

**A wisp of spring cloud**  
for 15 instrumentalists

(January 2004)

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A wisp of spring cloud  
drifting apart from the rest...  
slowly evaporates

**Haiku by Tom Tico**

## Instrumentation

Flute / Alto Flute / Piccolo

Oboe

Bb Clarinet / Bass Clarinet / Eb Clarinet

Bassoon

Horn in F

Trumpet in Bb

Trombone

Percussion (2 players):

- 1) Marimba, 4 temple blocks, large suspended cymbal, snare drum, guiro, vibraslap, claves, whip, large triangle.
- 2) 1 high-pitched timpano (23" / 58cm), large bass drum, large tam-tam, sizzle cymbal, hi-hat, woodblock, sandblocks, guiro, ratchet, vibraslap, claves, high whistle, wooden chimes, superball.

Piano

Violin 1

Violin 2

Viola

Cello

Double Bass

**Score in C** (with usual octave transpositions)

**Duration** – 5" + 4" + 3" + 12" = 24"

The haiku can be found in *Spring Morning Sun*, Morris Publishing, © 1998 by Tom Tico. I have used it with permission of the author.

Funded by Schafer grant from Harvard University.

## Performance Instructions

Quarter-tones:      ♯ = ¼ tone sharp       $\sharp\sharp$  = ½ tone sharp


                         ♭ = ¼ tone flat       $\flat\flat$  = ½ tone flat


Where quarter-tones are required care should be taken that they are consistently played in tune. On occasion it may be more straightforward in the wind to adjust the tuning of the instrument (by pulling out to lower by a quarter-tone) than to play an entire section with quarter-tonal fingerings: the prime example of this is in the alto flute part in [ii], bars 78-104.


Generally the notation for quarter-tones indicates an exact subdivision of the semitone. Exceptions to this are the two natural harmonics sections in [iv] (bars 47-52 and 91-94), and in much of solo writing in [iv] where tunings may be "tweaked" for expressive purposes.

Timing: Generally the rhythmic notation is very strict, but much of [iv] requires a freer approach to time. In this movement, where time signatures are given either in brackets or not at all, the job of the conductor is not to beat time but to follow the rubato of the principal solo instrument and show where the bar-lines are, cueing other instruments to start and stop where appropriate. At times in (iv) and also in (ii) for the 1<sup>st</sup> percussion part proportional rhythmic notation is used.

Non-standard playing techniques:

 (viola, p8) = very short, weighty stroke, not loud, allow to resonate only on release. Damp C and G strings to avoid sympathetic resonance.

 (brass, p34/35) = pop mouthpiece with palm.

 (piano, p53) = stop piano string at distance indicated from end of string.

*Clave on marimba* (p54) = for best results draw clave over marimba, clave at 45° over marimba bars, in a smooth circular motion within pitches shown.

Please note snare drum notation in (ii) and (iv) where upward stems indicate striking of instrument, whereas downward stems indicate timing of switching on and off of snares.

*A wisp of spring cloud  
drifting apart from the rest...  
slowly evaporates*

In many ways this strikingly simple Haiku by Tom Tico epitomizes what I strive to achieve in composition: an insight on the world that has the power to transport us from the logistics of everyday life into a deeper realm of existence. What, for me, is so beautiful about this haiku is how within just 18 syllables – through attention to a fleeting detail within something so familiar, yet so awe-inspiring as the sky – a reader is transported very powerfully into a spiritual association with nature.

To talk of my general compositional aspirations at the time of writing this composition, my most important aim as a composer is to find ways of achieving greater intimacy through engaging my audience's imagination and memory in the experience of listening to music. As part of this quest I am interested in writing very quiet music (which makes people listen more intently), and – through use of fragmentation, non-exact repetition and incorporation of silence – writing music that suggests rather than explicitly states. Having said this my relationship with tonal classical music informs how I consider harmony and form: tensions between material are crucial to the way my music evolves. I am very conscious of the act of composition as a quest for language: a balancing act between spontaneity, imagination and instinct, versus detailed analysis and consideration of implications of aspects of style.

The technique of variation is crucial to the way each of the four movements unfolds. This allows the character of each movement to be well-defined from the start, and gave me a way to control the speed of evolution, and a way of building some level of complexity, whilst always referring

to familiar material. However the scope of the “theme” in each movement is very different: in (i) [*A wisp of spring cloud*] it is a melodic fragment, in (ii) [*drifting apart from the rest*] it is approximately a minute's worth of four-part harmony, in (iii) [...] it is a series of gestures. (iv) [*slowly evaporates*] is not a theme and variations, but it is the most static and repetitive of all the movements, creating a sense of greater freedom and repose, thus variation is associated with evolution, straight repetition as a negation of this process.

I worked very hard on the harmonic language, both on a local level in deriving harmonies from melodic material (in particular the interval of a minor 9<sup>th</sup> heard at the very start of the piece in the piano) in order to create a unity between material and form, and on a much larger level in terms of control of the degree of tension at any point in relation to the large-scale structure.

Overall there is an increase in the level of harmonic movement / complexity from (i) until (iii), followed by mostly very static harmony in (iv). To give some idea of the processes involved, (i) derives its harmony from resonance and inflection / variation of resonance, (ii) is about movement, mostly in the form of 4 part voice-leading, but with continual tension between voices using the familiar 12 semitones and voices using just the quarter-tones situated exactly halfway between the 12 semitones, (iii) is an intensification of harmonic movement, almost to the point of negation of the importance of pitch, as a result of a complex counterpoint between 2 layers of gestures and (iv) depends on long-term relationships between blocks of material that are subtly inflected, yet which do not really change, resulting in a sense of repose and resignation.

Microtones occur to some degree in all four movements, most notably in (ii) where I wanted tension and an edginess to the timbre of instruments, but also as a result of inflections as I find that microtonal inflections and adjustments can be more subtly and varied in their effect than more straightforward semitones. The degree to which I make use of microtones within this composition is limited by a desire not to make the piece more difficult than it absolutely has to

be to perform, and the fact that I used them is not important to a listener's understanding of the music.

It may seem perverse to turn an 18 syllable work of art – the ultimate triumph of miniaturization – into an extended 24 minute piece of music: my reasoning is that I wanted the extended time-span to allow much time and space for reflection, particularly later on in the composition. The structure of my composition is an interpretation of the emotional curve of the haiku: it may seem strange to have the moment of greatest intensity corresponding with the three dots at the end of the second line but in haiku these three dots between the two halves of the haiku form an apex: the moment where truth and understanding can be acknowledged and fully savored. Having said this I wish to state that my intention was not to split the haiku line by line: indeed it is very important to me that the aesthetic of the entire haiku is reflected in the entire composition, and that the haiku be experienced as a whole.

Tom Tico is an American poet, living and working in San Francisco. For many years he was homeless and during this time he spent a lot of time writing haiku recording his experiences of nature. I am grateful to his permission for me to use it as a basis for this composition.

## Contents

- (i) *A wisp of spring cloud* – page 2
- (ii) *drifting apart from the rest* – page 20
- (iii) ... – page 36
- (iv) *slowly evaporates* – page 49



(A)

Handwritten musical score for a full orchestra, measures 8 through 16. The score includes parts for Flute (Fl.), Oboe (Ob.), Clarinet (Cl.), Bassoon (Bsn.), Horns (Hrn.), Trumpets (Trp.), Trombones (Trb.), Piano (Pno.), Percussion (Perc.), Violins (Vln.), Viola (Vla.), Violoncello (Vcl.), and Double Bass (D.B.).

Measure 8 is marked with "(8)" and "pizz." above the Flute staff. Measure 9 has "(9)" and "pizz." above the Flute staff. Measure 10 has "(10)". Measure 11 has "(11)". Measure 12 has "(12)". Measure 13 has "(13)". Measure 14 has "(14)". Measure 15 has "(15)". Measure 16 is marked with "(16)" and "(A)" above the Flute staff.

Dynamic markings include *pp*, *p*, *mp*, *ppp*, *f*, *mf*, and *pp*. Performance instructions include "sempre *ppp*", "arco, sul tasto", "GUIRO (struck)", and "TIMP.". Fingerings and articulations are indicated with numbers (1-5) and accents (>).

Rehearsal marks are present at the end of measures 15 and 16, with a "5" above a "4/4" time signature and a "(2+3)" annotation.



⑧

(24) (25) (26) "pizz." (27) (28) (29) (30) breathy (31) "pizz"

Fl. *mfpp* *mp* *mp*

Ob. *mfpp* *pp* *PPP* *P*

Cl. *mfpp* *f* *mfpp* *pp*

Bsn. *mfpp* *P* *sfz* *mf* *P*

Hrn. *pp* *mp* *P* *pp* *mp*

Trp. *pp* *mf* *mp* *pp* *mp*

Trb. *P* *harmon mute* *mf* *pp* *mp*

Pno. *f* *pp* *pp* *pp* *pp* *mp* *mf* *f*

Perc. 1. *f* *(p) MARIMBA* *damp cymbal* *P*

Perc. 2. *TIMP* *WOODBLOCK* *pp*

Vln. 1. *arco* *mp* *pp* *pizz.* *mp* *mp* *arco, sul pont.* *mfpp* *pp*

Vln. 2. *arco* *pp* *pp* *pp* *pp* *pp* *pp* *pp*

Vla. *mfpp* *pp* *molto vib.* *pp* *(simile)* *pp* *pizz.* *pp* *arco* *molto vib.* *pp* *pp*

Vcl. *P.* *P* *pp* *pp* *mf* *mf* *mf* *pp* *pp* *pp* *pp* *pp*

Vcl. *P* *P* *pp* *pp* *mf* *mf* *mf* *pp* *pp* *pp* *pp* *pp*

D.B. *P* *P* *pp* *pp* *mf* *mf* *mf* *pp* *pp* *pp* *pp* *pp*

8 (2+2+3) 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4

|| SUSP. CYMB. Ped (Ped)