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Further Letters from the Earth

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Sarah Bassingthwaighte

Further Letters
from the Earth

for flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon,
horn, tuba, percussion, piano, and strings

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Further Letters from the Earth – Sarah Bassingthwaighte

Performance Notes

Percussion I:

Splash cymbal (w/ bow)
Vibraphone (w/ bow)
Rain stick
Thundersheet
Slapstick
Ratchet
Superball or hard rubber mallet

Percussion II:

Bass drum
Flexitone
Bull roar
Gravel box (I will provide if needed)
Pot of water (I will provide)
Bedsheets (I will provide)
Vibraslap
Maracas
Snare

Piano

Some techniques are performed inside the piano. These include flexibility bands, ping pong balls, and quarters.

Flexibility bands – any wide, thin piece of rubber will work (so will fishing Line). The band is to be strung around all of the strings of a given pitch. To play, slowly pull the band back and forth to vibrate the string.

Ping pong balls – these are to be dropped in the specified section of the piano, but not on specific pitches. With 3 or 4 balls, the speed (as well as stopping and starting) can be controlled.

Quarters – these are to be drawn across the top of the wound strings (low pitches) inside the piano. Moving side to side can provide an additional glissando effect.

Winds

Varied wind sounds means both pitched and unpitched sounds, in various ranges, lengths, and textures.

Flute – include airy flutter tongue, whistle tones, bent tones

Clarinet – include airy flutter tongue, bent tones, quiet multiphonics

Oboe – include whistle tones (can be done on the inhale), no reed, only reed

Bassoon – include airy flutter tongue, no reed, only reed, quiet multiphonics

French Horn – include mouth piece whistles, reverse mouthpiece, sing & play
quiet flutters, glissandi

Tuba – include quiet growl tones, fluttering keys, sing & play, didgeridoo effects

Strings

Extended techniques include scratch tones, pizz glissandi, quarter tone bends

Further Letters from the Earth
By Sarah Bassingthwaighe
Program Notes

Further Letters from the Earth is a piece for chamber orchestra written for the “After Y2K” concert given by The Sound Ensemble in Seattle, WA on January 7, 2017.

The piece is made up of 4 continuous movements: Playful, Heat, Unleashed, After. The motivation for the piece was my interest in exploring our complex relationship with the natural world since the year 2000. The 1st movement, Playful, is full of the sounds that I associate with being outdoors – running, splashing, birds calling, wind blowing. I’m like thousands of other Pacific Northwesterners in that I love to spend time out in the mountains, and the soundscape is as special as the visual landscape. In order to summon these sounds, the players engage in quite a few extended techniques, such as creating wind sounds, dropping ping pong balls in the piano, special articulation techniques, and so on. The 2nd movement, Heat, is a continuation of the first, but with an increase in tension. Here I tried to imitate the sounds I associate with Heat, including melting, burning, scorching, and steam. Also, with increased heat comes increased disease, and the discomfort and sickness is part of the tension that I hoped to convey. The 3rd movement, Unleashed, is the sound of the storms we’ve seen increase over the last 17 years: typhoons, hurricanes, earthquakes. Many of these have been affected by human activity, and there promises to be more storms as we all continue our disruptive behaviors. The 4th movement, After, is a reflection on what happens after the humans have either extinguished themselves or have come to some sort of uneasy peace with the natural world. While I don’t believe humans to be separate from the natural world, I do see human behavior as having an enormous effect on the non-human world. We live in a time when our choices will affect not only the health and well-being of all people, but of the entire living planet.

Every member of the ensemble is asked to perform in an unusual manner in the piece. Almost every player at some

point gets up from their seat to manipulate sound inside the piano, and also every player explores timbral possibilities in their instrument.

Questions for Sarah Bassingthwaighe:

1. Can you tell us a bit about your piece that Sound Ensemble is premiering in the Life After Y2K performance?
(i.e. What does it sound like? What is the instrumentation? What inspired it?) Will you be performing the work?
2. What are you most looking forward to with the Life After Y2K performance, and with the future of the Sound Ensemble?

It is my hope that performing this piece, and listening to it, is actually pretty fun.

Each player explores unusual sounds on their instruments, from multiphonics to wind sounds to percussive techniques, and most of the players get up out of their chair at some point to make sound inside the piano (so there's a bit of a visual element to the piece).

The inspiration for Further Letters from the Earth is the complex relationship between humans and the natural world since the year 2000. I spend a lot of time in our beautiful mountains, as well as on the water, and the first part of the piece are some of the sounds that I enjoy so much: splashing water, rain, wind, birds. I use a drone to represent the sense of quiet I experience when I'm out backpacking – this might be inappropriate or ironic, since it actually is the escape from the drone of everyday electronic noise and traffic that I love. Then the tension increases, and the sounds of heat, melting, burning and stress replace the playful sounds. This gradually leads to the third section, called "Unleashed," which is driving and energetic. This section is inspired by the hurricanes, typhoons, earthquakes and so on that have occurred in the last decade and is in part human-caused. This section is the most rhythmically compelling, and the most traditional musically. The last section, called "After," represents an uneasy peace with the natural world.

The sounds throughout the piece are interesting and "other-wordly." I call for exercise bands threaded through the strings of the piano (and operated by the other instrumentalists) – these create an eerie sound that has no attack, that sort of floats above the rest of the music. Each instrument has special capabilities – such as helicopter tonguing in the bassoon, growling in the tuba, or singing while playing the flute. I strive for a timeless quality for at least parts of the piece. I really enjoyed experimenting with ping pong balls on the strings of the piano – a great sound!

The Sound Ensemble is an exciting and inspiring group for me to work with.

Everyone in the group has a sense of adventure as well as technical mastery of their instrument, and the energy is so positive and stimulating. Bobby is a strong, organized and inspirational leader, and helps pull together this amazing group of musicians. On this concert, we've got a great mix of contemporary music. While all the pieces are interesting, I'm especially excited to do Paczkowski's Deep Decline for chamber ensemble and live electronics (written in 2016). And, at the concerts, the players mix with the audience at every opportunity, and discuss the music and the instruments. I'm hoping that some audience members will be interested in our unusual instruments and techniques, and give us the opportunity to demonstrate.

Further Letters from the Earth

for chamber orchestra

s. bassingthwaighte
2017

I. Playful ♩ = 56

varied wind sounds (pitched and unpitched)

Flute

Oboe

B♭ Cl

Bssn

Horn in F

Tuba

Perc. I

Perc. II

Piano

Violin

Viola

Cello

Bass

p *mp* *pp* *f*

depress silently
hold pedal
throughout movement

drop ping pong balls middle strings

Blue flex-band in piano

Green flex-band in piano

walk in gravel

8

Fl. (splash cue) *random key clicks with air*
p

Ob. (splash cue) *random pitches slap tongue*
p

B $\flat$ Cl. (splash cue) *random pitches slap tongue*
p

Bsn. (splash cue) *random pitches, helicopter tongue*
p

Hn. (splash cue) *random pitches, flutter fingers*
p

Tuba (splash cue) *random pitches, growling*
p

Vib. splash w/ brushes

Perc. 8 *mf* slosh water in pot

Pno. 8 *run in gravel* *Splash!* (splash cue)
drop ping pong balls middle strings

Vln. (splash cue) *p*

Vla. (splash cue) *p*

Vc. (splash cue)

D.B. (splash cue)

drop ping pong balls middle strings

The musical score is arranged in a system of staves. The top section includes woodwinds (Flute, Oboe, B-flat Clarinet, Bassoon) and brass (Horn, Tuba) with specific performance instructions like 'random key clicks with air' and 'random pitches slap tongue'. Below these are Vibraphone and Percussion parts, with the latter including a 'slosh water in pot' effect. The Piano part features 'run in gravel' and 'drop ping pong balls middle strings' textures. The string section (Violins, Violas, Cellos, Double Bass) includes 'splash' cues and a 'drop ping pong balls middle strings' instruction at the bottom. Dynamics like *p* (piano) and *mf* (mezzo-forte) are indicated throughout.

[illegible]

19

Fl. *slow bend* *ppp*

Ob. *mp* *bend* *walk to piano*

B♭ Cl. *walk to piano*

Bsn. *mp* *bend*

Hn. *mp* *mouthpiece "pop"*

Tuba *ppp* *p*

Vib. *mf* *splash w/ brushes*

Perc. *walk in gravel* *run in gravel* *Splash!*

Pno. *random rhythms drop ping pong balls middle strings slowing frequency* *And. off*

Vln. *pp*

Vla. *pp*

Vc. *walk to your seat (don't remove band)*

D.B. *walk to your seat (don't remove band)*

II. Heat ♩ = 92

B

Fl. walk to piano

Ob. Red flexband in piano *mp* *ff* grinding smooth *mp* *ff* grinding smooth into piano

B♭ Cl. Black flexband in piano *mp* *ff* grinding smooth *mp* *ff* grinding smooth

Bsn.

Hn. 27 flz *mf* *ff* *mf*

Tuba growl *mf* *ff* *mf*

Vib. 27 bowed cymbal *pp* *mf* *pp* *mf* *pp* *mf* *pp* *mf* *pp* *mf* *pp*

Perc. 27 thunder sheet hard rubber mallet flexitone vibraslap (l.v.) *pp* *mf* *pp* *mf* *mf*

Pno. 27 Quarter - rub down strings move side to side to gliss depress silently *mf* *ff* *mf*

Vln. 27 sul pont slow 1/4 tone bends (like a drop of water) pizz. arco sul pont slow 1/4 tone bends pizz. arco *p* *mf* *p* *mf*

Vla. 27 sul pont slow 1/4 tone bends (like a drop of water) pizz. arco sul pont slow 1/4 tone bends pizz. arco *p* *mf* *p* *mf*

Vc. 27 (like a drop of water) pizz. arco sul pont slow 1/4 tone bends pizz. *mf* *mp* *mf*

D.B. 27 pizz. *mf* pizz. *mf*

[illegible]

49

Fl. *pp* *ff* *pp* "sss" **C** "chh" "sss"

Ob. *ff* grinding smooth remove band with a snap remove band with a snap

B♭ Cl. mouthpiece only *ff* grinding smooth

Bsn. *mf* *ff* *mf*

Hn. 49 flz *ff* growl *p*

Tuba *ff* *p*

Vib. 49 *pp* *mf* *pp* *mf* rainstick *mp*

Perc. 49 flexitone *pp* *mf* maracas *pp*

Pno. 49 drop ping pong balls middle strings *mp*

Vln. 49 pizz. *mf*

Vla. 49 pizz. *mf*

Vc. 49 pizz. *mf*

D.B. 49 pizz. *mf*

56

Fl. random key clicks, no air *p*

Ob. random pitches slap tongue *p*

B♭ Cl. random key clicks, no air *p*

Bsn. random pitches, helicopter tongue *p*

56

Hn. bend 1/4 tone up *p* bend 1/4 tone down *f* bend 1/4 tone up *pp* bend 1/4 tone down

Tuba *p* *f* *pp*

56

Vib.

56

Perc. *f* *pp*

56

Pno.

56

Vln. random pitches, col legno *p*

Vla. random pitches, col legno *p*

Vc. random pitches, col legno *p*

D.B. random pitches, col legno *p*

59

Fl.

Ob.

B♭ Cl.

Bsn.

Hn.

Tuba

Vib.

Perc.

Pno.

Vln.

Vla.

Vc.

D.B.

thunder sheet

use fist

rip sheet quickly

drop ping pong balls middle strings

arco

scratch tone

pp

mf

61

Fl.

Ob.

B♭ Cl.

Bsn.

Hn.

Tuba

Vib.

Perc.

Pno.

Vln.

Vla.

Vc.

D.B.

bend 1/4 tone up

bend 1/4 tone down

p *f* *pp*

bend 1/4 tone up

bend 1/4 tone down

p *f* *pp*

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

thunder sheet

rub with large super ball or hard rubber mallet

soft mallets or s

bull roar

pp

arco scratch tone

mp

arco scratch tone

mp

arco scratch tone

mp

arco scratch tone

mp

mp

68

Fl.

Ob.

B $\flat$ Cl.

Bsn.

68

Hn.

Tuba

68

Vib.

68

Perc.

68

Pno.

pp

ff

68

Vln.

Vla.

Vc.

D.B.

Detailed description: This page contains the musical score for measures 68, 69, and 70 of the piece 'Further Letters from the Earth'. The score is arranged in a system of 13 staves. The first four staves (Fl., Ob., B $\flat$ Cl., Bsn.) and the next two staves (Hn., Tuba) contain whole rests for all three measures. The fifth staff (Vib.) and sixth staff (Perc.) each contain a single half note in measure 68, which is sustained through measures 69 and 70. The Vib. part is marked with a crescendo hairpin and a *ff* dynamic at the end of measure 70. The Perc. part is also marked with a crescendo hairpin and a *ff* dynamic at the end of measure 70. The seventh staff (Pno.) is divided into two parts: the right hand contains whole rests, while the left hand features a complex rhythmic pattern of sixteenth and thirty-second notes, marked with a *pp* dynamic at the start and a *ff* dynamic at the end of measure 70. The final five staves (Vln., Vla., Vc., D.B.) contain whole rests for all three measures.

III. Unleashed ♩ = 132

D

E

Fl.

Ob.

B♭ Cl.

Bsn.

Hn.

Tuba

Vib.

Perc.

Pno.

Vln.

Vla.

Vc.

D.B.

71

71

71

71

71

71

71

71

71

71

71

71

71

flz

flz

growl

slapstick

bass drum

agitato

p

p

fff pp

mp

ff

78

Fl.

Ob.

B $\flat$ Cl.

Bsn.

78

Hn.

Tuba

78

Vib.

slapstick

78

Perc.

78

Pno.

78

Vln.

Vla.

Vc.

D.B.

82

Fl.

Ob.

B $\flat$ Cl.

Bsn.

82

Hn.

Tuba

82

Vib.

82

Perc.

82

Pno.

82

Vln.

Vla.

Vc.

D.B.

snare (or

[illegible]

[illegible]

98

Fl.

Ob.

B♭ Cl.

Bsn.

98

Hn.

Tuba

98

Vib.

98

Perc.

98

Pno.

98

Vln.

Vla.

Vc.

D.B.

101

Fl.

Ob.

B♭ Cl.

Bsn.

101

Hn.

Tuba

Vib.

101

Perc.

101

Pno.

101

Vln.

Vla.

Vc.

D.B.

espressivo

f

espressivo

f

espressivo

f

ff

104

Fl.

Ob.

B♭ Cl.

Bsn.

Hn.

Tuba

Vib.

Perc.

Pno.

Vln.

Vla.

Vc.

D.B.

The musical score is arranged in a system of 13 staves. The first six staves are for woodwinds: Flute (Fl.), Oboe (Ob.), B♭ Clarinet (B♭ Cl.), Bassoon (Bsn.), Horn (Hn.), and Tuba. The next three staves are for Percussion (Perc.), Vibraphone (Vib.), and Piano (Pno.). The final four staves are for strings: Violin (Vln.), Viola (Vla.), Violoncello (Vc.), and Double Bass (D.B.). The score begins at measure 104. The woodwinds and strings play sustained notes, with dynamic markings like mf and f . The Piano part features a complex rhythmic pattern with triplets and sixteenth notes. The Percussion part has a simple rhythmic pattern. The overall tempo is marked as 104.

This musical score page contains measures 107 through 110. The instrumentation includes Flute (Fl.), Oboe (Ob.), B♭ Clarinet (B♭ Cl.), Bassoon (Bsn.), Horn (Hn.), Tuba, Vibraphone (Vib.), Percussion (Perc.), Piano (Pno.), Violin (Vln.), Viola (Vla.), Violoncello (Vc.), and Double Bass (D.B.).

Measure 107: The woodwinds (Fl., Ob., B♭ Cl., Bsn.) enter with a half note G#4, marked *f*. The Bassoon has a half note G#3. The Horn and Tuba have whole rests. The Vibraphone has a whole rest. The Percussion has a whole rest. The Piano has a complex figure: the right hand plays a sixteenth-note triplet (A#4, B4, C5) followed by eighth-note pairs (D5, E5), (F5, G5), (A5, B5), and (C6, D6); the left hand plays a half note A#3, followed by eighth-note triplets (B3, C4, D4) and (E4, F4, G4), and then eighth-note pairs (A4, B4), (C5, D5), (E5, F5), and (G5, A5). The Violin, Viola, Violoncello, and Double Bass have whole rests, with the Violoncello and Double Bass marked *ff*.

Measure 108: The woodwinds (Fl., Ob., B♭ Cl., Bsn.) have whole rests. The Bassoon has a whole rest. The Horn and Tuba have whole rests. The Vibraphone has a whole rest. The Percussion has a whole rest. The Piano continues its complex figure. The Violin, Viola, Violoncello, and Double Bass have whole rests.

Measure 109: The woodwinds (Fl., Ob., B♭ Cl., Bsn.) have whole rests. The Bassoon has a whole rest. The Horn and Tuba have whole rests. The Vibraphone has a whole rest. The Percussion has a whole rest. The Piano continues its complex figure. The Violin, Viola, Violoncello, and Double Bass have whole rests.

Measure 110: The woodwinds (Fl., Ob., B♭ Cl., Bsn.) have whole rests. The Bassoon has a whole rest. The Horn and Tuba have whole rests. The Vibraphone has a whole rest. The Percussion has a whole rest. The Piano continues its complex figure. The Violin, Viola, Violoncello, and Double Bass have whole rests.

110

Fl.

Ob.

B $\flat$ Cl.

Bsn.

110

Hn.

Tuba

110

Vib.

110

Perc.

110

Pno.

110

Vln.

Vla.

Vc.

D.B.

H

f

f

f

f

vibes (off)

snare (on)

f

A musical score for a symphony orchestra, specifically measures 110-113. The score is arranged in a standard orchestral format with woodwinds, brass, strings, and percussion. The woodwinds (Flute, Oboe, B-flat Clarinet, Bassoon) and percussion (Vibraphone, Snare Drum) have active parts starting in measure 110. The brass (Horn, Tuba) and strings (Violin, Viola, Violoncello, Double Bass) are mostly silent, with some string activity in the piano part. The score includes dynamic markings like 'f' (forte) and 'vibes (off)' for the vibraphone. A rehearsal mark 'H' is placed above the woodwind staves in measure 110. The piano part features complex rhythmic patterns with triplets and quintuplets. The woodwinds play sixteenth-note patterns, while the percussion plays a steady eighth-note rhythm.

[illegible]

118

Fl.

Ob.

B♭ Cl.

Bsn.

Hn.

Tuba

Vib.

119

Perc.

Pno.

Vln.

Vla.

Vc.

D.B.

119

120

121

122

123

124

125

126

127

128

129

130

131

132

133

134

135

136

137

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533

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535

536

537

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541

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543

544

545

546

547

548

549

550

551

IV. After ♩ = 56

I

123

Fl.

Ob.

B♭ Cl.

Bsn.

Hn.

Tuba

Vib.

Perc.

Pno.

Vln.

Vla.

Vc.

D.B.

ff

(LT13R23)

ff

(LT3R12)

ff

flz

walk to piano

mp

8va - Blue flex-band in piano

8va - Green flex-band in piano

mp

vibes (on)

p

pp

ff pp

ff pp

ff

fff

mf

ff

mf

f

ff

f

ff

f

ff

gliss

gliss

gliss

gliss

This page contains measures 132 through 137 of the musical score. The instruments are arranged as follows:

- Fl.**: Flute
- Ob.**: Oboe
- B^b Cl.**: Bass Clarinet
- Bsn.**: Bassoon
- Hn.**: Horn
- Tuba**
- Vib.**: Vibraphone
- Perc.**: Percussion
- Pno.**: Piano
- Vln.**: Violin
- Vla.**: Viola
- Vc.**: Violoncello
- D.B.**: Double Bass

The score includes various musical notations such as dynamics (*mf*, *mp*), articulation marks (accents, slurs), and performance instructions like "splashing water" and "violin string bounce on piano strings". Measure numbers 132, 133, 134, 135, 136, and 137 are indicated at the beginning of their respective staves.

138

Fl. *mp* *mf* *mp*

Ob. *mp* *mf* *mp* *mf*

B♭ Cl. *mp* *mf*

Bsn. *mp* *mf*

Hn.

Tuba

Vib. *mp* *mf*

Perc.

Pno.

Vln.

Vla.

Vc.

D.B.

142 K

Fl. *mf*

Ob.

B♭ Cl. *mp* *mf*

Bsn. *mf* *f*

Hn.

Tuba

Vib. *mf* *f*

Perc.

Pno. *legato* *mf*

Vln. *espressivo legato* *mp* < *mf*

Vla. *espressivo legato* *mp* < *mf*

Vc. *espressivo legato* *mp* < *mf*

D.B. *arco* *espressivo legato* *mp* < *mf*

147

Fl.

Ob.

B $\flat$ Cl.

Bsn.

Hn.

Tuba

Vib.

Perc.

Pno.

Vln.

Vla.

Vc.

D.B.

mf

151

Fl.

Ob.

B♭ Cl.

Bsn.

Hn.

Tuba

Vib.

Perc.

Pno.

Vln.

Vla.

Vc.

D.B.

Blue flex-band in piano

Green flex-band in piano

splashing water

156

157

Fl. *vibes flute cello*
p *mp* *pp*

Ob.

B♭ Cl.

Bsn. *(Quia)*

Hn. *(8va)*

Tuba

Vib. *p*

Perc. 157

Pno. 157

Vln. *pizz.* *mp* *arco* *violin viola cello trio*

Vla. *mf* *mp*

Vc. *bend* *mp* *p*

D.B. 157

165

Fl.

Ob.

B♭ Cl.

Bsn.

Hn. *(8va)*

Tuba *(8va)*

Vib. *p* *pp*

Perc.

Pno.

Vln. *mf* *p*

Vla. *mf* *p*

Vc. *mf* *p*

D.B. *mf* *p*

arco