

jp merz

A Last Look

for mezzo-soprano, piano, violin,
cello, percussion and electronics

7'

2015

text by W.S. Merwin

W.S. Merwin - A Last Look

*Even the words are going somewhere urban
where they hope to find friends
waiting for them*

*some of the friends will think of trees as pleasant in a minor
way
much alike after all
to us*

*some of the friends will never be aware of a single tree
they will live in a world without a leaf
where the rain is misfortune*

*all the languages until now have flowed
from leaf to leaf
and have gone like faces*

*gone like the stone porches of small houses
and the smell of the forest
in the water of summer*

about:

I was drawn to the nostalgic and understated tone of W.S. Merwin's poem "A Last Look". The simple but vivid natural imagery Merwin uses influenced the sound world of this piece which is full of bright, ringing colors and deep, lush electronics. For me, this pairing of text and music evokes memories of the past and the feeling of returning to a once familiar place.

A Last Look

jp merz
text by W.S. Merwin

① **Sensa Misura** ♩ = ~ 60

Mezzo-Soprano

Piano

Vibraphone

Violin

Cello

Electronics

blend w/ electronics
p
Ped. ad. lib.
f

blend w/ electronics
p

p

p

* = important to align with electronics; all other notes can be played more freely

②

5

Mezzo

Pno.

Vib.

Vln.

Vc.

Elec.

f *p* *f* *mp*

ord. → sul. pont. → ord. blend w/ electronics
sensa vibrato *

f *p* *f* *n* *f*

f *mp*

* = important to align with electronics; all other notes can be played more freely

A Last Look - Merz

11 ♩ = 60 Like the surface of water, fragile

Mezzo

Pno.

Vib.

Vln.

Vc.

p

ethereal ripples very slow → med.

ethereal ripples very slow → med.

ethereal ripples very slow → med.

15

Mezzo

Pno.

Vib.

Vln.

Vc.

mf *p*

mf *p*

very slow > very slow → med.

very slow → med. → very slow

n *n* *mp*

n *mp*

n *mp*

n *mp*

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4

5

22 *plainly stated, direct; mostly straight tone*
mf

Mezzo 20

E - ven — the words are

with weight

Pno.

Vib.

Vln.

Vc.

p

pp Ped. ad. lib.

mf

n *mp* 3 *n* 3

Mezzo 24

go - ing — some - where ur - ban —

Pno.

Vib.

Vln.

Vc.

p *mf* *p*

p *mp* *p* *mp* *p*

mp *p* 3 *mf* *p sub.*

A Last Look - Merz

28 6 30 *with a hint of urgency*

Mezzo
ur - ban — where they — where they hope to find

Pno.

Vib.
f mp f pp

Vln.
f mp n³ mf n

Vc.
f mp

full L.H. pressure → less L.H. pressure ord.

32

Mezzo
friends — wait - ing for them —

Pno.

Vib.
mf p sub. mf

Vln.
f p sub. mf n f

Vc.
f p sub. mf n f

pressure trill

A Last Look - Merz

36 **Sensa Misura**

~ 6"

♩ = 110

4x

Mezzo

Pno.

Vib.

Vln.

Vc.

slowly accel. in "zig-zag" motion until the pattern reaches sixteenth notes at ♩ = 126

pp *cresc.* *mf*

Ped. ad. lib.

Play the notes freely, try to interact with the cello in a kind of dialogue. Start out slowly with lots of space then gradually increase in intensity and speed.

Artificial Harmonic Trill "Touch 4"

n \leftarrow *f* *n* \leftarrow *f*

Play the notes freely, try to interact with the violin in a kind of dialogue. Start out slowly with lots of space then gradually increase in intensity and speed.

n \leftarrow *f* *n* \leftarrow *f*

Mezzo

Pno.

Crt.

Vib.

Vln.

Vc.

38

7

40

8 *f*

cue with vibraphone

Some _____ of the friends throughout this section *p sub.* refers to the strength of playing and not the overall dynamic of the piano. The pedal marking is intentional. All other dynamics should be performed as written.

fff *p sub.* Ped. ad. lib.

cue with piano

ff

Natural Harmonic Trill

change bow freely vary speed of "trill" pressure trill

p \leftarrow *f*

A Last Look - Merz

42

Mezzo

will think of trees _____ As

Pno.

ff *mp* *ff*

Crt.

Vib.

Vln.

Vc.

p *f* *fp* *f*

46

Mezzo

plea - sant _____ In a min - or _____ way _____

Pno.

mp *ff* *p sub.*

Crt.

Vib.

Vln.

Vc.

p sub. *ff* *mp* *p* *f* *mp*

ord.

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50 *darker, somewhat withdrawn*

Mezzo *Much*

Pno. *f* *fff* *p sub.*

Crt.

Vib. *f*

Vln. *sul. pont.*

Vc. *ff* *p sub.* *ff* *mp*

53

Mezzo a - like af - ter

Pno. *f* *Ped. ad lib.*

Crt.

Vib.

Vln.

Vc. *f*

A Last Look - Merz

56

Mezzo

all to us

Pno.

p *f*

Crt.

Vib.

Vln.

Vc.

full L.H. pressure

less L.H. pressure

fp *fff*

Detailed description: This system covers measures 56, 57, and 58. The Mezzo-soprano part has the lyrics 'all to us'. The Piano part features a consistent arpeggiated accompaniment, starting at a piano (*p*) dynamic and increasing to forte (*f*) by measure 58. The Violoncello part plays a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with accents, starting at fortissimo-piano (*fp*) and reaching fortissimo (*fff*) by measure 58. Performance instructions for the Cello include 'full L.H. pressure' and 'less L.H. pressure'.

59

Mezzo

Pno.

Crt.

Vib.

Vln.

Vc.

f *fff*

Detailed description: This system covers measures 59, 60, 61, and 62. The Mezzo-soprano part has rests. The Piano part continues with arpeggiated chords, dynamics increasing from *f* to *fff*. The Violoncello part continues with eighth-note patterns, dynamics increasing from *f* to *fff*. A first finger marking '1' is shown above the Cello staff in measure 61. The Violin part has a melodic line with dynamics *f* and *fff*. The Viola part has a melodic line with dynamics *f* and *fff*. The Violoncello part has a melodic line with dynamics *f* and *fff*.

A Last Look - Merz

62 9

declarative, forceful, upset, more vibrato

Mezzo

Piano: *3*

Vib.

Vln. *f* *p*

Vc. *f* aggressive, driving

Some of the friends

Mezzo

Piano: *3*

Vib.

Vln. *f* *p* ord. sul. pont. ord.

Vc.

will ne - ver be a -

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66

Mezzo

ware of a

Pno.

Vib.

Vln.

Vc.

f

p

ord. → sul. pont.

68

Mezzo

sin - gle tree

Pno.

Vib.

Vln.

Vc.

f

p sub.

f

p

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70

Mezzo

Pno.

Vib.

Vln.

Vc.

p sub.

f

p

They will live in a world

72

Mezzo

Pno.

Vib.

Vln.

Vc.

p

f

pp

p

in a world

sul. pont.

A Last Look - Merz

10

74

Mezzo

ff

in a world with - out a leaf

Pno.

Vib.

Vln. *f* *p* *p sub.* sul. pont. ord.

Vc.

76

Mezzo

Where the rain is mis - for -

Pno.

Vib. *f*

Vln. *p* *f* sul. pont.

Vc.

A Last Look - Merz

78 LET LOOSE, ALL OUT!

Mezzo
- - - tune - - - - - Where the

Pno.

Vib.

Vln. ord. *p*

Vc.

11

Mezzo
rain is mis - - - rain - - - for - - - tune

Pno.

Vib.

Vln.

Vc.

♩ = 60

A Last Look - Merz

82 **12** long, "rockstar" gliss.
instant *sensu vibrato* on downbeat

molto vibrato

sensu vibrato

Mezzo

Pno.

Crt.

Vib.

Vln.

Vc.

mf *fff* *mf*

sffz *p sub.* *mf* *f* *sffz* *p sub.* *mf*

sffz *p sub.* *mf* *sffz* *p sub.* *mf*

sffz *p sub.* *mf* *f* *sffz* *p sub.* *mf*

sffz *p sub.* *mf* *sffz* *p sub.* *mf*

mis - for - tune

13

Mezzo

Pno.

Vib.

Vln.

Vc.

heavy with weight
mf

light, atmospheric
pp *legato*

measured tremolo

measured tremolo

pp

mf

mf

A Last Look - Merz

91 With a sense of longing

Mezzo

All the lan-gua-ges un-til now have flowed From

Pno.

Vib.

Vln.

Vc.

96

Mezzo

leaf to leaf and gone like fa-cies Gone

Pno.

Vib.

Vln.

Vc.

A Last Look - Merz

100

Mezzo

like stone por - ches of small hou - ses

Pno.

Vib.

Vln.

Vc.

104 (14)

Mezzo

And the smell of the for - rest In the wa - ter of sum - mer And the

Pno.

Vib.

Vln.

Vc.

cycle through notes freely/out of time, resist lining up with the cello, bring out the dissonances

cycle through notes freely/out of time, resist lining up with the violin, bring out the dissonances

A Last Look - Merz

108

Mezzo

smell of the for - rest ___ In ___ the wa - ter of sum - mer ___ And ___ the

Pno.

Vib.

Vln.

Vc.

111

Mezzo

smell of the for - rest ___ In ___ the wa - ter of sum - mer ___ And ___ the smell

Pno.

Vib.

Vln.

Vc.

A Last Look - Merz

15

rit.

Mezzo

And the smell And the smell of the for - rest

Pno.

Crn.

Vib.

Vln.

Vc.

3

3

3

1

The score is for a piece titled "A Last Look - Merz", starting at measure 15. It is in 4/4 time and the key signature has three sharps (F#, C#, G#). The tempo is marked "rit." (ritardando). The vocal line (Mezzo) has lyrics: "And the smell And the smell of the for - rest". The piano accompaniment (Pno.) features a triplet of eighth notes in the right hand and sustained chords in the left hand. The woodwinds (Crn. and Vib.) and strings (Vln. and Vc.) provide harmonic support with sustained notes and chords. There are performance markings such as slurs and accents throughout the score.