

Alex Stephenson

# ADRIFT

(2021)

for bass flute (doubling piccolo),  
piano, and electronics

Commissioned by and written for Duo Axis  
First performed by Duo Axis – Zach Sheets, flutes, and Wei-Han Wu, piano  
Tenri Cultural Institute, New York, New York  
May 8, 2022

DURATION: 12 minutes

#### PERFORMANCE NOTES

##### **Bass Flute/Piccolo**

- Breathy tone
- Normal tone

The flutist plays from two different positions over the course of the piece: (1) playing into the piano (standing as close to the piano as possible with the flute pointing into the body of the piano), and (2) a standard playing position (in front of the piano and facing the audience). The score specifies when the flutist should move from one position to another, indicating both when the transition may begin and the moment by which the target position should be reached. To enable these transitions, a few small fragments of the flute part may need to be memorized.

##### **Electronics**

The electronics consist of synthesized audio, which is generated by a Max/MSP patch using oscillator banks and a pitch-glitching algorithm. The patch should be cued (either by the performers or a dedicated sound engineer) at moments indicated in the score so that the timing of the electronics is responsive to the performers' interpretation. Audio from the patch should be diffused through a single (mono) loudspeaker placed under the piano or possibly inside it (for example, a high-quality Bluetooth speaker placed discreetly inside the body of the piano). Microphones/amplification for the instruments should not be necessary.

TO CONTACT THE COMPOSER

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#### PROGRAM NOTE

*Adrift* stages a dialogue between what I've sometimes called "narrative" and "spatial" music—between music, in other words, that seems outwardly communicative and expressive, and music that seems only to curate an ambiance in which outward expression might (or might not) happen. Over a bed of sonorous piano harmony, the flutist continually negotiates their place in the texture. At times, they present a simple, ambient oscillation of long tones; at others, they behave much more like a "traditional," lyrical soloist. This narrative-space spectrum is traversed not only through the flutist's sonic material but also theatrically, in terms of their position onstage.

The electronics engage in a similar sort of role negotiation. In several passages, they are quite subtle, consisting only of pure tones that resonate the acoustic instruments. In others, they present much more complex textures that assert themselves to the ear as active, independent entities.

Despite the continuous flux underlying the music, much of the piece presents itself as calm, focused, and meditative.

FOR PERUSAL ONLY

# Adrift

Alex Stephenson (2021)

Slow, spacious, gently drifting (♩=c.32)

Bass Flute play into the piano (sempre) senza vib. ● → ○ *sim.*

Bass Flute (doubling Piccolo)

Piano *p* *pp* *p* *sim.*  
sonorous, sighing ↑  
match the dynamic of the resonance (sempre)

bring out the pitches shown in each chord:  
E♭ (sim.) F#

1 sine tones  
½ changes sempre

Electronics

4 (3+2+2 sempre)

Bs. Fl.

Pf.

Elec. *sim.*

2 F

7 (2+2+3+2 sempre)

Bs. Fl.

Pf.

Elec.

3 E

2

10

Bs. Fl.

Pf.

Elec.

13

Bs. Fl.

Pf.

Elec.

16

Bs. Fl.

Pf.

Elec.



4

28

Bs. Fl. *sim.*

Pf.

Elec.

9

A

31

Bs. Fl.

Pf.

Elec.

10

34

Bs. Fl.

Pf.

Elec.

11

glitchy chord

37

Bs. Fl.

Pf.

Elec.

c. 5"

p

12 (+ harmonics)

More expressive (poco più mosso: ♩=c.38)

transition to standard playing position (facing audience) in standard playing position by here

41

Bs. Fl.

Pf.

Elec.

c. 8"

con vib.

smorz.

p

mf

p

mf

p

mf

espr., soloistic, flexible

pp

p

sim.

13 fade out glitchy chords

14 sine tones

15

sim.

45

Bs. Fl.

Pf.

Elec.

f

p

f

p

f

p

f sub.

Bs. Fl. *p* *f* *p* *f*

Pf. *8va* *8va* *8va*

Elec. *8va* *8va* *8va*

*C#* *16*

Bs. Fl. *p* *f* *p* *mf* *p* *f* *p*

Pf. *8va* *8va* *8va*

Elec. *8va* *8va* *8va*

*Db*

Bs. Fl. *f* *p* *f* *p* *fp* *mf* *f*

Pf. *8va* *8va* *8va*

Elec. *8va* *8va* *8va*

*17*

54

Bs. Fl. *ff* *f* *p* *ff* *ff* *f* *ff* *f*

Pf. E 18

Elec.

57

Bs. Fl. *p* *f* *p* *f* *p* *f*

Pf. *sub.* A<sup>b</sup> 19

Elec. glitchy chord

60

Bs. Fl. *p* *f* *p* *f* transition to playing-into-piano position in playing-into-piano position by here

Pf. c. 8" 20 (+ harmonics) c. 8" c. 8" c. 8"

Elec. (+ harmonics)

Calm, almost withdrawn (tempo primo: ♩=c.32)

64 c. 8<sup>th</sup> (playing into the piano) senza vib.

Bs. Fl. *p mp p mp*

Pf. *p pp p sim.*

Elec. 21 fade out glitchy chords *loco* 22 sine tones + glitchy chord *loco*

68

Bs. Fl. *p mp p mp*

Pf. *loco* *loco*

Elec. 23 sine tones + glitchy chord *loco* *loco*

71

Bs. Fl. *p mp p mp*

Pf. *C*

Elec. 24 glitchy chord sine tones 25 glitchy chord *loco*

74

Bs. Fl.

*p* *mf* *p*

Pf.

C

26 sine tones

27 glitchy chord

loco Ped.

Elec.

77

Bs. Fl.

*mf* *p* *mf* *p*

Pf.

G#

28 sine tones

glitchy chord

loco Ped.

Elec.

80

Bs. Fl.

*mf* *p* *mf* *p* *mf*

Pf.

Eb

29 glitchy chord

30 sine tones

glitchy chord

Elec.

Still rather calm (despite intensifying electronics)

83

con vib. ●

Bs. Fl. *p* *f*

Pf. *cresc. poco a poco, gently, almost imperceptibly, remaining just audible in the texture*

Elec. (increasingly bright harmonics added →)

31 glitchy chord

32 sine tones

86

Bs. Fl. *p* *f* *p*

Pf.

Elec. glitchy chord

33 loco

34

89

Bs. Fl. *f* *p* *f* *p* *f*

Pf.

Elec. sine tones

35

36

92 transition to standard playing position (facing audience) in standard playing position by here take Piccolo

Bs. Fl. *p* *f* *ff*

Pf. *G* *8* *8* *3* *3*

Elec. sine tones glitchy chord *37* *38*

95 Intense (♩=c.64)

Picc. *mf* *ff* frantic, sputtering *sfz*

Pf. *p ↔ ff* *ff* clangorous *molto cresc.*

Elec.

glitchy, Morse code-like tremolo, oscillating irregularly between slow and fast speeds. Also oscillate irregularly between the dynamics shown; pop in and out of being audible in the texture.

97

Picc. *sfz* *s* *sfz* *s* *sfz* *s* *p*

Pf.

Elec.

98

Picc. *ffsfz* *p* *ffsfz* *sfz*

Pf. *ff* *p ↔ ff*

Elec.

39 texture intensifies

99

Picc.

*p* *ff* *sfz*<sup>5</sup>

(8)

Pf.

Elec.

100

Picc.

*sfz*

(8)

Pf.

Elec.

Musical score for measures 101 and 102, featuring Piccolo (Picc.), Piano (Pf.), and Electric Guitar (Elec.).

**Measure 101:**

- Picc.:** Treble clef, starting with a circled measure number 101. Features a five-measure phrase with a *sfz* dynamic marking, followed by another five-measure phrase with *sfz*, and a final five-measure phrase.
- Pf.:** Treble and Bass clefs. Treble clef has a *sim.* marking and an 8-measure rest. Bass clef has a *ff* dynamic marking and an 8-measure rest.
- Elec.:** Treble and Bass clefs. Treble clef has a circled measure number 40 and the text "texture intensifies". Both staves show a dense, multi-layered texture of horizontal lines.

**Measure 102:**

- Picc.:** Treble clef, starting with a circled measure number 102. Features a five-measure phrase with a *p* dynamic marking, followed by a five-measure phrase with *ffsfz*, and a final five-measure phrase.
- Pf.:** Treble and Bass clefs. Treble clef has an 8-measure rest. Bass clef has an 8-measure rest.
- Elec.:** Treble and Bass clefs. Both staves show a dense, multi-layered texture of horizontal lines.

103

Picc. *sfz* 5 *p* 8 *sim.* *p* ↔ *ff* 8

Pf. *ff* *ff* *ff*

Elec. 41 texture intensifies + very high glitchy layer fades in

104

Picc. *ffsfz* 5 *sfz* 5

Pf.

Elec.

105

Picc.

5

5 *ffp*

Pf.

Elec.

106

Picc.

*ff* 5 *sfz* 5

Pf.

*ff*

*p ↔ ff*

42 texture intensifies

Elec.

107

Picc. *sfz* *ffp* *molto cresc.* c. 5"

Pf. c. 5" *ff*

Elec.

109

Picc. *fff* long

Pf. *sfz* long

Elec.

43 cut off! (this cue should be synchronized precisely with downbeat)

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San Diego, California