

... Watching the Sun Set on Another Summer ...

Duet for vibraphone and piano

Ian Percy

An Infinite Circle is a Straight Line

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Duration ca. 3' 41"

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Prelude

When in doubt, just keep walking forwards ...

Interlude

There are, and will always be, just causes to fight ...

Postlude

There are, and will always be, vast oceans to explore ...

Duration: ca. 3' 41"

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This very short duet for vibraphone and piano was composed using three movements from *An Infinite Circle is a Straight Line – A Thousand Sounds of Pi* (for solo piano). The majority of the original score was realised systematically from the first 1,000 decimal digits of Pi during the summer of 2012. The Prelude and Postlude were composed in a far more instinctive manner during the summer of 2014 through a desire to bookend the systemised cycles with music formed from a more 'philosophical' approach to the use of Pi and musical 3s, 1s and 4s. The (originally silent) Interlude was added during final realisation of the performance score in late 2020.

Pi is an eternal number; it is infinite and linear but is part of the equation used to calculate the circumference of a circle; a cyclic and self-contained shape. The composer was attracted by this contradiction and was intrigued by the realisation that if Pi is an 'infinite decimal', it could also be argued that the precise circumference of a circle is an unobtainable pursuit (an infinite elusive). Whilst researching the fundamentals of Pi, one stumbled across an area of research (or mode of thinking) referred to as 'philosophical mathematics', which, until then, one would have considered to be an oxymoron. A quotation accredited (with some dispute) to Johannes Kepler (1571-1630) stating that 'an infinite circle is a straight line' offered just 'a splash' of external narrative (and a title for the piece). Others have mused how, therefore, the maximum triangle must also be a straight line ...

As a guiding atmosphere (that essential incorporeal elusive) for the musical characters interacting within this duet, an additional strand of narrative was conceived from the Kepler quote. This scenario is used as a performance indication at the start of the score: "Watching the curved horizon as the sun sets on another summer."

The emotive and flamboyant (but very short) Prelude was originally composed through inverted mirror symmetry and transposed palindromic retrogrades of musical 3s, 1s and 4s (intervals and interval-classes). The short movement was conceived as a duet (with reference to the additional narrative) for violin and piano during 2014, but although the notes the violin played were 'the right ones', the piece did not work, did not capture the character of the narrative and seemed to detune with the timbres. The decision to use vibraphone in this final version radically transformed the soundworld; the atmosphere of the notes (and the combined timbres) now complimented the narrative. The introverted and reflective Postlude was composed from a reductive linear sequence of dyads (3s, 1s and 4s). This half of the sequence was actually removed from its parent piece, so it was very satisfying to be able to utilise the material here. The Interlude acts as a transitional exclamation mark (an emotive ambiguity) and was composed (over the original silence) through conflating fragments of the materials that surrounded it: The space within the circle.

Watching the Sun Set on Another Summer was an enjoyable piece to compose. It is a short 'stocking-filler' designed to lighten the tension in the concert programme and provide a reflective 'breath of fresh air'. It is a warm breeze on a cold day (composed in twelve-tones).

An Infinite Circle is a Straight Line

... Watching the Sun Set on Another Summer ...

Ian Percy

for vibraphone and piano

Prelude: When in doubt, just keep walking forwards ...

1 ♩ = 76 ... watching the curved horizon as the sun sets on another summer ...

[soft beaters] [motor off]
molto rubato, molto espress.

poco rit. [♩ = 60]

Musical score for vibraphone, 4/4 time. The piece begins with a tempo of ♩ = 76 and a dynamic of *p*. It features a melodic line with triplets and slurs. Dynamics progress from *p* to *mp*, then *mf*, and finally *pp*. The score includes a first ending bracket (l.v.) and a *ped. (ad lib. throughout)* instruction.

1 ♩ = 76 ... watching the curved horizon as the sun sets on another summer ...

molto rubato, molto espress.

poco rit. [♩ = 60]

Musical score for piano, 4/4 time. The piece begins with a tempo of ♩ = 76 and a dynamic of *p*. It features a complex accompaniment with triplets and slurs. Dynamics progress from *p* to *mf*, then *f*, and finally *ppp*. The score includes a first ending bracket (l.v.) and a *ped.* instruction.

A ♩ = 72 ... do you recall the time when ...

poco rit.

♩ = 60

B ... watching the sun melt into
a million brilliant colours ...

9

p *mf* *p* *mf sfz* *p*

1.v.

A ♩ = 72 ... do you recall the time when ...

poco rit.

♩ = 60

B ... watching the sun melt into
a million brilliant colours ...

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

8^{va}

8^{vb}

Red.

rit. [♩ = 40]

15

pp mp mf f pp

l.v. l.v.

rit. [♩ = 40]

f pp l.v.

cresc.

8^{va}

Interlude: There are, and will always be, just causes to fight ...

... an ambiguous closure (why would they do that?) ...

2 ♩ = 56 ... a cool breeze ... poco rit. [♩ = 50]

rit.

C ♩ = 40 rit.

molto rubato, molto espress.

solo

21

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

ped. (ad lib. throughout) -----

l.v. *l.v.*

... an ambiguous closure (why would they do that?) ...

2 ♩ = 56 ... a cool breeze ... poco rit. [♩ = 50]

rit.

C ♩ = 40 rit.

molto rubato, molto espress.

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

8vb -----

l.v.

Red.

Postlude: There are, and will always be, vast oceans to explore ...

3 ♩ = 52 ... lost transitions form conclusions: watching the sun set on the final summer ...

molto rubato, molto espress.

27

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

ped. (ad lib. throughout) -----

... nothing lasts forever ...

D ♩ = 56 *poco rit.* ----- [♩ = 40]

3 ♩ = 52 ... lost transitions form conclusions: watching the sun set on the final summer ...

molto rubato, molto espress.

8^{va} -----

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

8^{va} -----

Ped. -----

... nothing lasts forever ...

D ♩ = 56 *poco rit.* ----- [♩ = 40]

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