

KIT McCARTHY

Magnetic Ribbon

for vocal octet

(2024)

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All text by the composer.

Duration: c. 7'

for EXAUDI

Performance notes

- **“N’n’na”**— This direction appears throughout. For this, sing a continuous ‘nn,’ constantly interrupting by irregular stuttering ‘naa’s.’¹ A graphic representing this technique’s irregularity appears the first time the direction is used in each part. Breathe as needed during long notes.
- **“Half-whistle”**— For this, aim for a half-pitched/half-unpitched sound between whistling and exhaling.
- **“Faint whistling, like the wind”**— Again, this should be a half-pitched whistle, approximately following the given contour. It should sound organic and wild; don’t try to tune to the surrounding chords.
- **Spoken text**— Spoken text appears above single-line staves. The speech should be clear but conversational.
- **Microtones**— The piece uses standard quarter- and three-quarter-tones. The exact tuning is not essential; rather, these just need to sound like a slight detuning or pitch bend.
- **Third-line techniques**— Any technique notated with a cross notehead on the third line is unpitched (e.g. “shh,” baritone, bar 52).
- **Final inhale**— The inhale in the final bar should be very quiet – more felt than heard.

¹ For reference, this is the same sound as at the start of *Kangaru* by Jóhann Jóhannsson, or in the first 25 seconds of *The Flood Is Following Me* by Caroline Shaw.

Programme note

This is a piece about geometry, tape saturation, the double bass, oatcakes, the Studer A80 tape machine, motion, meteorology, cassettes, vocoders, felt, noise, cinema sound systems, kaleidoscopes, dance, wow-and-flutter, London streets, radioactivity, film grain, and the Sylvan Esso song, *Make It Easy*.

KM
London, November 2023



Please note: This score has been edited since the workshop recording.

Magnetic Ribbon

for EXAUDI

Kit McCarthy

Soft, fragile (♩ = c.168)

The score is for a vocal ensemble in 4/4 time. The tempo is marked 'Soft, fragile' with a quarter note equal to approximately 168 beats per minute. The key signature is one flat (B-flat major or D minor). The score consists of eight staves, each for a different voice part. Soprano 1 and Soprano 2 have rests for the first five measures, followed by a melodic line in the sixth measure. Mezzo-soprano has a melodic line starting in the third measure. Countertenor, Tenor 1, and Tenor 2 have melodic lines starting in the first measure. Baritone and Bass have rests throughout. Dynamics include *ppp* (pianissimo) and *mm* (mezzo-moderato). Performance instructions include 'exhale' with an arrow and 'shh' with a hand icon. Some notes are marked with a circled 'x'.

7 faint whistling, like the wind

S. 1

S. 2 half-whistle (ord.) *p*
n'n'na

M.-S. *ppp* (ord.) *pp*
mm *ab* *mm*

Ct. *pp* *ppp*
mm *n'n'na*

T. 1 *n'n'na* *mm*

T. 2 half-whistle *mp*

Bar. *ppp* half-whistle faint whistling, like the wind

B.

13 (ord.) *p*

S. 2 *mm* "as I watch" "above the coast, everyone thinks" *mm*

S. 2 *ppp* *mm* *n'n'na*

M-S. *ppp* *mm* *n'n'na* *mm* af -

Ct. *pp* "built for repetition" all this

T. 1 *mm* af - ter *mm* *p*

T. 2 *ppp* *p* "glancing across the sea" faint whistling, like the wind

Bar. *p* "you still have a sting" *ppp* (whistling)

B.

19

S. 1 *ppp*
mm *n'n'na*

S. 2 *mm*

M-S. *ppp*
 - ter af - - - ter af - ter

Ct. *ppp*
 time *mm*

T. 1 *ppp* *mp*
n'n'na *mm*

T. 2 (ord.)
 "and then watch as you" af - - - ter af - - -

Bar.

B.

25 *mp*

S. 1 *mm* *n'n'na* *mm*

S. 2 this time *n'n'na*

M-S. *mm* *mm* *mp* this

Ct. *mm* *mm* af - - - ter

T. 1 *ppp* *p* "than someone telling you" "fluttering, magnetic ribbon"

T. 2 - - - ter all this

Bar. *p* "you've got a frequency"

B. *p* "it's close at hand"

B Becoming warm

30 *ppp*

S. 1 "will there be any" af - - - ter all

S. 2 *mp ppp* af - ter all this time *mf*

M.S. *ppp* n'n'na af - ter all n'n'na *mp ppp*

Ct. *ppp* n'n'na just a - - - fraid *p* 3

T. 8 "I remember that" then *p*

T. 2 *mp ppp* n'n'na

Bar. *ppp* (ord.) "holding memories before" af - - - ter all

B. *ppp* af - - - ter all 3

37 *mf* *ppp*

S. 1 *mm* *n'n'na*

S. 2 *ppp* *mm* af - ter all this time af -

M-S. af - ter all this time af -

Ct. *ppp* that I'm fall

T. 1 *ppp* af - ter all time

T. 2 af - - - ter all this time

Bar. *mp* *ppp* this time del - - - i -

B. *ppp* this time then af - - - ter

C rit.

42

S. 1 *f* *mp* *ppp*
af - ter all this time *mm*

S. 2 *f* *ppp*
- - - ter *mm*

M-S. *f* *ppp* *p*
- ter all "and some of it was sort of in between the two"

Ct. *f* *ppp*
n'n'na

T. 1 *f* *mp*
just a - fraid fall

T. 2 *f* *ppp*
n'n'na

Bar. *f* *ppp*
- - - cate tape

B. *f*
this

49 - - - **D** Peaceful (♩ = c.132)

S. 1 *mm* *af* *p*

S. 2 *n'n'na*

M-S. *ppp* *if* *mm* *n'n'na*

Ct. *ppp* *if* *n'n'na* *if*

T. 1 *ppp* *if* *this* *if*

T. 2 *ppp* (faint whistling) (ord.) *if*

Bar. *ppp* *mp* *shh*

B. *ppp* *if* *this* *if*

56

S. 1

ter if

S. 2

n'n'na if

M.-S.

n'n'na if

Ct.

this if

T. 1

if

T. 2

this

Bar.

ppp (ord.)

this

B.

this if

E Exploratory (♩ = c.152)

63

ppp *p*

S. 1 this af - ter the flood

S. 2 this

M.S. this we

Ct. this we

T. 1 this

T. 2

Bar. this

B. this

Detailed description: This is a page of a musical score for an 'Exploratory' section, measures 63-68. The tempo is marked as c.152. The score features seven vocal parts: Soprano 1 (S. 1), Soprano 2 (S. 2), Mezzo-Soprano (M.S.), Contralto (Ct.), Tenor 1 (T. 1), Tenor 2 (T. 2), Baritone (Bar.), and Bass (B.). The music is in 4/4 time and begins with a dynamic of *ppp* (pianississimo) in measure 63, which then changes to *p* (piano) in measure 64. S. 1 has a triplet of eighth notes in measure 64. The lyrics are: 'this' (measures 63-64), 'af - ter the flood' (measures 65-68). S. 2, M.S., Ct., T. 1, Bar., and B. all sing 'this' in measures 63-64. M.S. and Ct. sing 'we' in measures 65-68. T. 2 and all other parts are silent in measures 65-68.

70

S. 1 *f*
we _____ draw _____ draw

S. 2 *mp*
"and we recorded it on to two-inch tape"

M-S. *f*
draw sea birds out

Ct. *f*
draw crea tures out in

T. 1 *mp* *f*
"if eyes could stop them" sand

T. 2 *mp* *f*
"and you both say, sitting here in the sun" sand

Bar. *mp* *f*
"and I'm just afraid that I'm" sand

B. *f*
sand

F ♩ = c.120 *accel.*

S. 1 *ff*
 sea - birds sketch them

S. 2 *ff*
 sand sketch them

M.S. *f* *p* *ff*
 sea - birds sketch

Ct. *f* *p* *ff*
 sea - birds sketch

T. 1 *p* *ff*
 just a - fraid

T. 2 *p*

Bar. *p*

B.

G Bright (♩ = c.152)

82

S. 1 *p* *ff* *pp*
 on - - - ly

S. 2 *p* *ff* *pp* *ff*
 out in if on - ly a - way

M.S. *p* *ff* *pp* *ff*
 this was on - - - ly a - way

Ct. *p* *ff* *pp* *ff*
 them on - - - ly fly a - way

T. 1 *p* *ff* *pp* *ff*
 on - - - - - ly a - way

T. 2 *p* *ff* *pp* *ff*
 sketch them out fly a - way

Bar. *ff*
 on - ly if

B. *ff*
 on - ly if

87

S. 1 *f* *pp* *f*
 n'n'na if

S. 2 *pp* *ff*
 could come from the sky could

M.S. *pp* *ff*
 fre - quen - cy sky they

Ct. *pp* *f*
 if they

T. 1 *pp* *f* *pp*
 they could could

T. 2 *pp* *f* *pp*
 they could they

Bar. *pp* *f* *mf*
 they could "you worried 'cause of many things"

B. *pp* *f* *mf*
 they could "in which the water"

S. 1 *pp* they _____ sky _____ *ff* *pp*

S. 2 *pp* _____ from _____ sky _____ *ff*

M.S. *pp* _____ could come from the sky _____ then _____ *ff*

Ct. *pp* _____ fre - quen - cy _____ fall _____ on _____ *ff*

T. 1 _____ come _____ from _____ from _____ the _____ *ppp* *ff*

T. 2 _____ sky _____ tape _____ *ff* *p* *3*

Bar. _____ from _____ if _____ *p* *ff*

B. _____ from _____ mag - _____ *p* *ff*

97

S. 1 *f* *pp*
 then

S. 2 *ppp* *f* *p* *mf* *ppp*
 if *mm*

M.S. *ppp* *f*
 on - ly math - e - ma - tics

Ct. *ppp* *p* *mf* *ppp*
 to two inch tape *mm*

T. 1 *ppp* *p* *mf* *ppp*
 sky *mm*

T. 2 *f*
 on - ly math - e - ma -

Bar. *ppp* *pp* *mf* *ppp*
 this was all *mm*

B. *ppp* *f* *ppp*
 - ne - tic on - ly math - e - ma - tics

H

Becoming faded, dusty

accel.

103

S. 1

sand _____ and sha- dows _____

S. 2

all _____

M-S.

ppp

and _____

Ct.

T. 1

af -

T. 2

ppp

tics _____ mag -

Bar.

B.

109

S. 1 *f* *p* *f*
light then

S. 2 *f*
we draw sea - birds out in

M-S. *f*
then we draw sea - birds out

Ct. *pp* *f* *pp*
I'm just a- fraid that

T. 1 *f* *pp*
- - - ter all this time

T. 2 *f* *pp*
- - - - - tic tape mag - ne-

Bar. *pp* *f*
this might

B. *pp* *f*
this might

114 *p* *f*

S. 1 _____ and _____ we _____ both _____ say _____

S. 2 *pp* *mp*
 the _____ sand _____ and _____ if _____

M-S. *pp* *mm*
 in _____ sand _____ then _____

Ct. *mm*
 I'm _____ fal - - - ling _____

T. 1 _____ this _____ was _____

T. 2 _____ tic _____ tape _____ say _____

Bar. _____

B. _____

J Dreamy, nostalgic (♩ = c.152)

120

S. 1 *mp* *ppp* *mp*
n'n'na

S. 2 *p* *ppp*
 "it never really worked like that, but then" *n'n'na*

M.S. *ppp*
 just a -

Ct. *ppp* *p*
 and I'm "but after all this time, you still"

T. 1 *mm* *ppp*
n'n'na

T. 2 *ppp*
 del - i -

Bar. *p* *ppp*
 my bones are all

B. *p* *ppp*
 my bones are all mag -

126

S. 1 *ppp* *mp* *ppp*
n'n'na *mm*

S. 2 *mp* *ppp*
 lift me

M.S. *3* *3*
 fraid that I'm fall - ling then

Ct. ("but after all this time, you still")
 watch you leave *mm*

T. 1 *p*
 "and we recorded it on to two-inch tape" sa - tu - rate *n'n'na*

T. 2
 - cate mag - ne -

Bar. lift me twist

B. *3*
 - ne - tic tape all the pic -

K accel.

132

S. 1 *pp* that this was the mo - ment I'd

S. 2 *mm* this was

M-S. *> ppp* just a -

Ct.

T. 1

T. 2 - tic

Bar. *p* "you still have a sting"

B. - tures

(accel.)

138 *mp* *pp*

S. 1
— been wai - ting for that this — was — the mo - ment

S. 2
the mo - ment — I'd — been —

M.S.
- - fraid — that — I'm — fal -

Ct.

T. 1

T. 2

Bar.

B.

(accel.)

L Between L and N, gradually become bright, harsh, electronic...

144

S. 1 *mf*
I'd been waiting for my bones are

S. 2 *p* *mp*
waiting for my

M-S. *mp* *p*
ling after the flood I'm just a-fraid that I'm slee- ping

Ct. *ppp* *mp*
af - ter the flood

T. 1 *ppp* *mp*
af - ter all this time

T. 2 *ppp*
and af - - - ter

Bar.

B.

(accel.)

M

150 *p* steady cresc.

S. 1
twis - ting and _____ then if this _____ was _____ on - ly _____

p steady cresc.

S. 2
_____ bones _____ this _____ was _____

steady cresc.

M-S.
_____ my _____ bones _____ are _____ twis - ting in _____ my _____

p steady cresc.

Ct.
the pic - - tures keep chan - ging let _____

p steady cresc.

T. 1
_____ this was _____ the _____ mo - ment I'd _____ been wai - ting _____ for

mp *p* steady cresc.

T. 2
_____ all this _____ time _____ my _____ bones

ppp steady cresc.

Bar.
all _____ the _____ pic - tures keep _____ chan - ging _____ in _____ the

ppp steady cresc.

B.
and _____ if _____ this

(accel.)

155

S. 1 *(mf)* 3
 ___ math - e - ma - tics_ then_ what_ if_ they_ could_ come

S. 2 *(mf)*
 ___ the mo - - ment_ I'd been_ math -

M-S. *(mf)* 3 3
 ___ skin_ and_ if_ this_ was_ on -

Ct. *(mf)*
 ___ it crush and_ cra - ckle_ on-

T. 1 *(mf)* 3 3
 and for_ the first time_ they_ could come_ from the

T. 2 *(mf)* 3
 ___ are all mag - ne - tic_ tape_

Bar. *(mf)* 3
 sun and the_ win - dows are bur - ning

B. *(mf)*
 was the_ mo - ment_ I'd_ been_ wai

(accel.)

N Harsh (♩ = c.192)

160

S. 1
 from the sky and they here in

S. 2
 e - ma - tics not an

M-S.
 ly e - choes

Ct.
 ly don't let

T. 1
 sky they could come from the and

T. 2
 for just

Bar.
 up in the sun and they e -

B.
 ting e -

O Suddenly
warm again

167

pp *ff*

S. 1 the sun in the

pp *ff*

S. 2 e - scape in if

pp *ff*

M-S. start to in the sun burn sun

pp *ff*

Ct. them hear the sun you

pp *ff*

T. 1 you say in the sun

pp *ff*

T. 2 a - fraid sun and

pp *ff*

Bar. - choes start in the sun in the

pp *ff*

B. - choes start in the sun

175

S. 1
p *ff* *ppp* 3
 sketch in sand then we're glow - ing now

S. 2
p *ff* *ppp*
 sketch in sand then we're glow - ing

M-S.
p *ff* *ppp*
 sketch sand then glow -

Ct.
p *ff* *ppp*
 sketch in sand then glow -

T. 1
p *ff* *ppp*
 sketch in then glow

T. 2
p *ff* *ppp*
 sketch in then glow

Bar.
ppp
 sun glow glow

B.
ppp
 if glow glow

181 *f*

S. 1
we're

S. 2
now we're glow - - ing *f*

M-S.
- ing now e - choes start to burn *f*

Ct.
- - - - ing now we're glow - ing *f*

T. 1
e - choes start to burn we're *f* *p*

T. 2
e - choes burn glow and mag - ne - tic tape *f* *p*

Bar.
e - - - choes start to burn in the sun *f*

B.
e - - - choes start to *f*

Q

185 *p* *ff* *mp* *ff*

S. 1 glow - ing now e - choes start _____ and _____

S. 2 *p* *ff* *mp* *ff*
glow - ing I re - - mem - ber _____ now _____

M-S. *p* *ff* *mp* *ff*
glow - ing I re - - mem - ber _____ now _____

Ct. *p* *ff* *mp* *ff*
then I re - - mem - ber _____ in _____

T. 1 *ff*
glow - ing _____ now e - - choes _____ start _____ and _____

T. 2 *ff*
_____ glow - ing e - choes _____ burn _____

Bar. *ff*
e - choes _____ start _____ and _____

B. *ff*
e - choes _____ start _____ to _____

193

S. 1 *f* *fff* *f*
 there's just and there's just time

S. 2 *f* *fff* *f*
 there's on - ly time there's on - ly time

M.S. *f* *fff* *f*
 there's all this time there's on - ly time

Ct. *f* *fff* *f*
 there's on - ly time there's on - ly time

T. 1 *f* *fff* *f*
 it's too long and it's too late time

T. 2 *f* *fff* *f*
 on - ly glow in on - ly glow in

Bar. *f* *fff* *f*
 there's on - ly time there's on - ly time

B. *f* *fff* *f*
 there's all this time there's so much light

R Back to the start. Soft, fragile, melancholy...

202

S. 1 I knew

S. 2 the sun

M-S. I'm just

Ct. the sun

T. 1 I could

T. 2 the sun

Bar. I could

B. do I

Dynamic markings: *fff*, *ppp*, *mm*

S

211

S. 1
glow glow

S. 2
leave glow

M.S.
glow glow n'n'na

Ct.
leave glow n'n'na

T. 1
glow n'n'na

T. 2
n'n'na n'n'na

Bar.
glow

B.
light

S. 1

glow _____ and _____ then

S. 2

glow _____ *n'n'na* _____ and _____ then

M-S.

_____ glow _____ and _____ then

Ct.

_____ *n'n'na* _____

T. 1

_____ *n'n'na* _____

T. 2

_____ *n'n'na* _____

Bar.

_____ *n'n'na* _____

B.

_____ and _____ then

229

pppp
short inhale

S. 1

"time, I didn't tell
anyone I was" glow

Detailed description: This staff shows the vocal line for Soprano 1. It begins with a whole rest for the first two measures, followed by a half rest in the third measure. In the fourth measure, the vocal line resumes with a half note G4, which is tied to the next measure. The lyrics "time, I didn't tell anyone I was" are written below the first three measures, and "glow" is written below the tied note. The staff concludes with a fermata over the final note and a double bar line.

pppp
short inhale

S. 2

n'n'na glow

Detailed description: This staff shows the vocal line for Soprano 2. It features a melodic line starting with a quarter note G4, followed by a half note A4, and then a half note B4. The lyrics "n'n'na" are written below the first three notes. The staff continues with a half rest in the fourth measure, followed by a half note G4 tied to the next measure. The lyrics "glow" are written below the tied note. The staff concludes with a fermata over the final note and a double bar line.

pppp
short inhale

M-S.

glow

Detailed description: This staff shows the vocal line for Mezzo-Soprano. It begins with a whole rest for the first two measures, followed by a half rest in the third measure. In the fourth measure, the vocal line resumes with a half note G4, which is tied to the next measure. The lyrics "glow" are written below the tied note. The staff concludes with a fermata over the final note and a double bar line.

pppp
short inhale

Ct.

n'n'na

Detailed description: This staff shows the vocal line for Contralto. It features a melodic line starting with a quarter note G4, followed by a half note A4, and then a half note B4. The lyrics "n'n'na" are written below the first three notes. The staff continues with a half rest in the fourth measure, followed by a half note G4 tied to the next measure. The staff concludes with a fermata over the final note and a double bar line.

pppp
short inhale

T. 1

n'n'na

Detailed description: This staff shows the vocal line for Tenor 1. It features a melodic line starting with a quarter note G4, followed by a half note A4, and then a half note B4. The lyrics "n'n'na" are written below the first three notes. The staff continues with a half rest in the fourth measure, followed by a half note G4 tied to the next measure. The staff concludes with a fermata over the final note and a double bar line.

pppp
short inhale

T. 2

n'n'na

Detailed description: This staff shows the vocal line for Tenor 2. It features a melodic line starting with a quarter note G4, followed by a half note A4, and then a half note B4. The lyrics "n'n'na" are written below the first three notes. The staff continues with a half rest in the fourth measure, followed by a half note G4 tied to the next measure. The staff concludes with a fermata over the final note and a double bar line.

pppp
short inhale

Bar.

Detailed description: This staff shows the vocal line for Baritone. It begins with a whole rest for the first two measures, followed by a half rest in the third measure. In the fourth measure, the vocal line resumes with a half note G4, which is tied to the next measure. The staff concludes with a fermata over the final note and a double bar line.

pppp
short inhale

B.

Detailed description: This staff shows the vocal line for Bass. It begins with a whole rest for the first two measures, followed by a half rest in the third measure. In the fourth measure, the vocal line resumes with a half note G4, which is tied to the next measure. The staff concludes with a fermata over the final note and a double bar line.