The Dictionary of Obscure Sorrows: exulansis

for solo portable percussion and optional amplification

Annika K. Socolofsky

Commissioned by the New Works Project and Consortium Members

Aaron Butler, Adam Groh, Alex Alfaro, Alexandros Fragiskatos, Brianna Trainor, Chris Sies, Christian Kuhlman, Daniel Pate, Danielle Moreau, Dave Hall, Esteban Ganem, Filament Duo: DeLane Doyle and Aaron Gochberg, Jamey Kollar, Joe Millea, JR Alberto, Left Edge Percussion: Terry Longshore, McKayla Phillips, Nicholas Hall, Prism Percussion: Divesh Karamchandani and Elizabeth Hall, Scott Farkas, and Joseph Van Hassel

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Performance Notes

This piece is inspired by the sonic space of the physiological phenomenon ASMR (autonomous sensory meridian response), which relishes the nuance of delicate, everyday sounds. Similarly, this piece often hovers on the edge of audibility, embracing the border between gesture and music. It is a playground of timbre, inflection, and silence.

Amplification is optional; for unamplified performances, the percussionist should “mark” the dynamics up several levels in order to best communicate with their audience.

Percussion list: glockenspiel; one metal pipe tuned to sound at F#5; 3 crystal glasses (or jars/mugs/glasses) sounding approximately (preferably exactly) at the pitches B, E, and G; 1 cup of lentils (or rice) in a container that you can easily pour out of; one box (shoebox, briefcase, small suitcase, you name it) with optional kick pedal (can be tied to a shoebox with some string); 2 dimes (or light coins) set on second octave C & D.

Implements: 3 or 4 warm, gentle mallets; 1 thin, wooden dowel; 5 plastic finger picks (worn backwards so finger pad is covered by plastic).

Percussion setup:

![Percussion setup diagram](image-url)
Notation Key

- Triangular notehead – play metal F#5 bar
- Cents symbol – note is prepared with light coin (only second octave C & D)
- X-filled notehead – pour lentils onto glock bars

Program Note

The concept for this piece comes from The Dictionary of Obscure Sorrows, a collection of words invented by John Koenig that “aims to fill a hole in the [English] language—to give a name to emotions we all might experience but don’t yet have a word for.” The title for this piece comes from Koenig’s blog definition for “exulansis.”

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- Annika K. Socolofsky, July 2020

exulansis

n. the tendency to give up trying to talk about an experience because people are unable to relate to it—whether through envy or pity or simple foreignness—which allows it to drift away from the rest of your life story, until the memory itself feels out of place, almost mythical, wandering restlessly in the fog, no longer even looking for a place to land.
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exulansis

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**completely out of time**
pour lentils into E & G jars from considerable height very long fermata, approx. 10" (do not empty glasses)

sim. (pitch will be less resonant) approx. 15"

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Glasses

2

with thin wooden dowel (split roll, one hand)

slow roll to standstill, religiously linger on edge of audibility

sim.

Glasses

Glock.

p

with gentle, warm mallets

PPP

=48, freely

3

pour 1/2 of lentils from G glass → B glass

Glasses

PPP

Glock.

(PPP)

pour other 1/2 of lentils from G glass → B glass

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42, freely (slower than opening)
gentle, warm mallets fade into roll ord.

Glock.

just a bit slower still...
pour E → G
pour G → E
pour E → B

very long fermata
(freeze in position)

Glasses

Duration approx. 6’00”