

Nicolas Chuaqui

Dancing Over the Abyss

for sextet

2021

Dancing Over the Abyss (2021)

During the time I was composing this piece, I had immersed myself in the music of several 1960s and 70s artists, including, primarily, the Grateful Dead and Bob Dylan. I have always been fascinated by the minute fluctuations in tone of voice, pitch, and timing with which these (and many) popular artists seem to communicate in such expressive and individual ways. By using microtonal fluctuations and many patterns that are only loosely determinate in time, I strove to make this piece a testament to the unquantifiable and not-sufficiently-notatable (by my estimation) in music. This scenario also has the quality of giving a certain unpredictability to the music, partially lending the piece its title. More specifically, the feeling described in the title--the sense of a looming emptiness being toyed with--reached me through Dylan and the Grateful Dead ("Desolation Row" and "Brokedown Palace" especially, although they may not seem to have much in common with my piece on the surface).

Instrumentation

Piccolo

Bass Clarinet in B \flat

Percussion (1 player):

2 Suspended Cymbals

2 Toms

Bass Drum (with beaters and rute) in close proximity to cymbals and toms

1 Tubular Bell: G#4

Marimba

Piano

Violin

Violoncello

Durations (approximate): i - 2'10"; ii - 3'10"; iii - 2'10"

Total: approx. 7'30"

Performance Notes

All: Notes of indeterminate duration in the piano and percussion (Movement i, mm. 4 and 17, e.g.) do not affect the tempo and only represent the placement of individual notes within a consistent tempo.

Piccolo:

- Vibrato is desirable unless explicitly marked *senza vibrato*.
- ii, mm. 19-30: The "faint tone" should be less present and can be breathy. "More body" denotes a more luscious, soloistic sound (probably including more vibrato as well). The dashed ties in these passages indicate a very smooth and gradual changing between the two pitches, with ideally both the lower and higher octave notes sounding together where marked.

Bass Clarinet:

- ii, m. 43, 45: Quasi-glissando in the rhythm and shape indicated.

Percussion:

- i, m. 17: Change to E-flat roll placed where it falls graphically in the measure, without affecting global tempo.

Piano:

- i, m. 4, 12-15, and elsewhere: The stemless notes should be placed where they graphically fall in the measure; for example, the F and A in m. 13 fall slightly after beat 1. All rests and stemmed notes are in time as normally notated. The stemless notes also do not speed up or slow down the overall tempo; time continues.
- ii, mm. 41-45: The left-hand cluster is made up of the six pitches previously played in the tremolo (A through D).

Violin:

- i, m. 1: Glissando in the rhythm and shape indicated (slowly at first, then increasing).
- i, m. 2: Glissando in the rhythm and shape indicated, between the same pitches (E-flat and D-quarter-flat).
- ii, mm. 30-33: As in m. 1 of mvmt. i, glissando with the approximate shape indicated (slowly at first, then increasing).

Cello:

- ii, m. 13: Glissando in the rhythm and shape indicated.

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i. Breathe

$\text{♩} = 58 - 63$

Instrumentation and Dynamics:
 Piccolo: Rest
 Bass Clarinet in Bb: Rest
 Percussion: Rest
 Piano: mp , p , pp
 Violin: p , p sub., p sim., ppp , pp sempre, senza vib.
 Violoncello: p , pp sempre

Section 7-9:
 Picc.: pp sempre, senza vib.
 B. Cl.: Rest
 Perc.: Sus. cymbals, To Mar. pp \leftarrow mp
 Pno.: pp , p , p loco, mp
 Vln.: pp , pp , senza vib., pp sempre
 Vc.: pp sempre

14

Picc. *vib. norm.* **18**
mp *poco* *p*

B. Cl. *p* *mp*

Perc. *Marimba* *To B. D. take beaters*
pp

Pno. *(8)* *8va*
pp *mp* *loco* *sempre*

18

Vln. *pp*

Vc. *pp*

21

Picc.

B. Cl.

B. D. *Bass Drum* *take 1 beater and 1 rute*
ppp

Pno. *(8)* *loco* *mf (mp)* *loco*

Vln. *p non dim.* *pp < p* *pp < mp*

Vc. *p non dim.* *pp < p* *pp < mp* *ppp*

attacca

ii. Untitled

$\text{♩} = 60$ 5

Piccolo

Bass Clarinet in B \flat

Bass Drum *(with beater and rute)*
p < f > p *p* \leftarrow *mf* \rightarrow *p* *ppp*

Piano *ppp*

Violin $\text{♩} = 60$ 5

Violoncello *senza vib.* *ppp*

8

Picc.

B. Cl.

B. D. *poco* *poco*

Pno. *poco* *poco*

Vln.

Vc. *cresc.* *fp fp fp* *ppp* *fp fp fp*

14

Picc. *ppp* *ft.*

B. Cl. *f*

B. D. *f p subito* *mf*
side hit (rute)

Pno. *mf p subito* *mf*
(8)

Vln. *pp sempre* 5 5 5 5
without distinct pitch

Vc. *ff* *p* *mp* *f*

19 faint tone → more body *accel.* *A tempo* (♩ = 60)

Picc. *p* *mf* *mp* *mf* *mf* *p* *mf*

B. Cl.

B. D. *l.v. To Tub. bell* *Tubular Bell* *l.v.* *mf*

Pno. (8)

Vln. *19* *accel.* *A tempo* (♩ = 60)

Vc.

accel. . .

25

Picc. *p* faint → more body *mp* *mf* *p* 3

B. Cl.

B. D. Bass Drum (with 2 beaters) *ppp*

Pno. *ppp*

Vln. without distinct pitch *pp sempre* 5 5 5 5 5 5 accel. . .

Vc.

29

30 A tempo flt. ord.

Picc. *f* 3 *ffp*

B. Cl.

B. D. *pp* damp *mf* *ppp*

Pno. *f* *ppp*

30 A tempo ord.

Vln. *p* < *mf* > *p* *sim.*

Vc. pizz. *f* *dim.* *p*

34

Picc. *mp* *< poco > pp* *ft.*

B. Cl.

B. D. *dim.* damp

Pno. *dim.* *p*

Vln. *dim.* arco sul pont.

Vc. *ppp*

41 ♩ = 80

Picc.

B. Cl. *fp* *ff*

Sus. Cym. B. D. *f* Sus. Cym. (high)

Pno. *ff*

Vln. *ff* sul pont. ord.

Vc. *ff*

44 $\text{♩} = 60$

Picc. *noisy multiphonic (unspecified pitch)*

B. Cl. *ff* *damp* *damp*

Sus. Cym. *pp* *ff* *pp* *ppp*

B. D. *pp* *ff* *pp* *ppp*

Pno. *8^{vb}* *p* *pp*

Vln. *ppp*

Vc. *ppp*

iii. Untitled

$\text{♩} = 100$

Piccolo

Bass Clarinet in B \flat *f*

Bass Drum *mf* *mf* *f* *Marimba*

Piano *f marcato*

$\text{♩} = 100$

Violin

Violoncello

8 *poco rit.* *Slightly slower* 12
♩ = 88 - 90

Picc.

B. Cl. *mf* *dim.* *p* *f*

Mar. *pp* *f* *dead stroke* *p* *f*

Pno. *mf* < *f* *mp* *mf* <

poco rit. *Slightly slower* 12
♩ = 88 - 90

Vln. *pizz.*

Vc. *mf* *mp* *mp sempre*

15

Picc.

B. Cl.

Mar. *p* *f* *To B. D.* *p* *f*

Pno. *f* *mp* *mf* < *f* *mp* *mf* < *f*

Vln. *ord.* *pp* *sempre*

Vc.

22 **24**

Picc. *mf* *ft.*

B. Cl.

Mar. *pp* *pp*

Pno. *mp* *mf* *f* *mf* *f* *mf*

f *p* *f* *p* *f*

8vb

Vln. *mf* *pp* *mf*

Vc. *poco f*

28 **32**

Picc. *mf* *ft.*

B. Cl. *p* *p*

B. D. *p* *p* *p* *p* *mf*

Pno. *f* *mf* *f* *mf* *f*

f *p* *f* *p* *f* *p*

(8)

2 Toms
B.D.

32

Vln. *f* *pp* *mf* *pp* *mf* *f* *mp*

Vc. *mp* *f* *p*

arco

33

Picc. *p mp mf*

B. Cl. *p mp mf*

2 Toms
B. D.

Pno. *mf f mf f* *cresc.*

Vln. *mf mp mf f*

Vc. *<f p f mp <f > p <f > p <f > p <f p f*

(8) *Red*

40 *rit.* *Slower, very freely*
♩ = 80
senza vib.

Picc. *f pp*

B. Cl. *f pp*

2 Toms
B. D. *rim clicks* *Marimba* *ppp*

Pno. *f ff* *p*

Vln. *ff*

Vc. *mp <f > p <f*

(8) *Red*

40 *rit.* *Slower, very freely*
♩ = 80

45 rit. 49 ♩ = 60 Tempo I (♩ = 100)

Picc.

B. Cl.

Mar.

Pno.

Vln.

Vc.

mp

mp

ff

pp *mp*

FOR PERUSAL