

concert music

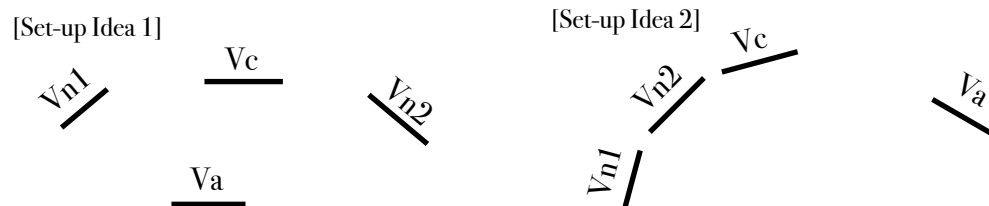
colors of early morning, of
clear skies, of salt
for String Quartet

peter gilbert

colors of early morning, of clear skies, of salt for String Quartet

Notes to the Performers:

- This work is based on the poem “Old Salt Woman” by Luci Tapahonso. You are encouraged to familiarize yourselves with this work while preparing this piece. It is in the book *A Radiant Curve* published by the University of Arizona Press.
- Time is given in proportional notation with barlines given in between staves so as to not disturb horizontal spacing. The barlines delineate approximately two seconds. Performance of time can be expressively flexible but should not wildly stray from the given notation. Events in the score that are vertically aligned are roughly simultaneous but need not be executed with absolutely precise coordination.
- The violist acts as a special character in this work: a kind of narrator who “speaks” with the voice of the poet. Consider a special positioning of the quartet, perhaps with the viola standing. The given diagrams should be taken only as examples of the possible set-ups you could do. You can come up with your own positioning or simply use a standard quartet set-up if necessary.



- You are encouraged to explore performing this work with amplification. It is not, per se, necessary for performance but amplification may well enhance the listening experience.
- The sound world of this piece is not a perfectly pure world.

Notes to Violin 1, Violin 2, Cello:

- All harmonics given are natural harmonics. If a string marking is given (II., IV., etc.) all material following is only on that string until a new marking is given. The indication I-IV. indicates that all strings are available as in normal playing.
- The double-stop harmonic-touch passages are done with very light bow pressure and long continuous bow strokes, changing the finger position in an improvisatory manner (sticking

outline of contour and dynamic. A strong sense of gesture is desired. These “spoken” passages are all performed on the C string unless otherwise noted.

- In the spoken passages each “syllable” is articulated with a notehead. Phrases are given with long dotted slurs. Bow changes can be done as needed but during a phrase, the bow should not really leave the string, even during pauses. In gaps between syllables (sometimes indicated with a dotted glissando line), bow pressure and touch simply lighten to the point of loosing pitch, maintaining a quiet bow noise.
- This is, in many ways, an unusual part and is in some ways a solo, even without being terribly soloistic, and should always be discernible. The part forms a figure of constancy, of clarity and calm assurance. It is not so much the story as the storyteller, not outwardly dramatic but rather an axis of reflection amidst the swirling colors of the narrative around it. Nevertheless each gesture should have its own musical, gestural sense and should feel expressive.
- Moments not using the large three-line staff are performed normally.

Program Note:

What you notice when you meet poet Luci Tapahonso is the strong clarity of her personhood. The richness of her interaction with life comes forth from her matriarchal eyes the way I imagine it would from the eponymous mythical figure in Tapahonso’s poem *Old Salt Woman*. I find the poem entrancing for so many reasons but perhaps none more so than the intriguing sense of time. The poem begins at the beginning of human history shortly after the birth of First Baby. The narrative flows forwards full of echoes from Old Salt Woman’s past until the it magically morphs into the ongoing tradition of the First Laugh Ceremony of the Navajos that continues today. The “oneness” of the Navajo worldview (in which all things are manifestations of a unity rather than the obsessive fragmentation of the Euro-American perspective) here relates to time as well, where the ancient and the present slip back and forth seamlessly.

As a sestina, the poem has built into its traditional form numerous repetitions but two of these end words are particularly important to my reading. One is “color”. In addition to the colors of early morning, clear skies and salt, there are colors of laughter, of light effervescence, of sharing, of betrothal and betrayal, as well as the intense colors of

midnight, the ageless colors of stones, and love's radiant colors. This suggested to me a sound world driven by sonic shapes and hues more than by 19th century European melodies and harmonies. Perhaps the most important color is the color of laughter at the heart of the poem. The baby's first laugh is a sacred rite for the Navajo that brings family together to rejoice in the healing power of sharing laughter. It was important for me to get that boisterous guttural explosion out of the quartet.

The other image source I focused on is the river. Water flows through this poem at every turn. In addition to the geographical San Juan river and the thin brown rivers at Dinétah, there are rivers of luminous beads, of baby laughter, of angry words, and the crystal rivers of salt beneath our feet. I attempted to weave that sense of motion into the fabric of the piece the way I enjoy it in Tapahonso's words. Her sentences continue past the ends of each of the sestina's six stanzas moving directly without break into the next, creating a sense of on-going that makes the whole poem into a river.

One last point I think is interesting is the way that age plays into the sense of time. The moving force in the poem is literally as an old person. The poem tells us early on that "her true essence became apparent in her autumn years" and it is only over time that "she was able to transform the grief into exquisite songs of beauty." Similarly, First Baby who would ultimately grow up to be the centrally important figure White Shell Girl, guides us to old age with her lilting songs. The songs don't rush to fill an urgent present. Just as it took time for the sorrows of Old Salt Woman to metamorphose into serenity, I've tried to compose this piece with an abiding sense of patience, unfolding


This piece is a setting of *Old Salt Woman* the way one sets a poem in an art song. The viola performs the role of singer, helping to keep us grounded in the poet's point of view as time shifts around us and the dance of colors envelopes us. The poem is full of magical songs. I've deliberately not tried to recreate or even refer to the magical songs of the Navajo people, but rather to invoke something more strange and unknown that can be its own song of joy and wonder. I have, however, used my analysis of the lilting of Tapahonso's own voice as a point of departure so that this new song, however distantly, still echoes something essential of her.

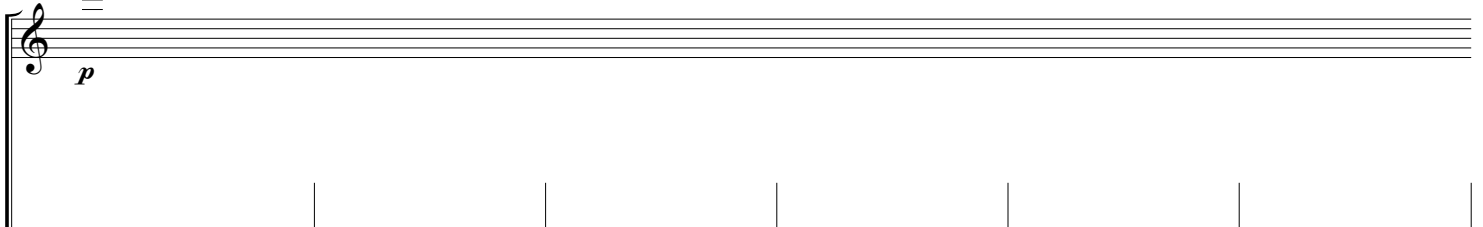
- Peter Gilbert, 2015


1 Intense but with a sense of stillness...as if infinite...

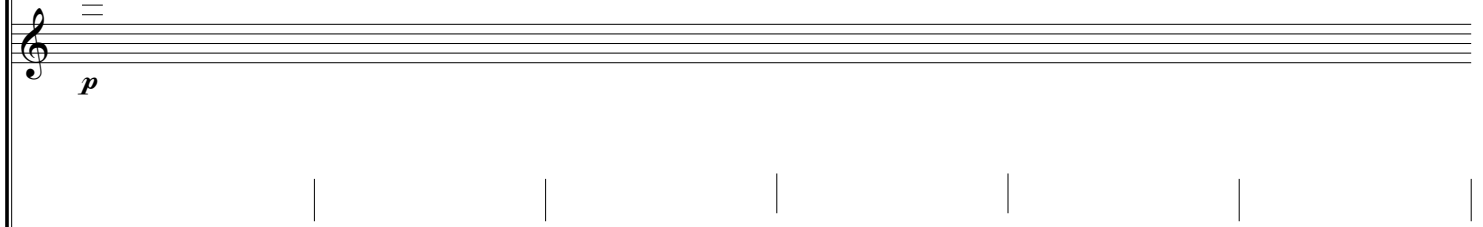
(2 seconds)

8va -

I.  retake bows freely, varying lengths



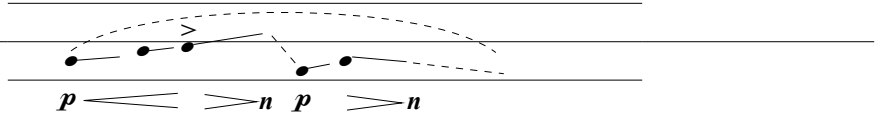
III.  retake bows freely, varying lengths



solo
molto espressivo as speech, without a specific sense of pitch

sempre portamento (without stopping or lifting the bow off the string during the marked phrase;
with bow noise, ghosting notes in between, though not necessarily all in one bow)

IV.



p < > *n* *p* > *n*

"Álk'dáá jini"

III.  retake bows freely, varying lengths



colors of early morning, of clear skies, of salt

2

7

8^{va}

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

26

27

28

29

30

31

32

33

34

35

36

37

38

39

40

41

42

43

44

45

46

47

48

49

50

51

52

53

54

55

56

57

58

59

60

61

62

63

64

65

66

67

68

69

70

71

72

73

74

75

76

77

78

79

80

81

82

83

84

85

86

87

88

89

90

91

92

93

94

95

96

97

98

99

100

101

102

103

104

105

106

107

108

109

110

111

112

113

114

115

116

117

118

119

120

121

122

123

124

125

126

127

128

129

130

131

132

133

134

135

136

137

138

139

140

141

142

143

144

145

146

147

148

149

150

151

152

153

154

155

156

157

158

159

160

161

162

163

164

165

166

167

168

169

170

171

172

173

174

175

176

177

178

179

180

181

182

183

184

185

186

187

188

189

190

191

192

193

194

195

196

197

198

199

200

201

202

203

204

205

206

207

208

209

210

211

212

213

214

215

216

217

218

219

220

221

222

223

224

225

226

227

228

229

230

231

232

233

234

235

236

237

238

239

240

241

242

243

244

245

246

247

248

249

250

251

252

253

254

255

256

257

258

259

260

261

262

263

264

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

1001

1002

1003

1004

1005

1006

1007

1008

1009

1010

1011

1012

1013

1014

1015

1016

1017

1018

1019

1020

1021

1022

1023

1024

1025

1026

1027

1028

1029

1030

1031

1032

1033

1034

1035

1036

1037

1038

1039

1040

1041

1042

1043

1044

1045

1046

1047

1048

1049

1050

1051

1052

1053

1054

1055

1056

1057

1058

1059

1060

1061

1062

1063

1064

1065

1066

1067

1068

1069

1070

1071

1072

1073

1074

1075

1076

1077

1078

1079

1080

1081

1082

1083

1084

1085

1086

1087

1088

1089

1090

1091

1092

1093

1094

1095

1096

1097

1098

1099

1100

1101

1102

1103

1104

1105

1106

1107

1108

1109

1110

1111

1112

1113

1114

1115

1116

1117

1118

1119

1120

1121

1122

1123

1124

1125

1126

1127

1128

1129

1130

1131

1132

1133

1134

1135

1136

1137

1138

1139

1140

1141

1142

1143

1144

1145

1146

1147

1148

1149

1150

1151

1152

1153

1154

1155

1156

1157

1158

1159

1160

1161

1162

1163

1164

1165

1166

1167

1168

1169

1170

1171

1172

1173

1174

1175

1176

1177

1178

1179

1180

1181

1182

1183

1184

1185

1186

1187

1188

1189

1190

1191

1192

1193

1194

1195

1196

1197

1198

1199

1200

1201

1202

1203

1204

1205

1206

1207

1208

1209

1210

1211

1212

1213

1214

1215

1216

1217

1218

1219

1220

1221

1222

1223

1224

1225

1226

1227

1228

1229

1230

1231

1232

1233

1234

1235

1236

1237

1238

1239

1240

1241

1242

1243

1244

1245

1246

1247

1248

1249

1250

1251

1252

1253

1254

1255

1256

1257

1258

1259

1260

1261

1262

1263

1264

1265

1266

1267

1268

1269

1270

1271

1272

1273

1274

1275

1276

1277

1278

1279

1280

1281

1282

1283

1284

1285

1286

1287

1288

1289

1290

1291

1292

1293

1294

1295

1296

1297

1298

1299

1300

1301

1302

1303

1304

1305

1306

1307

1308

1309

1310

1311

1312

1313

1314

1315

1316

1317

1318

1319

1320

1321

1322

1323

1324

1325

1326

1327

1328

1329

1330

1331

1332

1333

1334

1335

1336

1337

1338

1339

1340

1341

1342

1343

1344

1345

1346

1347

1348

1349

1350

1351

1352

1353

1354

1355

1356

1357

1358

1359

1360

1361

1362

1363

1364

1365

1366

1367

1368

1369

1370

1371

1372

1373

1374

1375

1376

1377

1378

1379

1380

1381

1382

1383

1384

1385

1386

1387

1388

1389

1390

1391

1392

1393

1394

1395

1396

1397

1398

1399

1400

1401

1402

1403

1404

1405

1406

1407

1408

1409

1410

1411

1412

1413

1414

1415

1416

1417

1418

1419

1420

1421

1422

1423

1424

1425

1426

1427

1428

1429

1430

1431

1432

1433

1434

1435

1436

1437

1438

1439

1440

1441

1442

1443

1444

1445

1446

1447

1448

1449

1450

1451

1452

1453

1454

1455

1456

1457

1458

1459

1460

1461

1462

1463

1464

1465

1466

1467

1468

1469

1470

1471

1472

1473

1474

1475

1476

1477

1478

1479

1480

1481

1482

1483

1484

1485

1486

1487

1488

for string quartet

13

(8^{va})

3

p < > < > < > *n*

"of Navaho time"

mp < > *n* *mp* > *mp* > *n*

"'Áshijih 'Asdzáán Sání"

colors of early morning, of clear skies, of salt

4

19

The musical score consists of three staves. The top two staves are treble clefs. The first staff has notes on the 1st, 3rd, and 5th lines, with a dashed line above the 5th line labeled *8^{va}*. The second staff has notes on the 2nd, 4th, and 6th lines, with a dashed line above the 6th line labeled *8^{va}*. The bottom staff is a bass clef. It contains two phrases of music with lyrics. The first phrase is marked *mp* and *n*, with the lyric "journeyed". The second phrase is marked *p*, *mp*, and *n*, with the lyric "to Huerfano Mesa".

for string quartet

5

25

(8va) ————

(5)

(8va) ————

(5)

p

p

p

n

"near the shallow river"

(5)

colors of early morning, of clear skies, of salt

6

31

8va

6

31

mp < > *n*
"They said"

mf < > < > < >
"first baby was"

for string quartet

37

7 8

mp *f* *mf* *n* *p*

"healthy" "but her cooing was not a song" "of joy"

colors of early morning, of clear skies, of salt

9

43

(8va) $\overset{\circ}{\circ}$

$\overset{\circ}{\circ}$

$\overset{\circ}{\circ}$

$\overset{\circ}{\circ}$

13

"or wonder" *n*

mf "Since a baby" *n* *mp* "does"

p

for string quartet

10

49

(8^{va})

(8^{va})

(8^{va})

B

n

"not know sorrow"

p

n

"Old Salt Woman was called"

n

12

61

(8^{va})
(8^{va})

n

flautando; very airy
with spontaneously changing bow placement,
ranging from sul ponticello to molto sul tasto

III.
IV.

pp

pp

p

lifting one finger to get the open string to sound

13

mp

"effervescence traveled with her"

mp

n

"she"

p

13

67

p

p

13

p > < > < > *n* *p* > < > < > *n*

"who is the primordial mother of the salt clan"

→ sul pont.

p

mp

for string quartet

14

73

73

mp

p

p

mp

(sempre sul pont.)

varied bow position

mp

p

mp

lifting alternating fingers to get alternating open strings to sound

colors of early morning, of clear skies, of salt

15

79

I-IV.

n

lifting alternating fingers to get alternating open strings to sound

(not coordinated or synchronized with Cello)

13

(not coordinated or synchronized with Violin 2)

mp

p

16

85

non vib.

p

pp *n*

p *n*

pp

B

mf *n*

"But her true essence"

mf *mp*

"became apparant in her autumn years"

pp

colors of early morning, of clear skies, of salt

17

91

Musical score for the first system, measures 91-96. It features a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line starts with a treble clef and contains a melodic phrase with dynamics *pp* and *n*. The piano accompaniment consists of a steady eighth-note pattern in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand.

13

Musical score for the second system, measures 97-102. It features a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line starts with a treble clef and contains a melodic phrase with dynamics *mp* and *n*, and the lyrics "When 'Áshijh 'Asdzáán was young". The piano accompaniment consists of a steady eighth-note pattern in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand.