

Night Meditation

for cello and piano

Marcus Macauley

Composed for and premiered by cellist Truls Mørk, with the composer at the piano,
at the Seattle Symphony's March 17, 2001 *Discover Music!* concert at Benaroya Hall.

Program notes

Night Meditation begins with a quiet, meditative cello solo consisting of eight phrases, each separated by an eighth rest. The up bows represent inhaling, the down bows, exhaling, so that the overall effect is that of conscious and mindful breathing, as is often done in meditation. The piano enters, continuing in the calm, meditative style of the cello and introducing a low, repeated pedal tone. The entire opening section, lasting about two minutes, is based on the interval of the perfect fourth, which provides the skeleton around which the melodic lines are built. The harmony is ambiguous, and the melodic lines are very chromatic.

In the central section of the piece, the cello plays a pizzicato line of straight eighths, similar to a walking bass, while the piano carries a slow, *cantabile* melody in octaves above, much like a cantus firmus. Soon, the piano left-hand adds a flowing line of triplets. The three voices are periodically exchanged from one instrument to the other. Together, they build to a climax as the piano right-hand brings back the material from the opening, now in augmentation. Although it modulates frequently, this entire section is considerably more tonal than the beginning.

As the music settles down after the climax, the harmony deteriorates and becomes more ambiguous, so that the mood of the opening returns: quiet, slow, and meditative. The last phrase of the cello solo from the very beginning is repeated several times, functioning much like the pedal tone did at the start. Between these repetitions, the piano develops the first phrase of the opening cello solo. After this interplay, the two instruments join together in octaves to end the piece quietly and peacefully with what begins like the first phrase of the piece and ends with a series of descending fourths.

Notes on the performance

Dynamics

Except where otherwise noted, the dynamic level should increase when the musical line is ascending and decrease when it is descending, within a range of about one dynamic level above and below that which is marked.

Bowing

Each slur indicates a single bow. The bowing direction should alternate between each slurred group of notes, except where otherwise indicated.

Breathing

Throughout the piece, the eighth rests should feel like breaths, as if the player were a singer breathing to prepare for the next phrase. The same is true with the quarter rests beginning in bar 72. With the quarter rest at the very opening, the player should again feel like a singer, taking a large breath before starting the piece.

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Molto adagio (♩ = 50)

Cello

mp, sempre legato e espressivo

Molto adagio (♩ = 50)

Piano

7

poco rit. *A tempo*

poco rit. *A tempo*

mp espressivo *dim.*

13

mp dim. *p cresc.*

p *pp cresc.*

8va bassa.....

17

mp *mf*

p *mp* *mf*

8.....

21

f *mp* *f*

8 10 12 14 16 18

26

mf *mp*

8 10 12 14 16 18 20 22 24 26 28 30 32 33

34

p *mp* *p* *mp* *f* *pp* *poco cresc.* *mp*

pizz. *poco rit.* *A tempo* *rit. molto* *accel.* *al Poco più mosso* (♩ = 58)

mp cantabile

8 10 12 14 16 18 20 22 24 26 28 30 32 34 36 38 40

41

mf *simile*

8 10 12 14 16 18 20 22 24 26 28 30 32 34 36 38 40 42 44 45

47

cresc. - - - - *f dim.* - - - - *mp*

cresc. più espressivo - - - - *f* *dim.* - - - - *mp*

legato 3 3

51

mf

56

arco
sempre legato

mf

più espressivo

non legato

61

f *mp*

pizz.

f *mp* *cresc. poco a poco*

legato 3 3

65

mf cresc.

mf cresc.

This system contains measures 65 through 68. The top staff is a single melodic line in bass clef. The bottom staff is a piano accompaniment in grand staff. Dynamics include *mf* and *cresc.* (crescendo).

69

f

f molto espressivo ff

This system contains measures 69 through 71. The top staff is a single melodic line in bass clef. The bottom staff is a piano accompaniment in grand staff. Dynamics include *f*, *f molto espressivo*, and *ff*. Time signatures change from 3/4 to 2/4 and back to 3/4.

72

ff mf f molto espress. arco v

mf legato

This system contains measures 72 through 75. The top staff is a single melodic line in bass clef. The bottom staff is a piano accompaniment in grand staff. Dynamics include *ff*, *mf*, and *f molto espress.*. Performance markings include *arco v* and *legato*. Time signatures change from 3/4 to 2/4 and back to 3/4.

76

ff p pizz.

f f espress.

This system contains measures 76 through 79. The top staff is a single melodic line in bass clef. The bottom staff is a piano accompaniment in grand staff. Dynamics include *ff*, *p*, and *f*. Performance markings include *pizz.* and *f espress.*. Time signatures change from 3/4 to 2/4 and back to 3/4.

80

largamente

84

arco *mf espress.* *dim.* *mp*

legato *mf* *dim.* *mp* *p*

87

mp *p* *mp* *n.*

Meno mosso (♩ = 48) *cantabile* *mp* *simile*

93

simile *poco rit.* *pp* *p* *mp* *p*

Poco meno mosso (♩ = 88) *Più lento, rit. (♩ = 72)*

poco rit. *più espressivo* *p* *mp* *p*

Più lento, rit. (♩ = 72)

*) This should be an expressive grace note, not simply a fast pickup to the C#.