

Social sounds from whales at night

commissioned by the Canada Council for Helen Pridmore

version for Oboe d'Amore (in A), percussion and tape

Humbback Whale song recorded by Patrick Miller.

Thanks also to Thomas Götz, Luke Rendell and Henrik Brumm for grey seal, sperm whale and musician wren sounds respectively.

Emily Doolittle, 2007

0" 15" background ocean sounds gradually becoming audible

Tape (in C)

Oboe d'Amore (A)

Bamboo Chimes

Ocean Drum

let fade after initial strike

Percussion

f *p* *mp* *mf*

Detailed description: This diagram shows the timing and dynamics of three elements. The 'Tape (in C)' part starts at 0" and has a thick black bar from 15" to the end, labeled 'background ocean sounds gradually becoming audible'. The 'Percussion' part starts at 0" with a 'Bamboo Chimes' strike (marked *f*) and an 'Ocean Drum' strike (marked *p*). The 'Ocean Drum' part has a dynamic curve that rises from *p* to *mp* and then to *mf*. The 'Oboe d'Amore (A)' part is represented by a set of five horizontal lines with small dashes indicating note positions.

(♩ = aprox. 84)

In this section (until 2'49"), rhythmic coordination between tape part and saxophone is only approximate. Note values are also approximate. There should be a sense of proportion, but not "beat". Noteheads indicate the general ballpark of the pitch to be sung: glissandi, wavers and minor alterations of pitch (within, say, a 1/4 tone) may be added freely. Begin as if far away, gradually coming closer until 2'49".

2 30" (35") (44")

diffuse

pp

focused, bright

p

pushing

p

set down ocean drum

Detailed description: This musical score is for the Oboe d'Amore. It starts at 2" with a dynamic of *pp* and a 'diffuse' quality. At 30", the dynamic changes to *p* and the quality becomes 'focused, bright'. At 35", there is a melodic line with noteheads and a slur. At 44", the dynamic returns to *p* with a 'pushing' quality. The score ends with the instruction 'set down ocean drum'.

2'26" 2'32" 2'38" 2'42"

entrance of water sounds

seal noise

mf *mf* *f* *mf*

2'43" 2'46" 2'49"

higher seal noise

third splash/seal noise

water/seal sounds fade out as eerie pitched sound takes over

Final "huh" should coincide with third splash.
(Vary the number of preceding "huh's" as necessary.)

Strike chimes, then let fade for next 10-15 seconds.
(Rustle if natural fade is not long enough.)

mf *mf* *ff*

Bamboo Chimes
rustle chimes

ppp *mp* *ff*

3'00"

Whistle

shortly after 3'00"

Improvise using individual notes, leaps, and slower glissandi, as well as rests. Use mostly the notes in the box, but add others as desired. Begin by favouring individual notes and leaps, and gradually switch to favouring glissandi.

mp *mf*

3'15"

3'23"

Favour this type of figure, but still include other notes and figures.

Actually these notes (end of B should overlap with whale entrance).

Musical staff with a treble clef. A long horizontal line spans the staff. A box highlights a specific figure. Dynamics markings include *mp* and *p*.

3'27"

3'34"

3'37"

espressivo
(still whistling) *p*

mp

Musical staff with a treble clef and notes. Dynamics markings include *p*, *mp*, and *espressivo*. A note is marked "(still whistling)".

3'46"

3'54"

Mirror whale song as closely as possible (including "out of tune" notes). Of course it won't be possible to mimic it perfectly: relish the little clashes between your version and the whale's. From here until the cadenza, the alignment between the saxophone and the tape/timings should be as precise as possible.

Musical staff with a treble clef and notes. Dynamics markings include *mp* and *mf*. A triplet is indicated with a bracket and the number 3.

4'01"

4'03"

4'06"

Play

mf

Whistle

mp

mf

Musical staff with a treble clef and notes. Dynamics markings include *mf*, *mp*, and *mf*. Includes "Play" and "Whistle" boxes. A triplet is indicated with a bracket and the number 3.

4'16" a little faster (around ♩ = 120)

mf *f* *a little rough* *mf* **Play** *f*

4'26" beginning of audible low rising sounds (approx. 41 -- not all exactly B)

mf *becoming increasingly rough, pushing* *mf*

back to original tempo (around ♩ = 84)

4'37" 4'39" 4'42" 4'49" 4'51"

ff *f* *mf* *trumpet* *let pitch waver as desired* *sort of trailing off (more like a waver than precise triplets)*

4'55" 5'02" 5'04" 5'07" 5'14"

f *mf* *trumpet-like* *f* *mf* *f*

(Slightly higher than the whale entrance at 4'51".)

5'18"
descending

5'26"

5'33"

start with a normal, pitched sound, gradually transform into a rough, glottal sound (centred around E, but not always sounding like a E), then fade away back through a pitch into nothing

becoming rough → roughest ← fading away

gone nothing

ff

5'33"-6'27"

Improvise freely. Use material drawn from other sections of the piece, as well as anything else you might like to add. You may play the percussion instruments (and even add percussion instruments that are not used elsewhere in this piece) and sing if you want.

6'27"-6'30"

reentrance of tape (low rising whale sound)

6'38"-6'51"

rising shimmer/computery sounds

6'52"-6'55"

rising whale sound

Continue to improvise, gradually adding more rising figures which mimic those in the tape part (or which introduce new sounds).

6'56"

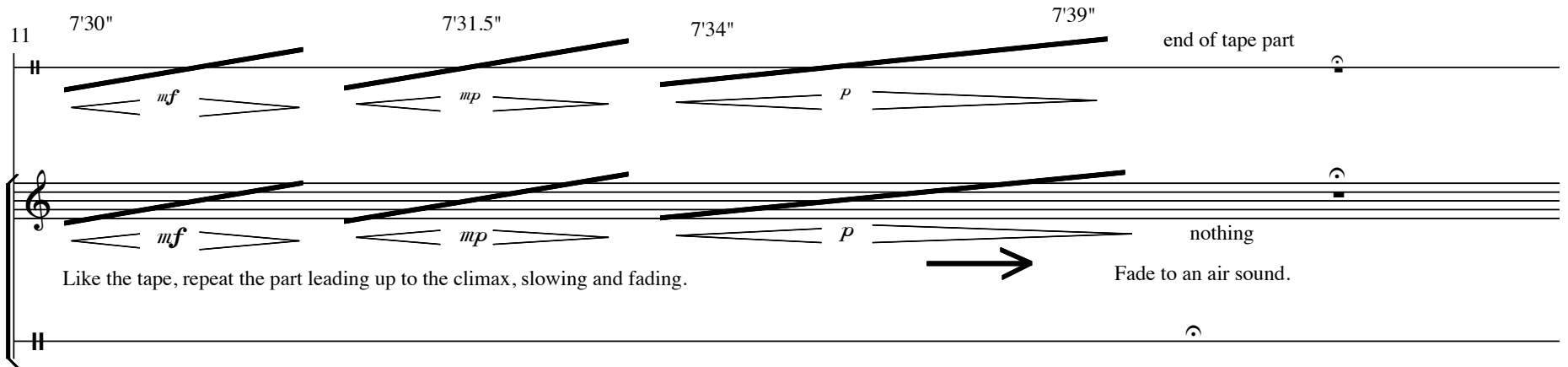
overlapping rises to "climax"

7'29"

Add to the overlapping layers of rising figures, becoming increasingly lively and intense. Get swept away by the tape part.

ff

11 7'30" 7'31.5" 7'34" 7'39" end of tape part

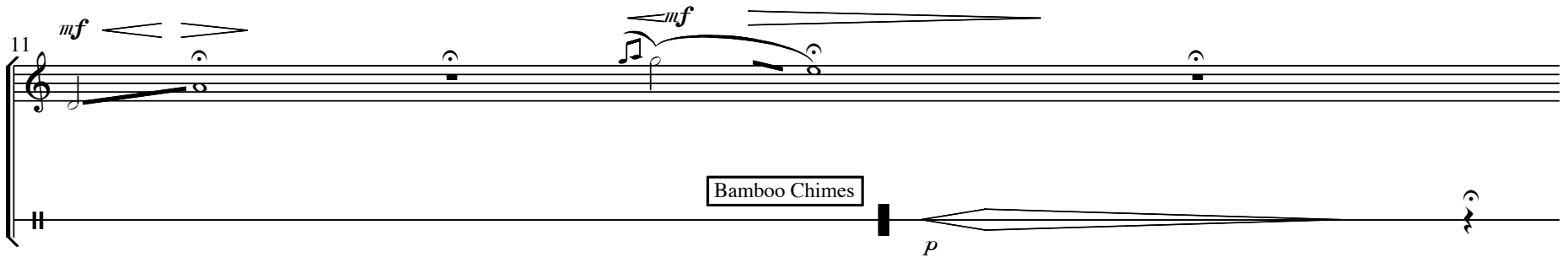


mf *mp* *p*

nothing

Like the tape, repeat the part leading up to the climax, slowing and fading. → Fade to an air sound.

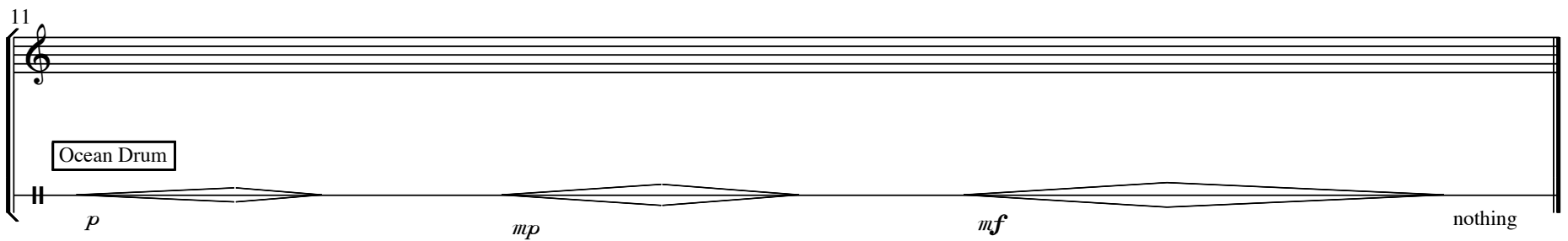
11 *mf* *mf*



Bamboo Chimes

p

11



Ocean Drum

p *mp* *mf* nothing