

What Larks

for voice, chamber ensemble and electronics

Music by Evelyn Ficarra

Words from a poem by Valerie Whittington

Instrumentation:

Flute doubling piccolo

Clarinet in Bb

Electric Guitar with effects pedals

Mezzo Soprano

Sampling keyboard (to trigger sound files)

Piano

Cello

Technical notes:

A MIDI keyboard connected to a sound file player such as a computer will be needed to trigger the sounds.

Files are offered for playback via Logic Studio X or Max MSP.

Alternately sounds can be triggered by a technical person who would also balance levels during the performance.

The electric guitarist will have their own amp and pedals.

The sound files will ideally come from small onstage speakers associated with the piano. If possible, small speakers could even be put inside the piano, so that the birdsong seems to come from there.

Amplification of other players is not necessary, but is acceptable if preferred.

Equipment List:

Electric guitar with amplifier and pedals

Small MIDI keyboard

Computer with Logic Pro X or Max MSP

2 small self powered speakers e.g. Genelec 8010

Cables to go from computer headphone output to speakers, via direct output box or suitable sound card or mixer.

Performance notes:

Any unusual techniques are explained in boxed text on the score.

There are 5 sound files that are triggered as part of the keyboard part.

The piece has been composed so that the pianist can also operate a small MIDI keyboard to trigger the keyboard sound files.

The piece should ideally be conducted.

The final section is semi-improvised according to instructions in boxed text. The idea is for players to listen to the birdsong and blend with that and each other. The pianist and cellist have a special game of co-ordinating their bird calls, so will need good sight lines.

In this piece, especially at the beginning, the piano and electric guitar are the landscape, while the singer and the other instruments and the are the creatures in it.

At the end, everyone is trying to be a bird.

Programme notes:

This piece considers the different experiences to be had of nature and time, and the otherness of non human species. What is it to be a lark? How do they experience the closeness and immediacy of their nests in the ground, compared with the vast vistas and freedom of soaring above it? How can we enter into their perspective and imagine their point of view? How do the cliffs and the sea hold it all in place?

During composition, I read and re-read a suite of poems by my friend and collaborator Valerie Whittington. I was continually struck by resonant phrases, notions of listening and silence, the intense light, '*stark white and blue*', the '*hard pressed chalk*', the larks '*speaking in tongues*' - '*speaking decisively, but not for us*'. I was particularly attracted to the opening of one poem:

*I have not written this
not yet*

I played with this line and it became a refrain for the piece - for all the things we have simultaneously done and not done - written, sung, heard - as our lives play out through imagination and time.

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I *Not written*
♩ = 60

light sporadic key clicks, increasingly fast and dense with crescendo

A

10

Flute

Clarinet in B♭

Electric Guitar

Mezzo Soprano

Piano

Keyboard

Violoncello

Double Dragon 2 octaves down, reverb

fingers travel around fretboard lightly sporadically like a living creature, light hammeron to strings: 'mousey'

Double Dragon OFF

Set light reverb

ff L.V.

L.V.

15^{mb}

ff

15^{ma}

L.V.

ff

15^{ma}

L.V.

ff

15^{ma}

L.V.

ff

15^{mb}

Ped.

15^{mb}

Ped.

15^{mb}

Ped.

15^{mb}

Ped.

15^{mb}

Ped.

Q1 Low reverse piano cluster gets louder and louder to bar 7

Q2 Larksong detuned low, 32 sec

right hand lightly mutes strings near bridge, left hand fingers light sporadic tapping strings on fretboard, increasingly fast and dense with crescendo

♩ = 60

senza vibrato

light vibrato

f

pp

15 20 **B** accel. 3

Fl. *mp* *p* *mp* *p*

Cl. *mp* *p* *mp* *p*

E. Gtr.

S. Solo *pp* *p* *mp* *mp*
 I have not writ - ten this I have

Pno. *ff* *f* *mf* *f*
 15^{ma} 15^{ma} 15^{ma} 15^{ma} L.V. L.V.
 Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped.

Kbd. **Q3** More low larksong, 37"

Vc. *p* *pp* *mp* *p* *pp* *p* *mp*
 sul tasto senza vibrato sul ponticello normale light vibrato sul ponticello normale regular vibrato a piacere

B accel.

25 C ♩ = 88 30

Fl. *mp* *p* *mp* *p* *mp*

Cl. *mp* *p* *mp* *p* *mp*

E. Gtr. light reverb *pp*

S. Solo *mp* *mf* *mf* *mf*

I have not I I have not writ-ten this not not not not not not not not not not not not

Pno. *mf* *mf*

Kbd.

Vc. C ♩ = 88 *pizz* *p* *pp* *p* *mp*

piu mosso

35 40 $\text{♩} = 96$

Fl. *p* *mp* *mf* *mf* 3 3

Cl. *p* *mp* *mf* 3 3 3 3

add light delay increase delay maximum delay L.V.

E. Gtr. *p* *mp* *mf* *mf*

S. Solo

mp *mf*

I have not writ - ten I have not not not not not not

Pno. *mf* *mf* *mf* *mf* *mf* *f*

15^{ma} 8^{va} 15^{ma} 8^{va} 8^{va} 15^{ma} 8^{va}

Ped. Ped.

Kbd.

piu mosso

$\text{♩} = 96$ arco

Vc. *p* *mp* *mf* 3

rall. II Not sung

D ♩ = 60 accel. ♩ = 72

Fl. 45

Cl.

mp p mp pp

pp p mp p

keep reverb, set double dragon 2 octaves lower

double dragon 2 octaves lower + reverb L.V.

Double Dragon fades...

E. Gtr.

f

S. Solo

mf mp

not yet I have I have not

gliss.

Pno.

mp f

15^{ma} 15^{mb}

Red.

L.V.

Kbd.

rall. D ♩ = 60

accel. ♩ = 72

Vc.

mp f pp p pp

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

Cl. *mf* *p* *f* *f* *mp* *mf*

Double Dragon OFF
Keep light reverb

E. Gtr. *f* *f* *mp* *mf*

S. Solo *mf* *gliss.* *mp* *p* *mp* *mf* *mp* *mf* *mp*

sung _____ this I have not sung I have not sung I have not sung I have not

Pno. *pp* *pp*

Kbd. *mf* 8^{vb}

Vc. *p* *arco* *mp* *pp* *pizz* *f* *p* *arco* *mp* *mf* *pizz* *pp* *mf* *pp*

8

E

60

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

Cl. *mp* *mf* 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 6 6

E. Gtr. *mp* *f* *mf* *f* add light delay

S. Solo sung hard pressed chalk

Pno. *mf* *p* *f* *mf* *f* 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6

Kbd.

Vc. arco *f* *mf* *f* 6 6 6 6

Fl. *f* *mf* *mf*

Cl. *f* *mf* *mf*

E. Gtr. *mf* *mp* *mf*

S. Solo *f* *mf* *f*

so bright so bright so bright

Pno. *mf* *mp* *mf*

Kbd.

Vc. *mf* *mp* *mf*

Fl. *f* **F** *p* 70

Cl. *f* *p* L.V.

E. Gtr. *mp* *mf* *p*

S. Solo *gliss.* *f* *mp*
 so bright it hurts our eyes

Pno. *mp* *f* *p*

Kbd.

Vc. **F** *pizz* *mf* *p*

III Not heard

♩=84

75

Fl. *pp* *f* *pp* *mp* *f* *mp*

Cl. *pp* *f* *pp* *mp* *mp*

cut delay, keep reverb

gentle sporadic tapping on body of instrument, each with a natural arc of starting slow / quiet and getting faster / louder then the reverse, over couple of bars.

E. Gtr. *pp*

breathy, rolled R's, cooing like a pigeon

breathy, with downward gliss

S. Solo *mp* *mf* *pp* *mp*

you who you who you have not have not you have not heard not

Pno. *p* *15mb* *pp* *ppp* *8va* *pp* *15mb*

Q4 Larksong, specific call, 26"

Kbd.

♩=84

arco sul ponticello

normale

sul ponticello

Vc. *pp* *ppp* *pp* *mp* *pp* *ppp*

G

Piccolo

Fl. *pp* *f* *mp* *f* *mp* *mp*

Cl. *p* *f* *mf* *f*

E. Gtr. *f* *pp* *p*

S. Solo *mf* *mp* *f* *pp* *mp* *mf*

Pno. *mp* *mf* *f* *pp* *p* *mp*

Kbd. *Q5* LARKSONG, normal speed, continuous to end of piece.

Vc. normale *mp* *mf* *f* *p* *pp* sul ponticello

who not heard not heard this have you not heard the sun the sun the sun the sun the sun the sun is ex plo - ding

gently sporadic tapping on body of instrument

gently sporadic tapping on body of instrument - continue to alternate between this gesture and the notated music until bar 90

80

8va

8va

Ped.

85

Picc. *p* *mp*

Cl. *mp*

E. Gtr. *p* *pp*

add delay, keep reverb

S. Solo *mp* *mp* *mf*

the_sun the_sun the_sun the_sun the_sun the_sun is ex plo - ding

Pno. *mp* *pp* *mp* *pp* *p*

8va

Kbd.

Vc. *pp* *pp* *pp*

sul ponticello

8va

