

Akasha is a music of invisibility, electricity and the open expanse of the sky. The title is the Sanskrit word for the æther, a concept once understood as an unseen force present in all things in motion in the world.

Scordatura. The violins are tuned as usual. String IV of the viola is tuned down a minor third to A \flat 2; string IV of the cello is tuned down a minor third to A \flat 1.

Accidentals. Accidentals govern only one note. **Because of this no natural signs appear in the score:** G \sharp 4 G4 should be played G \sharp 4 G \flat 4. This is especially important in the densely chromatic sections that appear throughout the score.

String contact points. Five string contact points appear in the score:

XT	as close to the fingers as possible (without touching the fingers)
tasto	very noticeably <i>tasto</i> in color
pos. ord.	ordinary playing position
pont.	very noticeably <i>ponticello</i> in color
XP	as close to the bridge as possible (without touching the bridge)

Bridge contact points. The indication **OB** stands for “directly on the bridge” and means that the bow should be run diagonally on the bridge to produce white noise with no pitch at all. Fractional bridge contact points also appear. These are played with the bow extremely high on the string such that the hair of the bow runs against both the wrapping of the string and the wood of the bridge at the same time. Taken as a series these bridge contact points do three things: they reduce the fundamental of the string’s fingered pitch; they increase the spectral content of the upper partials; and they replace the overall sensation of pitch with noise. Some examples:

XP	as close to the bridge as possible (without touching the bridge)
$\frac{1}{4}$ OB	one quarter of the hair on bridge (and three quarters of the hair on string)
$\frac{1}{2}$ OB	one half of the hair on bridge (and one half of the hair on string)
$\frac{3}{4}$ OB	three quarters of the hair on bridge (and one quarter of the hair on string)
OB	bow directly on bridge with a diagonal bow (to produce white noise only)

Bow speed colors. The score contrasts widely different speeds of the bow:

XFB	extremely fast bow (extreme <i>flautando</i> with the bow only very lightly skimming the string)
FB	fast bow (very pronounced <i>flautando</i> just slightly less than above)
NBS	normal bow speed (neither <i>flautando</i> nor <i>scratch</i>)
$\frac{1}{4}$ scratch	timbre with one quarter part <i>scratch</i> (and three quarter parts pitch)
$\frac{1}{2}$ scratch	timbre with one half part <i>scratch</i> (and one half part pitch)
$\frac{3}{4}$ scratch	timbre with three quarter parts <i>scratch</i> (and one quarter part pitch)
scratch moltiss.	timbre with as much <i>scratch</i> (and as little pitch) as possible (though without encouraging subtones)

Do not substitute *tasto* for the FB and XFB degrees of bow speed *flautando* requested in the score: bow speeds combine freely with the string and bridge contact points given above. Indications for individuated clicks of the bow also appear; these result from almost impossibly slow motions of the bow against the string.

All passages marked “leggierissimo” should be played off string. The effect is to be an incredibly fast, and nimble, flurry of notes. (All such passages carry a quiet dynamic and are marked with *staccati*.)

Glissandi. Do not rearticulate note-heads in the middle of glissandi.

Akasha was written for the JACK Quartet who gave the world premiere the piece on February 6th 2016 in Paine Hall on the campus of Harvard University.