



No. 7558

DILLON

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Vapor

for 4 voices (SATB) and string quartet

James Dillon

Vapor

Liber Materia. . . ab de rerum natura

for 4 voices (SATB) and String Quartet

1999

Edition Peters

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COMMENTS :

1) The text is taken from Lucretius' great epic/didactic poem *De Rerum Natura* (which dates from around c.90 BC) in which he expounds the theories of the Greek philosopher Epicurus. The first principle of Epicurean physical theory is that "nothing is created out of nothing" and Lucretius begins his work with an exposition of atomic theory and sweeps through (in six books) to the formation of matter, the mind and sensation, thought, astronomy and onto the composition of atmospheres. Epicurus emphasized that physics must always be subservient to ethics separating his work from (the earlier) Democritus.

2) The title refers to its descriptive usage in the *De Reum Naturawhere* vapor is described as both 'substance benign and malignant', but also to Keats' use of the term as 'poetic influence'. The subtitle refers to one derivation of the Italian term madrigal; *materia* in Latin can mean either 'matter', 'substance' or 'character', but also maintains links with *mater*, mother interpreted as in 'mother tongue'. The subtitle here may be translated as 'Book of Madrigals' or perhaps 'Book of Characters' the ambiguity is maintained. The setting of the original Latin in some ways serves to create both distance and proximity with the text. It could be argued that at times the language of the modern scientist is closer to Lucretius' choice of poetics to describe rational observation than we suspect. Part of the tension of the Lucretius lies as much with the use of poetry as a vehicle of rational exposition here I retwist the language poised between the descriptive and its physical presence - my concern is with a kind of *vocal aura* (vapor) or leakage (the superposition of text and music invokes the mutual destruction of the early vocal compositions known as *contrafactum* where the overlay of text and music are interchangeable with alternatives).

3) The *Liber materia . . .* is arranged in the form of eight tableaux which follow each other in succession I - VIII, and with varying lengths of time between. The duration of these breaks will be left to the performers' discretion - but should be decided in advance and rehearsed. The one exception is between nos. II & III (see below). On no account must the interval between tableaux be used simply for the turning of pages and other adjustments it is essential that the atmosphere *entre-temps* is held, and all practical strategies for 'performance' are an integral part of rehearsals.

4) No special attempt should be made to emphasize the pronunciation of the text, since it is contentious just how this ancient Latin should in fact sound. Rather a more impressionistic approach is desirable either by occupying the phonetic structure as a chain of sound events at one extreme, or at the other by imposing a particular pronunciation on the text based upon linguistic research; in the manner of some early music vocal ensembles (for ex. Organum or Gothic Voices). The 'character' and degree of approach should change from movement to movement and must carry some musical and dramatic consistency. Perhaps the more interesting approach will slip continuously and spontaneously between the phonetics and the semantics of the text.

cont.

5) Both ensembles are always without vibrato (unless otherwise stated) or at the very least should minimize vibrato to smallest amount possible to sustain an intensity of sound. Whilst the atmosphere of each of the eight works are quite distinct ranging from the playful to the more circumspect it is necessary that the singers try to express these outside of the sugar-coated confines of 'over-trained' voices.

6) In II the voices at the beginning (where marked) must select extracts from the Lucretius text for recitation. The actual extracts are to be chosen by the individual singers. It is however important to read from a translation of the original in the mother tongue of the performer - for ex German singer/German text etc. The reading should be a little eccentric - whispered, conversational and slightly exaggerated in expression. This recitation begins with the four voices and is without measure for the given duration, the Alto and Bass continue without a break into the measured music as indicated.

At the end of II and into III there is a stated *Attacca* which will in effect mean that the SQ will begin Tableaux III whilst the Bass voice continues the end of II ; the bass voice must then pick up his later entry in III.

7) At the end of VIII the 4 singers each have a small cluster of Indian Bells - for ex, as worn around the wrists and ankles of Indian dancers - the bells must be kept out of sight but in a playable position. Each of the initial (notated) impulses should be executed by gentle but firm attacks perhaps into the palm of the hand. Gradually the impulses get quicker and out of phase until there is one continuous texture. It is important that this action is discreet and without unnecessary gesture- the 4 singers end together and a little later than the quartet.

Suggested staging for the 2 ensembles (may need some modification from space to space) :-

Bass
Tenor
Alto
Soprano

Viola
V'cello

Vln II
Vln I

Dedicated to the memory of Ted Hughes

Commissioned by **MUSIK DER JAHRHUNDERTE**, Stuttgart for the Neuen Vocalsolisten Stuttgart and the Arditti String Quartet : first performed on 12th February 2000 at the ECLAT Festival Neue Musik Stuttgart.

SYMBOLS :

Vocal :

falsetto



breath (pitch indicates a relative placement of the sound)



bocca chiusa



whispered



sprechstimme



speech or unpitched sound

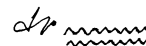


vibrato or tremolo



String Quartet :

double trill - rapidly and irregularly change the interval of the trill within a margin of a semitone above and below the note.



General :

three-quarter tone flat



semitone flat



quarter tone flat



natural



quarter tone sharp



semitone sharp



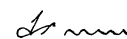
three-quarter tone sharp



cancel previous indication



all trills to the semitone above (unless otherwise indicated)



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Text :

1

Effice ut interea fera moenera militia
per maria ac terras omnis sopita quiescent ;

Quod superest, vacuas auris animumque sagacem
semotum a curis adhibe veram ad rationem,
ne mea dona tibi studio disposta fideli,
intellecta prius quam sint, contempta relinquant.
nam tibi de summa caeli ratione deumque
disserere incipiam, et rerum primordia pandam,
unde omnis natura creet res auctet alatque
quove eadem rursus natura perempta resolvat,
quae nos materiem et genitalia corpora rebus
reddunda in ratione vocare et semina rerum
appellare suemus et haec eadem usurpare
corpora prima, quod ex illis sunt omnia primis.

Praeterea cur vere rosam, frumenta calore,
vites autumnis fundi suadente videmus,
si non, certa suo quia tempore semina rerum
cum confluxerunt, patefit quodcumque creatur,
dum tempestates adsunt et vivida tellus
tuto res teneras effert in luminis oras?

2

o miseras hominum mentes, o pectora caeca!
Qualibus in tenebris vitae quantique periculis
degitur hoc aevi quodcumque est!

ex oculisque vetustatem subducere nostris,

atque ita suspiciens tereti cervice reposta
pascit amore avidos inhians in te, dea, visus,
pascit amore avidos inhians in te, dea, visus,
funde petens placidam Romanis, incluta pacem ;

ergo vividas vis animi pervicit et extra
processit longe flammantia moenia mundi
atque omne immensum peragravit menta animoque,
unde refert nobis victor quid possit oriri,
quid nequeat, finita potestas denique cuique
quanam sit ratione atque alte terminus haerens,
quare religio pedibus subjecta vicissim
obteritur, nos exaequat victoria caelo.

non inter se stipata cohaeret
materies, quoniam minui rem quamque videmus
et quasi longinuo fluere omnia cernimus aevo

3

Inter enim cursant primordia principiorum
motibus inter se, nil ut secernier unum
possit nec spatium fieri divisa potestas,
sed quasi multae vis unius corporis extant.

O tenebris tantas tam clarum extollere
lumen qui primus potuisti inlustrans
commoda vitar

4

Fit quoque de speculo in speculum ut tradatur
imago,
quinque etiam aut sex ut fieri simulacra suerint.

5

tanto opere officerent nobis Symphala colentes,
et Diomedis equi spirantes naribus ignem
Thracis Hesperidum servans fulgentia mala,
asper, acerba tuens, immani serpens
arboris amplexus stirpem,

6

Hisce tibi in rebus latest alteque videndum
et longe cunctas in partis discipendum,
ut reminiscaris summam rerum esse profundam
et videas caelum summi totius unum
quam sit parvula pars et quam multesima constet.

hoc se quisque modo fugit, at quem scilicet, ut fit,
effugere haud potis est, ingratis haeret et odit,
propterea morbi quia causam non tenet aeger;
quam bene si videat, iam rebus quisque relictis
naturam primum studeat cognoscere rerum,
temporis aeterni quoniam, non unius horae,
ambigitur status, in quo sit mortalibus omnis
aetas, post mortem quae restat cumque, manenda.

usque adeo speculo in speculum translucet imago,
et cum laeva data est, fit rursus ut dextera fiat,
inde retro rursus redit et convertit eodem..

Cuius ego ingressus vestigia dum rationes

from : Lucretius' ; De Rerum Natura (Books 1 -6)

Vapor

	<i>Page</i>
I.....	1
II.....	20
III.....	28
IV.....	35
V.....	42
VI.....	47
VII.....	52
VIII.....	57

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I

$\text{♩} = 120$ **Affrettando**
(3 + 3 + 3 + 4)

Soprano
f *pp* *ff* *pp*
E - re - - a fe - ra mo - - e - ne - ra

Alto
f *pp* *f* *pp*
E - ffi - ce ut in - te - re - a fe - ra

Tenor
f *pp* *f* *pp*
E - ffi - ce fe - ra

Bass
f *pp* *f* *pp*
E - ffi - ce fe - ra mo - e - - ne - ra mi - li - ti - ai

Violin I
f *pp* *ff* *pp* *f* *pp* *ff*

Violin II
ff *pp* *f* *pp* *ff*

Viola
fff *pp* *fff* *pp* *f* *pp*

Violoncello
fff *pp* *f* *pp*

2

S. *f* 5:4 *p* 5:4 *f* *p* 5:4 *f* *p* 5:4
 mi - li - ti - ai per ma - ri - a ac ter - ras om - nis so - pi - tas qui -

A. *pp* *ff* *pp* *ff* *p* *ff*
 mi - li - ti - ai per ma - ri - a ac ter -

T. *f* 3:2 *p* 3:2 *f* 3:2
 mo - per ma - ri - a

B. *ff* 6:5 *pp* 6:5 *ff* *pp*
 per ma - ri - a ac ter - ras om - nis so - pi - tas

Vln I *ff* 5:4 *pp* 5:4 *ff* 5:4 *pp* 5:4

Vln II *ff* *pp* *ff* *pp* sub. *ff*

Vla 3:2 *ff* 3:2 *f* 3:2 *pp* *ff*

Vc. 6:5 *ff* 6:5 *pp* *f* *pp* *f* *pp*

3 (3 + 3 + 2)

S. *pp* *ff* *pp*
 es - cant;

A. *ff* *pp*
 ras.

T. *pp* 3:2 *ff* *pp*
 ac ter - ras.

B. *pp* 5:4 *ff* *pp*
 qui - es - cant.

Vln I 9:8 *ff* 5:4 *pp* 5:4 *ff* 7:6 *ff*

Vln II 5:4 *pp* 5:4 *ff* 3:2 *ff*

Vla 3:2 *pp* 5:4 *ff* 5:4

Vc. 3:2 *ff* 3:2 *pp* 9:8 *ff* 9:8 *ff*

4

ff *pp* *ff* *pp*

S. nam tu so - la po - tes tran - qui - - lla pa - - ce.

ff *pp* *ff* *pp* *ff* *pp*

A. om nis so - pi - ta qui - es - cant nam tu so - la po - tes tran - qui - - - la

ff *pp* *ff* *pp*

T. om - nis so - pi - ta qui - es - - cant nam tu so - la

ff *pp* *ff* *pp*

B. nam tran - qui - - - la pa - ce

Vln I *pp* *ff* *pp*

Vln II *ff* *pp* *ff* *pp*

Vla *ff* *pp* *ff* *pp*

Vc. *pp* *ff* *pp*

gliss.

6:5 5:4 3:2

5

pp *ff* *pp* *ff* *pp*

S. i - u - va - re mor - ta - lis quo - ni - am be - - lli

ff *pp* *ff* *pp*

A. pa - ce i - u - - va - re mor - ta - lis quo - -

ff *pp* *ff* *pp*

T. po - tes tran - qui - lla pa - ce i - u - va - re mor - ta - lis quo - - - ni - am

ff *pp*

B. i - u - va - re mor - ta - lis quo - - ni - am be - - - lli

Vln I *pp* *ff* *pp* *ff* *pp*

Vln II *ff* *pp* *ff*

Vla *ff* *pp* *ff*

Vc. *pp* *ff* *pp* *ff*

gliss.

3:2 6:5 5:4

6 *pp* *ff* *pp* *ff* *pp*

S. fe - ra mo - e - - ne - - - ra Ma - vors ar - mi - - - po - tens

A. *pp* 3:2 *ff* 3:2 *pp* 3:2 *ff* 3:2
be - lli fe - ra mo - e - ne - ra Ma - vors ar - mi

T. *ff* 6:5 *pp* 6:5 *ff*
be - lli fe - - ra mo - ne - - - ra Ma - - vors

B. *pp* 5:4 *ff* 5:4 *pp* 5:4 *ff* 5:4 *pp*
fe - ra mo - e - ne - ra Ma - - vors ar - mi - po - tens re - git in

Vln I *pp* *ff* *pp* *ff*

Vln II *pp* 3:2 *ff* 3:2 *pp* 3:2 *ff* 3:2

Vla *ff* 6:5 *pp* 6:5 *ff*

Vc. *ff* 5:4 *pp* 5:4 *ff* 5:4 *pp* 5:4 *ff*



7

S. 13

A. 13

T. 13

B. 13

Vln I *ff* 6:5 *pp* *pp* *ff* tr

Vln II *ff* 7:6 *pp* *pp* *ff* gliss. gliss.

Vla *ff* 3:2 *pp* *ff* gliss. gliss. 5:4 tr

Vc. *ff* 3:2 *pp* *ff* tr

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