

BOREALIS MUSIC

Eleanor Hovda

For the Sylmar Chamber Ensemble
Commissioned by the MCF/CCP Program
funded by the Jerome Foundation

BOREALIS MUSIC

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for flute, oboe, bassoon, piano

PERFORMANCE NOTES

BOREALIS MUSIC suggests energy which moves but doesn't go anywhere. The Aurora Borealis is seen as curtains or ribbons of active energy, but not a travelling form. There is also the perception of the Aurora being a series of superimposed "after-images" - the idea that what is seen is the resultant of a field of reflected/refracted electrical impulses.

The energy fields are achieved by introspective probings of the "sound around the sound" of strings and winds. Sonic ribbons emerge, and lengths of time taken to excavate and articulate resonance fields.

An important aspect of performance, is to be able to work with very soft dynamic levels with intense concentration and energy. A theatrical metaphor is the Noh drama of Japan, where the slow unfolding of infinitesimally distilled material serves to heighten and sustain focus and attention.

TIMING

This piece moves in "breath" or "process" time - the "time it takes to do something". Any pulsed/repetitive sections should be performed in a fleet, non-dogged manner once the tempo is established; avoid rigid execution at all times.

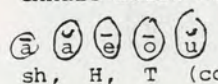
ENERGY COUNTERPOINTS

Instruments in the ensemble perform similar pitches with very different types of energy inherent in the nature of each instrument. Players may establish "push/pull" or balancing-act relationships with each other during performance.

Both WINDS and PIANO are asked to use techniques which will result in the possibility of sounds considered "extraneous" or "wrong" by classical standards of technique. These sounds include "air" sounds, "escape tones" which may occur while changing fingerings, and upper partials which result from slow bowing/blowing. These sounds are important to give multidimensional/spacial form to the soundings, and plenty of time should be allowed for them to become established into the texture of the piece.

FLUTE

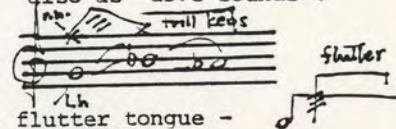
It is important to use inhale as well as exhale "melodically", as motion forms, to establish flow. Let both inhale and exhale modes be audible.

 (vowels) used melodically to color air sounds and shape attacks and decays
sh, H, T (consonants)

FLUTE

"subtone"/"covered tone" - used in soft modo ordinario (mo) seq

also as "dove sounds":

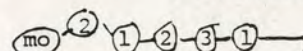


soft, muffled playing with trill keys coloring and "hollowing" basic tone. Trill keys using variable speeds.

m.o. - modo ordinario; ordinary mode of tone production

- ① - traverse air sound ($\frac{1}{2}$ air, $\frac{1}{2}$ pitch); relaxed embouchure
- ② - covered air sound; mouth covers embouchure hole, exhale
- ③ - same as ②, except inhaled.

NOTE: ② & ③ are interchangeable and should be used as needed (exhale or inhale). They are made audible in a phrase by the use of vowels and consonants.

 indicates unbroken, flowing transition from one manner of playing to another.

OBOE & BASSOON

Always maintain as soft, sheet sound as possible. The intensity of the softness of reed instruments is important in the piece.

Alternate fingerings - (x) (y) (z) used to indicate different fingerings to be used to make a "timbral melody". Please select three different fingerings for the written pitch which differ in color (and microtonally, in pitch, probably). Assign each fingering a letter (x) (y) or (z) and use these fingerings when performing the piece. This process allows each player to design an alternate fingering set which works for that player.

Trill keys are used to "hollow out" tones. Use at gentle, variable speeds to give contour to tones played softly.

ALWAYS take time to fully exhale and rest when needed.

BOWED PIANO

Use 5 or 6 violin bowhairs knotted together at each end and threaded under the designated piano strings. Anchor each end of each bow on the bars when not in use. Masking tape works well for this purpose. Resin each bow before use.

"Bow" very slowly and gently; strings "speak" most clearly when bowed gently and relaxedly.

A variation to violin bowhairs, is to use lengths of nylon fishline, lightly sanded to give traction, and resined well.

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Borealis Music

Eleanor Hovda

Flute

Oboe

Bsn.

6 "Bows" of 5 horsehairs
looped under strings

Bowed
Piano
Strings

lrcal, espressivo
flowing, very elastic tempo

(x, 4 fingerings) 3 3 3

#0
pp < espress. > simile

Bow [slowly → (3 3 3) → long slow] Ad lib, Allow overtones

#0
8va brass
ped sempre

Handwritten musical score for Flute, Oboe, Bassoon, and Piano.

Flute: Starts with a circled "mo" and a line with circled numbers 1, 2, 3, labeled "AS needed". The main staff begins with a "Subtone" marked *pp*, followed by a trill key marked *l.h.* with fingerings 3, 3, 4. This is followed by a section marked *ad lib* with notes marked with 'x' and the instruction "G# key + l.h. trill key colorings vary tempo, rhythms, etc".

Oboe: Features a section marked *ad lib* with notes marked with 'x' and the instruction "(x y z fingerings ad lib)".

Bassoon: Includes a trill marked *tr* and a section marked *ad lib* with notes marked with 'x' and the instruction "(x y z fingerings ad lib)".

Piano: The piano part is indicated by a brace on the left. It features a section marked *ad lib* with notes marked with 'x' and the instruction "(x y z fingerings ad lib)".

Other markings include "G# key" above the flute staff, "pp" (pianissimo) in several places, and various fingerings (3, 3, 4) and trills.

Handwritten musical score for Flute (fl), Oboe (ob), Bassoon (bssn), and Bowed Piano (Bowed pno.).

Flute (fl):

- Staff 1: (subtone) (1 2 3) (3) ① *very energetic + fleet*
- Staff 2: [Ad lib] *rh. + l.h. trill key coloring. Use ① ② ③ As needed for breathing*
- Staff 3: (x 4 z alt. fingerings) (Ad lib) x 4 z x 4 z (x 4 z) (x, 4, z) *Accel — dec*

Oboe (ob):

- Staff 1: (x 4 z alt. fingerings)
- Staff 2: (Ad lib) x 4 z x 4 z
- Staff 3: (x 4 z) (x, 4, z) *Accel — dec*

Bassoon (bssn):

- Staff 1: #0
- Staff 2: #0
- Staff 3: #0

Bowed pno.:

- Staff 1: #0
- Staff 2: #0
- Staff 3: #0

① ③ "covered tone" (no + ①) (use ① ② + ③ As needed)

fl

(x, y, z ad lib)

f

pp

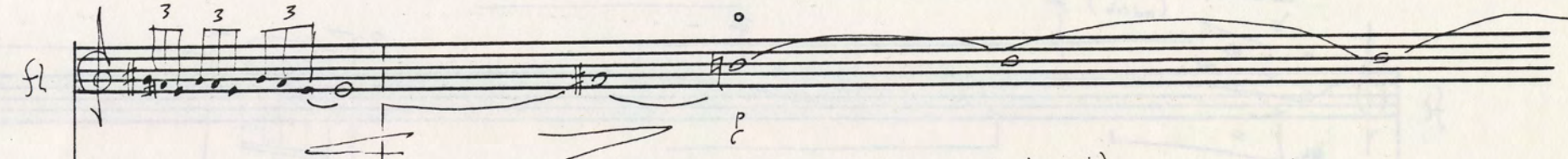
ob

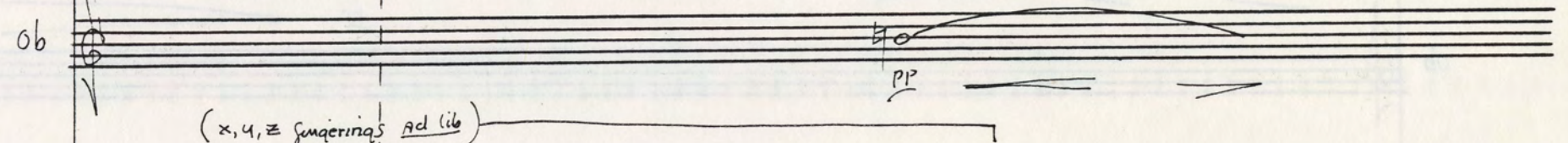
pp

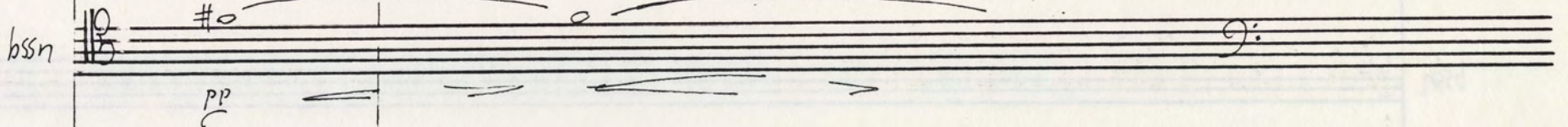
bssn

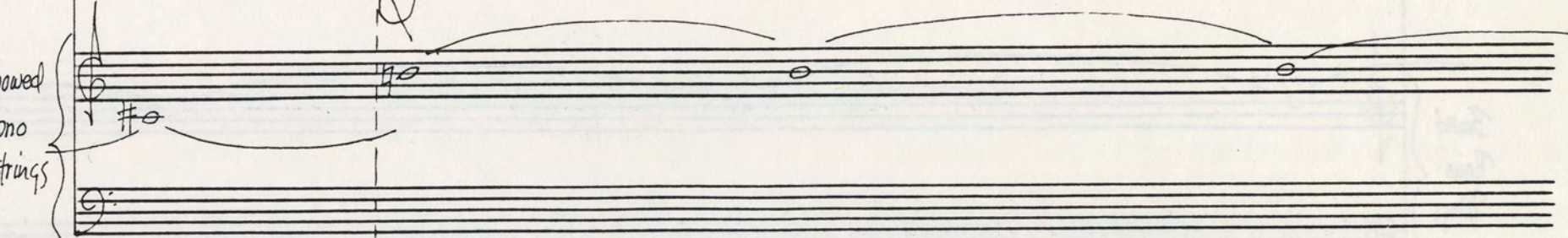
covered pno

(subtone) — ① — ② — ③ — ① — ("whistle tone" harmonics at 8va + 5th) —————→

fl 

ob 
(x, y, z fingerings ad lib)

bssn 
(x, y, z fingerings ad lib)

bowed pno strings 

Handwritten musical score for four staves: Flute (fl), Oboe (ob), Bassoon (bssn), and Bowled Piano Strings.

Flute (fl): The staff contains several musical notations and performance instructions. At the beginning, there is a note with a downward arrow and the instruction "Lh. tail keys". This is followed by a bracketed section with the instruction "(Ad lib)". Further along, there are two horizontal lines with the word "flutter" written above them. Towards the end of the staff, there is a complex figure-eight pattern with a bracket underneath it, labeled "5". The staff concludes with a long horizontal line and an arrow pointing to the right.

Oboe (ob): The staff is mostly empty, with a few small, faint markings near the beginning.

Bassoon (bssn): The staff is mostly empty, with a few small, faint markings near the beginning.

Bowled Piano Strings: The staff contains a long, continuous, wavy line that spans the width of the staff, suggesting a sustained or tremolo effect.

Handwritten musical score for four staves, featuring a double bar line in the middle. The staves are labeled on the left:

- fl** (Flute): The first staff. It begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The first measure contains a complex, rapid sixteenth-note passage. A dynamic marking *mf* (mezzo-forte) is written above the staff after the double bar line.
- ob** (Oboe): The second staff. It begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). It features a melodic line with a slur and a dynamic marking *pp* (pianissimo) below the staff after the double bar line.
- bssn** (Bassoon): The third staff. It begins with a bass clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). It is currently empty.
- Bowed Pno Strings** (Bowed Piano Strings): The bottom two staves. The top staff has a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#), with a melodic line and a slur. The bottom staff has a bass clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#), and is currently empty.

"Subtone"
covered tone

mo

(use ① ② + ③ when needed for breathing)

③

mo

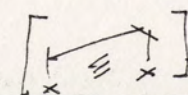
"Subtone"

flutters

flutter

flutter

(Ad lib)



Arpeggio in "G"
easily playable & repeatable
very fast, even, fluid

(mo ① ② ③ Ad lib)

fl

Select best sequence of 3 or 4 diff. pitches

try this one

[PPP - SS]

ob

Arpeggio in "G"
easily playable sequence

Select best sequence of 3 or 4 pitches

try this one

(PPP → ms)

bsn

trill or Arpeggio ("G" or "G" grouping)
easily playable - fast, even, fluid

try this one

Select 3 or 4 different pitches
which are best sequence for
repeated, fleet, playing

(PPP → ms)

pno

Handwritten musical score for four staves, featuring arpeggiated figures and performance instructions.

Staff 1: Arpeggio (inhalés + rests as needed) Stagger with oboe + bsn

Staff 2: Arpeggio (inhalés/rests as needed) Stagger w/ flute + bsn

Staff 3: Arpeggio (inhalés + rests as needed) Stagger w/ flute + bsn

Staff 4: (No specific instruction, but contains a large slur and a sharp sign #)

The score includes various musical notations such as staves, clefs, arpeggio brackets, slurs, and performance markings like "inhalés" and "Stagger".

Handwritten signature/initials
 7/20/87
 [illegible]