The Night Sky

For String Quartet

2009

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The Night Sky

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String Quartet no. 4

1. Con Moto. The Canopy (6: 30)

2. Adagio. Lights in the Dusk (5:30)

3. Presto. Shooting Stars (5:00)

The title of this quartet refers not simply to the sky at night, but to the night sky as it appears in places remote from the glare of artificial light--not the night sky we see all the time, but the night sky as it once was, as most of us rarely or ever see it. When Gerard Manley Hopkins wrote his sonnet "The Starlit Night" in 1877, the vista it celebrates--"Look at the stars, look up at the skies! / O look at all the fire-folk sitting in the air"--was already becoming as much a thing of the past as the elfin fire-folk. Although the music of "The Night Sky" is neither nostalgic nor elegiac, it does suggest, at least to me, the kinds of experience that will soon be lost to us if we do not do better at our stewardship of the only world we have.

The quartet consists of three movements in the familiar order: fast-slow-faster. The first movement, "The Canopy," evokes the night sky as a spur to the imagination. The second, "Lights in the Dusk," takes the gradual filling of the sky with light as an object of contemplation traditionally associated with cosmic harmony. The finale, "Shooting Stars,"simply surrenders to wonder and excitement. The outer movements are based on fluctuating rhythjms of fragmentation and coalescence, neither of which quite gets the upper hand. The middle movment is hushed and concentrated, played *ppp* almost throughout.

1. Con Moto. The Canopy.




10
14
17
pizz.
pizz.
arco
mp
p
mp


19
3
3
mp
mf
mf
p
mp
arco
mp
p
22
mf
f
mf
mf
mp
mf
mf
mp
mf
26
f
pp
f
sul pont.
mf
pp


30
sul tasto
ordin.
pizz.
arco
33
36
legato


38
p
legato
p
p
arco
p
legato
p
42
mp
mp
mp
mp
45
p
rit.
pp
a tempo
sul D
p
pp
p
pp
pizz.
arco
pp


51
rit.
a tempo
fp
p
mp
p
arco
pp
p
56
p
3
3
sul D
59
pizz.


64
fp
mf
p
mp
p
arco
mp
p
66
mp
mf
f
mp
mf
f
mp
f
mp
f
69
pizz. arco
pp
p
mf p
mp
pizz. arco
pp
sul D
p
pizz. arco
mf p
mp
pp
p
mf p
mp
pp
p
mf p
mp


75
mf
mf
pizz.
78
mp
mf
p
p
p
mp
mp
arco
mp
81
p
pp
pizz.
p
mp
p
p
pp
sul tasto
sul G
p
pp


86
arco
pizz.
arco
sul G
ordin.
91
pizz.
arco
pizz.
arco
95


100
sul pont.
ordin.
103
106
rit.
cresc.
cresc.
cresc.


♩ = 76
109
mp
p
mp cresc.
f
mp
mf
mp
cresc.
112
rit.
a tempo
p
mp
cresc.
mf
mp
mp
mp
115
rit.
♩ = 88
f
p
cresc.
f
p
cresc.
f
p
pizz.
arco
cresc.
f
p


120
rit.
sul tasto
ordin.
pizz.
124
♩ = 76
pp
legato
pizz.
arco
127
p

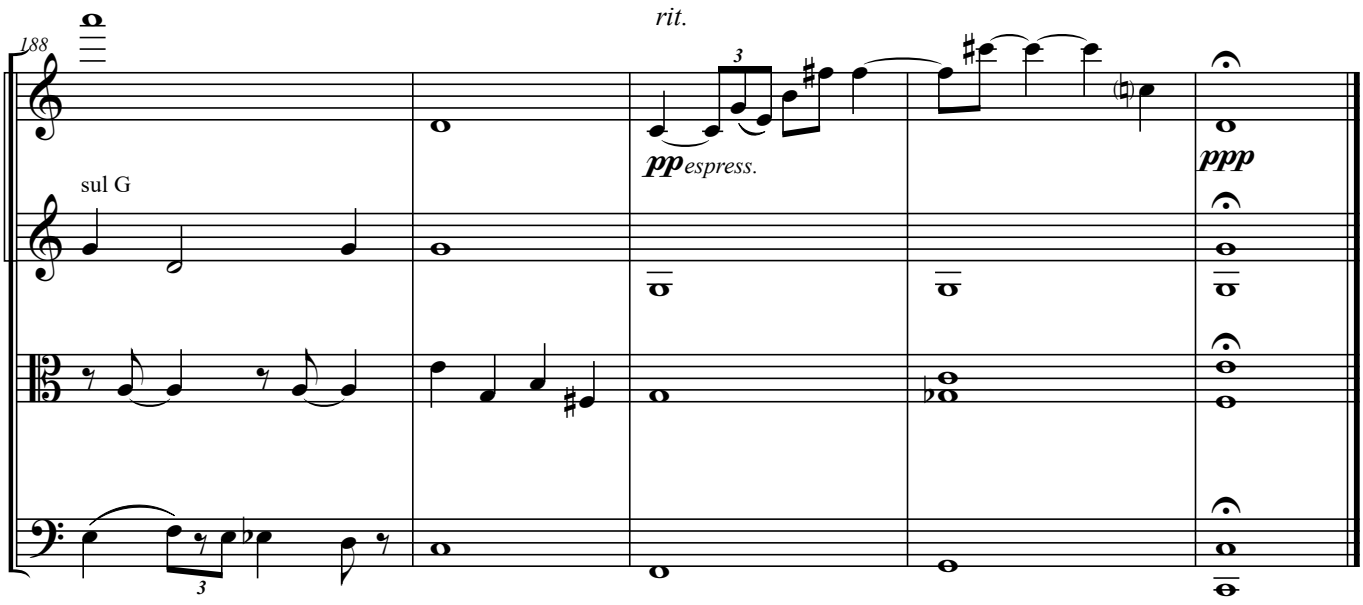

♩ = 54
rit.
130
ppp
p
ppp
8va
135

2. Adagio. Lights in the Dusk.




156
162
sul A
sul G
sul G
sul A
3
167
8va
sul A


173
sul A
pp espress.
pp
ppp
178
sul G
sul D
sul A
3
pp
183
sul A
3
ppp
sul D
sul A
ppp
ppp
espress.


188
rit.
sul G
pp espress.
ppp


193
♩ = 126
Senza sord.
p
Senza sord.
p
Senza sord.
p
Senza sord.
p
198
p
p
p
p
202
tr
3
3
3
3
pizz.
mf
arco
p


205
pizz.
p
arco
208
cresc.
cresc.
cresc.
cresc.
f
f
f
f
212
p
p
p
p


215
f
f
f
cresc.
f
p
p
219
pizz.
p
cresc.
f
arco
pizz.
p
cresc.
3
3
arco
f
cresc.
f
pizz.
f
arco
223
pizz.
pizz.
arco
3
3
3
3
3
pizz.


226
dim.
pizz.
dim.
dim.
p
p
p
arco
arco
tr
tr
arco
p
230
tr
tr
tr
pizz.
234
pizz.
f
p
3
mf
p
mf
f


237
arco
mp
mf
mf
p
fp
arco
mf
tr
p
p
241
mf
p
p
tr
tr
p
p
245
mf
mf
f
tr
mf
f
mf
f


248
f
p
p
p
252
mf
f
f
cresc.
cresc.
f
255
ff
p
mf
f
p
p
cresc.
f
cresc.
f


259
263
p
mf
cresc.
f
266
ff
dim.


269
mp
p
pizz.
pizz.
273
rit.
♩ = 116
arco
arco
278
rit.
♩ = 104


accel.
282
♩ = 116
accel.
286
♩ = 126
289
p
p
p
p

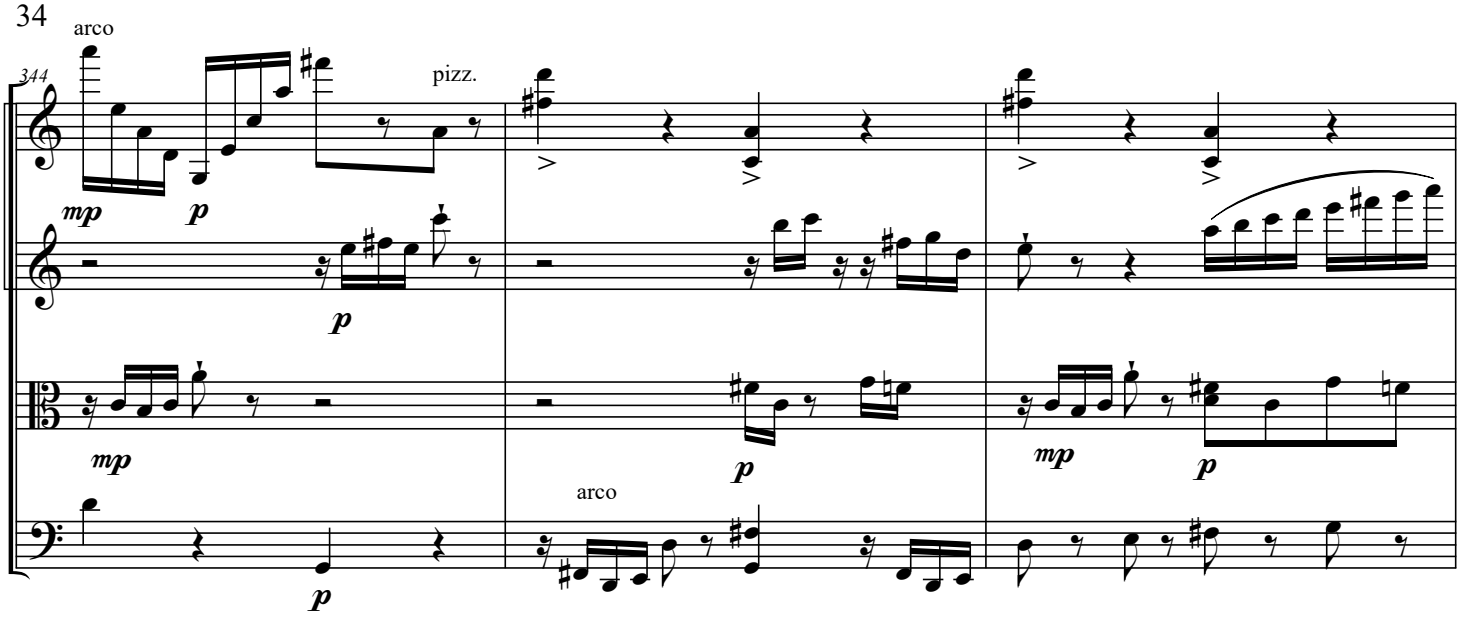

293
f p f p
cresc.
p
tr
296
pizz.
3
300
arco
fp


303
fp
fp
fp
fp
arco
306
8va
mf
fp
p
p
mf
tr
tr
mf
p
309
cresc.
p
cresc.
p
cresc.
tr
p
tr
cresc.
p


313
316
320
cresc.
dim.
pizz.


324
arco
arco
pizz.
arco
328
cresc.
cresc.
cresc.
pizz.
arco
pizz.
arco
mp
331
f
mf
f
mf
tr
tr
f
p
cresc.
pizz.
arco
pizz.
arco
mf
f
p
cresc.


335
pizz.
f
tr
338
arco
p
mp
341
pizz.
mp



Do not slow down.

