

Sohrab Uduman

Elogia for solo viola

Programme note

The title refers to the notion of a collection of elegies or laments that, rather than appearing on stone or paper or, indeed, recited as poetry, take life as inscriptions in the air.

The starting point and ideas for this piece came from the character of the instrument itself as well the action of making it sound. The arc of the piece, from an impulse which unravels a line to its dissolution and release, is based on the action of the bow drawn across the strings, while its position and pressure change timbre; where colour is modulated to create and articulate lines and rhythms.

The piece is made up of four cycles, sections, traversed by three types of material; first, a gesture marked by an accent, an impulse, which gives rise to accelerating, repeated low-register notes; second, a melodic line, initially in the mid-low register, which unfolds, sounding against open strings; third, the line dissolving into high register figurations and harmonics - decelerating, reiterated pitched sounds which veer towards noise.

Sound-colour and harmony are rooted in the viola's changes of timbre as well as pinned around its open strings. The sense of musical time for each of these inscriptions also move along different paths; at times certain elements compress and expand in different ways against other strands, which stay fixed, unchanged.

The composition also enciphers the names of three musicians who died young, were good friends, colleagues, and students of mine: the composer, musical director and pianist Jonathan Goldstein, the composer and organist Jeremy Cull, the academic, producer, and sound engineer Richard Smith.

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for solo viola

Commissioned for the Royal Academy of Music's 2020 200th anniversary

Performance Notes

sul tasto → pos. nat.

→ sul pont.

sul pont., sul tasto

→ flautato

etc. Transition between bowing positions

The differences between timbral colour in s.t/s.p, and in comparison with pos.nat., must be strong, marked: dark, low sounding when sul tasto; light, high, metallic sounding when sul pont.

Transition from regular to extremely light bow pressure.



Heavy, exaggerated bow pressure, rasping noise

Pauses: ^ short, ▭ medium, ☰ long

