

Continuoso Cycles and Continuum

For string quartet

Ian Percy

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[Inflections of Antiquity]

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2015/18

(Rearranged: May 2020)

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[Inflections of Antiquity]

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1. ... And then they noticed the light ...
2. Permanence IS change (repetition is stasis) ...
 3. The eternal Akashic record ...
 4. A passing prayer (a cry for mercy) ...
5. Take from Caesar that which belongs to Caesar ...
6. A universal melody for all saints and sinners ...

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The opening movement of this score was originally composed in 2015 for *Gli Archi del Cherubino* in a version for string orchestra and harpsichord. *The Ensemble of St Luke's* proofread a literal arrangement for string quartet during 2016 and conversations evolved to where an extended multiple-movement work was commissioned. The first movement was extensively recomposed in 2017/18 during realisation of this piece and the score was rearranged in May 2020 when two movements were removed. The remaining collection is a more coherent journey without them ...

Continuoso Cycles and Continuum is a set of six movements inflecting elements of antique compositional form: Medieval Mass, Renaissance and Baroque Suites. The music is written in a modal language with contemporary references to retrospective soundworlds, looking forwards into (or is it 'backwards from?') the twenty-first century via textural fabrics weaved from the cycling pitch-patterns of mid 20th century modernism, contrapuntal gradual process synonymous with post-modern minimalism and pseudo-modulations within tonal stasis reminiscent of post-minimalist simplicity. Avoiding literal emulation, the inconsistencies of polystylistism and the dreaded pastiche: a contemporised formal scheme 'smudging' the structural lines of the past and respectfully blending elements of 'each and all' into an evolving concept one refers to as *modal sfumato*¹ ...

This reductive, retrospective and minimal music of relative simplicity opens with a sequence of consonant chords that expand at each iteration (trichord – tetrachord – pentachord – hexachord) to introduce the first six pitches of the cycle of fourths: [C] – F – B^b – E^b – A^b – D^b.

The first movement is written in A^b Major/F minor, but the expanding pitch content initially avoids the 'defining-third' to subliminally modulate through F, B^b and E^b on its way. Alternating phrase resolutions add 'dialectic lilt's of the passing modes as the chord-type expands and blurs the sense of a 'home-tone'. Chords built upon the perfect-fourth interval shaped modal phrases and ambiguous consonant harmony that seemed sympathetic to the reference repertoire yet remained authentic to a contemporary palette. The motion to (and prominence of) the (Copland-like) A^b home-tone in the latter stages of the first movement seemed forgivable within the context of the piece as a whole, but the final resolution of the first movement to C Phrygian mode (3rd mode of A^b) and the quasi whole-tone modulation to B^b Dorian mode (2nd mode of A^b) to start the second movement is far more representative of the subtle amorphic possibilities and subliminally modulating pitch-schemes available through the blending of modal sfumato.

The second movement is reminiscent of the slow movements within Albinoni's *Sinfonia 'a quattro'*, where time seems to stop, a few bars last an eternity and the world hangs on a chord. The only real difference here is in the spelling of the chords. Clear comparisons to Vivaldi's *L'estro Armonico* (Inspiration of Harmony) Op.3 should also be stated. The title is a light-hearted play on words, having fun with the rhythms of word-sound. The opening performance instruction in the score contains a passing reference to a certain young wizard, which is a little odd, as I was 'never really a fan' ...

¹ Sfumato: Technique used by Leonardo Da Vinci for softening the transition between colours: Imperceptible transitions between colours and tones ...

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1. ... and then they noticed the light ...

1 ♩ = 88 ... continuoso misterioso ...

A ♩ = 92

B ♩ = 96

C ♩ = 100 ... with increasing fluidity and momentum ...

poco rubato, molto espress.

... symbiotic resonance of light and sound ...

molto rubato, molto espress.

pp pp poco rubato, molto espress.

poco rubato, molto espress.

p

pp pp poco rubato, molto espress.

p

mp sul tasto

p

D ... with increasing dynamic (and emotional) intensity ...

E ... in subtle progressive cycles of momentum and release (like nature) ...

poco accel.

Musical score for orchestra and piano, page 17, measures 17-21. The score consists of four staves. The top staff is for the piano, featuring sixteenth-note patterns with dynamic markings: *mf*, *sul tasto*, *f*, *ord.*, *sul tasto*, *mf*, *f*, *ff*, and *mf*. The second staff is for the first violin, with dynamics *mp*, *sul tasto*, *ord.*, *mf*, *mp*, *ord.*, *mf*, *mp*, and *mp*. The third staff is for the second violin, with dynamics *mp*, *ord.*, *mf*, *mp*, *mf*, *mp*, and *mp*. The bottom staff is for the cello, with dynamics *mp*, *mf*, *f*, *mf*, and *mp*.

F $\downarrow = 104$... and the light grew stronger ...

poco accel.

$\text{♩} = 108$

poco accel.

31

sul tasto ord.

mf *f*

ff *f*

sul tasto

ord. *sul tasto*

ord.

mp *mf*

sul tasto

mf

ff

mf

ff

f

f

... a temporary release of tension - back to the beginning (one last time) ...

... with increasing anxiety ...

$\text{♩} = 112$

G = 100

poco accel.

[H] = 104

poco accel.

$\text{♩} = 108$

61

A musical score page featuring four staves of music. The top staff uses a treble clef and includes dynamic markings "ff" (fortissimo) and "fff" (ffff). The second staff uses a treble clef and includes a dynamic marking "f". The third staff uses a bass clef. The bottom staff uses a bass clef. All staves are in a key signature of three flats (B-flat major or A-flat minor). The music consists of measures of eighth and sixteenth notes, with various slurs and grace notes.

I

poco accel

sul tasto

ord

... in consonant counterpoint and confident continuum ...

Musical score for string quartet, page 60, measures 1-4. The score consists of four staves: Violin 1 (top), Violin 2, Cello, and Double Bass. The key signature is B-flat major (two flats). Measure 1: Violin 1 plays eighth-note chords (F#-A-C#-E) with slurs and dynamic *fff*. Measure 2: Violin 1 continues eighth-note chords. Violin 2 and Cello play eighth-note chords with dynamic *ff*. Double Bass plays eighth notes with dynamic *f*. Measure 3: Violin 1 and Violin 2 play eighth-note chords. Cello and Double Bass play eighth notes with dynamic *sul tasto*. Measure 4: Violin 1 and Violin 2 play eighth-note chords. Cello and Double Bass play eighth notes with dynamic *f*.

V

poco accel

sul tasto

ord

100

ord.

sul tasto

1

... in perpetual momentum ...

4

K

poco accel.

ord.

[♩ = 112]

poco accel.

sul tasto

[♩ = 116]

L

♩ = 112 ... chorus and continuum ...

ord.

Musical score for measures 75-89. The score consists of three staves: Treble, Bass, and Cello/Bassoon. The dynamics are marked as follows: measure 75: f (Treble), mf (Bass), f (Cello/Bassoon); measure 76: ord. (Treble), mf (Bass), f (Cello/Bassoon); measure 77: sul tasto (Treble), f (Bass), mf (Cello/Bassoon); measure 78: ord. (Treble), f (Bass), mf (Cello/Bassoon); measure 79: sul tasto (Treble), f (Bass), mf (Cello/Bassoon); measure 80: ord. (Treble), mf (Bass), f (Cello/Bassoon); measure 81: sul tasto (Treble), f (Bass), mf (Cello/Bassoon); measure 82: ord. (Treble), mf (Bass), f (Cello/Bassoon); measure 83: sul tasto (Treble), f (Bass), mf (Cello/Bassoon); measure 84: ord. (Treble), f (Bass), mf (Cello/Bassoon); measure 85: sul tasto (Treble), f (Bass), f (Cello/Bassoon); measure 86: ord. (Treble), f (Bass), mf (Cello/Bassoon); measure 87: sul tasto (Treble), f (Bass), f (Cello/Bassoon); measure 88: ord. (Treble), f (Bass), mf (Cello/Bassoon); measure 89: sul tasto (Treble), f (Bass), f (Cello/Bassoon).

... the potential of infinite cycles ...

M

poco accel.

sul tasto

ord.

[♩ = 116]

N

poco rit.

sul tasto

[♩ = 112]

sul tasto

Musical score for measures 90-98. The score consists of three staves: Treble, Bass, and Cello/Bassoon. The dynamics are marked as follows: measure 90: mf (Treble), f (Bass), mf (Cello/Bassoon); measure 91: ord. (Treble), sul tasto (Bass), mf (Cello/Bassoon); measure 92: f (Treble), f (Bass), mf (Cello/Bassoon); measure 93: mf (Treble), f (Bass), mf (Cello/Bassoon); measure 94: ord. (Treble), sul tasto (Bass), ff (Cello/Bassoon); measure 95: ord. (Treble), sul tasto (Bass), ff (Cello/Bassoon); measure 96: mf (Treble), f (Bass), ff (Cello/Bassoon); measure 97: mf (Treble), f (Bass), ff (Cello/Bassoon); measure 98: ord. (Treble), mf (Bass), p (Cello/Bassoon); measure 99: sul tasto (Treble), f (Bass), mp (Cello/Bassoon); measure 100: ord. (Treble), mf (Bass), p (Cello/Bassoon); measure 101: ff (Treble), ff (Bass), ff (Cello/Bassoon).

... with just a little push ... the light began to fade (slowly) ...

O

poco rit.

$\text{♩} = 116$

ord.

$\text{♩} = 108$

P

... a final burst of energy, but ...
... a little more relaxed ...

5

106

ord. *f* sul tasto *mf* ord. *sul tasto* *mf* ord. *ord.* *p* *mf* *f* *sul tasto* *ord.*

mf *f* *mf* *f* *mf* *f*

poco rit.

$\text{♩} = 108$

ord.

Q ... searching for an exit (following the light) ... poco rit.

sul tasto

118

mf *sul tasto* *molto vib.* *wide vib.* *f* *ord.* *sul tasto* *molto vib. ord.* *f* *mf* *f* *mf* *f*

... a temporary opening emerges (a temporary exit appears) ...

R

$\text{♩} = 104$ *poco rit.* $\text{♩} = 100$

ord.

poco rit.

$\text{♩} = 100$

molto rubato, molto express.

ord.

molto rubato, molto express.

molto rubato, molto express.

molto rubato, molto express.

molto rubato, molto express.

ord.

mf

sul tasto

p

mp

p

S

rit.

$\text{♩} = 72$ *rit.*

$\text{♩} = 60$

molto rubato, molto express.

sul tasto

vib.

sul tasto

pp

ppp

vib.

pizz.

poco rubato

molto rubato

pp

ppp

vib.

molto rubato

ord.

sul pont.

ord.

molto rubato

ord.

sul pont.

ord.

molto rubato, molto express.

sul tasto

pp

ppp

vib.

mf

sul tasto

p

mp

p

molto rubato

ord.

sul pont.

ord.

molto rubato

ord.

sul pont.

ord.

molto rubato, molto express.

sul tasto

pp

ppp

vib.

2. ... permanence is change (repetition is stasis) ...

2 ♩ = 60 ... and the light was filled with promise ...

(ord.) poco rubato

sul pont.

ord.

ppp
(ord.) poco rubato

pp

p
sul pont.
ord.

sul tasto

ord.

ppp
poco rubato
(arco)

pp

p
sul pont.
ord.

ppp
(ord.) poco rubato

pp

p
sul pont.
ord.

ppp
sul tasto

p
ord.

ppp
sul tasto

p
ord.

ppp

pp

p

ppp

p

mp

poco rit.

7

T ... and that promise was eternal ...

poco rit.



... the peaks and troughs of natural cycles ...

[♩ = 52] **U** ♩ = 60 ... patient, primordial and ethereal (stasis and flow)...

sul tasto

ord.

V

sul pont.

ord.

poco rit.

[♩ = 52]

sul tasto

pp
sul tasto

ppp
ord.

p

mf
sul pont.

ord.

p
sul tasto

pp
sul tasto

ppp
ord.

p

mf
sul pont.

ord.

p
sul tasto

pp
sul tasto

ppp
ord.

p

mf
sul pont.

ord.

p
sul tasto

pp

ppp

pp

p

mf

p

p

W $\text{♩} = 60$... in contemporary antiquity (come as you are) ...

poco rit. $\text{♩} = 52$ poco rit. $\text{♩} = 40$

173 sul pont. ord. sul tasto sul pont. sul tasto ord.

mp ord. **p** **pp** **sul tasto** **ppp** **sul pont.** **sul tasto** **pppp** **ord.**

mp ord. **p** **pp** **sul tasto** **ppp** **sul pont.** **sul tasto** **pppp** **ord.**

mp ord. **p** **pp** **sul tasto** **ppp** **sul pont.** **sul tasto** **pppp** **ord.**

mp **ord.** **p** **pp** **sul tasto** **ppp** **sul pont.** **sul tasto** **pppp** **ord.**

mp **ord.** **p** **pp** **sul tasto** **ppp** **sul pont.** **sul tasto** **pppp** **ord.**

3. ... the eternal akashic record ...

3 ♩ = 92 ... give to Caesar w
poco rubato, molto espresso.

molto rubato, molto espress.

] **X** ♪ = 88 ... in fluidic perpetuum ...
poco rubato, molto espress.

poco rit.

[♩ = 76]

183

poco rubato, molto espress.

molto rubato, molto espress.

sul tasto

ord.

poco rubato, molto espress.

... welcome to the machine ...

Y ♩ = 84 poco rit.

poco rubato, molto espresso

J = 72

... if only we had more time ..

Z poco rit.

rubato, molto espress.

[♩ = 60] poco rit.

sul tasto

4. ... a passing prayer (a cry for mercy) ...

10 **4** ♩ = 40 ... in reverance ... poco accel.(ord.) *molto rubato, molto espress.***AA** ♩ = 52 poco accel.

with exaggerated sorrow

♩ = 60

soft and lyrical

211

p

(ord.) *molto rubato, molto espress.*

p *molto rubato, molto espress.*
(arco) solo

poco rubato

molto vib.

mp

mf

ord.

molto vib. *sul tasto*

molto rubato, molto espress.

aggressive

f

poco rubato
ord.

mf

mf

mp

... in reverance (a passing prayer for mercy) ...

poco rit.

[♩ = 52]

rit.

BB ♩ = 44 poco rit.

♩ = 40

sul tasto

poco rubato

mf

poco rubato

mp

p

mf

molto rubato, molto espress.

mp

p

mf

poco rubato, molto espress.

mp

p

p

sul tasto

p

sul pont.

p

sul tasto

p

sul pont.

p

poco rubato

p

poco rubato

p

sul tasto

pp

5. ... take from Caesar that which belongs to Caesar ...

5 ♩ = 40 ... an antiquarian futurist - looking out into the twenty-first century ...
poco rubato, molto espress.

227 (ord.)

p
poco rubato, molto espress.
(ord.)

p
poco rubato arco sul tasto

molto rubato
pizz.

IV
III pp
p
mf
f
mf
ff
fff
mf
v
f

molto rubato, molto espress.
mp
molto rubato, molto espress.
mf
poco rubato, molto espress.
ord.
mf
v
f

molto rubato, molto espress.
mf
poco rubato, molto espress.
mf
poco rubato, molto espress.
mf
v
f

CC ... chronometric links, chains and pulse-based transitions ...
poco rubato, molto espress.

11

DD ... the contradictions and pleasures of modern life ...
molto rubato, molto espress.

241

poco rit.
molto rubato, molto espress.

mf
f
mf
poco rit.
molto vib.
ord.
sul tasto
poco rubato

sul tasto
ord.
sul tasto
ord.
sul tasto

ppp
ord.
ppp
ord.
ppp
ord.

ff
ff
fff
ff
f
mf
p

[♩ = 56]

6. ... a universal melody for all saints and sinners ...

12

6. $\text{♩} = 60$... to walk the hallowed halls of standard and tradition ... poco accel. $\text{♩} = 72$

... living with a past, present and future ...

EE

rit.

poco rubato (ord.)

poco rubato, molto express.

p

mp

mp

mf

pp

mp

molto rubato, molto express.

solo

mp

mf

poco rubato pizz.

mf

f

mp

mf

arco sul tasto

mp

mp

sul tasto

ord.

poco rubato pizz.

molto vib.

vib.

poco rubato, molto express.

arco

mf

mp

mf

ff

f

p

mp

mp

mp

... sometimes a song must be repeated if it is to be sung ...

FF

 $\text{♩} = 60$

poco rubato

accel.

 $\text{♩} = 76$

molto rubato, molto express.

sul tasto

ord.

molto rubato, molto express.

p

molto rubato, molto express.

mp

poco rubato, molto express.

arcò

molto rubato, molto express.

solo

mf

mp

mf

mp

mf

poco rubato, molto express.

ord.

molto rubato, molto express.

p

mp

mf

mf

mp

poco rubato, molto express.

poco rubato pizz.

molto vib.

arco

poco rubato, molto express.

mf

ff

p

mp

mf

mp

... we stand on the shoulders of giants for all the faces and places we have called home ...

269

GG rit. $\text{♩} = 60$ rit. $\text{♩} = 40$

poco rubato, molto espress.

poco rubato, molto espress. **p**

poco rubato, molto espress. **p**

poco rubato, molto espress. **p**

arco **p**

poco rubato, molto espress. **p**

poco rubato, molto espress. **p**

sul tasto

sul tasto

sul tasto

sul tasto

molto rubato sul tasto

ord.

poco rit. $\text{♩} = 40$

poco rubato con sord. ord.

pp poco rubato **ppp**

pp molto rubato pizz. **p**

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