

***Ma: No-Sound is Not No Sound (2024)***  
***for shakuhachi and mixed quartet***

***Robert Carl***

*Commissioned by and dedicated to Ko Umezaki  
and HUB New Music, Michael Avitabile, director,  
for the Garmany Chamber Music Series, University of Hartford,  
Steve Metcalf and Gilda Lyons, directors*

*Instrumentation:*

*Shakuhachi*

*Flute*

*Clarinet in Bb*

*Violin*

*Cello*

*Performance notes:*

*The pronounced breath on upward leaps in the shakuhachi  
is indicated by a wavy glissando line. The player may  
vary its timbre, volume, and intensity following  
taste and interpretation.*

*Pronounced vibrato is indicated by a wavy line above a note.  
Same variance allowed as for breath leaps.*

*An actual trill is indicated by the wavy line plus "tr",  
with the note trilled to written above, in parentheses.*

*Pay careful attention to gradations of dynamics and articulations throughout.*

*Tempi are flexible, with rubato allowed, but always project the indicated  
shape of speeding and slowing the music's flow.*

*Duration: c.15-16'*

*Descriptive note:*

*The concept of Ma in Japanese aesthetics, and in particular music,  
suggests the space before and after a note sounds. It is "emptiness",  
but not a void. Rather, it is a space to be filled.*

*I went to Japan several years ago for a few months, and part of my  
project was meeting with many composers, asking them the question  
of what is Ma. I got beautiful answers, none exactly the same.  
And that seemed appropriate. Ma is something one feels; even the  
description I have given above hopelessly limits it.*

*This work evolves slowly, defining a space that the instruments inhabit,  
and begin to fill. A space for sounds to emerge from, and to resonate within.  
The shakuhachi, an instrument dear to me (that I play after a fashion),  
embodies the human breath as few other instruments do.*

*The title, with its triple-negative, suggests that silence is not necessarily  
"silent". It is empty but full of potential. And so I think of this ensemble  
becoming a slowly pulsating, breathing entity. It is a living space for meditation,  
moving gradually outward and upward.*

# Ma: No-Sound is Not No Sound (2024)

for shakuhachi and mixed quartet

R. Carl

♩ = 52

Shakuhachi

Flute

Clarinet in B $\flat$

Violin

Cello

*ppp* *pp* *ppp*

*ppp* *pp* *ppp*

*ppp* *pp* *ppp*

9

Sh. (offstage)

Fl.

Cl.

Vln.

Vc.

*pp* *p* *pp* *n.*

*pp*

*ppp* *pp* *ppp* *n.*

*ppp* *pp* *ppp* *n.*

18

(Muraiki\*)  
(rough, breathy)

(pronounced vibrato; same latitude of timing and degree allowed as for muraiki)

Sh. *mf* *f* *mf* *p*  
(blend seamlessly)

Fl. *pp* *p* *mp* *p*

Cl.

Vln. *ppp*

Vc.

\*Player can take time to make gesture longer or shorter, depending of interpretive instinct.  
S/he does not need to follow duration exactly, and can vary the timing throughout the piece.

25

Sh. *p*

Fl.

Cl. *ppp* *pp* *p* *pp*

Vln. (con sord.) (smooth gliss) (senza sord.)

Vc. *pp* *p* *pp*

31 (simile) (smooth gliss) (shakuhachi enters stage, moves to upright stand)

Sh. *mp* *mf* *f* *mp* (smooth gliss)

Fl. *mp* *mf* *p*

Cl. *ppp*

Vln. *pp*

Vc.

36

Sh. *sf* *mp* *f* *mf* *sf* *mp* *mf*

Fl. *pp* *p*

Cl. *p* *ppp* *ppp*

Vln. *n.*

Vc. *mp* *mf* *p*

*Accel.*

40

Sh. *mp* *p* *mf* *f* *mp* *mf*

Fl. *ppp* *pp*

Cl. *pp* *p* *pp* *pp* *p*

Vln. *ppp*

Vc.

(alternate fingerings or microtonal variants on repeated notes throughout)

♩ = 60

43

Sh. *mp* *mf* *mp* *mf* *mp* *mf* *mp* *mf*

Fl. *pp* *p* *mp* *p*

Cl. *pp* *ppp*

Vln. *pp* *p* *pp*

Vc. *pp* *p*

(*punta d'arco\**)

\*and always so for the entirety of the piece)

46

Sh. *mp* < *mf* < *f* > *mp* > *pp*

Fl. *pp* > *mp* > *pp* *pp* < *p*

Cl. *pp* > *p* > *pp* *p* > *mp* > *p*

Vln. *ppp* > *pp* < *p* > *pp* > *ppp*

Vc. *pp* > *ppp*

51

Sh. *mf* < *f* > *mf* > *mp* *mp* < *mf* < *f* > *mp* > *pp*

Fl. *p* < *mp* < *mf* *p* > *pp*

Cl. *p* < *mp* < *mf* *p* > *pp*

Vln. *p* < *mp* < *mf* *p* > *pp*

Vc. *p* < *mp* < *mf* *p* > *pp*

57

Sh. *p* *mp* *p* *ppp* *pp* *ppp*

Fl. *pp* *p* *pp* *n.* *pp*

Cl. *pp* *p* *pp* *n.* *ppp* *n.*

Vln. *pp* *p* *pp* *n.* *ppp* *n.*

Vc. *pp* *p* *pp* *n.* *ppp* *n.*

62

Sh. *ppp*

\*) follow shakuhachi's example w/ pronounced vibrato

Fl. *n.*

Cl. *ppp* *n.*

Vln. *ppp* *n.*

Vc. *ppp*

67

Sh. *pp*  $\rightrightarrows$  *ppp* *pp* *p*  $\rightrightarrows$  *ppp* *p*  $\leftarrow$  *mp*

Fl. *pp*  $\rightrightarrows$  *n.*

Cl. *pp*  $\rightrightarrows$  *n.*

Vln. *pp*  $\rightrightarrows$  *n.*

Vc.  $\rightrightarrows$  *n.* *pp*  $\rightrightarrows$  *n.*

72

Sh. *p*  $\rightrightarrows$  *pp* *ppp*  $\rightrightarrows$  *n.* *pp*

Fl. *pp*  $\rightrightarrows$  *n.* *ppp*

Cl. *pp*  $\rightrightarrows$  *n.*

Vln. *pp*  $\rightrightarrows$  *n.* *ppp*

Vc. *pp*  $\rightrightarrows$  *n.*

Accel.

77

Sh. *p* < *mf* < *f* *p* > *pp* *p* <

Fl. *pp*

Cl. *p* *pp*

Vln. *pp*

Vc. *p* *ppp*

♩ = 72

81

Sh. *mp* < *mf* < *f* > *mf* < *sf* *mf* < *sf*

Fl. *mp*

Cl. *p* *mp* *mf* *mp* *pp*

Vln. *mp*

Vc. *p* *mp* *mf* *mp*

84

Sh. *p mp mp < mf mp p*

Fl. *mf p pp p*

Cl. *pp p*

Vln. *p pp p > pp*

Vc. *p mp pp*

89

Sh. *mp mf f sub mf mp p mp*

Fl. *pp p mp*

Cl. *mp subp*

Vln. *pp*

Vc. *p cresc. mf mp pp*

93

Sh. *mf* *mp*

Fl. *mf*

Cl.

Vln. *pp*

Vc. *pp* *p*

95

*Rit.*

Sh.

Fl. *mp* *p* *pp* (F#) *tr*

Cl. *p* *pp* (Bb) *tr*

Vln. *p*

Vc. *mp* *mf* *mp*

*n.*

*\*) follow shakuahchi's example w/ pronounced vibrato*

97  $\text{♩} = 60$

Sh. *mp*  $\triangleleft$  *mf*  $\langle$  *f*  $\rangle$  *mp*  $\triangleleft$  *p*  $\triangleleft$  *n.*

Fl. *ppp*

Cl. *pp*

Vln. *ppp*

Vc. *p*  $\triangleleft$  *pp* *ppp*

102

Sh. *p*  $\triangleleft$  *mf*  $\langle$  *f*  $\rangle$  *sub mp*  $\triangleleft$  *p*

Fl. *ppp* *p*  $\triangleleft$  *mp*  $\langle$  *mf*  $\rangle$  *mp*

Cl. *ppp* *pp*  $\triangleleft$  *p*  $\triangleleft$

Vln. *ppp* *pp*

Vc. *ppp* *pp*

107

Sh. *p* *mp* *p*

Fl. *p* *p* *mp* *p*

Cl. *pp* *pp* *p* *pp*

Vln. *n.* *pp* *ppp*

Vc. *n.* *pp* *n.*

112

Sh. *p* *mp* *pp* *p* *mp* *mf* *p*

Fl. *p* *mp* *sub p*

Cl. *p* *mp* *sub p* *n.*

Vln. *pp* (III) *n.*

Vc. *pp* *n.*

117 *Accel.*

Sh.  $p \rightarrow mp \rightarrow mf \rightarrow p$   $mp < mf$

Fl.  $pp \rightarrow n.$   $mp$

Vln.  $pp$

Vc.  $pp$

(Suddenly with greater agitation!)

$\bullet = 90$

122

Sh.  $mp$   $mf \rightarrow f \rightarrow mf \rightarrow mp$

Fl.  $mf$   $mp$   $mp < mf \rightarrow mp$

Cl.  $p$   $mp$   $p$   $mp$   $mf < f > mp$   $p$

Vln.  $mf$   $mp$   $pp$

Vc.  $sf$   $mf$   $f$   $sub mp$   $p$

(arco)

127

Sh. *mf*  $\leftarrow$  *f*  $\rightarrow$  *mf*  $\rightarrow$  *mp*

Fl. *p*  $\rightarrow$  *pp* *mp*  $\leftarrow$  *mf*  $\rightarrow$  *mp*  $\rightarrow$  *pp*

Cl. *mp*  $\leftarrow$  *mf*  $\leftarrow$  *f*  $\rightarrow$  *mp*  $\rightarrow$  *p*

Vln. (*pp*) *mf* (*arco*) *mp*  $\rightarrow$  *pp* (*pp*)

Vc. *sf* *mf*  $\leftarrow$  *f* *sub mp*  $\rightarrow$  *p*

132

Sh. *mp*  $\leftarrow$  *f*  $\rightarrow$  *p* *mf*  $\leftarrow$

Fl. *mf*  $\rightarrow$  *mf*  $\rightarrow$  *p*

Cl. *mp*  $\leftarrow$  *mf*  $\rightarrow$  *p* *mf*  $\leftarrow$  *f*

Vln. *sub mf* (*arco*)  $\rightarrow$  *pp* *mf* (*arco*)

Vc. *sf* *mf*  $\leftarrow$  *f* *sub mp*  $\rightarrow$  *p* *sf* *mf*  $\leftarrow$  *f*

136 *Rit.* ♩ = 60

Sh. *f* *mf* *mp* *sf* *sub mf* *f* *ff*

Fl. *mf* *f* *mp* *mf* *f* *mf* *f* *ff*

Cl. *mp* *mf* *f* *mf* *f* *ff*

Vln. *mp* *sub mf* *mp* *f*

Vc. *mp* *p* *sf* *mf* *f* *mf* *f* *ff*

(arco)

(Suddenly very still, peaceful and deliberate)

140 *Rit.*

Sh. *p*

Fl. *p*

Cl. *p*

Vln. *p*

Vc. *p*

145  $\text{♩} = 52$

Sh. *mp* *mf* *sub p*

Fl. *pp* *p*

Cl. *mp* *sub p*

Vln. *mp* *sub p*

Vc. *mp* *sub p*

*(Free tempo to end)*

*(Shakuhachi should embellish/ornament each note, creating a tiny piece on each. Microscopically active, yet also meditative.)*

**150 Tutti improvise delicatissimo on an idea from the piece that has become most meaningful for each.**

Sh. *mp*

Fl. *It should be a summing up of your experience performing it.*

Cl. *Very subtle and intimate.*

Vln. *No more than 1 minute....*

Vc.