

Samuel Messer

thanksong

for small orchestra

thanksong (2020)

for small orchestra

Instrumentation

2 Flutes:

(2. = Alto Flute)

2 Oboes

2 Clarinets:

(2. = Bass Clarinet in B \flat)

2 Bassoons:

(2. = Contrabassoon)

2 Horns in F

2 Trumpets in B \flat

Timpani

Strings (8. 6. 4. 4. 2)

This piece, commissioned by Royal Northern Sinfonia as part of their 2020 Young Composers Competition, takes as its starting point a tiny snippet from the 'Heiliger Dankgesang', the third movement of his String Quartet in A minor, Op. 132.

As listeners (and hyper-critical citizens of the modern age), naturally our focus is on what Beethoven leaves behind, for good or ill. Through this wonderful music, full of craft & vision, we might suppose that we are familiar on some level with the composer himself – but, separated as we are by time & culture, the prickly 'unknowability' of Beethoven seems to me to be an equally fascinating topic. This intrinsic distance can be felt keenly in Beethoven's "conversation books" – documents where visitors to the almost entirely deaf composer would write down what they wanted to say (his responses are not recorded, though can often - vividly - be imagined).

The idea of engagement with the past as a kind of 'one-way traffic' was the starting point for the treatment of the material in *thanksong*, whose incessant chattering drives the work forward with little room for perspective or reflection, upon either itself or a secondary figure felt but rarely glimpsed in the second violins.

Only in the coda, as the material settles into something of a 'call' (with a response left to our collective imagination) do we start to approach a kind of clarity - though here, too, a secondary figure emerges in the distance, and the spontaneous 'dropping-out' of individual players complicates things, a communal mass dismantling Beethoven's music one part at a time.

Duration: c. 8'

Transposed score.

thanksong

Samuel Messer

♩ = c. 80: poised, delicate, melodious

Flute 1.2
mp > pp *p*

Oboe 1.2
p

Clarinet in B \flat 1.2
mp > pp *mp* *p* pp < mp *p*

Bassoon 1.2
p pp < mp *p*

Horn in F 1.2
1. *p*

Trumpet in B \flat 1.2
1. pp < mp *p*

Violin 1
♩ = c. 80: poised, delicate, melodious
Strings: senza vib. throughout unless stated
p solo, sul pont. tutti, ord. div. 3 unis. pp < mf; pp < p > pp *p*
poco

Violin 2
flautando, sul tasto con sord. sempre
pp < p molto legato sempre

solo Vla.
sul pont. ord. pp < mp

gli altri
p pp < mp *p* pp < mp

Violoncello
solo 3 tutti div. unis. 3 pp < p > pp *mp*

Double Bass
p pp < mp pp < p > pp *mp*

A

Fl. 1.2
p *pp* < *mp* *p* *pp* < *p* *mp* > *p* *pp* < *mp* *p*

Ob. 1.2
p *pp* < *mp* *p* *p*

Cl. 1.2
mp *p* > *p* *pp* < *p* *pp* < *mp* > *p* *pp* < *mp* *p*

Bsn. 1.2
pp < *mp* > *pp* *p* > *pp* < *mp* *p* *p*

Hn. 1.2
pp < *mp* > *pp* *p* > *p*

Tpt. 1.2
pp < *mp* *p*

Vln. 1
pp < *mp* *p* > *pp* < *p* *pp* < *mp* *p* *pp* < *p* *pp* < *mp* *p*

Vln. 2
p *pp* < *mp* > *pp* *p* > *p* *pp* < *mp* *p* *pp* < *mp* *p*

Vla.
p *pp* < *mp* > *pp* *p* > *p* *pp* < *mp* *p* *pp* < *mp* *p*

Vc.
p *pp* < *mp* > *pp* *p* > *pp* < *mp* *p* *p* *pp* < *mp* *p*

Db.
pp < *mp* > *pp* *p* > *p* *pp* < *mp* *p*

Performance Instructions:
 solo, sul pont. tutti, ord.
 solo, tutti
 solo, sul pont. ord.
 solo gli altri

7

Fl. 1.2

Ob. 1.2

Cl. 1.2

Bsn. 1.2

Hn. 1.2

Tpt. 1.2

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

Db.

B

pp, *p*, *mp*, *mf*, *poco*, *tutti*, *div.*, *unis.*

10

Fl. 1. 2

Ob. 1. 2

Cl. 1. 2

Bsn. 1. 2

Hn. 1. 2

Tpt. 1. 2

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

Db.

p *pp* *mp* *pp* *p* *mp*

p *pp* *mp*

p *pp* *mp* *pp* *p* *mp*

pp *mp* *pp* *p* *mp* *p*

p *pp* *mp* *pp* *pp* *mp*

p *pp* *mp* *pp* *pp* *mp*

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

pp *p* *pp* *p* *p*

p

C

13

Fl. 1.2
 Ob. 1.2
 Cl. 1.2
 Bsn. 1.2
 Hn. 1.2
 Tpt. 1.2
 Vln. 1
 Vln. 2
 Vla.
 Vc.
 Db.

This page of a musical score, numbered 10, contains staves for various instruments. The woodwind section includes Flute 1 & 2 (Fl. 1.2), Oboe 1 & 2 (Ob. 1.2), Clarinet 1 & 2 (Cl. 1.2), Bassoon 1 & 2 (Bsn. 1.2), Horn 1 & 2 (Hn. 1.2), and Trumpet 1 & 2 (Tpt. 1.2). The brass section includes Violin 1 (Vln. 1), Violin 2 (Vln. 2), Viola (Vla.), Violoncello (Vc.), and Double Bass (Db.). The score is divided into three measures. A rehearsal mark 'D' is placed above the first measure of the Flute 1 & 2 staff. The music features complex rhythmic patterns, including triplets and sixteenth-note runs. Dynamic markings such as *pp*, *p*, *mp*, and *mf* are used throughout. Performance instructions like *div.*, *unis.*, *poco*, and *poco espress.* are present. The Flute 1 & 2 part includes a *2 soli* instruction in the final measure. The Violin 2 part features a dense sixteenth-note texture. The Viola and Violoncello parts have similar rhythmic patterns. The Double Bass part has a more sparse, rhythmic accompaniment.

19

Fl. 1. 2

Ob. 1. 2

Cl. 1. 2

Bsn. 1. 2

Hn. 1. 2

Tpt. 1. 2

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

Db.

tutti

3 soli

p poco espress.

solo

div. a 4

unis.

E

Fl. 1. 2: *pp* < *mp* > *pp* *p* *mp* *p*

Ob. 1. 2: *pp* < *mp* > *pp* *p* *pp*

Cl. 1. 2: *pp ten.* *p* *p*

Bsn. 1. 2: *pp* < *mp* > *pp* *mp* *p*

Hn. 1. 2: *pp* < *mp* > *p*

Tpt. 1. 2: *p*

Vln. 1: *pp* < *mf* *poco* > *pp* *p* *pp* < *mp* > *p*

Vln. 2: *5*

Vla.: *pp* < *mp* > *pp* *p* *p* sul pont. ord.

Vc.: *pp* < *mp* > *pp* *p* *p*

Db.: *p* *p* sul pont. ord.

F ♩ = c. 66: light, poised

25

Fl. 1. 2

Ob. 1. 2

Cl. 1. 2

Bsn. 1. 2

Hn. 1. 2

Tpt. 1. 2

F ♩ = c. 66: light, poised

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

Db.

nat. sul tasto

ord.

div. sul pont.

univ. ord.

div. a 4

univ.

29 **G**

Fl. 1. 2
Ob. 1. 2
Cl. 1. 2
Bsn. 1. 2
Hn. 1. 2
Tpt. 1. 2
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.
Db.

to B. Cl.
Bass Clarinet in B \flat
1. con sord. (straight)
div.
mf poco

32

Fl. 1. 2 *pp* *mp* *pp* *p* to A. Fl.

Ob. 1. 2 *p* *p*

Cl. 1. 2 *pp* *mp* *pp* *p*

Bsn. 1. 2 *p* *pp* to Cbsn. *p*

Hn. 1. 2 *p* *pp* *p* *p*

Tpt. 1. 2

Vln. 1 solo *pp* *p* *pp* *p* *mf* *espress.* *p* *sul pont.* *ord.*
gli altri *pp* *p* *pp* *p* *p*

Vln. 2 solo *pp* *mf* *espress.*
gli altri

Vla. *pp* *p* *pp* *p* *mp* *pp* *mp* *p*

Vc. *p* *mp* *p* *ord.* *div. a 4*

Db. *pp* *mp* *pp* *p*

H

35

Fl. 1.2

Alto Flute

Ob. 1.2

Cl. 1.2

Bsn. 1.2

Contrabassoon

Hn. 1.2

Tpt. 1.2

H

Vln. 1 div.

solo

Vln. 2

gli altri

solo

gli altri

Vc.

Db.

Fl. 1. 2
pp < mp > pp
p
pp < mp > pp
p

Ob. 1. 2
pp < mp > pp
p

Cl. 1. 2
pp < mp > pp
mp > pp
p

Bsn. 1. 2
p > pp
mp > pp
p

Hn. 1. 2
p > pp
pp < mp > pp
p

Tpt. 1. 2
senza sord.
pp < mp > pp

Vln. 1 div.
pp < mp > pp
p
pp < mp > pp
p

Vln. 2 solo
pp < mf > sim.

Vla. solo
p > pp
mp
pp < mp > pp
mf
espress.

Vc.
p > pp
mp
p
pp < mp > pp
p
pp < mp > pp
p

Db.
p > pp
mp
p
pp < mp > pp
p

gli altri
sul pont.
ord.
p
pp < mp > pp

gli altri
sul pont.
ord.
p
pp < mp > pp

gli altri
sul pont.
ord.
p
pp < mp > pp

gli altri
div.
un. sul pont.
p

gli altri
p

gli altri
light, with rubato
poco vib.

41 |

Fl. 1. 2
pp < mp > pp p

Ob. 1. 2

Cl. 1. 2
pp < mp > pp p

Bsn. 1. 2

Hn. 1. 2
pp < mp

Tpt. 1. 2

solo | light, with rubato sempre poco vib. ord.
pp < mf > pp espress. sim. pp < mp

Vln. 1
gli altri
pp < mp > pp mp

Vln. 2
solo | light, with rubato sempre poco vib. ord.
pp < mf > pp espress. sim. pp < mp

Vla.
pp < mp > pp p

Vc.
ord. 3 div. a 4 3 div. a 2 3 unis.
pp < mp > pp p

Db.
pp < mp > pp mp > pp < mp p

J

44

Fl. 1.2 *pp* *mp* *pp* *p*

Ob. 1.2 *pp* *mp* *pp*

Cl. 1.2 *pp* *mp* *pp*

Bsn. 1.2 *p* *pp* *mp* *pp*

Hn. 1.2 *p* *pp* *mp*

Tpt. 1.2 *pp* *mp* *pp* con sord. (harmon)

J

solo *pp* *mf*

Vln. 1 *pp* *mf* *poco* sul pont. ord. *mp* *p*

gli altri *pp* *mp* *pp* *p* sul pont. ord. *mp* *pp* *mp* *pp*

solo *pp* *mf*

Vln. 2 *pp* *mf*

gli altri light, with rubato poco vib. *pp* *p* *pp* *p* *pp* *mp* *pp* *mf* *sim.*

solo *pp* *mf* *espress.* *p* *pp* *mp* *pp* *mf* *sim.*

gli altri *pp* *p* *pp* *p* *pp* *mp* *pp* *mp* *pp*

Vc. *pp* *mp* *pp* *mp* *pp* *mp* *pp* *mp* *pp*

Db. *pp* *p* *pp* *mp* *pp*

47

Fl. 1.2
 Ob. 1.2
 Cl. 1.2
 Bsn. 1.2
 Hn. 1.2
 Tpt. 1.2
 solo
 Vln. 1
 gli altri
 solo
 Vln. 2
 gli altri
 solo
 Vla.
 gli altri
 solo
 Vc.
 gli altri
 solo
 Db.

Detailed description of the musical score for measures 47-50. The score is written in 2/4 time. The woodwind section (Flutes, Oboes, Clarinets, Bassoons, Horns, Trumpets) plays melodic lines with triplets and dynamic markings ranging from *pp* to *mp*. The string section is divided into solo and tutti (gli altri) parts. Violins 1 and 2 play melodic lines with triplets and dynamic markings from *p* to *mf*. The Viola part has a performance instruction: "light, with rubato poco vib." The Violoncello (Vc.) and Double Bass (Db.) parts feature triplets and dynamic markings from *pp* to *mf*. The Cello part includes the instruction "3 soli espress.".

K ♩ = c. 60-66; increasingly resonant and spacious

51

Fl. 1.2

Ob. 1.2

Cl. 1.2

Bsn. 1.2

Hn. 1.2

Tpt. 1.2

K ♩ = c. 60-66; increasingly resonant and spacious

solo

Vln. 1

gli altri

Vln. 2

gli altri

Vla.

Vc. div.

Db.

1.

poco sul pont.

pp sempre

tutti

54 **L**

Fl. 1.2
Ob. 1.2
Cl. 1.2
Bsn. 1.2
Hn. 1.2
Tpt. 1.2
Timp.

pp, *f*, *mp*, *mf*, *p*, *gliss.*, *shadowing*

L

solo
Vln. 1
gli altri
Vln. 2
gli altri
Vla.
Vc. div.
Db.

pp, *f*, *mp*, *mf*, *p*, *pp*, *mf*, *ord.*, *univ.*, *sul pont.*

M

58

Fl. 1. 2

Ob. 1. 2

Cl. 1. 2

Bsn. 1. 2

Hn. 1. 2

Tpt. 1. 2

Timp.

M

solo

Vln. 1

gli altri

solo

Vln. 2

gli altri

solo

Vla.

ord.

gli altri

Vc. div.

ord.

Db.

light, with rubato sempre poco vib.

espress.

sim.

62 **N**

Fl. 1.2
Ob. 1.2
Cl. 1.2
Bsn. 1.2
Hn. 1.2
Tpt. 1.2
Timp.
Vln. 1
gli altri
Vln. 2
gli altri
Vla.
gli altri
Vc. div.
Db.

Dynamic markings: *pp*, *p*, *mf*, *f*, *mp*, *pp*, *pp*, *f*, *pp*, *mf*, *p*, *pp*, *p*, *pp*, *pp*, *f*, *pp*, *mf*, *p*, *pp*, *pp*, *f*, *pp*, *mf*, *p*, *pp*, *pp*, *f*, *pp*, *mf*, *p*, *pp*, *pp*, *f*, *pp*, *mf*, *p*, *pp*, *pp*, *f*, *pp*, *mf*, *p*, *pp*, *pp*, *f*, *pp*, *mf*, *p*, *pp*, *pp*.

Performance instructions: *gliss.*, *espress.*, *ord.*, *sul pont.*, *1.*

Tempo/Style: *pp*, *p*, *mf*, *f*, *mp*, *pp*, *pp*, *f*, *pp*, *mf*, *p*, *pp*, *pp*, *f*, *pp*, *mf*, *p*, *pp*, *pp*, *f*, *pp*, *mf*, *p*, *pp*, *pp*.

66 O

Fl. 1. 2
p
pp *mp*
p ten.

Ob. 1. 2
mf
mf

Cl. 1. 2
mf *p*
mf *p*
p ten.
p ten.

Bsn. 1. 2
p
pp *p* *pp*
pp *p* *pp*

Hn. 1. 2
pp *poss.*
p

Tpt. 1. 2
mf

Timp.
p *pp*
gliss.

O

solo
f *p* *f*
pp

Vln. 1
ord.
mf *p*
pp *mp* *pp*
mf *p*

gli altri
sul pont. ord.
mf *p*
pp *p* *pp*
mf *p*

solo
pp *mf* *mp* *f*

Vln. 2
gli altri

Vla.
sul pont.
mf
mp poco
solo
tutti

gli altri
pp *mp* *pp*
p ten.
pp

Vc. div.
sul pont. ord.
mf *p*
pp *mp* *pp*
p ten.
pp

gli altri
pp *p* *pp*
p ten.
pp

Db.
pp *p* *pp*
p ten.

This page of a musical score, numbered 26, covers measures 70, 71, and 72. A dynamic marking of **P** (Piano) is positioned at the top center. The score is arranged in systems for various instruments:

- Fl. 1.2** (Flute 1 & 2): Measures 70-72 with dynamics *pp*, *mp*, *pp*, *p ten.*, and *mf*.
- Ob. 1.2** (Oboe 1 & 2): Rests in measures 70-71, then *pp* and *mp* in measure 72.
- Cl. 1.2** (Clarinet 1 & 2): Dynamics *mp*, *pp*, *pp*, *p ten.*, *pp*, and *mf*.
- Bsn. 1.2** (Bassoon 1 & 2): Dynamics *pp*, *mp*, *pp*, *pp*, and *mp*.
- Hn. 1.2** (Horn 1 & 2): Dynamics *mp*, *pp*, and *pp poss.*.
- Tpt. 1.2** (Trumpet 1 & 2): Rests in measures 70-71, then *pp* and *mp* in measure 72.
- Timp.** (Timpani): Dynamics *p*, *pp*, *mp*, *pp*, and *mp*, with *gliss.* markings.
- Vln. 1** (Violin 1): Solo part with dynamics *mf*, *p*, *pp*, *f*, and *mf*.
- gli altri** (Violin 1, others): Dynamics *pp*, *mp*, *pp*, *mf*, *pp*, and *mp*.
- Vln. 2** (Violin 2): Solo part with dynamics *pp* and *mf*.
- gli altri** (Violin 2, others): Dynamics *pp*, *mp*, *pp*, *mp*, and *pp*.
- Vla.** (Viola): Solo part with dynamics *pp* and *f*.
- gli altri** (Viola, others): Dynamics *mp*, *pp*, *mp*, *pp*, *p ten.*, *pp*, and *p*.
- Vc.** (Violoncello): Solo part with dynamics *pp*, *mp*, *pp*, *p ten.*, *mf*, *p*, and *pp*.
- gli altri** (Violoncello, others): Dynamics *pp*, *mp*, *pp*, *p ten.*, *mp*, *pp*, *pp*, *mf*, *pp*, and *pp*.
- Db.** (Double Bass): Dynamics *pp*, *mp*, *pp*, *p ten.*, *pp*, *mf*, *pp*, and *pp*.

The score includes various musical notations such as triplets, slurs, and dynamic hairpins. A **P** marking is present at the beginning of measure 71. The page concludes with a **P** marking at the top center.

74 Q

Fl. 1. 2
pp *mp* *pp* *mf* *p*

Ob. 1. 2
pp *mp* *pp* *mf* *p*

Cl. 1. 2
pp *mf* *pp* *mf* *p* *pp*

Bsn. 1. 2
pp *mp* *pp*

Hn. 1. 2
pp poss. *mf* *pp* *p*

Tpt. 1. 2

Timp.
pp *p* *pp*

Vln. 1
solo *pp* *mf* *p* *mp* *f* *p* sul pont. ord. *pp*
gli altri *pp* *mp* *pp* *mf* *p* sul pont. ord.

Vln. 2
solo *pp* *mf* *mf* *mf* sul pont.
gli altri *pp* *mf* *pp* *mf* sul pont.

Vla.
solo *pp* *mf* sul pont. div. sul pont. unis., ord.
gli altri *pp* *mp* *pp* *mp* *pp* *mf* *p* *pp*

Vc.
solo *pp* *mp* *pp* *mp* *pp* *mf* *p* *pp*
gli altri *mf* *pp* *mf* *p* *pp*

Db.
pp *p* *pp* *mp* *pp* *mf* sul pont.

light, with rubato poco vib.
espress.

82 **R**

Fl. 1.2 *pp* *mp*

Ob. 1.2 *pp* *mp* *pp* *p*

Cl. 1.2 *mp* *pp* *pp*

Bsn. 1.2 *pp* *mp* *pp*

Hn. 1.2 *p*

Tpt. 1.2

Timp. *pp* *p* *pp* *gliss.*

R

solo *pp* *mf* *p*

Vln. 1 *pp* *mp* *pp*

gli altri *pp* *mp* *pp*

solo *pp* *mf* *mp poco* *p*

Vln. 2 *pp* *mf*

gli altri

solo *pp* *mf*

Vla. *pp* *mf*

gli altri

solo *p* *mf* *sim.*

Vc. *mp* *pp* *p* *pp* *solo* *tutti*

gli altri *pp* *p* *pp*

Db. *pp* *mp* *pp* *p* *tutti*

G.P.

86

Fl. 1. 2

Ob. 1. 2

Cl. 1. 2

Bsn. 1. 2

Hn. 1. 2

Tpt. 1. 2

G.P.

solo

Vln. 1

gli altri

solo

Vln. 2

gli altri

solo

Vla.

gli altri

solo

Vc.

gli altri

Db.

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Fig. S: Each player chooses one of the given pitches to be played throughout this section.
 The section begins with all players playing, before individuals drop out ad lib. within the given range of repeats.
 The leader should be the last to finish, completing a single repeat with the soloists at the end of the piece.
 The conductor gives downbeats, and brings the leader off to end the piece.
 The overall effect should be of a gradual, but unpredictable, thinning-out of the chord over a span of at least 10 repeats.

Independent soloists: These should be two adjacent or proximate players from the rear desks of Vln. 2 & Vla.
 After 3-5 repeats of **S** the soloists enter together as indicated by the arrow, and play independently.
 The soloists continue playing until brought off by the conductor.

S
↓ S1 (after 3-5 repeats)
7"
3"

Woodwind

90 **Play 5-14 times**

mp

Brass

Play 5-14 times

Hns = stopped
Tpts = con sord. as before

mp

Timpani

Play 5-14 times

mp

Strings

Vln. 1, Vln.2 **Leader of Vln. 1: repeat indefinitely**
Gli altri: play 5-14 times
All = con sord.

Vla., Vc. *mp*

Cb. *mp*

S1 After 3-5 repeats, enter together with Vla. solo, during tutti chord. Perform independently; repeat until brought off by conductor.

$\text{♩} = \text{c. } 56$; resonant, spacious

Vln. 2 solo

II
III
III

mp *mp* *p* *mp* *mp* *p*

mp *mp* *mf*

mp *mp* *mp*

S1 After 3-5 repeats, enter together with Vln. 2 solo, during tutti chord. Perform independently; continue until brought off by conductor.

$\text{♩} = \text{c. } 60$: light, singing

molto sul tasto
sul A sempre

Vla. solo

mf poco, espressivo con rubato

p *mf sim.*

p *mp*

p *mp sim.* *p* *mp*

p singing faintly *p sim.* *p*

p

repeat indefinitely*

*Viola repeats this latter section indefinitely until brought off by conductor.