

Samuel Messer

# strange calligraphy

for sextet

# Notes

## Co-ordination & balance

The piece has no score; as such throughout the piece there is no directly metred co-ordination between parts (though occasionally players may begin playing simultaneously).

Rehearsal marks are not shared between parts; these serve just to highlight the different sections within each individual part.

Each player is equipped with a stopwatch – these should be started simultaneously & discreetly by all players prior to beginning.

Individual performers follow the boxed text to indicate points at which they should start, move on to new material, and stop. The effect should be 'collage-like', with gradual shifts in timbre, tonality, and dynamic providing a continuously shifting sonic landscape.

Despite the lack of rhythmic co-ordination, players are asked throughout to remain alert and establish certain relationships between their part and others. It is essential that the performers pay close attention to the balance between foreground/background as indicated in the parts & attached Timeline.

## 'Emergent lines'

Certain instruments (Alto Flute, Clarinet and, later, Violin) develop their part by way of 'emergent lines', with the desired effect being that of organic growth & gradual expansion. Performance of these sections is as follows:

- 1) Play ① and repeat ad lib. Next, play ① + ②, and repeat ad lib., then ① + ② + ③ and repeat ad lib., and so on.
- 2) Use the rough timings outlined in the boxed text to indicate when you should proceed on to the next section. Never cut a phrase short to move on to the next section, and do not rush – the desired effect is of a gradual & irregular movement from section to section. The timings are approximate only.

## General

All parts are transposed as appropriate.

Accidentals apply throughout the bar, though in certain cases cautionary accidentals have been applied.

**Duration: c. 6'.**

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**A: 0'30"**

'Emergent line' - see notes.

♩ = c. 48 - 52; pale, hesitant

*a little in the foreground; blend with clarinet*

Alto Flute

① *p* < poco > *p*

② *p* < poco >

③ *p* < poco a poco sostenuto > *mp*

④ *p* < mp > *sp*

⑤ *p* < mp > *p* < poco >

c. 2' - 2'45"  
finish phrase

**B**

'Emergent line' - see notes.

♩ = c. 60; melodic, becoming warmer

*as before; in dialogue with clarinet and, later, violin*

① *p*

② *p* < poco > *p* 3 < poco >

③ *mp* < p >

④ *p* < pp > 3 < mp >

⑤ *p* < poco >

almost an echo

3'45"  
finish phrase

**TACET**

**C: 4'15"**

'Emergent line' - see notes. 'Fade in' over cello.

♩ = c. 48 - 52; pale, hesitant

*still in foreground; blend with violin*

① *p* 3

② *p* 3

③ *pp* 3 < p >

④ *pp* < poco >

⑤ *pp* 3 < poco >

5'45"  
finish phrase

**TACET\*** ||

\*Piece ends when all are silent.

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**A: 0'10"**

♩ = c. 40; brittle, conversational  
a little in the foreground; as a monologue

**pizz.** **mp** **mp** **poco** **mp** **p** **poco** **mf** **mp** **mp** **poco** **mf** **p** **mp**

**poco mosso** **a tempo**  
with much resonance

*spacious* *poco a poco lontano...*

**mp** **poco** **mf** **p** **mp** **poco** **p** **pp** **TACET**

**B: 3'25"**

♩ = c. 40; brittle, conversational  
gradually displacing AFI/CI/Vln, becoming soloist  
pizz., letting open strings ring where possible

**p** **mf** **mp** **p** **mp** **p** **mf** **poco** **mp** **poco** **mf** **mp** **mfz**

**poco agitato** **gradually retreat into background** **a tempo**  
as other instruments return *spacious* *poco a poco lontano...*

**p** **mf** **mp** **mfz** **mp** **p** **poco** **p** **mp** **> p** **p** **pp** **TACET\***

*gliss.*

\*Piece ends c. 5'45 - 6', when all are silent.

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**A: 0'30"**

'Emergent line' - see notes.

♩ = c. 52-54; **pale, rocking gently**  
*a little in the foreground; blend with alto flute*

Clarinet in Bb

① *p* ② *p* ③ *pp* < *p* ④ *mp poco* — *p* *più cantabile* ⑤ *pp* ③ *mp* ③ *pp*

⑥ *pp* ③ *mp* > *p ten.* ⑦ *p* ③ *mp* < *sp, ten.* **c. 2' - 2'45"**

**B**

'Emergent line' - see notes.

♩ = c. 60; **melodic, becoming warmer**  
*in the foreground; in dialogue with alto flute and, later, violin*

① *p* — *poco* ② *p* ③ *mp* ③ *poco* ④ *mp* ③ *poco* *mf* ④ *mp* ③ *poco*

⑤ *almost an echo* *p* **3'45"** finish phrase **TACET\*** ||

\*Piece ends c. 5'45 - 6', when all are silent.

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**A: 0'00"**

Repeat indefinitely.

**senza misura; ad lib.**

*in the background; ambient, detached*

Sizzle cymbal

large, soft beater & 'fizz'\*

Percussion

*p*

\* Hold an unfolded paperclip (or light triangle beater) on the edge of cymbal, then strike with a large, soft beater. Keep holding the paperclip/triangle beater to the edge whilst the cymbal rings on.

1'30"

**B**

Repeat indefinitely.

♩ = c. 48 - 52

*in the background; ambient, whispering quality*

Sizzle cymbal

sim.

*p sim.*

Snare drum

with brushes; circular motion

*p*

slowly blend  
with cymbal

2'45"

**C**

Repeat indefinitely.

♩ = c. 40

*emerging slightly; as a drone*

Bass drum

near centre → edge → near centre → edge

*ppp* *pp*

4'20"

**D**

Repeat indefinitely,  
varying ad lib.

♩ = c. 32; **molto lento**

*moving in and out of background, cymbal colouring flute & violin line*

Bass drum

*ppp*

Suspended cymbal

arco

*pp*

5'15"

**E**

Repeat indefinitely,  
varying ad lib.

♩ = c. 32; **molto lento**

*whispering in background*

Suspended cymbal

arco

*ppp*

5'45" → TACET\*\*

\*\*Finish phrase, then TACET.  
Piece ends when all are silent.

Piano

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**A: 0'05"**

Repeat indefinitely.

♩ = c. 48 - 52; chiming softly  
in the background; colouring violin line

Piano

*p brittle* *pp* *p* *pp*

*8va* *8va* *8va* *(loco)*

Ped. sempre throughout

*pp poco* *pp*

*8va*

*p*

*8va*

(Vln. cue: moving to here from extreme-high register)

finish phrase **TACET**

**B: 4'35"**

Repeat indefinitely.

$\text{♩} = \text{c. } 48 - 52$ ; **chiming softly**  
*in the background; colouring percussion*

The musical score consists of two systems of two staves each. The first system includes dynamic markings *p poco*, *p*, *pp*, and *pp*. It features a *8va* marking with a dashed line and a slur over a triplet. The second system includes a *pp* marking and a *8va* marking with a dashed line. The piece concludes with a **TACET\*** instruction and a double bar line. An arrow points to the **TACET\*** instruction with the text "5'45" finish phrase".

\*Piece ends when all are silent.



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**A: 0'15"**

Choose bars to perform *ad lib.*, in any order desired. Repeat as necessary until cue.

**♩ = c. 72; thin, fleeting**

*in the background; emerging from piano resonance*

Violin

8<sup>va</sup>

gliss.

3

3

ppp

mp

p sotto voce

pp sotto voce

gliss.

gliss.

3

poco

ppp

p poco

ppp

8<sup>va</sup>

(quasi trill)

tr

gliss.

gliss.

gliss.

p sotto voce

3

poco

pp

8<sup>va</sup>

tr

gliss.

gliss.

ppp

p poco

ppp

(A. Fl. & Cl. both varying the below)

c. 2' - 2'45"

**B**

'Emergent line' - see notes.

**♩ = c. 60; melodic, a little warm**

*a little in the foreground; in dialogue with AFl.*

① flautando

② flaut. sim.

③

mp dolce

mp <

mp

mp

poco >

p

3'45" → TACET  
finish phrase

**C: 4'15"**

'Emergent line' - see notes.  
'Fade in' over cello.

**♩ = c. 48 - 52; pale, hesitant**

*still in foreground; blend with AFl.*

pp senza vib.

poco

pp <

poco >

pp <

poco >

pp <

poco >

pp <

poco >

pp <

poco >

5'45" → TACET\* ||  
finish phrase

\*Piece ends when all are silent.