



ed scolding
visions through translucent time

text by Margaret Atwood & Mark Strand

for mezzo-soprano and baritone soloists,
alto flute, bass clarinet, french horn,
percussion (one player: rain stick, sizzle cymbal, two bongos, crotales, vibraphone),
harp and string quintet

approx duration 15'

Text:
(baritone:)
Mark Strand
The Prediction

That night the moon drifted over the pond,
turning the water to milk, and under
the boughs of the trees, the blue trees,
a young woman walked, and for an instant

the future came to her:
rain falling on her husband's grave, rain falling
on the lawns of her children, her own mouth
filling with cold air, strangers moving into her house,

a man in her room writing a poem, the moon drifting into it,
a woman strolling under its trees, thinking of death,
thinking of him thinking of her, and the wind rising
and taking the moon and leaving the paper dark.

(mezzo-soprano:)
Margaret Atwood
This is a Photograph of Me

It was taken some time ago.
At first it seems to be
a smeared
print; blurred lines and gray flecks
blended with the paper;

then, as you scan
it, you see in the left-hand corner
a thing that is like a branch: part of a tree
(balsam or spruce) emerging
and, to the right, halfway up
what ought to be a gentle
slope, a small frame house.

In the background there is a lake,
and beyond that, some low hills.

(The photograph was taken
the day after I drowned.

I am in the lake, in the center
of the picture, just under the surface.

It is difficult to say where
precisely, or to say
how large or small I am:

the effect of water
on light is a distortion

but if you look long enough
eventually
you will be able to see me.)

Staging:
Since each singer portrays the character narrating the poem,
semi-staged production is recommended to emphasise drama.

The baritone, whose role is of a narrator, should sing more closely
and directly to the audience than the mezzo-soprano,
who is more involved in her own narrative.

Programme note:
visions through translucent time sets two poems; *The Prediction*
by Mark Strand followed by *This is a Photograph of Me* by Margaret Atwood.
In each poem a speaker describes a vision; one in the past, the second
in the future. In both, something clouds our sight so that only the
storyteller can see their own vision clearly.

Whilst the style or personality of the voice in each poem is different,
they are linked by a sense of detachment. They describe their vision
without seeming to become involved, though in each vision a sharp twist
brings the voice into focus.

The detail in the text is supported by evolving music that builds
atmosphere and direction. Much of the material is developed from one of my
first musical ideas for the text; the melody for the lines at the end of
the second poem beginning 'the effect of water on light is a distortion...'
This melody is transformed in different ways throughout the piece, as a
unifying key for the tone of the whole work.

A recurring theme introduced at the very start of the piece is a single
pitch, often played by rhythmically shifting, seething strings. The sound
slowly works out both up and down from the single pitch, bleeding into the
surrounding pitches to create a discordant smudge of sound.

This theme returns in modified forms at many points, and is developed into
a separate idea used during the second poem. The smudged patch of sound is
thinned out and moves up or down through different notes at changing
speeds. Further smudged pitches might split from this and make their own
journeys. The constant fluid travel of lines removes stability from the
music, leaving a sense of forward motion to an unknown destination.

Flurries of movement emerge and sink from the still surroundings of the
drifting moon, rain, milky water and blue trees of the first poem, set for
baritone. Much of the music here is without pulse, floating outside time.
The voice glides over patches and points of sound collected and matched in
different patterns.

An instrumental interlude introduces a strong pulse and builds momentum
from the first poem into a passage of fast angular rhythms as the mezzo-
soprano singer describes the photograph of the second poem. As we reach the
climax of the piece, material from the start returns, now coloured and
filled out.

The music crystallises to a single rising arpeggio figure in the harp. This
figure repeats and develops, gradually gaining momentum and colourings from
other instruments.

A return to the pulse-less still and pitch smudging of the first poem marks
the final passage, which unwinds, fading to calm.

visions through translucent time

Score in C
Text by Mark Strand and Margaret Atwood

Ed Scolding

Alto Flute *Slow* ♩ = 66
dark, sweet gliss.

Bass Clarinet in B \flat
at sounding pitch

Horn in F
dark, sweet
gliss.

Untuned percussion
(rain stick, sizzle cymbal, 2 bongos)

Percussion (1 player)
Crotales

Vibraphone
(pedal only where marked)
dark, sweet motor on medium sticks
to crot. (same sticks)

Harp
dark, sweet

Violin I
Slow ♩ = 66
dark, sweet sul tasto

Violin II
dark, sweet sul tasto

Viola
dark, sweet sul tasto

Violoncello
pizz.

Double Bass

The score is for a chamber ensemble. The Alto Flute part features a melodic line with dynamics *p*, *mp*, *mf*, and *p*, and includes a glissando. The Bass Clarinet is silent. The Horn in F has a melodic line with dynamics *p*, *mp*, *pp*, and *mf*, and includes a glissando. The Percussion section includes Untuned percussion (rain stick, sizzle cymbal, 2 bongos) and Crotales. The Vibraphone part has a melodic line with dynamics *mp* and *f*, and includes a pedal and motor on medium sticks. The Harp part has a melodic line with dynamics *mf* and *f*. The String Quartet (Violin I, Violin II, Viola, Violoncello, Double Bass) has a melodic line with dynamics *p* and *mf*, and includes a pizzicato. The score is in 4/4 time and starts with a tempo of *Slow* ♩ = 66.

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Text: This is a Photograph of Me from The Circle Game by Margaret Atwood ©1966 Margaret Atwood, used with permission of House of Anansi Press;
The Prediction from Selected Poems by Mark Strand ©1970 Mark Strand

11

Bar. *the moon drift - ted o - ver the pond*

Vib. *to crot. (bowed)*

Hp. *mp* *F#*

Vln. I *3 3 5 6 7*

Vln. II *5 3 3 5 3*

Vla. *5 3 5*

Vc. *arco* *ppp*

16

Bar. *mp* tur-ning the wa-ter to milk

A. Fl. *p* gliss. *mp*

Hn. *p*

Crot. bowed l.v. to vib. *f*

Hp. *p* *pp* *mf* *mp*

16

Vln. I (sul tasto) *p* *mp* *p* *p*

Vln. II (sul tasto) *p* *mp* *p* *p*

Vla. (sul tasto) *p* *mp* *p* *p*

Vc. (sul tasto) *p* gliss. *mp* *p* *p*

Db. sul pont. *mp* *p*

19

Bar. *p*
and un-der the boughs of the trees

A. Fl. *mf* *mp* *p*

Hn. *mp*

Crot. (same sticks) to vib. *mp* *mf*

Vib. motor on medium sticks *mp* Ped. 3

Hp. *f*
B \flat G \sharp C \sharp

Vln. I *mp* *pp* (nat.) 3

Vln. II *mp* *pp* (nat.) 3

Vla. *mp* *pp* (nat.)

Vc. *mp* *pp* sul. D gliss. (nat.)

24

22

Bar. *mp*
the blue trees

A. Fl. *soft, melting*
pp mp mf

B. Cl. *pp p pp*

Hn. *pp p*

Vib. *p* *ped.* *motor off*

Hp. *B₄ C₄ F₄ G₄* *pp* *6 6 6 6*

Vln. I *sul pont.* *pp* *6 6 6 6* *24 sul tasto: light, shimmering*

Vln. II *sul pont.* *pp* *5 5 5 5* *sul tasto: light, shimmering*

Vla. *3* *sul pont.* *pp* *7 7 7 7* *sul tasto: light, shimmering*

Vc. *sul pont.* *pp* *sul tasto: light, shimmering*

Db. *sul E* *p* *3*

25 *mp*

Bar. *a*

A. Fl.

B. Cl.

Crot. *mp* to vib.

Vib. to crot.

Hp.

Vln. I 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6


Vln. II 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5

Vla. 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7


Vc.

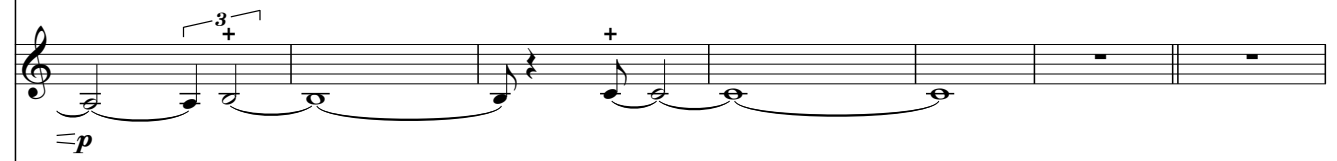
29
Bar. 

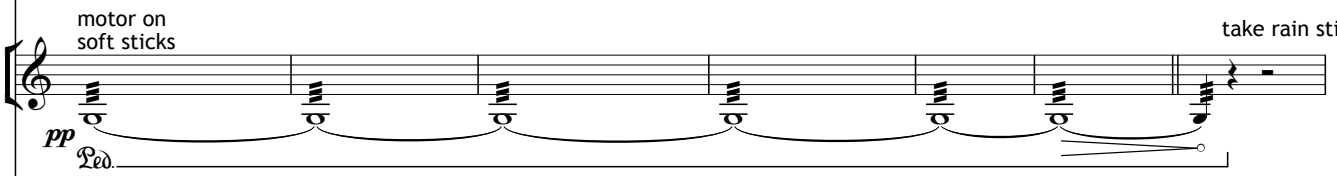
and for an ins-tant the fu - ture came to her

A. Fl. 

solo - cold, detached

B. Cl. 

Hn. 


Vib. 

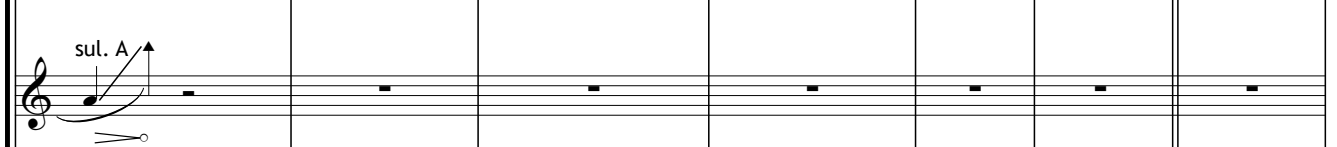
motor on soft sticks

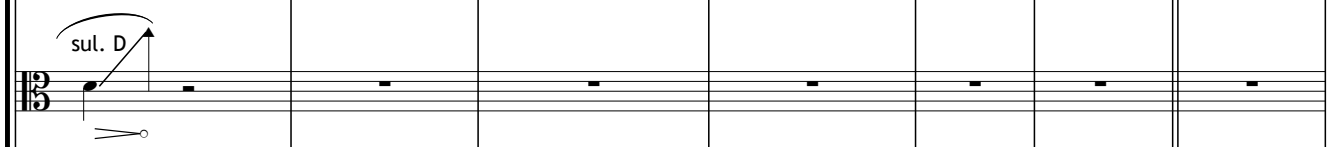
take rain stick

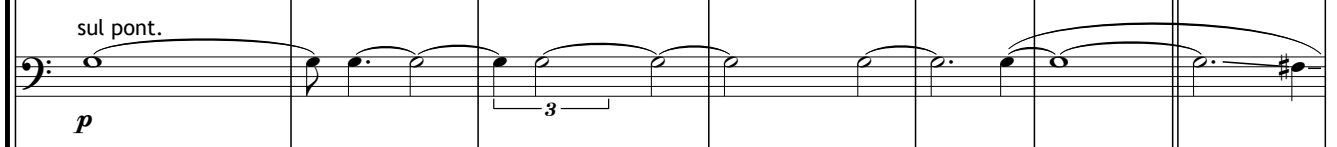
Hp. 

D \flat C# F#

Vln. I 

Vln. II 

Vla. 

Vc. 

Db. 

arco, light

mp

36

A. Fl. *mp* *mf* *mp* *mf*

U. Perc. rainstick *p* to crot. beater l.v. l.v. *mp*

Crot. *mp*

Hp. *mp* *gliss.*

Vln. I *mp* *mf* *f* *gliss.*

Vln. II *mp* *gliss.* *mf*

Vc. *con sord.*

42

Bar. cold, flat, light (senza vib.) *mp* (warmer)

A. Fl. *mp* *mf* *ppp*

U. Perc. *ppp*

Crot. l.v. bowed *p* *mf*

Hp. *mf* *f* *p*

Vln. I *pp* senza vibrato sustained, stagger bow changes

Vln. II *f* *p* *gliss.*

rain _____ fa - lling _____
non solo, cold

48

Bar. *on her hus - band's grave rain*

A. Fl. *p* *pp* *p*

U. Perc. rain stick *p*

Crot. beater l.v. *mp* *mf*

Hp. (8)

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla. pizz. *p*

54

Bar. *fa - lling on the lawns of her chil-*

A. Fl. *ppp* *p* *pp*

U. prc. *mp*

Crot. *mp* *l.v*

Vib. *p*

Hp.

Vln. I *p* *normal vibrato*