

the heavens can make light and flame and ice and water

AARON HOLLOWAY-NAHUM

2022

Score in C [omits register octave doublings]

Duration ca. 7'

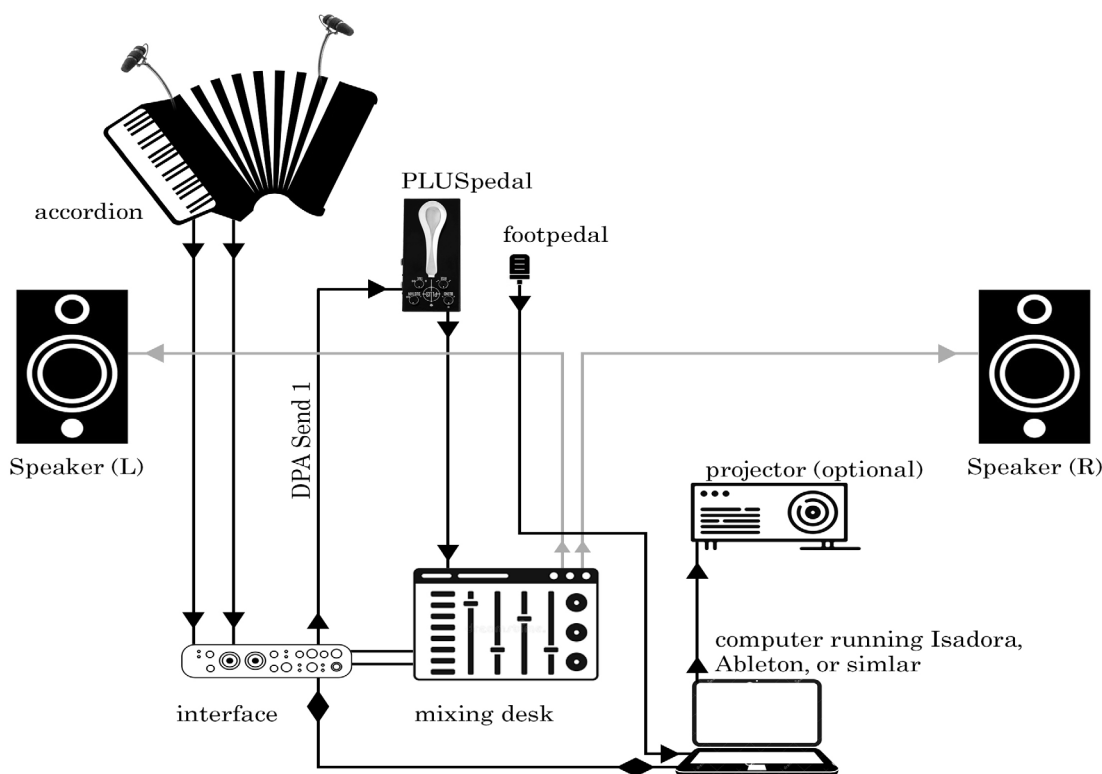
Performance Note

This piece includes eight triggered samples [shown with triangles], optional video elements, and sustain effects achieved using the [GameChanger Audio “Plus” Pedal](#) [shown using an encircled “S”]. It is vital that the ‘live’ accordion remains the most important/fundamental part of the sound in balancing the electronics.

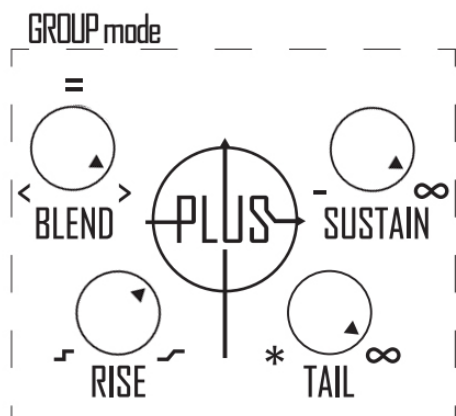
To feed the PlusPedal and to achieve this balance, the Accordion is amplified using two DPA4099 microphones.

An Isadora Patch (which can be run in a free version of the software) is available from the composer and can handle all triggering and video elements. Alternatively, the performer may load and trigger samples from any live software such as Ableton (if no video element is desired).

Patch Diagram



Plus Pedal Settings



Programme Note

the heavens can make light and flame and ice and water was commissioned by the Royal Academy of Music as part of their [Bicentenary 200 Commissions Project](#).

The piece takes - as its starting point - a reading of a translation of a poem by Ukrainian poet Kateryna Babkina. This reading was analysed (for pitch and rhythmic content), processed heavily (in the electronic samples) and reflected upon constantly while I was composing the piece.

Throughout the piece, the player is directed to perform (in general) *extremely quietly* with violently loud accents. The effect is one of a text, or spoken dialogue that is half-remembered by the listener. The electronics alternatively veil the performance further, or illuminate it concretely with snippets of text and moments of concrete interaction with the live performer.

Though the piece was composed mostly in 2021, it was completed and premiered three weeks into the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine, in March 2022. It carries within it every resonance of sadness, anger, helplessness, smallness, and loss which I have felt in watching that criminal tragedy unfold.

The heavens can make light and flame and ice and water –
and you're as small and weak against them as an insect,
a wrinkled berry on a frozen hawthorn in December,
the shadow of a bird that fades across the snowy steppe –
yes, this is you, so small against the heavens. All-embracing,
they will envelop everything around you in their arms –
held tightly in their clasping velvet, rigid, black, abrasive,
you'll stand as though up to your neck in water, warm and dark.
And now you stand as though before the heavens begging –
timidly, you raise your lowered eyes without permission:
perhaps the sky, on such a night, as one might for a baby,
will turn some music on for you and set the stars in motion.

Kateryna Babkina

Translated from the Ukrainian by Uilleam Blacker

for Phil
the heavens can make light and flame and ice and water

Aaron Holloway-Nahum
2022

rubato espressivo ♩ = 66

wild and virtuosic, but *as quietly as possible*
except for accents which should *always be very loud*

Solo Accordion

p *ppp sempre*

Musical score for measures 8-9. Measure 8 features a treble clef with a melodic line and a bass clef with a supporting line. Measure 9 continues the piece, ending with a 5/4 time signature. Fingerings 7 and 6 are indicated.

Musical score for measures 9-10. Measure 9 continues from the previous system. Measure 10 shows a change in the bass line. Fingerings 6 and 7 are indicated.

Musical score for measures 10-11. Measure 10 continues with complex fingering (6). Measure 11 shows a change in the bass line. Fingerings 6 and 5 are indicated.



(change with chin)



wait for pulse

Musical score for measures 12-15. Measure 12 shows a change in the bass line. Measure 13 has a 'wait for pulse' instruction. Measure 14 shows a change in the bass line. Measure 15 continues the piece. Fingerings 5, 3, 7, and 5 are indicated.

Musical score for measures 16-17. Measure 16 continues the piece. Measure 17 shows a change in the bass line. Fingerings 3 and 7 are indicated.

19

6

21

3 7 6

S

(with chin) "perhaps the sky..."



24

"and now you stand..."

suddenly gaining weight and power

26

28

7

p

S

"...and set the stars in motion..."

4

with more presence than before, *accents still very loud*

immediately upon hearing 2nd birdcall

tones come one by one
fragile and insecure

vib. molto (finger)

add leg to vibrato

[clusters]

(vib. molto (finger)) bellows shake

tutta la forza!

again, the tones
come one by one

clear sustain layers
1 through 4 with
four slow taps

53

ff pp sub. p p poco f p

gliss. gliss.

fast and delicate (the speed of the sine tone beating) (♩ = 128)

59

ppp far away but (as always) with loud accents!

listen!

(with chin)

63

pp still far off

do not forget
to listen!

66

Nearly half / Tempo I ♩ = 66

p poco f pp

gliss. gliss.

73

6

ppp as in the beginning (loud accents!)

3

6

6

Detailed description: This system contains measures 73 and 74. Measure 73 is in 3/4 time and features a sixteenth-note triplet in the right hand and a sixteenth-note sixteenth-note pair in the left hand, both with accents. Measure 74 is in 4/4 time and continues the triplet in the right hand and the sixteenth-note pair in the left hand. The dynamic is *ppp* with the instruction 'as in the beginning (loud accents!)'. A circled '3' is placed above the right-hand triplet.

a sudden shift

8

75

6

mp *mf*

3

6

3

Detailed description: This system contains measures 75 and 76. Measure 75 is in 3/4 time and features a sixteenth-note triplet in the right hand and a sixteenth-note sixteenth-note pair in the left hand. Measure 76 is in 3/4 time and features a sixteenth-note triplet in the right hand and a sixteenth-note sixteenth-note pair in the left hand. The dynamics are *mp* and *mf*. A circled '3' is placed above the right-hand triplet in measure 76.

78

f *ff* *p sub.* *poco f*

gliss.

gliss.

7

7

7

7

S

Detailed description: This system contains measures 78 and 79. Measure 78 is in 3/4 time and features a sixteenth-note triplet in the right hand and a sixteenth-note sixteenth-note pair in the left hand. Measure 79 is in 3/4 time and features a sixteenth-note triplet in the right hand and a sixteenth-note sixteenth-note pair in the left hand. The dynamics are *f*, *ff*, *p sub.*, and *poco f*. The word 'gliss.' is written above the right-hand line in measure 79. A circled 'S' is placed below the right-hand line in measure 79.

82

p *sfz* *p*

7

7

Detailed description: This system contains measures 82 and 83. Measure 82 is in 3/4 time and features a sixteenth-note triplet in the right hand and a sixteenth-note sixteenth-note pair in the left hand. Measure 83 is in 3/4 time and features a sixteenth-note triplet in the right hand and a sixteenth-note sixteenth-note pair in the left hand. The dynamics are *p*, *sfz*, and *p*. A circled '7' is placed above the right-hand triplet in measure 83.

all sound stops suddenly

87

pp *ppp* *pppp* *poco p*

3

3

Detailed description: This system contains measures 87, 88, 89, and 90. Measure 87 is in 8/8 time and features a sixteenth-note triplet in the right hand and a sixteenth-note sixteenth-note pair in the left hand. Measure 88 is in 4/4 time and features a sixteenth-note triplet in the right hand and a sixteenth-note sixteenth-note pair in the left hand. Measure 89 is in 4/4 time and features a sixteenth-note triplet in the right hand and a sixteenth-note sixteenth-note pair in the left hand. Measure 90 is in 4/4 time and features a sixteenth-note triplet in the right hand and a sixteenth-note sixteenth-note pair in the left hand. The dynamics are *pp*, *ppp*, *pppp*, and *poco p*. A circled '3' is placed above the right-hand triplet in measure 88.