



Listening Guide

Ecstatic Science by Missy Mazzoli

This listening guide will focus on the nuanced features of Missy Mazzoli's *Ecstatic Science* highlighting the primary musical motives that create structure in this work.



Regina Symphony Chamber Players.
Credit Chris Graham Photography

Description

Ecstatic Science is structured on mathematical principals to formulate melodies, harmonies, and motivic fragments. While these nuanced mathematical structures might not be obvious to the listener, the overall effect is an ethereal soundscape comprised of persistent bubbling energy and a cohesive ensemble sound rather than foreground and background. The organically shifting colours and textures in *Ecstatic Science* establish an intimate and meditative atmosphere drawing deep connections between music and science.



Listening Guide

Composition Date: 2016

Orchestration: flute, clarinet, trumpet, violin, viola, cello

Duration: 10 minutes

Form: *Ecstatic Science* is structured similar to a constantly changing colour spectrum. Musical ideas blur and transform to create new characters. Two primary musical ideas, presented at the opening, create a foundation for this work.

Musical Idea 1

The first foundational musical feature includes held notes in the strings with intermittent glissandi (slides) by the violin ([click here to listen to an example of a glissando](#)). This melody is accelerated and slowed throughout this piece.

Description	Time
Long held notes in the strings with the violin playing glissandi (slides)	43:43
The trumpet plays a faster, more recognizable version of the melody.	45:05-45:31
The clarinet plays a version of the melody at a quicker tempo	45:31-45:56
The flute, clarinet, and trumpet play a high, faster, soaring version of the melody.	46:53-47:27
The melody returns to the strings with sustained notes and glissandi, reminiscent of the opening	49:47-50:33



Musical Idea 2

Ecstatic bubbling flute and clarinet fragments create a composite musical line. This is presented at the beginning and is prominent and easily recognizable throughout. This motive contrasts the sustained melody in the strings being fast, light, and rhythmically active.

The flute and clarinet alternate notes of the melody quickly to create a bubbling effect. This compositional technique is called *hocket*.

[Click here to listen to the opening flute line alone.](#)

[Click here to listen to the opening clarinet line alone.](#)

[Click here to listen to the composite melody created by the flute and clarinet lines.](#)

Examples of the *hocket* melody in *Ecstatic Science*:

Description	Time
Interjections of the <i>hocket</i> melody throughout the opening.	43:43-45:33
The flute plays without the clarinet	45:33-45:55
The trumpet joins the <i>hocket</i> melody	49:12-49:36
The clarinet plays alone without the flute	50:34-50:48
The clarinet plays all parts of the <i>hocket</i> melody rather than passing it back and forth with the flute.	51:19-51:43
Return to the opening <i>hocket</i> melody in short interjections.	51:54-53:21



REGINA
SYMPHONY
ORCHESTRA
Gordon Gerrard
Music Director

info@reginasymphony.com

@ReginaSymphony

www.reginasymphony.com

Further Listening

Title	Features
yMusic <i>Ecstatic Science</i> album	This album of contemporary works contains works in a similar aesthetic to <i>Ecstatic Science</i> .
Charles, Ives. <i>Unanswered Question</i>	Like <i>Ecstatic Science</i> , this piece has a long string melody that is difficult to discern.

Listening Guide prepared by Shawn Earle, RSO Manager of Education & Outreach