

We the Way Outward

for chamber ensemble

Sid Richardson

2021

We the Way Outward

Instrumentation

Flute (doubling piccolo)

Bass Clarinet in Bb (with C extension)

Violin

Violoncello

Percussion

Piano

Percussion List

Drum Set:

Crash Cymbal

Ride Cymbal

Hi-Hat

Snare Drum

2 Tom-toms (rack and floor)

Pedal Bass Drum

2 Cowbells (high and low)

Maracas

Tam-tam

General Notes

Accidentals hold throughout the bar.

Glissandi should take the total duration of the note or of notes tied together.

An arrow indicates to gradually transition from one mode of playing to another, e.g. from sul ponticello to ordinario.

Crescendi dal niente and diminuendi al niente are indicated with hairpins emerging from or terminating in a circle.

Triangle note heads indicate to play the highest possible note on the instrument, or on a given string.

 = note raised 1/4 of a tone

 = note raised 3/4 of a tone

 = note lowered 1/4 of a tone

 = note lowered 3/4 of a tone



= A long pause of indefinite length, unless a duration is indicated above in seconds

The beginning and ending of the second movement, *Sonorant Cerement*, utilize box notation in a senza misura texture. Indications are given for cues on and off between the instruments, for example given by the percussion player on page 24, but the conductor may choose to give these indications themselves. Staging for pages 21-23, in which the flute and violin players begin the movement playing into the piano and then proceed to their seating positions during page 24, is left up to the discretion of the players and conductor. Violin and flute should memorize this opening music before m. 1 so that they can move freely about the hall.

Performance Notes

Flute

The ending of the piece calls for a mix of air tone and pitch in a roughly half-and-half proportion.

The flute part in the second movement should be considered an obbligato part of primary importance.

Bass Clarinet

"Split tone" indicates a rich multiphonic sound achieved by playing a standard fingering and using the air pressure and vocal cavity to split the note into various upper partials. It is notated by a box on the note stem.

The bass clarinet part in the first movement should be considered an obbligato part of primary importance. The general feel in this movement should be free and improvisatory.

The second movement calls for "subtones," extremely soft, airy notes, as sustained sounds that allow for "whisper harmonics," high upper partials of the fundamental tone, to be brought out when indicated.

Strings

String tremolo should always be unmeasured.

Natural harmonics are accompanied by an indication of the intended string in roman numerals, followed by the partial number of the desired harmonic with a degree symbol. For example, the natural harmonic found an octave above the highest open string would be notated I/2°.

The violin part in the second movement should be considered an obbligato part of secondary importance only to the flute part.

The cello part in the third movement should be considered an obbligato part of primary importance.

Percussion

The setup calls for a drum set augmented by two cowbells, maracas, and a tam-tam. These additional instruments may be arranged in whatever way seems most convenient to the player (e.g., mounted cowbells).

The percussion part in the first movement should be considered an obbligato part of secondary importance only to the bass clarinet part. The general feel in this movement should be free and improvisatory.

Pages 24 and 30 of the second movement call for an unusual snare drum technique involving a very thin strip metal laid flat across the head of the snare drum so that about two thirds of the strip lays on the snare head and the other third sticks out over the rim. For the premiere, a .41mm x 6.35mm brass strip was used (produced by K&S Precision Metals, #8230). The player presses down on the strip firmly on the rim so that it remains steady, while at the same time bowing the part that hangs out over the drum. The bowing activates the part of the metal strip laying on the head of the drum, which produces a sustained snare roll that has some pitch.

Piano

Piano resonance plays a large roll in the texture of the piece in all three movements. The indication to "hold down" the pedal may last for long stretches, and is canceled out by the indication "senza Ped."

The piano part in the third movement should be considered an obbligato part of secondary importance only to the cello part.

Program Note

We the Way Outward springs from my continued interest in the work of experimentalist poet Nathaniel Mackey, whose poetry and literary criticism engage African American history and culture in a way that emphasizes a cross-cultural approach to art and life. The release of his newest collection of poetry, a three-volume set entitled *Double Trio*, led me to explore several musical ideas, which have worked themselves into this piece for chamber ensemble.

Its title derives from the protagonists of Mackey's intertwined poems *Song of the Andoumboulou* and *Mu*. They feature a "band of nervous travelers," who go by many names, and whose peripatetic nature brings them in contact with cultures from around the globe. Norman Finkelstein describes the poet's penchant for using the nominative, first-person pronoun as his "wandering we." We, the reader, are participating in the mythos that Mackey unfolds in his poems along with his "philosophic posse"; we're part of the band searching for gnosis, a point of knowing that comes from without. "We the stubborn consort." "We the band we were, we the band we'd be." "We the would-be chorus." *We the Way Outward*.

The first movement, *Ludic Limp*, fixes on musical connotations of limping, off-kilter rhythms juxtaposed with steady pulse streams. In his essay "Sound and Sentiment, Sound and Symbol," Mackey establishes a connection between limping and empowerment in relation to the African god Legba, one of the gods retained in the New World African traditions of *vodoun*, *candomblé*, and *lucumí*. Legba is often depicted as an old man who walks with a limp because his legs are of unequal lengths, one being rooted in the spirit world and the other in our reality. Nonetheless, he dances. Mackey identifies this joining of "limping disability with the gracefulness of dance" in the music of some of his favorite artists, including John Coltrane, Eric Dolphy, Cecil Taylor, Sun Ra, and Ornette Coleman, among many others. Legba is the god of intersections, doorways, crossroads, thresholds. Mackey relates this interstitial nature to a "forking of the voice," which he hears in Coltrane's soloing as he splits his instrument into various registers in dialogue with each other. I've applied this idea to the bass clarinet part in *Ludic Limp*, which constantly jumps between registers in dialogue with itself. While the music in this movement seeks to draw ideas from without, it sometimes resists them. Ultimately all are subsumed and re-contextualized in a playful limping dance.

The second movement, *Sonorant Cerement*, engages the funereal element in Mackey's work. The "Song of the Andoumboulou" is a cosmic funeral song the poet encountered on an album of field recordings of the Dogon people of Mali and Burkina Faso. The myth recounted therein deals with Andoumboulous, what Mackey calls "a rough draft of a human being, the work-in-progress we continue to be." These ancestors have not been properly laid to rest with requisite rites. This story has been the springboard for Mackey's ongoing mythology, which is spun out in his serial poetry. Peter O'Leary identifies it as "a torn cloth, covering a lost, phantomic body (of knowledge, of lore, of flesh—of a people)." I associate the music and ceremony of *Sonorant Cerement* with the loss we've collectively experienced in the COVID-19 pandemic, which initiated this commission.

The final movement, *Goat Gut Gospel*, springs from several *Mu* poems, which evoke a "morning song" as it emerges from the funeral rite of the second movement. "The wail and whine of the goat gut" are envisioned as a cello solo that moves between disjunct musical contexts juxtaposed with one another. Cello and piano come to the fore, following the highlighting of bass clarinet and drums in the first movement, and flute and violin in the

second. A prevailing theme of this ensemble is a band made up of distinct characters. It has its roots not only in Mackey's poems, but also his prose series *From a Broken Bottle, Traces of Perfume Still Emanate*.

In response to Mackey's call for "centrifugal work" in his manifesto "Destination Out," *We the Way Outward* plays with adding musical influences to his contexts. He suggests that we begin from "whatever [it is that the] medium we find ourselves working in will not do." This music cannot convey to the audience in a one-to-one relationship the composer's thoughts and associations, for after all music is an abstract language. We can all, however, bring our own meaning to it; and those ideas could be just as meaningful.

We the Way Outward was commissioned by Boston Musica Viva, Richard Pittman Music Director, as part of the Write It Now Commissioning Initiative. It received its premiere performance on March 13, 2023, in New England Conservatory's Jordan Hall by the Callithumpian Consort under the musical direction of Stephen Drury.

- Sid Richardson

We the Way Outward

I. Ludic Limp	1
II. Sonorant Cerement	22
III. Goat Gut Gospel	31

Duration: circa 15 minutes

We the Way Outward

I. Ludic Limp

C Score

Sid Richardson
(b. 1987)

♩ = 88 Floating, Atmospheric

Musical score for measures 1-4 of 'I. Ludic Limp'. The score is in 3/4 time. The instruments are Flute, Bass Clarinet in B $\flat$, Violin, Violoncello, Percussion, and Piano. The Flute and Violoncello parts are silent. The Bass Clarinet part begins with a half note G $\flat$ (B $\flat$ 4), followed by a half note F $\flat$ (A $\flat$ 3), and then a half note E $\flat$ (D $\flat$ 3). The Percussion part begins with a cymbal (with sticks) and cowbells, marked *mp*, followed by a half note G $\flat$ (B $\flat$ 4), and then a half note F $\flat$ (A $\flat$ 3). The Piano part is silent. The score includes dynamic markings: *pp* submerged, *p*, *poco*, and *mfpp*.

Musical score for measures 5-8 of 'I. Ludic Limp'. The score is in 3/4 time. The instruments are Flute, Bass Clarinet in B $\flat$, Violin, Violoncello, Percussion, and Piano. The Flute and Violoncello parts are silent. The Bass Clarinet part begins with a half note G $\flat$ (B $\flat$ 4), followed by a half note F $\flat$ (A $\flat$ 3), and then a half note E $\flat$ (D $\flat$ 3). The Percussion part begins with a cow, marked *p*, followed by a half note G $\flat$ (B $\flat$ 4), and then a half note F $\flat$ (A $\flat$ 3). The Piano part is silent. The score includes dynamic markings: *mfpp*, *pp*, *p*, *mp* freely, and *pp*.

9

Fl.

B. Cl.

Vln.

Vc.

Perc.

Pno.

pp

p *breathy*

fp

mfpp

Tam-tam (with hand)

Cow (with sticks)

Cym scrape with stick *l.v.*

Ride Cymbal on bell *l.v.*

ppp *l.v.*

mp

sfz

mp

==

13

Fl.

B. Cl.

Vln.

Vc.

Perc.

Pno.

mf

p

mp

p airy

gliss.

3 *poco*

ppp

pp

Hi-hat Cymbal

Cow

Tam-tam (with stick)

p *3*

mf

mp

pp

pp *l.v.*

17

Fl. *pp*

B. Cl. *gliss.* *p* *pp* *ppp* *molto*

Vln.

Vc.

Perc. **Maracas** *pp* *mp* *pp* **Cow (with sticks)** *mf* *ppp*

Pno.



21

Fl.

B. Cl. *f*honking *poco f* *p* *mf* *p* *buttery*

Vln.

Vc.

Perc. **Tom-toms** *mf* *ppp*

Pno.

27

Fl. *ppp airy* *gliss.* *p* *pp*

B. Cl. *poco f* *6* *p* *pp*

Vln. *pizz.*

Vc. *l.v.* *p*

Perc. **Hi-Hat half-open** *mp sizzling* **Hi-Hat Ride (ord.)** *p* **Tam-tam (with hand)** *pp l.v.*

Pno. *pp glassy*

Hold down Ped. sempre

32

31

Fl. *pp glassy*

B. Cl. *mf* *< mf* *p* *mf*

Vln. *arco, sul C*

Vc. *mf*

Perc. **Maracas** *mf* *ppp*

Pno. *mf* *ppp*

(Ped.)

35

Fl. *poco* *pp* *poco*

B. Cl. *poco* *p* *mf* *pp* *ppp* *gliss.*

Vln. *pp* *pp* *mp*

Vc. *poco sul pont.* *ord.* *poco sul pont.* *ord.* *sul pont.* *ord.* *gliss.* *p* *mf* *p* *mf* *poco* *pp*

Perc. **Cow** *p* **Tam scrape with stick** *mf* l.v.

Pno. (Ped.)

39

Fl. *poco* *pp* *p* *mf* *ff* *f* *3* *3* *mf*

B. Cl. *f*

Vln. *gliss.* *5* *sul pont.* *gliss.* *ord.* *gliss.* *sul pont.* *pp*

Vc. *pizz.* *snap pizz.* *arco* *sfz* *3* *mp*

Perc. **Cow** **Toms** **Bass Drum** *mp* *pp* **Snare** *f* **Cym irregular scraping with stick** *mp* *poco* **Tam scrape with stick** *mp* l.v.

Pno. *ppp* *ff* *p* *mp* *p* (Ped.) *8^{va}*

♩ = 76 **Meno Mosso**

43

Fl. *p*

B. Cl. *p* *ppp* *p* *mf* *f* *pp*

Vln. *pp*

Vc. *pp*

Perc. Toms Toms BD *pp*

Pno. (Ped.)

=

47 Explosive

Fl. *f* *mp* *mf* *f*

B. Cl. *f* *mf* *f sub.* *ff*

Vln. *pp*

Vc. *pp*

Perc. Drum Set *poco f*

Pno. (Ped.)

accel. = 84 Ecstatic

50

Fl. *mp* *f* *mf* *f* *sffz* *mp* *mf*

B. Cl. *mp* *f* *mp* *f* *sffz* *ff* *mf* *f* *mp*

Vln. *mp* *f* *mf* *f* *ff* *mf* *f* *mf*

Vc. *f* *thick*

Perc. *mp* *f*

Pno. *f* *sffz* *f*

senza Ped.

8^{vb}



(2 + 3)

(2 + 3)

53

Fl. *f* *ff* *mp* *p*

B. Cl. *f* *mf* *ff* *f* *fff* *head splitting*

Vln. *f* *mp* *ff* *mf*

Vc. *sim.* *mf*

Perc. *Cow* *mp* *f* *p* *sfz*

Pno. *8^{vb}*

57 ♩ = 176 Poco più mosso, Limping

Fl. *mf pesante*
ord.
B. Cl. *mf pesante*
Vln. *mf pesante*
Vc. *pizz.*
sfz
sim.
Perc. *Cow*
mf
Pno. *mf* 3
f 3
mf 3



Floating

Fl. *mf*
B. Cl. *mf*
sfz
f
gliss.
mp
Vln. *mf*
Vc. *arco, sul pont.*
pp
poco
gliss.
p
mp
pp
Perc. *Hi-Hat Cym*
Cow
p sub.
f
half-open
mp
Tam-tam with stick
mf
l.v.
Pno.

67 ♩ = 84 Ecstatic, Barrelling Train Truck

Fl. *f* *mf* *f* *mf*

B. Cl. *f* *mf* *ff* *ffp* *molto* *sfz*

Vln. *mf* *f* *mf* *f* *mf* *sfz*

Vc. *f* *mf* *f* *mf* *sfz*

Perc. *f*

Pno.

Fl. *mf* *sfz* *mf* *ff*

B. Cl. *ff* *mp* *sfz* *mp* *ff* *mf*

Vln. *sfz* *mf* *f* *mf* *f* *mf* *ff* *mp*

Vc. *ord.* *mf* *ff sempre*

Perc. *sfz* *mf* *f*

Pno. *sfz* *sfz* *sfz* *mf* *< sfz*

8^{va}

74

Fl. *sfz* *mf*

B. Cl. *sfz* *ff* *mp* *f* *mf* *cresc. poco a poco*

Vln. *ff* *f_{sub.}* *mf* *f* *mf* *p* *f* *mf*

Vc. *tenuto sempre* *gliss.*

Perc. *mp* *f*

Pno. *sfz* *mf*

choke

gliss.



(2 + 3)

79

Fl. *f* *mf* *f*

B. Cl. *ff* *mf dolce* *poco* *f*

Vln. *f* *mf* *p* *mf* *f*

Vc. *f* *mf* *p* *mf* *f*

Perc. *f* *mf* *f*

Pno. *f* *mf* *f*

8th

7:6