

EARTH DREAM (1993)
for one to four xylophones

Arthur B. Hunkins

"Nothing can be itself without being in
communion with everything else."

Thomas Berry

"The earth does not belong to people; people
belong to the earth. This earth is precious
to the Creator and to harm the earth is to
heap contempt upon its Creator."

Chief Seattle

"God saw that all he had made was very good."

Genesis 1:31



For duration of "diamond head" notes, see below.

"Xylophone" is used in its generic sense: an instrument of wooden bars struck by mallets. Any such instrument or group of similar instruments is appropriate for this piece.

The piece may be freely transposed to any pitch in the same general range. The music is notated as it is for simplicity and to avoid chromatics. For accuracy's sake, performers should avoid using the chromatic bars as well. Instruments which approximate the specified pitch relationships are satisfactory.

Earth Dream consists of multiple varied repetitions of the above pattern. It starts softly and becomes louder over a period of at least four minutes. The performance terminates at the end of a pattern; if solo, on an open octave sonority. Each "diamond head" is a quarter, dotted quarter, or half note in length. Its actual duration changes at will, often from one "diamond" to the next--though the eighth "pulse" remains constant for all players. (Thus performers starting a phrase together normally finish "out of sync.") Once a player enters he does not pause.

There are three melodic lines/voices. The "melody" is on top and is played most of the time, including the first four statements in each instrument (statements may be accompanied by other voices as well). The next most important voice is the lowest--the repeated G's. Its role is largely accompanimental to the top voice; the two are often paired. The middle line is least important and frequently converges with the low voice on G for the last two notes. (Its final B's are played infrequently.)

The pickup figure (two sixteenths and an eighth) always begins a statement. After the pickup, one, two or three voices may be chosen for each two-note grouping. Do not change voicing within the note pairs. In general, follow the voices from beginning to end; do not skip frequently from line to line.

ENSEMBLE CONSIDERATIONS

With two or more players, one is the leader. The leader begins alone, with at least two solo statements. After two to eight variations the second player joins the leader at the beginning of a pattern. After the first five eighths the players will rhythmically diverge and no longer be coordinated. Any other players begin successively at additional intervals of two to eight statements, all entries relatively equally spaced. Each player enters with the leader (a cue may be required) at the start of a pattern, later to diverge. Each player includes in his first four statements the "melody." Until all players finish their initial presentations the leader too plays the melody.

Four or more variations before the end, the leader gives a "get ready to end" signal, at which time the other players begin to coordinate their phrases with the leader (listen for his pickup figure). This gradual coordination is only approximate, to within two to three eighths of the leader--ahead or trailing. To facilitate "coming together," an additional rhythmic adjustment may be made to the "diamond head" by the followers only: the "diamond" becomes an eighth to five eighths in duration. Rhythmic independence and variability is maintained; the players are never more than momentarily together.

The leader's last phrase concludes with octave G's. He may opt to add one to four repetitions of his last two intervals (the "diamond head" remains variable in duration). To signal the end, he gestures strongly on the eighth of each two-note grouping, starting with the last notes of his original pattern. As players conclude their own phrases they join him rhythmically as soon as possible (within the rhythmic constraints) and continue in rhythmic unison, repeating their own two final intervals. The leader stops after the first pair of repeated G's where all players are rhythmically together. (If all performers are not in rhythmic unison by the fourth extra pair of G's, the performance ends anyway. There is no sound after the leader's last G's.)