

# blank slate

Rosa Juritz

for string quartet (2020)

*cisterns in memory  
rivers in memory  
pools in memory  
always water in memory  
wind in memory  
whispering in memory*

- Alejandra Pizarnik, Uncollected Poems (1962-1972)

Pizarnik's poem left a deep impression on me upon my first reading. Its simplistic, serene atmosphere projected delicate images of water and air clouded by memory into my head. Each miniature of 'blank slate' illustrates a line from this poem, attempting to depict its nature through a lens of fuzzy reminiscence.

'cisterns in memory' is inspired by the Basilica Cistern in Istanbul. Built in the 6<sup>th</sup> century during the reign of Byzantine emperor Justinian I, it is a 9800 square metre underground construction that was used to store and distil rainwater for the Great Palace of Constantinople. Despite its practical purpose, it has an almost church-like quality, and inside its walls it stores two Medusa heads, and a column engraved with hen's eyes, supposedly erected to memorialise the lives of the slaves who died in the cistern's construction. This miniature is distant, with slightly warped, echoing, open intervals, illustrating the faint memory of an ancient structure.

'rivers in memory' is slightly more literal in its depiction. When examining river sounds, I was fascinated by the sound's sharpness. Rather than being fluid, the sound of a river is bitty and angular; water molecules crashing and clunking against each-other at high speeds. In this miniature I fuse the more literal river sound (pizzicato viola and cello) with the sound in our perceptions (the more free-flowing violins).

'pools in memory', simply put, uses a 'pool' of five notes. These are the only notes used in the miniature. The music does not progress, modify, or change itself in any way. It is still, unchanging, and without journey. It is simply a pool.

'always water in memory' creates a coalescence of the previous three miniatures and focusses on the depiction of 'memory'. Memory is deeply personal and created through our own perceptions of our experiences. It is not a constant: things get jumbled, our perception changes, there is little sense of time, and just as easily as they are created, memories are deleted. The miniature is disorganised and disorderly, and rather than specific details of water being played in perfect harmony, it attempts to remember the essence of what water is – much like how we remember our own experiences.

'wind in memory' and 'whispering in memory' both focus less on the innate musical material and more-so on creating a simplistic sound world to allow space for reflection; for memory.

## Notation Key

S.T. Sul tasto

N Normal bow position

S.P. Sul ponticello



A rapid cascade with left-hand fingers barely touching the string, as playing if very fast-paced harmonics.



Use the left hand to stop notes on the fingerboard.  
Once note has been stopped, rapidly lift finger and let it ring slightly. This should be done sporadically, as if imitating singular droplets of water.

blank slate  
cisterns in memory

Rosa Juritz

**Very slow, spacious, and sustained.**  $\text{♩} = 40$

use subtle, slow vibrato when possible

Violin I

**mp**

use subtle, slow vibrato when possible, as if echoing violin I

Violin II

**p**

S.T.

use subtle, slow vibrato when possible as if echoing violin II

Viola

**pp**

use subtle, slow vibrato when possible, as if echoing viola

S.P.

Violoncello

**ppp**

2

**mp**

**p**

**pp**

**ppp**

1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7

*ppp*

*ppp*

8  
9  
10  
11  
12

*mp*

S.T.

*p*

*pp*

S.P.

*ppp*

N

*p*

12  
13  
14  
15

S.P.

*pppp*

*ppp*

S.T.

*pp*

blank slate  
rivers in memory

**Free flowing**  
 $\text{♩} = 70$

Rosa Juritz

S.P.

Violin I

p

S.P.

Violin II

p

con sord.  
pizz

Viola

mp

con sord.  
pizz

Violoncello

mp

This section contains two staves of musical notation for string instruments. The top staff includes Violin I and Violin II, both playing sustained notes with grace notes. The bottom staff includes Viola and Violoncello, both playing pizzicato patterns. Measure 1 starts with S.P. dynamics and measure 2 starts with p dynamics. Measure 2 includes dynamic markings for both violins and both cellos.

3

6/4

6/4

6/4

7:4

3

This section continues the musical score for strings. It features sustained notes with grace notes in measures 3 and 4. Measure 5 begins with a complex rhythmic pattern for the bass line, indicated by a 7:4 time signature and a 3 overline. Measures 6 through 8 show sustained notes with grace notes.

4

6/4

6/4

3/4

6/4

5:4

5:4

5

4/4

4/4

3/4

4/4

mf

N

mf

mf

5:4

3

3

Musical score page 7, featuring four staves of music. The top two staves are treble clef, the third is bass clef, and the bottom is bass clef. Measure 1 starts with dynamic **S.P.** (Sforzando Pizzicato). Measure 2 begins with **mp**. Measure 3 begins with **p**. Measure 4 begins with **S.P.**. Measure 5 begins with **mf**, followed by another **mf**. Measure 6 begins with **p**. Measure 7 starts with a measure repeat sign. Measure 8 ends with a **7:4** time signature change, indicated by a bracket over the next measure. Measure 9 ends with a **3** under a bracket. Measure 10 ends with a **5** under a bracket. Measure 11 ends with a **3** under a bracket.

9

N S.P.

*p*

N S.P.

*mf*

*p* *mp*

5:4

3 6 3

5:4

11

v

N

*mf*

*p*

*mf*

N

*mf*

3/4

5:4

3

6

3

13

S.P.

*p*

6/4

S.P.

*mf*

*p*

6/4

6/4

3

6/4

6/4

3

14

Treble clef, 6/4 time. Measures 1-2. Slurs and grace notes.

Treble clef, 6/4 time. Measures 3-4. Slurs and grace notes. Dynamic: *N*.

Bass clef, 13/4 time. Measure 1: 7:4. Measure 2: 3. Dynamic: *mf*.

15

Treble clef, 4/4 time. Measures 1-2. Slurs and grace notes.

Treble clef, 4/4 time. Measures 3-4. Slurs and grace notes. Dynamic: *S.P.*

Bass clef, 13/4 time. Measure 1: 3. Measure 2: 6. Dynamic: *mp*.

Bass clef, 4/4 time. Measures 1-2. Slurs and grace notes.

17

*mp*

*p* *mf*

*N* *S.P.*

*p*

*3* *3* *3* *3*

*3* *5:4* *3*

19

*mf*

*mf* *p*

*N* *S.P.*

*mp* *p*

*3* *3* *3* *3*

*3* *3* *3* *3*

*3* *7:4* *3* *5:4*

21

*mp*

*p*

*mp*

*p*

*p*

*p*

23

*mp*

*p*

*N*

*mf*

*5:4*

*3*

*3*

# blank slate pools in memory

Rosa Juritz

**Still, peaceful** ♩ = 45

no vibrato. as still and sustained as possible.

Violin I

no vibrato. as still and sustained as possible.

Violin II

no vibrato. as still and sustained as possible.

Viola

no vibrato. as still and sustained as possible.  
senza sord.

Violoncello

no vibrato. as still and sustained as possible.  
senza sord.

4

7

blank slate  
always water in memory

Rosa Juritz

$\text{J} = 70$   
no vib

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Cello

as audible as possible

This section contains two staves for Violin I and II, one for Viola, and one for Cello. The Violin parts consist of sustained notes. The Viola part features eighth-note patterns with dynamic markings 'con sord' and 'pizz'. The Cello part also has eighth-note patterns. A performance instruction 'as audible as possible' is placed between the Viola and Cello staves.

$3$

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Cello

$3$

$3$

This section contains two staves for Violin I and II, one for Viola, and one for Cello. The Violin parts consist of sustained notes. The Viola and Cello parts feature eighth-note patterns. Measure 4 concludes with a measure repeat sign.

5

*con sord  
pizz*

*mp*

*senza sord  
arco  
S.P.*

*mp*

*no vib*

*pp*

7

*senza sord  
arco*

*pp*

*con sord  
pizz*

*mp*

*con sord  
pizz*

*mp*

*arco*

*pp*

*senza sord  
arco*

*p*

*pp*

Musical score page 3, measures 9-10. The score consists of four staves. Measure 9 starts with a treble clef staff with a dynamic of *mf*. It transitions to a staff with a bass clef and a dynamic of *pp*. Measure 10 begins with a staff containing a single note, followed by a staff with a dynamic of *p*. The third staff continues from measure 9 with a dynamic of *mf*, followed by another *mf* dynamic. The fourth staff starts with a dynamic of *p* and includes a time signature change to  $\frac{5}{4}$  over three measures, followed by a *pp* dynamic.

Musical score page 3, measures 11-12. The score continues with four staves. Measure 11 features a treble clef staff with a dynamic of *p*, followed by a staff with a dynamic of *pp*. Measure 12 begins with a staff containing a single note, followed by a staff with a dynamic of *p*. The third staff contains six eighth-note groups, each labeled with a number (3, 6) under a bracket, with a dynamic of *mp*. The fourth staff starts with a dynamic of *ppp*.

suddenly cut off

# wind in memory

blank slate

Rosa Juritz

on the string stated at the beginning of each system,  
move your left handed finger, with as light a touch as possible, up and down  
the fingerboard of your instrument in accordance to the lines' direction.

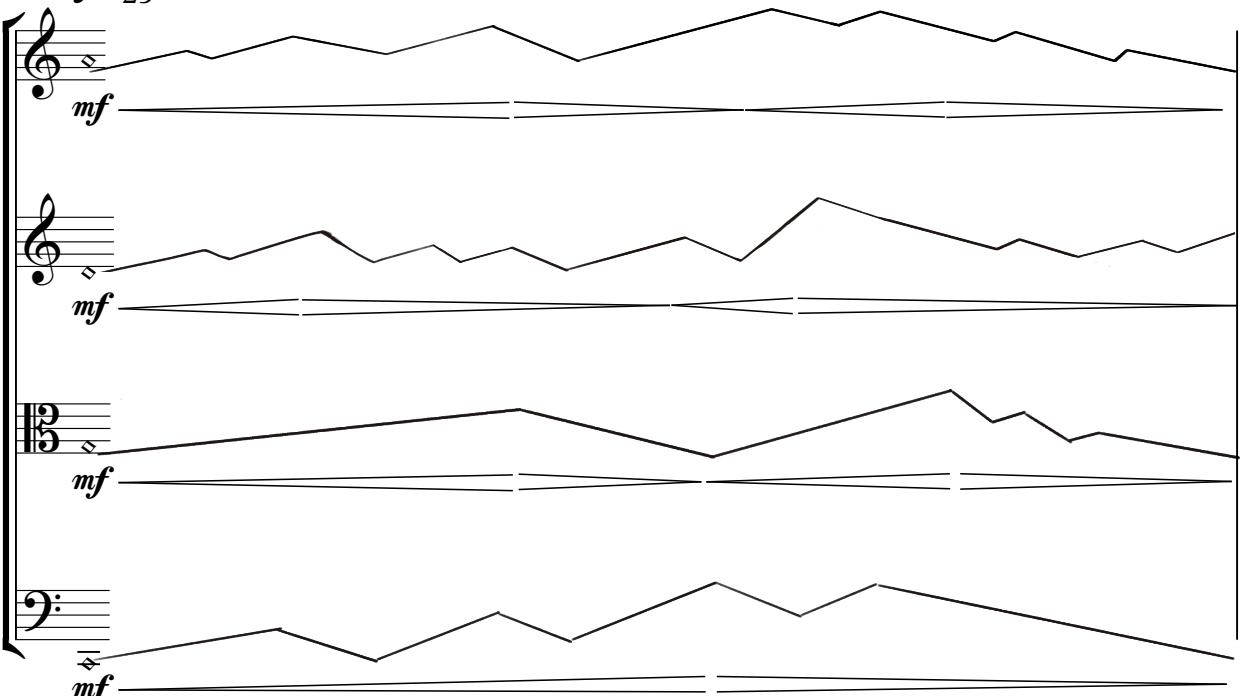
each system 30"  
 $\downarrow = 25$

Violin I

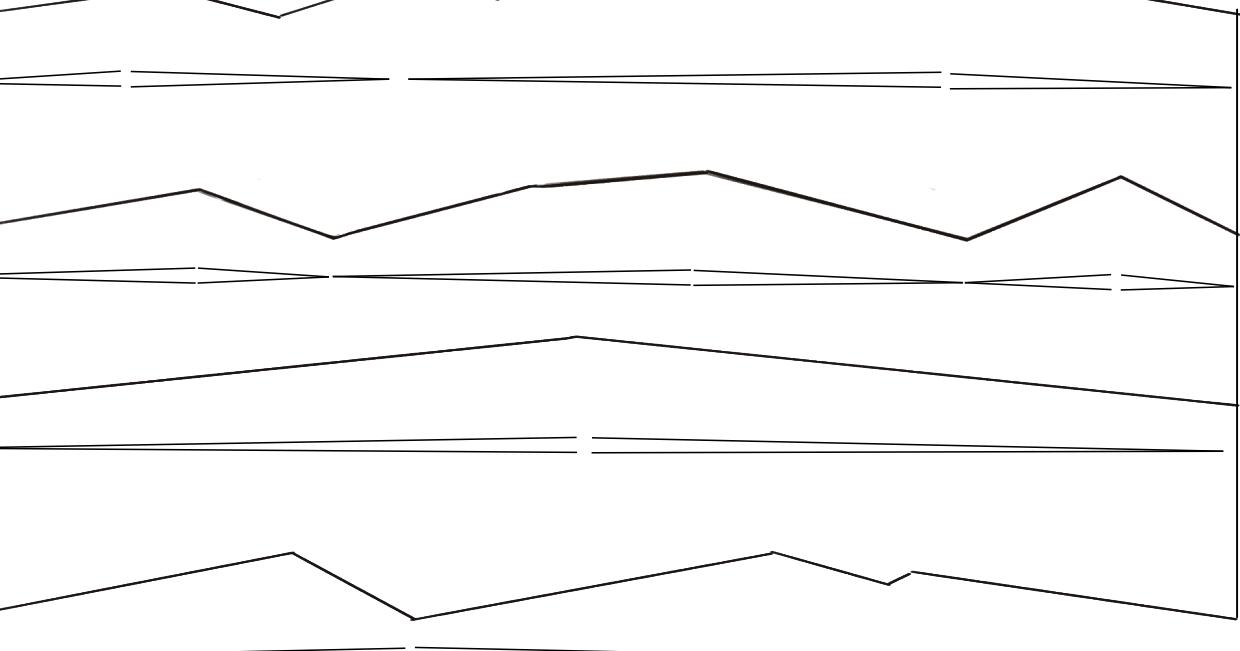
Violin II

Viola

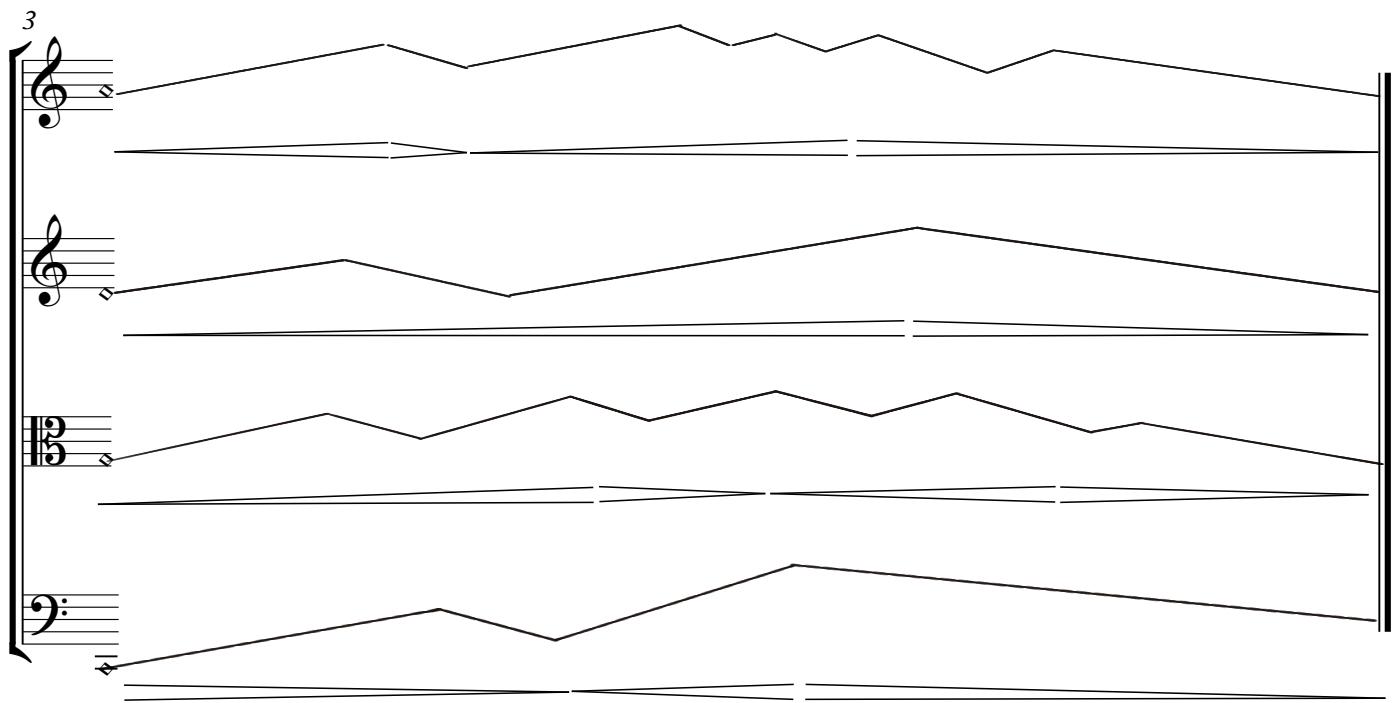
Violoncello



2



2



blank slate

# whispering in memory

bow the body of your instrument followin the notated lines.

listen to your fellow players.

follow beats loosely. play based on feeling.

"whisper" what you have just heard on to the next player.

Rosa Juritz

$\text{♩} = 30$

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Cello

Treble

Bass

Alto

6

Treble

Bass

Alto

