



# **DARK ZONE**

for 7-player mixed ensemble and live video projections  
(2013)

**Aaron Travers**

# DARK ZONE

*for Ensemble Dal Niente*

i

## INSTRUMENTATION:

Flute (should be placed near piano, if possible)

Clarinet in B $\flat$

Alto Saxophone

Percussion (playing waterphone, flexaton, metal wind chimes, small mark tree and gong)

Piano (ideally 5.5' to 6' model, played inside; requires 3 superbball mallets--see below, glass tumbler)

Violin

Violoncello (with C string tuned down to D1).

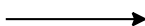
## GENERAL NOTATION and TEMPI:


Dark Zone is written almost entirely in spatial notation. Beams indicate duration within the given time brackets. Tempi written in brackets (e.g. [ $\text{♩} = 80$ ]) indicate a localized tempo, pertaining to a single instrument only.

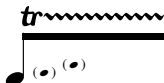
With few exceptions, time brackets are approximate.

Vertical dashed lines (not to be confused with dashed barlines) indicate approximate simultaneities between instruments.

## OTHER NOTATION:


 = indicates a gradual transformation from one state to another (e.g. sul pont. to ord.)

 = indicates playing within an approximate range (for strings, this does not indicate a double-stop)

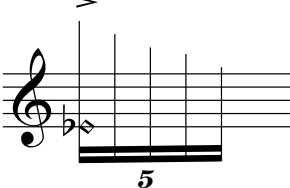
 = trill/tremolo among three pitches (including harmonics for strings)

## FLUTE:

• = normal playing

•  = gradual transition from normal playing to harmonics (harmonics should reach at least the 5th partial)

○ = toneless playing

 = harmonics played over a given fundamental (in this case E $\flat$ ), descending

Key trills are executed with 2 fingerings of the same pitch; microtonal fluctuations are acceptable.

## PIANO:

The piano is played almost entirely on the inside using superbball mallets. Two types are required:

1. Two large half-ball mallets (made from one large superbball cut in half)
2. One small superbball mallet (made from one whole small superbball)

The first of these is used for ricochet (ric.) effects and low "thunder" effects. The second is used for "moaning" effects on the lower strings.

For both mallets, the handle can be made from a metal rod or very hard, rigid plastic.

**PIANO (continued):**

The piano is divided into four basic regions (separated by the frame bars), and two sub-regions:

- Ⓐ Lowest strings
- Ⓑ Middle strings (sub-region Ⓑ1), behind the "bridge" of the piano)
- Ⓒ Medium-high strings (sub-region Ⓒ1), behind the "bridge")
- Ⓓ Highest strings

**Half-ball mallets:** Ricochet effects are accomplished with the half superballet mallets, and require a fairly loose hand.

A continuous sound can be effected alternating both mallets with slight overlaps.

Dynamics are created through changes in speed and pressure. Faster speed and slightly greater pressure result in louder dynamics.

For the low "thunder" effects in section II, the player may occasionally have the mallet touching the lowest string and the frame bar.

**Full-ball mallet:** Low moaning effects are accomplished with this mallet, exclusive to section IV of the piece. The exact sonority of this effect is a bit unpredictable, but usually involves slow glissandi both up and down.

A fair amount of pressure is needed for this technique, and better results are usually achieved by playing those strings somewhat close to the frame bar between Ⓐ and Ⓑ.

The sound can also be changed with the speed of the mallet, though in general the mallet should be slowly to moderately drawn across the string.

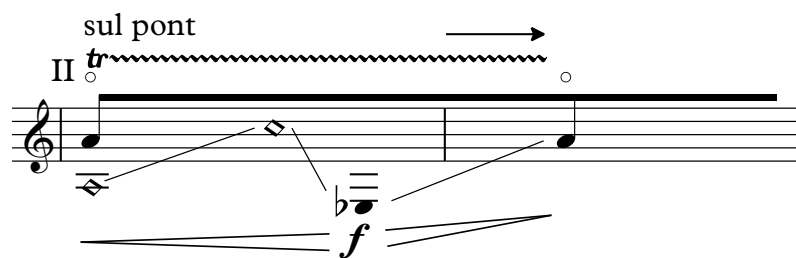
**Glass tumbler:** The tumbler should be fairly wide with a thick heavy bottom. When twisted on the string with considerable pressure, very high, random harmonics should result, like a high, sustained, metallic screech, very resonant.

**CELLO:**

The cello's C string is tuned a m7 down to D1. This makes the string so slack that exact intonation is not possible, especially in louder dynamics.

This lack of intonation is designed to blend with the low "thunder" effects of the piano. No attempt by the performer needs to be made to correct the intonation.

For the glissandi passages in section I, the cello should move seamlessly from harmonic glissandi to normal glissandi, and back. In the example below, the cello plays a harmonic glissando from the 5th partial to the 7th, then gradually applies pressure to the string to reach the low E $\flat$ , then back to an A $\sharp$  harmonic.

**VIDEO:**

At present, coordination of the live ensemble with the video is approximate. Players should pay special attention to visual cues presented in the video, as well as audio from the ensemble.

The score is transposed.

Total duration: approx. 15 minutes

# DARK ZONE

for Ensemble Dal Niente

Aaron Travers (2013)

I

3" ca. 10" ca. 10" ca. 3" ca. 4"

Flute

Clarinet in B $\flat$

Alto Saxophone

trills always extremely fast, within given range; feel free to use a variety of trill keys to produce an unstable, fluttering quality.

PP

PP

PP

WATERPHONE (bowed, one single rod; bow different rods each entrance)

Percussion

Piano

superball mallets (large 1/2), ric. sempre

brush back and forth along strings

f p f p

Violin

II III ric.

play slight variations (sul pont/sul tasto; quarter-tone pitch bends; non vib/molto vib)

p f pp

Violoncello

play slight variations (sul pont/sul tasto; non vib/molto vib)

pizz II arco

sfz pp

ca. 5" ca. 8" ca. 2" ca. 5" ca. 3"

Fl.

Cl.

Alto Sax.

MARK TREE

WATERPHONE (bowed)

MARK TREE

Perc.

Pno.

B1 C1

follow activity and dynamics of vln/vc

brush back and forth along strings

f p

Vln.

sul pont tr slight variations, as before

ord. pp

Vc.

sul pont tr slight variations, as before

ord. f

ca. 8"      ca. 8"      ca. 6"      ca. 3"

Fl. *tr*

Cl. *tr* Cl. solo *tr*

Alto Sax. *tr*

Perc. WATERPHONE *p* *f* MARK TREE *p*

Pno. slowly move toward F# *f* *p* B1 C1 follow vln/vc

Vln. slight variations, as before *tr* sul pont *f* *p* ord.

Vc. slight variations, as before I II *tr* sul pont *f* *p* ord.

ca. 10"      ca. 7 - 8"      ca. 10"

Fl. *tr* *ppp* *tr* *pp* *mp* *p*

Cl. *tr* *ppp* *tr* *pp* *f*

Alto Sax. *tr* *ppp* *tr* *pp* *mf*

Perc. (Mark tree) *p* B1 C1 follow vln/vc

Pno. *f* *p*

Vln. slight variations, as before *tr* sul pont *f* *p* *f* *p* ord.

Vc. slight variations, as before I II *tr* sul pont *f* *ppp* ord.

ca. 20" ca. 3"

Fl. *ff* > *pp* *ff* > *ff* > *pp* *ff* > *pp* *ff* > *pp*

Cl. *ff* > *pp* *ff* > *ff* > *pp* *ff* > *pp* *ff* > *pp*

Alto Sax. *ff* > *pp* *ff* > *ff* > *pp* *ff* > *pp* *ff* > *pp*

Perc. WATERPHONE *p* *f*

Pno.

Vln. 1/2 step trills within indicated range(s), with slight variations as before SOLO (approx. starting pitch) [ $\sharp$ ]

Vc. ca. 6 - 7" ca. 7 - 8" continue until end of section I, gradually lengthening held notes (with pitch bends).

*f* *p* *f* *p*

ca. 30"

Fl. *ff* > *pp* *ff* > *pp*

Cl. *ff* > *pp* *ff* > *pp*

Alto Sax. *ff* > *pp* *ff* > *pp*

Perc. *p* *f* begin sparsely (with woodwinds); bow single rods/small contours; gradually crescendo to *poco f* at first dashed barline

Pno. slow, overlapping glissandi in multiple directions, 2 mallets, within approximate range *poco a poco accel. e cresc.* faster glissandi (overlapping)

Vln. *pp-f* vln: improvise solo within given range; contour provided is only a suggestion; use given dynamic range; alternate between non vib/molto vib, sul tasto/ sul pont ad lib.

Vc.

Continue as before, keeping held notes and pitch bends within given range; lengthen to around 10".  
Gradually increase dynamics of held notes to *mf*.

Visual Cue 1:  
Dragon Fish

cut off  
immediately;  
hard accent at  
cut-off.

ca. 30"

5"

Fl. *ff*

Cl. *ff*

Alto Sax. *ff*

Perc. *ff* *l.v.*

Pno. *ff*  
fast, swirling glissandi, almost circular motions  
*poco a poco accel. e cresc.*

Vln. *mp-f* *ff*

Vc. *ff* [ca 3'20"]

Continue as before; lengthen held notes to around 12".  
Gradually increase dynamics of held notes to *f*.



II

ca. 17"

ca. 3"

♩ = 80

Fl. *f*

Cl. *f*

Alto Sax.

Perc. *p* **MARK TREE**

Pno. *ff* *p* *mf* *p* *mf* *f* *f* *p*  
**A** **B1** **C1**  
*sempre ric.*

Vln. (do not scratch)

Vc. *p* *mf* *p*

ca. 17" ca. 3"  $\text{♩} = 80$

Fl. *f* *f* *f*

Cl.

Alto Sax.

Perc. (Mark tree) *p*

Pno. *p* *mf* *p* *mp* *p* *mf* *f* *f* *p* *f* *p*  
continue as before, sometimes following cello

Vln. *tr* sul pont ord.

Vc. *p* *mf* *p*  
continue as before, with occasional swells and shifts between sul pont and sul tasto, ad lib.; follow low notes of piano when possible.

ca. 15"  $\text{♩} = 80$  ca. 15"

Fl. *pp* *mf* *pp* *f*

Cl.

Alto Sax. SOLO *p* *poco f* *mp* *p*  
(dynamics ad libitum; use the given suggestions as a guide; grace notes may be improvised, chromatic notes around given note)

Perc. *p*

Pno. *f* *sfz* *p* *mp*

Vln. (harmonic trill on D string) III *pp* *mp* *pp*

Vc. *tr* *mf*



**♩ = 80**

ca. 15"

Fl. *f* 5

Cl. *f* 5

Alto Sax.

Perc. (Mark tree) *p* FLEXATON (bowed) *p* *mf* *p* *mf*

Pno. *f* *f* *f* *p* *f* *p* *p* *mf* 2 mallets! *p* *f*

Vln. sul pont *p* *f* *p* ric. *f* *p* *mf* *f*

Vc. *p* *mf* *p* *mf*

8<sup>va</sup> →

ca. 6"

[♩ = 80]

ca. 10"

Fl. *f* 5

Cl. SOLO *p* *poco f* *mp*

Alto Sax. *p* *poco f* (dynamics as before) *p*

Perc. *p* (D)

Pno. *p - mp* *f* (B1)

Vln. ord. 8<sup>va</sup> → *ffp*

Vc. 8<sup>va</sup> → *ffp*

continue as before

(dynamics ad libitum; use the given suggestions as a guide, grace notes ad lib., favoring chromatic notes around given note)

*f* = 80

ca. 3" ca. 5" ca. 8"

Fl. *f* *p* *f* *pp* *f* *p* *f* *mf* *p* *mf* *p*

Cl. *p* *pp*

Alto Sax. *pp*

Perc. *p* *mf* *p* MARK TREE

Pno. *f* *p* *p* *sfz* *f* *p* *mp*

Vln. *mf* *p* *mf* *pp* sul pont *pp*

Vc. *8<sup>th</sup>*

ca. 15" ca. 2" ca. 8"

Fl. *p* *f* *mf* *p* *mf* *p*

Cl.

Alto Sax.

Perc. (Mark tree) *p*

Pno. *p* *mf* *p - mp* continue as before

Vln. *f* *p* *f* *p* *f* *pp* *mf*

Vc. *8<sup>th</sup>* *p* *mf* *p*

Fl. *ca. 9"* *mf* *p* *f* = 80 *ca. 7"* = 80 *f* *f* *f*

Cl.

Alto Sax.

Perc. FLEXATON (bowed) *p* *mf*

Pno. (C1) (B) 2 mallets (cluster) within given range *f* *mf* *p* *f* *f* *f* *p* *p < f*

Vln. *pp*

Vc. *8<sup>vb</sup>*

Fl. *ca. 9"* *p* *poco f* *p* *f* *ca. 3"* *p* *< f >* *pp* *ca. 6"* *p* *poco f*

Cl. *p* *poco f* *p* *f* *p* *poco f*

Alto Sax. *p* *poco f* *p* *f* *p* *poco f*

Perc. (Flexaton) *p* *mf*

Pno. *p* *f* 2 mallets!

Vln. *pp* *< mf >*

Vc. *8<sup>vb</sup>*

[♩ = 80]

ca. 7"      ca. 3"      ca. 10"

Fl. *f* 5

Cl. *p* *mf* *p* *f*

Alto Sax. *p* *mf* *p* *f*

Perc. MARK TREE

Pno. *f* *f* *p* *f*

Vln. II *tr* sul pont (harmonic trill, higher partials)

Vc. *p* *mf*

Visual Cue 2

ca. 10"      ca. 3"      ca. 6"      ca. 4"      ca. 9"

Fl. *Ktr* *p* *p* *Ktr* *p* *p* *pp*

Cl. *pp*

Alto Sax. *pp*

Perc. (Mark tree)

Pno. *f poss.* *p < mp* *f poss.* *p* 2 mallets (cluster) within given range Take small superball mallet! take glass tumbler and place on approximate range indicated

Vln. *tr* sul pont *tr* sul pont *p*

Vc. *p* *mf*

[ca 4'00"]

III

ca. 10"

ca. 4"

ca. 3"

Fl.  
Cl.  
Alto Sax.  
Perc.  
Pno. **GLASS TUMBLER** away from tuning pegs  
near tuning pegs  
on keyboard **C**  
[♩ = 80] sync w/all players  
[♩ = 80] sync w/all players  
sul pont  
[♩ = 80] sync w/all players  
gradually separate bows  
gradually separate bows



ca. 4"

ca. 4"

ca. 8"

♩ = 80

Fl. [♩ = 80] sync w/all players  
improvise on given figures  
Cl. improvise on given figures  
Alto Sax. improvise on given figures  
Perc. **FLEXATON** (shaken, in tempo)  
Twist glass slowly to slightly lower range (no more than a tone lower), allowing high, random partials to pop out.  
Pno. **III**  
I  
improvise on given figures  
improvise on given figures

ca. 4"  $\text{♩} = 80$  ca. 3" ca. 5"

Fl. *pp* < *poco f*

Cl. *pp* < *poco f*

Alto Sax. *pp* < *poco f*  
(Flexaton)

Perc. *f* *p* *f*

Pno. *p* *poco f* *mp* *f*  
(twist glass slowly as before)

Vln. *f*

Vc. *f*

II *tr*  
*p* < *f* > *p* < *f* >

I *tr*  
*p* < *f* > *p* < *f* >



ca. 15"

Fl.

Cl. air only, into instrument  $\text{♩} = 80$  synchronize w/sax inhale exhale *p* *f* *p*

Alto Sax. air only, into instrument  $\text{♩} = 80$  inhale exhale *p* *f* *p*

Perc.

Pno. (twist glass)

Vln.

Vc.  $\text{♩} = 80$  synchronize w/cl *p* *f* *p*  
*8<sup>vb</sup>*

**ca. 15"**

Fl.

ca. 5"

*pp* *poco f*

**All instruments: Repeat each figure about 3x; be sure that figures overlap as before; timings of each repeated figure need not be exactly the same.**

Cl.

*pp* *poco f*

2nd time, begin minor 3rd lower (from first time) and descend about a minor 3rd.

Alto Sax.

*pp* *poco f*

3rd time, begin minor 3rd higher (from first time) and descend about a minor 3rd.

Perc.

(Flexaton)

*p* *f*

Pno.

ca. 4"

*p* *f*

Vln. II

ca. 4"

*p* *f*

Vc. I

*p* *f*



**ca. 10"**

$\text{♩} = 80$

Fl.

*p*

improvise on given figures

Cl.

*p*

improvise on given figures

Alto Sax.

Perc.

Pno.

*p* *f*

Vln. I

*p* *p* *p*

improvise on given figures

Vc.

*p* *p* *pizz sfz* *arco p*

improvise on given figures

**ca. 10"**

All instruments: Repeat each figure 2x, as before. ♩ = 80

**ca. 5"**

Fl. *pp* *poco f*

Cl. *pp* *poco f*

Alto Sax. *pp* *poco f*

Perc. (Flexaton) *p* *f*

Pno. *f* *p* *f* *p*

Vln. II *p* *f*

Vc. *p* *f*

2nd time, begin minor 3rd lower (from first time)

and descend a minor 3rd.

\* *t* *p* *f*

\* *t* *p* *f*

\* **Vln, Vc:** If this is too difficult to coordinate with the piano, omit.



**ca. 15"**

Visual Cue 3:  
Mountain landscape

**ca. 5"**

Whistle tones

Fl. *ppp*

Cl. *[♩ = 80]* inhale exhale *p* *f*

Alto Sax. *[♩ = 80]* inhale exhale *p* *f*

Perc. TAM-TAM (small superball mallet) *p* *mf*

Pno. (slowly twist and draw glass along strings) *f*

Vln. I/II *improvise on given figures*

Vc. *p* *f* *pp*

[ca 2'00"]



IV

ca. 20"

Fl.

Cl. *air only* [ $\text{♩} = 80$ ] *inhale*

Alto Sax. *air only* [ $\text{♩} = 80$ ] *inhale*

Take turns, overlapping, repeat 5 - 8 times, then pause. Long silences in between (10 - 20 seconds)

exhale *p* *mf* *p*

Tam-tam serves as the "time-keeper", entering at the end of each time interval given above.

Perc. *sempre ca. 3"*

*p* *mf*

Continue twisting glass and drawing it slowly along string, occasional intervals of silence.

Pno. *p* *ca. 8 - 10"*

Small superball mallet: draw slowly along any low string lengthwise toward the player, applying pressure to the string with the mallet. The effect should be a low "moaning" sound. Dynamics are determined by speed and pressure. Continue ad libitum allowing intervals of silence in between (4 - 10").

Vln.

Vc. [ $\text{♩} = 80$ ] *2 - 4x*

Cello: Play 1 or 2 times each time bracket, varying length; occasionally synchronize with breathing sounds from clarinet and alto sax.

*p* *mf* *p*



ca. 20"

Fl.

Cl.

Alto Sax.

Perc. *sempre ca. 3"*

*p* *mf*

Pno.

Vln.

Vc.

ca. 20" ca. 30"

Fl. ca. 4 - 6"  
*ppp* Whistle tones (enter only occasionally, with long pauses in between (10 - 20"))

Cl.

Alto Sax.

Perc. (Tam-tam) WATERPHONE (bowed) (Tam-tam)  
*p*  $\triangleleft$  *mf* *p*  $\triangleleft$  *mf*  
Occasional bows on waterphone, 2 - 5 seconds each. Long silences in between.  
Bow either single rods or multiple rods.

Pno.

Vln.

Vc.



ca. 30" ca. 30"

Fl.

Cl.

Alto Sax.

Perc. (Waterphone continues) (Tam-tam) (Tam-tam)  
*p*  $\triangleleft$  *mf* *p*  $\triangleleft$  *mf*

Pno.

Vln.

Vc.

ca. 45"

Fl.

Cl.

Alto Sax.

Perc. (Waterphone continues) (Tam-tam) *p* < *mf*

Pno.

Vln. con sord. ① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦  
*p* < > < > < *mf* > *p* < > < *mf* > *p* < *mf* > < > < *f* > *p* < > *ppp*

Vc.

**Vln:** Improvise a solo (very slow, lyrical) on the following figures. Start with figure ①; end with figure ⑦; you may repeat any figures you wish.



ca. 45"

Fl.

Cl.

Alto Sax.

Perc. (Waterphone continues) (Tam-tam) *p* < *mf*

Pno.

Vln.

Vc.

ca. 1'00"

All players: Gradually fade out according to wavy lines; piano, fade out according to visuals.

The musical score consists of seven staves, each representing a different instrument. From top to bottom, the staves are labeled: Fl. (Flute), Cl. (Clarinet), Alto Sax., Perc. (Percussion), Pno. (Piano), Vln. (Violin), and Vc. (Viola). Each staff contains a wavy line that starts at a certain point and ends at a later point, indicating a gradual fade-out. The Fl. staff has a treble clef, the Cl. staff has a soprano clef, the Alto Sax. staff has an alto clef, the Perc. staff has a percussion clef, the Pno. staff has a grand staff with treble and bass clefs, the Vln. staff has a treble clef, and the Vc. staff has a bass clef. The wavy lines for Fl., Cl., Alto Sax., Pno., Vln., and Vc. all end at approximately the same horizontal position, while the Perc. staff has a shorter wavy line that ends earlier. The entire score is enclosed in a large bracket on the right side, with the label [ca 5'00"] at the bottom right.

[ca 5'00"]