



RED DESERT

EUGENE BIRMAN

AUGUST 2011

RED DESERT

commission by Ansambel U

“Three or four night-stars; the scattered brush, parched earth and sand, the black sea-sky, hovering blanket: the land is broken up by zigzags, where the water has seeped through into the ground, and left salt crystals on those infinitesimal ledges. And the rest, the rest is dead like old tree stumps and blunt lead, stretching over to the horizon which is burned by the sun each morning like a ticking clock. This is the red desert, which the waves do not reach, on which the storm does not tread. It is where my dreams are, where I have come to”

INSTRUMENTATION: piccolo/flute, clarinet, percussion (Chinese cymbal, Vibraphone), piano, violin, and violoncello.

DURATION approx 8 ’

notes, 18 July 2011

The last few weeks have been difficult. The idea is so strong and yet there is no metamorphosis into the music. The notes resist direction, and direction is the only thing here to hang on to. I fear I have written something quite minimalist, but this was the only way. This is the truth to the idea.

The desert is a foreign thing to many people; at least, I think it seems so on the surface. Those things we associate with desert – sand, heat – are just nothing compared to what a desert can be, what it perhaps is, even. The desert is not a place but an idea: only once the realization is made, can something become “desert”. And for me, what it has become for me, this realization, is simply one of thirst. Dry parched throat, mortality, healed by water...

When you travel through a real, physical desert, as I have many times, these sensations are primary: **distance, linearity, destination.** This piece is “structured” on those sensations and narrated by the thirst I mentioned before.

The only indeterminate aspect is the arrival, for it is always in question and experienced differently, in physical and emotional terms, of course. In this case, the arrival is a surprise: I am loathe to call it a “salvation” of sorts, in terms of the material, but it is a momentary glance away from inevitability. For to cross the desert: by itself, this idea, is one of beating the odds.

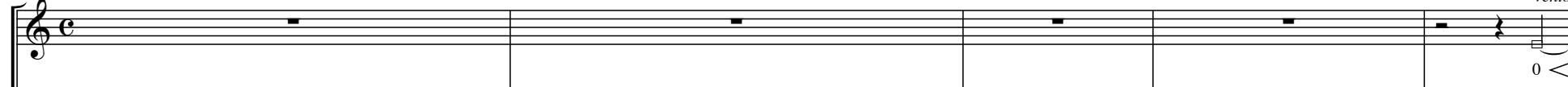
E. A. Birman (b. 1987)

change
breath
ad
libitum
solo
vento

re
Desert

Devoto ♩ ~ 56 - 63

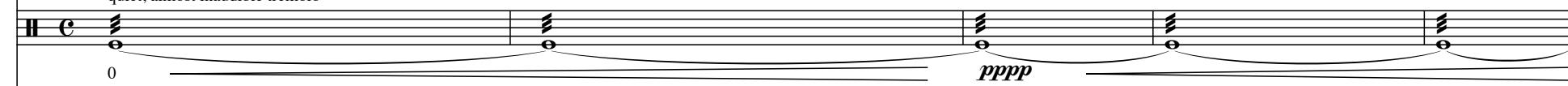
Piccolo



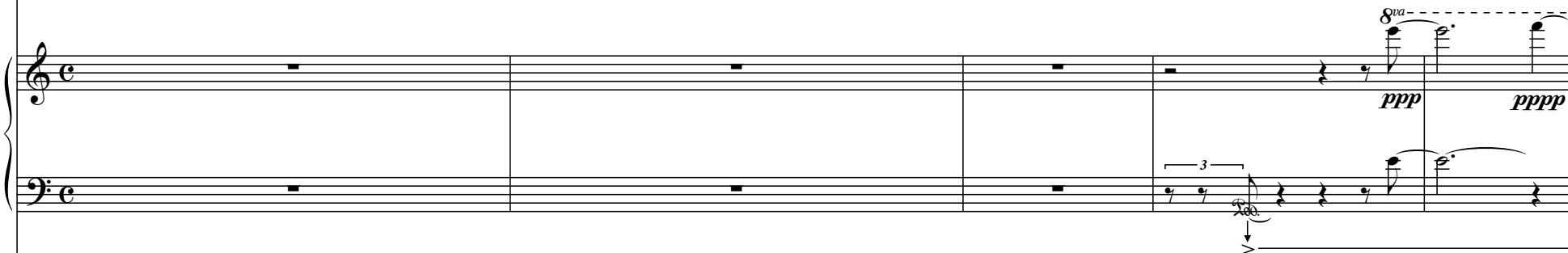
Clarinet in B♭



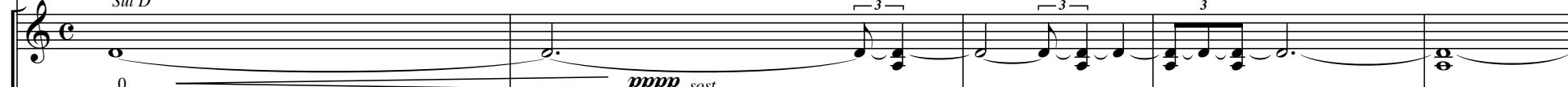
Percussion



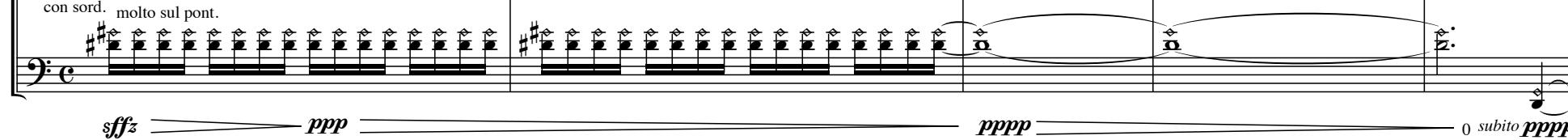
Piano



Violin



Violoncello



10

Pic.

0
sing at written pitch ***pppp*** sost.

B♭ Cl.

change breath ad libitum
play only: 0
pppp intensity triangle beaters, do not let ring

Perc.

10
mf

Pno.

10
ppp place finger on near part of string, before the hammer
mp
pppp

(R₂₀)

Vln.

10
pp respiro
pppp senza sord.
(sord.)
ppp sost. 3
0
ppp sost. very light and airy, like taking breaths

Vc.

pp respiro
(sord.)
0
ppp sost.

23 *accel. molto* - - - - - *a tempo primo* 5
 Pic. B♭ Cl. Perc.
 23
 Pno. Vln. Vc.
 23
 7:4
 mf ff subito ff pesante norm. sim. pppp
 0 3 pp subito ff pesante sim. sva - molto vib.
 ff 3 3 3 3 9 ffffff
 sotto voce
 with cb. bow
 marimba mallets, inside piano
 sva - pppp
 sva - ffffff

6
26

Pic.

B♭ Cl.

--- switch to flute ---

mf

0

pp *ppp*

pp *ppp*

pppp

respiro respiro

respiro respiro

26

Perc.

norm.

0

pp

0

26

Pno.

(8^b)

0

(8^a)

(8^{va})

(quietly)

26

Vln.

p

0

mf > *ppp* *sost.*

ppp

Vc.

35

Pic.

FL. sing at written pitch *pppp* *sost.* *3*

B♭ Cl. *mf* 0 *p* *3*

Perc. 35 intensity → ← triangle beaters, do not let ring *mp* *mf* > *mp* *3* light, let reverb *ppp*

Pno. 35 *pp* *ppp* *8va* *3* (quietly)

Vln. 35 *pp* *ppp* *subito p* > *ppp* *nonvib.* *vib.* *molto vib.* *espressivo* *3*

Vc. con sord. *0* *ppp* *p*

46

Pic.

mp

solo vento

sf

B♭ Cl.

> *mp*

3

0

46

Perc.

> *mp*

ppp

almost nothing

delicato

8va

46

Pno.

subito ff

mf

ppp

p

Red.

(*Red.*)

46

Vln.

mp

ppp

Vc.

mp

0

This page contains musical notation for six instruments: Piccolo, Bassoon Clarinet, Percussion, Piano, Violin, and Cello. The music is divided into measures 46 and 47. In measure 46, the Piccolo and Bassoon Clarinet play sustained notes with dynamics mp and sf respectively. The Percussion part has dynamic markings > mp, ppp, almost nothing, and delicato. The Piano part includes subito ff, mf, and p dynamics, along with Red. and Red. (Red.) markings. The Violin and Cello both play sustained notes with mp dynamics. Measure 47 begins with piano dynamics for the strings and bassoon clarinet, followed by a sustained note. The page number 9 is in the top right corner.

10
 50

Pic. *respiro*
fff sf

B♭ Cl. *respiro*
f

Perc. *respiro*
dampen immediately
f

Pno. *respiro*
f

Vln. *respiro*
fff sf
respiro
con sord.
fff sost.

Vc. *f*
ff
5:4
5:4

quasi vento → 11

Pic. 56 *fff* *sfp* *mf* *fff* *as loud as possible*

B♭ Cl. *sfp* *mf* *ff*

Perc. 56 *p* *ff* *f* *as fast as possible*

Pno. 56 *ff* *pp* *ff* *fff*

Vln. 56 *crunch* *ff* *fff*

Vc. *5* *5:4* *fff*

12 solo vento quasi vento

Pic.



solo vento

accel.

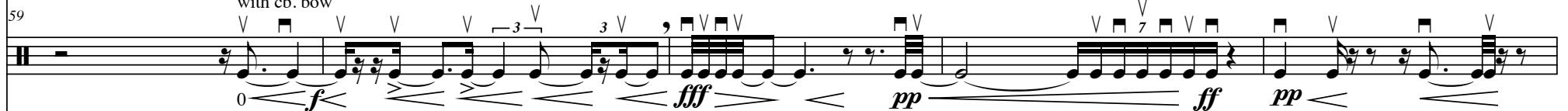
begin
humming
to create
beats,
move out
of tune
randomly
—3—

B♭ Cl.

sung or hummed on unis. with vib.



Perc.



Pno.

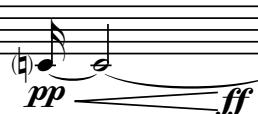
(Rœ)

senza sord.



Vln.

senza sord.



sul pont.

7:4

norm.



Vc.

Incoerente ♩ ~ 60 - 72
tanto vento

13

(accel.) 64

Pic. solo vento *sfs* *fff*

B♭ Cl. *grido* *ppp* *ff*

Perc. 64 *f* *ff* *fff*

Pno. 64 at the tip of the string (inside) *ff sost.* *ff* ad lib., with loud accents each time Pedal is used

Vln. sul pont. 7:4 5:4 *mf* *ff* *ff*

Vc. sul pont. 3 pizz. *pp* *ff* *pp* *ff*

accel.

Pic.

B♭ Cl.

67

Perc.

67

Pno.

(8^{vb})-----

8^{vb}-

Vln.

Vc.

This musical score page contains six staves. From top to bottom: Piccolo (Pic.) in treble clef, Bassoon (B♭ Cl.) in treble clef, Percussion (Perc.) with two black vertical bars, Piano (Pno.) with two staves (treble and bass), Violin (Vln.) in treble clef, and Cello (Vc.) in bass clef. Measure 67 begins with a dynamic marking 'accel.'. The piano part features complex rhythmic patterns with grace notes and slurs. The violin and cello are mostly silent. The bassoon has short, sharp notes. The percussion and piccolo also play short notes. Measure 68 starts with a dynamic '8vb' (fortissimo) followed by a dash, indicating a dynamic change.

70 (accel.)

Pic.

B♭ Cl.

70

Perc.

70

Pno.

(8^{vb})

fff sost.

8^{vb}

fff sost.

8^{vb} - -

Vln.

Vc.

This musical score page contains six staves. The top three staves (Pic., B♭ Cl., and Perc.) are mostly blank with a few short dashes. The fourth staff (Pno.) shows a complex piano part with two treble clef staves and two bass clef staves. It includes dynamic markings 'fff sost.' and '8vb' (with a dashed line) at different points. The bottom three staves (Vln. and Vc.) are also mostly blank. Measure numbers 70 and 70 are present above the first and second piano staves respectively. The instruction '(accel.)' is at the top left, and the instruction 'Pic.' is to the left of the first staff.

il più velocemente possibile

74

Come una corrente rotta

decel. - - - $\text{♩} \sim 56 - 60$

Pic.

B♭ Cl.

Perc.

Pno.

Vln.

Vc.

slap
tongue
+ key
solo vento click *solo vento*

triangle
beaters,
do not let
ring

p *f*

p *f* *f*

ppp

with cb. bow

p *f* *f*

(8^{bb})

(Ped. ad lib.) → ↑ ↓ ↑ ↓

mf *arco* *f* *sost.*

arco
con sord.
molto vib.

p *f* *p*

slap
tongue
+ key
click

79 3 solo vento

Pic.

f *p* *sost.*

B♭ Cl.

ppp *sost.*
sung or hummed on unis. with played pitch

ppp *p* *ppp* *f*

sung only:

Perc.

79 with cb. bow
mp *ppp* *f* *p* *f* *rute* *mf*

Pno.

pppp

(R) (D)

Vln.

ppp *sost.*

Vc.

norm.
pppp *fp* *sul pont.* 3 3 0

84

Pic.

B♭ Cl.

0

slap tongue + key click

fff

Perc.

VIB.
con motore
trem. as fast as possible

84

ppp (very gradual)

Pno.

(Rœ)

(quietly)

84

Vln.

0

Vc.

senza sord.

0

This musical score page contains six staves, each with a different instrument:

- Pic.**: Piccolo part, mostly rests with one dynamic instruction at the end.
- B♭ Cl.**: Bassoon part, consisting of eighth-note patterns.
- Perc.**: Percussion part, featuring sustained notes and a tremolo instruction.
- Pno.**: Piano part, with a dynamic instruction and a performance note "(Rœ)".
- Vln.**: Violin part, with sustained notes and a dynamic instruction "0".
- Vc.**: Cello part, with sustained notes and a dynamic instruction "0".

Performance instructions and dynamics are scattered throughout the score:

- Slap tongue + key click** (above the Piccolo staff)
- fff** (dynamic instruction above the Piccolo staff)
- VIB. con motore trem. as fast as possible** (above the Percussion staff)
- ppp (very gradual)** (dynamic instruction above the Percussion staff)
- (Rœ)** (performance note above the Piano staff)
- (quietly)** (performance note above the Piano staff)
- senza sord.** (performance note above the Cello staff)
- 0** (dynamic instruction below the Violin and Cello staves)

93

Pic. B_b Cl. Perc. Pno. Vln. Vc.

solo vento

sung or hummed an octave below played pitch

sing at written pitch

begin humming to create beats, move out of tune randomly

(very gradual)

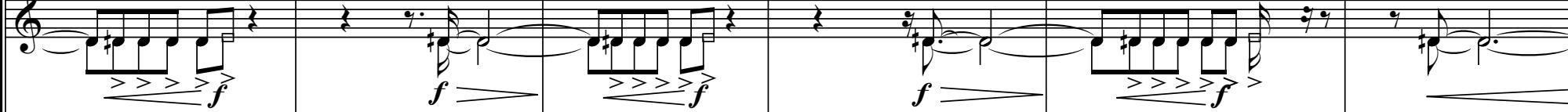
(very gradual)

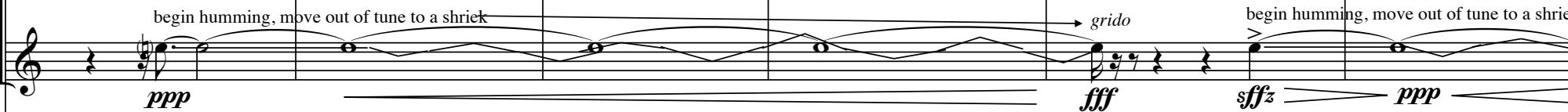
p *mp* *ff*

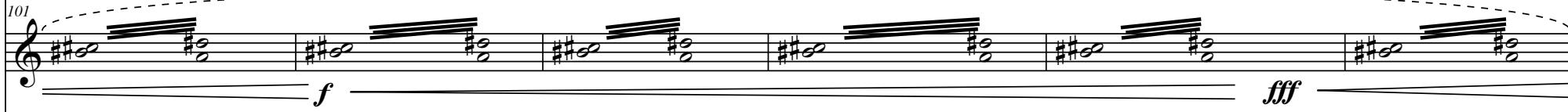
mf

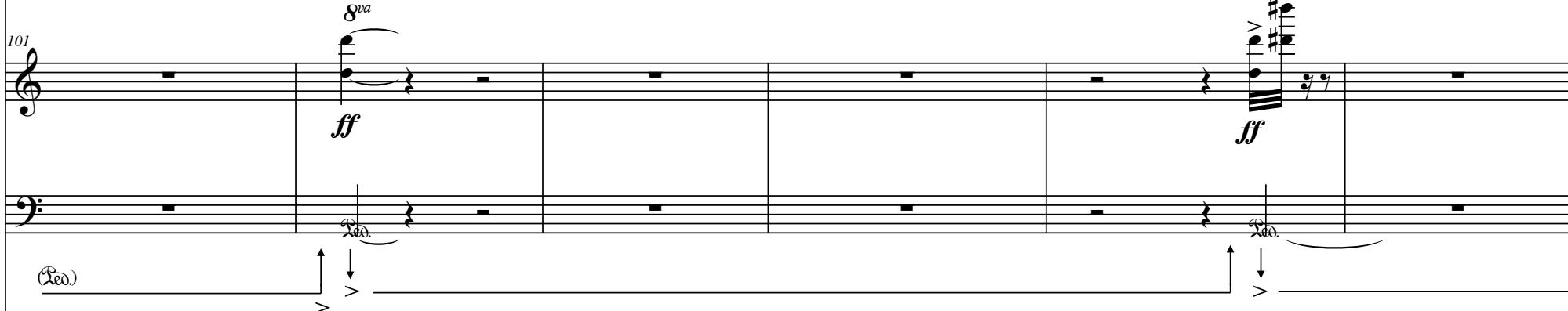
p *f* *p* *f* *p* *f* *p* *f*

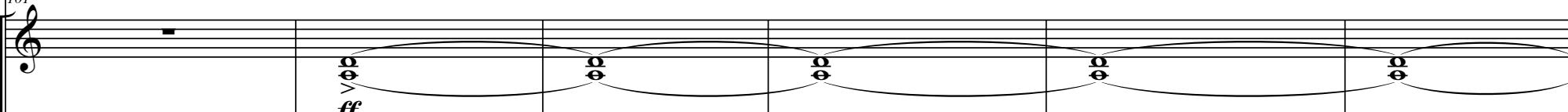
101 *solo vento*

Pic. 

B♭ Cl. 

Perc. 

Pno. 

Vln. 

Vc. 

Musical score page 21, featuring six staves:

- Pic.**: Treble clef. Measure 107: Dynamic *f*. Measure 108: Measure start, dynamic *grido*, followed by a sustained note.
- B_b Cl.**: Treble clef. Measure 107: Measure start, dynamic *f*.
- Perc.**: Treble clef. Measure 107: Measure start, dynamic *as loud as possible*. Measures 108-109: Sixteenth-note patterns. Measure 110: Measure start, dynamic *let reverb*.
- Pno.**: Treble and Bass clefs. Measures 107-110: Empty staves.
- Vln.**: Treble clef. Measures 107-110: Sustained notes.
- Vc.**: Bass clef. Measures 107-110: Sustained notes. Measure 110: Measure start, dynamic *f*.

Text annotations: *(Reo)* under the Vln. staff in measure 107; *(quietly)* under the Vln. staff in measure 110.