

UCLA

Contemporary Music Score Collection

Title

Blossoming Like Crazy

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/2sc608dm>

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2020

in memory of frank messina

(1938 – 2014)

B l o s s o m i n g

L i k e

C r a z y

for string quartet & fixed electronics

(2019 – 2020)

kyle brenn

(1997 –)

note: technique indications carry over all subsequent material until otherwise indicated.

make figure more even →



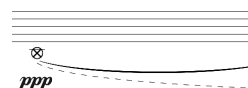
arrows, with or without text, denote a gradation between playing techniques.

material in boxed cells should be played on a loop until the next cell or event. sometimes additional text instructions will accompany cells.



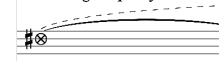
dotted slurs indicate no change of bowing whatsoever, requiring a slow bow and resulting in a broken sound towards the end of the bow.

slowly bow wood



bow the waist of the instrument on the edge, closest to the lowest string. this will allow for easy transitioning to playing on the string.

air-noise
(mute strings completely)



air-noise or *rauchen*; cellist should finger written pitch but wrap remaining fingers around neck to fully mute the sound. over the subsequent passage, fingers can be removed/pressure lightened to bring in pitch.

Bow position

sul pont / **SP**

play with bow closer to the bridge.

molto sul pont / **mSP**

play with bow extremely close to or on the bridge. sound should be unstable and laden with harmonic content.

sul tasto / **ST**

play with bow closer to the fingerboard.

molto sul tasto / **mST**

play with bow extremely close to or on the fingerboard. this sound should be thin and transparent.

ord.

cancels out any of the above indications.

Pressure & vibrato

vib.

standard 'default' vibrato.

non vib.

no vibrato.

molto vib.

faster, wider, more expressive vibrato. this indication often dovetails into other forms of vibrato or outright glissandi.

overpressure / **O.P.**

play with an excess of pressure to create a harsh, distorted sound.

norm.

cancels out any of the above indications.

The electronics in *Blossoming Like Crazy* are stereo fixed media. They are meant to be played alongside the quartet through the performance venue's house sound system, as with any electroacoustic piece. The strings can be amplified as well to improve blending, but the decision to do so depends on the size and acoustics of the venue.

To sync the players with the fixed electronics, a click track is available, which can be managed in one of several ways:

- a) all members of the quartet hear the click through in-ear headphones
- b) just one member of the ensemble (first violin, for example) has the click and the ensemble follows that player
- c) the quartet performs 'blind' with a conductor who has the click.

Method c was used for the premiere of the piece to great effect. Regardless, the click should be a separate track and will need to be routed via an audio interface to the headphones so only the players and/or conductor hear it.

My grandfather took the songs he loved (mostly from the 40s and 50s) and wrote his own words to the tunes. Many of these were performed over the phone and recorded onto my home answering machine, along with spoken messages to me and my family. As the messages move forward in time, the decline in his health is evident, making singing a belabored process. The players in this piece interact temporally and dramatically with one specific song, which I attempted to fully realize, while also exploring distorted versions of those musical ideas to fit dramatic circumstance. The relationship between the quartet and the electronics is the cornerstone for the drama of *Blossoming Like Crazy*, and I approached this work as a dramaturg as much as a composer.

The effectiveness of this piece depends on the players' ability to readily execute and move between two distinct styles of playing. One is derived from the 1930s-50s studio string sound (essentially an exaggerated Romanticism, relying on heavy vibrato, frequent portamenti, and extremes in dynamic range) and can be heard on the recordings of "traditional pop" crooners of that era, including Frank Sinatra, Pat Boone, and Perry Como. This performance practice is codified as the "Broadcast style" in Briony Luttrell's 2017 Doctoral thesis, linked below, which served as valuable reference during my research.

The other soundworld is more closely associated with 20th- and 21st-Century contemporary art music, characterized by extended techniques, a generally dryer or more sterile sound, and a lack of harmonious interaction between the four performers. It is imperative that the players seek to make these two soundworlds quite distinct in character and create an effective gradient between them. It is also important to remain aware of all playing indications in parts, since there are many axes upon which the sound moves—amounts of vibrato, bow position, bow pressure, etc.

Blossoming Like Crazy

Kyle Brenn

ALL: REPEAT CELLS AD LIB.
(out of sync w/ other players)

out of time
(ea. bar ≈ 6")

2 unpitched
(mute strings)

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Cello

Electronics

mST

pp

unpitched
(mute strings)

IV. - - - III.

pp fast and light

overtone heavy/rhythmic
"feedback loop" sample

4

pitched (faint)

sim. unpitched to pitched
process on all cells

mST

pp

unpitched
(mute strings)

mST

pp

pitched (faint)

sim. unpitched to pitched
process on all cells

mST

p

sim. unpitched to pitched
process on all cells

IV. - - - III. IV. - - - I

p fast and light

unpitched
(mute strings)

mST

p

(feedback sample cont.)

7

mp *mST* → *ord.* gradually slow down figure

mp *mST* → *ord.* gradually slow down figure

mp *mST* → *mST* gradually slow down figure

mp *mST* → *mST* gradually slow down figure

make figure more even

pitched (faint)

(feedback sample cont.)

9

barely touch pitches → fully pitched, *molto vib.* ("Broadcast" sound) ~3"

mf cresc. barely touch pitches → fully pitched, *molto vib.* ("Broadcast" sound)

mf cresc. barely touch pitches → fully pitched, *molto vib.* ("Broadcast" sound)

mf cresc. barely touch pitches → fully pitched, *molto vib.* ("Broadcast" sound)

barely touch pitches → fully pitched, *molto vib.* ("Broadcast" sound)

mf cresc.

(feedback sample cont.)
+string reverb (wet signal only)

Voice:
This song is to the tune of...

♩ = 70

14

unpitched
(mute strings)

pitched (faint)

pppp
unpitched
(mute strings)

pppp
unpitched
(mute strings)

pppp
unpitched
(mute strings)

pppp
(faint answering machine static)

18

mST
pitch a little
strongerunpitched
(mute strings)pitched
(still tentative)
(*mST*)*mST* *w/ light pressure*
(still pitched)

mf

mf

mf

pp

pp

pp

pp

(+feedback sample)

n.

breath

26

(l'istesso)
unpitched
(mute strings)
mf

*REPEAT rapidly and violently,
gradually slow down and add pitch*

mST
+a little pitch

mf
unpitched
(mute strings)

*REPEAT rapidly and violently,
gradually slow down and add pitch*

mf
unpitched
(mute strings)

*REPEAT rapidly and violently,
gradually slow down and add pitch*

mf
unpitched
(mute strings)

*REPEAT rapidly and violently,
gradually slow down and add pitch*

mST
+a little pitch

(still rapid/violent, but slowing)

(rhythms approx.)

pp

pp

(feedback sample)

+distorted bass rumbling

30

+more pitch

(rhythm approx.)

3

3

3

3

p

33

mp

p

mp

p

mST

mST

p

III.

37

slide between pitches, pseudo-vib.

mp *p* *mp* *legato* *mST*

breath

41

becoming agitated *mf*

becoming agitated *mf*

becoming agitated *mf*

becoming agitated *mf*

Voice
(heavily distorted)

+bass rumble, white noise

This song... This song... This song... This song... This song... This song... This song... This song... This song... This song...

slow down cell

48

sul tasto
non vib.

p sub.

sul tasto
non vib.

p sub.

sul tasto
non vib.

p sub.

sul tasto
non vib.

p sub.

—————→ full vib. —————→ start to slow vib.

—————→ full vib. —————→ start to slow vib.

—————→ full vib. —————→ start to slow vib.

—————→ full vib. —————→ start to slow vib.

□

—

—

—

—

+sine-like sliding sample

This song is to the tune of

(timestretched speech sample)

54 (pitches approx.)

follow contour of line for portamento

(pitches approx.) *follow contour of line for portamento*

(pitches approx.) *follow contour of line for portamento*

(pitches approx.) *follow contour of line for portamento*

(pitches approx.) *follow contour of line for portamento*

sine-like sliding sample cont's.
+white noise

59

*still slide through pitches
without landing on them*

*still slide through pitches
without landing on them*

*still slide through pitches
without landing on them*

*still slide through pitches
without landing on them*

*still slide through pitches
without landing on them*

This song is to the tune of
(timestretched speech sample)

63 *begin to make target pitches more present*

vib.

begin to make target pitches more present

vib.

begin to make target pitches more present

vib.

begin to make target pitches more present

vib.

string reverb (wet signal only)

67

lighten finger pressure

O.P. -----

lighten finger pressure

O.P. -----

lighten finger pressure

O.P. -----

O.P. -----

harmonic sample (l.v.)

white noise (hard panned)

harmonic sample (l.v.)

71

O.P. -----|

mf *p* *mf* *p* *mf* *pp*

O.P. -----|

p *mf* *p* *mf* *p* *mf* *pp*

O.P. -----|

mf *p* *mf* *p* *mf* *pp*

O.P. -----|

mf *p* *mf* *p* *mf* *p* *mf* *pp*

dist. vocal fragment (hard panned) +white noise (sust.)

+bass rumble (*cresc.*)

white noise (hard panned)

white noise (sust.)

75

mf *pp*

mf *pp*

mf *pp*

mf *pp*

+strings doubled (w/ reverb) -----| feedback sample

80

80

norm.

norm.

norm.

norm.

pizz. *arco* *ST no vib.*

pp

ST no vib.

pp

84

84

vib.

p

vib.

p

ST no vib. *vib.*

p

vib.

p

86

ord. *pizz.* *arco*

mp

ord. *pizz.* *arco*

mp

ord.

mp

ord.

mp

87

pizz.

pizz.

pizz.

arco

ord.

mp

(less distorted, some discernible pitch)

90

arco

mf

p

mf

arco

mf

p

mf

arco

mf

p

mf

arco

pizz.

mf

p

mf

pizz.

+bass rumble, white noise

97 **lifting off**

Measures 97-99 of the score. The music is written for four staves: two treble clefs and two bass clefs. The key signature is one sharp (F#). The first staff has a *mf* dynamic. The second staff has a *mf* dynamic. The third staff has a *mf* dynamic. The fourth staff has a *mf* dynamic and includes a sample of rushing wind, indicated by a diamond symbol and the text "+rushing wind sample". The music features a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes, with some measures containing rests.

Measures 100-102 of the score. The music is written for four staves: two treble clefs and two bass clefs. The key signature is one sharp (F#). The first staff has a *f* dynamic. The second staff has a *f* dynamic. The third staff has a *f* dynamic. The fourth staff has a *f* dynamic and includes a sample of distorted feedback and white noise, indicated by a diamond symbol and the text "distorted feedback sample + white noise". The music features a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes, with some measures containing rests. The fourth staff also includes a sample of O.P. (Other Parts), indicated by a diamond symbol and the text "O.P.". The score ends with a double bar line and a 4/4 time signature.

103

ff

ff

ff

ord.

ff

MIDI organ

bass rumble, white noise

3/4

3/4

3/4

3/4

107

pp *ppp* *f*

pp *ppp* *f*

pp *ppp* *f*

vib. *incr. vib.* (slight emphasis on bow liftoff)

vib. *incr. vib.* (slight emphasis on bow liftoff)

vib. *incr. vib.* (slight emphasis on bow liftoff)

n.

This song is to the tune of

("of" is timestretched)

n.

112

Andante

p sub.

p

p

p

ord.

ord.

ord.

ord.

p

This song, this song

115

SP

ord.

mf

SP

ord.

mf

SP

ord.

mf

SP

ord.

mf

...is to the tune of...

This song, this song, this song

118

SP → *(vib.) ord.* full 'Broadcast' sound

p *mf*

SP → *(vib.) ord.* full 'Broadcast' sound

p *mf*

SP → *(vib.) ord.* full 'Broadcast' sound

p *mf*

SP → *(vib.) ord.* full 'Broadcast' sound

p *mf*

4/4 ...is to the tune of... 3/4

This song, this song, this song, this song

121

legato

legato

This song, this song, this song, this song

124

Musical score for measures 124-127. The score is written for four staves: Treble 1, Treble 2, Bass 1, and Bass 2. The key signature is one sharp (F#). The time signature is 4/4. The dynamics are marked *mf* (mezzo-forte) and *legato*. The MIDI flute organ part is indicated as *MIDI flute organ w/ reverb (E Ionian cluster across mult. 8ves)* with a *cresc.* (crescendo) marking. The score includes various musical notations such as eighth notes, quarter notes, and half notes, with some notes beamed together. A large crescendo line spans across the measures.

Musical score for measures 128-132. The score is written for four staves: Treble 1, Treble 2, Bass 1, and Bass 2. The key signature is one sharp (F#). The time signature is 4/4. The dynamics are marked *no vib.* (no vibrato) and *+vib., increase* (increase vibrato). The MIDI flute organ part is indicated as *MIDI flute organ w/ reverb (E Ionian cluster across mult. 8ves)* with a *cresc.* (crescendo) marking. The score includes various musical notations such as eighth notes, quarter notes, and half notes, with some notes beamed together. A large crescendo line spans across the measures. The score ends with a double bar line and a 4/4 time signature.

quasi-Moog bass (low A)
+bass rumble

133

molto vib. (romantic)

molto vib. (romantic)

f *p* *f* *p*

f *p* *f* *p*

f *p* *f* *p*

f *p* *f* *p*

(rushing wind sample cont's) →

Voice (distorted)
(rhythm approx.)

You are my man

You are my

137

molto vib. (romantic)

ff *fff*

ff dig in *fff*

ff dig in *fff*

ff dig in *fff*

ff *fff*

MIDI organ

man

feedback sample

Moog bass (G#)
+rushing wind

(F#)

ALL: REPEAT AD LIB.
(out of sync w/ other players),
increase speed

146

The musical score for "This Song" by John Cage is presented on five staves. The notation includes various musical symbols and dynamics:

- Staff 1 (Treble Clef):** Features a melodic line with a triplet of eighth notes (F#, G, A) and a half note (B). Dynamics include *poco* and *pp* *n.*
- Staff 2 (Treble Clef):** Continues the melodic line with a triplet of eighth notes (F#, G, A) and a half note (B). Dynamics include *poco* and *pp* *n.*
- Staff 3 (Bass Clef):** Features a melodic line with a triplet of eighth notes (F#, G, A) and a half note (B). Dynamics include *poco*, *pp* *n.*, *mf*, *mSP*, and *pp* *n.*
- Staff 4 (Bass Clef):** Continues the melodic line with a triplet of eighth notes (F#, G, A) and a half note (B). Dynamics include *poco*, *pp* *n.*, and *pp* *n.*
- Staff 5 (Bass Clef):** Features a melodic line with a triplet of eighth notes (F#, G, A) and a half note (B). Dynamics include *poco*, *pp* *n.*, and *pp* *n.*

The score concludes with a section labeled "This song..." and "white noise cont's", indicated by a wavy line and a box.

154

mST

ord. vib.

mSP non vib.

mf

p

mST

ord. vib.

mSP non vib.

mf

p

ord. vib.

mSP non vib.

mf

p

mST

ord. vib.

mSP non vib.

pp

mf

p

The title of this song is called...

158

ord. *molto* *f* *p* *f* *mf* *n.* *p* *n.*

ord. *molto* *f* *p* *f* *mf* *n.*

ord. *molto* *f* *p* *f* *mf* *n.*

ord. *molto* *f* *p* *f* *mf* *n.*

(white noise out) ...is called... (white noise cresc.) The title of this song is called... The title of this song is called...

163

(phone static/ambience) → +white noise *ff*

The title of this song is called...

40s Big Band ♩ = 80166 full 'Broadcast' sound *ord.* *poco rit.*

mf

full 'Broadcast' sound

ord.

mf

full 'Broadcast' sound

ord.

mf

full 'Broadcast' sound

ord.

mf

full 'Broadcast' sound

ord.

(white noise hard cut out)

strings doubled w/ reverb

8

Voice: You're my

170 (♩ = 80)

pre-recorded strings (w/ reverb) enter

8

man Heart and soul of the Nor - walk band You must get up to rise and shine, then you'll be a-ble to

176

poco rit.

Musical score for measures 176-179. The score is written for four staves (Treble, Treble, Bass, Bass) and a vocal line. The key signature is three sharps (F#, C#, G#). The tempo marking is *poco rit.* The vocal line includes the lyrics: "play _____ so fine You're my man. You're so". The instrumental parts feature various musical notations including slurs, ties, and dynamic markings.

180

a tempo

Musical score for measures 180-183. The score is written for four staves (Treble, Treble, Bass, Bass) and a vocal line. The key signature is three sharps (F#, C#, G#). The tempo marking is *a tempo*. The vocal line includes the lyrics: "cool, play - ing, or march - ing, or just in school. _____ You give me goose - bumps, and". The instrumental parts feature various musical notations including slurs, ties, and dynamic markings (*p* and *mp*).

184

Musical score for measures 184-188. The score is written for four staves (Treble, Treble, Bass, Bass) and a vocal line. The key signature is three sharps (F#, C#, G#). The vocal line has lyrics: "make me proud ____ So much I want to shout__ out loud You're my man." The instrumental parts feature triplets and slurs.

make me proud ____ So much I want to shout__ out loud You're my man.

189

Musical score for measures 189-193. The score is written for four staves (Treble, Treble, Bass, Bass) and a vocal line. The key signature is three sharps (F#, C#, G#). The vocal line has lyrics: "Time at home ____ goes by so fast, ____ e - ven when you're sleep - ing. But". The instrumental parts feature slurs and ties.

+strings doubled w/ reverb

Time at home ____ goes by so fast, ____ e - ven when you're sleep - ing.

But

197

f *mf* *f* *mf* *mf* *f* *mf* *f* *mf* *f* *mf*

light dur - ing the day, and e - ven the night. You will be hap - py in

201

rit.

f molto espress. *mf*

f molto espress. *mf*

f molto espress. *mf*

f molto espress. *mf*

8 all that you do, All you ac - com - plish, and great - ness too You are my

205

5"

(answering machine ambiance / white noise fades out)

8 man, my Kyle man.

