Woodcuts

Violin, Viola, Cello, Double Bass & Percussion

LUKE CARLSON MUSIC

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(2018)

Duration: 16 minutes

Commissioned by Network for New Music, Philadelphia, PA
Premiered April 8, 2018 at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts
Hiroko Oka, violin · Burchard Tang, viola · John Koen, cello
Mary Javian, double bass · Christopher Deviney, percussion

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Program Notes

Rockwell Kent's woodcuts are strikingly bold and immediate. Like photographs, these images capture moments that are filled with power, motion, and intimate detail. But to me, these images also depict something deeper, a vision of industrialism and the act of creation; energy being harvested, harnessed, and unleashed.

The triptych opens with "Dynamos," an image that gives me the impression of great restraint and subdued power. The energy is palpable but controlled, held back, constrained within the giant spinning generators. Drawing on this idea, the movement begins with the strings playing very quietly near the bridge, creating a raspy, quasi-electric sound that pulsates in a gentle but mysterious way. The percussionist presents the melodic material in the vibraphone; resonant, metallic, and soft. The intensity increases and a period of sustained excitement provides a contrasting apex to the return of the opening material.

"Foundry" is pure heat, molten metal, brilliant white light. The overwhelming power of the image is brought to life by dramatic swells in the strings and a constant rhythmic overlay in the percussion. The chords are gradually transformed into syncopated rhythms that drive the middle section of the movement. Though intense, the music is also somewhat buoyant and lighthearted. The factory floor is bustling with activity and production.

The final movement is driving and rhythmic; an ostinato providing the impetus. The "Two Locomotives" appear to be vying for supremacy and the music picks up on this idea with rhythms and patterns that shift and fluctuate back and forth. The cyclic nature of trains is ever-present in the gyrating music. The powerful popping, puffing, and pounding of steam is augmented by the rays of light shimmering through the passing clouds. Thus, the cycle of energy comes full circle, seemingly man-made but ultimately God-made.

Instrumentation & Performance Notes

Instrumentation

Violin
Viola
Cello
Double Bass (with C extension)
Percussion (1 player)

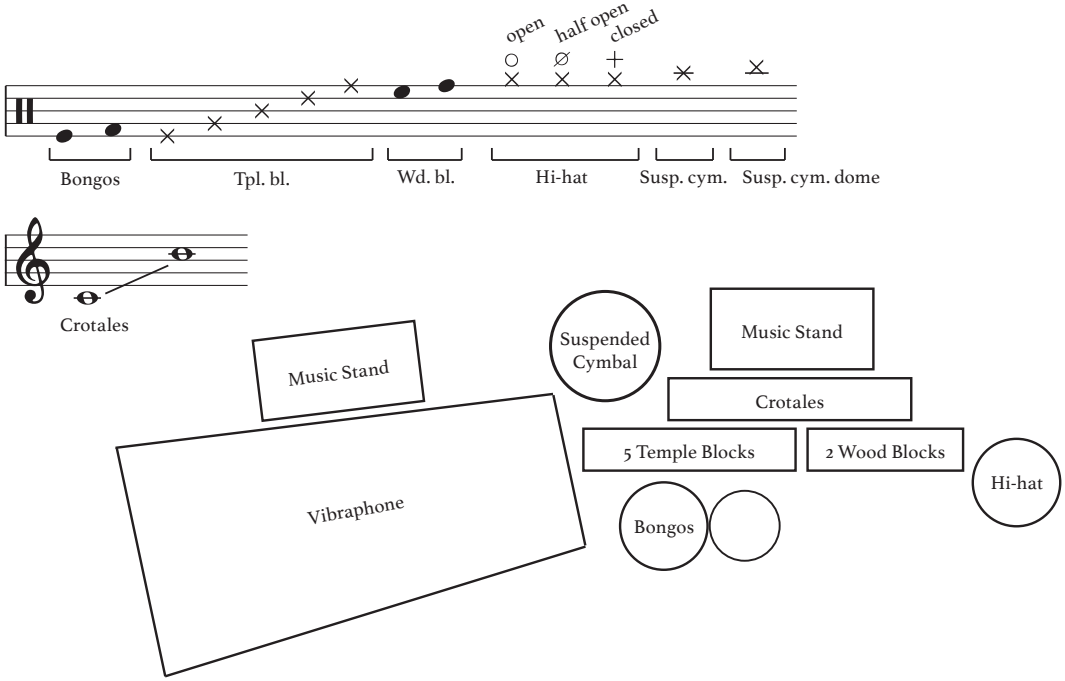
String Techniques & Abbreviations

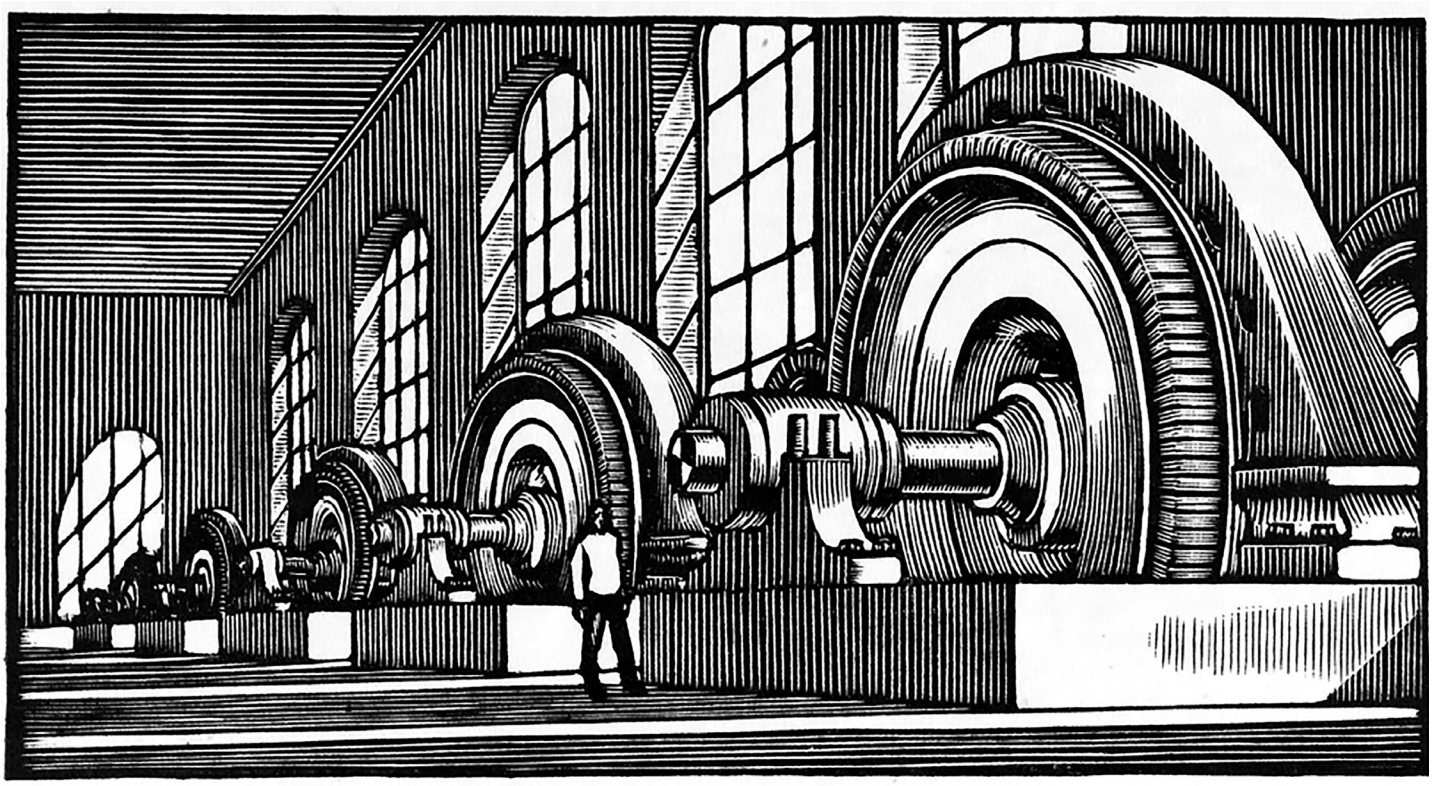
sul pont.	s.p.
poco sul pont.	p.s.p.
molto sul pont.	m.s.p.
ordinary	ord.
behind the bridge	

Percussion Instruments & Abbreviations

Triangle	Tgl.
Suspended cymbal (med.)	Susp. cym.
Hi-hat	Hi-hat
2 Wood blocks	Wd. bl.
5 Temple blocks	Tpl. bl.
2 Bongos	Bongos
Crotales (1 octave)	Crot.
Vibraphone	Vib.

Suggested Percussion Setup & Notation Key





Dynamos Rockwell Kent 1929–30

WOODCUTS

violin, viola, cello, double bass, percussion

I. Dynamos

Luke Carlson

*While bowing the indicated open string, lightly tap the natural harmonic node without pressing all the way down to the fingerboard.
**While bowing, move across the bridge from ordinary to behind the bridge.
***Behind the bridge. If possible, produce a pure pitch.

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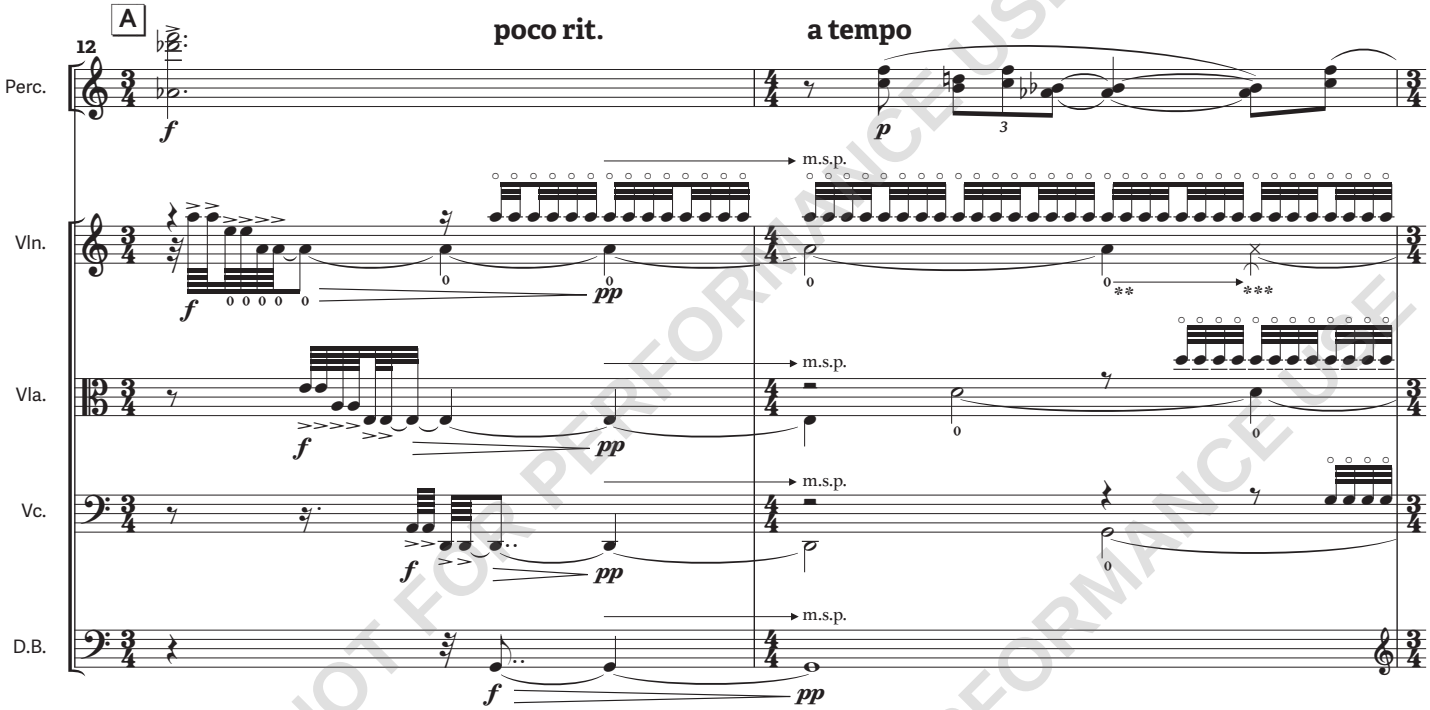

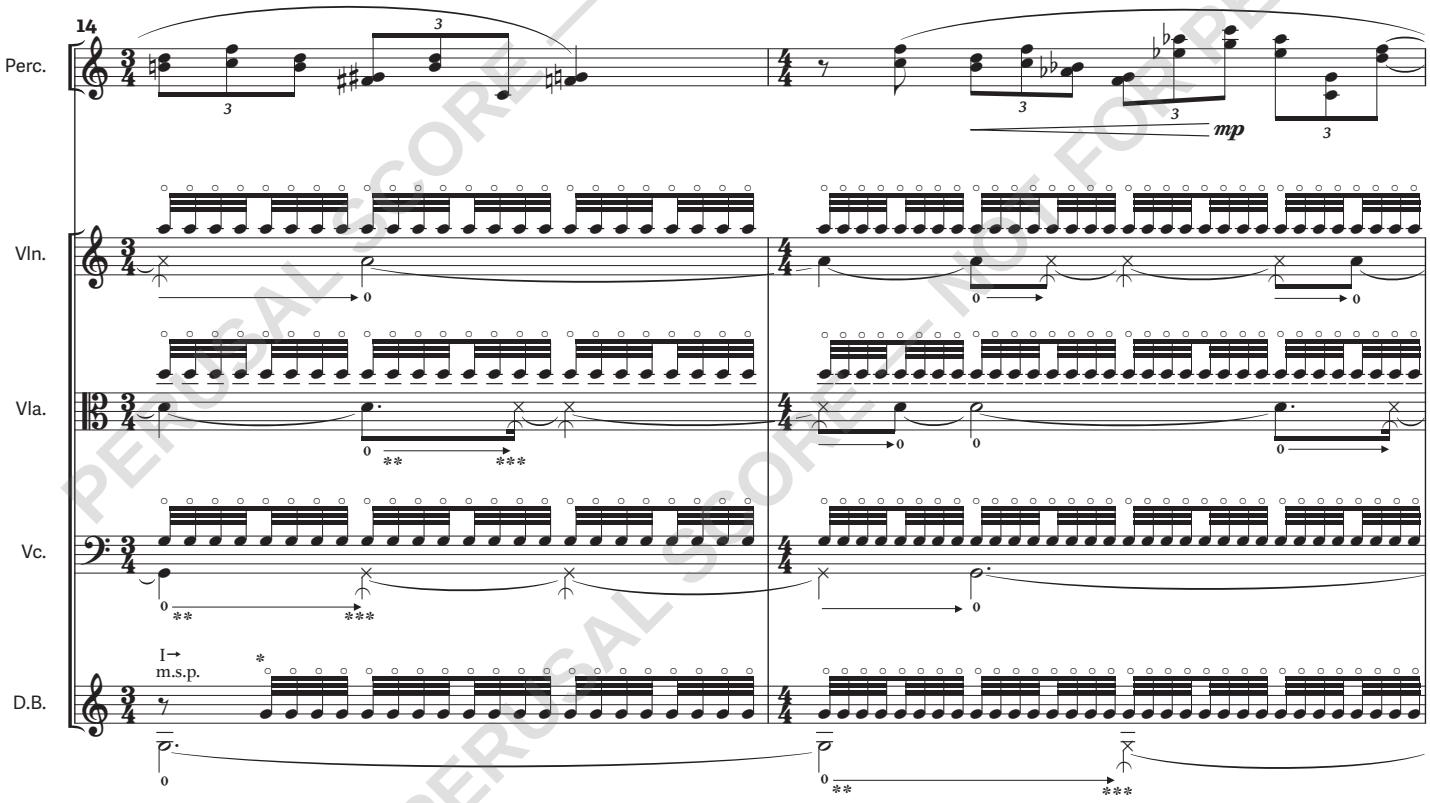

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