

Israel Lai (2023)

Mind the Gap

for symphony orchestra

Mind the Gap is a semi-autobiographical work that captures my current identity and state of mind as an immigrant. 'Please mind the gap' is a sonic element shared between the soundscapes of my hometown, Hong Kong, and famously of my adopted homeland, the UK. The 'gap' in the title can indeed refer to the cultural differences between the two societies: with the historical ties and mutual influences, you wouldn't say there is a chasm between them; yet it is always the tiny faux-pas that you fall into.

This piece is also inspired by a diptych by Price Chu, seen in a Manchester exhibition. A thoroughly monochromatic yet overwhelmingly dynamic piece, the abstract shapes depict two monoliths — representing the superpowers that have dictated Hong Kong's past and present — clashing into each other, and the powerlessness of being stuck in the middle.

Mind the Gap, in turn, focuses on two simple pieces of musical material. Despite the dissonant clashes, the piece shows that either side inherently has its own beauty; it's through belligerence that the grotesque leads to mutual destruction. Meanwhile, the central protagonist remains alone and powerless in the middle of everything.

Performance Notes

In all instances of boxes, each player is to repeat the boxed material at approximately the same tempo.

Each repetition can start immediately after the previous one or up to half a bar later.

The timing and speed are not strict; string players are allowed even greater flexibility.

Instrumentation

2 Flutes (II doubling Piccolo)

2 Oboes

2 Clarinets in B \flat (II doubling Bass Clarinet in B \flat)

2 Bassoons

4 French Horns in F

3 Trumpets in B \flat

3 Trombones

Tuba

Timpani (with Cymbal and bow)

Percussion I (Glockenspiel, Tubular Bells, Cymbals)

Percussion II (Triangle, Bass Drum)

Strings

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Concert Pitch

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4/4 Andantino $\text{♩} = 92$

Flute I

Piccolo

Oboe I
II

Clarinet in B \flat I

Bass Clarinet

Bassoon I
II

French Horn in F
I, II
III
IV

Trumpet in B \flat
I
II
III

Trombone I, II

Bass Trombone
Tuba

Timpani

Percussion I

Percussion II

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Violoncello

Double Bass

fp *fp* *fp* *fp* *fp* *fp* *fp* \leftarrow *f*

pp *fp* *fp* *fp* *fp* *fp* *fp* \leftarrow *f*

ppp *mp*

ppp *mp*

fp \leftarrow *f* *fp* \leftarrow

fp \leftarrow *f*

fp

fp \leftarrow

tr *p* *f*

div. *fp*

fp *div.*

div. *fp* \leftarrow

ppp *p*

43

3/4 **4/4**

Fl. I

Picc. *f*

I Ob.

II Ob.

I Cl.

II Cl. *f* molto stacc.

I F. Hn

II F. Hn

III F. Hn

IV F. Hn

I Tpt

II Tpt

I B. Tbn.

II B. Tbn.

fp

Vln I *f*

Vln II *f*

Vla *f*

Vc.

50 **Moderato** ♩ = 72

I F. Hn

II F. Hn *pp*

I B. Tbn.

II B. Tbn.

Vln I *mp* > < *mf* *mp* > < *mf* *simile*

Vln II *mp* > < *mf* *mp* > < *mf* *mp* > < *mf* *simile*

Vln I *fp*

Vln II *fp*

Vla *mp* > < *mf* *mp* > < *mf* *simile*

Vc. *mp* > < *mf* *mp* > < *mf* *mp* > < *mf* *p*

D. B.

