

Two New Proposals for an Overland Telegraph Line from Port Darwin to Port Augusta, from the Perspective of Alice Springs

for piano and pre-recorded electronics, by Erkki Veltheim (2015)

Commissioned by Gabriella Smart

Duration: 58'43"

The piano part consists of the following repeated Morse code pattern played as a dyad using the pitches Eb4 (311.13 Hz) and A6 (1760 Hz):

.. / .. - . / - - - / - . / . - .. / - . - - / - ... / . - . / . - / - .. /
.. - .. / . / - . - - / . - - - - . / ... / . - / . - . / - - / . - - / . - / ... /
.. - .. / - - - / - . / - - . / . / . - . / . - . - . - / - ... / . / ... / - /
.. - - . / ... / - - - / - / - - - / . / ... - / . / . - . / . - . - . - / ... /
.. - / ... / ... / - / . - / - - . / - - - / ... / - . - . / . - / . - . / ... /

This Morse code pattern is based on the most retweeted tweet (as reported on 13 January 2015), originally tweeted by Ellen DeGeneres on 3 March 2014: *If only Bradley's arm was longer. Best photo ever. [#oscars](#)*

This piece employs a modified Morse code, with the following rules:

short mark, dot (.) : 'dot duration'

longer mark, dash (-) : two dot durations

gap between each dot and/or dash : one dot duration UNLESS separated by a slash (/) : two dot durations

Imitate as closely as possible the rhythm of the Morse code pattern on the Eb4/A6 dyad in the pre-recorded electronics part. The speed of this pattern gradually increases throughout, from a 'dot duration' of 125 ms (16th note at 120 BPM) to 97 ms (16th note at 154.6 BPM). Repeat this Morse code until 58'12.5", then play a single sustained Eb4/A6 dyad until 58'40" and stop. (The sustain pedal should not be used at any point.)

Alternatively, use the score with the Morse code translated into conventional notation. Note that the section inclusive of bars 1-55 is played 70 times in total. On the 70th iteration, bar 50 leads into the coda. Vertical lines and triangles above the staff are included as a visual aid, marking pulse groups of, respectively, 2 and 3 semiquavers. The difference between 16th-note and 8th-note articulation should be made as clear as possible.

A 'guide' (mono) audio track can be used as an aid in performance. It consists of 2 empty bars of click in 4/4 at 120BPM followed by the unprocessed Morse code pattern on the Eb4/A6 dyad from the electronics part, which the piano part imitates. A triangle sounds as a cue for each iteration of the pattern (ie. each bar 1), and a whistle sounds as a cue in bar 48 of the 70th iteration, two bars before the jump to the coda. The guide audio track should only be played through headphones, and should not be audible to the audience. The pre-recorded electronics part is a stereo audio track and contains 4 seconds of silence at the beginning to match the duration of the click in the guide audio track. The guide and electronics tracks can thus be synchronised to begin together on a multitrack playback device.

Either an upright or a grand piano can be used, in any state of repair. The piano should be amplified to match the dynamic of the electronics. The use of a subwoofer is recommended.

