

Dream Lightly

In *Dream Lightly*, we are placed in a world that is beautifully paralyzed, or perhaps paralyzed by beauty. The music does not move; it has fallen asleep but is not aware of it. It is stuck in a continual repetition of similar thoughts, slightly changing and rearranging them, cast in subtly changing environments.

The guitarist almost always plays harmonics. These are notes produced by lightly touching the string at certain points to create sounds that sound higher and more fragile than ordinary pitches. The world of harmonics hovers above the guitar, oftentimes slightly, but purposefully, out of tune with instruments played in a conventional manner. The traditional tuning of the orchestra reflects a desire to move forward, to be able to modulate, and is a compromise between this desire and the way vibrating strings and air columns naturally work. The tuning of harmonics is derived from the open string; it is a static world, complete unto itself.

The piece explores the dissonance that exists between the harmonics on different strings of the guitar, as well as between the tuning of the guitar's harmonics and the tuning of the orchestra. All of the music is derived from or in response to the guitar. It is not a concerto in the traditional sense, as the soloist and the orchestra are not antagonists. Rather it is as if the orchestra exists inside of the guitarist's head, helping, supporting, and coloring. There is a passage where the guitarist gently strums the instrument, not playing harmonics. Whether this is a moment of clarity or a deeper sleep is uncertain. After this, the music returns to its initial thoughts but eventually pushes forward, whether to wakefulness or deeper slumber, is again uncertain.

Dream Lightly was commissioned by the American Composers Orchestra. Portions of it were composed at the American Academy in Rome.

Keeril Makan
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