

Transparent Things
piano solo

Katharine Norman

Duration approx. 16 minutes
composed 1996

Transparent things, through which the past shines! Man-made objects, or natural ones, inert in themselves but much used by careless life (you are thinking, and quite rightly so, of a hillside stone over which a multitude of small animals have scurried in the course of incalculable seasons) are particularly difficult to keep in surface focus: novices fall through the surface, humming happily to themselves, and are soon revelling with childish abandon in the story of this stone, of that heath.

Vladimir Nabokov

- Cold Light, 6 am
- Still, Clear (for VRM)
- Frozen Edge
- Long Causeway

The four pieces which make up *Transparent Things* each explore notions of transparency; the idea of looking through a surface in search of something less tangible, and more resonant. They were inspired by both the above quotation and my long walks in and around Stanage Edge, in the Peak District, Derbyshire (UK). Although the individual pieces came from memories of specific times and places, they are not overtly programmatic. Perhaps I was seeking a musical analogy for that growing clarity of mind that can arise during a solitary walk, when there is time to reflect, to remember, and to get thoughts and dreams into focus.

The piece can be performed as a set (keeping the above order) or individually/in pairs, as the performer prefers.

Commissioned for Stephen Gutman, with funds provided by a Holst Award and first performed at Sheffield University in 1996. Recorded on *Transparent things*, solo CD of piano music and electronic music by Katharine Norman; piano, Philip Mead. Metier Sound and Vision (MSV CD92054), 2000.

Programme note © Katharine Norman, 1996/2010

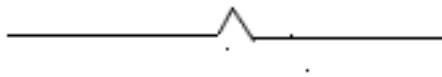
Transparent things © Novamara Music and Katharine Norman, 1996 (ASCAP)

Performance notes

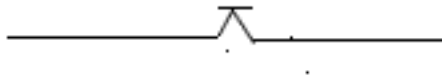
Tempo

Metronome markings provide a suggested tempo only. This tempo may be varied to accommodate the performing acoustic. For instance, in a very dry acoustic the last movement would probably need to be quicker.

Pedalling (sustain pedal)



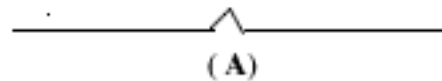
Change pedal, clearing resonance completely



Half-pedal: do not completely clear sustained resonance



“Pump” pedal to gradually clear previous sustained resonance, whilst sustaining what follows. This should be done almost imperceptibly.



(Fourth movement). Change pedal while holding pitch indicated.

Una corda pedal should *only* be used in the second movement, where it should be held down throughout the entire movement.



This is used to indicate phrases that should be brought out.

(i) Cold Light, 6 a.m.

It is very important to ensure that the pedal is *completely* cleared where indicated, whilst holding down the note concerned (e.g. bar 2): the idea is to build up brief resonances which disappear as a subsequent note is struck; this note should be sufficiently loud to mask the disappearance of the sustained sound.

(ii) Still, clear (for VRM)

The movement consists of a series of overlapping melodic phrases, ‘picked out’ of the accompanying texture. The melody notes are indicated by tenuto markings and phrase marks. There should be two distinct layers: the long melodic lines, which should be quite pronounced, and the lilting ‘accompaniment’, which should be extremely quiet. Crescendo and diminuendo markings beside phrase marks apply *only* to the melody lines. The accompaniment remains pp, unless indicated otherwise.



Play with both hands, the melody note is louder than the accompanying note, which is generally pp.



Play with one hand (preferably). the dynamic marking applies to both notes.

From bar 5 the sustain pedal is used throughout, changing or half-pedalling where indicated. From this point on notes should be struck and left to ring, except when a note is tied.

(iii) Frozen edge

The unmeasured bars at the beginning of the piece (i.e. bar 4, 5) are to be freely interpreted, but should be long. the ad lib repetitions of the *sfff* low chord at bar 5 should be sufficient to become oppressive, disrupting the listener's sense of time. the unmeasured repetitions at the end of the piece should be similar, but less oppressive (i.e. fewer repetitions, and probably shorter).

it is important that the loud, crashing chords, which occur throughout the movement, should be heard as interruptions to a continuing melodic 'flow' provided by the repeated semiquavers. the loud chords should be played *a tempo* unless otherwise indicated. The semiquavers should be played with alternating hands.

Bars without time signatures (marked //) are ad lib, in a fast tempo (generally 'furioso').

(iv) Long Causeway

The performer needs to strike a balance between a slow, at times almost static, tempo and a sense of forward movement provided by the melodic lines and harmonic progression. By the final section of the movement (molto meno mosso) the tempo should be so slow that the melodic lines are *almost* impossible to follow, leading the ear to focus on single notes.

The movement should, until its closing stages, sound quite strong, and very resonant. In this movement, the pedal changes are particularly important and will result in shifting 'clouds' of harmonic resonance, at times quite pronounced. Because of this, the audible dynamic level will at times be louder than the dynamic indications given to the performer.

Notes should be held as indicated by ties, which are simplified to avoid (even more) confusion.

Only one note is ever sounded at a time, and a note is struck on every quaver (1/8th note) of the piece. At points where the score may be unclear the intended pitch is given in brackets.

for Stephen Gutman

Transparent Things

I Cold Light, 6 a.m.

Katharine Norman

Tense, ringing $\text{♩} = 96$ (in strict time)

Piano

Measures 1-6 of the piano score. The music is in 12/4 time, with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The first staff (treble clef) contains a melodic line with notes G4, A4, B4, C5, and D5. The second staff (bass clef) contains a sustained chord of G4, B4, and D5. Dynamics include *poco sf*, *mp*, *mf*, *f*, *mf*, and *f < sf*. A fermata is placed over the first measure of the second staff, with a 'Ped.' marking below it. A '*' marking is placed below the first measure of the second staff.

7 (no rit.)

Measures 7-12 of the piano score. The music continues in 12/4 time. The first staff (treble clef) contains a melodic line with notes G4, A4, B4, C5, and D5. The second staff (bass clef) contains a sustained chord of G4, B4, and D5. Dynamics include *f*, *mf*, *mf*, *sf*, and *mf*. A fermata is placed over the first measure of the second staff, with a '*' marking below it.

13 poco rit. A tempo

Measures 13-18 of the piano score. The music continues in 12/4 time. The first staff (treble clef) contains a melodic line with notes G4, A4, B4, C5, and D5. The second staff (bass clef) contains a sustained chord of G4, B4, and D5. Dynamics include *f*, *p*, *mf*, *f*, *sf*, and *mf < p*. A tremolo marking is placed over the first measure of the second staff. A fermata is placed over the first measure of the second staff, with a '*' marking below it.

* Change pedal whilst holding note, sim. throughout

20 (A tempo) *mp* *sf* *mp* *p* *mp* *mf* *mp* *sf*

6 (fast)

26 *sff* *p* *p* *p* *mf* *mp*

poco rit. . . . poco meno mosso

(8)

31 *pp* *mp* *mp* *mf* *f* *mp* *p* *f* *mp* *mf* *p*

* If performed as a single movement, hold a niente, then release Ped. If performed as part of the set, hold until dynamic level reaches *p*, then into second movement without releasing Ped.

II Still, Clear (for V.R.M.)

Lilting, fragile
pìu mosso ♪ = 88

Tentative ♪ = c.80

poco più mosso *rit.*

una corda throughout

Ped. *Ped.* *Ped.* *mp*

8

poco rubato *A tempo*

15

* See performance notes for this movement

21

pp mf mp p mp poco marc. f

pp mp

26

mf mp sub. f mp pp mp pp mp pp f sub. poco f

mp pp p mp

32

pp p sf mf dim. p pp poco rit. mf mp

mp pp

38 **A tempo**
mp *sf* *pp* *pp* *mp* *sf* *mp* *pp* *pp*

44 *pp* *pp* *sf* *pp* *mp* *p* *mp* *p* *mp* *f* *pp* *sub. mp* *mf* *p* *p* *p*

poco f *mp* *p* *mp* *f* *pp* *sub. mp* *mf* *p* *p*

rit. *A tempo*

R.H. L.H. sim.

49 *mp* *sf* *p* *mp* *p* *mp* *p* *mp* *p* *mp* *p* *mf* *mp* *f* *mp* *mp* *sim.*

rit. **Poco deliberato**

R.H. L.H.

54

Musical score for piano, measures 54-60. The score is in treble and bass clefs. It features various dynamics (*mp*, *p*, *f*, *mf*, *sf*, *pp*, *rit.*) and articulations (accents, slurs). The key signature has one sharp (F#). The time signature changes from 3/4 to 3/8, then 7/8, and finally 6/8. A fermata is placed over the final measure, which is marked with an asterisk (*).

* If performed as a single movement, hold *a niente*, then release Ped. If performed as part of the set, proceed to next movement without releasing Ped.

III Frozen Edge

Urgent, intense (Tempo 1) ♩ = c.126

8⁻⁻⁻⁻⁻ |

allarg. - oppressive
× 6 - 9 ad lib.

3
sf

tre corde

sff () *mf* *sff* *f*

Ped.

6 A tempo

(loco)

3
sf

sff

sff

pp

sim.

Ped.

* See performance notes for this movement

9

Musical score for measures 9-11. The score is written for piano with three staves: Treble, Bass, and Bass (8va). Measure 9 has a time signature of 5/4 + 6/16. Measure 10 has a time signature of 7/4. Measure 11 has a time signature of 6/4. Measure 12 has a time signature of 5/4. Dynamics include *sf*, *ff*, *p*, *f*, *sf*, and *fff*. There are triplets in measures 10 and 11. A fermata is present in measure 11. Pedal markings are present at the bottom of the page.

12

Musical score for measures 12-15. The score is written for piano with three staves: Treble, Bass, and Bass (8va). Measure 12 has a time signature of 5/4. Measure 13 has a time signature of 5/4. Measure 14 has a time signature of 5/4. Measure 15 has a time signature of 5/4. Dynamics include *sf*, *ff*, *mp*, *sf*, *p*, and *fff*. There are triplets in measures 12, 13, and 14. A section starting at measure 14 is marked "ad lib., furioso". Pedal markings are present at the bottom of the page.

15 **A tempo**

sfp *ff* *mp* *f* *sim.* *mp* *p* *mf* *f* *sub. sff*

R.H. L.H. (ad lib.)

19 **ad lib., sim.**

mp *ff* *sff* *p* *f* *molto* *mp* *tr* *tr* *tr* *mf* *p* *poco rit.*

sim. *tr* *tr* *tr*

secco, senza Ped.

25 **accel.** **A tempo 1**

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

Pesante

Tempo 2: poco meno mosso

poco rit. - - - -

29

sf

sec. mf

mf

mp

f

mp

Ped.

33

A tempo

sec. mf

mp

sub. ff

sf

p

f

p

Ped.

37

mf

f

sfp

p

sf

p

f

pp

sub. ff

Ped.

41 **sub. furioso** *ff* *p* *f* *sff* *sff* *p* *mf* *p* *sff* *p* *f*

Ped. *ff* *p* *f* *sff* *sff* *p* *mf* *p* *sff* *p* *f*

46 *pp* *mf* *p* *5:4* *tr* *mp* *p* *accel.*

pp *mf* *p* *5:4* *tr* *mp* *p* *accel.*

R.H. *mp* *p* *3* *3* *3* *3*

L.H. *3* *3* *3* *3*

Ped.

50 **furioso** *ff* *mfp* *ff* *sff* *pp* *f* *mp* *f*

furioso *ff* *mfp* *ff* *sff* *pp* *f* *mp* *f*

A tempo 1

Ped. *ff* *mfp* *ff* *sff* *pp* *f* *mp* *f*

54

mp *sf* *sfff* *ff* *p* *sff* *mp* *ff* *sff* *8* *sff*

Ped. Ped. Ped.

57

sff *pp* *mf* *p* *3* *3* *3* *3* *3* *tr* *3*

R.H. L.H. *mp*

(loco)

Ped. Ped.

61

poco *poco dolce* *f* *sub. sff* *poco rit.* *A tempo (1)* *sff* *sub. mp* *sff* *poco allarg.* *sff* *3*

mp *pp* *f* *sub. sff* *p* *p* *sff* *sub. mp* *sff*

Ped. Ped. Ped.

A tempo 2 *cantab., poco rubato* **poco rit. . . .** **accel. . . .** **A tempo 1**

65 *mp* *p* *mp* *mp* *mf* *mp* *p* *mp*

7.6 *3* *3* *3* *3* *tr*

R.H. L.H.

Ped. Ped.

69 (sempre a tempo) *cantab., poco rubato* **A tempo**

69 *sff* *p* *p* *molto* *f* *sf*

3 *3* *3* *3*

L.H.

(senza Ped.) Ped.

74 *cantab., poco rubato* **A tempo** *poco* **molto meno mosso**

74 *mf* *ff* *ff* *poco* *mf* *mp* *mf* *pp* *sff*

3 *3* *3* *3*

tr

Ped. Ped.

79 **sub. a tempo (1)** **allargando** **Tempo 1**

ff *sff* *mf* *sff* *pp*

Ped. × 4 duration ad lib.

83 **poco rit.** **A tempo**

ff *pp* *ff* *sff* *mp*

* See performance notes

** If performed as a single movement, hold *a niente*, then release Ped. If performed as part of the set, hold (◡) until dynamic level of *mp*, then proceed to next movement; release Ped. on first note of next movement

IV Long Causeway

With great tenderness and warmth ♩ = 76

molto legato

p *pp* *p* *mp*

mp *mp* *mp*

Ped. (A) ↑

↓ (E) ↑ (A#)

5

mf *mp* *pp* *mp* *poco rubato pp*

p *mf* *p* *p* *mf*

mp *p* *mp* *mp*

↓ (A) ↑ (G)

↓ (E) ↑ (E)

↓ (F) ↑ (G)

↓ (E) ↑ (A) ↑ (E#)

10 **A tempo** **molto rubato** **A tempo** **molto rubato**

mp *sub. mp* *mp* *mp* *p* *p* *poco f* *p*

(C#) (B) (F) (C#) (A) (G#) (D)

16 **A tempo** **poco rit.**

p *mp* *p* *mp* *mf* *f* *mf* *pp*

(C) (Eb) (F) (D) (C)

20 **Poco meno mosso**

rubato *rit. - - - -*

pp *p* *mf* *p* *mp*

mp *p* *pp* *mp*

p *mp* *p* *pp* *mp*

(A) (A) (G \flat) (F) (E \flat) (G \flat) (C) (D \flat)

25 **Molto meno mosso** (♩ = c.58 or slower)

ppp *p* *pp* *p* *pp* *mf*

pp *p* *pp* *mp*

pp *p* *pp* *mp*

(D) (G) (G) (E) (D \sharp)

poco accel. *rit. -*

30

p

pp *p*

pp *mp* *mp* *p* *p* *mp*

pp *mp* *pp* *pp*

rit. *molto grave*

L.H. R.H. L.H. R.H. L.H.

8

[G]

hold a niente

(D#) (E) (G) (F#)

London, Dec. 1995