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Science Fiction Music

for Sinfonietta

FULL SCORE

Matthew Chamberlain · Oberlin, OH · January 2018

Program Note

This piece is a kind of science fiction. It imagines a future in which things work a bit differently than they do here and now, a future in which this piece is widely loved, its sensibility appreciated, its craft revered.

I have built the piece's harmony using eighth-tones, pitches that divide the octave into 48 equal parts rather than the standard 12. In this vastly expanded pitch space, familiar chords coexist with wildly unfamiliar harmonies, and players' instruments are rendered unfamiliar technology.

Like any science fiction, this piece is about the past and how it might hopefully become a more appalling and embarrassing future. It includes three time capsules, each about 5 minutes long. The first, titled Torch Song, features two slow-motion phrases for string quartet: two Beethoven bobbleheads shivering with fury. The second movement, Honor and Fidelity, sees the full ensemble chart a course from the romantic aspirations of the string quartet to a brief and sneaky dance. The final movement, Shipwrecks on the Shore of Meaning, is accurately titled.

Instrumentation

flute
oboe
clarinet / bass clarinet
bassoon / contrabassoon

horn
trumpet
trombone
tuba

percussion *vibraphone, xylophone, crotales, timpani (B2, E3)
bass drum, snare drum, tam-tam, hi-hat*

harp
piano

two violins
viola
cello
contrabass

Notation



This piece uses the standard quarter-tone accidentals. In addition, arrows are frequently attached to an accidental so as to raise or lower it by an approximate eighth-tone. The precise alteration of pitch called for by an arrow may range from 15¢ – 31¢, in accordance with the performer's sensibility and interpretation of the harmony to which the pitch contributes.

PSP MST

The standard bow position indications are abbreviated in capital letters: MST is *molto sul tasto*, PSP is *poco sul ponticello*, and so forth. At loud dynamics, *sul tasto* should not be taken to imply overpressure and may be mitigated in order to avoid distortion.



In this piece, marcato pitches do not necessarily indicate an accented attack. Rather, the dynamic of marcato tones should be exaggerated, marking them as particularly significant. Towards this end, the performer may also modify the timbre and/or articulation of a marcato note, although they must then take care to distinguish it from other accented sounds.

The score is given at sounding pitch.

Details

duration: ca. 14:30
completed: 10 January 2018

*For Tim Weiss
and the Oberlin Sinfonietta*