

ecliptic

for string quartet

Liam Elliot

ecliptic refers to the average path of the sun. Working on this piece in Banff, I was thinking of solstice, the changing lengths of day and night, winter, and warmth. The piece should feel intimate, but spacious, and like something between a song and a ritual.

Tempo

Tempo is approximate and flexible

Times (e.g. c. 30") indicate the approximate duration of an unmetred section

Harmonics

All harmonics are natural, played on the most recently indicated string

Use open strings and natural harmonics wherever possible

Balance the volume of open strings with harmonics

Allow harmonics to fade to or emerge from unpitched bow noise

Embrace the overtone and undertone detunings from equal temperament

Techniques

In bars 30 and 80, gliss. between different nodes of the same harmonic. When you find each node, let it sound, then press down to play a normal note at that position. After playing that note, raise your finger to return to a harmonic then continue glissing to the next node. The notes at each node will produce the undertone series of the harmonic.

Crossed noteheads unpitched by muting strings with left hand to produce only bow noise. When tied to a harmonic note, place bow and finger for the harmonic throughout the muted part in addition to other palm/fingers to mute the string. When you reach the harmonic note, release the muting palm/fingers to allow the harmonic to sound without changing bow or bowing technique.

“seagull effect” refers to the cello effect from George Crumb’s *Vox Balaenae*. It is accomplished by creating an octave artificial harmonic high on the string, then glissing down while keeping the hand position the same.

Rectangular noteheads over a small note indicate to place multiple fingers on the string and gliss. up without pressing down on the fingerboard. Avoid activating harmonics and create a semi-pitched, airy sound.

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molto SP and slow bow

bring out different harmonics using

only the bow, and allow them to shift aleatorically

♩ = 65



Vln 1

p

unpitched

Vln 2

pp

unpitched, bow as needed
move to open string mid-bow

Vla

p

unpitched, bow as needed
move to harmonic mid-bow

Vc.

p

Vln 1

II IV III

ppp

Vln 2

ppp

Vla

Vc.

Musical score for measures 10-14. The score is in 5/4 time. It features four staves: Vln 1, Vln 2, Vla, and Vc. Measure 10 starts with a first violin line marked with a *pp* dynamic and a fermata. The second violin and viola parts have rests. The cello part has a melodic line. Measure 11 has rests for all parts. Measure 12 features a *pp* dynamic marking above the first violin staff. The second violin and viola parts have notes with fingerings II and III. The cello part has notes with fingering I. Measure 13 continues the melodic lines. Measure 14 ends with a fermata on the first violin line.

poco rit...... ♩ = 75

Musical score for measures 15-19. The score is in 5/4 time. It features four staves: Vln 1, Vln 2, Vla, and Vc. Measure 15 starts with a first violin line marked with a *pp* dynamic and a fermata. The second violin and viola parts have rests. The cello part has a melodic line. Measure 16 has rests for all parts. Measure 17 features a *pp* dynamic marking above the first violin staff. The second violin and viola parts have notes with fingerings III and IV. The cello part has notes with fingering I. Measure 18 continues the melodic lines. Measure 19 ends with a fermata on the first violin line. The instruction "colour the cello line" is written above the cello staff. The dynamic marking *pp* *>* *sim.* is repeated for all parts in measures 17, 18, and 19.

20

Vln 1

Vln 2

Vla

Vc.

mf

..... ♩ = 65

[24]

Vln 1

Vln 2

Vla

Vc.

mf

Slide between nodes of the indicated harmonic, pressing down to play a note normally after reaching each node. This will produce the undertone series
 Do not sync with violin II

c. 30" node 6 node 5 node 4 node 3 node 2 node 1

IV sul pont. gliss. gliss. gliss. gliss. gliss. gliss. gliss.

Vln 1 *mp*

c. 30" node 5 node 4 node 3 node 2 node 1

sul pont. gliss. gliss. gliss. gliss. gliss.

Vln 2 *p*

brush fingers slowly up, avoiding activating harmonics
 breath in gently but audibly with each gliss.
 repeat passage as needed until 31

c. 30" IV III II I

Vla

brush fingers slowly up, avoiding activating harmonics
 breath in gently but audibly with each gliss.
 repeat passage as needed until 31

c. 30" III I IV II

Vc.

♩ = 90 normal

Vln 1

Vln 2

Vla

Vc.

31

pp normal IV III II

pp normal IV I

mf III I

mf III I

Vln 1

Vln 2

Vla

Vc.

35

p III

p

pp

p II

6

39

0 3 3

IV

Vln 1

Vln 2

Vla

Vc.

I

45

II

III

♩ = 65

quiet and bell-like
exhale sharply on each attack

Vln 1

Vln 2

Vla

Vc.

II

III

fp *fp*

quiet and bell-like
exhale sharply on each attack

p

fp

p

51

Vln 1 *fp* *fp* *fp* *fp*

Vln 2 *fp* *fp* *fp* *fp*

Vla

Vc.

55 c. 45"

Vln 1 Ad lib. bounce bow unpitched on string
begin with very slow bounces and
move towards chattering, uneven rhythms.

Vln 2 c. 45"
Ad lib. bounce bow unpitched on string
begin with very slow bounces and
move towards chattering, uneven rhythms.

Vla c. 45"
freely
light, fast bow

Vc. *mp* let ring III pizz. arco II III I II I # I pizz. arco III II III

[55]

Vln 1

Vln 2

Vla

Vc.

molto SP and slow bow
bring out different harmonics using
only the bow, and allow them to shift aleatorically

IV
pizz.
III
arco
I
II
pizz.
arco

[55]

Vln 1

Vln 2

Vla

Vc.

cue from cello

cue viola

string trem.

pizz.

I
III
string trem.
cue from cello
cue viola
pizz.

56 ♩ = 65

Vln 1

Vln 2

Vla

Vc.

quiet and bell-like
inhale sharply on each attack

arco

fp *fp* *fp* *fp* *fp* *fp* *fp*

61 ♩ = 90

Vln 1

Vln 2

Vla

Vc.

mp

p

mp

65

Vln 1

Vln 2

Vla

Vc.

Musical score for measures 65-69, featuring Violin 1 (Vln 1), Violin 2 (Vln 2), Viola (Vla), and Violoncello (Vc.). The score is in 5/4 time, with measures 65-66 in 5/4 and measures 67-69 in 4/4. Measure 65 includes fingerings III and II for Vln 2. Measure 66 includes fingering III for Vln 2. Measure 67 includes fingering I for Vln 2 and III for Vla. Measure 68 includes fingering IV for Vla. Measure 69 includes fingering I for Vla and triplet markings for Vln 2 and Vla. Dynamics include *mp* for Vla. A fermata is present over the first measure of the system.

70

Vln 1

Vln 2

Vla

Vc.

Musical score for measures 70-74, featuring Violin 1 (Vln 1), Violin 2 (Vln 2), Viola (Vla), and Violoncello (Vc.). The score is in 5/4 time, with measures 70-73 in 5/4 and measure 74 in 4/4. Measure 70 includes fingering III for Vln 2 and triplet markings for Vln 2, Vla, and Vc. Measure 71 includes fingering I for Vln 1 and triplet markings for Vln 1, Vln 2, and Vla. Measure 72 includes triplet markings for Vln 2 and Vla. Measure 73 includes triplet markings for Vln 2 and Vla. Measure 74 includes triplet markings for Vln 2 and Vla. Dynamics include *pp* for Vln 1 and Vln 2, and *mp* for Vc. A fermata is present over the first measure of the system.

75

Vln 1

Vln 2

Vla

Vc.

80 c. 30"

Vln 1

Vln 2

pp

Slide between nodes of the indicated harmonic, pressing down to play a note normally after reaching each node. This will produce the undertone series

node 6 node 5 node 4 node 3 node 2 node 1

IV

sul pont.

c. 30" gliss. gliss. gliss. gliss. gliss. gliss. gliss.

Vla

Vc. c. 30" slowly and quietly do the seagull effect on the D string until violins enter

accel.....

II

8^{va}

81 $\text{♩} = 65$

Vln 1

Vln 2

Vla

Vc.

III

normal III

p

$\text{♩} = 75$

83

Vln 1

Vln 2

Vla

Vc.

Musical score for measures 87-91. The score is for Violin 1 (Vln 1), Violin 2 (Vln 2), Viola (Vla), and Violoncello (Vc.).

- Measures 87-91:** The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/4. The first violin part (Vln 1) features a melodic line with a fermata over the final measure. The second violin part (Vln 2) has a similar melodic line. The viola part (Vla) consists of sustained notes. The cello part (Vc.) is mostly silent, with a few notes in the final measure.
- Performance Indications:** The dynamic marking *ppp* (pianissimo) is present at the bottom right of the score.
- Technical Markings:** First and second endings (I and II) are indicated for the violin parts. Octave markings (*8va*) are present for the violin parts.

Musical score for measures 92-96. The score is for Violin 1 (Vln 1), Violin 2 (Vln 2), Viola (Vla), and Violoncello (Vc.).

- Measures 92-96:** The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 3/4. The first violin part (Vln 1) features a melodic line with a fermata over the final measure. The second violin part (Vln 2) has a similar melodic line. The viola part (Vla) consists of sustained notes. The cello part (Vc.) consists of sustained notes.
- Performance Indications:** The dynamic marking *ppp* (pianissimo) is present at the bottom right of the score.
- Technical Markings:** First and second endings (I and II) are indicated for the violin parts. Octave markings (*8va*) are present for the violin parts.

8va

♩ = 90

98

Vln 1

Vln 2

Vla

Vc.

ppp

p

p

p

103

Vln 1

Vln 2

Vla

Vc.

p

ppp

p

p

106

Vln 1

Vln 2

Vla

Vc.

Violin 1: Treble clef, notes G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4. Measure 107: A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4. Measure 108: G4, F4, E4, D4, C4.

Violin 2: Treble clef, notes G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4. Measure 107: A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4. Measure 108: G4, F4, E4, D4, C4.

Viola: Bass clef, notes G3, A3, B3, C4, D4, E4, F4, G4. Measure 107: A3, B3, C4, D4, E4, F4, G4. Measure 108: G4, F4, E4, D4, C4. Includes fingerings I, II, IV arco.

Violoncello: Bass clef, notes G2, A2, B2, C3, D3, E3, F3, G3. Measure 107: A2, B2, C3, D3, E3, F3, G3. Measure 108: G3, F3, E3, D3, C3. Includes fingerings I, II.

109

Vln 1

Vln 2

Vla

Vc.

Violin 1: Treble clef, notes G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4. Measure 110: A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4. Measure 111: G4, F4, E4, D4, C4.

Violin 2: Treble clef, notes G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4. Measure 110: A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4. Measure 111: G4, F4, E4, D4, C4.

Viola: Treble clef, notes G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4. Measure 110: A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4. Measure 111: G4, F4, E4, D4, C4. Includes fingerings I, IV, III, IV, pizz., and triplets.

Violoncello: Bass clef, notes G2, A2, B2, C3, D3, E3, F3, G3. Measure 110: A2, B2, C3, D3, E3, F3, G3. Measure 111: G3, F3, E3, D3, C3.

112

Vln 1

Vln 2

Vla

Vc.

This musical score block covers measures 112, 113, and 114. It features four staves: Violin 1 (Vln 1), Violin 2 (Vln 2), Viola (Vla), and Violoncello (Vc.).

- Vln 1:** Measure 112 starts with a whole note G4. Measure 113 has a half note G4 and a half note A4. Measure 114 has a half note G4 and a half note F#4.
- Vln 2:** Measure 112 has a whole note G3. Measure 113 has a half note G3 and a half note A3. Measure 114 has a half note G3 and a half note F#3.
- Vla:** Measure 112 has a whole rest. Measure 113 has three triplet eighth notes: G4, A4, and B4. Measure 114 has a whole rest.
- Vc.:** All three measures (112, 113, 114) have a whole rest.

115

Vln 1

Vln 2

Vla

Vc.

This musical score block covers measures 115, 116, and 117. It features four staves: Violin 1 (Vln 1), Violin 2 (Vln 2), Viola (Vla), and Violoncello (Vc.).

- Vln 1:** Measure 115 has a whole note G4. Measure 116 has a half note G4 and a half note A4. Measure 117 has a whole rest.
- Vln 2:** Measure 115 has a whole note G3. Measure 116 has a half note G3 and a half note A3. Measure 117 has a half note G3 and a half note F#3.
- Vla:** All three measures (115, 116, 117) have a whole rest.
- Vc.:** All three measures (115, 116, 117) have a whole rest.