

Through a glass, darkly

for 6 players

Sean Clarke

**Written for Ensemble Mise-En and the 2016 Red Note New Music Festival,
Illinois State University.**

Program Notes

The title comes from an evocative passage in 1 Corinthians, which reads “For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face.” It points to the difficulty of seeing things clearly, to the imperfection of our knowledge and perception.

This piece is made up of slowly rolling waves of sound, by turns foreboding, lyrical, and violent. Themes gradually grow and transform; return and break off; appear and fade away; and reemerge unexpectedly. Players mimic each other, weaving dense webs of sound out of similar musical threads. The trombone repeats a funereal dotted rhythm that begins as an understated background detail but later dominates the entire texture. Sections return, develop, and build in intensity without achieving a clear sense of closure. There are glimpses of light and clarity, but the work ends in the dark muddled low register of the piano and contrabass.

Instrumentation

Flute
Clarinet in B-flat

Trombone

Piano

Violin
Contrabass

Score is notated in C.

Duration

ca. 7 minutes

Performance notes

- *Flute and clarinet:* Notes with X note-heads should be played as airy “tongue pizzicato” notes – mostly air and tongue sounds with a rough, airy tone. Notes with three slashes through the stem are flutter-tongued.
- *Violin and contrabass:* Spiccato notes should have a rough, aggressive, scratchy tone.
- *Piano:* Tremolo chords at lower dynamic levels should be played slowly and expressively, with rubato-like variations in speed. The player should freely play the notes within both hands instead of alternating right- and left-hand chords. Tremolo chords at higher dynamic levels should be played rapidly and aggressively, alternating between hands.

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Lamentoso

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♩ = ca. 40

mostly tongue and air; rough tone

The score is divided into two systems. The first system includes Flute, Clarinet (Notated in C), Trombone, Piano, Violin, and Contrabass. The second system includes Flute II (Fl), Clarinet II (Cl), Trombone II (Trb), Piano II (Pn), Violin II (Vn), and Contrabass II (Cb). The music is in 2/4, 3/4, and 4/4 time signatures. Performance instructions include *mp*, *p*, *mf*, *pp*, *sotto voce*, *spiccato, rough tone*, *sul pont.*, and *sul tasto*. Dynamic markings are often accompanied by hairpins. Fingerings (3, 5, 6) and articulation marks (x) are present throughout. A double bar line with repeat dots is used to separate the two systems.

Musical score for measures 9-13. The score is for a woodwind and string ensemble. The instruments are Flute (Fl), Clarinet (Cl), Trumpet (Trb), Piano (Pn), Violin (Vn), and Cello (Cb). The time signature changes from 2/4 to 3/8, then back to 2/4, and finally to 3/4. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The dynamics range from *mp* to *f*. Performance instructions include *sotto voce*, *(with mute)*, *tr*, *sul tasto*, and *Red.*. Fingerings 3, 5, and 6 are indicated. A double bar line is present at the end of measure 13.

Musical score for measures 14-18. The score continues for the same instruments and key signature. The time signature changes from 2/4 to 3/8, then back to 2/4, and finally to 3/4. The dynamics range from *ff* to *pp*. Performance instructions include *tr*, *Red.*, and *mf*. Fingerings 3, 5, and 6 are indicated. A double bar line is present at the end of measure 18.

19

Fl *mp* *pp* *mp* *mf* *tr*

Cl *mp* *p* *mp* *tr* *tr*

Trb *pp* *(with mute)* *mp* *mf* *mp*

Pn *p* *mp* *mf*

Vn *mf* *tr* *tr* *tr* *tr* *sul pont.* *norm.* *sul pont.* *p*

Cb *mp* *p*

Furioso

23

Fl *pp* *mp* *p* *f* *sfz*

Cl *tr* *pp* *mp* *mp* *p* *f* *sfz*

Trb *p* *p* *mp* *p* *f*

Pn *mp* *p* *mp* *f* *sfz*

Vn *tr* *norm.* *pp* *mp* *p* *f* *sfz*

Cb *p* *mp* *p* *ff*

spiccato, rough tone

pizz.