

Newton Armstrong

The Book of the Sediments

for soprano
and electronic sounds

2022

Credits

The Book of the Sediments was commissioned by Juliet Fraser as part of the Carson Commissions (2021-23).

Commission funds were provided by Arts Council England, PRS Foundation, and the Vaughan Williams Foundation (formerly RVW Trust).

First performance of revised version: *Rainy Days*, Philharmonie Luxembourg, November 2022.

Programme note

In *The Sea Around Us*, Rachel Carson describes the slow accumulation of sediments on the deep sea floor, proceeding over hundreds of millions of years to form vast mountains of particulate materials — silt, volcanic dust, meteoric elements, miniscule shells and skeletons — at the bottom of the oceans. For Carson, the sediments form "a sort of epic poem of the earth," an inscription of all that has happened in the geologic and climatic history of our planet. *The Book of the Sediments* stems from these images; not as depiction, but rather as a contemplation of the interactions between the momentary and the vast, and of endless process as a form of saying.

Performance notes

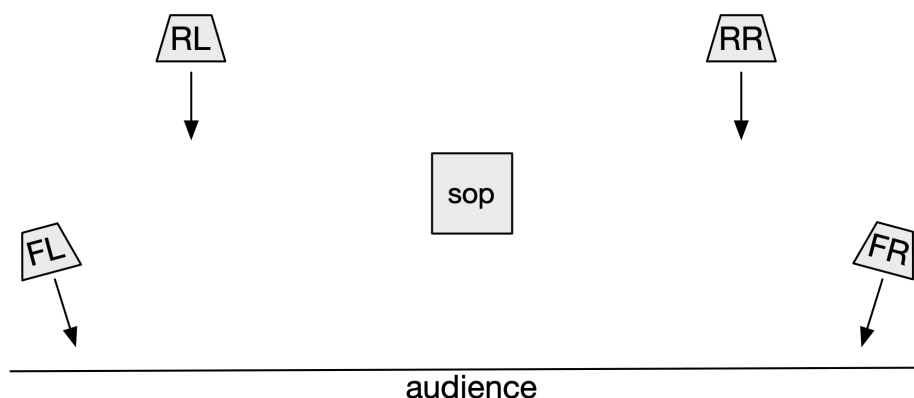
The Book of the Sediments is composed for unamplified solo soprano voice and stereo audio diffused into four loudspeakers (see stage set-up diagram below). The sound technician must be able to independently adjust levels of front and rear (stereo) loudspeaker pairs, and to calibrate the front/rear delay time for optimal phase correlation.

The nature of the piece will vary considerably from one performance environment to the next. As such, no dynamic markings are indicated on the score and cues are minimal. For each new performance, it's key that the vocalist and sound technician develop a working plan conducive to the way in which the room and audio equipment respond.

A click-track should not be used. Rather, the slow 'respiratory' quality that characterises the vocal writing should be thought of as a fifth voice folding into the four-voice electronic texture that runs through most of the piece. It's important that the four-voice texture is present in the rear loudspeakers at all times as listening cues for the vocalist.

Beating phenomena, psychoacoustical roughness, and warping of the spatial image are attributes of the music. They should not be suppressed but nor should they be noticeably foregrounded.

Source soundfiles are available at: <http://staff.city.ac.uk/newton.armstrong.1/sediments/>.



The Book of the Sediments

For Juliet

Newton Armstrong

1 ♩ = 42

all is all that

8

all in all

15

2

is all all all

22

all

29

3

is in is in

36

4

is all in

43

all in all

5

50

writ - ten

58

writ - ten writ - ten writ - ten

6

66

writ - ten all is

73

all that is

80

in all is all

7 ♩ = 30

87

Musical score for measures 87-93. The vocal line starts with a whole note rest, followed by a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, and a quarter note B4. A triplet of eighth notes (G4, A4, B4) is marked with a '3' above it. The lyrics are "all" under the first note and "writ - ten" under the triplet, followed by "here" under a final quarter note. The piano accompaniment features a steady eighth-note bass line in the left hand and a more complex melodic line in the right hand with various chords and intervals.

94

Musical score for measures 94-101. The vocal line begins with a whole note rest, then a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, and a quarter note B4. The lyrics are "all is" under the first two notes, "writ - ten" under the next two, and "hap - pened here" under the final two. The piano accompaniment continues with a similar rhythmic pattern, featuring a bass line with eighth notes and a right hand with chords and melodic fragments.

8 ♩ = 42

102

Musical score for measures 102-109. The vocal line starts with a whole note rest, followed by a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, and a quarter note B4. The lyrics are "all that" under the first two notes, "hap - pened" under the next two, and "all" under the final note. A triplet of eighth notes (G4, A4, B4) is marked with a '3' above it at the end of the phrase. The piano accompaniment features a consistent eighth-note bass line and a right hand with chords and melodic lines.

110

is all

117

is all

124

9 ♩ = 30

all that hap - pened all

+ Glissandi

132

is writ - ten all is here writ - ten

140

here hap - pened here writ - ten

148

10 ♩ = 42

here writ - ten here

+ Wind

156

Musical score for measures 156-162. The vocal line features a repeating melodic phrase: a quarter rest, a quarter note G4, a quarter note F4, and a dotted quarter note E4. This phrase is repeated three times, with the lyrics "is", "all", and "is" under each. The piano accompaniment consists of a steady eighth-note bass line in the left hand and a melody in the right hand that mirrors the vocal line's intervals. The piano part includes fingering numbers 5 and 7.

163

Musical score for measures 163-169. The vocal line continues the phrase from the previous system, with lyrics "all", "is", "all", and "is" under the notes. The piano accompaniment remains consistent with the previous system, providing harmonic support for the vocal melody.

11

170

Musical score for measures 170-176. The vocal line begins with a quarter rest, followed by the phrase "all" under a quarter note G4, a quarter note F4, and a dotted quarter note E4. This phrase is repeated twice. The piano accompaniment continues with the same eighth-note bass line and right-hand melody as in the previous systems.

177

186

12 ♩ = 30

all is writ - ten all that

Wind cresc. + Rain

193

hap - pened hap - pened writ - ten hap - pened

203

13

ca. 3 mins.

writ - ten writ - ten writ - ten writ - ten