

Piker

Larry Polansky (1997-98)

Piker is in five movements

You're a Piker!

Piker

You're no Piker!

I Know You!

Daughter of Piker

Two of the movements (*Piker*, *You're No Piker!*) are based on harmonic series rhythms and intonations, the other three on Shaker songs.

You're a Piker! is an experiment in melodic streaming on the tune "Hop up and Jump Up." Written by computer (in HMSL), non-melody notes on a constant pulse are gradually moved out of the way of the melody.

You're no Piker! is a 3-voice polyrhythmic study, in which the foot is one of the voices. Written in three staves, grupetto relationships are morphed from the outer edge of the harmonic series on D (4:17) towards the middle (9:8), gradually swapping notes between the different voices of the grupetti.

Piker, the centerpiece and most difficult of the set, uses a composite melody consisting of the rhythmic relationships and pitches of the harmonics 4–17 on E. Pitches enter successively, from the middle of the "measure" (some constant duration), and in from both ends, using some simple rules for replacement of pitches on the same beat. Gradually, a composite melody is formed (17:16:15:....7:6:5:4).

I Know You! morphs two Shaker tunes, "O the Simple Gifts of God" and "Little Trumpet."

Daughter of Piker is the Shaker tune, "Love, More Love" played four times, each time in a different tuning. The last tuning is the same as the first. The three tunings are derived from approximate cognates in the harmonic series on A, C# and E, where those pitches themselves are related as 4:5:6. For example, the A in the original tune is treated as the fundamental of A, the 13th harmonic of C#, and the 11th harmonic of E, all three with their own tunings.

The title is taken from a letter from Marion Bauer to Ruth Crawford Seeger: "I know you! You're no piker!"

Thanks to douglas repetto for helping prepare practice tapes, and for helping with other aspects of the score.

Piker was originally written for piccolo (or any other wind) for Margaret Lancaster, who has performed it many times, and recorded it for New World Records (on her CD entitled *Io*). Christine Tivolacci did the first complete performance on flute.

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Lebanon, NH
January 15, 1998
(revised, Santa Cruz, CA, 2014)