

Beyond the End of Times

Quartet for the twentyfirst century

in memory of Olivier Messiaen (1908-1992)

Composed by
Peter Bjuhr
2008

violin, clarinet, violoncell, piano

written for
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It is easy to see how the twentieth century could be considered "the end of times". Never before had humanity seen such cruel and extensive wars and such a vast technical evolution. Life had changed for everyone and forever. It was also the end of a millennium, and twenty century's had past from the birth of Christ. If there was a God maybe this was an appropriate time to end it all.

The title and the whole of this work is a reference to Olivier Messiaen's work "Quartet for the end of times (Quatuor pour la fin du temps)". Messiaen was a religious man and was also prisoned during the war while he wrote his famous piece. Hearing his quartet you can clearly imagine his position and his feelings and thoughts.

Now it is the twenty first century and it is obvious that humanity survived into the new millennium. The future is in our own hands, but we feel instead an accelerating worry about how the future generations will be affected by the damage done in the previous century. If the tweintieth century man didn't believe that it was the end of times, he surely acted as it was...

This piece is basically formed by three different sections (or themes):

The first section (*the technological theme*) is not build upon Messiaen's quartet as much as on Messiaen in general. It uses scales from his "modes of limited transposition". The strings uses a whole-tone scale, the piano a dim-scale and the clarinet a scale which is Messiaens own. This section also features (pizzicato) harmonics in the strings.

The second section (*the powerlessness theme*) has more direct references to Messiaen's quartet. It uses the typical 16ths pulse chords in the piano and also utilizes some very short fragmented quotations.

The third section (*the humanity theme*) has in contrast much less references to Messiaen. It tries to capture the feeling of despair and hopelessness we can feel today. It constitutes of a Dm11(b13) chord held over several bars.

After the basic material is presented the themes are rearranged and varied throughout. The last time the humanity theme is heard it has been transformed into something more hopeful, yet the cello is presenting a threatening figure. The piece ends as it begins with the technological theme leaving the future still in obscurity.

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Disillusioned (♩ = c. 54)

Violin

Clarinet in B♭

Cello

Piano

A

pizz.

p

arco

p

p

8^{vb} con *legato*

8

arco

B

Vln.

B♭ Cl.

Vlc.

Pno.

poco cresc.

p

u.c.

senza Œœ

13

mf

C

Vln.

B♭ Cl.

Vlc.

Pno.

con Œœ

D

Very expressive and rather crude

ff

f

sim.

ff

f

t.c.

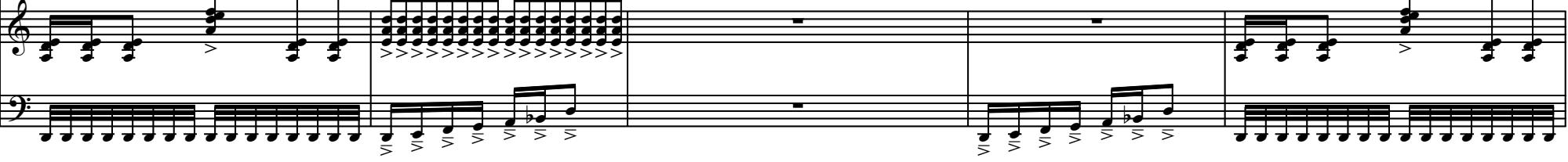
senza Œœ

19 *sim.*

Vln. 

B♭ Cl. 

Vlc. 

Pno. 

24 [E]

Vln. 

B♭ Cl. 

Vlc. 

Pno. 

29

Vln. *mf*

B♭ Cl. *mf*

Vlc. *mf*

Pno. *mp* *mf* *p*
con &lo; *8vb--* *t.c.* *8vb--* *8vb--*

G

36

Vln. **G** pizz. *p*

B♭ Cl. *p*

Vlc. *p* *pp* *p*

Pno. *p* *15^{ma}* *3-3-3* *3-3-3* *gentle* *mp* *p*
u.c.

H arco *p*

gliss.

43

Vln. *agitated*

B♭ Cl.

Vlc.

Pno.

I

f

sim.

43

f ..

f

ff

t.c.

48

Vln. *J*

B♭ Cl.

Vlc.

Pno.

ff

pizz.

ff

mf

sul pont.

ord.

mf

arco

sul pont.

ord.

mf

mf

8vb - - - senza Ped.

K

Delicately

ord.

54

Vln.

B♭ Cl.

Vlc.

Pno.

8vb--

8vb---

L

mp

con &oo

54

54

54

54

59

Vln.

pizz.

B♭ Cl.

Vlc.

Pno.

arco

M

16

59

59

59

59

Musical score for orchestra and piano, measures 64-68.

Measure 64: Vln. (Violin) plays eighth-note patterns. B♭ Cl. (B♭ Clarinet) and Vlc. (Double Bass) play eighth-note patterns. Pno. (Piano) plays eighth-note chords.

Measure 65: B♭ Cl. and Vlc. continue their eighth-note patterns. Pno. plays eighth-note chords.

Measure 66: Vln. and Vlc. play eighth-note patterns. Pno. plays eighth-note chords.

Measure 67: Vln. and Vlc. play eighth-note patterns. Pno. plays eighth-note chords.

Measure 68: Vln. and Vlc. play eighth-note patterns. B♭ Cl. plays sixteenth-note patterns. Pno. rests.

Measure 69: Vln. and Vlc. play eighth-note patterns. B♭ Cl. plays sixteenth-note patterns. Pno. rests.

Measure 70: Vln. and Vlc. play eighth-note patterns. B♭ Cl. plays sixteenth-note patterns. Pno. rests.