

INSTRUMENTATION

Violin I
Violin II
Viola
Violoncello
Contrabass

Minimum string count: 5.4.3.2.1.

Duration: *ca.* 15 minutes

PERFORMANCE NOTES*

Abbreviations: ord. = ordinario; s.p. = sul ponticello.

Accidentals: Accidentals, including quarter tones, carry through each measure. Accidentals do not carry through different staves in any given bar unless otherwise notated.

Boxed Cells: A box around a set of notes indicates to perform the respective cell ad libitum. The first iteration of boxed cells should be rhythmically unison, then gradually become asynchronous. Thick horizontal lines that follow boxed cells indicate to repeat the cell ad libitum until the next notated event.

Grace notes:

1. Slashed grace notes should be played *before* the beat; long enough to discern the glissando (if any).
2. Un-slashed grace notes should be played *on* the beat; long enough to discern the glissando (if any).
3. Empty grace notes should hold for the rest of the duration of that measure after playing preceding grace notes.

Hairpins: *Crescendo* and *diminuendo* hairpins with circles indicate to start from *niente* and end at *niente*, respectively.

Quarter tones:



Do not bend into quarter tone.

Rehearsal D-E:

1. Tremolos should be very fast, but must be executed as rhythmically unison as possible across the ensemble.
2. A comma over a pitch indicates to execute the shortest possible rest before playing that pitch. These commas should sound like very sudden and deliberate pauses in between the melodic, tremolo fragments.

*Additional performance instructions appear throughout the score parts.

PROGRAM NOTE

In writing this work, I looked back to a movement of my first string quartet, *Fugha*, which superimposed the Arab *maqamat* (modes) over the harmonic motion of a fugue from *The Well-Tempered Clavier* by J. S. Bach. As I composed, I quite enjoyed this process of ruminating on what Bach might have done if presented with the rich tapestry of possibility from the microtonally inflected Arab modes coupled with his ingenious sense of counterpoint and harmony.

For this work, I went further back in time for inspiration, turning to the often-overlooked Nicola Vicentino, an Italian composer and theorist from the Renaissance period. In his 16th century treatise, “L’antica musica ridotta alla pratica moderna,” he devised a 31-tone system (our “standard” Western system has *only* 12 tones!) which includes his four-part madrigal, “Musica prisca caput,” where he put his ideas into practice. I used this work as a harmonic template for my own musical exploration. This madrigal is organized into three parts that are distinguished by pitch content: (1) diatonic (7 possible tones), (2) chromatic (12 possible tones), and (3) microtonal (31 possible tones(!))

In my work, every chord in “Musica prisca caput” is chronologically represented: almost all of them with their original voice leading, many of which are solely in root position! They vary from the original by the extension of range (beyond what is possible with human singers), expansion of timbral possibilities (i.e. glissandi, tremolandi, harmonics, etc.), and the implementation of the *maqamat* to establish a new melodic context for Vicentino’s contrapuntal writing.

By focusing on this distinctly Western point of departure, I hope to provoke a renewed awareness of the richness of Arab traditions and how their facets can coexist within our global cultural landscape.



