



WHAT THE SILENCE OFFERS

for SATB chorus, soprano soloist,
and amplified speaking voice

[2022]

*Commissioned and premiered by
Modern Sound Collective - Kai Leung, artistic director
Toronto ON Canada*

text by

ERICA KATH

music by

EMILY GREEN



Modern
Sound
Collective

ABOUT THE PIECE

With so much vibrant and evocative imagery in this poem, I wanted to make sure that the text was not buried under the music. I decided the best way to do this would be a combination of the choir singing key elements of text, and an amplified voice acting as a narrator, reciting more substantial parts of the poem. The imagery is further enhanced by the soloist and choir singing large sections of music which are not set to text, creating a contemplative atmosphere.

I was most taken by the image of the "colossal spirit," which I wanted to emulate throughout the work as the underlying character of the piece. At the end of the poem, this colossal spirit is described as "pulsing," and I decided to turn this pulsing feeling into a tangible musical element which drives the music forward. It was a unique challenge to write a musical piece based on a poem which focuses so heavily on ideas of silence, stillness, quiescence, etc. I decided to focus on the contrast between stillness and motion, silence and sound, to create the sonic equivalent of a "flooding of negative space" or "tidal Silence [drawing] backwards."

ORIGINAL TEXT

Erica Kath

What the Silence Offers

A quiescence:

Stillness appears as foreign

—saturated and lingering.

A flooding of negative space,

and tidal Silence draws backwards

and brings forth the molting present:

An offering—

An unsheathed history, folding under

pressure and Time.

(Where do we begin to unfurl the present? Where

do we begin to write the past?)

And Silence draws nearer

as we press ears

to hear the bare offering:

From within,

there (still) pulses

a colossal spirit: invoking and emerging.

PERFORMANCE NOTES

-Text in quotation marks above staff is to be spoken by one amplified voice. The performer speaking this text may stand either in front of the choir or out of the audience's sight, and should not sing between speaking parts. (Suggestion: perhaps your choir's collaborative pianist could take on this role.)

-*"hum"* : begin with an open and accented *"hu"* before closing to *"mm"* (as notated in mm.1-3)

-*"aa"* : like a sforzando, accent the onset of the syllable, then recede (as notated in mm.46)

-*"ah"* : normal *"ah"* vowel, with no accent.

-*"hm"* : normal humming (start with mouth closed).

-*"hum"* and *"aa"* sounds are layered on top of each other in alternating voice parts with the goal of creating a pulsating effect.

PRINTING

Choral scores distributed by *MSC Presents* are optimized for 8.5x11 printing.

ABOUT THE COMPOSER

Emily Green grew up in Ottawa, Ontario. She holds a Bachelor of Music degree in composition from the University of Toronto, and is currently pursuing a Masters degree in composition at the Manhattan School of Music, where she studies with Reiko Fueting. Green has been commissioned by numerous ensembles, including the Ottawa Children's Choir, the Exultate Chamber Singers, Pax Christi Chorale, and Modern Sound Collective. Being a vocalist herself, she has a particular interest in vocal and choral music, and enjoys exploring the full range and capabilities of the human voice.

Emily Green is also a passionate music educator. She especially enjoys working with beginner students, and has taught voice, theory, and composition both privately, and with organizations including Sistema Toronto, which provides free, after-school music instruction to students from low-income families.



MSC Presents:
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for SATB chorus a cappella,
soprano soloist, and one amplified speaking voice

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$\text{♩} = 40$

SOPRANO

ALTO

TENOR

BASS

PIANO
(for rehearsal only)

$\text{♩} = 40$

* As notated in mm. 1-3, begin with an open "hu" before closing to "mm." There should be no rearticulation/ gap between the two notes.

6

S.

A.

T.

B.

Pno.

Still - ness

si - lence

hum hum hum hum hum hum

12

SPEAKER: "A quiescence." "Stillness appears as foreign —." "saturated and lingering"

A. *p* *pp*
hum hum hum hum hum hum

T. *p* *pp*
hum hum hum hum hum

B. *p* *pp*
hum hum hum hum hum

Pno.

19

Solo *mf* with a pure tone
ah ah ah ah

A. *mf*
ah

T. *mf*
hum

B. *mf*
hum

20

Pno.

26

Solo

Ah Ah Ah Ah

A.

Ah Ah Ah Ah

Pno.

34 poco a poco accel. . . .

Solo

S.

mf poco a poco cresc.

Si lence, still - ness

A.

p poco a poco cresc.

Hum Si - lence, still - ness

T.

p poco a poco cresc.

Hum hum hum hum hum hum hum hum

B.

p poco a poco cresc.

Hum hum hum hum hum hum hum hum

34 poco a poco accel. . . .

Pno.

43 46 ♩ = 50

S. Si - lence draws _____ Si - lence draws back - wards _____
hum hum hum *sfz aa*** *simile, cresc. cont'd* *aa aa aa*

A. Si - lence draws _____ Si - lence draws back - wards _____
hum hum hum *sfz aa*** *simile, cresc. cont'd* *aa aa aa*

T. *hum hum hum* *sfz aa*** *simile, cresc. cont'd* *aa aa aa*

B. *hum hum hum* *sfz aa*** *simile, cresc. cont'd* *aa aa aa*

Pno.

****aa: Aim for the same effect as "hum." Emphasize the onset of the note, then immediately recede. There should not be articulation on the 2nd eighth note.**

50

S. *ah* _____
*ah**** *ff* *ah*

A. *aa* *aa* *aa* *aa* *aa* *aa*
*ah**** *ff* *ah*

T. *aa* *aa* *aa* *aa* *aa* *aa*

B. *aa* *aa* *aa* *aa* *aa* *aa*

Pno.

****ah: articulate normally, not like "ah"**

"A flooding of negative space, and tidal Silence draws backwards and brings forth the molting present."

76 ♩ = 90

73 fold - ing fold - ing

S. Time fold - ing fold - ing

fold - ing un - der pres - sure and Time fold - ing un - der

A. fold - ing, fold - ing un - der pres - sure and fold - ing fold - ing

T. Time fold - ing fold - ing

B. un - der

Pno.

76 ♩ = 90

79 Time fold - ing fold - ing un - der pres - sure and Time

S. Time Time fold - ing un - der pres - sure and Time

A. fold - ing fold - ing un - der pres - sure and fold - ing un - der Time

T. Time fold - ing un - der Time fold - ing un - der Time

B. Time fold - ing fold - ing Time fold - ing Time

Pno.

84

S. fold - ing pres - sure and Time Time

A. Time fold - ing un - der pres - sure and Time Time

T. fold - ing un - der Time pres - sure and Time

B. (stubborn, unmoving) Time fold - ing Time fold - ing un - der

Pno. fold - ing Time fold - ing Time

91

Solo ah fold - ing Time fold - ing *ff*

S. Time Time Time *ff*

A. fold - ing un - der Time fold - ing un - der Time *ff*

T. pres - sure and Time Time fold - ing un - der Time fold - ing fold - ing *ff*

B. Time fold - ing Time fold - ing Time

Pno. 91 Time

93

A. *p*
ah ah ah

T. *p*
ah*** ah***

B. *p*
fold - ing fold - ing

Pno.

***ah: articulate normally, not like "aa"

98

S. ah ah

A. ah ah

T. ah ah ah ah

B. (unis.)
fold - ing fold - ing fold - ing fold - ing

Pno.

104

"an offering —"

"an unsheathed history,"

mf

"folding under pressure and Time."

Solo

S.

A.

T.

B.

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

aa aa aa aa aa

ah ah ah

ah

104

Pno.

111

Solo

S.

A.

Pno.

mf

ah ah ah ah

ah ah

124 ♩ = 100

119

Solo

Ah ah

A. ah ah ah ah

T. hum hum ah

B. hum hum hum

Pno.

124 ♩ = 100

127

S. *mf* Si - lence, still - - ness

A. Si - lence, still - - ness

A. ah hum ah hum hum hum ah hum

T. hum hum hum hum hum hum

B. hum hum hum hum hum hum

Pno.

133 136 *f*

S. si - lence draws si - lence draws

A. *hum* *hum* *ah* *ah* *f* si - lence draws

T. *hum* *hum* *hum* *f* aa aa

B. *hum* *hum* *hum* aa

Pno.

138

S. near er near er ah ah

A. *gum* near er near er ah

T. ah aa aa aa aa

B. aa aa aa aa aa

Pno.

143 **144** *f* with a full tone

Sop. solo

small group of Altos

"Where do we begin to unfurl the present?"

S. Still ness

A. *f* aa ah

T. aa *f* aa ah aa

B. aa aa aa aa aa aa

Pno.

"Where do we begin to write the past?"

148

Solo

(sop. solo)

ff

mp

ah

S.

ff

p

Si - lence

ah

A.

aa

aa

ah

aa

aa

aa

ah

T.

ah

ff

aa

aa

aa

B.

ff

aa

aa

aa

Pno.

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"And silence draws nearer,
as we press ears to hear the
bare offering:"

157

153

Solo

A.

T.

B.

Pno.

157

160

A.

T.

B.

Pno.

"From within"

170 *mp*

166

S. Still - ness

A. *p* *mf* *p* *p* *mf* *p*
hum hum hum aa aa aa

T. *p* *mf* *p* *p* *mf* *p*
hum hum hum aa aa aa

B. *p* *mf* *p*
hum hum hum

Pno.

"There still pulses
a colossal spirit"

180

173

Solo ah

S. Si - nce

A. *p* *mf* *p* *mf* *p*
aa aa aa aa hum

T. *p* *mf* *p* *mf* *p*
aa aa aa hum hum

B. *p* *mf* *p*
aa hum hum

Pno. 180

"a colossal spirit, invoking..."

181

A. *mf* *p* *mf*

T. *mf* *p* *mf*

B. *mf* *p* *mf*

Pno.

186

S. *ppp* *n*

A. *p* *n* *pp* *n* *ppp* *n*

T. *p* *n* *pp* *n* *ppp* *n*

B. *p* *n* *pp* *n* *ppp* *n*

Pno.

and emerging"

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Sami Anguaya	<u><i>Lying Awake, Waiting</i></u>	SSAATTBB a cappella	Tom Robinson & Sami Anguaya	4 min	2022	MSC0001
Emily Green	<u><i>Somewhere in Space</i></u>	SSAA & percussion trio	Edith Södergran	3.5 min	2023	MSC0002
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Kai Leung	<u><i>Generation 2.5</i></u>	SSAATTBB a cappella	Kai Leung	7 min	2024	MSC0014
Kai Leung	<u><i>When David Heard</i></u>	SSAATTBB a cappella	2 Samuel 18:33	3 min	2022	MSC0005
Carol Kayee Mak	<u><i>The Sirens' Song</i></u>	SSATBB & piano	William Browne	5 min	2019	MSC0008
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Danial Sheibani	<u><i>The Affable Enigma</i></u>	SSSAAATTTBB a cappella	Rūmī	3 min	2021	MSC0009
Madox Terrell	<u><i>Remember</i></u>	SSAATTBB a cappella	Christina Rossetti	2.5 min	2020	MSC0010
Nicholas Wanstall	<u><i>Le Pont Mirabeau</i></u>	SATB, soloist, & piano	Guillaume Apollinaire	4 min	2024	MSC0016
Nicholas Wanstall	<u><i>May This Place</i></u>	SSAATB a cappella	Nicholas Wanstall	3 min	2018	MSC0006



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