

UCLA

Contemporary Music Score Collection

Title

Ephemera in 5 Movements

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/3dm9q0nz>

Author

Phlox, Sebastian

Publication Date

2020

Ephemera in 5 Movements

Sebastian Phlox
Poem by Emma Carmody

Ephemera in 5 Movements is written in five short stanzas, or movements, with each part describing a different thought or moment. The piece is based around a poem of the same name by Emma Carmody that evocatively depicts these ephemeral experiences in a compact form, which I felt would make for an interesting musical setting. Each of the five stanzas of the poem conjure an impression of a short-lived but vivid moment, through strongly evoking smells and sounds in addition to visual portrayal. These scenes are all contrasting, and seem almost like random thoughts one might have while looking over five particular landscapes. In setting this to music, I have tried to maintain the feeling of volatility by being very direct and simple in the treatment of the text. The piece is scored for the minimal ensemble of flute, violin, cello and percussion, with text recited in turn by the players. I have taken the approach of not being unnecessarily subtle in how the music alludes to the words, since the text itself is sufficiently abstract in the way it carries its meaning. This results in quite a bit of unconcealed word-painting.

In the final verse, the viewer's perception of the world appears to fall apart - so the music ends incoherently, as if it couldn't remember its train of thought...

Ephemera in 5 Movements was commissioned by the Soundstream New Music Collective as a result of my participation in their 2012 Young Composers' Award, and was my second collaboration with Australian poet Emma Carmody. My heartfelt thanks go to the Soundstream Collective for performing my work, and especially to Gabriella Smart for making this opportunity possible.

Ephemera in 5 Movements

Emma Carmody

Ephemera 1

I remember you
tenderising angelica in the pestle,

the bruised,
white petals on my tongue,

trying to sublimate desire
with their faintly medicinal taste.

Ephemera 2

When I was fourteen, a priest swung
a silver chalice from side to side

and chanted Arabic verse. You'd
bought your frankincense in Morocco,

and believed that all wonder
resided in my breasts.

Ephemera 3

And me, standing on the threshold,
listening to the lake freeze over.

Wondering if setting water
is audible.

Filled with visions
of someone's paradise.

Ephemera 4

Perhaps the world was sprung from this alpine
wilderness? –
A spasm of pine needles

And cities, deserts, horizons were born,
Like the lone tree that quakes its passion,

A tambourine struck by wind,
Its leaves the birth of music.

Ephemera 5

To speak of reason,
as if it were the flickering verge of a star,

the coming and going of light:
there are nights

when candling voices into sunrise,
he dissembles the universe itself,

sign by sign,
motion by motion,

his wounds prospering in symbol,
the incandescence of exhaustion.

Ephemera in 5 Movements

For the Soundstream Collective

Sebastian Phlox
Text by Emma Carmody

Ephemera I

Flute

Violin

Cello

Percussion

Off the string; percussive

mp

Off the string; percussive

mp

Marimba

mp

Detailed description: This block contains the first four measures of the musical score for 'Ephemera I'. It features five staves: Flute, Violin, Cello, Percussion (Marimba), and a lower Percussion staff. The Flute staff is mostly empty with a few rests. The Violin and Cello staves play a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes, with the Cello part including some sixteenth-note runs. The Percussion staff shows a steady eighth-note pattern on the Marimba. Dynamics are marked as *mp* (mezzo-piano). The key signature has one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is 3/8.

Fl.

Vln.

Vc.

Perc.

5

Detailed description: This block contains measures 5 through 8 of the musical score. The Flute staff (labeled 'Fl.') has a measure rest in measure 5 and then continues with a few notes. The Violin (labeled 'Vln.') and Cello (labeled 'Vc.') staves continue with their rhythmic patterns. The Percussion staff (labeled 'Perc.') continues with the Marimba part. A measure rest is present in the lower Percussion staff in measures 5 and 7. The score is numbered '5' at the beginning of the first measure of this block.

9

Fl.

Vln.

Vc.

Perc.

This system contains measures 9 through 12. The Flute part is silent, indicated by a whole rest in each measure. The Violin part plays a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes, starting with a quarter rest in measure 9. The Viola part plays a similar rhythmic pattern, often with a half note in the first half of the measure. The Percussion part provides a steady accompaniment of eighth notes. The key signature has one flat (B-flat).

13

Fl.

Vln.

Vc.

Perc.

This system contains measures 13 through 16. The Flute part is silent, indicated by a whole rest in each measure. The Violin part continues with its rhythmic pattern, including some dynamic markings like accents (>) and hairpins (<). The Viola part continues with its rhythmic pattern. The Percussion part continues with its steady eighth-note accompaniment. The key signature has one flat (B-flat).

17

Spoken:

Fl. *mp* I re-mem-ber you

Vln. *pp*

Vc. *pp*

Perc. *p* *mp* *mf*

20


Fl. ten - der-is - ing an - ge-li - ca in the pes-tle,

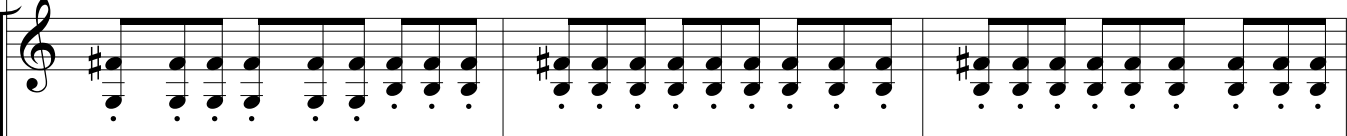
Vln.

Vc.

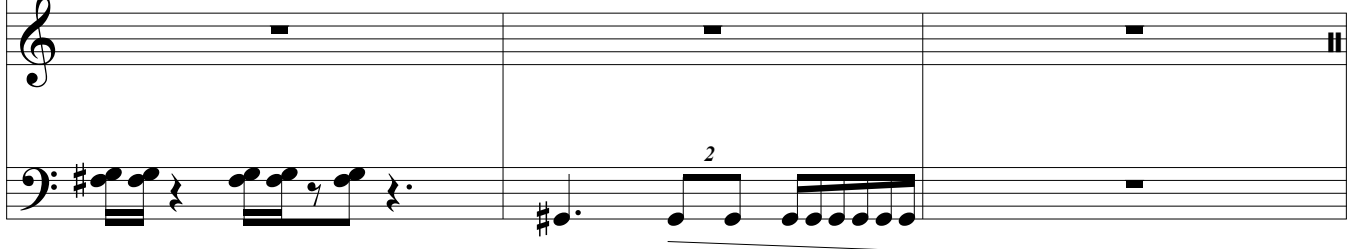
Perc. *mp*

23

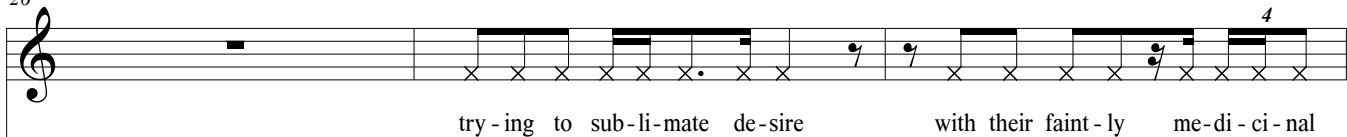
Fl. 

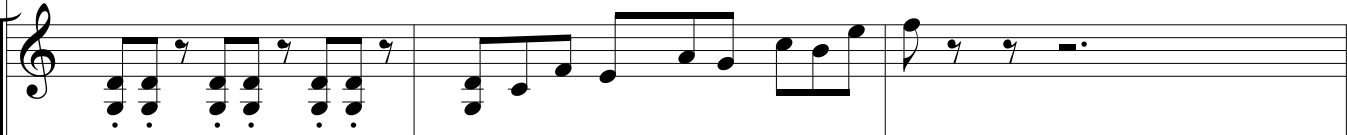
Vln. 

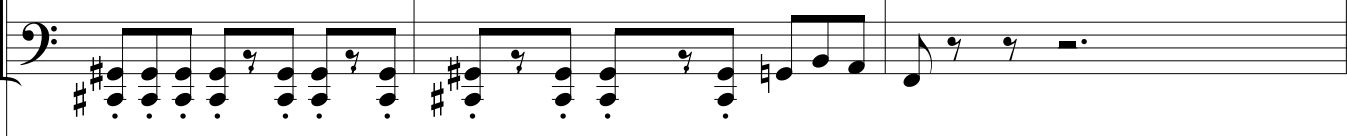
Vc. 

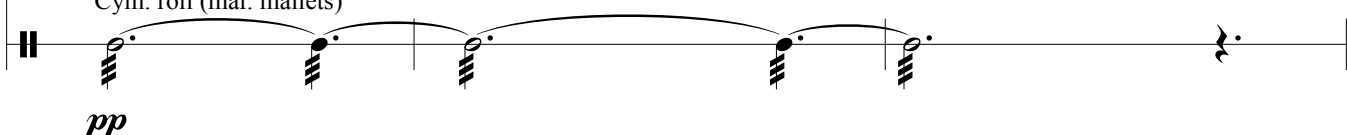
Perc. 

26

Fl. 

Vln. 

Vc. 

Perc. 

29

Fl.

Vln. *taste. pizz.* *mf* *arco* *come prima* *f*

Vc. *pizz.* *mf* *arco* *come prima* *f*

Perc. Woodblocks *p* *f*

33

Fl.

Vln. *f*

Vc. *f*

Perc.

37

Fl.

Vln.

Vc.

Perc.

40

Fl.

Vln.

Vc.

Perc.

gradually move bow to about halfway up fingerboard

43

Fl.

Vln.

Vc.

Perc.

ff

ff

ff

14/8

Ephemera 2

46

Fl.

Vln.

Vc.

Perc.

Con spirito $\text{♩} = 120$
in 5

molto sul pont

f

fp *fp* *fz* *fp* *fp* *fz*

Toms

14/8

14/8

14/8

f

fp *fp* *fz* *fp* *fp* *fz*

Toms

48

Fl. *f*

Vln.

Vc. *fp fp fz mf* *bow ad lib.*

Perc.

51

Fl. *f*

Vln. *mf fp*

Vc.

Perc.

53

Fl. *ff* *niente*

Vln. *mp*

Vc.

Perc. *sn.*

55

Fl. *ff* *subito p*

Vln.

Vc. *subito p*

Perc. *subito p*

57

Fl. *mp*

Vln. *mf* Spoken: 3

Vc.

Perc.

mf When I was four-teen, a priest swung a sil - ver cha - lice

59

Fl.

Vln. from side to side

Vc.

Perc.

12
61

Fl.

Vln.

and chan - ted a - ra - bic verse.

Vc.

Perc.

63

Fl. *mp*

Vln.

You'd bought your fran - kin - cense in Mo - ro - cco,

Vc.

Perc.

65

Fl.

Vln.

and be - lieved that all won - der

Vc.

Perc.

67

Fl.

Vln.

Vc.

Perc.

re - si - ded in my breasts.

69

Fl.

Vln.

Vc.

Perc.

f
molto sul pont

f

mf

71

Fl.

Vln.

Vc.

Perc.

ff niente *f*

f

74

Fl.

Vln.

Vc.

Perc.

Musical score for measures 74-75. The Flute (Fl.) and Violin (Vln.) parts play a melodic line consisting of eighth notes, with a sharp sign indicating a key signature change. The Viola (Vc.) part plays a sustained chord. The Percussion (Perc.) part plays a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with accents.

76

Fl.

Vln.

Vc.

Perc.

Musical score for measures 76-77. The Flute (Fl.) and Violin (Vln.) parts feature trills. The Viola (Vc.) part plays a sustained chord. The Percussion (Perc.) part plays a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with accents. The piece concludes in 3/4 time.

Ephemera 3

79 **Andante**

Fl. *p*

Vln. *mp* sul pont scratch

Vc. *pp*

Perc. Spoken: *mf* And me, stan-ding

85

Fl.

Vln. behind bridge *fp* sul pont. *pp*

Vc.

Perc. 3 3 3

on the thres-hold, lis-ten-ing to the lake freeze ov-er.

90

Fl.

Vln.

Vc.

Perc.

mp

pp

3

3

3

3

Won-der-ing if set-ting wa-ter is au-di-ble.

95

Fl.

Vln.

Vc.

Perc.

p

pp

ppp

3

3

3

3

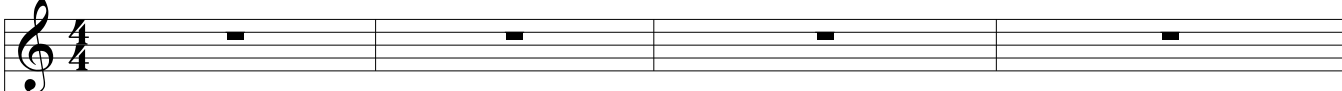
behind bridge

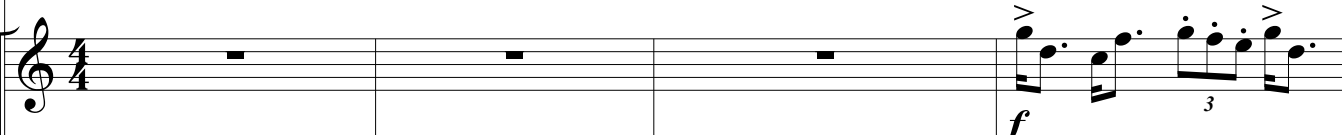
Filled with vis-ions of some-one's pa-ra - dise.


Ephemera 4

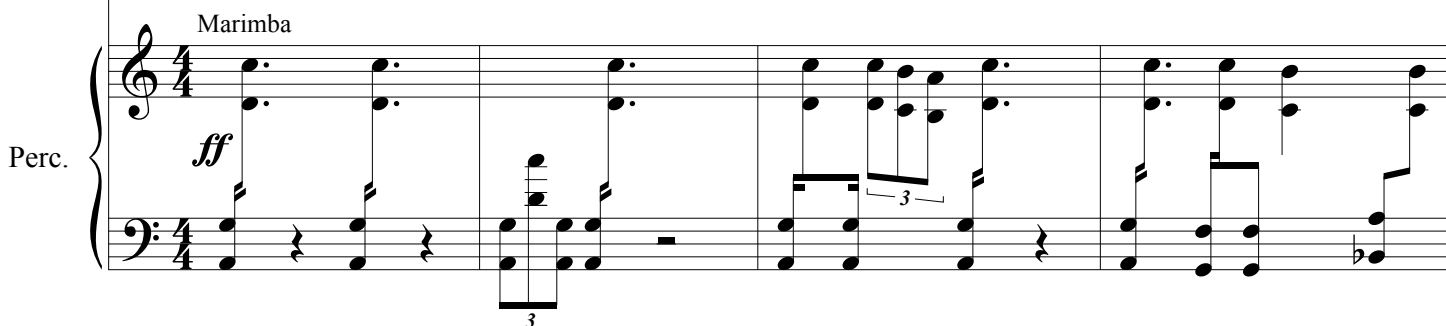
Allegro

101


Fl.  **ff**

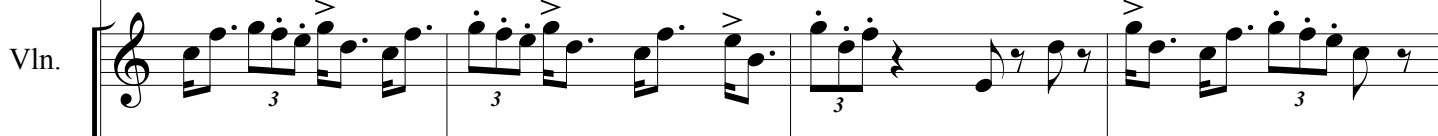
Vln.  **f**

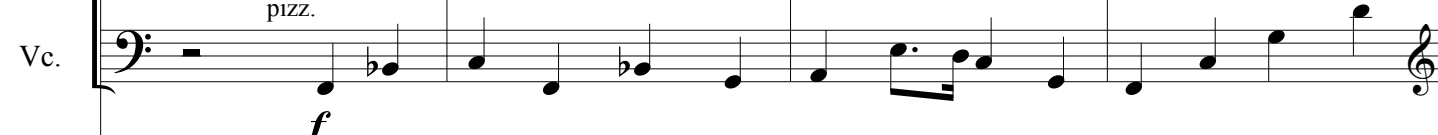
Vc. 

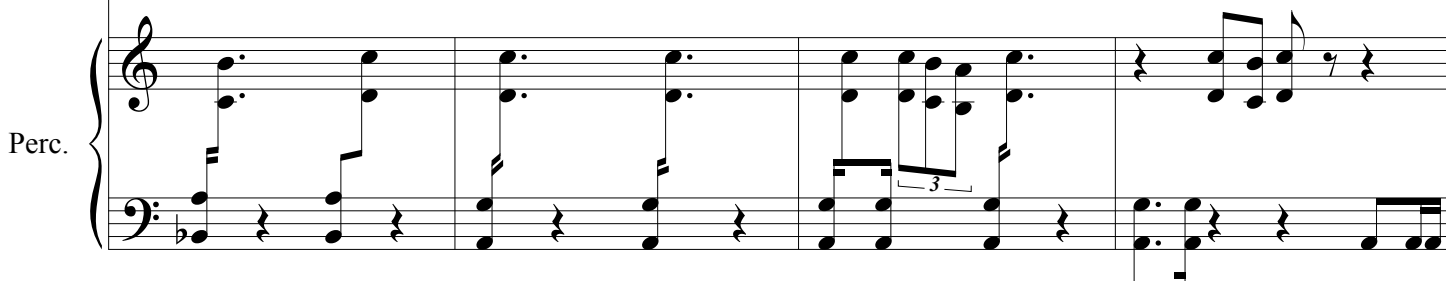
Perc. **ff** *Marimba* 

105

Fl.  **f**

Vln. 

Vc. *pizz.*  **f**

Perc. 

109

Fl.

Vln.

Vc.

Perc.

113

Fl.

Vln.

Vc.

Perc.

p

mf Per -

Spoken:

115

Fl.

Vln.

Vc.

Perc.

haps the world was sprung from this al - pine wil - der - ness? - - - A

117

Fl.

Vln.

Vc.

Perc.

spa-sm of pine nee - dles

ff

120

Fl.

Vln.

Vc.

Perc.

pp

And ci - ties, de - serts, ho - ri - zons were born,

Detailed description: This system covers measures 120 to 122. The Flute part begins with a whole rest in measure 120, followed by a quarter note in measure 121, and a triplet of eighth notes in measure 122. The Violin part consists of continuous triplet eighth notes across all three measures. The Violoncello part has a quarter rest in measure 120, followed by eighth notes in measure 121, and a triplet of eighth notes in measure 122. The Percussion part has a quarter rest in measure 120, followed by continuous triplet eighth notes in measures 121 and 122. The vocal line, written in the Vc. staff, includes the lyrics: "And ci - ties, de - serts, ho - ri - zons were born,".

123

Fl.

Vln.

Vc.

Perc.

bass drum

pp

Like the lone tree that quakes its pas-sion, A tam - bou-rine struck by wind,

Detailed description: This system covers measures 123 to 125. The Flute part has a long note with a slur in measure 123, followed by a quarter rest in measure 124, and a triplet of eighth notes in measure 125. The Violin part consists of continuous triplet eighth notes across all three measures. The Violoncello part has triplet eighth notes in measure 123, a quarter rest in measure 124, and triplet eighth notes in measure 125. The Percussion part has a quarter rest in measure 123, followed by a bass drum hit in measure 124, and a quarter rest in measure 125. The vocal line, written in the Vc. staff, includes the lyrics: "Like the lone tree that quakes its pas-sion, A tam - bou-rine struck by wind,".

126

Fl.

Vln.

Vc.

Perc.

ppp

ff

Its leaves the birth of mu - sic.

Detailed description: This system covers measures 126 to 128. The Flute part (Fl.) has a single note in measure 126 with a fermata that extends through measures 127 and 128. The Violin part (Vln.) plays a continuous eighth-note triplet pattern throughout. The Viola part (Vc.) has a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with stems pointing down. The Percussion part (Perc.) starts with a very soft (*ppp*) pattern and becomes much louder (*ff*) in measure 128. The lyrics "Its leaves the birth of mu - sic." are written below the Viola part.

129

Fl.

Vln.

Vc.

Perc.

f

f

pizz.

Detailed description: This system covers measures 129 to 132. The Flute part (Fl.) plays eighth-note triplets, starting with a dynamic of *f*. The Violin part (Vln.) also plays eighth-note triplets. The Viola part (Vc.) plays a bass line with a dynamic of *f* and is marked *pizz.* (pizzicato). The Percussion part (Perc.) has a complex rhythmic pattern with various note values and rests.

140

Fl. *sfz sfz* the com-ing and go-ing of light:

Vln. *sfz sfz f* 3 3

Vc. *sfz sfz* the com-ing and go-ing of light:

Perc. Woodblocks *mf*

143

Fl. *sfz sfz* there are nights when candling voices into sunrise, ad lib.

Vln. *sfz sfz*

Vc. *sfz sfz* pizz. *ff*

Perc. *mf* cym. *

146

Fl. he dissembles the universe itself, sign by sign,

Vln. play random notes jaggedly

Vc. to speak of reason,

Perc. Woodblocks play random notes jaggedly

ff

150

Fl. motion by motion, his wounds prospering in symbol,

Vln. play random notes jaggedly

Vc. play random notes jaggedly

Perc. play random notes jaggedly

154

Fl. *play random notes jaggedly*

the incandescence of exhaustion.

Vln.

Vc.

Perc.

158

Fl. aim for disarray

End on cue from flautist

fff

Vln.

fff

Vc.

fff

Perc.

fff