

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 polystylism 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 liits' 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 ... *continuosamente misterioso* ...

A ♩ = 92

B ♩ = 96

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

poco rubato, molto espress.

molto rubato, molto espress.

poco rubato, molto espress.

mp

sul tasto

ppp

pp

p

poco rubato, molto espress.

ppp

pp

p

poco rubato, molto espress.

pp

p

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

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

poco accel.

17

ord. *mf* *f* *mf* *f* *ff* *mf*

mp *mf* *mp* *mf* *mp*

mp *mf* *mp* *mf* *mp*

mp *mf* *f* *mf* *mp*

F ♩ = 104 ... and the light grew stronger ...

poco accel. ♩ = 108

poco accel.

31

mf *f* *ff* *f* *ff*

mf *mp* *mf* *f* *ff*

mf *mp* *mf* *f*

mf *mp* *mf* *f*

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

... with increasing anxiety ...

♩ = 112

G ♩ = 100

poco accel.

H ♩ = 104

poco accel.

♩ = 108

3

45



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

poco accel.

I ♩ = 112 ... sometimes we just have to 'let it go' (and go with it) ...

J ♩ = 108

60

... in perpetual momentum ...

K

poco accel.

[♩ = 112]

poco accel.

[♩ = 116]

L

♩ = 112 ... chorus and continuum ...

75

ord. sul tasto ord. sul tasto ord.

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

... the potential of infinite cycles ...

M

poco accel.

♩ = 116

N

... round and round and round we go ...

poco rit.

♩ = 112

90

ord. sul tasto ord. sul tasto ord. sul tasto

mf *f* *mf* *f* *mf* *f* *mp* *p*

ord. sul tasto ord. sul tasto ord. sul tasto

mf *f* *ff* *f* *mf* *f* *ff*

5



poco rit. - - - - -

118

ord.

sul tasto

mf

f

mf

p

sul tasto

ord.

sul tasto

mf

f

mf

p

sul tasto

molto vib.

wide vib.

ord.

sul tasto

molto vib. ord.

mf

f

mf

f

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

R ♩ = 104

poco rit. ♩ = 100

... we hope you enjoyed the ride ...

S rit. [♩ = 72] rit. [♩ = 60]

molto rubato, molto espress.

131

ord.

ord.

ord.

mf *mp* *mp* *p* *pp* *ppp*

molto rubato, molto espress.

molto rubato, molto espress.

pizz. *poco rubato* *molto rubato*

molto rubato, molto espress.

sul tasto *ord.* *sul pont.* *ord.* *molto rubato, molto espress.* *vib.*

mf *p* *mp* *p* *pp* *ppp*

sul tasto

ppp

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

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

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

poco rit. . . .

7

145

(ord.) *poco rubato* sul pont. ord. sul tasto ord.

ppp *pp* *p* *ppp* *p* *mp*

(ord.) *poco rubato* sul pont. ord. sul tasto ord.

ppp *pp* *p* *ppp* *p* *mp*

poco rubato (arco) sul pont. ord. sul tasto ord.

(ord.) *poco rubato* sul pont. ord. sul tasto ord.

ppp *pp* *p* *ppp* *p* *mp*

ppp *pp* *p* *ppp* *p* *mp*

159

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

[♩ = 52] **U** ♩ = 60 ... patient, primordial and ethereal (stasis and flow)... **V** sul pont. ord. poco rit. [♩ = 52] sul tasto

sul tasto ord. sul pont. ord. sul tasto

pp *ppp* *pp* *p* *mf* *p*

sul tasto ord. sul pont. ord. sul tasto

pp *ppp* *pp* *p* *mf* *p*

sul tasto ord. sul pont. ord. sul tasto

pp *ppp* *pp* *p* *mf* *p*

sul tasto ord. sul pont. ord. sul tasto

pp *ppp* *pp* *p* *mf* *p*

. [$\text{♩} = 52$]

[♩ = 40]

ord.

173

mp sul pont.

p

pp

ppp sul pont.

pppp ord.

mp sul pont.

p

pp

ppp sul pont.

pppp ord.

mp sul pont.

p

pp

ppp sul pont.

pppp ord.

mp

p

pp

ppp

pppp

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

3 ♩ = 92 ... give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar ... poco rit. [♩ = 80] **X** ♩ = 88 ... in fluidic perpetuum ... poco rit. [♩ = 76] ⁹

poco rubato, molto espress. *molto rubato, molto espress.* *poco rubato, molto espress.* *molto rubato, molto espress.*

183

p *poco rubato, molto espress.* *mf* *mp* *mf* *f*

p *mp* *mf* *mp* *mf* *mp*

poco rubato, molto espress. *molto rubato, molto espress.* *ord.* *poco rubato, molto espress.*

p *mp* *mf* *mp*

poco rubato, molto espress. *molto rubato, molto espress.* *ord.* *poco rubato, molto espress.*

mf *f* *p* *mf* *mp*

Y ♩ = 84 poco rit. ♩ = 72 **Z** poco rit. [♩ = 60] poco rit.

poco rubato, molto espress. *sul tasto* *ord.* *molto rubato, molto espress.* *sul tasto*

197

p *mp* *mf* *mp* *p* *ppp*

poco rubato, molto espress. *ord.* *sul tasto* *ord.* *molto rubato, molto espress.* *wide vib.*

p *mp* *mf* *mp* *p* *pp*

poco rubato, molto espress. *ord.* *pizz.* *p* *mf* *mp* *pp*

pp *p* *mp* *p* *mf* *mp* *pp*

molto rubato, molto espress. *poco rubato pizz.* *arco* *molto rubato, molto espress.*

mp *f* *mf* *p* *ppp*

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

10

4 ♩ = 40 ... in reverence ... poco accel.

AA

♩ = 52 poco accel. ♩ = 60

(ord.) molto rubato, molto espress.

with exaggerated sorrow

soft and lyrical

211

p (ord.) *molto rubato, molto espress.* *mp* *mp* *mf* *mf* *mf* *mp*

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

mp *poco rubato* *molto vib.* *mf* ord. *molto vib.* *molto rubato, molto espress.* sul tasto *f* *poco rubato* ord. *mf* *mp*

p *mp* *p* *mp* *mf* *mp*



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

poco rit.

[♩ = 52]

rit.

BB

♩ = 44 poco rit. ♩ = 40

219

mf *poco rubato* *mp* *p* *mp* *p* *pp*

molto rubato, molto espress. *mf* *mp* *p* *p* *p* *pp* *pp*

mf *mp* *p* *p* *mp* *poco rubato* *pp* *sul tasto*

p *mp* *pp* *pp* *pp* *pp* *pp* *pp*

5 ♯ = 40 ... an antiquarian futurist - looking out into the twenty-first century ...

molto rubato, molto espress.

CC ... chronometric links, chains and pulse-based transitions ...

227 (ord.)

p
poco rubato, molto espress.

(ord.)
p

poco rubato
arco sul tasto

pp

p

mp
molto rubato, molto espress.

mf
poco rubato, molto espress.

mp
poco rubato, molto espress.

ord.

mf
molto rubato, molto espress.

pp

p

mp

ff

fff

mf

f

... the contradictions and pleasures of modern life ...

poco rit. .

[♩ = 56]

poco rubato, molto espress.

sul tasto

241

poco rubato

fff *ff* *fff* *ff* *f* *mf* *p*

mf *f* *mf* *mp* *ppp*

molto vib. *ord.* *sul tasto* *ord.* *sul tasto* *ord.* *sul tasto*

mf *f* *mp* *p* *mp* *ppp*

sul tasto *ord.* *sul tasto* *ord.* *sul tasto* *ord.* *sul tasto*

[illegible]

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

GG

rit.

♩ = 60

rit.

♩ = 40

poco rit.

poco rubato, molto espress.

sul tasto

poco rubato

con sord.

ord.

mp

poco rubato, molto espress.

p

sul tasto

pp

poco rubato

con sord.

ord.

mp

poco rubato, molto espress.

arco

p

sul tasto

pp

poco rubato

con sord.

ord.

mp

mp

p

*molto rubato
sul tasto*

ord.

pp

poco rubato

ppp

*molto rubato
pizz.*

p

pp

p

III
III

III
IV

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