

An Infinite Circle is a Straight Line

Duet for violin and piano

Ian Percy

2014

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This very short duet for violin and piano emerged from a theoretical study into the linear qualities and musical possibilities of composing with Pi (3.14159...).

Pi is infinite and linear, but is part of the equation used to calculate the circumference of a circle (cyclic and self-contained). The composer was attracted by this contradiction. Stumbling across a quotation accredited (with some dispute) to Johannes Kepler (1571-1630) stating that 'an infinite circle is a straight line' seemed to enhance the contradiction within the compositional premise. The oxymoronic hint of 'philosophical mathematics' contained within the quote was all the additional inspiration needed. This quotation has since been adopted as the concept for a series of compositions.

As a guiding template for the musical characters interacting within this duet, a single line of narrative was conceived from the Kepler quote. This scenario is used as a performance indication at the start of the score: "A curved horizon: the sun sets on another summer."

The material used in this short piece all references Pi in some way (rhythm, proportion, chord, interval, repetition etc.), and circular symmetry is represented through vertical and linear pitch-palindromes (inverted and transposed to reduce direct recognition). Inverted mirror symmetry is used extensively within the writing.

This duet is part of a planned series of works exploring practical study into the musical possibilities of the infinite integer cited above. The composer has initial sketches for 6 unaccompanied bass and baritone voices and plans to set Pi as a linear chant within cyclic pitch and rhythm patterns: The maximum triangle is an infinite line.

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1
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A ♩ = 76 **A curved horizon: the sun sets on another summer...**

poco rit.

B ♩ = 76

poco rubato molto espress.

sul tasto

sul pont.

sul tasto

molto vib.

ord.

sul pont.

Violin staff for section A and B. It features a melodic line with various dynamics including *p*, *mf*, *mp*, *pp*, and *p*. There are also performance instructions like *sul tasto*, *sul pont.*, *molto vib.*, and *ord.*. The staff includes triplets and slurs.

A ♩ = 76 **A curved horizon: the sun sets on another summer...**

poco rit.

B ♩ = 76

poco rubato molto espress.

Piano staff for section A and B. It features a complex accompaniment with dynamics ranging from *pp* to *f*. Performance instructions include *8va* and *8vb*. The staff includes triplets, slurs, and a *cresc.* marking.

C *poco rit.*

C

poco rit.

sul tasto

sul pont.

sul tasto

pizz.

arco

cresc.

Violin staff for section C, starting at measure 11. It features a melodic line with dynamics including *pp*, *mp*, *sfz*, *p*, *pp*, *f*, *mp*, and *f*. Performance instructions include *sul tasto*, *sul pont.*, *pizz.*, and *arco*. The staff includes triplets, slurs, and a *cresc.* marking.

C *poco rit.*

C

poco rit.

Piano staff for section C. It features a complex accompaniment with dynamics ranging from *ppp* to *f*. Performance instructions include *8va* and *8vb*. The staff includes triplets, slurs, and a *cresc.* marking.

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Individual Parts

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An Infinite Circle is a Straight Line

Violin

A ♩ = 76 **A curved horizon: the sun sets on another summer...**

poco rit.

poco rubato molto espress.

sul tasto *sul pont.* *sul tasto* *molto vib.*

p *mf* *mp* *mf* *pp*

B ♩ = 76

poco rit.

C

ord. *sul pont.* *sul tasto* *sul pont.* *sul tasto*

p *mp* *pp* *mp sfz* *p* *pp*

poco rit.

pizz. *arco* *cresc.*

f *mp* *f* *pp*

An Infinite Circle is a Straight Line

Piano

A ♩ = 76 A curved horizon: the sun sets on another summer...

poco rit.

poco rubato molto espress.

Musical score for section A, measures 1-8. The score is in 4/4 time with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). The tempo is marked ♩ = 76. The piece begins with a piano (*pp*) dynamic. The right hand features a melodic line with triplets and a long slur spanning across measures. The left hand provides a harmonic accompaniment with triplets and a bass line that includes an 8va^b marking. Dynamics progress from *pp* to *mf* and finally to *f ppp*. The section concludes with a *poco rit.* marking and a repeat sign.

B ♩ = 76

poco rit.

C

Musical score for sections B and C, measures 9-16. The score continues in 4/4 time with the same key signature. Section B (measures 9-12) starts with a piano (*pp*) dynamic and includes a *ppp* dynamic. It features a melodic line with triplets and a bass line with an 8va^b marking. Section C (measures 13-16) begins with a *poco rit.* marking and includes dynamics of *mf ppp* and *pp*. The piece ends with a repeat sign.

poco rit.

16

cresc.

f *ppp*

3

3

5

6

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