

The sky without end.

Star-threaded.

The sky without end. uses a very simple chromatic line as its basic starting material. With this chromatic line, canonic structures are built that operate independently on several levels. Instrumental groupings present the same material using different scalings of pitch (whole tone, chromatic, quarter-tone, glissandi), different scales of duration (based on mathematical proportions and multiplications of these proportions), and different scales of timbre (on a spectrum from noise to tone). The form of the piece, also built with these proportions, uses the contour of the chromatic line to determine its shape. By introducing erasure and fragmentation into these independent structures, their resultant layering alternates sound and silence to create a state of floating and to fill the space with felt potential. In this way the piece builds a whole world that, from very limited material, includes all different types of sound: from infinitely small to large steps, from short attacks to long sustained notes, from pure noise to pure tone.

Performance Notes

Played with great concentration and intention. Non-vibrato.

Dynamics

Always pppp, at the edge of audibility.

Long tones emerge imperceptively without accent, are woven into the surrounding texture, and recede imperceptively also without accent. A relatively equal balance between all instruments should be maintained. No instrument should dominate. This might mean that the dynamic of certain instruments, or particular sounds of those instruments, should be brought up in dynamic to achieve this balance. Overall, however, the piece should sound and feel at this border of audibility.

Time

♩ = approximately 60

The traditional notation should not be understood to represent a tension between syncopated rhythm and meter. The meter itself is simply a convenient way to represent duration and achieve relative coordination. The piece consists of several independent layers following their own durational structures. Rhythms should be treated somewhat freely. Overall, a state of floating is desired.

From about measure 90 to the end the coordination between individual instruments can be especially loose.

Articulation

strings

finger pressure

"norm." = normal finger pressure for a pressed note

"1/2 harm." = approximately halfway between normal pressure and natural harmonic pressure

bow pressure

"P1" = low bow pressure with normal bow speed

"P2" = normal bow pressure with normal bow speed

"P3" = slightly heavier bow pressure with slower bow speed

For "P3" the result is a sound that is as though broken by a series of small cracks. Even so, it should still be a relatively continuous sound with clear, though granulated, pitch content.

bow position

"sul tasto" = very far down the fingerboard

"ord." = normal, central position

"sul pont." = very far up on the bridge

All of these positions and pressures should be understood not as stable, isolated positions but as points of arrival/ departure within a continuous process of transition.

glissando

"gliss. up" or "gliss. down" indicates an inaudibly slow, small glissando made in the respective direction. When destination pitches are unspecified, the glissando should reach approximately one half-step, but the distance covered should vary from note to note (sometimes larger or smaller), but should never be a large glissando spanning several half-steps.

As much as possible, instances of crossing double stops have been avoided. If there remains any that are not resolvable by alternate fingerings, the player may briefly pause to reset fingering, but this should be done subtly, always exiting and entering as imperceptively as possible, and staggering entrances and exits.

harmonics

Natural harmonics on the viola and cello are notated at the node which is the same as the harmonic's sounding pitch. In addition, string and harmonic numbers are provided (e.g. "g5" = 5th harmonic on the g-string, "g6" = 6th harmonic on the g-string, "g7" = 7th harmonic on the g-string, and so on). Whereas the articulations described above texture much of the string material, these do not apply to the natural harmonics. Rather, the inherently rich textures of the natural harmonic -- its combination of pure and unstable tone -- is sought.

winds

Long tones emerge and recede as imperceptively as possible, without accent. There are three layers of articulation indicated by symbols placed above the note:

● = mostly tone

◐ = approximately half tone / half breath

○ = mostly breath

As with the string articulations, these should be understood not as precise categories but as relative ones, always fluctuating, always gradually transitioning. Half-filled circle does not mean precisely half of each but an intermediate state between tone and breath. With the half-filled circle as with the other circles, each sound can and should vary with respect to its timbre.

percussion

Percussion plays two instruments:

1. crotales or glockenspiel (whichever is more convenient):

Plastic mallets and a bow are used to play this instrument. All notes are allowed to ring except when a "+" appears above the note. These notes should be played with a metal beater (such as a triangle beater), the beater should hit the note and remain in contact with it to immediately suppress its resonance.

2. medium-large tam-tam or gong:

For the tam-tam, a small metal object such as a small triangle beater is used to delicately scrape across the surface of the instrument. The ideal resulting sound should be a rough sound that is mostly continuous but as though with small cracks within it.

piano

The piano keeps the sustain pedal down the entire time. When indicated, mute notes with the entire palm of the hand to avoid activating a harmonic.

In addition to playing the piano the pianist also plays a noise-producing object. This can be any object that creates a rustling noise that results in irregular, sporadic cracks of sound with small gaps between. Possibilities include a plastic bag, a piece of newspaper, a collection of dry leaves. The rustling sound should always emerge and recede imperceptively and should be always extremely delicate, each small sound existing for itself.

Pitch

In general, pitch is based on the equal-tempered twelve tone scale of the piano and percussion. However, the strings use quarter tones and the winds use quarter tones as well as tones smaller than a quarter tone:

‡ = approximately 1/4 tone higher

‡ = approximately 3/4 tone higher

‡ / ‡ = somewhat higher

‡ / ‡ = somewhat lower

Accidentals with an arrow up or down indicate very small deviations from the pitch. The amount by which these deviate is left to the musician and should vary from note to note (but never more than 40 cents). Musicians should follow the pitch contour of their own line without attempting to alter pitches in relation to another player's note. Any unisons or slight deviations therefrom are welcome.

Stage Position

As is possible, given the performance setting, the musicians should be spread out across the stage.

The score is notated in C.

♩ = 60 ; always pppp, emerging imperceptibly to the edge of audibility and receding imperceptibly, non vibrato

Flute

Clarinet in Bb

Percussion
 crotales or glockenspiel (with mallet)
 always let ring
 tam-tam

Piano
 pedal down throughout
 rustle object (rustle, very delicate)

Violin

Viola

Violoncello

8 [A]

Fl.

Cl.

Perc.

Pno.

Vln.

Vla.

Vc.

dynamics sim.

dynamics sim.

dynamics sim.

norm. (finger pressure)
P3 (bow pressure)
sul tasto (bow position)

dynamics sim. gliss up

gliss up

dynamics sim.

gliss up

gliss down

gliss up

15

Fl.

Cl.

Perc.

Pno.

Vln.

Vla.

Vc.

tam-tam (scrape)

gliss down

gliss down

gliss down

dynamics sim.

22

Fl.

Cl.

Perc.

Pno.

Vln.

Vla.

Vc.

B

(norm.) (P3) (sul tasto)

gliss down

(norm.) (P3) (sul tasto)

gliss up

(norm.) (P3) (sul tasto)

gliss up

5

8vb

28 C

Fl.

Cl.

Perc.

Pno.

Vln.

Vla.

Vc.



35

Fl.

Cl.

Perc.

Pno.

Vln.

Vla.

Vc.

D

42

Fl.

Cl.

Perc.

Pno.

Vln.

Vla.

Vc.

gliss up

gliss up

50

Fl.

Cl.

Perc.

Pno.

Vln.

Vla.

Vc.

(norm.) (P2) (ord.) gliss down

(norm.) (P2) (ord.) gliss up

(F#) gliss up

gliss up

gliss down

→1/2 harm.

5

8th

F

57

Fl.

Cl.

Perc.

Pno.

Vln.

Vla.

Vc.

→1/2 harm. gliss up →norm. →P1 gliss up →sul pont.

→norm. →P1 gliss down gliss down

→1/2 harm. →P1 gliss down →norm. →P2

gliss down

64

Fl.

Cl.

Perc.

Pno.

Vln.

Vla.

Vc.

arco

gliss up gliss up →P2 gliss up →ord.

gliss down d3 gliss up d3

g7 gliss up c10

71 G

Fl.

Cl.

Perc.

Pno.

Vln.

Vla.

Vc.

→ord. →1/2 harm. (C) gliss up →norm.

gliss down gliss up

→sul pont. gliss up gliss down →1/2 harm. →ord. →norm.

gliss down

79 H

Fl.

Cl.

Perc.

Pno.

Vln.

Vla.

Vc.

(norm.) (P2) (ord.) gliss up →1/2 harm.

(norm.) (P2) (ord.) gliss down

(norm.) (P2) (ord.) gliss down →sul tasto

gliss down

10

86

Fl.

Cl.

Perc.

Pno.

Vln.

Vla.

Vc.

→norm. gliss down gliss up gliss up

gliss down gliss down gliss up gliss up gliss up

→sul tasto →P3 →P2

d3

gliss up gliss up gliss up

gliss up g9 gliss up

93

I

● (tone till end)

● (tone till end)

Perc.

Pno.

Vln.

Vla.

Vc.

→sul pont.

gliss down gliss down gliss up gliss up

d3

c10 g9

100

Fl.

Cl.

Perc.

Pno.

Vln.

Vla.

Vc.

(norm.) (P2) (sul pont.) | | | gliss up | | | gliss down →P3 | | | gliss down →P2

gliss down

(norm.) (P2) (sul tasto) | | | gliss up | | | →ord.

c7

(F)

gliss down

g7

g9

107

Fl.

Cl.

Perc.

Pno.

Vln.

Vla.

Vc.

J

d3

c11

112

Fl.

Cl.

Perc.

Pno.

Vln.

Vla.

Vc.

d3

89

Detailed description: This is a page of a musical score for a chamber ensemble. The score is written for seven instruments: Flute (Fl.), Clarinet (Cl.), Percussion (Perc.), Piano (Pno.), Violin (Vln.), Viola (Vla.), and Violoncello (Vc.). The page is numbered 12 in the top left corner. The Flute part begins with a circled '112' above the first measure. The Clarinet part features a melodic line with a slur and a sharp sign in the second measure. The Percussion part is mostly silent, with a few small marks. The Piano part is also mostly silent. The Violin part is silent. The Viola part has a single note marked 'd3' in the second measure. The Violoncello part has a long slur across the second and third measures. The score is divided into five measures by vertical bar lines, and each measure ends with a repeat sign.