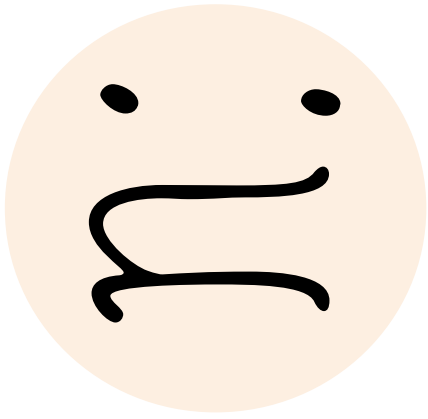


The winter desert of my silences

Eugene Birman
The winter desert of my silences
June 2014
for tuba with live electronics



neither a song, a reason, or a landscape,
so it's a mirage that paints itself
in **the winter desert of my silences**.
~fabio franzin, *the color of words*

28 february 2014 – Oxford, UK

> This is a piece for a live tuba soloist and eleven pre-recorded, “inanimate” tubas. They are as much voices as they are instruments; as much nothing as they are something. Despite the inclusion of electronics, this is, indeed, a solo piece: a solitary, meditative experience, at times ascetic or mystical, but with no pretensions of reaching to the divine.

It is in no parts; it has no divisions and I have endeavored to remove any vestiges of linearity or form. It is the kind of music to which one could add or subtract from the end or the beginning and keep the message entirely intact. I am tired myself of expectation in my music, of climax or resolution, even of “material” as it has come to mean in music of our time. Listening to it, one might wonder why it has so few silences indeed considering its title. I am instead looking for the silence this piece creates as a result, an internal one, a memory that contains not sound but a mirage that, as Franzin wrote, “paints itself.”

Commission: Sound and Music Higher Education Programme, for Oren Marshall and Sound Intermedia

Instrumentation: tuba with live electronics

Duration: approximately 7 minutes 45 seconds

- (1) Undefined pitches (missing noteheads) ostinato, as low as possible in the instrument's range in the approximate shape/gesture provided; x-shaped noteheads signify piercing, *pesante* pitches. Upward-diagonal arrow = inhale continuing with the same rhythm as the gestures immediately preceding.
- (2) Triplets (combination of unpitched notes and inhale) eventually occurring metronomically every second. Cross-shaped notehead figure should be particularly loud, piercing, and of a slightly different shape/gesture than the quieter undefined pitch gesture/shape before. Then, transitions between the two extremes (loud, piercing, cross-shaped gestures and quiet, "shadowy" missing-notehead gestures), either gradual or sudden.
- (3) Whispered text is sourced from the poem, read backwards. Pronunciation is, as would be, in Italian, with hard "ch", short "e", etc – to be whispered into instrument unless stated otherwise. Short Maestoso section (and all following pitched sections) played on the Eb harmonic series, very approximate, with partial #s given above. The section "expires" into an exhale (downward-diagonal arrow).
- (4) Like in the beginning, but very very gradually, linking with the silence as seamlessly as possible.
- (5) Unpitched ostinato section as before; the pitched notes gradually become interrupted by exhales, like heavy breathing. Transition between ostinato and pitched section should be done as quickly as reasonable but it is possible to take more time **after** the whispers.
- (6) Smooth transition between loud material to the missing-notehead ostinato which should appear to blend seamlessly with the electronics.
- (7) a) Exactly like in the beginning of (6) but interrupting extremely suddenly as the electronics end.
b) Another interruption, but this time with the quadruplet missing-notehead ostinato.
- (8) Whispered (into instrument) very dramatically – as close as possible to the "real tempo" of the other gestures as possible.
- (9) a) Whispered as fast as possible into instrument, dramatically (theatrically), completely ad libitum, repeating words or even parts of words until a sudden silence (cresc. Sempre)
b) Gradual electronic decresc. and thinning of texture.
c) A very theatrical whisper, fast, sempre ad libitum.
- (10) This rather romantically-titled finale is inspired by the idea of gradually losing the definition, shape, identity, etc. of all previous ideas as if being lost to the fog or the ocean. The mute should be inserted as fast as possible but if there must be a rather long break, then that can be taken between the grace notes and the long muted note. The "coda," if it can be titled as such, should be played with the same technique as before but sound somehow different, more distant and esoteric.

General note about breathing: The performer may breathe at any point during the ostinato sections as long as he maintains the pattern, maintains the regularity, and exchanges/omits one of the undefined pitches for a breath.

The winter desert of my silences

1 tuba soloist + 11 electronic tubas

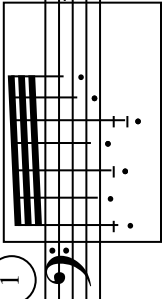
E. A. Birman (b. 1987)

"neither a song, a reason, or a landscape,
so it's a mirage that paints itself
in the winter desert of my silences."
- Fabio Franzin, "The color of words"

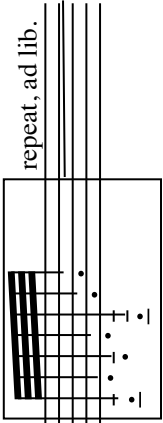
Distant, like an incantation:

 ~ 54-60 (very approx.)
low register (as low as feasible)
tuning valve OUT

1



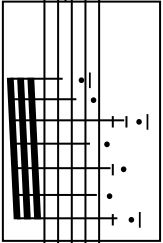
Solo Tuba



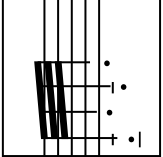
repeat, ad lib.

ppp sost.

Solo Tuba



repeat, ad lib.



repeat, ad lib.

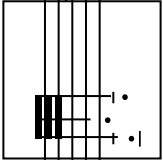
gently accel.

sfp

ppp sost.

[gently accel.]

Solo Tuba



repeat, ad lib.

Vocal Effects

pppp

[illegible]

The image shows a musical score for 'The Swan' by Camille Saint-Saëns. It is a two-staff score, with the piano (p) on the left and the cello (cello) on the right. The key signature is one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is 3/4. The tempo is marked 'moderato'. The piano part is marked 'ppp sost.' and the cello part is marked 'gently accel.'. Both parts include a 'repeat, ad lib.' section. The piano part features a series of sixteenth notes, while the cello part features a series of eighth notes. The score is written in a standard musical notation style.

[gently accel.] ----- **subito tempo primo**

as low as possible: repeat, ad lib.

pppp *sff sost.*

gently accel.-----

Solo Tuba

repeat, ad lib.

repeat, ad lib.

repeat, ad lib.

subito pp

[gently accel.]-----

Solo Tuba

subito tempo primo
(lowest pitches possible)

repeat

come prima

repeat

subito pp

sfff sost.

ppppp sfff sost.

subito pp sfff sost.

3-5 sec

3 *molto meno mosso* (< 40)

Solo Tuba

A short, tense silence

whispering, first very quietly/privately

into instrument

subito tempo primo
interrupting:

come prima

repeat

subito pp

come prima

molto meno mosso ($< 40-54$)

Vocal Effects

iz nel is em i ed aen rev ni ot res ed let ar o e oc es l'ech

0

sfff sost.

mp

ppp

mp

Maestoso ♩ = 60
tuning valve IN
16 15

let note slip

14 12 15 16

5

6-10 sec.

Solo Tuba

Vocal Effects

whispered freely, fatalistically:

ac is um an *ppppp*

ne musica ne un perche ò *ppppp*

pp

A long, flat silence

piu mosso di tempo primo, allarg. molto
low register (as low as feasible)
tuning valve OUT

connect to the silence

3-5 sec.

Solo Tuba

pp

A rippling moment of peace

Maestoso, piu mosso ♩ = 80-100
tuning valve IN
16 15 14 12 15 16 13

insert tuning valve

(let note slip)

flz.

5

come prima

mp

ppp

sfz sost.

whispered, freely

ne musica ne *subito p > ppp*

Solo Tuba

Vocal Effects

(sempre $\bullet = 80-100$)

6 12 14 12 15 16 13 12 16 15 14 12 16 15

Solo Tuba

Vocal Effects

f

subito mfpp

f

subito mfpp

becoming increasingly like heavy breathing

15 16 13 12 16 15 16 15 14 12 15 16 13

Solo Tuba

Vocal Effects

f

sf

f

subito mfpp

subito mfpp

subito mfpp

subito mfpp

12 16 15 16 15 16 15 14 12 11

Solo Tuba

Vocal Effects

f

sf

sf

subito mf

subito mfpp

subito mfpp

subito mfpp

, tuning valve OUT

6

(tempo primo)

7

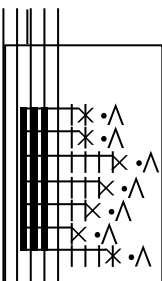
as soon as possible:



(lowest pitches possible)



Solo
Tuba



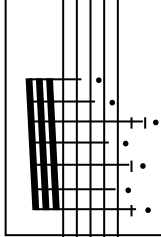
Vocal
Effects

fff

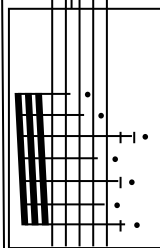
transitioning to...



Solo
Tuba



0



Tuba 2
(elec)

p

ppp

Musical score for Tuba 2 through Tuba 12. The score is written for 12 tubas, each with its own staff. The notation includes various musical symbols, dynamics, and articulations.

- Tuba 2 (elec):** Starts with a dynamic of *p* and a crescendo leading to a dynamic of *ppp*. It features a series of notes with stems and flags, and a final note with a fermata.
- Tuba 3 (elec):** Starts with a dynamic of *p* and a crescendo leading to a dynamic of *ppp*. It features a series of notes with stems and flags, and a final note with a fermata.
- Tuba 4 (elec):** Starts with a dynamic of *p* and a crescendo leading to a dynamic of *ppp*. It features a series of notes with stems and flags, and a final note with a fermata.
- Tuba 5 (elec):** Starts with a dynamic of *p* and a crescendo leading to a dynamic of *ppp*. It features a series of notes with stems and flags, and a final note with a fermata.
- Tuba 6 (elec):** Starts with a dynamic of *p* and a crescendo leading to a dynamic of *ppp*. It features a series of notes with stems and flags, and a final note with a fermata.
- Tuba 7 (elec):** Starts with a dynamic of *p* and a crescendo leading to a dynamic of *ppp*. It features a series of notes with stems and flags, and a final note with a fermata.
- Tuba 8 (elec):** Starts with a dynamic of *p* and a crescendo leading to a dynamic of *ppp*. It features a series of notes with stems and flags, and a final note with a fermata.
- Tuba 9 (elec):** Starts with a dynamic of *p* and a crescendo leading to a dynamic of *ppp*. It features a series of notes with stems and flags, and a final note with a fermata.
- Tuba 10 (elec):** Starts with a dynamic of *p* and a crescendo leading to a dynamic of *ppp*. It features a series of notes with stems and flags, and a final note with a fermata.
- Tuba 11 (elec):** Starts with a dynamic of *p* and a crescendo leading to a dynamic of *ppp*. It features a series of notes with stems and flags, and a final note with a fermata.
- Tuba 12 (elec):** Starts with a dynamic of *p* and a crescendo leading to a dynamic of *ppp*. It features a series of notes with stems and flags, and a final note with a fermata.

[illegible]

Solo Tuba

5-8 sec

A dead, deserted silence

subito *pppp*

0

8 Drifting, circling into silences

Solo Tuba

6-8 sec

6-10 sec

3-5 sec

Very short

Thin, restrained

More tense

sudden: ,

whispered, ghostly, at the pace of an incantation:

come prima

un mirajo 'lora, che'

na musica, ne un perche o paesajo

pp *mp* *pppp* *pp* *pppp* *pppp*

9A

Solo
Tuba

whispered, repeating words or phrases freely like an incantation:

suddenly silent: ,

Vocal
Effects

na musica, ne un perche o un paesajo, un mirajo | ora che | se coora tel deserto invernæ dei me silenzi...

pp

f

Tuba 2
(elec)

ppp

mf

Tuba 3
(elec)

Tuba 4
(elec)

Tuba 5
(elec)

sim.

Tuba 6
(elec)

sim.

Tuba 7
(elec)

sim.

Tuba 8
(elec)

sim.

Tuba 9
(elec)

sim.

Tuba 10
(elec)

sim.

Tuba 11
(elec)

sim.


Tuba 12
(elec)

sim.


9B insert tuning valve

9C

Solo Tuba

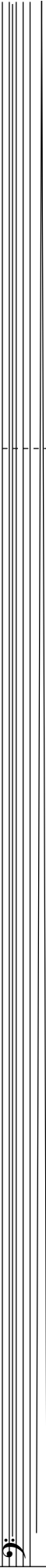


Vocal Effects

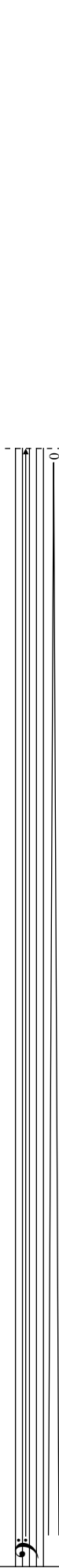


whispered, ghostly, faint:
nel deserto inviamo dei me silenzi
pp *pppp* *pp*

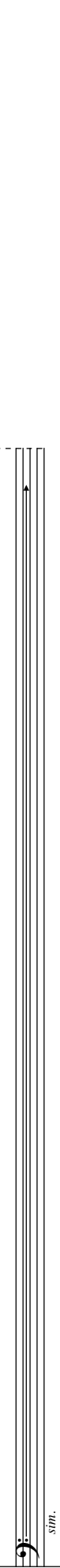
Tuba 2 (elec)



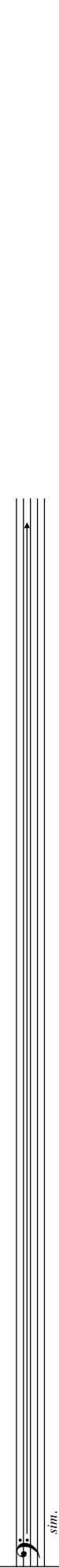
Tuba 3 (elec)



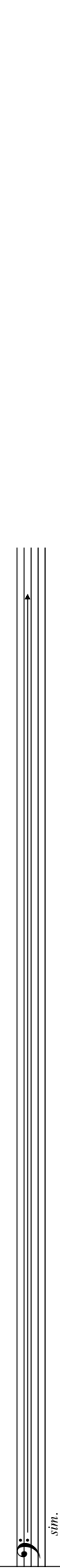
Tuba 4 (elec)




Tuba 5 (elec)




Tuba 6 (elec)




Tuba 7 (elec)




Tuba 8 (elec)




Tuba 9 (elec)




Tuba 10 (elec)



Tuba 11 (elec)



Tuba 12 (elec)



10 Lost, like a carcass of a ship in a fog-covered

ocean ♩ = 80-100

tuning valve IN

16 15 > 14 12 > con sord. 13

~10 sec
A spiraling,
dizzy
silence

> transition directly to... a long exhale

Solo Tuba

Vocal Effects

mp

ff

sppp

pppp

Tuba 2 (elec)

0

(con sord.)
> transition directly to... a short exhale

3-5 sec

Solo Tuba

Vocal Effects

ppp

pppp

molto

whispered, precisely: ;

wait...

dei me silenzi

mf > *pp* > *pppp*

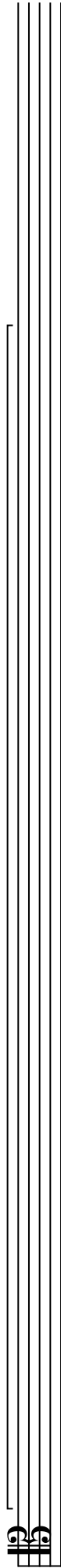
tempo primo

Tuba 2 (elec)

pppp sost.


~10-20 sec

Solo Tuba



Vocal Effects

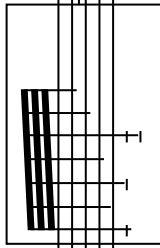
whispered, theatrically:



dei me silenzi

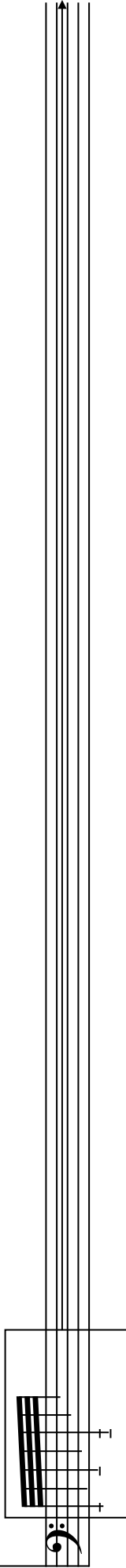
mf *pppp*

Tuba 2 (elec)



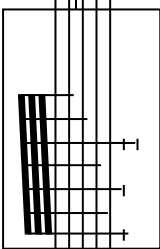
pppp *sost.*

Tuba 3 (elec)



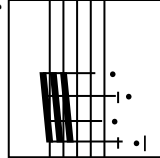
pppp *sost.*

Tuba 4 (elec)



pppp *sost.*

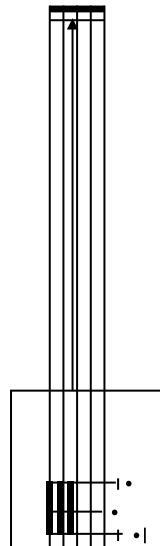
[nonaccel.] mechanically:



pppp

15-30 sec

Tuba 2 (elec)



pppp