



Conversation with Magic Stones

(after the sculpture by Barbara Hepworth)

For solo double bass

Poem by Margaret Morgan

Music by Nigel Morgan

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About the music

These 5 conversations for solo bass were written for the Canadian bassist David Langstroth for a performance surrounded by Hepworth's strange group of monolithic stones at Yorkshire Sculpture Park. The piece is also part of Music for Sculptures, a sequence of pieces that celebrate Hepworth's lifelong fascination for music and musical forms. Conversations is the only one of the sequence that doesn't carry a musical title, but in discussions with Sophie Bowness, Hepworth's granddaughter, this sculpture - usually seen in the sculptor's studio garden at St Ives - was felt to be complimentary with the others chosen. That said, the notion of a musical conversation between instruments is commonplace in chamber music, but here the conversation is definitely one imagined between the bass and the stones themselves!

The work may be played on any contrabass instrument and has been performed on contra-bassoon, tuba and electric fretless bass. There is an ensemble version available for this work created for the American bassist Susan Kixmiller scored for bass and five instruments (flute, oboe, clarinet in Bb, trumpet in Bb and tenor trombone).

Conversation with Magic Stones

A few black and green yews
are where these forms choose,
for privacy or camouflage,
to stage their large self-absorption.

Among them
no bend.
No stoop.
I turn.
The bland
smile of
innuendo
glances
off my back.
Verdigris
mouths
grimace.

But oblique is the glance of the magic stones.
No horizontals but a line of obedient water
where yew needles ride, idle in the shallow
bronze crater in a warm bronze plain.
One stone bends an avian eye
but the other, with lowered gaze,
exposes its receptivity,
its vulnerable fontanelle.

A figure
confronts
a stone.
Severe
Verdigris
mouth.
Smooth
face, hard.

The stone deflects all words,
with every plane, line and angle
points to escape routes.
I stand where the stones
overlap in my sight
Each seems a child
with an incalculable centre.

There is no end to the secrets
they slip each other.

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I

with purpose $\text{♩} = 176$

f *(pizz.)*

4 *(arco)*

(arco)

7

$\frac{2}{4}$

II

10 *cool* ♩ = 60

mf *mp*

3

Detailed description: This system contains measures 10 through 13. It begins with a bass clef and a 2/4 time signature. The tempo is marked 'cool' with a quarter note equal to 60 beats per minute. The first measure starts with a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic. The music features eighth and sixteenth notes, with a triplet of eighth notes in measure 11. Measure 12 includes an accent (>) over a note. The system concludes with a mezzo-piano (*mp*) dynamic.

14

mf

3

Detailed description: This system contains measures 14 through 17. It continues with the bass clef and 2/4 time signature. Measure 14 has a sharp sign (#) above the staff. Measures 15 and 16 feature triplets of eighth notes. Measure 17 has a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic and an accent (>) over a note.

18

cresc. *f* *gliss.* *mf*

3

Detailed description: This system contains measures 18 through 22. Measure 18 starts with a crescendo (*cresc.*) and a triplet of eighth notes. Measure 19 features a forte (*f*) dynamic and a glissando (*gliss.*) over a note. Measure 20 has a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic. Measures 21 and 22 include triplets of eighth notes.

23

f *mf* *mp*

3

Detailed description: This system contains measures 23 through 27. Measure 23 begins with a forte (*f*) dynamic. Measure 24 has a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic. Measures 25 and 26 feature triplets of eighth notes. The system ends with a mezzo-piano (*mp*) dynamic.

28

mf

3

Detailed description: This system contains measures 28 through 31. It starts with a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic. Measures 29, 30, and 31 feature triplets of eighth notes. The system concludes with a fermata over a note and a double bar line.

III

33 *with energy* ♩ = 90

f *sempre*

3/8 2/8 5/16 2/8 3/8 5/16 5/8

Detailed description: This musical staff contains measures 33 through 38. It begins with a bass clef and a key signature of one flat. The tempo is marked 'with energy' and the metronome is set to 90. The dynamics are 'f' (forte) and 'sempre' (always). The time signatures are 3/8, 2/8, 5/16, 2/8, 3/8, 5/16, and 5/8. The music consists of eighth and sixteenth notes, often beamed together in groups.

39

(pizz.) *(arco)*

5/8 4/8 3/8 3/4 3/8 3/4

Detailed description: This musical staff contains measures 39 through 43. It starts with a bass clef and a key signature of one flat. The first measure is marked '(pizz.)' (pizzicato) and the subsequent measures are marked '(arco)' (arco). The time signatures are 5/8, 4/8, 3/8, 3/4, 3/8, and 3/4. The music features a mix of eighth and quarter notes, with some rests.

44

3/4 2/4

Detailed description: This musical staff contains measures 44 through 48. It begins with a bass clef and a key signature of one flat. The time signatures are 3/4 and 2/4. The music is composed of eighth and quarter notes, with some beaming and slurs.

49

7/16 2/4

Detailed description: This musical staff contains measures 49 through 53. It starts with a bass clef and a key signature of one flat. The time signatures are 7/16 and 2/4. The music features eighth and quarter notes, with some beaming and slurs.

54

(pizz.) (arco) (pizz.) (arco)

2/4 3/4 2/8 3/4 3/4

59

(pizz.) (arco)

5/8 5/8 5/16 5/8 10/16

64

10/16 2/4

IV

65 *cool but with freedom* ♩ = 58
(poco sul tasto)

(pizz.) (arco)

69

73 (pizz.) *accelerando & cresc.* (arco) *a tempo*

mp *mf* *f* *mf* *ff* *mf* *mf*

78

82

V

84 *with determination* ♩ = 56 *brighter (less determined)*



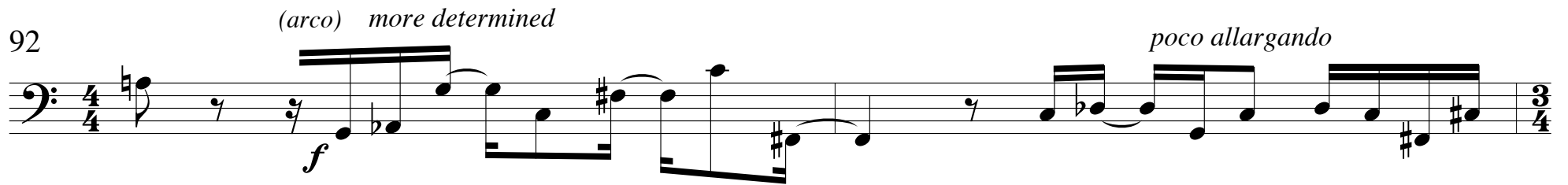
f *(pizz.)* *(arco)*

88 *(pizz.)*



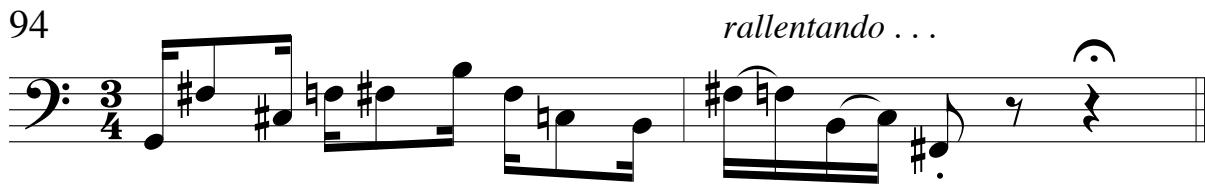
mf

92 *(arco) more determined* *poco allargando*



f

94 *rallentando ...*



For David and Tasha