

# Cities &

For Sextet

Bass Flute, Bass Clarinet, Violin, Cello, Guitar, Piano

Anton Lindström

## Program Note

"...But you would have said communication between them was less happy than in the past: to be sure, words were more useful than objects and gestures in listing the most important things of every province and city – monuments, markets, costumes, fauna and flora – and yet when Polo began to talk about how life must be in those places, day after day, evening after evening, words failed him, and little by little, he went back to relying on gestures, grimaces, glances..."

- Italo Calvino *Invisible Cities* (1972)

### About the piece (Not to be included in the program!)

The following are two excerpts from Italo Calvino's book *Invisible Cities* (1972) from the translation by William Weaver:

"...But when the young Venetian made his report, a different communication was established between him and the emperor. Newly arrived and totally ignorant of the Levantine languages, Marco Polo could express himself only with gestures, leaps, cries of wonder and of horror, animal barks or hootings, or with objects he took from his knapsacks - ostrich plumes, pea-shooters, quatzes - which he arranged in front of him like chessmen. Returning from the missions on which Kublai sent him, the ingenious foreigner improvised pantomimes that the sovereign had to interpret: one city was depicted by the leap of a fish escaping the cormorant's beak to fall into a net; another city by a naked man running through fire unscorched; a third by a skull, its teeth green with mold, clenching a round, white pearl. The Great Khan deciphered the signs, but the connection between them and the places visited remained uncertain; he never knew whether Marco wished to enact an adventure that had befallen him on his journey, an exploit of the city's founder, the prophecy of an astrologer, a rebus or a charade to indicate a name. But, obscure or obvious as it might be, everything Marco displayed had the power of emblems, which, once seen, cannot be forgotten or confined. In the Khan's mind the empire was reflected in a desert of labile and interchangeable data, like grains of sand, from which there appeared, for each city and province, the figures evoked by the Venetian's logographs. As the seasons passed and his missions continued, Marco mastered the Tartar language and the national idioms and tribal dialects. Now his accounts were the most precise and detailed that the Great Khan could wish and there was no question or Curiosity which they did not satisfy. And yet each piece of information about a place recalled to the emperor's mind that first gesture or object with which Marco had designated the place. The new fact received a meaning from that emblem and also added to the emblem a new meaning. Perhaps, Kublai thought, the empire is nothing but a zodiac of the mind's phantasms..."

"...Newly arrived and quite ignorant of the languages of the Levant, Marco Polo could express himself only by drawing objects from his baggage – drums, salt fish, necklaces of warhog's teeth – and pointing to them with gestures, leaps, cries of wonder or of horror, imitating the bay of the jackal, the hoot of the owl.

The connections between one element of the story and another were not always obvious to the emperor; the objects could have various meanings: a quiver filled with arrows could indicate the approach of war, or an abundance of game, or else an armorer's shop; an hourglass could mean time passing, or time past, or sand, or a place where hourglasses are made. But what enhanced for Kublai every event or piece of news reported by his inarticulate informer was the space that remained around it, a void not filled with words. The descriptions of cities Marco Polo visited had this virtue: you could wander through them in thought, become lost, stop and enjoy the cool air, or run off.

As time went by, words began to replace objects and gestures in Marco's tales: first exclamations, isolated nouns, dry verbs, then phrases, ramified and leafy discourses, metaphors and tropes. The foreigner had learned to speak the emperor's language or the emperor to understand the language of the foreigner.

But you would have said communication between them was less happy than in the past: to be sure, words were more useful than objects and gestures in listing the most important things of every province and city – monuments, markets, costumes, fauna and flora – and yet when Polo began to talk about how life must be in those places, day after day, evening after evening, words failed him, and little by little, he went back to relying on gestures, grimaces, glances..."

These two excerpts succeed triumphantly in summarizing my thoughts on music as a form of expression and communicative tool. Whilst not as exact nor distinct as mediums such as text, speech or image, music and sound contains a certain directness which – to me – is not present through these other mediums. The inherent nature of metaphors present in music is what gives it part of its strength. As a "meta-example", this program note would not be necessary if all the information it contains could be transmitted through the composition itself. However, whether this is truly impossible, or simply something I believe from a lack of understanding and ability, I naturally can't say for sure.

This piece partially investigates this nature of instrumental composition as a means of information transmission. If it's possible as a listener to observe a semi abstract structure, that through other mediums; text, film, speech, could easily be transmitted. In Calvino's *Invisible Cities*; chapter 7 opens and closes with a dialogue between Marco Polo and Kublai Khan. This dialogue is here loosely and metaphorically translated to musical phrasing, gestures and duration. The difference being that in my "Invisible Cities", we only hear one side of the conversation at a time. First we hear all which Kublai Khan's has to say – similar to how one only hears half the conversation when listening to someone speak through a telephone – in the form of a duo between the Bass Flute and Bass Clarinet. Afterwards, to receive the missing context we hear the remaining quartet of instruments represent the words of Marco Polo.

Can one as a listener perceive this missing context, this filling out of missing information upon hearing and referencing or remembering the other side of the conversation?

## Performance Notes

### Performance Variations and Form

This piece can be performed in 3 different ways. A performance may feature one, two or all of these different variations, in any order.

"Turns" – This option means that the piece is performed entirely linearly, starting with the first page (the flute and clarinet duo), and then the next to pages.

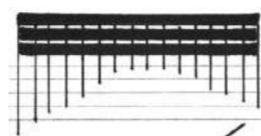
"Layers" - This option means that the flute and clarinet duo starts their music simultaneously as the remaining quartet begins their respective music. They then both play through their music material. Note that this can cause significant performance difficulties as the tempo of the two musics don't always align. It is therefore more important that each of the two groups keeps their internal tempi consistent, rather than as a perfect match to the other. (Though both is of course preferred).

"Conversations" – The third option is for the piece to be performed in a manner that shifts between the two groups. With the flute and clarinet starting from the beginning, then once they reach their double barline; the other group takes over from rehearsal mark A. Once they reach their next double barline, the winds again take over from rehearsal mark B and so on. The only exception to this is rehearsal mark E → F, both of which are in the quartet. These transitions should be as and quick as possible, leaving no gap or rest between the change.

### General Approach and Notations

Gesture and dynamics are very primary elements of the music. Crescendos and diminuendos, as well as rhythmical and other gestural elements are to be played very clearly and can almost exaggerated.

One should always have a very strict rhythmical pulse and a strong relation to the musical meter.




- Stems without noteheads can refer to two different things. Either an unspecified pitch or approximate register, or (if specified) to repeat a note.

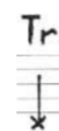


Crescendo al niente (Reversed is diminuendo al niente)


### Instrument Specific Notations


#### Winds

 - Closed Mouthpiece

 - Tongue Ram

 - Jet Whistle

 - Slap Tongue ("pizz")

 - Square note heads refer to a purely air sound/noise with no discernible specific pitch. They are written on a three line staff in which the top line means as bright of a noise as possible and the bottom line means as dark of a noise as possible. The performer may achieve these differences using any means necessary, including but not limited to consonant choice, embouchure, with or without mouthpiece (if they find the time to remove it), and opening and closing the keys.

Score is notated Transposed

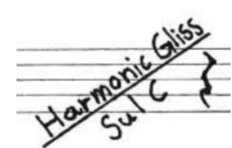
#### Bowed Strings

The bowed string instruments (Violin and Cello) use the following Scordaturas (from low to high)  
d = quarter Flat

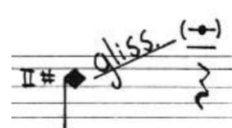
Violin : G D Ad Ed

Cello: Cd Gd D A

All notes played on these instruments are harmonics, and all glissandos are to be performed as harmonic glissandos.



Unspecified register harmonic gliss.



Specified register harmonic gliss. (Also showing stopping point)

#### Guitar

The piece is intended to be performed with a nylon-stringed classical guitar, however, a steel-stringed acoustic guitar can also be used if desired.

Scordatura: (from low to high)

Dd Ad Cd G A B

Like the bowed strings, all notes on the guitar are harmonics.

**Piano**

The piano uses an intricate preparation. Strings are to be prepared using blue-tac, rubber erasers, gum or other similar tools at the discretion of the performer in order for the strings to produce a harmonic when played on the keys. It can also help during slower passages to slightly press down with ones finger on said harmonic node as well, but during faster passages this is not possible.

The following are 2 schematics for how the piano should be prepared:

In the below notation, the lower system indicates which note is to be prepared with a number indicating which harmonic node on said string is to be prepared. The top system shows the resulting, sounding harmonics.

| Note | Partial | Sounding |
|------|---------|----------|
| Eb1  | 3       | Bb       |
| E1   | 3       | Bb       |
| F1   | 11      | b1       |
| Gb1  | 5       | bb       |
| G1   | 11      | db2 (c#) |
| Ab1  | 3       | eb       |
| A1   | 5       | c#1      |
| Bb1  | 7       | ab1      |
| B1   | 10      | eb2 (d#) |
| C    | 5       | e1       |
| Db   | 9       | eb2      |
| D    | 5       | gb1 (f#) |
| Eb   | 3       | bb       |
| E    | 5       | ab1 (g#) |
| F    | 5       | a1       |
| Gb   | 4       | gb1      |
| G    | 3       | d1       |
| Ab   | 2       | ab       |
| A    | 7       | g2       |
| Bb   | 5       | d2       |
| B    | 10      | eb3 (d#) |
| c    | 5       | e2       |
| db   | 5       | f2       |
| d    | 4       | d2       |
| eb   | 4       | eb2      |
| e    | 7       | d3       |
| f    | 6       | c3       |
| gb   | 4       | gb2      |
| g    | 6       | d3       |
| ab   | 6       | eb3      |
| a    | 7       | g3       |
| bb   | 2       | bb1      |
| b    | 3       | gb2 (f#) |
| c1   | 5       | e3       |
| db1  | 2       | db2      |
| d1   | 3       | a2       |
| eb1  | 3       | bb2      |
| e1   | 5       | ab3 (g#) |
| f1   | 3       | c3       |
| gb1  | 5       | bb3      |
| g1   | 3       | d3       |
| ab1  | 4       | ab3      |
| a1   | 2       | a2       |
| bb1  | 3       | f2       |
| b1   | 2       | b2       |
| c2   | 3       | g3       |
| db2  | 3       | ab3      |
| d2   | 2       | d3       |

The above table shows to the left, which note is to be prepared (starting from low Eb), then on which partial, and then which sounding harmonic will be the result.

Boxed notation followed by a thick line means to perform the contents of the box continuously for the specified duration.

S/M Time signature = Senza Misura, these sections are to be played as one long continuous flow with no relation to meter or downbeats.

**Score Notes**

The score contains a “Sounding Chords” system, that whilst not always specifically specifying chords, shows the resulting pitches from all the instruments. This system is very approximate, as some measures can be quite dense with information or contain difficult to notate gestures sounding, such as piano and string harmonic glissandos.

Score is transposed.

Flute and Clarinet read from score (the first page), the other 4 musicians can read either from score or from their parts.

A conductor is highly recommended, basically essential, in order to perform the piece with the **Dialogue** form as discussed at the beginning, to show transitions between the different parts.

The music is originally in A2 format, but since this is quite large, printing in A3 or a custom size might be more practical and should still be readable for a conductor.

Since a conductor would need simultaneous view of all pages, it’s recommended not to print the score double sided.

Parts are in A4 format.

ERRATA: As of October 26, 2020, the following adjustments have been made to the score:  
 - Clarinet and Flute 2 bars following rehearsal mark B – All written notes replaced with approximated air sounds.

If you have any questions about the score or music, contact the composer at [antonrunelindstrom@gmail.com](mailto:antonrunelindstrom@gmail.com)



$\text{♩} = 60$

Exact pitch not important  
Ad Lib. harsh multiphonic

**B**

B.Fl.  $\text{ff}$   $\text{mf}$   $\text{p}$   $\text{flz}$   $\text{Tr.}$

B.Cl.  $\text{ff}$   $\text{mf}$   $\text{f}$   $\text{Very airy, flz}$   $\text{f}$

**D**  $\text{♩} = 120$

B.Fl.  $\text{Ord.}$   $\text{f}$   $\text{fp}$   $\text{f}$   $\text{f}$

B.Cl.  $\text{f}$   $\text{fp}$   $\text{f}$   $\text{f}$

**G**

B.Fl.  $\text{f}$   $\text{ff}$   $\text{Air sound}$   $\text{Different consonants ad lib.}$   $\text{f}$

B.Cl.  $\text{f}$   $\text{ff}$   $\text{Air sound}$   $\text{Vary ad lib.}$   $\text{f}$

B.Fl.

B.Cl.

**I**

B.Fl.  $\text{fff}$   $\text{Jet whistle}$   $\text{f}$   $\text{p}$   $\text{f}$

B.Cl.  $\text{fff}$   $\text{f}$   $\text{p}$   $\text{f}$

**K**

B.Fl.  $\text{p}$   $\text{ff}$   $\text{Repeated Note}$   $\text{pp}$   $\text{f}$   $\text{ff}$

B.Cl.  $\text{p}$   $\text{ff}$   $\text{Repeated Note}$   $\text{pp}$   $\text{f}$   $\text{ff}$

**M**

B.Fl.  $\text{f}$   $\text{ff}$   $\text{Keyslaps}$   $\text{ff}$

B.Cl.  $\text{f}$   $\text{ff}$   $\text{Keyslaps}$   $\text{ff}$

**O**

B.Fl.  $\text{f}$   $\text{pp}$   $\text{ff}$   $\text{pp}$   $\text{pp}$   $\text{Hold as long as possible in one breath}$

B.Cl.  $\text{f}$   $\text{pp}$   $\text{ff}$   $\text{pp}$   $\text{pp}$   $\text{Hold as long as possible in one breath}$





**F**  $\text{♩} = 140$

Sounding Chords

Pn. *Very staccato*

Improvise freely using  $\text{F}$  Within Specified Range

$\sim 10s$

$\sim 3s$

**H** *Approx. Cello rhythm*

Sounding Chords

8va Basso

V. *gliss. (-)* *mp*

C. *"Seagull gliss."* *mp*

Gt. *mf* *3*

Pn. *4 Sim.* *4 pppp*

**J**

Sounding Chords

V. *Pizz.* *f*

Pn. *f* *gliss.* *mp* *gliss.* *f* *gliss.*

Ped. *f*

Arco *f*

**L**  $\text{♩} = 120$

Sounding Chords

V. *match pn/gt decay* *mf*

C. *match pn/gt decay* *mf*

Gt. *f*

Pn. *f*

**N**

V. *gliss. (-)* *gliss. (\*\*)* *mf*

C. *Pizz.* *Arco gliss. (-)* *mf*

Gt. *mf*

Pn. *mp* *gliss.*

**P**

V. *ppp*

C. *ppp*

Gt. *p*

Pn. *8va Basso* *p*