

BOOK OF BIRDS

A THESIS IN
Music Composition

Presented to the Faculty of the University
of Missouri-Kansas City in partial fulfilment of
the requirements for the degree

MASTER OF MUSIC

by
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BOOK OF BIRDS

Paul Stanton Berlinsky, Candidate for Master of Music Degree

University of Missouri-Kansas City, 2021

ABSTRACT

Book of Birds is a composition for flute and electronics inspired by birds. Throughout human history, artists have developed stories and music about the natural world around them. In this piece, Book of Birds, I am adding to this vast repertoire of folk stories with some of my own design, focusing on select bird species. Every movement focuses on a bird who serves as a spiritual guide for the listener as each sonic narrative progresses.

The live flute performance serves as a connection between the real-world space that the listener is occupying, and the spirit world created by the electronics. The performer takes on many roles, sometimes as a combined instrument with the electronics and at other times performing independently from the electronics. Live processing of the flute performance allows for the line between real and electronic to break down even further, taking the listener deeper into the sonic universe of each tale.

The fixed media is where the bulk of the spiritual and story elements of the work manifest themselves. It is here that samples and synthesized sounds work together to create the world where these stories take place. I traverse many different modes of listening in the fixed media, including semiotic, reduced, causal, and semantic. In some

cases, they may happen at the same time, creating a counterpoint of meaning, sonic behavior, and music.

APPROVAL PAGE

The faculty listed below, appointed by the Dean of the Conservatory of Music and Dance have examined a thesis titled “Book of Birds” presented by Paul Stanton Berlinsky, candidate for the Master of Music degree, and certify that in their opinion it is worthy of acceptance.

Supervisory Committee

Yotam Haber, D.M.A., Committee Chair
UMKC Conservatory

Chen Yi, D.M.A.
UMKC Conservatory

Paul Rudy, D.M.A.
UMKC Conservatory

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This project would not have been possible without so many important people in my life. I would like to thank my composition professors, Chen Yi, Zhou Long, Paul Rudy, and Yotam Haber, for their encouragement and for pushing me to be a better composer all throughout my time at UMKC.

I would like to thank my colleagues throughout the conservatory for their feedback, support, and hours they put in that helped create my time at UMKC a successful one. Whether for input on a new piece, help to find performers, or perform a work, I appreciate and am thankful for all their generous collaborations.

Next, I would like to thank my family for their support and love. I traveled across the country to learn about music, and they never wavered in their belief in me.

Lastly, I would like to thank my wife, Jessica. Without her I quite possibly would not have even started studying music. She has always pushed me to do my best, it is because of her I am able to pursue being a composer.

Book of Birds

for flute and electronics

Paul Berlinsky

Instrumentation

Flute
Electronics

Movements

Hummingbird
Woodpecker
Seagull
Raven

Duration: approx. 26 minutes

Text

“The Pool” by Hilda Doolittle (1886-1961)

Are you alive?
I touch you.
You quiver like a sea-fish.
I cover you with my net.
What are you - banded one?

This poem is in the public domain.

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Program Notes

Book of Birds was initially inspired by the hummingbirds that would come drink from the sugar-water feeder that I put out during the spring. From there, I gathered field recordings of feeding and buzzing around. I began to compose with the sounds I captured. Each movement focuses on a different bird and the world they inhabit, both physically and mystically. The movements contain sound-stories based on short folklore tales that I wrote for each bird. The work harkens back to ancient days, before written word, when stories would be shared and passed aurally through generations, letting the mind create worlds with just sound alone.

Chapter 1: Hummingbird

The world is in a deep winter, the snow is still and makes the world quiet. The hummingbird finds its way to this place, and with it comes spring.

Chapter 2: Woodpecker

The lonely woodpecker searches for a tree to build a home, but it does not know how. It hears another woodpecker in the distance and begins to search for it. They are united and build a home together.

Chapter 3: Seagull

A solitary person stands on the seashore, not sure what to make of their life. The seagull carries them out to sea and asks them what and who they are. The person must answer to be set free.
Text by Hilda Doolittle:

The Pool, by Hilda Doolittle








Are you alive?
I touch you.
You quiver like a sea-fish.
I cover you with my net.
What are you - banded one?


Chapter 4: Raven


Someone has died, and their soul leaves their body. It is lost and does not know how to move on. A raven comes and guides the soul to new living vessels for it to be united with. The soul is guided to a whale and a cricket before finally it is united with a tree.


Performance Notes


Notation:

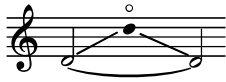
- = air
- ◐ = half air, half pitch
- = pitch
- = gradual transition to new technique
-  = natural harmonic
-  = key click
-  = tongue pizz
-  = flutter tongue
-  = jet whistle
-  = tongue ram
-  = start electronics
- ① = initiate or end patch
- L.H. = left hand
- R.H. = right hand

 = increase rhythmic density

 = decrease rhythmic density

 = repeat and improvise gesture to the end of the line

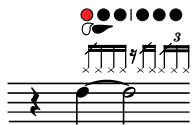
 = whistle tone, bottom pitch is fundamental fingering, top pitch sounding pitch, line indicates rate of changing pitch



= change from fundamental to harmonic then back down to fundamental



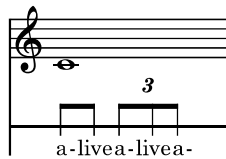
= timbral trill, between equal harmonics of different alternating fundamentals



= play pitch while performing rhythm with key clicks of suggested fingering



= play notated pitches with left hand fingering, and with right hand trill the D and D# keys.



= play given note and whisper rhythm and text of bottom staff

Notes on Interpretation:

1. Accidentals apply only to the note they precede. Even in the case of repeating notes, accidentals will be given.
2. Rests are given for silences generally less than eight beats. Longer silences will have blank space on the staff. The click track and graphic cues will assist in the timing of returning after long pauses.
3. The graphic notation for the electronics act as cues for the performer. Not all sounds could be notated and maintain a readable score. They are there in order provide a general understanding of what the sounds are doing with the performer.
4. All timing indications underneath rehearsal marks are in relation to when the electronics start, not the start of the movement. This is for practice assistance, but can also be useful in performance.
5. Let all live electronics decay naturally before stopping the effect.

Technical Requirements:

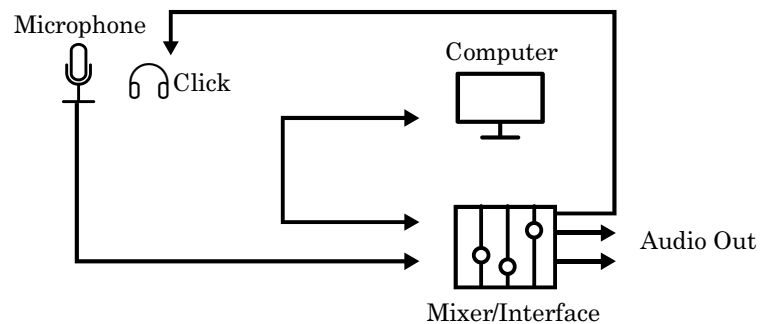
Hardware:

- Microphone for amplification and optional live processing performance
- Audio interface/Mixer and related cables
- Computer
- 2.1 speaker setup
- In-ear monitor for click track

Software:

- A DAW to route audio channels to speakers and in-ear monitor

Hardware Setup Diagram:



Speaker Arrangement:

- Have both speakers on stage on either side of the performer.

Electronics Performance:

- It is recommended that someone perform the electronics by pushing play as indicated in the score. Each movement must be initiated as indicated in the score. This is also true if using live processing.

Click Track:

- A click track is provided for each movement to assist the performer in order to align perfectly with the electronics. Each rehearsal letter in the score indicates when the click will sound. There will be two preparatory beats given in tempo, then the letter will be spoken. It will sound as such: "1 - 2 - A".

Live processing:

- Live processing is recommended, but optional for this work. Users can create their own patches or use plugins for the work based off the descriptions below. The score indicates when to turn the patches/plugins on and off.

See next page for patch parameters.

There are four patches required if using live processing for the piece:

1. Heavy Reverb:
Large Hall
30-70 ms predelay
5-10 seconds decay
2. Medium Reverb:
Small Hall
14 ms predelay
1-2.5 seconds decay
3. Delay 1
Left 300-470 ms
Right 700-850 ms
Feedback 30%
4. Delay 2*
Left 200-250 ms
Right 60-90 ms
Feedback 30%

*Delay 2 is only used in the second movement, Woodpecker.

The performers should use discretion on what settings are best for the room the performance is taking place in, based on the ranges given. For example, in a small dry room, a longer decay time would be effective, whereas in a large wet hall, a shorter decay time would work better. The live processing should meld the flute with the fixed media. The computer performer should mix the amplification, live electronics and fixed media to create tasteful interactions between the flute and the fixed media.

If performers do not wish to create their own patches, they can contact the composer to receive the patches he used while composing the work at paulber1358@gmail.com.

Book of Birds

1. Hummingbird

Paul Berlinsky

Flute

Electronics

WT 8"

A 0'00" a cold wind $\text{♩} = 60$

B 0'12"

heavy rev.

continues

white noise

ice cracks

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

C 0'44"

delay ③

continues

19

D 1'24"

WT

stop delay ④

26

bell

granulated chord

Hummingbird

E 2'08" WT

32

granulated chord

pitched impulses

hummingbird

bass rumble

F 2'36"

Line indicates quick C major scale

41

mf p

G building energy 3'00"

H 3'06" bring out more harmonics as you go on

I 3:17

47

mp mf

5 delay

J 3'29" Improvise trill and tremolos based off given pitches. can be any octave. Continue to bring out harmonics.

K Hummingbird
3'37"

ff

hummingbird continues
bass hit ▽

processed nature sounds

bass continues

L
3'53"

ff

continues ▽

M
4'02"
(also inverse gesture)

ff

N
4'12"
Decrease density of gesture

O
4'21"

f *mf*

wings flapping

P
4'34"

p

stop delay ⑥

nature sounds

2. Woodpecker

with intent ♩ = 120

Flute

Electronics

L.H. R.H. *fz* *fz* T.R. **A** 0'00" T.R. *fz*

mp *f* *mp* *f* *mf* *f* *mf* *ff*

mf *f* *ff* *mf* *f* *mf* *f* *mp* *f*

B 0'19" *fz* *tr* *tr* *ff* *p* *f* *fz* *p* *fz* *fz* *p* *fz*

T.R. *ff* *p* *fz* *p* *fz* T.R.

C 0'35" (T.R.) T.R. *mp* *p* *fz* *mp*

continues

Woodpecker

First system of musical notation. Treble clef, key signature of one flat. The staff contains several measures of music featuring triplets of eighth notes. Dynamics include *f*, *fz*, and *fz*. There are upward and downward arrows under the notes, and a 'continues' label with a right-pointing arrow below the staff.

Second system of musical notation. Treble clef. A box labeled 'D' is above the first measure, with '0'53"' below it. The staff contains music with triplets and a trill (T.R.). Dynamics include *p*, *mp*, *mp*, and *p*. There are upward and downward arrows under the notes, and a 'continues' label with a right-pointing arrow below the staff.

Third system of musical notation. Treble clef. The staff contains music with triplets and a trill (T.R.). Dynamics include *p*. There are upward and downward arrows under the notes, and a 'continues' label with a right-pointing arrow below the staff.

Fourth system of musical notation. Treble clef. A box labeled 'E' is above the first measure, with '1'13"' below it. The staff contains music with triplets and a trill (T.R.). Dynamics include *pp*, *fz*, and *p*. There are upward and downward arrows under the notes, and a 'continues' label with a right-pointing arrow below the staff.

Fifth system of musical notation. Treble clef. The staff contains music with a septuplet (7) and a trill (T.R.). Dynamics include *f*, *ff*, *p*, *p*, and *ff*. There are upward and downward arrows under the notes, and a 'continues' label with a right-pointing arrow below the staff. Below the staff, there are labels for 'pitch impulses' (represented by a series of vertical bars) and 'noise' (represented by a horizontal bar).

Sixth system of musical notation. Treble clef. A box labeled 'F' is above the first measure, with '1'36"' below it. The staff contains music with triplets and a trill (T.R.). Dynamics include *f*, *pp*, *ff*, *mp*, and *f*. There are upward and downward arrows under the notes, and a 'continues' label with a right-pointing arrow below the staff. Below the staff, there is a label for 'phasing pitch motion' (represented by a wavy line).

Woodpecker

G 1'46" **H** 1'51"

fz stop delay (8) *mp* *mf* *ff* delay (9)

rattle bursts

I 1'58" **J** 2'09"

mp *f* *mf* *p* stop delay (10)

noisy pitch

f *mp* *mf* *p* *ppp*

3. Seagull

0'16" 1'08"

Flute

Electronics

waves bell high noise seagull

A Seagull cry ♩ = 76
1'27"

ff *p*

footsteps breath exhale

B The wind 2'00" *pp* *mp*

C 2'24" *p* *mf*

medium rev.

D 2'55" *p* *mp* *p*

stop rev. (12) crunch fast pitch motion heavy rev. (13)

E 3'30" *f* *mp*

stop rev. (14)

Seagull

Musical score for the first system of 'Seagull'. It features a single treble clef staff with a 7/8 time signature. The music consists of a series of eighth notes, some beamed together. There are three distinct melodic phrases, each marked with a slur and a number: '5', '6', '8', and '9'. The dynamic markings are *f*, *p*, and *ff*. The piece concludes with a final chord consisting of several black dots on a staff.

Pitch gesture diagrams for the first system. It shows two curved lines representing melodic contours. To the right, the text 'pitch gestures' is followed by three sets of notes with stems, illustrating different pitch movements.

Musical score for the second system of 'Seagull'. It features a single treble clef staff. The first measure is marked with a box 'F' and '4'14"'. The dynamic is *f*. The second measure is marked with a box 'G' and '4'22"'. The dynamic is *pp*. Below the staff, there are three groups of notes with stems, labeled '6', '5', and '3'. The lyrics 'a-livea-livea-livea-livea-livea-livea-livea-live a f f f' are written below the notes. A circled '15' and the word 'delay' are written to the left. Below the lyrics, the text 'are you....alive?' is written. To the right, there are two sets of notes with stems.

Musical score for the third system of 'Seagull'. It features a single treble clef staff. The first measure is marked with a box 'H' and '4'39"'. The dynamic is *p*. The second measure is marked with a box 'H' and '4'39"'. The dynamic is *f*. The third measure is marked with a box 'H' and '4'39"'. The dynamic is *p*. The fourth measure is marked with a box 'H' and '4'39"'. The dynamic is *mp*. Below the staff, there are three groups of notes with stems, labeled '3', '5', and '6'. The lyrics 'a-livea-livea-livea-livea-livea-livea-livea-livea-live' are written below the notes. Below the lyrics, the text 'are you....alive?' is written.

Seagull

I
4'49"

p *f*

t t t t t t t t t t t t t t t t

"I.....touch you"

t ch ch you

stop delay 16

"I touch you" "you.....quiver"

J
5'27"

tr D-D#

mf *ff* *p* *ff*

hev. rev. 17

k k k k k k sh

"like.....a sea fish"

stop rev., delay 18 *mp*

plucked pitches

"I cover you, with my net"

Seagull

K 6'00" bisbigliando

L 6'27"

19 *pp* stop delay

20 *p* hev. rev.

stop rev. 21

22 *f* med. rev.

what are you - banded one?"

3

3

mp

what are you

banded one?"

5

3

p

what are you

banded one?"

4. Raven

lost, wandering $\text{♩} = 60$

A 0'34"

B 0'56"

Flute

Electronics

muted piano

continues for remainder of movement

$f > mp$

p p mp p

distant wood chime

C surprise 2'20"

mp f

impulses

wing flaps

rumble

D 2'53"

f p mf f pp

wing flaps

rumble

Raven

4'13" 3'17" 4'10"

f

marble roll impact water drip water slosh whale song

E a duet

4'13" 23 24

mp *p* *gliss.* *mp* *p*

med. rev. stop rev. high noise

F cry for help

G

5'07" 5'13" 5'23"

f *p*

5'49"

mf

H

5'50"

mf

high wave

match rhythm precisely

Raven

I delicate, blend in

6'12"

Imitate crickets, short burst of sound with quick trill, bring out harmonics at will and vary rhythm as you go on.

Musical notation for section I. The top staff is a treble clef with a box around the first few notes labeled 'D-D#'. Below the staff is a wavy line labeled 'crickets'. A circled '25' with 'delay' is placed on the staff. At the end, a circled '26' with 'stop delay' is placed. The dynamic is *ppp*.

J freely

7'09"

Musical notation for section J. It consists of two systems of treble and bass staves. The first system starts with a treble clef and a bass clef. The second system continues with a treble clef and a bass clef. Dynamics include *mp*, *mf*, and *p*. There is a circled '3' indicating a triplet. A wavy line in the bass staff is labeled 'bass pulse'. The section ends with a treble clef staff.

K

8'26"

Musical notation for section K. It consists of two systems of treble and bass staves. The first system has a treble clef and a bass clef. The second system has a treble clef and a bass clef. A circled '27' with 'delay' is placed on the staff. The dynamic is *mf*. The notation includes wavy lines and a series of slanted lines.

Raven

L full, warm
8'47"

stop delay (28) *f*

ff

This system shows the beginning of section L. It features a piano introduction with a tremolo effect and a forte (*ff*) dynamic. The main melody starts at 8'47" with a 'full, warm' character. A 'stop delay' of 28 measures is indicated at the start of the main melody, which begins with a forte (*f*) dynamic.

M
9'18"

med. rev. (29) *mp*

This system shows the beginning of section M. It starts at 9'18" with a 'med. rev.' (medium reverberation) of 29 measures. The melody is marked with a mezzo-piano (*mp*) dynamic and includes a triplet of eighth notes.

N
9'52"

f *p*

This system shows the beginning of section N. It starts at 9'52" with a forte (*f*) dynamic, followed by a piano (*p*) dynamic. The melody includes a triplet of eighth notes and a four-measure phrase.

f *ff* 10'44"

This system continues section N, starting at 10'44". It features a forte (*f*) dynamic followed by a fortissimo (*ff*) dynamic. The melody includes a triplet of eighth notes and a four-measure phrase.

VITA

Paul Berlinsky (b. 1994) is a composer and sound artist whose music investigates the intangible space between tone and noise, metaphor and reality. His music explores collective memories and the stories they tell, often looking to the natural world and how we connect to it. He writes music for a vast range of performing forces, from acoustic to electronic, and solo to orchestral.

His music has been performed and recorded by musicians and ensembles around the country including Hub New Music, Transient Canvas, Plaza Winds, Florida Gulf Coast University Wind Orchestra, and flute soloist Gözde Çakır. Over the course of his career, Berlinsky has received honors and awards for his work, including a 2021 ASCAP Morton Gould Young Composer Award, with the panel recognizing him with the 2021 Leo Kaplan Award, first prize in the 2019 Arnold Salop Memorial Competition, and an appointment as the 2019 composer in residence with wind quintet Plaza Winds.

Berlinsky has recently finished his master's degree in music composition from the University of Missouri-Kansas City, where he studied with Chen Yi, Zhou Long, Paul Rudy, and Yotam Haber. During his time at UMKC, he was also able to take lessons with composers Anthony R. Green, Amy Williams, Evan Chambers, and Ingrid Stölzel. He holds an undergraduate degree in music education from Florida Gulf Coast University, where he began to study composition with Jason Bahr and Shawn Allison.