SI JI TU

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ABSTRACT

Marilyn Shrude, Advisor

In partial fulfillment of the Master of Music degree in Composition, I composed *Spring*, a stand-alone movement from what will be a four-movement work for orchestra (3-3-3-2, 4-3-3-1, percussion, harp, strings). *Spring* is approximately seven minutes in length and draws inspiration from the ancient Chinese visual art form *Si Ji Tu*.

In *Si Ji Tu*, four paintings of the same scene are placed side-by-side, each representing one of the four seasons. The images not only differ in season, but also in perspective. Often times each scene is viewed from a different angle; others have small, but noticeable differences from one season to the next, such as a displaced tree or the absence of a rock. *Spring* will be one of four movements in *Si Ji Tu* - the others, of course, being the remaining three seasons. As in the art form, all four movements will have similar materials used in different ways.

*Spring* reflects upon the concept of growth from nothingness to life teeming with energy. The piece begins on e₄ glissing upward to f♯₄, with e₄ being reiterated. This alludes to *gu xing* (Chinese zither) repertoire, where there is interplay between same-note pitches on open and closed strings. The harmonic language consists of two hexachords, each being the first six pitches of the major scale, a tritone apart. This pattern begins on f₄ and b₄, but is transposed throughout the composition. In this way, the aggregate is presented in a manner that alludes to Chinese pentatonicism. (Chinese pentatonicism only has five pitches, those being scale degrees one, two, three, five, and six from the major scale. A fourth is added here so that the twelve-pitch aggregate can be completed.) The two distant hexachords battle for prominence, thus increasing tension. Each note of the hexachord is played by a different instrument; the brass play the first hexachord and the woodwinds have its compliment, while the strings double all pitches.

Growth is also reflected harmonically through the use of a chromatic cluster that begins with three pitches and increases to a two-octave cluster by the end of the piece. Expansion of the cluster is controlled through exponential means; the interval of time between changes becomes smaller and smaller as the piece progresses. This cluster will be passed between sections of the orchestra and will resonate with the melody and/or rhythm. If the melodic material is sharp and disjunct, the cluster will be likewise.

*Spring* has many small sections, each one growing in intensity and volume. In this way, each part alludes to the overall form of the piece. *Crescendo/decrescendo with accelerando/ritard* connects each division. Each section will isolate a musical element: the section containing the major-second theme is melodic; the section with hexachords is based on harmony; the transitions are primarily structured around rhythm; and lastly, a section is text-based. In this section, different choirs of the orchestra chant *Li Li Yuan Chuang Tsao*, a Chinese poem from the *Tang* dynasty that addresses the cyclical nature of the seasons and the beauty of spring. The piece ends with the statement of e₄-to-f♯₄ in a full orchestral unison, followed by a soft imitative section which grows and disappears played by strings and woodwinds.
To my wife, Clare Hu, and my daughter, ShayAr
Performance Notes

Instrumentation
2.2.2.2/4.2.2.1/percussion/harp/strings

Percussion section
Timpani: 29-inch, 26-inch
Percussion 1: vibraphone, bass drum
Percussion 2: suspended cymbal, marimba

Mallets
Soft, medium, and hard yarn mallets
Soft, medium, and hard timpani mallets
Soft, medium, and hard bass drum mallets

Accidentals
Accidentals carry throughout measure.
All accidentals and accidental cancellations are notated in boxes.

Harmonics
All harmonics sound at pitch, except in the double bass part, where harmonics sound an octave below notated pitch.

Divisi
A divisi of two is required in all string parts. Two staves are used in all cases of divisi.
Whenever two or more notes are placed together on the same staff in the strings, it is a double/triple stop.

Circles indicate niente.

Pattern continues on next page.

When figure is given as noteheads only, play in random order at indicated speed.

When figure is beamed, play notes in order at indicated speed.

When rhythmic figure is indicated above the box, play the given notes in random order emphasizing that rhythmic figure.

Text
All text is spoken with an unvoiced whisper. Guidelines for boxes apply as indicated above.

Score is untransposed.