

what on earth

for solo viola and computer

Brad Decker

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2023

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Duration: 7:17

what on earth (2023) reflects on the dichotomies and juxtapositions of daily life, in light of recent world events and societal shifts. Is the earth a peaceful place to be? Is humanity and nature meant to coexist? Do we know what is real and unreal? The viola soloist performs a variety of musical fragments that depict opposing human attributes - passionate, aggressive, resolute. The computer responds with digital manipulation of the viola, at times making the beautiful distorted, and vice versa. While the soloist is existing in a very real and tactile environment, the computer reminds us of the ghastly and swirling presence of the unreal.

Technical Note: All computer sounds are generated by the performer, whose viola will have a pickup or microphone that is sent to a laptop and computer program - a Max patch/application. The large boxed numbers refer to the cues within the patch, which can be triggered by foot controller from stage, or by a technician (or the composer) from the computer at mix position. Since this is not necessarily driven by a fixed timeline, the performer has some flexibility in regard to fermati and other notation elements. Many of these moments, while notated, suggest a feeling of improvisation. Therefore, some deviation from the letter of the notation is at times encouraged.

About the composer: Brad Decker is a composer, educator, and performer of contemporary concert music, whose works often incorporate electronic, electroacoustic, or interactive media. His recent works explore the interaction of acoustic instruments and electronics to create immersive composite textures. His instrumental works combine virtuosic flourishes, polyrhythmic interplay, and extended techniques. Electronic elements include adventures in analog synthesis, interactive computer processing and sampling, multichannel diffusion, and fixed-media accompaniments. Multimedia projects range from traditional film soundtracks to live-performed improvisations with video. As a double bassist, he regularly performs his own compositions and improvisations that incorporate computer interactivity. His teachers include Peter Hestermann, Kenneth Jacobs, Erik Lund, Heinrich Taube, Steven Taylor, and Scott Wyatt. He has attended masterclasses and lessons with composers Agostino DiScipio, Stefano Gervasoni, Lee Hyla, and Tristan Murail. He is currently Assistant Professor of Composition and Music Technology at Eastern Illinois University. His music is distributed through his website www.braddecker.org.

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b.decker75@gmail.com

Passionate
♩ = 35

Kr
1
Kp →

Gr

Viola
arco

fp ————— *f* *p* ————— *ff* > *p* ————— *ff*

Gr
s. p. —————
ord.
fff *fp* ————— *pp* *fp* ————— *fff* *fp* ————— *pp* *s. p.* ————— 3"

2

Aggressive
♩ = 70
ord.
off the string
non-legato

legato

fp ————— *fff* *p* ————— *f* *p* < *f*

off the string
non-legato

Gr

fp ————— *fff* *fp* ————— *fff*

legato *off the string non-legato*

p ————— *fff* *fff* *fp* ————— *pp*

6 6

s. p. ————— 3"

Passionate

3

♩ = 35

ord.

p *f* *p* *ppp*

Gr

p *f* *pp* *p* *f* *p*

Aggressive

4

Ks

♩ = 70

fff *fff*

off the string
non-legato

fp *ff* *fp* *fff* *fp* *fp*

Gr

as high as possible...>

fp *ffff*

Aggressive, yet

♩ = 40

s. p.

fff *fff* *fp* *ppp*

REC

5

pizz.

Animated

♩ = 50

Musical score for the first section, featuring two staves of music. The first staff contains a series of eighth-note chords with dynamic markings *f*, *p*, *f*, *p*, and *sfz*. The second staff contains a series of eighth-note chords with dynamic markings *f*, *p*, *ff*, *p*, *mp*, *p*, and *sfz*. A **PLAY** button is located above the second staff.

Gr

Passionate

arco s. p.

♩ = 35

Musical score for the second section, featuring a single staff with dynamic markings *p*, *mp*, and *pp*. The score includes first and second endings (I. and II.) and a 3-measure rest (3"). A **Gr** (Grave) marking is present above the staff.

Gr

6

pizz.

Animated

♩ = 50

Musical score for the third section, featuring two staves of music. The first staff contains a series of eighth-note chords with dynamic markings *f*, *p*, *ff*, *p*, and *mp*. The second staff contains a series of eighth-note chords with dynamic markings *p*, *f*, *p*, *f*, *p*, *ff*, *p*, and *mp*.

Musical score for three staves, measures 5-6. The music is in 3/8 time and features a variety of dynamic markings and articulations.

Staff 1: Measure 5 starts with a piano (*p*) dynamic, followed by a sforzando (*sfz*) dynamic. A crescendo leads to a piano (*p*) dynamic, followed by another *sfz*. Measure 6 starts with a forte (*f*) dynamic, followed by a piano (*p*) dynamic, then a forte (*f*) dynamic, and ends with a piano (*p*) dynamic and *sfz*.

Staff 2: Measure 5 starts with a piano (*p*) dynamic and *sfz*. Measure 6 starts with a piano (*p*) dynamic and *sfz*, followed by a forte (*f*) dynamic and piano (*p*) dynamic, then a forte (*f*) dynamic and piano (*p*) dynamic, and ends with a piano (*p*) dynamic and *sfz*.

Staff 3: Measure 5 starts with a piano (*p*) dynamic and *sfz*. Measure 6 starts with a pianissimo (*pp*) dynamic and *sfz*, followed by a forte (*f*) dynamic and piano (*p*) dynamic, and ends with a piano (*p*) dynamic and *sfz*.

Dynamic markings include *p*, *f*, *sfz*, *pp*, and *ff*. Articulations include accents (>) and sforzando (> sfz). Crescendos and decrescendos are indicated by wedge-shaped lines. A **Stop1** box is above the first staff and a **Stop2** box is above the second staff. A fermata with a 3" marking is above the final note of the third staff.

Musical score for two staves, measure 7. The music is in 3/8 time and features a variety of dynamic markings and articulations.

Staff 1: Measure 7 starts with a piano (*p*) dynamic and *sfz*. A crescendo leads to a fortissimo (*ff*) dynamic. A decrescendo leads to a piano (*p*) dynamic. A **7** box and a **Gr** box are above the first staff. The instruction *arco legato* is written above the staff. The tempo marking *Passionate* and $\text{♩} = 35$ are also present.

Staff 2: Measure 7 starts with a fortissimo (*ff*) dynamic. A decrescendo leads to a fortissimo (*ff*) dynamic, followed by a mezzo-piano (*mp*) dynamic, a piano (*p*) dynamic, and ends with a forte (*f*) dynamic. A fermata is above the final note.

Dynamic markings include *p*, *ff*, *mp*, *p*, and *f*. Articulations include accents (>) and sforzando (> sfz). Crescendos and decrescendos are indicated by wedge-shaped lines. A **7** box and a **Gr** box are above the first staff. The instruction *arco legato* is written above the staff. The tempo marking *Passionate* and $\text{♩} = 35$ are also present.

Gr Kr Kp 7
 2"

p \longrightarrow *ff* *fff* (arco) *p* *f* *ff* *f* *ff*

L.H. pizz.

II

pp \longrightarrow *mp* *pp* \leftarrow *mp* \rightarrow *pp* *mp* \longrightarrow *f* \longrightarrow *p* \rightarrow *pp*

no vibrato sul tasto ord. III 3"

p *mp* *p* \longrightarrow *ppp*

Animated $\text{♩} = 80$ Ks 8 Gr

arco molto vib. arco arco pont. arco ord. off the string

f pizz *ff* *f* pizz *ff* *f* pizz *ff* *fff*

arco ord. off the string arco off the string pont.

pizz *ff* *f* \longrightarrow *ff* *fff* *p*

6

arco ord.
off the string

pizz

arco
off the string

f *p* *ff* *ff* *f* *ff* *fff*

6 3"

pizz

arco
IV

off the string 3"

ff *p* *ff* *fff*

REC

9

III pizz

arco
no vib.
IV

s. p.

ord.
off the string

IV
(e)

off the string

ff *p* *fff* *p* *f* *fp* *p* *f* *p*

6 3"

pizz

pizz

ff *ff* *pp*

6

pizz
(no snap)

f *ff* *p*

6

PLAY

mp *f* *p*

6 3"

Resolute

♩ = 60

Kr

Gr

10

arco s. p. ord.

ppp p pp

s. p. ord. s. p. ord.

p pp p pp

Ks
STOP

March 4, 2007
November 9, 2023
Champaign, IL

