

Gardenscape **(Glasgow 2020)**

for solo violin and recording device
(or for multiple violins)

commissioned by Contemporary Music for All
for Ruta Vitkauskaite

Emily Doolittle, 2020

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duration: variable (probably 3'00" to 10'00")

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Since 1998, much of my music has been inspired by sounds from the natural world, especially birdsong. Though my initial interest in birdsong and music was sparked by the experience of hearing an individual bird – a European blackbird – singing outside my window, and by transcribing the song of that particular bird, many of my more recent birdsong-based pieces have been more broadly inspired by the song patterns and structures of a species as a whole, in some cases even a species I have heard only in recording. Covid 19-lockdown – going on for three months and counting – has led me to refocus on the specificity of the sounds and songs around me, first grudgingly, but now, increasingly often, joyfully. After lockdown began, I initially found it very hard to compose: I was worried about so many things, and my moods varied so widely. But as I spent day, after day, after day, only in my flat or in the shared garden behind it, I came to realize that the ever-shifting soundscape of the garden was a perfect counterpoint to my own ever-shifting state of mind. The wood pigeon is variously comforting, invigorating, or annoying, depending on my own mood: the blackbird can poeticize my melancholy, or remind me of the beauty that is still all around. I began to transcribe the songs of the birds that came regularly to our garden, and as I became more familiar with the song of each individual, the experience of staying in one place became richer and more fulfilling. *Gardenscape* does not seek to recreate any one lockdown soundscape, but rather provides the ingredients for the performer to recreate their own series of ever-varying Glasgow garden soundscapes. (I've provided transcriptions of the birds that visit my garden, but the performer is certainly welcome to add transcriptions of the birds around them too.)

Each of the sound layers provided is optional (though it is hard to imagine leaving out the blackbird), and they can be combined in many different ways. The performer could pre-record most of the desired layers, and perform one of them (most likely the blackbird) live. Alternatively, they could use a looper and add layers one by one in performance. Or if there are several violinists, all layers could be performed live: this piece is particularly suitable for socially distanced and/or outdoor performance, as the birds, too, are spatially separated when they sing.

Rain: You can make this sound by pouring beans, rice, or lentils into a metal baking dish, glass jar, or paper bag, and/or rolling them about in the dish, jar, or bag. You may wish to superimpose several layers of rain sound to create a more continuous sound, and you might want to experiment with speeding up or slowing down the recording. If you include rain, it would presumably either continue for the entire duration of the performance, or fade in or out.

Lesser Black-Backed Gull: You could have one gull make a repeated sound, or a raucous flock with varied calls. They often call loudly for a short while (maybe 30 seconds) and then move on. You could perhaps have the flock call from various distances away (as represented by different volumes).

Wood Pigeon: There is always a wood pigeon, or so it seems. (Which does not mean you always have to have a wood pigeon in your performance!)

Blue Tit: A high, descending arpeggio.

Chiffchaff: Short, high ostinati. They tend to sing for a few minutes at a time. I've only heard one Blue Tit at a time, but there are sometimes multiple chiffchaffs.

Goldfinch: A bit more melodic. This is a sporadic visitor to the garden: I've only heard it a few times.

Wren: This bird has a surprisingly loud voice for one so small. Once they start singing, they usually sing for several minutes (with 5"-20" of silence between each song).

Common Blackbird: Sweet and melodious. They often sing for a long time, especially during or after rain.

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* Accidentals apply only to the note or group of beamed notes they are attached to (but reminders may sometimes be given for clarification)

Emily Doolittle

Rain

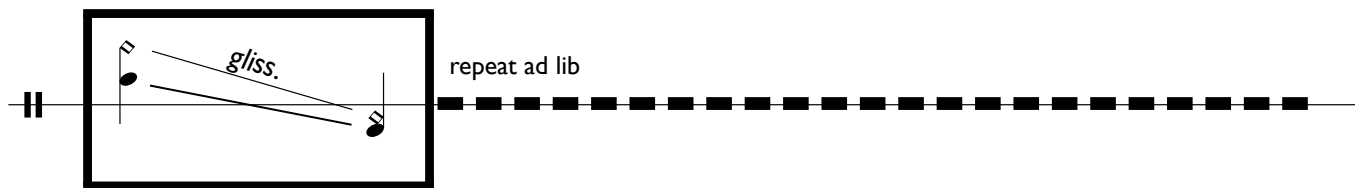


ppp to mf ad lib.

Lesser Black-Backed Gull

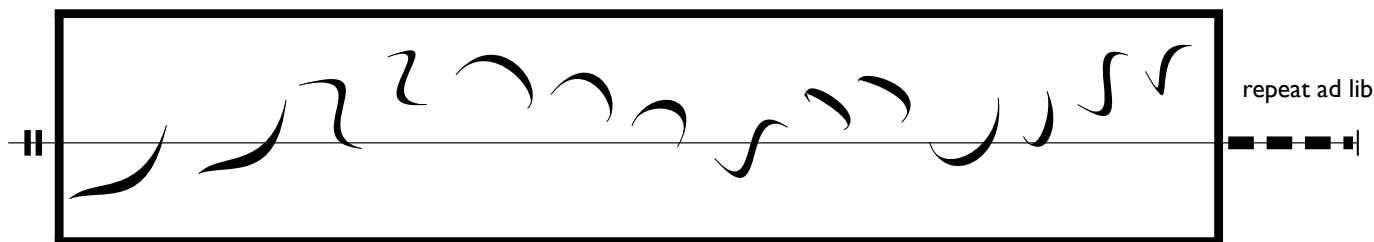
Use either or both of these techniques to create gull sounds.

Play on any string. Start on a medium high pitch and glissando to a medium low pitch, with fingers a medium distance apart.



pp to f ad lib.

Gull-like slides, can be guttural and/or clear, low and/or high. Highly varied, but gestures may repeat before moving on to something new.



pp to f ad lib.

Wood pigeon

Persistent, ♩ = 72

Repeat any number of times

Fast bow, with a hoarse but penetrating sound
(2+2+2+3)

mf \rightrightarrows *mp* \leftarrow

On the G string, following the contour but with pitches less than a semitone apart.

Any amount of silence

Blue Tit

Silvery, thin

starting approx. ♩ = 212,
speeding up a bit

mf \rightrightarrows *mp*

Exact number of each note varies (1 B-C, 1-3 Gs, 2-4 Es)

2"-3" silence

Chiffchaff

♩ = 184, metronomic

Use these pitches to create short (2-5 note) motifs which usually repeat (1-5 times),
Join 2-5 motifs together to make a song.

Short, percussive, bright 'chiffs' with a small, fast mordent on each attack. As much noise as pitch.

mf *f*

Eg. this is one possible arrangement of motifs to create a chaffinch song.

1x

4x

2x

3"-6" silence

Goldfinch

Lively, a bit manic

♩ = 152

Play all or part of this song each each time

Fast tremolo gliss (itches/ intervals don't have to be exact.)

Musical notation for Goldfinch in treble clef. The piece starts with a forte (*f*) dynamic. It features a series of chords and glissandos. A section of fast tremolo glissandos is marked with *sfz* and *pp*. The piece concludes with a *loco* section and a 3"-6" silence. Performance instructions include *8va* and *gliss.* markings.

Wren

Lively, playful, a bit aggressive

Play all or most of this song each each time

Musical notation for Wren in treble clef. The tempo is marked as ♩ = 176. The piece is divided into several sections with specific dynamics and performance instructions:

- 2-3x:** A section with dynamics *ff > f* and *mf*. It includes a box containing a glissando marked *gliss.*
- 4-6x:** A section with dynamics *f > p*. It includes a box containing a long F note with a fast glissando to a short Ab, marked *gliss.*
- 5-8x:** A section with dynamics *mf*, *sfz >*, *mp <*, *mf <*, and *f*. It includes a box containing an immediate percussive glissando marked *gliss.*

The piece concludes with a *becoming lighter* section and a 5"-20" silence. Performance instructions include *gliss.* markings throughout.

Common Blackbird

X-shaped noteheads are not pitched. Place left hand loosely across all strings and play as a noisy multistop.
 Height of X-noteheads indicates approximate height of left hand, spacing indicates approximate spacing.
 Rhythms don't need to be exact (and shouldn't sound mathematical).

Play through the motifs in roughly this order, with occasional repetitions, variations, or restarts, and with 2"-3" silence between them. Motifs in darker boxes are a bit more frequent, so if you restart or repeat, you may want to go to one of them.

Cheerful, melodious, inventive

♩ = 144

The musical score consists of 14 motifs arranged in five rows, each on a single treble clef staff. The motifs are as follows:

- Row 1:**
 - Motif 1: **eager**, dynamics *mp* to *mf*. (Darker box)
 - Motif 2: dynamics *mp* to *mf*. (Darker box)
 - Motif 3: dynamics *mp*, *mf*, *mp*, *mf*. (Darker box)
- Row 2:**
 - Motif 4: **a bit lazy** (*mp*) and **focused** (*mf*).
 - Motif 5: **a bit lazy** (*mp*) and **focused** (*f* 3, *p*).
- Row 3:**
 - Motif 6: **easygoing** (*mp*) with *gliss.* markings and a triplet. (Darker box)
 - Motif 7: *gliss.* (*mp*).
- Row 4:**
 - Motif 8: (*mp*).
 - Motif 9: (*mp*).
 - Motif 10: **triumphal** (*f*) with triplets. (Darker box)
- Row 5:**
 - Motif 11: **fast bow** (*mf* to *f*) with a triplet. (Darker box)
 - Motif 12: **melodic** (*mf* to *mp* to *mf* to *mp*) with a triplet. (Darker box)

light

mp *mf*

mf

This system contains two boxed musical phrases. The first box is labeled 'light' and contains a melodic line starting with a triplet of eighth notes, followed by a quarter note, and then another triplet of eighth notes. The dynamic markings are *mp* and *mf*. The second box contains a melodic line with a triplet of eighth notes and a quarter note, with a dynamic marking of *mf*.

mf > mp mf p

playful

mp *mf*

This system contains two boxed musical phrases. The first box is labeled with dynamics *mf > mp mf p* and features a melodic line with a triplet of eighth notes and a quarter note, ending with a triplet of eighth notes marked with 'x' symbols. The second box is labeled 'playful' and contains a melodic line with a triplet of eighth notes, a quarter note, and another triplet of eighth notes, with dynamic markings *mp* and *mf*.

scratchy tone,
approx. B
gliss.

mp *f* *mf*

This system contains a single boxed musical phrase. It starts with a triplet of eighth notes marked with a trill (tr) and a sharp sign (C#). The dynamic is *mp*. The phrase continues with a quarter note, a half note, and a quarter note marked with a trill (tr) and a sharp sign (B). The dynamic markings are *f* and *mf*. A glissando (gliss.) is indicated over the final quarter note.

tr (D#) gliss. gliss. *tr* gliss. gliss.

mp *f*

This system contains a single boxed musical phrase. It begins with a triplet of eighth notes marked with a trill (tr) and a sharp sign (D#). The dynamic is *mp*. The phrase continues with a quarter note, a half note, and a quarter note, each marked with a glissando (gliss.). The dynamic markings are *mp* and *f*.

lyrical

mp *f* *mp*

playful

mp *f > f* *mf*

This system contains two boxed musical phrases. The first box is labeled 'lyrical' and contains a melodic line with a triplet of eighth notes, a quarter note, and a half note, with dynamic markings *mp*, *f*, and *mp*. The second box is labeled 'playful' and contains a melodic line with a triplet of eighth notes marked with a trill (tr) and a sharp sign (D#), followed by a quarter note, a half note, and a quarter note marked with a trill (tr) and a sharp sign. The dynamic markings are *mp*, *f > f*, and *mf*.