

**James Chan**

**Being Sisyphus**

*after Camus*

2019

for sextet



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**Instrumentation**

Flute  
B $\flat$  Clarinet

Percussion (1)  
- Vibraphone (w/bow)  
- Suspended Cymbal

Piano

for sextet

Violin  
Violoncello

**Performance Notes**

Transposed score

Dynamic markings in quotation marks indicate the force with which certain techniques are to be executed, and does not necessarily reflect the actual dynamic.

T before a trill indicates a tone-colour trill

**Duration: ca. 4'30"**

### **Programme Note**

In Albert Camus's seminal work on existentialism *The Myth of Sisyphus*, he described the notion of the absurd as the paradox between the meaninglessness of the universe and the human need for unity, posing the question of whether this necessarily leads to suicide. Camus concludes that we must accept the condition of the absurd and thereby revolt against it, as Sisyphus must accept the futility of the task that he has been condemned to.

My piece, perhaps quite expectedly, begins with repetitive upward gestures. A more pulse driven section tries to assert itself in the middle, but is eventually assimilated into the other materials. To borrow a phrase used by Morton Feldman, the way in which my piece unfolds can perhaps be described as a 'rondo of everything'. What I wish to achieve ultimately is to construct an engaging trajectory in what is ultimately a non-teleological and cyclical piece.

**J.C.**

# Being Sisyphus

after Camus

James Chan

Scorrevole ♩ = c. 92

Flute

Clarinet in B $\flat$

Vibraphone  
motor off

Percussion

Piano

Violin

Violoncello

Scorrevole ♩ = c. 92

sempre poco sul pont.

Fl.

Cl.

Perc.

Pno.

Vln.

Vc.

9

Fl. *p* *pp*

Cl. *p* *ppp*

Perc. *p* *pp*  
Led.

Pno. *p*

Vln. *p* *tr#*

Vc. *tr* *pp*

Detailed description: This system contains measures 9 through 12. The Flute part begins in measure 9 with a *p* dynamic, playing a melodic line with a quintuplet (5) and a triplet (3) in measure 10, ending with a *pp* dynamic. The Clarinet part also starts in measure 9 with a *p* dynamic, featuring a triplet (3) in measure 9 and a quintuplet (5) in measure 10, concluding with a *ppp* dynamic. The Percussion part has a steady eighth-note pattern with a *p* dynamic in measure 9 and a *pp* dynamic in measure 10, marked with 'Led.'. The Piano part plays chords in measure 9 and chords with eighth notes in measure 10, marked with a *p* dynamic. The Violin part has a *p* dynamic in measure 9, playing a melodic line with a quintuplet (5) and a triplet (3) in measure 10, and a sextuplet (6) in measure 11, with a *tr#* (trill) in measure 12. The Violoncello part has a *tr* (trill) in measure 9, a triplet (3) in measure 10, and a quintuplet (5) and triplet (3) in measure 11, marked with a *pp* dynamic.

13

Fl. *ppp*

Cl. *ppp*

Perc. *ppp*  
Led.

Pno. *ppp*

Vln. *ppp* *tr#*

Vc. *ppp*

Detailed description: This system contains measures 13 through 16. The Flute part starts in measure 13 with a *ppp* dynamic, playing a melodic line with quintuplets (5) and triplets (3) in measure 14, and quintuplets (5) in measure 15. The Clarinet part has a quintuplet (5) in measure 13, a triplet (3) in measure 14, and a quintuplet (5) in measure 15, marked with a *ppp* dynamic. The Percussion part has a steady eighth-note pattern with a *ppp* dynamic in measure 13 and a *ppp* dynamic in measure 14, marked with 'Led.'. The Piano part has a steady eighth-note pattern with a *ppp* dynamic in measure 13 and chords in measure 14, marked with a *ppp* dynamic. The Violin part has a *ppp* dynamic in measure 13, playing a melodic line with a triplet (3) and a quintuplet (5) in measure 14, and a sextuplet (6) and a *tr#* (trill) in measure 15, marked with a *ppp* dynamic. The Violoncello part has a quintuplet (5) and triplet (3) in measure 13, a triplet (3) in measure 14, and a quintuplet (5) and triplet (3) in measure 15, marked with a *ppp* dynamic.



This musical score page contains six systems of staves for various instruments. The first system (measures 26-29) includes Flute (Fl.), Clarinet (Cl.), Percussion (Perc.), Piano (Pno.), Violin (Vln.), and Viola (Vc.). The second system (measures 30-33) includes Flute (Fl.), Clarinet (Cl.), Percussion (Perc.), Piano (Pno.), Violin (Vln.), and Viola (Vc.).

**Flute (Fl.):** Measures 26-29 feature a melodic line with slurs and fingerings (5, 3, 5). Dynamics range from *p* to *ppp*. Measure 30 starts with a triplet (*p*), followed by slurs and fingerings (5, 5) with dynamics *pp* and *ppp*.

**Clarinet (Cl.):** Measures 26-29 feature a melodic line with slurs and fingerings (5, 3, 5). Dynamics range from *p* to *ppp*. Measure 30 starts with a triplet (*p*), followed by slurs and fingerings (5, 5) with dynamics *ppp* and *ppp*.

**Percussion (Perc.):** Measures 26-29 feature a rhythmic pattern with slurs and dynamics *p* and *ppp*. Measure 30 features a continuous rhythmic pattern with slurs and dynamics *p*, *pp*, and *ppp*.

**Piano (Pno.):** Measures 26-29 feature a melodic line with slurs and dynamics *ppp* and *p*. Measure 30 features a melodic line with slurs and dynamics *p*.

**Violin (Vln.):** Measures 26-29 feature a melodic line with slurs, triplets, and dynamics *pp* and *ppp*. Measure 30 features a melodic line with slurs, triplets, and dynamics *pp* and *ppp*.

**Viola (Vc.):** Measures 26-29 feature a melodic line with slurs, triplets, and dynamics *ppp* and *ppp*. Measure 30 features a melodic line with slurs, triplets, and dynamics *p* and *ppp*.



34

Fl. *ppp* 3 5 *ppp* 3 5

Cl. *ppp* 5 3 5

Perc. *ppp* *ppp* *ppp*  
*sed.* *sed.* *sed.*

Pno. *ppp* *ppp* 5 3 *p* 3

Vln. *ppp* 3 *ppp* 5 *ppp* 3 *tr*

Vc. *ppp* 5 3 *ppp* 3 5 *ppp* 3 *tr*

38

Fl. - - - - -

Cl. - - - - -

Perc. - - - - -

Pno. 5 *mf* 5 *p* 3 5 *ppp*

Vln. - - - - - *ppp*

Vc. - - - - -



55

breath only (as before)

Fl. *p'* *p* *p*

Cl. *p*

Perc. *ppp* *p* *ped.*

Pno. *p*

Vln. *ppp* *ppp* *gliss.* *tr* *3*

Vc. *ppp* *ppp* *tr* *5* *3* *p*

D

breath only (as before)

Fl. *5* *3* *p'* *3*

Cl. *3* *pp* *5* *ppp*

Vib. *pp* *ped.* *Suspended Cymbal* *3* *ppp*

Pno. *ppp* *15<sup>ma</sup>* *p* *5* *3* *5* *(loco)*

Vln. *tr* *pp* *3* *D* *ppp* *ppp*

Vc. *tr* *ppp* *6* *3* *3* *gliss.* *3* *ppp*



78 **vuota** breath only (as before)

Fl. *p*

Cl. *ppp*

Perc. *ppp* *p*

Vln. *ppp* *ppp*

Vc. *ppp* *ppp*

83 **F** **vuota** *15<sup>ma</sup>*

Pno. *p delicato*

Vln. *ppp* *ppp* *ppp*

Vc. *ppp*

88 **vuota** *(45)*

Pno.

Vln. *ppp* *ppp* *ppp*

Vc. *ppp* *ppp* *ppp*

92

Fl.

Cl.

Perc.

Pno.

Vln.

Vc.

96

Fl.

Cl.

Perc.

Pno.

Vln.

Vc.

G

tr

tr

Vibraphone bowed

Ped. →

100

Fl. *tr* *ppp* 3

Cl. *tr* *ppp* 3

Perc. *pp*

Pno. (f5)

Vln. *ppp* I---II, II---III, III---IV, I---II

Vc. *ppp* I---II, II---III, III---IV

Detailed description: This system covers measures 100 to 103. The Flute and Clarinet parts feature trills and triplets, both marked *ppp*. The Percussion part has a *pp* dynamic. The Piano part is marked (f5). The Violin and Viola parts play sixteenth-note patterns with *ppp* dynamics and first/second endings indicated by Roman numerals.

104

Fl. *tr* *ppp* 3

Cl. *tr* *ppp* 3

Perc. *pp*

Pno. (f5)

Vln. *ppp* II---III, III---IV

Vc. *ppp* II I---II, I---II, II III---

Detailed description: This system covers measures 104 to 107. The Flute and Clarinet parts continue with trills and triplets, marked *ppp*. The Percussion part has a *pp* dynamic. The Piano part is marked (f5). The Violin and Viola parts play sixteenth-note patterns with *ppp* dynamics and first/second endings indicated by Roman numerals.

108 *trb* *breath only (as before)*

Fl. *ppp* *3* *p*

Cl. *(Tr)* *ppp* *3*

Perc. Suspended Cymbal *ppp* *p*

Pno.

Vln. *gliss.* *ppp* *3* *ppp* *II*

Vc. *I* *ppp* *ppp* *3* *ppp* *3*

112 *8va* *H* *p*

Pno.

Vln. *H* *I* *ppp* *II* *ppp* *I* *II* *ppp* *I* *II* *ppp* *III* *IV* *ppp*

Vc. *I* *II* *ppp* *I* *II* *ppp* *II* *III* *ppp* *III* *IV* *ppp*

115 *8va* *H*

Pno.

Vln. *I* *ppp* *II* *III* *ppp* *II* *III* *IV* *ppp* *I* *II* *ppp* *I* *II* *ppp*

Vc. *I* *II* *ppp* *I* *II* *ppp* *II* *III* *ppp* *III* *IV* *ppp*



118

Fl. *tr* *ppp* *vuota*

Cl. *tr* *ppp* *tr#* *ppp*

Perc. *Vibraphone bowed* *pp* *pp*

Pno. *8*

Vln. *III* *ppp* *II-----III* *ppp* *II--- III---* *ppp* *III---IV* *ppp*

Vc. *I-----II* *ppp* *II-----III---* *ppp*

123

Fl. *tr* *ppp* *tr* *ppp*

Cl. *tr* *ppp*

Perc. *pp* *pp*

Pno. *8*

Vln. *III-----IV---* *ppp* *I II---* *ppp*

Vc. *III--- IV---* *ppp*

128

Fl. *ppp* *tr* whistle-tone *p'*

Cl. *ppp* *tr* *ppp*

Perc. Suspended Cymbal *ppp* *ppp*

Pno.

Vln. *ppp* *ppp*

Vc. *ppp* *gliss.* *ppp* *ppp*

133

Fl. *p* *ppp*

Cl. *p*

Perc. Vibraphone norm. *ppp* *p* *pp*

Pno. *p* *ppp*

Vln. *ppp* *pp* *ppp*

Vc. *ppp* *pp*

138

Fl. *breath only (as before)*

Cl. *ppp*

Perc. *Suspended Cymbal* *ppp* *p*

Pno.

Vln. *tr* *ppp*

Vc. *ppp* *ppp*

144

Fl. *tr* *ppp*

Cl.

Perc. *Vibraphone bowed* *p*

Pno. *15<sup>ma</sup>* *p*

Vln. *ppp* *ppp* *ppp*

Vc. *ppp* *ppp* *ppp*

147

Fl. *ppp* *tr* *ppp* *3*

Cl. *ppp* *tr* *ppp* *3*

Perc. *pp*

Pno. (15)

Vln. *ppp* III---IV---1 I---II I---II---1 III---IV---1

Vc. *ppp* III---IV---1 I---II---1 II III---1 III---IV

151

Fl. *ppp* *tr* *ppp* *3* breath only (as before) *p'*

Cl. *ppp* *tr* *ppp* *3*

Perc. Suspended Cymbal *ppp* *ppp*

Pno. (15)---

Vln. *ppp* I---II I---II III---

Vc. *ppp* *gliss.* *ppp* III---1 III---1

K

156

Fl. *pp*

Cl. *p* *ppp*

Perc. *p* *ppp*

Pno. *p* *ppp*

Vibraphone norm. *p* *ppp*

Suspended Cymbal *ppp*

K

Vln. *pp* *ppp*

Vc. *pp* *ppp*

161

Fl. *p*

Cl. *p* *pp*

Perc. *p* *pp*

Pno. *p* *ppp*

Vln. *pp*

Vc. *pp* *ppp*

166

Fl. *ppp* 3 5

Cl. *p* 3 5 *ppp* tr

Perc. *p* Red. Suspended Cymbal *p*

Pno. *p* *ppp*

Vln. 5 3 *pp* tr# 3 *ppp* I

Vc. 3 6 *ppp* tr#

170

Fl. *ppp* Ttr vuota

Cl. 3 *ppp* 3 tr#

Perc. Vibraphone bowed *pp* Red. →

Pno. *p* 15<sup>ma</sup>

Vln. *ppp* I II III

Vc. *ppp* I II III

174

Fl. *tr* *ppp* *pp* *ppp* *pp*

Cl. *tr* *ppp*

Perc. Suspended Cymbal *ppp* *ppp*

Pno. (15)-----1

Vln. III-----IV-----1 *ppp* *gliss.* *ppp* *ppp*

Vc. I-----1 *ppp* *gliss.* *ppp*

*vuota* *breath only (as before)*

179

Fl. *vuota* *vuota* *p* *pp*

Cl. *pp*

Perc. Vibraphone norm. *p* *ped.*

Pno. *p* *ppp*

Vln. *pp* *ppp*

Vc. *pp*

M

185

Fl. *p* *pp*

Cl. *p* *pp*

Perc. *p* *pp* *pp*

Pno. *p*

Detailed description: This block contains the first system of music for measures 185-187. It includes parts for Flute (Fl.), Clarinet (Cl.), Percussion (Perc.), and Piano (Pno.). The Flute part features a melodic line with triplets and a dynamic shift from *p* to *pp*. The Clarinet part has a similar melodic line with triplets and a dynamic shift from *p* to *pp*. The Percussion part provides a rhythmic accompaniment with a dynamic shift from *p* to *pp*. The Piano part has a bass line with a dynamic of *p*.

M

Vln. *pp* *ppp*

Vc. *pp* *pp*

Detailed description: This block contains the second system of music for measures 185-187, featuring Violin (Vln.) and Violoncello (Vc.) parts. The Violin part has a melodic line with triplets, a dynamic shift from *pp* to *ppp*, and trills. The Violoncello part has a bass line with triplets and a dynamic shift from *pp* to *pp*.

188

Fl. *ppp*

Cl. *ppp*

Perc. *ppp* *ppp* *ppp* *ppp*

Pno. *ppp* *ppp*

Detailed description: This block contains the third system of music for measures 188-191. It includes parts for Flute (Fl.), Clarinet (Cl.), Percussion (Perc.), and Piano (Pno.). The Flute part has a melodic line with triplets and a dynamic of *ppp*. The Clarinet part has a similar melodic line with triplets and a dynamic of *ppp*. The Percussion part provides a rhythmic accompaniment with a dynamic of *ppp*. The Piano part has a bass line with a dynamic of *ppp*.

Vln. *ppp*

Vc. *ppp* *ppp* *ppp*

Detailed description: This block contains the fourth system of music for measures 188-191, featuring Violin (Vln.) and Violoncello (Vc.) parts. The Violin part has a melodic line with triplets, a dynamic of *ppp*, and trills. The Violoncello part has a bass line with triplets and a dynamic of *ppp*.



192

Fl. *ppp* 5 3 5 3

Cl. *ppp* 3 5 3 5

Perc. *ppp* Led.

Pno. 5 3 3 *p*

Vln. *ppp* tr 3 6 3 5 3 tr

Vc. *ppp* 5 3 5 3

196

Fl.

Cl.

Perc.

Pno. *mf* 5 5 3 5 *p* *ppp*

Vln. *ppp*

Vc.

N

201

Fl.

Cl.

Perc.

Pno.

Vln.

Vc.

N

206

whistle-tone

Fl.

Cl.

Perc.

Pno.

Vln.

Vc.

211 vuota

Fl. *pp* 3 5

Cl. *p* 3 5 *tr*

Perc. *p* *sed.*

Pno. *p* *ppp*

Vln. *pp* 5 3 *tr#*

Vc. *p* 6 3 *ppp* 6 *tr#*

215

Fl.

Cl. *ppp* *tr*

Sus. Cym. *p*

Pno. *p* *15ma*

Vln. *ppp* *ppp*

Vc. *tr#*