

Pieces for string orchestra
by Kirsten Johnson

Medirecon Orchestra

Antonii Kedrovskiy, conductor



Pieces for string orchestra by Kirsten Johnson



CRC 4169

Medirecon Orchestra
Antonii Kedrovskiy, conductor

1: *Why?* **8:53**

2: *And time stood still...* **10:16**

Recorded November 14, 2020 at Zvukoceh Recording Studio,
Kyiv, Ukraine.

Produced by Sergiy Kazakov. Engineered by Denis Yambor.

Mastering: Ben Connellan.

Executive Producer: Kirsten Johnson.

Photos: Jonathan Herring.

Pieces for String Orchestra by Kirsten Johnson

Written in 2020, *Why?* is unsettling. There is never a resolution to the musical question, asked in layers and circling around. *Why?* is a



comment on the uncertain times we live in, and the existential question that cries out in pain: why?

The fugal opening of *Why?* begins with the 1st violins stating the haunting melody. Based on whole-tone patterns, the last note of the melody becomes the first note of the next statement, in the 2nd violins. The last note of this transposed melody becomes the next reiteration, in the violas. Finally, the cellos come in with the last transposition of the open melody, using the final note in the violas as their starting point. The piece builds, with motives from the opening melody being developed across the string orchestra.

This material is mirrored in inversion and layered in 8th- and 16th-note patterns. There isn't a tonal centre to the piece – opening on E-flat, and moving through colours of the musical landscape, climaxing on E diminished, finishing on a D major third – the piece is not centred, it is not stable, it is hurting and anguished.

And time stood still..., written in 2019, is in D minor, with the opening theme presented by the 1st violins. The beautiful melody is timeless, creating a still, calm scene for the fugal unfolding of the theme. The melody next comes in the 2nd violins, accompanied by an 8th-note obligato in the 1st violins.

And time stood still... was first conceptualized as a set of variations, and this is reflected in the counter-melody next being set in triplets against the theme in the violas. After some development, the theme then arrives in unison cellos and double basses, accompanied by 8th-note figuration in the 2nd violins and violas, and triplet patterns in the 1st violins.

Halfway through the piece, the theme is introduced in retrograde in the 1st violins and violas. The retrograde melody travels through other doublings and variations, with the return of the opening theme coming in the violins, in unison, and echoed in canon by the cello and double bass lines. ***And time stood still...*** draws to a close with an extended cadence of elongated thematic tones.

—Copyright 2025 Kirsten Johnson.



Kirsten Johnson is a composer and pianist. *Journeys* (Centaur CRC 4133), the 2025 release of her piano music, follows the 2024 release of *Expressions: Piano Music by Kirsten Johnson* (Centaur CRC 4095). Performances of Kirsten's works include: the London Contemporary Chamber Orchestra; Festival Osmose, Brussels; Vent Nouveau, NYC; the Boston New Music Initiative; and Fifteen Minutes of Fame, NYC. 2024 saw the premier of *Crying*, on a haiku by a Japanese woman poet, in NYC by soprano Mary Hubbell; and *Moonlit Night*, for clarinet, cello and piano, in Belgium by Trio Erämaa.

November Wind, for solo piano, was premiered in NYC by Max Lifchitz of in January 2025, and *The Four Elements*, a chamber piece for six instruments, was premiered in Italy in April, 2025. Kirsten is the 2025 Sara Pennypacker Fellow at the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts for a composer residency.

Kirsten has released 26 discs of classical piano music on several record labels.

Further information is at www.kirstenjohnsonpiano.com.