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A Metaphor

*for a very large number of bowed strings
and clarinets
of any kind*

(2010)

PLAINSOUND MUSIC EDITION

*written in November of 2010 in fond memory of Arthur Jarvinen
(1956-2010)*

Metaphor

for a very large number of bowed strings and any kind of clarinets

part I

All musicians should be arranged in a very large semi-circle if on stage, or even better, in a full circle surrounding the audience if the space allows.

The musician at one end of the semi-circle (or at a predetermined point in the full circle) should play any pitch he or she chooses and hold it, not too loud and especially not too soft, with an unwavering, non-vibrato tone. Neither the dynamic or pitch should change until part II.

Once the sound has become solid and predictable in the space, the first player should signal to the next player (clockwise or counterclockwise from the first) to similarly pick any tone on their instrument and sustain it, trying to achieve a very beautiful blend of dynamic and timbre with the first pitch and, if needed, very slightly adjust the pitch in either direction to a place at which the interval is more resonant and “tuned” (not necessarily in a consonant or simple way).

Once a desirable balance is achieved, the second player should signal to the third to similarly add a tone. Continue this process until everyone is sustaining one large, vibrant, and resonant chord.

Clarinets may breathe or circular breathe as they see fit. Strings should try to hide bow changes as much as possible.

The last musician to enter signals the end of part I once they have established a sound they are satisfied with. Continue playing into part II.

part II

Each musician continues sustaining until they feel it is time to stop (probably one musician at a time, but not necessarily). The end of each musician’s tone should be abrupt, but not dramatic.

Duration: as long as necessary