



anna berg

returnal

2023

for string orchestra

duration: 9'

Commissioned and created with financial support by The Norwegian Chamber Orchestra.

about anna berg: returnal (2023)

"Returnal" (2023) for string orchestra was commissioned by The Norwegian Chamber Orchestra, and created with financial support by the orchestra itself. It was composed during spring and summer 2023, and completed in August 2023. First performance by The Norwegian Chamber Orchestra: August 29th, 2023, The University Aula, Oslo.

All performances of the piece shall be reported to performing rights organisation TONO (Norwegian collection society) either directly when performed in Norway, or indirectly through the performing rights organisation belonging to the country where the piece is being performed (Le Sacem, STIM, CODA, etc.).

Returnal is part of a series consisting of three pieces:

1. "Earthward, Ever Circling" for string trio
*Commissioned by Guro Kleven Hagen, Eivind Rongstad and Amalie Stalheim.
First performance in Oslo, February 2023.*
2. "Twirling, Revolving" for mixed ensemble (fl, ob, cl, sax, vln, vla, vlc, cb)
*Written for l'Ensemble NEXT.
First performance in Paris, March 2023.*
3. "Returnal" for string orchestra
*Commissioned by The Norwegian Chamber Orchestra.
First performance in Oslo, August 2023.*

Any questions regarding the score or parts can be directed to:

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Program note (English)

"The living need light, the dead need music". The quote is from a Vietnamese Buddhist funeral ritual, where different forms of music are used to prepare the soul of the newly deceased for reincarnation. Funeral music is an important part of Vietnamese cultural heritage and tradition, that along with many rites across the world is about to disappear. I'm fascinated by how music in this ritual is used as a tool for the living to communicate with the soul of the deceased, creating a link between lived life and new lives yet to come.

The ritual has been a point of departure for me in a series of pieces written in 2022-2023, starting with "Earthward, Ever Circling" for string trio, continuing with "Twirling, Revolving" for mixed ensemble with woodwinds and strings, and ending with "Returnal" for string orchestra. In the three different pieces, I've used my imagination to fantasize further upon the ritual. In "Earthward, Ever Circling" I imagine a circular motion between an earthly life, represented by the lower registers of the strings, and a heavenly state, in the strings' higher registers, and the piece is a constant interplay and push-and-pull between the two stages. In "Twirling, Revolving" I apply a narrower view, where I imagine one soul's hectic and swirling route from the earthly life to the afterlife, or the state in between lives.

In "Returnal" I continue the idea of reincarnation, where I'm imagining the soul's process of searching for and finding a body to settle in for the next earthly life. In the piece we can hear phraselike states and shimmering chords, which never fully settle down. There's a constant gliding movement between the instrument groups, where one group stretches towards the other instruments, and the lines and initiatives created by one group are succeeded by another group. We can hear chords and passages behaving in different manners; they can be still, hesitant and waiting, they can be glimmering or trembling, or they can be transformed into longer passages with more movement, stretching from light to dark and vice versa. The piece unravels a search where different musical states of being are tested out and held onto as a way of trying on different possible lives, before, in the end, the ensemble finally settles down and lands.

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Notes to the performers

Accidentals

Accidentals apply to all repetitions of the same note in the same octave within the same measure.

Tremolos

All tremolos should be performed *leggiero* a punta d'arco.

Octave transposition

The double bass uses normal octave transposition.



returnal

anna berg

♩ = 60

violin I

violin II

viola

cello

double bass

7

vln. I

vln. II

vla.

vc.

db.

*) all tremolos should be performed
leggiero a punta d'arco

returnal

A

12

Score for measures 12-17. The score is for five instruments: Violin I, Violin II, Viola, Violoncello, and Double Bass. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 3/4. Measure 12 starts with a dynamic of *f* for Violin II. Measure 13 has dynamics of *p sub.* for Violin I and II, and *mf* for Violoncello. Measure 14 has dynamics of *p* for Viola and Violoncello. Measure 15 has dynamics of *mf* for Violoncello and *p* for Double Bass. Measure 16 has dynamics of *mf* for Violoncello and *p* for Double Bass. Measure 17 has dynamics of *p* for Violin I, Viola, and Double Bass.

18

(ord.)

Score for measures 18-23. The score is for five instruments: Violin I, Violin II, Viola, Violoncello, and Double Bass. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/4. Measure 18 has dynamics of *p* for Violin II and *mf* for Violoncello. Measure 19 has dynamics of *mf* for Violoncello and *mf* for Double Bass. Measure 20 has dynamics of *mf* for Violoncello and *mf* for Double Bass. Measure 21 has dynamics of *mf* for Violoncello and *mf* for Double Bass. Measure 22 has dynamics of *mf* for Violoncello and *mf* for Double Bass. Measure 23 has dynamics of *mf* for Violoncello and *mf* for Double Bass.

returnal

25

vln. I

vln. II

vla.

vc.

db.

p *mp* *f*

p *mp*

p *mp*

p *mp*

32

vln. I

vln. II

vla.

vc.

db.

mf *p*

p *mf*

p *mf*

p *mf*

mp *mf*

mp *mf*

*) all tremolos should be performed
leggiero a punta d'arco

returnal

B

Musical score for measures 41-46. The score is for five instruments: Violin I (vln. I), Violin II (vln. II), Viola (vla.), Violoncello (vc.), and Double Bass (db.). The time signature changes from 2/4 to 4/4 at measure 42, and then to 3/4 at measure 46. Dynamics are marked as *f*, *mf*, and *p*. The key signature has one sharp (F#).

Musical score for measures 47-50. The score is for five instruments: Violin I (vln. I), Violin II (vln. II), Viola (vla.), Violoncello (vc.), and Double Bass (db.). The time signature is 4/4. Dynamics are marked as *p*. The key signature has one sharp (F#). A large watermark is present over the score.

returnal

accel.

53

Score for measures 53-56. The score is for five instruments: Violin I, Violin II, Viola, Violoncello, and Double Bass. The music is in 4/4 time. Measure 53 starts with a dynamic of *f*. Measures 54-56 show a dynamic shift from *f* to *p*. The score includes various rhythmic patterns and phrasing marks.

C

♩ = 96

Score for measures 57-60. The score is for five instruments: Violin I, Violin II, Viola, Violoncello, and Double Bass. The music is in 4/4 time. Measure 57 starts with a dynamic of *f*. Measures 58-60 show a dynamic shift from *f* to *p*. The score includes various rhythmic patterns and phrasing marks.

returnal

64

vln. I

vln. II

vla.

vc.

db.

p sub.

mf

mf

p sub.

mf

p sub.

mf

mf

70

vln. I

vln. II

vla.

vc.

db.

f

f

f

f

f

D

75

Score for measures 75-78. The score is for five instruments: Violin I (vln. I), Violin II (vln. II), Viola (vla.), Violoncello (vc.), and Double Bass (db.). Measure 75 starts with a box containing the number 75. The key signature has one sharp (F#). Dynamics include *p*, *f*, and *mf*. A dynamic hairpin is present in measure 75. A box containing the letter 'D' is located above measure 77. The score ends with a double bar line at the end of measure 78.

79

Score for measures 79-82. The score is for five instruments: Violin I (vln. I), Violin II (vln. II), Viola (vla.), Violoncello (vc.), and Double Bass (db.). Measure 79 starts with a box containing the number 79. The key signature has one sharp (F#). Dynamics include *p*, *mf*, and *f*. A dynamic hairpin is present in measure 79. The score ends with a double bar line at the end of measure 82.

returnal

85

85

vln. I

vln. II

vla.

vc.

db.

mf

mf

p

mf

mf

p

mf

mf

p

Detailed description: This block contains the musical score for measures 85 through 90. It features five staves: Violin I (vln. I), Violin II (vln. II), Viola (vla.), Violoncello (vc.), and Double Bass (db.). The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/4. Measure 85 is marked with a box containing the number 85. Dynamics include *mf* (mezzo-forte) and *p* (piano). The score shows various rhythmic patterns and melodic lines for each instrument.

91

91

vln. I

vln. II

vla.

vc.

db.

mp

f

p

mp

mf

p

mp

Detailed description: This block contains the musical score for measures 91 through 96. It features the same five staves as the previous block: Violin I (vln. I), Violin II (vln. II), Viola (vla.), Violoncello (vc.), and Double Bass (db.). The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/4. Measure 91 is marked with a box containing the number 91. Dynamics include *mp* (mezzo-piano), *f* (forte), *p* (piano), and *mp* (mezzo-piano). A crescendo hairpin is visible in the Violin I staff between measures 94 and 95. The score shows various rhythmic patterns and melodic lines for each instrument.

returnal

99

vln. I

vln. II

vla.

vc.

db.

p

f

E

105

vln. I

vln. II

vla.

vc.

db.

p

f

E

returnal

110

vln. I *p*

vln. II *p*

vla. *mf*

vc. *mf*

db. *mf*

115

vln. I *mf* *f* *3* *8va*

vln. II *mf* *p* *mp*

vla. *p* *mp*

vc. *p*

db. *p* *mp*

returnal

F

120

Score for measures 120-125. The score is for five instruments: Violin I, Violin II, Viola, Violoncello, and Double Bass. Measure 120 starts with a dynamic of *f* and a crescendo leading to *p* by measure 121. The key signature has one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 3/4. The Violin I part has a melodic line with a slur and a dynamic marking of *p*. The Violin II, Viola, and Violoncello parts have a melodic line with a dynamic marking of *f*. The Double Bass part has a melodic line with a dynamic marking of *f*.

126

Score for measures 126-131. The score is for five instruments: Violin I, Violin II, Viola, Violoncello, and Double Bass. Measure 126 starts with a dynamic of *p*. The key signature has one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 3/4. The Violin I part has a melodic line with a dynamic marking of *p*. The Violin II, Viola, and Violoncello parts have a melodic line with a dynamic marking of *p*. The Double Bass part has a melodic line with a dynamic marking of *p*.

returnal

132

Musical score for measures 132-137. The score is for five instruments: Violin I (vln. I), Violin II (vln. II), Viola (vla.), Violoncello (vc.), and Double Bass (db.). The key signature has one sharp (F#). The time signature changes from 4/4 to 3/4 and back to 4/4. Dynamics include *mp*, *pp*, and *f*. A crescendo hairpin is present in measures 133-134.

138

Musical score for measures 138-143. The score is for five instruments: Violin I (vln. I), Violin II (vln. II), Viola (vla.), Violoncello (vc.), and Double Bass (db.). The key signature has one sharp (F#). The time signature is 4/4. Dynamics include *p* and *pp*. A decrescendo hairpin is present in measure 143.

returnal

G

144

Score for measures 144-148. The score is for five instruments: Violin I, Violin II, Viola, Violoncello, and Double Bass. The key signature has one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 6/8. Measure 144 starts with a box containing the number 144. A dynamic marking of *p* is present at the beginning of the piece. A chord symbol 'G' is written above the staff. The Viola part begins with a *p* dynamic and a melodic line that moves to *mf* in measure 146. The Violoncello and Double Bass parts also begin with *p* and move to *mf* in measure 146. The Violin I part has a whole rest in measure 144 and then a whole note in measure 145. The Violin II part has a whole rest in measure 144 and then a whole note in measure 145.

149

Score for measures 149-152. The score is for five instruments: Violin I, Violin II, Viola, Violoncello, and Double Bass. The key signature has one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 6/8. Measure 149 starts with a box containing the number 149. A dynamic marking of *p* is present at the beginning of the piece. The Viola part has a melodic line with a triplet of eighth notes in measure 149. The Violoncello and Double Bass parts have melodic lines starting in measure 149. The Violin I part has a whole note in measure 149 and a whole rest in measure 150. The Violin II part has a whole rest in measure 149 and measure 150, and then a whole note in measure 151.

returnal

rit. -----

153

Musical score for measures 153-156. The score is for five instruments: Violin I (vln. I), Violin II (vln. II), Viola (vla.), Violoncello (vc.), and Double Bass (db.). The key signature has one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 3/4. Measure 153 starts with a box containing the number 153. Dynamics include *mf* and *p*. A *rit.* (ritardando) marking is indicated by a dashed line above the staff. The music features various melodic lines and rests across the staves.

157

Musical score for measures 157-160. The score is for five instruments: Violin I (vln. I), Violin II (vln. II), Viola (vla.), Violoncello (vc.), and Double Bass (db.). The key signature has one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 3/4. Measure 157 starts with a box containing the number 157. Dynamics include *p* and *mf*. A large watermark "NB noter" and "This music is copyright protected" is overlaid on the score. The music continues with melodic and rhythmic patterns across the staves.

returnal

H

♩ = 60

Musical score for measures 1-8. The score is for five instruments: Violin I (vln. I), Violin II (vln. II), Viola (vla.), Violoncello (vc.), and Double Bass (db.). The key signature is one sharp (F#). The time signature changes from 3/4 to 4/4 and back to 3/4. Dynamics are marked as *mf* and *p*. The double bass part has dynamics *p* and *mf* indicated below the staff.

Musical score for measures 170-174. The score is for five instruments: Violin I (vln. I), Violin II (vln. II), Viola (vla.), Violoncello (vc.), and Double Bass (db.). The key signature is one sharp (F#). The time signature is 4/4. Dynamics are marked as *p* and *pp*. A watermark "NB noter" and "This music is copyright protected" is overlaid on the score. A box with the number "170" is in the top left corner of the system.