

Program Notes

Traveling to Australia on a direct flight from Dallas to Sydney during the summer of 2018 constituted a seventeen-hour plane ride that began at 10pm at night. (My longest previous air travel from Houston to London was no preparation for this marathon event in the sky!) I fully expected to come back from the trip with inspiration for a new work; after all, this was my first time to visit the continent. What I did not expect was where the inspiration came from – interestingly, because my husband and I left at 10pm at night and traveled westward, and due to the fact that the earth spins eastward, our plane stayed out of the path of the sunlight until we finally arrived in Sydney at 6am. Ever since, I have found my mind drawn to the idea of how this circumstance is physically achieved. Since typically we all experience the daylight and nighttime as the earth makes its daily rotation, my fascination centers around a plane's ability to move fast enough to not be taken with the atmosphere, but instead, in essence – to chase light.

At the beginning of this work, I imagine ripples of light; an urgent, suspended, undulating chase – each line just behind where another left off. The extended techniques utilized beginning in the second section give what one of my consortium members coined a “secret agent vibe”. As the music progresses, it aims to communicate the ideas of stamina and resistance – all the while building in intensity as the chase continues and ultimately builds to a climax!

Performance Notes

The beginning section aims to communicate ripples of light to the audience as the figures begin to overlap, first in the alto and tenor. To effectively achieve this sound, it is of the upmost importance that the alto, tenor and baritone match each other as evenly as possible. Ensembles may find that the alto needs to play slightly louder than the written dynamic markings, and the baritone needs to play slightly softer so that they match as closely as possible despite their disparate sizes. This resulting minimalist accompaniment part in the three lower saxophones demands much attention to detail.

At m.48 there is a mimicking of the motive from the soprano's melody part. This is another important rippling gesture, and each player should take care to bring out their iteration of the motives as they occur:

The image shows a musical score for measures 48, 49, and 50. The score is written for five staves, likely representing different instruments. The key signature has one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 3/4. Measure 48 is marked with a circled motif in the first staff. Measure 49 features a circled motif in the second staff, with dynamic markings *mf* and *p*. Measure 50 shows a circled motif in the fifth staff, with dynamic markings *p* and *mf*. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

Measure 103 begins the second section in the piece, and utilizes many extended techniques. This point to the end of the work is a giant crescendo, so pay attention to the dynamic level markings throughout to ensure the gaining energy has the most impact. In other words, keep the music very quiet for awhile, and don't get too loud too soon! Some techniques may require a greater amount of effort to achieve the overall balance of dynamic level in a section. For instance, the key clicks in the baritone at m.103 are marked at *ppp*, but the literal effort level of the player may require opening and closing the keys with force. Similarly, the air sounds in the soprano, first appearing at m.106 may require blowing air as hard as possible, even to achieve a *pp* level relative to the ensemble balance. The soprano player should take notice of the circular symbols for air tone, sub tone and normal tone, which are indicated by an open circle, half shaded circle and full shaded circle, respectively.

This musical score snippet shows measures 106, 107, and 108 for three saxophone parts. The Soprano Saxophone part begins in measure 106 with an 'air tone' (open circle) and a 'half tone' (half-shaded circle) marking, followed by a 'play' marking. The dynamics are *ppp* in measure 106, *pp* in measure 107, and *p* and *pp* in measure 108. The Alto Saxophone part features an 'unpitched slap (like a woodblock)' in measure 106, marked *ppp*. The Baritone Saxophone part has a '(leave keys compressed)' marking in measure 106, a '(release keys)' marking in measure 107, and a '(leave keys compressed)' marking in measure 108. The time signature changes from 4/4 to 3/4 between measures 107 and 108.

Some dynamic variation in these lines is expected, as marked with the changing dynamic levels. Note that I have marked an indication for the tenor and baritone to leave the keys compressed or to open them together at certain points. This technique is sometimes combined with slap tonguing, as in m.113. At first glance, the staccato marking may look confusing in combination with the tie that indicates to hold the keys down. Know that the staccato marking address the length of the pitch, and doesn't effect what to do with the fingers.

This musical score snippet shows measures 109, 110, and 111 for two saxophone parts. The Soprano Saxophone part has a 'closed muted pitched slap' in measure 109, marked *ppp* and 'leave keys compressed'. In measure 110, there is a 'release keys' marking. In measure 111, there is a '(keys compressed)' marking. The Alto Saxophone part also has a 'closed muted pitched slap' in measure 109. The time signature changes from 3/4 to 2/4 between measures 110 and 111. The dynamics are *pp* in measure 111.

At m.106 I have indicated a “woodblock slap” for the alto (similar to the effect utilized in Barry Cockcroft’s *Rock us*). This should be as described – a soft, pitched percussive sound, which may be achieved by slapping without keys down and opening the mouth increasingly as the dynamic level grows. The interaction between the woodblock slap in the alto and soprano melodic lines beginning at m.113 will take much attention to precise rhythmic execution.



At m.111 I have indicated a “closed muted pitched slap”. With this I mean for the players to finger notes while keeping the mouth closed, and may sound somewhat similar to string pizzicato. The alto line utilizing this technique at m.137 is a recurring motive that will also need much attention to rhythmic precision especially relative to the overall texture.



At m.158 the baritone should strike the reed with the tongue while performing the key clicks to give a louder, more resonate effect. Take care not to exhale air, so that a literal pitch sounds. At m.170 I have indicated a “pitched slap” first in the alto and tenor (later in the baritone’s part), and at m.189 I have indicated an “open pitched slap”. Both these slaps are a more open slap, but are still pitched and should be fingered. The distinction between the “pitched slap” and “open pitched slap” is simply a dynamic level issue, and may be achieved by tonguing more aggressively for the latter and opening the mouth more.