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Can't You See?

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Can't You See?

For 2-5 string players

James W. Parker

General notes about the piece:

- The sections can be as long as you want. This piece could last 30 seconds or 30 minutes, all depending on how you feel that day. I would, however, encourage you to take time with each gesture. Try to pull every ounce of music you can from each one, experiment with different techniques, different timbres, different tempi, rhythms, dynamics, phrasing, try anything and everything. Once you've done everything you can, do a little bit more, then move on.
- To move between sections, I often write "one by one." There should be some predetermined order in which players move from one section to the next. It can be the same for each transition, or different for each one, however you want to approach it. The transitions are, in a way, sections in their own right, and should be treated as such. There's no need to rush from one section to the next, some of the most interesting sounds come between the sections. It is also not unheard of for the group to be spread out over 3 sections at any given time. Again, experiment and see what works for you.
- Don't feel like you always need to be playing. It's ok to take a rest if you need it.
- This is, at it's core, a fiddle piece. Keep that in mind as you're playing and improvising. If you need some inspiration, check out Darol Anger, Casey Driessen, Ben Sollee, and Joe D'Esposito.
- The hardest part is probably the overtone singing bit. Here are a few resources to get you started, but it takes a bit of practice:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HP0iotJCL7k>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WIZH-e21os8>

- The piece was conceived for a string quartet, but could be equally viable as a piece for between 2-5 violins, violas, cellos, or basses, in many different combinations. Some slight adjustments would have to be made, of course. If you don't have a cello, replace anytime I say "cello" with whatever your lowest sounding instrument is. If it's a viola or a bass with a C extension, everything should be fine. If your lowest sounding instrument is a violin or a bass without a C extension, the gesture at letter C might have to involve some detuning of the lowest string so that it makes it all the way to a C for the moment at letter D.
- If you have any questions, feel free to e-mail me at James.Parker10@gmail.com, and we can set up a skype/face time session to clear anything up for you.

Can't You See?

for 2-5 string players

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A ♩ = c. 144

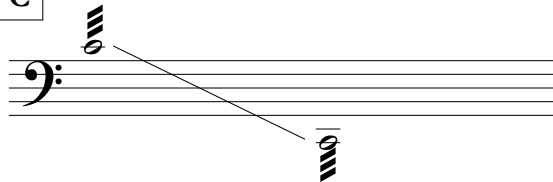


(pretty much a constant crescendo until letter D)

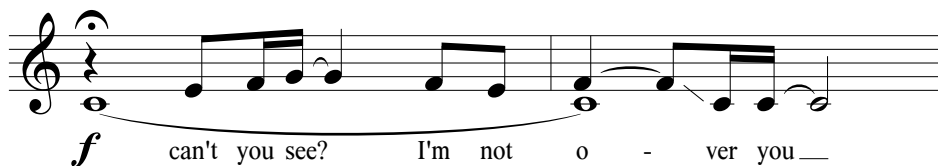
B



C



D ♩ = c. 80



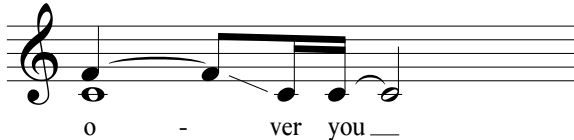
The piece begins with a solo player. One by one the rest of the ensemble enters in the same tempo, but rhythmically offset by a certain amount. This is really an exercise in futility, because by the time we get to letter D that whole concept will have completely fallen apart, so don't be too concerned if it's not perfect. Improvisation within the style is highly encouraged, if not required!

After all of the players have entered, one player should slowly begin incorporating these pitches, one by one, in that order, into their gesture. As the other players hear these additions, they should respond in kind by adding them to their own gestures as well. The pitches get more crunchy, and as they do, so should your sound. Sul pont., scratch tones, or slightly violent outbursts would not be out of place. We're building energy!

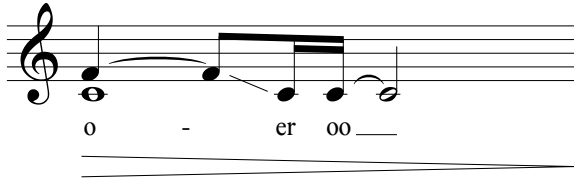
The violins and the viola should continue in the same vein, expanding the range of their fiddling and increasing the frequency of the noise gestures. The cellist should play the figure to the left, taking as long as they choose to do so. Feel free to tremolo at different speeds, move between ord., sul tasto, and sul pont., experiment with over pressuring the bow, or any other technique that suites you. The combination of those things, with the new pitches you started improvising with in the previous section should sound like a sort of descent into madness. The cellist should end their gesture with some sort of cue so that everyone hits letter D together.

Here, the violins and viola cut out all of a sudden and the cellist lays the hammer down on that low C for a while. Once the sound from the room has cleared, Everyone sings this little tune, really hamming up the gliss. on the word "Over." This bar just happens once, and then...

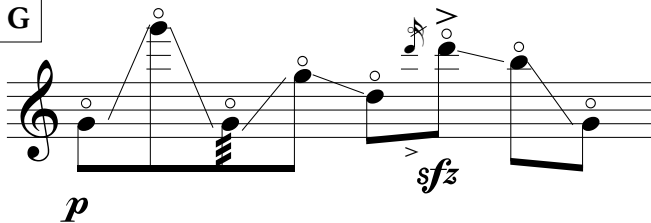
E



F



G

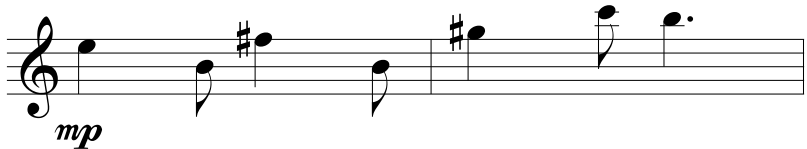


H

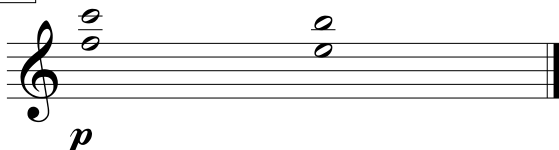
♩. = c. 80



I



J



The cellist is still droning, and everyone keeps singing that last little bit, "over you." This section should have a decrescendo to it, and the entrances of the "over you"s should be staggered. After we hear the first one, sing until your breath runs out, take a big breath, and start again, taking your time. It's ok if you're not always singing, take a rest if you need to. Also feel free to change octaves if you can/want to.

After a bit you'll start eliding the words together and stop pronouncing the "V" so much, while simultaneously slowing down the tempo. This will eventually lead you to be doing some overtone singing! Keep repeating the gesture, but add in some of the overtones whenever it feels right.

One by one you'll stop singing and start experimenting with some harmonic glissandi on your G string. Start simply, but as time goes on experiment more and more, adding in more variations. The gestures to the left are just a few ideas, don't feel like you have to play any of them. Think about experimenting with things like speed of the gliss., speed of any tremolo you might decide to do, dynamic and phrasing changes, how far up/down the string you decided to go on each pass, and really anything else you can think of. How radical can you make it?

One by one you'll quit your glissing and start playing these little melodic fragments. Experiment with note durations, phrasing, sul pont./tasto, glisses, etc. These fragments are the only things you get to play for a while, so make the most of them! You can move from one to the other whenever you feel like it, and you're also free to play them in whatever octave you see fit. That G in the second bar of letter H can be sharp or natural. Or both!

Eventually you should try to distill these melodies to their basic materials. Start to fragment the melodies, slowly removing notes and emphasizing certain intervals as you play the melodies. The ultimate goal is that the melodies slowly become more and more concentrated until everyone is oscillating between these two pitches, either the top line or the bottom line. Or both! Glissing between them would be appropriate, as would harmonics or sul pont./tasto. Whenever you feel like the piece is done, do your best to end together, or don't.