Mystics

Duo for two pianos

Ian Percy
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1. The Search for a Consistent Truth
2. Rapid Changes have been Foretold (the world will watch in awe)
3. Everything Changes whilst Everything Remains the Same (Impermanence is a constant truth)

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2015-16
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To celebrate Alexander Scriabin’s (1872-1915) anniversary year, his Mystic Chord: C – D – E – F# - A – Bb – C was used as the primary pitch material within this work. A Mystic Complement: Db – Eb – F – G – Ab – B – Db completed the total chromatic and provided secondary pitch material used for contrast and balance. This piano duo (for two pianos) carries the listener through three movements of succinct and well-focused musical form:

1st movement: Both pianos begin playing the primary atonal material: The six pitches of the Mystic Chord. At figure F, the 1st piano plays the Mystic Chord and the 2nd piano plays the Mystic Complement, combining to create a 12-tone soundworld, but effectively playing in two different atonalities. Before the movement ends with a final statement of the opening theme, both pianos play the six pitches of the Mystic Chord at figure N in a relaxed and melodic passage with a modal ‘quasi-blues’ feel to the atonal pitch collection. The first thematic statement holds a reference to an invisible G, with all the pitches belonging to the G Jazz melodic minor scale and the final statement is in an ‘atonal’ A. The melodic material at figure N outlines a clear reference to an Ab ‘atonal modality’, and so the form passes through two semi-tone modulations before resolving a whole-tone above where it started. Whilst one could not help but consciously notice references to Lutoslawski’s semi-tonal formal modulations, the form (and eventual pitch-scheme) was a natural consequence of working with the Mystic Chord.

2nd movement: Pitch organisation rotates through specific parts of the pitch matrix. This is currently a work in progress...

3rd movement: Rotating through predetermined elements of the pitch matrix (and completing the rotations), this lyrical and expressive movement starts in Chord material and ends in Complement material after passing through the total chromatic twice along the way. The form is fluid and linear with energetic crescendos and similar semi-tone modulations as the first movement. The pitch organisation produced a clear contrast between flats and naturals in the primary and secondary (Chord and Complement) material and this provided the catalyst for the opening (and closing) piano clusters, where syncopated rhythms separate pentachords (pentacclusters), playing all five flat notes (black keys) from diatonic clusters, playing all seven natural notes (white keys). There was also a notable conflict between E flat and E natural in the primary and secondary (Chord and Complement) material. This pair of notes (and similar semi-tonal conflict and resolution) can be heard at pivotal formal landmarks within the movement and the pitch-scheme, it is also used to flavour the melodic contour of the writing.
**Mystics**

**Pitch Matrices**

**Mystic Chord Matrix:** Primary material

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>I0</th>
<th>I2</th>
<th>I4</th>
<th>I6</th>
<th>I9</th>
<th>I10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P0</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>F#</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Bb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P10</td>
<td>Bb</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>Ab</td>
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<tr>
<td>P8</td>
<td>Ab</td>
<td>Bb</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Gb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P6</td>
<td>Gb</td>
<td>Ab</td>
<td>Bb</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Eb</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P3</td>
<td>Eb</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Db</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>F#</td>
<td>G#</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Mystic Complement Matrix:** Secondary material

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>I0</th>
<th>I2</th>
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<th>I6</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P0</td>
<td>Db</td>
<td>Eb</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>Ab</td>
<td>B</td>
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<td>P10</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Bb</td>
<td>Db</td>
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| RI0 | RI2 | RI4 | RI6 | RI9 | RI10 |
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1. The Search for a Consistent Truth

\[ \sum_{n} \text{Piano 1} \]

\[ \sum_{n} \text{Piano 2} \]

A With growing confidence: A thematic statement...

\[ \dot{=} \text{Pensive and hesitant: An ambiguous genesis with a flexible pulse...} \]
Eighty-eight keys and the total chromatic: A combined linear statement and a stream of consciousness...
A quiet thematic statement...
poco rit.

\[ \sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \text{\textit{pp}} \]

\[ \sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \text{\textit{p}} \]

\[ \sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \text{\textit{PPP}} \]
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3 \( \frac{\text{d}}{\text{d}t} \) A new beginning dissolves as an ancient conclusion appears...

Note: The dynamics for both pianos are proportional to how quietly piano 2 can play the clusters.
One can dampen the resonance of the piano strings with a lightweight scarf, in conjunction with the sostenuto pedal to help control the dynamics, but this reduces the natural harmonics within the pedalled resonances of the clusters.

3 \( \frac{\text{d}}{\text{d}t} \) A new beginning dissolves as an ancient conclusion appears...

(pentachords/pentaclusters: black keys) (sim.)

PPPP

(diatonic clusters: white keys) (sim.)
Reflections from the past are always in the present...

So What! ... not all answers can be positive...

Sometimes contemporary life can seem complex...
As above, so below: In awe and celebration... poco accel.

poco rit.

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