

# Eternity

For soprano and chamber ensemble

**Words:** Walt Whitman (1819-1892)

**Music:** Nicholas Gawley (2001-)

**Hermes Experiment Project**

Persual score – not for performance

## **Instrumentation:**

Soprano

Clarinet in Bb (dbl. Bass Clarinet)

Harp

Contrabass

## **Text:**

Eternity lies in bottomless reservoirs .... its buckets are rising forever and ever,

They pour and they pour and they exhale away.

We have thus far exhausted trillions of winters and summers;

There are trillions ahead, and trillions ahead of them.

From 'Song of Myself' (1855 version)

## **Composer note:**

I've been fascinated by this passage (incidentally, excised from the more well known 1892 version of the poem) ever since I read it as a teenager. For me it symbolises the visionary nature of Whitman's prophecy of America: its attempt to express the ineffable (the idea of 'trillions' would've been almost too big to comprehend in 1855) acts as a showcase of Whitman's ambition to be a prophet for America, a sort of President David if you will.

In depicting Whitman's vision of eternity, the music ranges between soft, lyrical, pulseless moments, to moments of extreme emotions (from a sort of raging of the universe to an infinite abyss). Eternality is finally seen to be a cyclical process, via the palindromic reprise of the first (more tonally anchored) section.

## **Score in C**

# Eternity

Walt Whitman

Nicholas Gawley

Slowly, freely, without pulse  
*pp*

Soprano

Bb Clarinet

Harp

Contrabass

*p quasi in tempo*

In a slow and flowing pulse; feel one to a bar (♩ = 112)

Sop.

Bb Cl.

Hp

Cb.

*pp espr.*

Sop.

Bb Cl.

Hp

Cb.

*ppp <*

14

Sop.

Bb Cl.

Hp

Cb.

*p legato e espr.*

19

Sop.

Bb Cl.

Hp

Cb.

5

24

Sop.

Bb Cl.

Hp

Cb.

5

30

Sop.

Bb Cl.

Hp

Cb.

36

Sop.

Bb Cl.

Hp

Cb.

43

Sop.

Bb Cl.

Hp

Cb.

Personal score - not for performance

48

Sop.

Bb Cl.

Hp

Cb.

53

Sop.

Bb Cl.

Hp

Cb.

58

Sop.

Bb Cl.

Hp

Cb.

Personal score - not for performance

63

Sop. *p* ————— *mf*

Bb Cl. *mf* ————— *p*

Hp *mf*

Cb.

E - - - - -

68

Sop. - - - - - ter

Bb Cl. 4 4 4 4

Hp *p*

Cb. *ppp* ————— *p legato e espr.*

73

Sop. *p*

Bb Cl. 4

Hp

Cb. 5

ni - - - - - ni

78

Sop.

Bb Cl.

Hp

Cb.

83

Sop.

Bb Cl.

Hp

Cb.

E - - - ter - - -

To B. Cl.

*pp*

89

Sop.

Bb Cl.

Hp

Cb.

ni - - - ty

rit.....

*mf* *p* *ppp*

**4/4**

96 Slow and heavy ♩ = 60

Sop. *B. Cl.*  
E - - ter - - ni - ty lies in bot - tom - less

B. Cl.  
*pp < mf > pp* *pp < mf > pp* *f* *fp < f > p*

Hp  
*p*

8ba

Cb.  
*pp*

Sop.  
re - - ser - voirs... its buc - kets are ri - - sing

B. Cl.  
*tr tr tr tr* *sf* *pp*

Hp  
*p* *mf*

Cb.  
*pp* *sf*

Sop.  
ri - - sing ri - - sing ri - - - - sing ri - ri - ri -

B. Cl.  
*f* *pp*

Hp  
*sf* *pp*

Cb.  
*pp*

107

Sop. *mf* *mp cresc. poco a poco*

B. Cl. *mf* *mp cresc. poco a poco*

Hp *sf mp cresc. poco a poco*

Cb. *sf mp cresc. poco a poco*

110

Sop. *mf*

B. Cl.

Hp

Cb.

112

Sop. *f*

B. Cl.

Hp

Cb. *fff quasi-gliss*



a tempo (as at bar 96) (♩ = 60)

118

Sop. *ppp* <—>

— — — — — sing for - e - ver

B. Cl. *tr* *fff* *pppp* bibisglando *pppp*

gva

Hp *fff* *fffz* *p*

Let the harp resonate for as long as possible. thunder effect

4/4

Cb.

123

Sop. *pp* *pp* *p* *pp*

and e - ver for - e - - ver They pour,

B. Cl. *ppp* *pp* *p* *pp*

Hp (8)

3/4 2/4 3/4

Cb.

127 *ppp*

Sop. pour pour, and they pour and they ex - hale

B. Cl.

Hp

Cb.

132 *whispered*

Sop. a - way. ex - hale a - way. ex - hale a - - way.

B. Cl.

Hp

Cb.

138 *f with a*

Sop. ex - - hale a - - way We\_

To Bb Cl.

B. Cl.

Hp *ppp*

Cb. *pp*

144 Sop. *pp*  
have thus far ex - - - haus - - - ted trill - - - ions,

Bb Cl. *ppp*

Harp *pp*  
8va. 2/4 3/4 8

Cb. *pp*

149 Sop. *ppp*  
trill - - - ions trill - - - ions

Bb Cl. *pp*  
bibisglando

Harp *pp*

Cb. *ppp* *ppp* *ff*

153 Sop. *ff*  
vocal fry  
of win - - - ters

Bb Cl. *p* *mp* *f*

Harp *mf* *f* *ff*

Cb. *mp* *ff*



Eternity

171 *f* *mf* *leggiero e rubato* gradually exhale

Sop. trill - - - ions,

Bb Cl.

Hp *sf* *sf* *mf* *colla voce*

Cb.

175 *ppp* *pp* (non-harm.) 8va

Sop. trill - - - ions a - head,

Bb Cl. *pp*

Hp *ppp*

Cb. *pp* *gliss.*

180 *ppp* *rit.* *ppp* *con sord.*

Sop. and trill - - ions a - head of them, trill - ions a - head

Bb Cl. *ppp*

Hp *ppp* 8ba

Cb. *ppp* *p* *pp*

Personal score - not for performance

.....Slightly slower than the start ♩ = 100

186

Sop. of them. E-

Bb Cl.

Hp *pp* *espr.*  $\frac{3}{4}$  *pp*

Cb. *pp* *pp*

191

Sop. ter- ni -

Bb Cl. 4 3

Hp *pp* *pp*

Cb. 4

197

Sop. ty

Bb Cl.

Hp *gva* *gva* *ppp* 3 3

Cb.

Personal score - not for performance

