While converging

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WHILE CONVERGING

by

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ABSTRACT

While Converging functions as an expression of the human experience of earnestly seeking comprehension and discernment of available information in an era in which the plurality of conflicting information is prominent. The recent rapid advancements achieved in communication technologies have made a dramatic impact on the experience of interpersonal communication, including the mass increase of the dissemination of information and ideas through unofficial sources. The resulting convergence of disparate philosophical and intellectual ideologies is currently a cause of conflict in interpersonal relationships among many individuals, as well as globally. These conflicts are largely found within the dialectic of Nationalism (traditional locale or heritage specific ideologies) and Universalism (the global convergence of ideologies). To seek enlightenment through research and communicative means in such an environment is an endeavor of great complexity. While one typically seeks to clarify their personal understanding, it is not uncommon that obfuscation acts as the source of enlightenment by becoming an opposition to ignorance and naivety – expressions of clarity that lack enlightenment. The difficulty, excitement, frustration, confusion, and the multitude of further often nuanced experiences involved in such an endeavor is expressed through While Converging.

For this work, I have constructed a system of interrelated pentachords that features ten primary pentachords in two sub-groupings of five. Additionally, ten secondary sets are derived from the primary pentachords by intervallic diminution, dividing each interval in half. The resulting secondary pentachords are microtonal in nature, thereby
functioning as a contrasting harmonic space to the primary sets. When a third operation is
applied to the primary pentachords, augmenting each interval by one half, then inverting
intervals larger than a tritone, and lastly, putting the resulting sets in normal order, all the
primary pentachords transform into subsets of one symmetrical pentachord – a
diminished triad, plus the quarter-tone pitches found symmetrically between each minor
third. This relationship is revealed only once, in a discreet manner, toward the end of the
piece. Through this piece-specific system of pitch organization, a dialectic of clarity and
obfuscation is presented by sequencing, reorganizing, and layering the aforementioned
groups, sub-groups, and individual pentachords. Movement toward or away from clarity
is achieved through these means and is symbolic of the struggle one experiences in
pursuit of comprehension.

This work is organized in three movements that cohere to form a continuity. Each
movement is distinct in its aesthetic as well as its approach to representing the dialectic of
clarity and obfuscation. The first movement focuses on textural transformation, using
pitch organization and density of texture as the primary means of movement within the
clarification/obfuscation dialectic. The symbolic focus of this movement is on the
accumulation of vast quantities of disparate information and ideologies, and the difficulty
of accounting for discrepancies in acquired information. Presented through mosaic-like
orchestration, dovetailing melodic segments gradually culminate into a massive collage-
like texture. At the pinnacle of textural growth, a sudden shift away from linearity occurs,
in favor of a focus on vertical sonorities and density of rhythmic attacks.
The second movement is slow, with harmony and melody as focal points. In this movement, melodic design functions as an alternative representation of the clarification/obfuscation dialectic. Through this aesthetic focus, a sense of naivety and intimacy is implied, alluding to the influence of nationalism and intimate interpersonal communication. Sustained chords gradually transform from one to another as melodic fragments emerge aperiodically. Approximately mid-way through the movement, a rhythmic groove is established, over which melodic design is revealed in a more complete fashion, exploring the clarity/obfuscation dialectic via its relationship to the previously presented melodic fragments.

In the final movement, there is a focus on succinct and discrete groupings of musical events. Here, discreteness/continuousness of musical events, as well as rhythmic unity/disparity are presented as new dialectics, through which clarification/obfuscation is represented. The expansion of the number of musical parameters reflecting the clarification/obfuscation dialectic illustrates the complex nature of seeking enlightenment. Discrete musical events gradually expand in duration, leading to overlaying musical events that culminate in a climatic section in which direct repetition illustrates an apex of intellectual frustration. Nonetheless, the following section, prominently composed of sustained sonorities, presents a gradual reduction of energy while moving toward clarity in all respects; ultimately implying the possibility of a comprehensible resolution.
PUBLIC ABSTRACT

While Converging functions as an expression of the human experience of earnestly seeking comprehension and discernment of available information in an era in which the plurality of conflicting information is prominent. The recent rapid advancements achieved in communication technologies have made a dramatic impact on the experience of interpersonal communication, including the mass increase of the dissemination of information and ideas through unofficial sources. The resulting convergence of disparate philosophical and intellectual ideologies is currently a source of conflict in interpersonal relationships among many individuals, as well as globally. To seek enlightenment through research and communicative means in such an environment is an endeavor of great complexity. While one typically seeks to clarify their personal understanding, it is not uncommon that obfuscation acts as the source of enlightenment by becoming an opposition to ignorance and naivety—expressions of clarity that lack enlightenment. The difficulty, excitement, frustration, confusion, and the multitude of further often nuanced experiences involved in such an endeavor is expressed through While Converging.

This work utilizes a piece specific system of pitch organization that allows for different groupings of pitch collections to be rearranged in numerous ways. The reconfiguring of pitch collection groups results in varying degrees of clarity as to how the system is organized. Through these means, a dialectic of clarification and obfuscation is presented. Movement within this dialectic is representative of the struggle endured in the
pursuit of personal enlightenment and is further explored through melodic and rhythmic design throughout the work.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

INSTRUMENTATION .......................................................................................................................... viii

PERFORMANCE NOTES .................................................................................................................... ix

WHILE CONVERGING ....................................................................................................................... 1

| I.  | .................................................................................................................. 1 |
| II. | ............................................................................................................... 47 |
| III. | ............................................................................................................. 87 |
INSTRUMENTATION

Flute / Alto Flute
Oboe
Clarinet in Bb / Bass Clarinet
Bassoon

Horn in F
Trumpet in C
Trombone
Tuba

Percussion I
Vibraphone

Percussion II
Bass Drum
Floor Tom
2 Woodblocks (high/low)
Snare Drum
Tam-tam
Hi-hat
2 Suspended Cymbals
  Crash Cymbal (16”)
  Ride Cymbal (20”)

Piano

Violin I
Violin II
Viola
Violoncello
Contrabass
PERFORMANCE NOTES

Glissandi should begin at the beginning of the note value. There should be no vibrato during the movement between pitches. Pitches of arrival should be articulated unless they are under a slur.

**Bowed (for vibraphone)**

Use a bass bow to produce the indicated pitch.

*** With Mallet...

First depress indicated keys as silently as possible, then depress and hold the sostenuto pedal. With sostenuto pedal held, gently strike the lower strings on the inside of the piano with a soft percussion mallet or beater.

(½ harmonic)

Apply pressure that is half way between that used to produce a harmonic, and that used to produce a stopped tone.

\[ \begin{align*}
  &\text{Quarter-tone flat} \\
  &\text{Quarter-tone sharp} \\
  &\text{This note-head indicates an indeterminate pitch. In this piece, brass players will either perform a tongue-click or pronounce a given fricative into the mouth piece as indicated in the score.}
\end{align*} \]

s.t.

Sul tasto

a.s.t.

Alto sul tasto – on the fingerboard

s.p.

Sul ponticello

a.s.p.

Alto sul ponticello – as close to the bridge as possible

ord.

Ordinary bow position

n.v.

Without vibrato

ix
slow vib. Perform a slower rate of vibrato so as to destabilize the clarity of pitch

vib. Cancels “n.v.” or “slow vib.”

Indicates a gradual change in bow placement

Snap pizzicato

Flutter tongue or unmeasured tremolo

Timbre trill – a trill between two fingerings for the same pitch

Gradually increase or decrease the rate of tremolo

A square note-head on woodwind parts indicates a change in embouchure to create a timbre that includes both air-noise and pitch.

In this piece, a sforzando indicates an extreme accent on the attack of a given pitch. In the case of sustained notes, the performer should return to the given dynamic level as quickly as possible after the attack.

½ valve glissando (for trumpet) With all valves depressed half way, perform a glissando with a smooth but irregular trajectory from one given pitch to another.
While Converging
for chamber orchestra

I.

Jacob P. Simmons

Flute
Oboe
Clarinet in B♭
Bassoon
Horn in F
Trumpet in C
Trombone
Tuba
VibrSIGnphone
Percussion
Piano
Violin I
Violin II
Viola
Cello
Double Bass

Flute
Oboe
Clarinet in B♭
Bassoon
Horn in F
Trumpet in C
Trombone
Tuba
VibrSIGnphone
Percussion
Piano
Violin I
Violin II
Viola
Cello
Double Bass
*continue to hold sos. ped.*
Fl.
Ob.
B. Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
C Tpt.
Tbn.
Tuba
Vib.
Perc.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
D.B.

109

open

fl

arco
Fl.
Ob.
B. Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
C Tpt.
Tbn.
Tuba
Vib.
Perc.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
D.B.
Pno.

144

attacca
II.

Flute

Oboe

Clarinet in Bb

Bassoon

Horn in F

Trumpet in C

Trombone

Tuba

Vibraphone

Percussion

Piano

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Cello

Double Bass
III.

Alto Flute

Oboe

Clarinet in B♭

Bassoon

Horn in F

Trumpet in C

Trombone

Tuba

Vibraphone

Percussion

Piano

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Cello

Double Bass
A. Fl.
Ob.
Bb-Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
C Tpt.
Tbn.
Tuba
Vib.
Perc.
Pno.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
D.B.