

Gordon Hamilton
ANTARCTICA

for voices and recorded sounds

duration: 12 – 18 minutes.

Composed 2018-19 near Casey Station, Antarctica and on board the icebreaker Aurora Australis on an Aurora Legacy Fellowship from the Australian Antarctic Division.

for The Australian Voices

- I. Aurora Australis
- II. Strips of Sky, Sea and Ice
- III. Whalesong
- IV. Infinite Monochrome
- V. Reeve Hill

Download the audio tracks here: <https://bit.ly/2NAy73t>

Program Note

I wrote *Antarctica* during and after a trip to Casey Station, Antarctica onboard the icebreaker *Aurora Australis* – an Australian icon, nearing the end of her service*. I was the lucky guest of the Australian Antarctic Division on an Aurora Legacy Fellowship.

The opening movement is an aria set against the backdrop of a recording I made of the ship cutting through sea-ice (standing in the bow while my stinging hands clenched the microphone! – I soon learned to glove-up!). A solo voice sings, hand-in-hand with mighty bricks of harmony: a blazing seascape coated in white. Aeliatoric music follows, depicting a hill near Casey Station where the scene can be divided into three colossal horizontal strips of sky, sea and ice. ‘Whalesong’ is a harmonisation of a finback whale call: the Aurora Australis recovered a hydrophone which had been recording the crooning of sea mammals. Over a year’s worth of sound was logged; I picked the bit in D-minor†. *Infinite Monochrome* is a pock-marked canon inspired by – in the words of Voyage Leader James Maloney – “...the vision of a brilliant bright expanse where ice, snow and cloud coalesced, holding the ship suspended in white nothingness.” Every direction is a hiss of white (painful to the naked eye!) and the frozen sea bristles, splintered by town-sized icebergs. In the last movement ‘Reeve Hill’ short chorale-like utterances are sown among long thoughtful stillnesses, played over my recording of ice gently melting on Reeve Hill, far-off Adélie penguins and snow-petrels nattering to each other.

The work is for voices (their type unspecified), with various moments of solo singing.

– GH

* In a happy fluke, my dad and I were at hand in 1989 at the launch of the Aurora Australis in Newcastle NSW when I was six-years-old – we even experienced a dunking!

† My thanks to marine mammal acoustician Brian Miller!

I. Aurora Australis

Gordon Hamilton

Audio Track
"Icebreaker"

SOLO

GROUP I
[High Voices]

GROUP II
[middle voices]

GROUP III
[low voices]

|--- c. 15 sec ---| **A** ♩ = c. 50 (all rhythms are approximate)

* Choose any of these pitches to sing the parts which follow.
Change between the pitches individually at will.

5

B

Track

SOLO

I

II

III

10

Track

SOLO

I

II

III

p *espr.*

Ah

pp *espr.*

Ah

pp < *mp*

Ooh

2

Track SOLO

mp Ah Ah

pp

D

Track SOLO I II

mf Ah Ah

p

p Ah

p Ng

Ng

E

Track SOLO I II III

= espr.

pppp open and close gradually

f Ah *pppp*

f Ah *pppp*

f Ah *pppp*

niente

M M M M

F

Track SOLO I II III

pp

mp Ah Ah

mf M Ah Ah

mp Ah Ah *mf* M Ah Ah

mf M Ah Ah

II. Strips of Sky, Sea and Ice

GORDON HAMILTON

I

div. { dm dm ddm
a 3 { Ng Ah

II

gliss. [change uniformly]
— <#> —
(?) M eee M

III

HOT M ← Or [change uniformly]
A ||| L [move tongue across palate]
M [be together on the accents; vary tempo]

②

HOT [any vowel; change gradually]
A slow → fast

HOT [random text]
A [be together; vary tempo]
Nga Nga Nga ...

③

A ||| Ah |||
L [move tongue across palate]
M [be together on the accents; vary tempo]

④

A ||| Ah |||
Ah [not together]

dn AL — ||| Ah
a Ng — ||| Ah
3 dm dm dm — ||| Ah
[nasal] [normal]

⑤

A ||| Ah |||
Ah (*)

⑥

A ||| Ah |||
Ah [together] M —

⑦

A ||| Ah |||
Ah (*)

⑧

A ||| Ah |||
Ah [a low note; gliss. towards pitch interval]
M

⑨

A ||| Ah |||
start together, drift out of time

⑩

A ||| Ah |||
[stay together; vary tempo]
Nga Nga Nga, etc...

⑪

A ||| Ah |||
kkkk kkkk
[less together] [more together]

⑫

A ||| Ah |||
V ↔ F

⑬

A ||| Ah |||
[change vowel uniformly]

⑭

A ||| Ah |||
[whistles, converge on one note]

III. Whalesong

$\text{♩} = 80$

A

Gordon Hamilton

Whale
Track

8

p dolce > *pp*

N N N N

14

B

Wh.

8

p *mp* *pp*

Ah Ah N Eh Ah

dolce *p* *mp* *pp*

Ah Ah N Eh Ah

Ah Ah N Eh Ah

Ah Ah N Eh Ah

14

C

Wh.

14

Ah N M M

pp

Ah N M M

mp

Ng Ng Ng Ng M

M

pp

Ah N M M

pp

Ah N M M

Ng Ng Ng Ng M

M

pp

Ah N M M

M

18

IV. Infinite Monochrome

"...the vision of a brilliant bright expanse where ice, snow and cloud coalesced, holding the ship suspended in white nothingness." – James Maloney

Gordon Hamilton

GROUP I

GROUP II

GROUP III

Canon in 3 Parts:

- Group II begins, then III shortly after, and finally I.
- Each group remains together as a group, but does not co-ordinate with other groups.
- Singers may choose any of the pitches (left) to sing the canon.
- Singers may change between the four pitches individually at will.
- The conductor 'catches' all groups in the final bar, ending the canon.

A $\text{♩} = \text{c. } 50$ (rhythms are approximate)

A start together, proceed individually

B start together, proceed individually

C start together, proceed individually

start together, proceed individually

D start together, proceed individually

Repeat until all groups have caught up.

last time

p start together, proceed individually

V. Reeve Hill

Gordon Hamilton

- To be sung together with the audio track “Reeve Hill”
- Sing the chords on the syllables indicated on the left.
- The notes can occupy various octaves, though this should be done with taste.
- Circled notes: one solo singer starts early or finishes late.
- Repeat the last two chords many times.

The image shows four staves of handwritten musical notation on five-line staff paper. The notation includes lyrics and circled notes indicating performance timing.

m

F E^b E^b F F B^b B^b
E^b D D C C C A
G F G E^b (B^b) D C
C B^b C A^b G G F

ooh

A A (F) F E^b E^b E
B^b C B^b C D D (E^b)
F G D E^b G F G
C D G A^b C B^b C

ah

A (B^b) B^b A G D E^b
F G A C D D D
C D C E^b F F G
G A F G (B^b) (B^b) C

m

G F G A C B^b B^b B^b
E^b D D C B^b B^b A
D (D) F G F D C
C B^b B^b A A (G) F