

Aim Straight for Starlight

Paul Burnell

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duration 7'30" approximately

Instrumentation:

- small drum
- 2 cellos
- handbells (chromatic set of 13, c-c)11 players - one doubling accordion, others doubling handheld percussion, timpani
- group of wind/brass players, voices (no set instrumentation) at least 3 performers
- bass drum
- Optional - bottles, other accordions, melodicas, organ etc

Aim Straight for Starlight is a processional piece that symbolises the movement of life from Earth into the wider Universe.

It was commissioned by COMA London Ensemble for their performance on 14 June 2003 at the Spitalfields Festival.

The performance took place in Shoreditch Church, London, where the procession emerged from behind the choir stalls, moved along one side aisle, down and up the middle aisle, then down the other side aisle to finish at the stage area. The sound of the procession at the mid-point of the performance completely enveloped the audience. Performers playing bottles (by blowing across the tops of the bottles) were positioned in the balcony, and an additional accordion player and a melodica player were positioned in the balcony at the stage end.

Other performances could take place in spaces such as shopping centres, car parks or outdoor venues such as public gardens. The piece could also be performed as a 'link' between two different concert locations, or as a way of bringing the audience into the concert venue (after an interval for example).

The piece is 'modular' in the sense that different elements may be omitted. It could be performed by handbells only, or without the band. The handbells music is available as a piano part - the pianist could perform at the same time as the handbells. If the performers do not include voices, then some attempt should be made to present the words of the band 'melody' - either in the concert programme, or as a spoken introduction.

Text

Verse

Chorus

D N A

Never ending

Aim straight for starlight

Jump on a comet's tail

And spread the song along the
Universe

Aim Straight for Starlight

for CoMA London

processional piece for ensemble

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Mark processional route with 12 equally spaced points A to L (including start and end point). The points are spaced ideally at fifteen paces - 30 beats. Each procession group 2-13 begin at A when previous group has reached B. Groups maintain equal distance. The conductor quietly reinforces start of each group with bass drum. Slow pace - every other beat. Tempo = 104bpm

1 Pulse group small drum every beat and 2 cellos, carried, pizz open g every other beat. Sit at L to form procession 'gateway'

1	Handbells - pitch / beat interval	After 'Gateway' handbells change to other instruments, slow crescendo pp to fff:
2	g / 2 beats	accordion - chords (see below) - begin when handbell 3 passes through gateway
3	c # / 13 beats	finger cymbals / still every 13 beats
4	f # / 9 beats	triangle / still every 9 beats - during final chord play continuous 'roll'
5	d # / 11 beats	timp d, or low drum / 5 beats
6	top c / 6 beats - and - g # / 12 beats	timp a, or low drum / 4 beats
7	a # / 10 beats	suspended cymbal / still every 10 beats
8	f / 7 beats - and - low c / 14 beats	claves / 4 beats
9	b / 8 beats	cowbell or resonant saucepan if louder / still every 8 beats
10	d / 5 beats	agogo or resonant saucepan if louder / still every 5 beats
11	e / 4 beats	small cymbals / every 3 beats
12	a / 3 beats	take c # handbell and play continuously - after final chord play every 13 beats

13 Band - wind/brass (at least 3), voices (optional), bass drum (conductor). Play/sing together the following phrases once when passing each of the processional points. Each phrase introduced by bass drum with three beats. Melody repeats after all lines have been built up; bass drum then ad libs. Band always plays ff. See below for melody rhythm and 'shape'.

Verse

Verse Chorus

Verse Chorus DNA

Verse Chorus DNA Never-ending

Verse Chorus DNA Never-ending Aim straight for starlight

Verse Chorus DNA Never-ending Aim straight for starlight Jump on a comet's tail

Verse Chorus DNA Never-ending Aim straight for starlight Jump on a comet's tail And spread the song along the

Verse Chorus DNA Never-ending Aim straight for starlight Jump on a comet's tail And spread the song along the Uni Uni Uni Uni Uni Uni Uni Uni Uni (Verse Chorus DNA... etc., keep repeating)

Band

play / sing melody within loudest range, any notes within indicated range (except on "DNA" - play divisi d major chord)

musical notation for the band part, including bass drum and melody lines with lyrics: Verse Chorus DNA Never-ending Aim straight for starlight Jump on a comet's tail And spread the song along the Uni Uni Uni Uni Uni Uni Uni Uni Uni

Accordion (organ, melodicas etc) begin each chord as handbells (starting with 3) and band pass through the gateway 'g major'

musical notation for the accordion part, showing chords and dynamics: pp, p, mp, mf, f, ff, fff

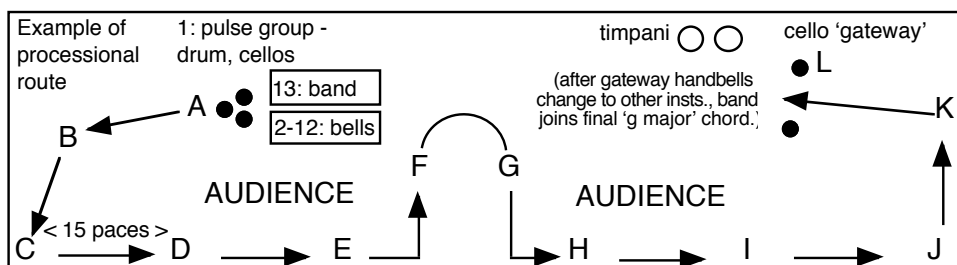
When pulse group reaches final point L cellos sit forming a 'gateway' through which procession passes. Cellos continue to pizz g, then introduce repeated motif below - becoming arco. Small drum maintains regular beat. Cellos join 'g major' chord at end.

Cellos pizz ... arco after several repeats... accented and gradually crescendo to join 'g major' chord

musical notation for the cellos part, showing pizzicato and arco sections with lyrics: a g e s f a c e a h e a d

When the band has added the last phrase it keeps repeating the melody. After passing through 'gateway' band (and cellos) join 'g major' accordion chord. Conductor signals to stop. C # handbell continues alone, every 13 beats. Total duration 7'30" approx.

Optional: others above blow across bottle tops until band starts. Other accordions etc placed around route.



Note: piece is modular, for example may be performed with handbells only, or without band. Handbells music available as piano part from composer.