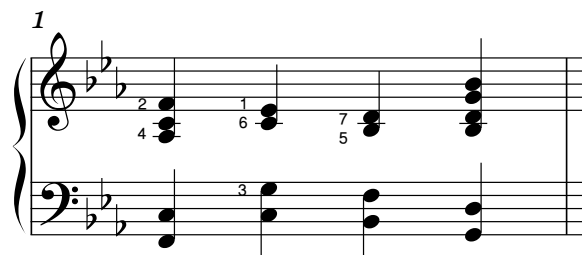


Fig.I *Sleep*, bar 1, Degrees of Eb scale

- An imperfect cadence in Eb (IV-V) is suggested at the end of phrase 1 (b.2-3, “be-neath the moon”) (see fig. II).

Fig.II *Sleep*, bars 1-6, Analysis

imperfect cadence

perfect cadence

- The first incidence of chord I (Eb) is seen in b.6 (see fig.II); It is a strong arrival via a surprisingly conventional perfect cadence (IV-V-I) firmly establishing Eb as the tonic.
- Whitacre gives prominence to the IV chord (Ab) in Section A as the upbeat and climax chord of each phrase (e.g. b.1 and 2, b.4 and 5) (see fig.II, in bold). The other chords in bb.1-2 could be seen as less harmonically important, or “[pandiatonic](#) wanderings” around the IV chord.
- Eb is an important pitch, occurring many times, particularly in [pedal notes](#), throughout Section A. (analysis of fig.II, bb.5-10, shows Eb pitch present in all but 3 chords)
- Whitacre’s characteristic use of pedal notes can be clearly seen here in the continuation of the Eb pitch from bb.2-3 in the Alto, and then again in phrase 2, bb.4-5 in the Soprano (see fig.II, ties added for illustration)
- The use of an added fourth (or tonic) in the V chord is used widely in this piece (see fig.II, b.3). Theorists believe the addition of the tonic greatly weakens the tonal effect or function of the dominant chord¹⁰
- The first accidental, B natural (b.10 in Bass), creates passing chromatic movement in the bass rather than indicating a modulation. This brief chromatic moment highlights the importance of the word “sleep” (see word-painting below).
- Section A ends at b.12 on a C^{sus4} chord, with an E natural accidental (Alto). As the music is moving towards an important arrival on an F chord (chord II in Eb) in the following section (b.16), this altered (major) chord VI in Eb could be seen as a pivot chord of sorts, V of II (V of F).

Metre

- *Sleep* begins in common time (C, as for 4/4, four crotchet beats per bar)
- Metre frequently changes to suit the natural rhythm of the text:
 - The A section uses: C, 2/4, and 3/4 time with 8 metre changes in 12 bars (see fig.II).
 - This irregular pulse reduces the impact of the barline (strong and weak beats etc.) and focuses attention on the entirety of each phrase.

¹⁰ Tymoczko, Dmitri. *A Geometry of Music: Harmony and Counterpoint in the Extended Common Practice Period*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011, p.345

Phrase structure

- Section A consists of two periods (see fig.III).

Period	Period 1		Period 2
Phrase	Phrase 1	Phrase 2	Phrases 3 & 4 (no breath between)
Phrase Length	8 notes	8 notes	16 notes (8 + 8)
Bar	1-3	4-6	7-12

Fig.III Periods and phrases in Section A

- A period is a structure of two consecutive phrases, often built of similar melodic material, in which the first phrase gives the impression of asking a question (also known as an antecedent phrase) which is answered by the second (or consequent) phrase.¹¹
- An antecedent phrase normally ends on a weak cadence (e.g. imperfect) and the consequent phrase normally ends on a stronger cadence (e.g. perfect)¹²
- The third and fourth phrases are combined (by the indication of ‘no breath’ between “head” and “I” in b.9) into one longer phrase, resulting in a phrase structure of short-short-long.
- Phrase length: 8notes-8notes-16notes (see fig.III), or 3bars-3bars-6bars. The no breath indication stems from lines 3 and 4 of the original text, Frost's poem “stopping here_to watch”. Silvestri's lyrics have been written to precisely match the rhythm and momentum of Frost's poem.

Dynamics

- The very soft dynamics (pianissimo, *pp*) match the ‘lontano’ feel indicated.

Composition Devices

- Pedal Notes:** Whitacre starts this piece with two bars of conventional, root position chords. At b.3 we see the appearance of one of Whitacre's trademark devices: pedal notes (pitches that are repeated unchanged while the harmony around them changes). These pedal notes result in suspensions (a dissonance created by sustaining a note of a chord into a following chord) and shimmering, complex harmonies (see [Style](#) for how Whitacre describes this technique in his own words).
- Another pedal note can be found in the consequent phrase, this time in Soprano (see fig. II, bb.4-5, marked with ties for illustration). This example clearly illustrates Whitacre's approach to pedal notes: three chords descend in similar motion (vi-V-IV) with the Soprano remaining on the Eb from the first chord throughout. **This information is useful in analysis, as it suggests that the identity of more complex chords throughout *Sleep* may be uncovered by first looking for which pitches have been used as pedal notes and/or suspensions.**
- In the second period (the third, longer, phrase) pedal notes are used more extensively to create shimmering close harmonies. One example, again using Eb as a pedal, is seen in b.8, beat 4, through b.11, beat 1, where the Eb begins in Alto and then moves to Soprano in b.9, and is even doubled in b.10 in Tenor and Bass.

¹¹ White, John D. (1976). *The Analysis of Music*, p.44

¹² [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phrase_\(music\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phrase_(music))