

James Weeks

The World in tune

for solo soprano

perusal score
not for performance
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The World in tune

solo soprano

Duration

8'

Performance note

The piece is built entirely from four Just Intonation intervals, as follows:

minor third (6:5) – 316c
subminor third (7:6) – 267c
septimal (wide) whole tone (8:7) – 231c
neutral third (11:9) – 347c

The vocal style should be *senza vibrato* but warm, radiating an inner confidence and peace.

Dynamics may be treated with freedom (natural rises and falls, *poco espressivo*), and may increase as the music opens out towards the end.

Each sung phrase should be performed in one single breath, typically of 10-12" duration. The length of each line (sung/spoken phrase + rest) is given at the start of each section.

The rhythm is notated in whole notes with whole-note rests. The length of these varies relative to the number of notes in a line and the duration of each line as stated at the top of each section. Within each line, each note should have approximately the same duration.

Vowels: 'a' as in English 'father' (IPA: α)
'o' as in Italian 'ombra' (IPA: o)

In the first section the five different pitches are each associated with a specific vowel, either 'o' or 'a' or a transitional state between the two ($o - o(a) - a(o) - a$). The differences of vowel should be as subtle as the differences of pitch.

In the third section, $o \dashrightarrow \dashrightarrow a$ indicates a gradual opening-up of the vowel from 'o' to 'a' through the last eight lines of the piece.

The text of the second section should be spoken clearly at a natural reading pace, as if to oneself.

The piece must be performed in a resonant acoustic.

Commissioned by Irene Kurka and first performed by her at Klangraum, Düsseldorf, 27 August 2013.

Programme note

Asked for a piece on the subject of Prayer, I thought of Henry Vaughan's definition, from *The Morning-watch* (from *Silex Scintillans*, 1650) :

*Prayer is
The World in tune,
A spirit-voyce,
And vocall joys
Whose Eccho is heav'ns blisse.*

The idea of 'tuning oneself in' also occurs in the lines from Pessoa that are incorporated into the piece:

*May this always be my life:
The day bright with sunshine or mild with rain,
Or stormy as if the world would drown...*

*To feel life flowing through me like a river over its bed,
And outside a great silence, like a sleeping god.*

The piece exclusively uses intervals formed between some of the first eleven partials of the harmonic series, and so performs its own kind of tuning-in.

James Weeks, May 2013

1.

Line = 20"

p-mp, warm

o a

o a o a

o a(o) o a

o a(o)

o a o a(o) o a

o a(o) o o(a)

o o(a) o(a)

o o(a) o a o a

o o(a) o o(a)

o a o a(o) o o(a)

Line = 10"

mp spoken

x
Könnte mein Leben doch immer dies sein:

x
Die Tage sonnig oder regnenmild

x
Oder stürmisch, als ginge die Welt unter,

x
 das Leben durch mich strömen spüren wie einen Fluss durch sein Bett,
 x
 und draußen ein großes Schweigen - ein schlafender Gott.

Line = 15"

p-mp ←, opening out

Handwritten musical score for a string instrument, consisting of 12 staves. The notation includes various notes, rests, and dynamic markings. A large watermark "www.notforperusal.com" is overlaid diagonally across the score. The first staff has a circled "x" above it. The second staff has a circled "x" above it. The score includes dynamic markings like "p-mp" and "opening out". There are also some performance instructions like "p-mp ←, opening out" and "->a" at the bottom left.