

THE GREY SKIES THE BLIND

for flute, clarinet, and cello

PRELUDE – PART I

PART II – POSTLUDE

Ben Stonaker

2007

The Grey Skies the Blind was written for Mark Stauffer and Rebecca Ashe, completed in October 2007 in Kansas City, Missouri. The work was started as a reaction to a short story titled “Beautiful Story About.” – written by Stanley Donwood (from a collection of stories titled “Partly Mechanical, Hardly Human.”). The structure of the work eventually became directly attached to my reaction to the story in two different ways. Initially, I started imagining detailed images associated with the wide variety of sounds described in the story until I found myself coming up with some kind of background music I felt could accompany the images in my mind. Some of the images were directly related to the visual aspects in the story, but they were mostly unrelated and were images I realized only in reaction to the specific sounds described. This led to picking out several words found throughout the story that I attempted to develop into musical gestures and ideas somehow (i.e. muffled, crunchy, grinding, scraping, crying, talking, marching, laughing, squawking, spluttering, hissing, whirring). Breaking apart the story in this way also led me to the title of the piece when I took the phrase “the grey skies the blind” completely out of context and felt that it would be a perfect fit.

Even though there is considerably strong extra-musical inspiration for this work, I do not believe it is necessary for the audience to be aware of any of it before listening. Whether or not program notes are available to the audience prior to performance is entirely up to the performers. Performers may also choose to read the story aloud to the audience before the performance – this was the case with the first performance of the work (with my permission).

Beautiful Story About. (by Stanley Donwood)

There's just the muffled crunchy sound of teeth grinding and scraping of boots on tarmac or something and a noise far away that maybe is someone crying or a cat and everything moves a bit in the wind but there isn't any noise of that sort of thing. There's a tape on of people talking about probably nothing important at a restaurant and a marching sound that's a bit like a lot of soldiers and a bit like a wheel rubbing against metal but it might not be a tape it's hard to tell. And everyone's run out of jokes because no-ones laughing at anything although they probably would if they had a sense of humour. Probably nothing important. Just a noise in the dark when you're half asleep something behind the curtains don't look its nothing don't look honestly its nothing. Maybe it's the town you live in making these noises or maybe it's you. Just a million mobiles and modems squawking and spluttering and hissing like piss on a fire like a million gallons of piss on an inferno just think of that eh? Just think of that. Vertebrae being sawn apart sounds like this.

And when I opened the curtains they were taking the set away and packing up for the day, the cameras and lights turned off. The darkness replaced with striplights and the grey skies the blind whirring of machinery.

I'd like to write a beautiful story about love:

The instrumentation is for C Flute, B-flat Clarinet, and Violoncello. The score is transposed. Staging is not specific – the performers should arrange the chairs on stage in the most comfortable setup so that they can communicate clearly.

Duration is approximately 15 minutes.

Notes to performers: The piece is divided into two large parts, each of which is then divided into two sections without break. The Prelude is marked *deliberately* and must be played as rhythmically precise as possible. Cues are included in the individual parts to assist with unusual juxtapositions of rhythms. Part I is also very rhythmic – and a direct modulation of tempo from the Prelude. Part II makes use of key clicks and other special techniques that are explained in the score. Each technique is also explained in detail in each of the corresponding parts. Performers should pay close attention to detail with articulations and dynamic markings. These have been carefully calculated and must be followed for the overall effect to be clear to the audience. When marked *rubato*, the performers are encouraged to make adjustments to the tempo when they feel it makes sense musically. Do not hesitate to add changes in tempo in these sections – especially in the Postlude.

The Grey Skies the Blind

for flute, clarinet, and cello

Ben Stonaker

PRELUDE

Deliberately, always very steady ♩ = c.108

The musical score is arranged in three systems, each containing staves for Flute (Fl.), Clarinet in Bb (Cl.), and Cello (Vc.).

System 1 (Measures 1-4):
- **Flute:** Starts with a whole rest, then plays a melodic line with dynamics *mp sempre*, *poco mf*, *mp*, and *p*.
- **Clarinet:** Plays a low register accompaniment with dynamics *ppp*, *ppp*, *ff*, *ppp*, and *p*.
- **Cello:** Plays a rhythmic accompaniment with dynamics *sfz*, *mp*, *sfz*, *ff*, *f*, and *p*.
- **Tempo/Performance:** Includes markings like *al tallone*, *pizz.*, and *arco*.

System 2 (Measures 5-8):
- **Flute:** Continues the melodic line with dynamics *mp*, *mp*, *mf*, *mp*, and *ff*.
- **Clarinet:** Accompaniment with dynamics *ppp*, *mp*, *ppp*, *p*, *mp*, *ff*, *ff*, *f*, *p*, and *ff*.
- **Cello:** Accompaniment with dynamics *sfz*, *p*, *mf*, *p*, *ff*, *sfz*, *sfz*, *p*, *f*, *ff*, and *sfz*.
- **Tempo/Performance:** Includes markings like *poco a poco*, *slap/strike all strings*, *arco*, *pizz.*, and *flutter*.

System 3 (Measures 9-12):
- **Flute:** Melodic line with dynamics *f*, *p*, *mp*, *poco mf*, *p*, and *mp*.
- **Clarinet:** Accompaniment with dynamics *ppp*, *poco a poco*, *fff*, *p*, *pp*, *mf*, and *fff*.
- **Cello:** Accompaniment with dynamics *sfz*, *mf*, *pp*, *mp*, *f*, *ff*, *sfz*, and *sim.*.
- **Tempo/Performance:** Includes markings like *without vibrato*, *(cresc. as much as possible)*, and *arco*.

13

(ord.)

* breath attacks
(in rhythm)

Fl.

Cl.

Vc.

19

pitch bend

breath attacks

Fl.

Cl.

Vc.

26

breath attacks

Fl.

Cl.

Vc.

slap/strike
all strings

arco

pizz.

arco

pizz.

*Breath attacks are used throughout as a technique that should sound similar to vibrato, but with a specific rhythm. These "attacks" are not meant to be accented in any way, there should merely be a slight break in the sound between any note with the stacc./tenuto articulation.

**The clarinet "fake" fingerings refer to the throat-tone fingering of written B \flat . This is achieved by playing a normal B \flat (A key plus register key) and adding one of the top two side keys (or both, depending on the instrument). It is understood that the intonation will be off when using this fingering. It is possible to "overblow" at the 12th using these same fingerings to achieve the high F \sharp .

31

Fl. flutter *pp mp p mp < f f p mf > p* *mf sff mp*

Cl. flutter *ff ppp p f pp ff mf sff mp*

Vc. (slap) arco *ff sfz* pizz. (slap) arco *mf sfz mp molto ff sfz* pizz. (snap) dampen immediately *ff* (do not let ring)

35

Fl. *pp p mp espr. mf poco*

Cl. *pp p ppp arco ppp molto ff*

Vc. *mf p sfz mp arco sfz ff*

39

Fl. without vibrato pitch bend (ord.) *p mp*

Cl. *pp ff ppp mp pp ppp*

Vc. arco *ff* *poco a poco* sul pont. pizz. *mp* arco *sfz*

43

Fl. breath attacks *mp pp mp pp p mp pp*

Cl. *ff > ppp pp p ppp*

Vc. *ff pp mp p sempre*

48

Fl. *mf* *pp* *mp* *pp* *mf* *pp* *mp*

Cl. *mf* *pp* *mp* *pp* *mf* *pp* *p* *sempre*

Vc. *mf*

breath attacks

3 3 3

5 5

52

Fl. *mf* *p* *p* *pp* *p*

Cl. *p* *ppp* *p*

Vc. *p* *mf* *p*

3 3

PART I

Quickly, hurriedly ♩ = c.144

57

Fl. *p* *mf* *p* *mp* *mf*

Cl. *ppp* *p* *mf* *p* *mp* *p*

Vc. *p* *mf* *p*

(♩. → ♩)

3 3 3

62

Fl. *mp* *f*

Cl. *mp* *mp* *mf* *ff* *mp*

Vc. *f*

flutter

(let ring)

3 3 3 3

66

Fl. *mp* *p*

Cl. *ff* *mp* *p*

Vc. *mf espr.* arco

Measures 66-69: Flute and Clarinet parts feature complex rhythmic patterns with triplets and slurs. The Flute starts at *mp* and moves to *p*. The Clarinet starts at *ff* and moves to *mp* and then *p*. The Violoncello part is marked *mf espr.* and includes the instruction *arco*.

70

Fl. *f* *mp*

Cl. *f* *mp*

Vc. *ff* *mf espr.*

Measures 70-73: Flute and Clarinet parts feature complex rhythmic patterns with quintuplets and slurs. The Flute starts at *f* and moves to *mp*. The Clarinet starts at *f* and moves to *mp*. The Violoncello part is marked *ff* and *mf espr.*.

74

Fl. *mf*

Cl. *mf*

Vc. *ff* *mf* *ff*

Measures 74-77: Flute and Clarinet parts feature complex rhythmic patterns with triplets and slurs. The Flute is marked *mf*. The Clarinet is marked *mf*. The Violoncello part is marked *ff*, *mf*, and *ff*.

78

Fl. *f*

Cl. *f*

Vc. *mf* *ff sempre*

Measures 78-81: Flute and Clarinet parts feature complex rhythmic patterns with triplets and quintuplets. The Flute is marked *f*. The Clarinet is marked *f*. The Violoncello part is marked *mf* and *ff sempre*, with the instruction *détaché*.

82

Fl.

Cl.

Vc.

ff

ff

86

Fl.

Cl.

Vc.

sfz *f* *ff*

sfz *f* *ff*

91

Fl.

Cl.

Vc.

pitch bend

mp *fff* *p* *ff*

fff

97

Fl.

Cl.

Vc.

pitch bend ("smear") if possible

ff *fff*

mp pizz.

102

Fl. *p* breath attacks

Cl. *p* breath attacks

Vc. *p* sul G

108

Fl. *p* sempre, molto espr.

Cl. *pp* sempre, molto espr.

112

116

121

126

Fl. *mf* *p*

Cl. *mf* *p*

Vc. *mf* *mp*

131

Fl. *mf* *pp* *mp espr.*

Cl. *mf* *pp* *mf* *pp* *mf*

Vc. (accent downbeats)

135

Fl. *mf* *f*

Cl. *pp* *p* *ff*

Vc. *ff*

140

Fl. *ff* *fff* *fff*

Cl. *pp* *ff* *p* *f* *fff* *fff* *molto stacc.*

Vc. *fffz* *fffz* *p* *pizz.* *sfz* *ff* *arco* *mp*

overblow

(high-low)

144

Fl. *mp* *pp* wide vibr. flutter 3 3 pitch bend

Cl. *p* *pp* *mp* *pp* *f* use "fake" fingering for B \flat (throat tone) flutter no flutter *sul pont.*

Vc. *f* *pp*

149

Fl. *ff* *mp* wide vibr. breath attacks

Cl. *ff* *f* *ff* *mp* *p* *mf* breath attacks 3 3 3

Vc. *sfz* *ff* *f* *mp* arco (ord.) (slap) pizz.

154

Fl. *mf* *p* *mf* *p* *mp* *espr.* *mf* *mp* *mf*

Cl. *p* *mf* *mf* *p* *mp* *mf* *p*

Vc. *f*

159

Fl. *f*

Cl. *mf* *f*

Vc. (gliss. as high as possible)

164

Fl. *ff* *mf < f*

Cl.

Vc. *f*

arco

170

Fl. *ff* *mf* *roll flute to bend pitch, ad lib. actual pitches between bends*

Cl. *pp* *f* *mf > pp*

Vc. *ff* *p* *mf* *p* *f* *rebow as needed, as smooth as possible*

176

Fl. *mp* *fff* *sempre as loudly as possible, overblow, breathy*

Cl. *p* *ff* *fffz*

Vc. *p* *ff* *fffz*

rit. poco a poco

181

Fl. *ffffz*

Cl.

Vc. *mp* *f* *mf*

highest possible pitch (at the very end of the fingerboard)
punta d'arco
col legno batt.

ric.

(use the very tip of the wood of the bow and lightly tap)

$\text{♩} = \text{c.}72$

PART II

Moderately ♩ = c.72

186

Fl. *key slaps *mp* *sempre*

Cl. *key/hole slaps *mp* *sempre*

Vc. arco sul G *p* gliss. *mf* lightly, off the string *p* sul pont. gliss.

189

Fl.

Cl.

Vc. *mf* *mp* pizz. behind the bridge (pizz.)

192

Fl. air/breath only, no pitch flutter *ff* *ppp* *sfpp* *mf*

Cl. (mostly air/slap sounds) *ff* *pppp* *mp* *f* *p*

Vc. arco *f* *pp* pizz. *mp*

*The key/hole slaps in the clarinet and flute parts are indicated by an "x" on the notehead. This effect is executed by striking the keys or slapping the holes with as much force as the performer is comfortable with - in order to make a loud, percussive sound. The relative sound of the slaps will not be very loud, but the performers should strike the keys/holes in this manner to obtain the loudest possible sound the instrument will make. The small numbers above each grouping (for clarinet only) indicate the fingers which should be used to "slap" - these also refer to fingerings for quarter tones. Each slapped pitch is followed by a note that is performed by raising the fingers specified while still fingering the previous note (except in the case of low G and B \flat). All fingerings refer to left hand 1-2-3 and right hand 4-5-6. The flute should finger the written pitches as usual. There should be no breath/tongue accent on the slapped pitches. Also note that the printed dynamic markings are for the air stream and overall dynamic of the grouping - but excludes the slap. Every slap should be played as loudly and as percussive as possible. This gesture will become very tiring, but always make an attempt to play exactly in rhythm as the most important sound resulting from this gesture is the underlying slapped rhythm (i.e. during a stream of 32nd notes, the audience's attention should be drawn to the underlying layer of steady 16th note slaps). When the written dynamic is relatively soft, the air/slap sounds are more important than any written pitches.

194

pitch bend (approx. 1/4 tone down/up)

Fl. *mf* *p* flutter *mf* *mp* *f*

Cl. *f* *p* *f* *p* *ff*

Vc. *f* *mp* *f* *arco* *mf*

197

Fl. *sfpp*

Cl. *pppp* *pp*

Vc. *p* *mf*

mostly air/slap sounds

199

Fl. *mf*

Cl. *mf*

Vc. *ff*

201

Fl. *f* *mp* *f*

Cl. *f* *mp* *f*

Vc. *pizz.* *mf*

overblow ord. overblow

203

Fl. *ff* *mf* *f* *mp* *f* *ff* *mp* *f* *ff*

Cl. *f* *fff* wildly *arco sul pont.*

Vc. *f* *fff*

sim. *flutter*

205

Fl. *fff* *f* *fff* *mf* *ff*

Cl. *mf* *gliss. "smear" long and exaggerated*

Vc. *sfz* (bounce off the strings) *sim.*

5-6 *12*

207

Fl. *ff* *fff* *p*

Cl. *fff* use *gliss.* and pitch bends when possible

Vc. *f* molto stacc.

210

Fl. *mp* *p*

Cl. *mp* *pizz.* *p*

Vc. *fffz* *mf* sempre

212

Fl.

Cl.

Vc.

215

Fl.

Cl.

Vc.

pp

ppp

key clicks, hole slaps only

218 *rit. poco a poco*

Fl.

Cl.

Vc.

p

pp

mp

whistle tone

remove mouthpiece and barrel

arco

pp

mp

$\text{♩} = \text{c.52 or slower, freely, molto rubato}$

222

Fl.

Cl.

Vc.

p

pp

pppp

p

mf

ppp

without vibrato

flutter

remove head joint

play only the mouthpiece and barrel (approximate pitch notated) wide vibr.

*bite the reed

play as softly and hold as steady as possible breathe when necessary

*When asked to bite the clarinet reed, the performer should simply take in more mouthpiece and lightly press the lower teeth against the middle of the reed, allowing only a very small portion of the reed to vibrate, producing an extremely high partial. With some practice it is possible to find the approximate pitch shown - which is normally two octaves higher than the open pitch of the mouthpiece and barrel alone. The pitch should vary depending on the performer, the reed, and the setup. Performers who use teeth pads or denture pads will find that this "squeak" is easier to achieve and is often more stable.

226 *quasi slide whistle* (head joint only) *ppp*

"giggle" into tone hole

repeat the exact gesture - attempt to play the same way on each repetition

play and giggle as quietly as possible (should sound very distant, crouch behind the music stand or turn away from the audience)

re-attack as indicated, each attack may result in a different pitch or timbre

sul A

repeat the exact gesture - attempt to play the same way on each repetition

ppp Scratch tone, very heavy bow pressure. Pull the bow slowly, with unsteady jerks, as quietly as possible - use only the middle of the bow and find the best bow placement (near the bridge, fingerboard, or in between) that results in the least amount of pitch. The bow hairs should touch the bow. The resulting sound should be similar to snoring, sawing, or teeth grinding, but should remain soft throughout. The written rhythm is only given to show an example of the desired sound (*ad lib*).

230

replace head joint

replace mouthpiece and barrel

ord.

p

POSTLUDE

Moderately slow, *molto rubato sempre* ♩ = c.60

235

without vibrato

pp *mp* *pp*

slow, wide vibr.

mp *espr.*

mp *espr.*

240

mp *espr.*

ord.

wide vibr.

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

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

245

Fl. *mf* *pp* *mp*

Cl. *mf* *p* *mf*

Vc. *pp* *f* *mf* *pp* *mp* *mf* *p*

251

Fl. *pp* *mp* *mp espr.*

Cl. *pp* *mf* *pp subito* *mp* *p espr.*

Vc. *mp* *p* *p espr.* *mp*

257

Fl. *mf*

Cl. *p* *pp*

Vc. *p* *mp* *p* *mf* *pp*

rit. poco a poco

Slower and broader ♩ = c.52

262

Fl. *f espr. (no accents)*

Cl. *f espr. (no accents)*

Vc. *f espr.*

267

Fl. *ff* *poco rit.*

Cl. *ff* remove mouthpiece and barrel

Vc. *ff* *poco a poco* *sul pont.* (no accent)

Freely, molto rubato, always very slowly ♩ = 72-80

273

Fl. *mp* without vibrato take your time and use pitch bends as much as possible wide, slow vibr.

Cl. *mp*

Vc. (let ring)

***Play independently and asynchronously to the end**

278

Fl. *mp* approximate dynamic level (attempt to play as quietly as possible) Sing square shape notes into flute while playing. Try to match the actual pitch, but do not match exactly, sing slightly out of tune in order to get the most waves out of the sound.

Cl. *mp* approximate dynamic level (attempt to play as quietly as possible) buzz on upper joint, as if playing a brass instrument

Vc. *mp* approximate dynamic level (attempt to play as quietly as possible) bow tailpiece (for longer durations, rebow as needed)

*From measure 280 until the end the performers should play their parts independently - asynchronous from each other. Each line should still be very slow and expressive, maintaining an eighth note beat around 72-80bpm, but performers need not rigorously count rests and durations to line up with each other. This will result in different endings for each performance - i.e. each line has the possibility of going on longer or shorter than written. Each performer should play their line until the end and then stop and wait for the others; however, in all cases the flute must be the last sound heard.

Fl.

Cl.

Vc.

Fl.

Cl.

Vc.

poco

Fl.

Cl.

Vc.

poco *pp*

gradually fade out (as much as possible)

gradually fade out (as much as possible)

let the sung pitch fade out until only the pitch played on the flute is heard

play pitch only (without singing) without vibrato

niente
(this should be the only sound at the end of the piece - hold and breathe as necessary if the others have not reached the end)