

# æther

*for open score for spatialized ensemble*

Jordan Nobles

*Inspired by, and dedicated to, Kelly Nobles*  
North Vancouver, September 2011

# æther

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## About the Piece

æther was completed in September 2011 in North Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada.

The duration of the piece varies and can be as short or as long as desired.

## Program Note

The æther (also spelled aether or ether) was once believed to be the material that fills the region of the universe above the terrestrial sphere, where the stars reside. Instead of the vacuum we know is there today previously it was imagined that a vaporous element surrounded the Earth, filled the heavens and was the very breath of the Gods.

## Performance Notes

### INSTRUCTIONS

In æther, the performers are given numerous phrases to play. There is no synchronized score.

æther should begin and end with a quiet G drone and last for whatever duration is desired

- what phrases to play, and when to play them, should be decided by each performer on their own in the spur of the moment. Musicians proceed independently performing any phrase in any order.
- one does not need play every single phrase. In fact one could decide just to play the G drone for the whole piece if desired.
- all phrases should be soft and quiet throughout the piece
- some phrases can be performed in a different octave if desired as long as they are still performed quietly
- players can pause between phrases to breathe and to listen or proceed directly to another phrase
- the tempo is variable but each phrase should only last as long as a single breath or bow
- each performer plays in his/her own time but conscious of, and responsive to, the other players
- players should decide ahead of time how long to perform the piece and how to end; whether stopping all together or dropping out one at a time
- Performers can change octaves whenever they wish to as long as they only do so after each phrase. Phrases should stay in the same octave.
- Accidental markings apply to all subsequent incidences of the note in the same phrase.
- Only play cells suitable for your instrument!
- Musicians in smaller ensembles can play more often but in larger ensembles musicians should play less often to give space throughout the performance.
- Long tones may be played straight or as a very quiet tremolo - not flutter-tongue, however.

### INSTRUMENT SPECIFIC NOTES

Percussion – use mallets instruments (vibes, marimba, etc.) switching instruments occasionally for colour.

Piano & Harp – please use lots of sustain and change octaves frequently.

Harp - due to the chromatic nature of the lead line only an accompaniment role is recommended for harpists

Guitars – use a clean warm tone with maybe a little reverb. A volume pedal can be useful but is not obligatory. Please choose fingerings that allow strings to ring as much as possible.

Winds – use your main instrument mostly, but feel free to double on an alternative for colour if desired.

Strings – vibrato can be used tastefully and please vary the bow position occasionally

Voice – Feel free to improvise vowels and consonants either melismatically or syllabically within the cells.

## SPATIALIZATION

*æther* is written for the musicians to be spatially spread about the performance space, preferably surrounding the audience. Balconies, lofts, etc. can also be utilized as well.

While it is not vital for the piece to be performed this way, a spatial distribution of musicians will greatly enhance the effect of the piece.

The exact layout will vary depending on the venue and is not important as long as they are evenly distributed throughout the space. Also, if possible, the sections should not be together as would be the norm but instead should be separated so each member of a section (violins, etc) is in a different area of the space from the others.

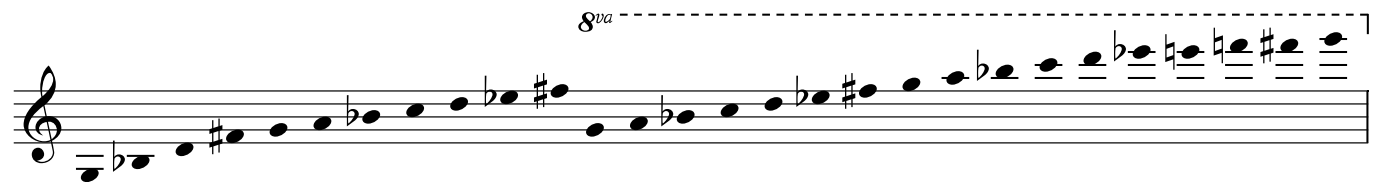
*Note: It may be beneficial to rehearse the piece, at least at first, in the standard layout with all of the musicians together. Then, once the piece is learned, it can be spread out and rehearsed in a spatial configuration.*

## OPTIONAL ACCOMPANIMENT

*æther* is composed to be performed with an optional accompanying piano, harp, glockenspiel or guitar. The attack/decay sound of those instruments is to represent the ‘stars’ in the *æther*.

- the following notes can be played in any order but conscious of, and responsive to, the musicians playing the legato phrases
- play very sparsely, only 1 or 2 notes at a time, and avoid any recognizable pulse
- all notes should ring until they decay naturally
- all notes should be very soft and quiet throughout the piece
- the accompaniment should begin after, and end before, the other musicians

Pitches for the piano, harp, guitar or glockenspiel:



Score in C

# æther

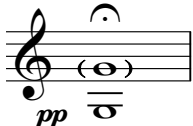
*open score for chamber ensemble*

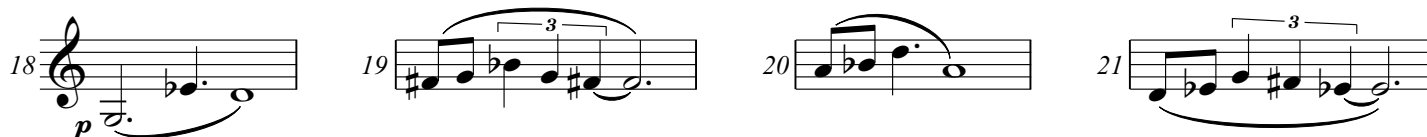
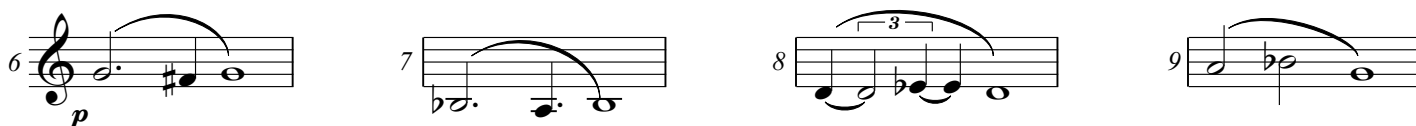
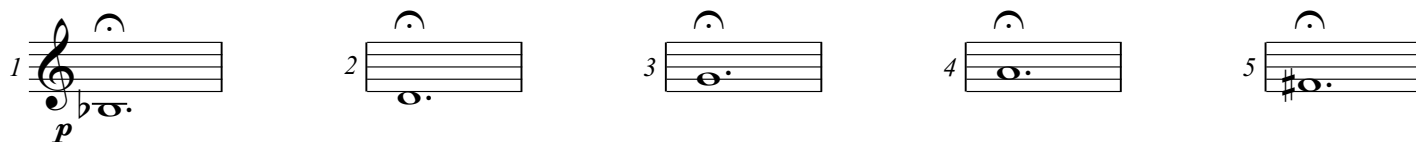
*Inspired by, and dedicated to, Kelly Nobles*

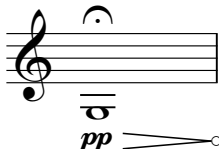
Jordan Nobles

**Freely ♩ = approx. 60-90**

**All phrases molto legato**

Begin with quiet drone  Anyone can play the G drone at anytime during the piece as long as there are enough players keeping it going throughout and they perform it pianissimo



End with quiet drone  which slowly fades away...

Score in C (Alto Clef)

# æther

*open score for chamber ensemble*

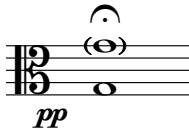
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**Freely** ♩ = approx. 60-90


**All phrases molto legato**


Begin with quiet drone





*pp*


Anyone can play the G drone at anytime during the piece as long as there are enough players keeping it going throughout and they perform it pianissimo


1  *p*

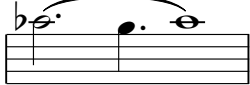
2 


3 


4 

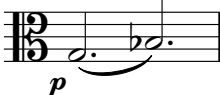
5 

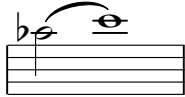
6  *p*


7 


8  3


9 


10  *p*


11 


12 


13 


14 


15  *p*


16 


17  3


18  *p*


19  3


20 


21  3


22  *p*


23 


24  3


25  *p*


26 

27 

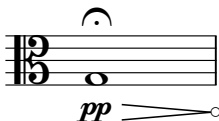
28 

29  *p*

30 

31 

End with quiet drone



*pp*

which slowly fades away...

Score in C (Bass Clef)

# æther

*open score for chamber ensemble*

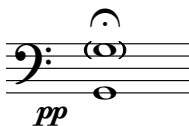
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Freely ♩ = approx. 60-90

All phrases *molto legato*

Begin with quiet drone



*pp*

Anyone can play the G drone at anytime during the piece as long as there are enough players keeping it going throughout and they perform it pianissimo

1



*p*


2



3



4



5



6



*p*

7



8



9



10



*p*

11



12



13



14



15



*p*

16



17



18



*p*

19



20



21



22



*p*

23



24



25



*p*

26



27



28



29



*p*

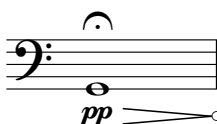
30



31



End with quiet drone



*pp*

which slowly fades away...

Score in B $\flat$

# æther


*open score for chamber ensemble*

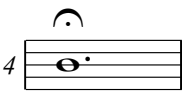
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**Freely** ♩ = approx. 60-90

**All phrases molto legato**

Begin with quiet drone  Anyone can play the drone at anytime during the piece as long as there are enough players keeping it going throughout and they perform it pianissimo


1  2  3  4  5 



6  7  8  9 

10  11  12  13  14 


15  16  17 

18  19  20  21 

22  23  24 

25  26  27  28 

29  30  31 

End with quiet drone  which slowly fades away...

Score in E $\flat$

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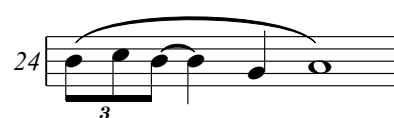
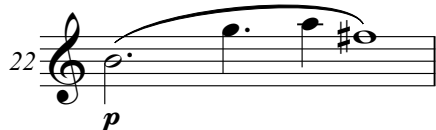
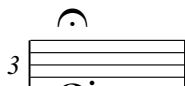
**Freely** ♩ = approx. 60-90

**All phrases molto legato**

Begin with quiet drone



Anyone can play the drone at anytime during the piece as long as there are enough players keeping it going throughout and they perform it pianissimo



End with quiet drone



which slowly fades away...



Score in F

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**All phrases molto legato**

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1  2  3  4  5 

6  7  8  9 

10  11  12  13  14 

15  16  17 

18  19  20  21 

22  23  24 

25  26  27  28 

29  30  31 

End with quiet drone  which slowly fades away...

# æther


*open score for chamber ensemble*

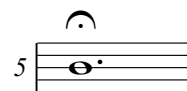
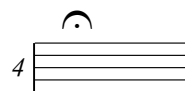
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