Tree of Life

by

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Tree of Life  
for string quartet and stereo digital sound

I. White Birch  
II. Weeping Willow  
III. Coast Redwood

Performance Notes:  
All trills oscillate between written pitch and adjacent note above as designated by key signature unless otherwise stated.  

Accidentals carry through to the end of the measure in which they appear.  

In free tempo section, ensemble should be cued by appropriate player to execute beats marked by dashed vertical lines together.  

In performance, electronic sounds are triggered at numbered cue with an accompanying MAX/MSP playback module.  

In electronic part, crescendos begin and decrescendos end in silence (niente) unless otherwise noted. Pitches and rhythms notated coincide with full realization of sound; sometimes they are preceded by a crescendo to show that the sound fades in to its full realization.  

Timings are given in parentheses to facilitate rehearsal with continuous CD playback.  

Program Note:  
The Tree of Life appears in numerous cultures throughout history and it represents the interconnectedness of everything on Earth and in the spirit world, above and below. In the Japanese Shinto tradition, natural features such as waterfalls, mountains, and so on, are believed to house kami, or spirits, who bring blessings or mischief to the human realm. I chose to integrate these ideas by exploring, as I imagine them, the spirit presences of my favorite types of trees and to consider what they might bring to share in the larger fabric of life, death, the world we can see, and the worlds we may not yet have experienced.  

Duration: 16 minutes.
DEDICATION

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for the Colorado Quartet

Tree of Life
I. White Birch

Kirsten Volness

**Quiet and ethereal**

\( \text{\textit{p}} \)

\( \text{\textit{pp}} \)

\( \text{\textit{p}}^{3} \text{\textit{cresc.}} \)

\( \text{\textit{con sordino, sul tasto}} \)

\( \text{\textit{sempre}} \)

*Trills are atmospheric; the rhythm need not be executed exactly, but entrances and releases should maintain approximate relationship to electronic part.*

*pitches ring through, similar pattern continues in free rhythm*
In strict tempo — Always propelling forward

\( \text{\textcopyright 1893, Copyright Renewed 1921}\)
G (2:36)  
Strong backbeat with a bluesy feel  
\(_\text{r} = 108\)  

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Elec.
Lightly gasping

Trigger accordingly to line up glockenspiel attack

*last beat of fermata, tremolo between harmonic and open string by adjusting L.H. touch

Lightly gasping

High metallic scraping

Glockenspiel
A bit faster — As though winded, with rubato

\( \text{K(4:06)} \)

\( j=66 \)

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Elec.

\( pp \) sempre legato

\( >pp \) espressivo

\( pp \) dolce

\( pp \)
II. Weeping Willow

(4:58)
Freely — gently fluttering in waves
(never faster than \( \frac{1}{4} = 48 \))

First trill need not necessarily line up with
Reverb wash, but should not begin before it.

*start trill/trem, quickly and rit.
trill independently but release together

Reverb wash
Gradually more strictly in tempo
B  In tempo — delicately
\[d=48\]
A tempo — swirling with a heavy pulse (♩)
D Light and flitty, as in opening

Pushing forward, crescendo poco a poco

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Elec.
E  (6:53)
A tempo — Grandiose (non troppo)
\[ \text{\textit{Degraded vocal}} \]
\[ \text{\textit{Helicopter}} \]
Slowly gliss up until only string noise sounds

Drop fader before cue.

Fade in to match vln.

String Noise
(8:07) Electronic Interlude (44")

Interlude

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Electro.

Electronic Interlude (44")
III. Coast Redwood

(10:05)
Snappy and cute, with strong accents

\( \text{\textit{\( d = 160 \)}} \)

\( \text{\textit{\( ^{187} \)}} \)

\( \text{\textit{\( \text{\textit{\( ^{190} \)}} \)}} \)
Somewhat freely (not faster than $\text{d}=40$)  
Solemnly — sempre legato $\text{d}=40$

Choral humming

Wind

Choral humming
(13:47)
Increasingly more tangled

Andante

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Elec.
Più mosso — luminous, bow as needed

\( \text{\textit{d}} = 60 \)
Graciously, with humility

Collection of pitches continues in "random" pattern among multiple layers.
Tree of Life.mp3

MIDI string quartet and electronics