

**Full Score**

# **Transmission Fog**

**For Soprano, Viola, and  
Recorded Obbligato Ensemble**

***by Aidan Gold***

*Duration: 6 – 8 minutes*

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# Instrumentation

Soprano (A3-A5, + opt. whistling E5-C6)

Viola

Recorded Obligato Ensemble:

Multitracked Trombone

Piano (opt. multitracking)

The following strings should be accessible: the lowest ~8 strings, E1, F1, A1, E2, A2, E3, A3, and the highest ~8 strings

Multitracked Percussion:

Timpani (32", 29", and 26") + the following Crotales to be placed on Timpani:  
C4, E4, F#4, G4, and A4, all sounding 15ma

Vibraphone

Sizzle Cymbal

Suspended Cymbal

China Cymbal

Tam-tam

Bass Drum

Fixed Media and Live Processing

## Performance Notes

From D until I, the Soprano and Violist should both be sending their audio through the Max Patch associated with this piece, which will process and send their sound out through Audiomovers. See the guide associated with the patch for detailed instructions on how to use it. The processed sound is then sent to the other musician. The Soprano and Violist should not be able to hear each other's dry sound, just their processed sound. In letters D and E, one of the musicians (the Soprano at D and the Viola at E) chooses one of their associated melodic fragments (found at the end of the score) randomly. It is then processed by one of eight different random sets of effects, and the result will be different every time. The other musician must then attempt to copy what they hear to the best of their ability. Their imperfect copy will then be processed in a similarly random manner and sent back to the first musician. The score notates passing the fragment 4 times each, but the performers may decide to elongate or shorten the section and pass the fragment back and forth more/fewer times if desired.

From letter G until I, the Soprano and Violist should freely play without regard to staying together with each other or the ensemble. They do not necessarily have to enter directly at G.

## Program Note

Communication has always been, in some ways, a struggle. We construct imperfect representations of our lived experiences that we tell as stories to each other. We use language and art to attempt to express thoughts, feelings, ideas, and concepts that in many ways defy representation in those mediums. We use these words as our primary way of transmitting information between us. However, these words are only abstract signs for the concepts they represent. There is always distance between what we want to express and our means of expression – a fog that blurs and obscures the transmission of meaning.

Now, during the pandemic, most of our communication occurs through the medium of a screen. Everything we try to communicate must be recorded by a microphone, digitized, and then transmitted across a huge gulf of space to arrive at our receiver's location before it is played back. Much can be lost in this transmission as our audio is compressed into packets of data sent across a network. It is also very fragile, requiring a stable internet connection on both ends. The refrain of "Can you hear me?" is now heard endlessly in Zoom meetings around the world as this connection is broken and reestablished, as voices come in and out of existence. Sometimes we can hear them clearly, and sometimes we can barely discern and recognize their voices through the fog of transmission.

I wrote this piece as a response to the struggle of communication during the pandemic. I had already been experimenting with various methods of remote live performance using Audiomovers, to try to capture some of the feeling of making music in person together while distanced. I wanted to try to create a type of musical interaction that was unique to our situation, with performers in Los Angeles, Seattle, New York, and Europe. The piece features two principal performers – a singer and a violist, who perform above a pre-recorded soundscape of instruments and electronics. These two performers perform the piece live, but in such a manner that they cannot hear each other directly. Instead, their sound is processed using a Max/MSP patch that does various spectral, timbral, and melodic transformations on their audio, which is then sent to the other performer. Thus, what the other performer hears is just the transmission fog – a distorted echo of the other part. In the central section of the piece, one of the two performers picks a melodic fragment randomly chosen from a set and performs it. The other performer then hears the processed version and attempts to imitate what they hear as closely as possible, given the limitations of their instrument (this is another imperfect transmission). That is then processed and sent back to the first performer. They continue having this dialogue for several minutes, trying to imitate each other and react in real time to each other based only on the foggy echo that they can hear. The vocalist's text is the phrase "Can you hear me?", but fragmented, split into individual vowel sounds, and reordered. It only becomes understandable at the very end of the piece, when the vocalist sings it as a distant, repeated chant as the music dissolves into the fog.

# Transmission Fog

Aidan Gold

Glowing ♩ = 80

+ = cup hand over mouth, muffling voice  
o = remove hand from in front of mouth, normal voice

ppp mf ppp

[m] - - - - [i] - - - - [m]

(smoothly transition between humming and vowel sounds)

wooden mute  
molto sul tasto

pizz.  
♩

pp < mf

fff  
♩

on keys  
(random, irreg. rhythms)

(mute str. w/r.h.)

pp f p

pp

low metal explosive sound  
sf + random cym, gong, tamtam strikes

pp

low ped. tone

wind  
pp

7

ppp f ppp

[u] - - - - [m] - - - - [a] [m] [u]

ppp

pp

p mf

(random, irreg. rhythms)

(mute str. w/r.h.)

pp f p

pp

pp

pp

pp

pp

Transmission Fog

sul tasto-----sul pont.

12

Va. *mf* *pp* *gliss.* **A**

Tbn. *p* *mf* *mp* *mf* (Trombone multitrack) *p* *mf* *mp*

Pno. *mf* *pizz.* *pp* *f* grad. increase speed

(Xed.)

Timp. *p* *p*

B. Dr. *p* *mp* hard yarn mallet

Tam. *p* *mp*

Ch. Cym. *mf* *p*

Sus. Cym. *p* *mp* *p*

Siz. Cym. *p* *mp* *ppp* *mp* *f* *pp* wind

Elec. *pp* *f* *pp*

19

Tbn. *mf* *mf* *f* *mf* *f* *f* *f* *f* (Trombone multitrack) *mp* *mf* *mf* *f* *f* *f* *f*

Pno. *mf* *f* *f* *f* on keys

(Xed.)

Timp. *p* *mp* *mf* *f*

B. Dr. *mf* *f*

Tam. *mf* *f*

Ch. Cym. *p* *pp* *mp* *pp* *mf*

Sus. Cym. *p* *pp* *mp* *pp*

Elec. *pp* *pp* *pp*

Transmission Fog

**B**

25

Va. *senza sord.*

Tbn. (unis.) *ff brilliant* *pizz.* *fff*

Pno *fff* *on keys*

Timp. *mf* *gliss.* *ff*

B. Dr. *ff*

Tam. *f* *ord. mallet*

Ch. Cym. *pp* *f*

Sus. Cym. *mf*

Elec. *f* *thunderclap*

random harm. gliss up and down C str. *rit.* *dim.* *pp*

ord. - sul pont. - m.s.p. - on bridge (no tone)

**C** *Misterioso* ♩ = 60

Va. *pp*

Tbn. *p*

Pno *strum high str. up and down* *15<sup>ma</sup>* *gliss.* *gliss.*

Crot. *on timp. (gliss. ped. freely)* *arco* *mf* *repeat freely & sporatically using these pitches*

Vib. *pppp*

B. Dr. *p* *ppp*

Tam. *pp* *mf* *pp*

Sus. Cym. *pp* *mf* *pp*

Siz. Cym. *p*

Elec. *pp* *misc. random high bell-like sounds, + wind, + resonant filter tmb. sound*

Transmission Fog

**D** Length of the fermatas between statements/imitations are up to the performers-  
Conversation listen to the flow of the dialogue between Sopr. and Vla. and judge accordingly.  
Choose randomly from  
Soprano Melodic Fragments (at end of score)

Musical score for measures 33-34. The Soprano part (Sopr.) begins with a melodic fragment marked 'FRAGMENT' and is followed by three 'COPY' markings. The Viola part (Vla.) begins with a 'COPY' marking and is followed by two more 'COPY' markings. Dashed arrows labeled 'listen & imitate' connect the Soprano and Viola parts. The Tbn., Pno., Crot., Vib., and Elec. parts are marked 'cont. ad lib.'. The Elec. part includes the instruction 'resonant filter: take frequency from pitch tracker for voice/vla slowed down'.

**E** Choose randomly from  
Viola Fragments (at end of score)

Musical score for measures 34-35. The Soprano part (Sopr.) begins with a 'COPY' marking and is followed by two more 'COPY' markings. The Viola part (Vla.) begins with a melodic fragment marked 'FRAGMENT' and is followed by two 'COPY' markings. Dashed arrows labeled 'listen & imitate' connect the Soprano and Viola parts. The Tbn., Pno., Crot., Vib., and Elec. parts are marked 'cont. ad lib.'. The score ends with a double bar line and a 4/4 time signature.

# Transmission Fog

F

move smoothly from air to pitch & back

Flowing ♩ = 92

35

Tbn. *mp* *p* *sf* *p*

Pno. on keys (random, irreg. rhythms) *pp cresc. poco a poco* *f dim.*

Crot.

Vib.

Tam. *ppp*

Ch. Cym. *p*

Sus. Cym. *mf*

Siz. Cym. *p*

Elec. waves and wind *p cresc. / dim. at random*

## G Freely (for Sopr. and Va.) ♩ = c. 60-72

49

Sopr. *f molto espr.* *p* *f* *p* *f*

Can you hear me? Can you hear I me? sul tasto

Va. *sf* *f molto espr.* *p* *f*

Tbn. *sf* *p* *sf* *p* *sf*

Pno. *pp cresc. poco a poco* *f dim.*

Timp.

B. Dr.

Tam.

Ch. Cym.

Sus. Cym. *mf*

Siz. Cym. *p*

Elec.



Transmission Fog

148

Sopr. *mf sost.* Can you hear me? *f* *p* *p <*

Va. *gliss.* *mf sost.* ord. sul pont. ord. III II III II I II III *f* *gliss.* *p*

Tbn. *p* *sf* *p* *sf*

Pno. *p cresc.* *f dim.*

Ch. Cym. *mf*

Siz. Cym. *mp*

Elec.

152

Sopr. *ff* *mp* *f* you hear me?

Va. *p* *ff* *p* ord. *gliss.* *gliss.* *sul tasto*

Tbn. *p* *sf* *p* *sf*

Pno. *p cresc.* *f dim.*

Ch. Cym.

Sus. Cym.

Siz. Cym. *mf*

Elec.

Transmission Fog

[55] **H** **Flowing** ♩ = 92

Sopr. *p* Can you hear me? *2-6 sec.*

Va. *sf* *pp* *2-6 sec.* **Flowing** ♩ = 92

Tbn. *p sf p sf p sf p sf* ord.-----growl--

Pno. *p mf p* palm on low str. *8ba. cresc. poco a poco 8ba. 8ba.*

B. Dr. *pp p*

Ch. Cym. *mp p*

Sus. Cym. *p*

Elec. Bell sound *pp p mp*

[60] **I**

Sopr. [Silence]

Va. scratch tone-----ord. m.s.p. sul pont.-----ord.-----sul tasto *fff mp ppp*

Tbn. (growl)-ord. ord.---growl---ord. ord.---growl ord. *p p ff p p fff mf p*

Pno. *8ba. f 8ba. 8ba. 8ba. f p pp*

Timp. *ff mf p ppp*

B. Dr. *mf f pp ff f mp pp*

Tam. *p mf ff mf p pp*

Elec. distant thunder *mf f ff f dim. pp*

Transmission Fog

70 **J** Distant, regretful  $\text{♩} = 60$  *p* chant-like; senza vib. *pp*

Sopr. Can you hear me? Can you hear\_me? Can you\_ hear me? Can you\_

Tbn. blow air blow air through instrument *ppp* *p*

Pno. pizz. *mf* *mp* *p*  
(*scd.*)

Crot. move timp. ped freely arco *pp* *ppp*

B. Dr. *ppp*

Tam. *ppp*

Elec. low synth + quiet spectral freeze of vocal part grad. denoise freeze until it disappears *ppp*

81 *pp* *ppp poss.*

Sopr. \_hear me? Can you hear me?

Va. *ppp*

Pno. *ppp* on keys *ppp*

Crot.

Vib. *ppp*

B. Dr.

Elec.



# Viola Melodic Fragments

Viola

♩ = 60  
II sul tasto

*p* < *mf* < *sf* > *pp*

---

2

♩ = 80  
pizz.  
molto vib. col legno

*f* *f* < *pp*

---

3

♩ = 60 (seagull) II (seagull)

*mf*

---

4

♩ = 60

*f*

ord.-----sul pont.-----ord.-----sul pont.-----ord.

*fpp*

---

5

♩ = 60  
IV

*p* *pp*

---

6

♩ = 60  
wooden mute  
IV sul tasto

*p* molto espr.

---

7

♩ = 60  
ord.-----sul pont.-----sul tasto

*p* 3 *sf* 3 *mf* espr.

---

8

♩ = 60  
IV (harm. gliss) III ord.-----sul tasto

*sfp* < *f* molto espr.

---

9

♩ = 92  
3 III III II

*f* < *p* < *f* > *p* *p* < *f* 3 *sf* > *pp*

---

10

♩ = 60

*mf* espr.