

The Black Path
for string quartet

Cameron McArthur
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Programme Note

The 'Black Path' is a track that follows the southern bank of the river Tees. It is ancient: in the late 5th century it formed the boundary between the Anglian Kingdoms of Deira and Bernicia. Later, when York was under Viking rule, the path marked the north-eastern corner of Eric Bloodaxe's kingdom. For the last few decades, it has been a barren route through the abolished heart of industrial Teesside. Once used by sailors and steelworkers on their daily commute, it carves a scar between blast furnaces, cranes, and heavy pipelines, working steadily out from the town to the mouth of the Tees and Coatham marshes. Grimy steel slag, a by-product of the (now abandoned) steel works along the route was used for the foundations for the path. This slag, combined with the accumulation of industrial cinders underfoot, helped give the path its modern name. It's an arresting and unique landscape, and I am regularly struck by its semi-wildness, as I drive above it on one of my own weekly commutes. An evocative image, it was the inspiration for this, my second string quartet.

The work is split into two movements. The first establishes a traditional score-as-absolute approach, where the performers adhere to a precisely notated, traditionally designed score. The sense of momentum is largely controlled by pitch relationships, texture, and by shapes, gestures, and phrases. The performers' role is simply to convey what they encounter; they are expressive, but always serving the music (and thereby, my intentions). In the second movement, the performers are given increasing amounts of control over the sense of musical energy, making decisions about tempo, metre, pitch, and the general flow of the music. Sometimes one performer takes charge; sometimes all four musicians carve their own path. Eventually, all four players return to follow the precise notation in the score - but the musical momentum is different. The energy has changed, and it cannot be reset.

The Black Path

for string quartet

Cameron McArthur

Glistening $\text{♩} = 96$

I

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Violoncello

x.s.p. → m.s.p. → x.s.p.

ppp < p ppp

delicato

x.s.p. → s.p. → x.s.p.

ppp < mp < ppp

delicato

8

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

x.s.p. → m.s.p. → m.s.t.

ppp < p

ppp < p

ppp < p

ppp < p

s.t.

ppp < f < p

espress.

s.t.

pp < ppp < f < p

espress.

s.t.

pp < ppp < f < p

espress.

s.t.

ppp < f

espress.

13

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

f < p < ppp < p < f < p < f

f < ppp < p < f < p

f < ppp < f < p < f

p < ppp < p < f

17 poco a poco ord. (ord.) poco a poco s.p.

Vln. I *p* *f* *ppp* *f* *p* *f* *p* *f* *p* *f*

Vln. II poco a poco ord. (ord.) poco a poco s.p. *f* *p* *f* *ppp* *f* *p* *f* *p* *f* *p*

Vla. poco a poco ord. (ord.) poco a poco s.p. *p* *f* *ppp* *p* *f* *p* *f*

Vc. poco a poco ord. (ord.) poco a poco s.p. *p* *f* *ppp* *f* *p* *f* *p*

23 (s.p.) rall. ord.

Vln. I *p* *f* *p* *ppp* *p* *pp*

Vln. II (s.p.) ord. *f* *p* *f* *p* *ppp* *p* *mf* *pp*

Vla. (s.p.) ord. *p* *f* *p* *ppp* *mf* *pp*

Vc. (s.p.) ord. *f* *p* *ppp* *p* *pp*

A Hurriedly, spidering $\text{♩} = 72$

28

Vln. I *mp* *f* *mf* *mf*

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

30

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

f *mf*

7 6 7 7 3

31

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

ff *mp* *p* *f*

7

33

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

pp *f* *ppp* *f* *f* *ppp*

3

36

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

f *p* *f* *ppp*

5

39

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

f *pp* *f* *pp* *mp* *p*

quasi gliss.

3 3 6

41

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

fp *mf* *pp* *f* *mf* *mf* *p* *mf* *pp* *sfzp* *f* *sfzp* *f* *sfzp* *f* *sfzp*

5

44

Vln. I *f* 6 6 *ff* 3 5

Vln. II *f* *ff* 3

Vla. *f* 6 *ff* 3

Vc. 3 5 *ff* 3

B

m.s.p. 'nasty'
heavy and slow bow
rapid light touch left hand tremolo

46

Vln. I m.s.p. 'nasty'
heavy and slow bow
rapid light touch left hand tremolo

Vln. II m.s.p. 'nasty'
heavy and slow bow
rapid light touch left hand tremolo

Vla. m.s.p. 'nasty'
heavy and slow bow
rapid light touch left hand tremolo *f* m.s.t. flautando III 3

Vc. m.s.p. 'nasty'
heavy and slow bow
rapid light touch left hand tremolo *f* m.s.t. flautando

47

Vln. I

Vln. II *f* m.s.t. flautando IV

Vla. 3

Vc.

6 48  m.s.t. flautando IV 3

Vln. I *f* *pp*

Vln. II *f* *pp*

Vla. *f* *pp*

Vc. *f* *pp*



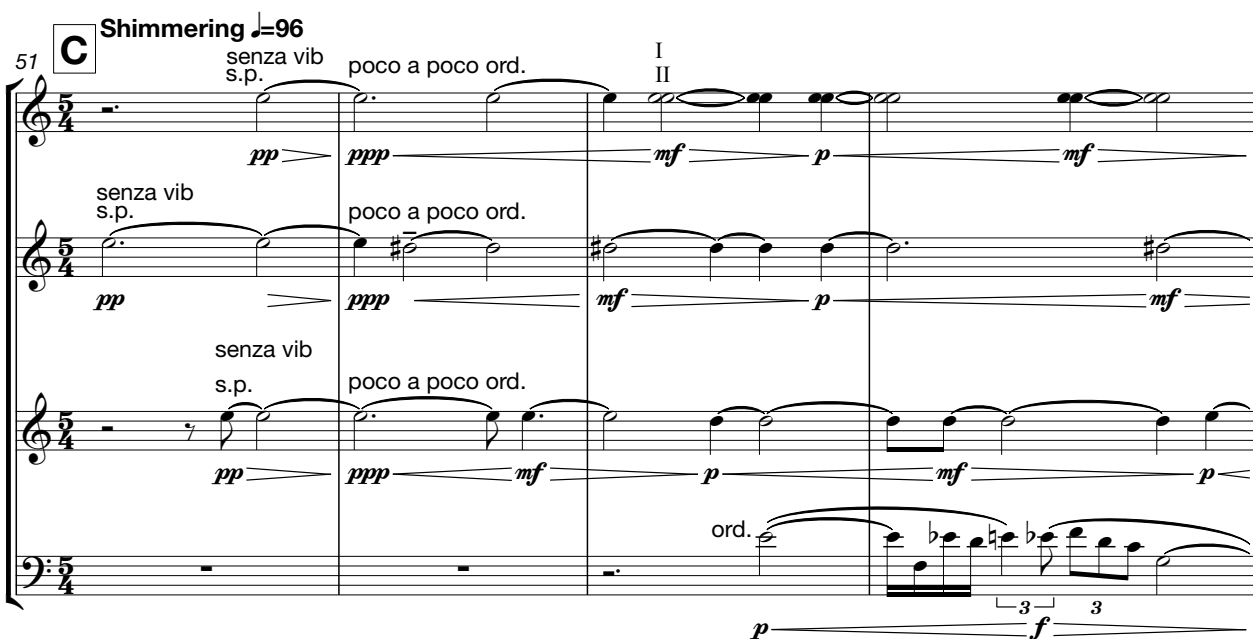
51 **C** Shimmering ♩=96 senza vib s.p. poco a poco ord. I II

Vln. I *pp* *ppp* *mf* *p* *mf*

Vln. II *pp* *ppp* *mf* *p* *mf*

Vla. *pp* *ppp* *mf* *p* *mf* *p*

Vc. ord. *p* *f*



55 ord. m.s.p. ord.

Vln. I *ppp* *mf* *p* *mf* *p* *mf*

Vln. II ord. *ppp* *mf* *p* *mf* *p*

Vla. ord. *mf* *p* *mf* *p* *mf*

Vc. *pp* *f* *p* *mf* *pp* *mf* *p*



59

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

p *mf* *ppp* *p*

mf *mf* *ppp*

p *mf* *p* *mf* *p*

mp 3 3 6 *f* *ppp* *mp*

62

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

mf *p* *mf* *p* *mf* *rall.*

p *mf* *p* *mf* *p*

mf *p* *mf* *p* *mf* *p*

pp *p* *mp* *ppp*

67

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

p *pp* *ppp*

pp *ppp*

ppp

s.p. → m.s.p. → x.s.p. → tonlos

s.p. → m.s.p. → x.s.p. → tonlos

D Dark, heavy, and rich $\text{♩} = 120$

70 ord.

Vln. I *ppp* *p* *mf* *pp* *f* *pp*

Vln. II (ord.) *pp* *mf* *pp* *f* *pp* *f* *p*

Vla. (ord.) *pp* *f* *pp* *pp* *f* *p* *f*

Vc. ord. *ppp* *f* *pp* *f* *pp* *f*

78

Vln. I *mf* *ff* *p* *fff* *p*

Vln. II *f* *mp* *f* *ff* *p* *fff* *ppp*

Vla. *pp* *f* *ff* *p* *fff* *f* *pp*

Vc. *pp* *f* *ff* *p* *fff* *f* *p* *f*

poco accel.

83

Vln. I *f* *p* *f* *p* *ff*

Vln. II *f* *p* *f* *p* *ff*

Vla. *p* *f* *p* *ff*

Vc. *p* *f* *p* *ff*

Aggressive ♩=140

9

87

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

p *fff* *ff* *p* *fff* *ff* *p*

← ♩=70 → Scurrying (♩=70)

91

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

fffz *p* *cresc.*

fff *p* *f* *mp* *f* *mp* *f*

fff *p* *mp* *p* *mf* *mp*

fff *p* *f* *p* *f* *p*

94

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

f *ff* *3*

f *5* *7* *7*

f *5* *7*

f *5*

ff *3*

gliss. up with harmonic pressure
trill to open strings

10

96

lightly dampen all strings
bow randomly as fast as possible, staying close to the frog

poco rall. . . .

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

ff

pp *ppp*

pp

f 3

pp

99

Meno mosso ♩=64

pizz. 5

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

pp *mp* *pp*

pp *mp* *pp*

ppp

ppp

ppp

101

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

mp *pp*

mp *p* *pp*

(ord.) m.s.p.

f

attacca

II

11

Free Time - open and spacious

N.B. durations are at performers' discretion, unless otherwise indicated
move to the next bar only when all performers have played their material
pizz.

104

Vln. I *mp*

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

109

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

pizz.

112

Vln. I

Vln. II *mp*

Vla.

Vc.

pizz.

mp

pizz.

115

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

mf *f* *mp*

continue ad lib.

Each bar ca. 4"

118

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

mp

continue sim. using these pitches in any order

begin to introduce random accents (examples notated this bar only)

play in any order repeat ad. lib (pizz.)

121

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

mf

play in any order repeat ad lib. (pizz.)

continue sim. using these pitches in any order

125 **accel.**

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla. *arco* *p*

Vc. *pizz.*

very slow bow
gritty sound with no pitch

129 **E Driving, rhythmic ♩=164**

Vln. I *ff* (4+3+4) *arco* *mf* *stuttering* 5

Vln. II *ff* (4+3+4) *mp* *pizz.* 5

Vla. *ff* *arco* (4+3+4) *mp* *pizz.*

Vc. *ff* *p* *accents sim.*

132

Vln. I *f* 5 3 4:3 5

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

135 pizz.

Vln. I *pp subito* 5 *f mp*

Vln. II (pizz.) 6 4:3 *f mp*

Vla. arco *f mp*

Vc. pizz. *ff* *f*

138

Vln. I *f* *pp* 6 5

Vln. II *f* *pp* 5

Vla. *f* *pp* 3

Vc. arco *mp* pizz. *f*

141

Vln. I *mf* arco

Vln. II *ff* *mf*

Vla. 3 *f mp* 5 *f mp*

Vc. *f* *mp* arco *p* 5

Violin I (Vln. I) and Violin II (Vln. II) parts are in treble clef. Viola (Vla.) is in alto clef. Violoncello (Vc.) is in bass clef. The score shows measures 144 to 15. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The time signature is 3/4. The score includes dynamic markings such as *mf* and *ff*, and articulation marks like accents and slurs. The Vln. I part has a measure number 144 at the beginning. The Vln. II part has a measure number 5 at the beginning. The Vla. part has a measure number 5 at the beginning. The Vc. part has a measure number 3 at the beginning. The Vln. I part has a measure number 6 at the beginning. The Vln. II part has a measure number 5 at the beginning. The Vla. part has a measure number 5 at the beginning. The Vc. part has a measure number 3 at the beginning. The Vln. I part has a measure number 15 at the end. The Vln. II part has a measure number 5 at the end. The Vla. part has a measure number 5 at the end. The Vc. part has a measure number 3 at the end.

146

Vln. I

5

5

6

11

16

pp

Vln. II

5

11

16

pp

Vla.

3

3

11

16

pp

Vc.

3

11

16

pp

148 **F**

Vln. I *pizz.* *f* *mp*

Vln. II *pizz.* *f* *mp*

Vla. *pizz.* *f* *arco* *mf* *f* *pp* *f* *p* *ord.*

Vc. *pizz.* *f* *arco* *mf* *f* *pp* *f* *p* *ord.*

16

153

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

arco

ff *pp*

p

4:3

s.p.

quasi gliss.

ord.

pp

ord.

pp

6

ff

156

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

ff

p

ff

p

ff

ff

5

4:3

5

5

3

3

3

3

3

158

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

pizz.

pp

mp

pizz.

pp

mp

pizz.

mp

pizz.

mp

mf

mp

166

Vln. I *mf*

Vln. II *mf*

Vla. *f*

Vc. *f*

mp

arco

pp

pp

172

Vln. I *pp*

Vln. II *pp*

Vla. *pp*

Vc. *pp*

arco

pp

pp

pp

174

Vln. I *f*

Vln. II *f*

Vla. *f*

Vc. *f*

poco rall.

pizz.

pizz.

pizz.

s.p.

18

176 - - - - - Lightly $\text{♩}=148$

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Violoncello

pp

pp

pizz.

ppp

pizz.

pp *ppp*

G

179 accel. - - - - -

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Violoncello

arco

arco ord.

pp

3

arco ord.

pp

pp

Driving, rhythmic $\text{♩}=164$

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Violoncello

arco

pp

5

6

6

3

5

5

5

3

3

5

183

Vln. I *f* 5 6

Vln. II *f* 6 7

Vla. *f* 5

Vc. *f* 6 7

184

Vln. I *ff* 7 7

Vln. II *ff* 9

Vla. *ff* 6 6

Vc. *ff* 9

185

Vln. I 7

Vln. II 9

Vla. 7

Vc. 7

lightly dampen all strings
bow randomly as fast as possible, staying close to the frog

186

Vln. I *fff*

Vln. II *fff*

Vla. *fff*

Vc. *fff*

ms.p. - finger lightly
vigorous bow pressure
bright, loud, dirty
harmonic glissandi

ms.p. - finger lightly
vigorous bow pressure
bright, loud, dirty
harmonic glissandi

187

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

m.s.p. light finger pressure
bounce up and down the strings wildly
scratchy and almost pitchless

III IV 5

m.s.p. light finger pressure
bounce up and down the strings wildly
scratchy and almost pitchless

III IV 5 5

m.s.p. 'nasty'
heavy and slow bow
rapid light touch left hand tremolo

lightly dampen all strings
bow randomly as fast as possible,
staying close to the frog

molto rall.

189

pizz. *p* *morendo* *pp*

6 5

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

3

p *morendo* *pp*

p *morendo* *pp*

p *morendo* *pp*

p *morendo* *pp*

192

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

H With delicate pride ♩=66

195

arco

arco

pp

arco N.B. all trills sim. (to touch 4th harm.)

pp (pizz.)

p

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

22

197

Vln. I *mp*

Vln. II *mp*

Vla. (tr) *tr*

Vc. *pp* arco II

N.B. all trills sim. (to touch 4th harm.)

199

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla. (tr) *p* L.H. pizz. 7 5 *pp*

Vc. *tr*

201

Vln. I *mp*

Vln. II *mp*

Vla. (arco) *tr* *pp* *p*

Vc. *tr* *pp* *p*

24

210 **rall.**

First system of music (measures 210-211). The score is for four staves: Vln. I, Vln. II, Vla., and Vc. The tempo marking is **rall.** (rallentando). Measures 210 and 211 are indicated by a dashed vertical line. The Vln. I and Vln. II staves are mostly silent, with some faint lines. The Vla. and Vc. staves contain musical notation, including eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests. The Vc. staff has a **ppp** (pianississimo) dynamic marking.

Fragile; dying away ♩=66

212

Second system of music (measures 212-213). The tempo marking is **Fragile; dying away** with a tempo of ♩=66. The Vln. I staff has a **pp** (pianissimo) dynamic marking. The Vln. II staff is mostly silent. The Vla. staff has a **pp** dynamic marking. The Vc. staff has a **ppp** dynamic marking and a trill (tr) in measure 213. The Vc. staff also has a **pp** dynamic marking.

213

Third system of music (measures 213-214). The Vln. I staff has a **mp** (mezzo-piano) dynamic marking. The Vln. II staff has a **mp** dynamic marking. The Vla. staff has a **p** (piano) dynamic marking and a trill (tr) in measure 213. The Vc. staff has a **p** dynamic marking and a trill (tr) in measure 213. The Vc. staff also has a **pp** dynamic marking. The Vc. staff has a **pp** dynamic marking. The Vc. staff has a **pp** dynamic marking.

216 25

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

pp

tr

pp

tr

pp

high, weak, airy harmonic

II

3

218 *rall.*

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

p

pp

ppp

high, weak, airy harmonic

IV

high, weak, airy harmonic

IV

ppp

ppp

220

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

ppp

ppp

ppp

ppp