

Celestial Dances

for string quartet

Nick DiBerardino

About *Celestial Dances*:

This piece originated as an exploration of a specific and, it is hoped, a relatively novel timbral technique. In the first measure of the work, the viola plays a triplet figure indicated by triangular noteheads. As specified below, these noteheads signify that the player should use very light finger pressure, on the same order as the pressure ordinarily used to produce harmonics. In this piece, however, the performers are asked to apply that pressure instead to the non-harmonic nodes of each string, resulting in a soft, scratchy, whirring tone in which the fundamental pitches are audible, but timbrally obscured.

Much of the architecture of the work is designed around this technique. Because there are only six first-position non-harmonic nodes on each string, the technique is inherently restrictive in the pitch domain. That means that many of the piece's harmonies are constructed around fixed subsets of notes as determined by the available hexachords. Much of the voice leading is also conceived around these limitations: many different figurations of the hushed triplet gesture are explored, but all are constrained by the fact that only a few notes are available on any given string. Timbrally, great care has been taken to construct a sound world that both compliments and augments the ethereal nature of this finger pressure technique, so that fleeting harmonic glissandos and other techniques like snap pizzicato and col legno battuto all form a synergistic whole with its scratchy, distorted character.

The broad narrative of the piece is also built around the possibilities of this technique. The first twenty-four measures introduce its strange, delicate sound and also present the first of two main motivic sources in the work. The highest pitches articulated by the violins in this section outline a descending major third (from G sharp to E) which is reiterated (preceded the second time by an A natural) and then followed by an ascending fifth (E to B). This motivic material recurs, as one example, in the “weird, whispered waltz” (m. 64), where it functions as the melody. The second motive of the piece appears in the Violin I part (mm. 27-28), articulating material that was derived from the harmonic series of each string so that it could be played across the quartet in harmonics (as occurs at the end of the piece, in mm. 303-306). Both motives recur frequently, often at their original pitch level – as just another of many examples, see the suddenly sparse section in mm. 116-144, which articulates the piece's first motive in parallel motion across very high pizzicato chords. But these motives are rarely “developed” in a traditional sense in this piece. Instead, the approach here is kaleidoscopic: motives recur across the work in very different contexts, each of which imbues the material with new and different meaning. This piece does develop material, of course, but not its motives; it focuses instead on the possibilities offered by the finger pressure technique. It asks, most basically, whether the strangely timbred music of the opening can coexist with more traditional musical sounds and gestures, like the piece's waltz or its *molto espressivo* material in m. 266. The hope here is that the piece's ultimate outburst of lyricism will be all the more powerful in contradistinction to the strange and reserved materials of its outset.

Special Noteheads and Indications:



– signifies a note to be played with very light finger pressure comparable to the pressure used to produce a harmonic. In the context of this piece, these noteheads always indicate that such pressure is to be applied to a non-harmonic node of any given string. The result should be a scratchy, whirring tone quality in which the fingered pitch is audible, but somewhat timbrally obscured. When playing passages in this timbre, great care should be taken to balance timbral distortion with pitch clarity. Ideally, a balance will be struck wherein the notated pitches are audible but as timbrally distorted as possible.



– signifies a passage to be played so that only the sound of the bow running across the strings can be heard. The indicated pitches in these passages are just rough suggestions of where one might place the fingers in order to produce this effect; these suggestions may readily be ignored when a better way to produce the pitchless brushing sound desired.



– signifies a smooth transition from one type of playing to another. One such transition might be from *ordinario* playing to *sul ponticello* playing, but the score will make clear what each specific arrow means. If the arrow occurs without technique indications around it, then the noteheads underneath should make the indication clear: often, such arrows are used to indicate a transition from light finger pressure to normal finger pressure, as signified by the corresponding noteheads.

Duration: c. 8 minutes
Spring 2012

Celestial Dances

Nick DiBerardino

Hushed and ethereal, but always with a sparkling sense of energy ♩ = c. 80

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Violoncello

bow hiss

pp

molto sul pont.

ppp with just enough finger pressure to make pitches audible

4

pizz.

ppp

p

f as possible

ord.

molto

pizz.

pp

mp

molto <

6

arco

8va

mp *mf* *mp* *p* *mf* *mp*

harm. gliss sul D

sul A

bow hiss

pp *f* *poss.* *pp* *mp*

harm. gliss sul D

molto sul pont.

mfp *mp* *p*

snap pizz. *sfz*

pizz. *mp*

p

snap pizz. *mp*

pizz. *mf*

8

8va

mfp *mf* *mp* *p*

sul A

mp *pp* *f* *as poss.*

sul pont. ord.

pp *mf* *mp* *p*

ord.

mf

pizz. *mp*

f

8va

10

mf mp *mf* *mp*

harm. gliss sul D
sul G

mp *mp*

molto sul pont.

p

pizz.

f *mp*

8va

12

(8)

p *mp*

harm. gliss sul D
sul G

p *p*

mp

14

(8)

pizz. + *f* *p* flautando

arco 8^{va}

harm. gliss sul D *p*

arco 8^{va} *p* flautando

ord. *mp* molto sul pont. *p*

mf *mf* espressivo

16

(8)

mf

molto sul pont. *pp* < *mf*

ord. *mf* sul pont. *fp*

snap pizz. *sfz* *sfz*

18

p *mp*

molto sul pont.
p *mp* *mp*

*with just enough finger pressure
 to make pitches audible*

*harm. gliss
 arco
 sul D* *pp*

ord.

pizz. *mf* *pp*

20

fp

molto sul pont.
p

pizz. *mf*

22

ord. *p* with just enough finger pressure to make pitches audible *pp* molto sul pont.

ord. *mf* flautando *pp*

pizz. *mp*

25

mp *mf* *8va*

harm. gliss sul D sul A sul E *mp* *mp* *mf* *f* gliss freely between nodes *mf* gradually increase finger pressure *8va*

arco molto sul pont. ord. *f* as poss.

arco sul pont ord.

mf *mp*

27

Measures 27-28 of a musical score. The score is written for four staves: Treble (top), Treble (second), Bass (third), and Bass (bottom). The key signature is one sharp (F#). Measure 27 begins with a forte (*f*) dynamic. The Treble staff contains a melody with a triplet of eighth notes. The second Treble staff has a melody with a slur. The Bass staff features a complex rhythmic pattern with multiple triplets of eighth notes. The bottom Bass staff has a simple melody. Measure 28 continues the patterns from measure 27.

29

Measures 29-30 of a musical score. The score is written for four staves: Treble (top), Treble (second), Bass (third), and Bass (bottom). The key signature is one sharp (F#). Measure 29 begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The Treble staff has a melody with a triplet of eighth notes. The second Treble staff has a melody with a slur. The Bass staff features a complex rhythmic pattern with multiple triplets of eighth notes. The bottom Bass staff has a simple melody. Measure 30 continues the patterns from measure 29.

33

fp

fp

fp

fp

35 *mf* 8^{va} 6/4

Musical score for measures 35-38. The score is written for four staves. The first staff is in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 6/4 time signature. It begins with a measure rest, followed by a melodic line with triplets and a final triplet of eighth notes. The second staff is also in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp and a 6/4 time signature, featuring a continuous melodic line with triplets. The third staff is in bass clef with a key signature of one sharp and a 6/4 time signature, featuring a continuous melodic line with triplets. The fourth staff is in bass clef with a key signature of one sharp and a 6/4 time signature, featuring a continuous melodic line with triplets. The dynamic marking *mf* is present at the beginning of each staff.

36 (8) 6/4

Musical score for measures 36-39. The score is written for four staves. The first staff is in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 6/4 time signature. It begins with a measure rest, followed by a melodic line with triplets and a final triplet of eighth notes. The second staff is also in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp and a 6/4 time signature, featuring a continuous melodic line with triplets. The third staff is in bass clef with a key signature of one sharp and a 6/4 time signature, featuring a continuous melodic line with triplets. The fourth staff is in bass clef with a key signature of one sharp and a 6/4 time signature, featuring a continuous melodic line with triplets. The dynamic marking *mf* is present at the beginning of each staff.

37

Measures 37-38 of a musical score in 4/4 time. The score consists of four staves. The first two staves are in treble clef, and the last two are in bass clef. The key signature has one sharp (F#). Measure 37 features a half note G4 in the first staff (fp), a half note F#4 in the second staff (fp), and a complex bass line with eighth notes and triplets (f). Measure 38 features a triplet of eighth notes in the first staff (f), a triplet of eighth notes in the second staff (f), and a complex bass line with eighth notes and triplets (fp). The first staff ends with a half note G#4 (sfzp). The second staff ends with a half note F#4 (sfzp). The third staff ends with a half note G#4 (sfzp) and a half note F#4 (ff). The fourth staff ends with a half note G#4 (fp) and a half note F#4 (ff).

fp *f* *sfzp* *f* *sfzp* *ff* *fp* *sfzp* *f* *ff*

39

Measures 39-40 of a musical score in 3/4 time. The score consists of four staves. The first two staves are in treble clef, and the last two are in bass clef. The key signature has one sharp (F#). Measure 39 features a half note G#4 in the first staff (fp), a half note F#4 in the second staff (mf), and a complex bass line with eighth notes and triplets (mf). Measure 40 features a half note G#4 in the first staff (pp), a half note F#4 in the second staff (pp), and a complex bass line with eighth notes and triplets (p). The first staff ends with a half note G#4 (ppp). The second staff ends with a half note F#4 (pp). The third staff ends with a half note G#4 (pp). The fourth staff ends with a half note G#4 (p).

fp *pp* *ppp* *mf* *pp* *pp* *p*

41

harm. gliss
arco
sul A

pizz.

p

pp

p

harm. gliss
sul A

p

mp

p

ord.

mf *espressivo*

f

43

harm. gliss
arco
sul E

p

pizz.

mf

p

pizz.

mp

p

pp

mf

p

pp

mf molto espressivo

(8)

49

p

f *poss.*

mp *mf* *p*

51

pp

f

53 *molto sul pont.*

p

f

f

mf

mf

pizz.

mf espress.

sul A

55

ff

mf

57

mp

sul A

pizz.

p

59

ord.

pp

61

p

col legno battuto

pizz.

A weird, whispered waltz

63

pizz. col legno battuto

$\text{♩} = \text{♩}$

sul tasto

p *decresc. poco a poco*

sul tasto

p

col legno battuto

(col legno)

mp

68

Musical score for measures 68-74. The score is written for three staves: Treble, Alto, and Bass. The key signature is one sharp (F#). The time signature is 4/4. The music features a complex rhythmic pattern with many sixteenth and thirty-second notes, often beamed together. The Alto staff has a melodic line with some rests. The Bass staff has a more active line with many sixteenth notes. The Treble staff has a melodic line with some rests.

75

Musical score for measures 75-81. The score is written for three staves: Treble, Alto, and Bass. The key signature is one sharp (F#). The time signature is 4/4. The music features a complex rhythmic pattern with many sixteenth and thirty-second notes, often beamed together. The Alto staff has a melodic line with some rests. The Bass staff has a more active line with many sixteenth notes. The Treble staff has a melodic line with some rests. The score includes dynamic markings: *ppp* (pianissimo) in measure 75 and *pp* *decresc.* (pianissimo, decrescendo) in measure 78.

82

pizz. *pp*

pizz. *pp*

pizz. *ppp* *pp*

mp

90

arco *p*

pizz. *p*

col legno battuto *pp*

arco ord. *pp*

mp *p*

99

arco sul D

ppp

arco sul G

ppp

molto sul pont.

pizz.

arco molto sul pont.

ppp

ord.

pp

107

pizz.

pp

harm. gliss arco sul E

pp

col legno battuto

ppp

pizz.

pp

pizz.

pp

arco ord.

pp

pizz.

pp

arco

pp

112

arco

pp

ppp flautando

arco
bow hiss

mf

pizz.

pp

pizz.

pp

119

pizz.

mp

arco

mf

mf

mp

126

pizz.

arco

pizz.

mf

f

mf

136

arco

pizz.

arco

mf

p

mp

p

bow hiss

bow hiss

145 *col legno battuto*

mp

arco
mf *strong and assured*

arco
mf

pizz.
mf

152

mf

158

arco
ord.

mf

pizz.
mf

165

arco
molto sul pont.

p

pizz.
mp

pp

ppp

pizz.
mf

arco
molto sul pont.

p

pizz.
mp

p

col legno battuto
mf

arco
molto sul pont.

p

176

8va

molto

mp

mf

f

f

p

pizz.

arco

arco

bow hiss

187

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Cello/Double Bass

arco

mp

p

193

arco

mp

f

pizz.

mf

arco

f

f

f

molto sul pont.

ff *pp*

With a subterranean momentum

199

sul tasto

ppp

sul tasto

ppp

sul tasto

ppp

ppp

207

ppp *p* *ppp* *pp* *p* *mp* *espressivo*

215

mp *mp* *p* *mp* *pp* *molto sul pont. sul C*

223

Musical score for measures 223-229. The score is in G major (one sharp) and 3/4 time. It features a piano accompaniment with a steady eighth-note pattern in the left hand and a more complex right hand. The right hand has a melodic line in the upper register and a bass line in the lower register. The melody is marked with a fermata over the final measure.

230

molto sul pont.

Musical score for measures 230-236. The score is in G major (one sharp) and 3/4 time. It features a piano accompaniment with a steady eighth-note pattern in the left hand and a more complex right hand. The right hand has a melodic line in the upper register and a bass line in the lower register. The melody is marked with a fermata over the final measure.

pp

molto sul pont.
sul G, D, A

pp

p

sul G

237 sul G sul D

Musical score for measures 237-243. The score is written for four staves (treble and bass clefs, each with a grand staff). It features complex rhythmic patterns with many slurs and accents. The key signature changes from one sharp (F#) to one flat (Bb) at measure 240. The first staff has a "sul G" marking at measure 237 and a "sul D" marking at measure 240. The music is highly technical, with many slurs and accents throughout.

Straining against the timbral constraints with increasing vigor

244 sul G, D, A

Musical score for measures 244-250. The score is written for four staves (treble and bass clefs, each with a grand staff). It features complex rhythmic patterns with many slurs and accents. The key signature is one flat (Bb). The first staff has a "sul G, D, A" marking at measure 244. The music is highly technical, with many slurs and accents throughout.

251

Musical score for measures 251-256. The score is written for four staves (two treble and two bass clefs). The key signature is one flat (B-flat). The time signature is 3/4. The notation includes eighth and sixteenth notes, rests, and slurs. The first five measures show a consistent rhythmic pattern with eighth notes and rests. The sixth measure introduces a change in the bass line with a sharp sign. The score is divided into two systems of three staves each.

257

Musical score for measures 257-262. The score is written for four staves (two treble and two bass clefs). The key signature is one sharp (F-sharp). The time signature is 3/4. The notation includes eighth and sixteenth notes, rests, and slurs. The first five measures show a consistent rhythmic pattern with eighth notes and rests. The sixth measure introduces a change in the bass line with a sharp sign. The score is divided into two systems of three staves each. The dynamic marking *mf* and the tempo marking *molto* are present in the sixth measure of the first system and the sixth measure of the second system.

Exultant, finally free!

264

ord.

ff molto espressivo

ord.

ff molto espressivo

ord.

ff molto espressivo

ord.

ff molto espressivo

265

266

267

268

269

270

271

272

273

274

275

276

277

278

279

280

281

282

283

284

285

286

287

288

289

290

291

292

293

294

295

296

297

298

299

300

301

302

303

304

305

306

307

308

309

310

311

312

313

314

315

316

317

318

319

320

321

322

323

324

325

326

327

328

329

330

331

332

333

334

335

336

337

338

339

340

341

342

343

344

345

346

347

348

349

350

351

352

353

354

355

356

357

358

359

360

361

362

363

364

365

366

367

368

369

370

371

372

373

374

375

376

377

378

379

380

381

382

383

384

385

386

387

388

389

390

391

392

393

394

395

396

397

398

399

400

401

402

403

404

405

406

407

408

409

410

411

412

413

414

415

416

417

418

419

420

421

422

423

424

425

426

427

428

429

430

431

432

433

434

435

436

437

438

439

440

441

442

443

444

445

446

447

448

449

450

451

452

453

454

455

456

457

458

459

460

461

462

463

464

465

466

467

468

469

470

471

472

473

474

475

476

477

478

479

480

481

482

483

484

485

486

487

488

489

490

491

492

493

494

495

496

497

498

499

500

501

502

503

504

505

506

507

508

509

510

511

512

513

514

515

516

517

518

519

520

521

522

523

524

525

526

527

528

529

530

531

532

533

534

535

536

537

538

539

540

541

542

543

544

545

546

547

548

549

550

551

552

553

554

555

556

557

558

559

560

561

562

563

564

565

566

567

568

569

570

571

572

573

574

575

576

577

578

579

580

581

582

583

584

585

586

587

588

589

590

591

592

593

594

595

596

597

598

599

600

601

602

603

604

605

606

607

608

609

610

611

612

613

614

615

616

617

618

619

620

621

622

623

624

625

626

627

628

629

630

631

632

633

634

635

636

637

638

639

640

641

642

643

644

645

646

647

648

649

650

651

652

653

654

655

656

657

658

659

660

661

662

663

664

665

666

667

668

669

670

671

672

673

674

675

676

677

678

679

680

681

682

683

684

685

686

687

688

689

690

691

692

693

694

695

696

697

698

699

700

701

702

703

704

705

706

707

708

709

710

711

712

713

714

715

716

717

718

719

720

721

722

723

724

725

726

727

728

729

730

731

732

733

734

735

736

737

738

739

740

741

742

743

744

745

746

747

748

749

750

751

752

753

754

755

756

757

758

759

760

761

762

763

764

765

766

767

768

769

770

771

772

773

774

775

776

777

778

779

780

781

782

783

784

785

786

787

788

789

790

791

792

793

794

795

796

797

798

799

800

801

802

803

804

805

806

807

808

809

810

811

812

813

814

815

816

817

818

819

820

821

822

823

824

825

826

827

828

829

830

831

832

833

834

835

836

837

838

839

840

841

842

843

844

845

846

847

848

849

850

851

852

853

854

855

856

857

858

859

860

861

862

863

864

865

866

867

868

869

870

871

872

873

874

875

876

877

878

879

880

881

882

883

884

885

886

887

888

889

890

891

892

893

894

895

896

897

898

899

900

901

902

903

904

905

906

907

908

909

910

911

912

913

914

915

916

917

918

919

920

921

922

923

924

925

926

927

928

929

930

931

932

933

934

935

936

937

938

939

940

941

942

943

944

945

946

947

948

949

950

951

952

953

954

955

956

957

958

959

960

961

962

963

964

965

966

967

968

969

970

971

972

973

974

975

976

977

978

979

980

981

982

983

984

985

986

987

988

989

990

991

992

993

994

995

996

997

998

999

1000

269 *8va*

Musical score for measures 269-270. The score is in treble and bass clefs with a key signature of one sharp (F#). Measure 269 features a treble staff with a long melodic line and a bass staff with a triplet of eighth notes. Measure 270 continues the melodic line in the treble and has a triplet of eighth notes in the bass. A dashed line labeled "8va" is above the treble staff.

(8) 271

Musical score for measures 271-272. The score is in treble and bass clefs with a key signature of one sharp (F#). Measure 271 features a treble staff with a long melodic line and a bass staff with a triplet of eighth notes. Measure 272 continues the melodic line in the treble and has a triplet of eighth notes in the bass. A dashed line labeled "(8)" is above the treble staff.

(8)

273

This system contains measures 273 and 274. Measure 273 features a melody in the upper voice with a half note and a quarter note, while the lower voices play a complex triplet pattern. Measure 274 continues the triplet pattern in the lower voices and introduces a long, sustained note in the upper voice.

(8)

275

This system contains measures 275 and 276. Measure 275 shows a continuation of the triplet patterns in the lower voices, with the upper voice providing a melodic line. Measure 276 features a more complex melodic line in the upper voice, including a sixteenth-note run, while the lower voices continue with triplet patterns.

(8)

277

Musical score for measures 277-280. Measure 277 has a measure rest in the treble and a triplet of eighth notes in the bass. Measure 278 features a complex texture with triplets in both hands. Measure 279 has a half note in the treble and a triplet in the bass. Measure 280 continues the texture with triplets in both hands.

279

Musical score for measures 279-282. Measure 279 has a half note in the treble and a triplet in the bass. Measure 280 continues the texture with triplets in both hands. Measure 281 has a half note in the treble and a triplet in the bass. Measure 282 continues the texture with triplets in both hands.

A Tempo ♩ = c. 80

281 **poco rall.**

sfz

sfz

sfz

sfz

284 **pizz.** **poco accel.**

mf

mp

p

pizz.

mf

mp

p

arco

pp

p

arco

p

290

arco

p

8va

arco

p

pizz.

p

$\text{♩} = \text{♩}$ **Piu mosso** $\text{♩} = \text{c. } 84$

(8)-----|

296

pizz.

ppp

pp

pizz.

ppp

pp

pp

pizz.

pp

300 arco

pp

sul E

302

sul G

sul G

sul A

sul D

sul D

sul E

sul A

sul A

304

sul A

sul A

sul D

sul A

sul D

sul G

sul A

sul E

sul E

sul D

sul A

306

sul E

sul A

308

ord.
sul E

molto sul pont.

ppp

pp

molto sul pont.

ppp

molto sul pont.

ppp

molto sul pont.

ppp