BENEATH THE UNIVERSAL STRIFE, THE HIDDEN HARMONY IN ALL THINGS

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ABSTRACT

Elainie Lillios, Advisor

...beneath the universal strife, the hidden harmony of all things... is a single movement, twelve minute composition for percussion trio and live, interactive electronics. Its three percussionists play an assortment of traditional and non-traditional percussion instruments with various implements including, sticks, mallets, brushes, metal dowels, and thimbles. The electronic element consists of real-time live processed, and fixed pre-composed sounds sourced from recordings of percussion sounds and vocal drones.

Cast in three main sections, this piece includes musical ideas that represent order, clarity and harmony juxtaposed with contrasting ideas that represent chaos and dissonance. In the opening section, contrapuntal, articulate drum and metal gestures combine with sung vocal intonations and droning electronics to create a calm, undulating texture. A contrasting second section employs bowed metals to create a sustained stillness. The third section begins with vocal hums and sustained bowed metals that develops using rhythmic and melodic motives from the previous sections.

The melodic language of …beneath the universal strife, the hidden harmony in all things... is derived from an opening motive utilizing the set 6-z12 [TE0146]. This motive is augmented structurally and rhythmically throughout the piece becoming a foundation for the piece’s global harmonic language.

Rhythmic motives play an important role in this piece, particularly in the form of a dotted rhythm that eschews the quarter note pulse. This syncopated rhythm assumes a variety of roles in
the piece, acting as an agitator, cohesive element and generative germ for the piece’s rhythmic material.

...beneath the universal strife, the hidden harmony in all things... is the natural evolution of my work of integrating electronics with percussion. It has also allowed me to explore pairing electronics with an ensemble of acoustic instruments using techniques that are new to my musical language.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Technical Diagrams

Mix Position

Performers

Mic
Mic
Mic
Mic

Stage

Multi-Channel Audio Interface

Live Electronics (L/R)

Fixed Electronics (L/R)

Amplified Percussion

In House Mixer

Trigger patch with USB foot Pedal or via computer space bar

USB Foot Pedal

Laptop

Stage Position

Performers

Mic
Mic
Mic
Mic

Stage

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Instrumentation

Percussion I
5 Octave Marimba
Large Concert Bass Drum (shared with P3)
Small Bass Drum
Large Tam-Tam (shared with P3)
1 Octave Crotale (low)
5 Temple Blocks
Opera Gong
Implements: Bass Bow, Yarn Mallets, Sticks, Triangle Beaters, Brass Mallets

Percussion II
Vibraphone
Glockenspiel
2 Octaves Crotale
Almglocken (C, C#, D#, E, F#, G#, A#)
Brake Drum
3 Metal Bowls (or other non-resonant metals)
Chinese Gong (shared with P3)
Implements: 2 Bass Bows, Hard Yarn Mallets, Soft Yarn Mallets, Chopsticks, Knitting Needles, Sticks, Metal Thimbles

Percussion III
6 Drums of various sizes
4 Cymbals of various styles
4 Metal Bowls (or other non-resonant metals)
Large Concert Bass Drum (shared with P1)
Large Tam-Tam (shared with P1)
Chinese Gong (shared with P2)
Implements: Bundle Sticks, Heavy Brushes, Metal Thimbles, Sticks, Metal Dowels, Chopsticks
Performance Notes
-Accidentals carry through the measure that they appear, and do not transfer the octave.
-Percussion II and III each call for “Non-Resonant Metals” that may be sourced from whatever is available (e.g. bowls, pots, pans, cowbells, zilbells, etc.).
-Percussion III calls for “6 Drums, Various” which may be sourced from whatever is available as long as they are graduated in size.
-Percussion III calls for “Cymbals, Various” which may be sourced from whatever is available. Specific cymbals are called upon in certain circumstance, but may be substituted with another cymbal if they are not available.
-It may assist Percussion I to have loose crotales available for bowing.
-Vibrphone is pedaled based on note length.
-Players should let all cymbals, crotales, and tam-tams vibrate, unless otherwise marked.

Technical Requirements:
-Requires a Macintosh computer running OSX with at least 4 GB RAM, and Cycling 74’s Max/MSP Version 7.
-Obtain the patch from the composer at briansearsdrum@gmail.com
-Audio interface with at least 4 microphone preamps and at least 4 line outputs.
-One USB foot pedal set to trigger with spacebar (if using in stage position).
-Four cardioid condenser microphones.
-At least 2 loudspeakers setup in stereo configuration.
-Electronics may be triggered by the conductor or Percussion III via USB foot pedal, or by a sound engineer at the mix position via computer spacebar.

Notational Conventions

- Scrape Tam-Tam with implement
- Strike Tam-Tam with stick/dowel or thimble
- Strike Tam-Tam with side of stick/dowel or thimble
- Non-Resonant Metal
- Resonant Metal
- Vary speed of rolls with dynamics
- Repeat same note
- Play any notes
- Play any instruments at random, growing in density and dynamics.
...beneath the universal strife, the hidden harmony in all things...

Shimmering Calm △84

Percussion I

Percussion II

Percussion III

Electronics

*Vary speed of scraping or rolls with the dynamics (scrape faster with crescendo, slower with diminuendo).
Like a Gathering Rain Storm

[Music notation diagram]
Perfect Balance and Order

\[ \text{26} \]