*Decisions ..* A composition for oboe and piano in three movements; Written in 2016 for Los Angeles oboist Jennifer Cullinan and 11 minutes in length.

While probing the meaning behind my recent composition, I returned continually to this central question: Why are decisions sometimes so difficult to make? Perhaps the answer lies in the realization that truth resides on both sides of an issue. As Ernest Hemingway noted in "Islands in the Stream": "I know now that there is no one thing that is true--it is all true".  His insight illuminates the complexity of the decision-making process.

It is tempting to assume that the hardest decisions are those in the middle of the spectrum, where the consequences of a decision carry roughly equal weight. And conversely, that easy decisions are those which lie at the extreme ends, where differences of possible outcomes are stark and very pronounced--for instance, a choice between good and evil.

Based on these assumptions, choosing between good and bad should be simple. However, history demonstrates that otherwise decent people opt to support evil when concerned about their safety, their lives, or because a choice presents an unforeseen opportunity to gain an advantage. Others reject the "good" choice, fearing a loss of happiness or success. In other words, the matter is not entirely black or white.

The first movement of *Decisions ..* , *This – Or That?* , illustrates the conundrum of decision-making: The main motif can’t seem to make up its mind which direction the notes should go, with the first three pointing up, and the second three descending.

*2. Where To?* describes a person feeling her/his way along in the dark, with careful consideration in each step.

*3. Case Closed?* begins with optimism and resolve: finally, a decision has been made. However, towards the middle of the movement, second thoughts creep in, casting a sliver of doubt on this “solution”. Is there ever any decision that doesn’t have a flip side?

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