

Four Bass Studies (what to do when the night comes)

Polansky

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Four Bass Studies is an orchestration of an earlier piece, *Four Violin Studies (what to do when the night comes)* for James Tenney. Each study explores movement through the harmonic series (1 – 17), as well as the instrumental-specific challenge of continuously overlapping double stops.

Pitches are in a mixture of tunings: rational, equal-tempered, and harmonic series-related. Often unusual tunings are motivated by the availability of proximal nodes. As such, when rational tunings do occur, they are not necessarily harmonic tunings.

In “Ascension”, dyads rise from the fundamental to the 17th harmonic: 1, 1:2, 2:3, ... 16:17. In “Internal Differences,” beginning with the 17th and 13th harmonics, dyads are followed by their difference tones (or octave equivalents), and consequently, not all of the 17 pitches occur. In “Psalm” and “Psalm II,” the trajectory is derived from my earlier work *Psaltery* (1978), in which I first used the simple idea of harmonicity called “*Psaltery* order,” to traverse the harmonic series:

1,2,4,8,16,3,6,12,9,5,10,15,7,14,11,13,17

“Psalm” goes up, “Psalm II” goes down.

As in much of my work, the concerns are focused. Notational austerity is intended as an invitation to the performer who must not only be virtuosic but creative and intelligent in the choice of dynamics, tempi, length, sound, and so on.

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