

FOR FLUTE, VIBRAPHONE, CELESTA, PIANO

An **Camchéachta**

Nicholas Gish



An Camchéachta

Instrumentation

Flute

Vibraphone

Celesta

Piano

Duration

4'40"

Program Notes

This piece is entitled (in Irish) "An Camchéachta," which translates to "The (bent) Plough." This is the Irish name for the constellation called the "Big Dipper" (Ursa Major). The work is essentially a musical portrait of the constellation but also takes into account the Irish and Welsh mythology around the first person to yoke an oxen. The political significance of the plough symbol is also taken up.

The image carries a deep mythological inheritance. In a strand of Celtic tradition preserved most clearly in Welsh sources, the constellations themselves trace the figure of the first ploughman. Boötes the herdsman – identified with Hu Gadarn, the first man to yoke oxen to the plough – moves westward across the sky, drawing through Ursa Major and on toward Taurus, the oxen at the head of the yoke. The first ploughing is not merely an event remembered but an event continually re-enacted, wheeling silently around Polaris each night. The plough that broke the first furrow is the same plough turning, even now, above the field.

This is also a calendrical figure. Across the agricultural year *An Camchéachta* rises and falls and rotates around the pole, its handle pointing now here, now there – a slow celestial clock that bound the rhythm of work in the fields to the rhythm of the heavens above them. To name a constellation a plough is to insist that the practice of breaking and turning the earth has its origin, and its measure, in the sky.

The image is also politically charged. In 1914 the constellation gave its name to the Starry Plough – *An Camchéachta* – the banner of James Connolly's Irish Citizen Army, flown over the Imperial Hotel during the 1916 Rising. Connolly's gloss on the flag turned the plough's vertical reach into a manifesto: a free Ireland, he said, would own everything from the plough to the stars. The same image that joins blade to constellation, field to firmament, here joins labour to sovereignty. To invoke *An Camchéachta* in Ireland is, unavoidably, to invoke this lineage – the cosmic plough as the people's plough, and the night sky as a territory of legitimate claim.

An Camchéachta

Nicholas Gish

♩ = 130

Musical score for measures 1-16. The score is in 4/4 time and features four staves: Flute, Vibraphone, Celesta, and Piano. The Flute part includes markings for 'overblown', 'ord.', and 'o.b.', with dynamics *ff*, *p*, and *ff*. The Vibraphone, Celesta, and Piano parts feature triplets and dynamic markings *ff*, *p*, and *f*. The Celesta and Piano parts also include 'Red.' markings. Measure numbers 9 and 16 are indicated at the end of the first and second systems respectively.

Musical score for measures 17-24. The score is in 9/16 time and features four staves: Flute (Fl.), Vibraphone (Vib.), Celesta (Cel.), and Piano (Pno.). The Flute part includes markings for 'ord.' and 'o.b.' with dynamics *f*. The Vibraphone part includes dynamics *f*. The Celesta part includes dynamics *mf*. The Piano part includes dynamics *p* and *f*, and features triplets. Measure numbers 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, and 24 are indicated at the end of the staves.

20 *ord.*

Fl. *p* *f* *p* *f* *p* *f*

Vib. *mf* *f* *mp*

Cel. *p* *mf* *mf* *p*

Pno. *p* *mf* *p* *f* *p*

Red.

27 *o.b.* *ord.*

Fl. *ff*

Vib. *f* *ff*

Cel. *f* *p* *ff* *p* *f*

Pno. *f* *p* *ff* *p* *f* *ff*

Red.

33

Fl. *tr* *sfp* < *f*

Vib. *mp* < *ff* > *mp* *mp*

Cel. *mp* < *ff* > *mp* < *ff* > *mp* < *ff* >

Pno. *f*

39

Fl.

Vib. *ff* < *mp* > *mp* < *ff* > *mp* *f* > > > > > > *f*

Cel. > *mp* < *ff* > *mp* *mp* < *ff* > *mp* < *ff* > *mp* *f*

Pno. *stib* *stib* *Red.*

48 *rall.* ----- *a tempo* *o.b.* *rall.* ----- *a tempo* *ord.*

Fl. *ff* *p* *ff*

Vib. *f* *ff* *p* *f*

Cel. *ff* *p* *f*

Pno. *ff* *p* *f*

Red.

56

Fl. *f* *p* *mf* *f*

Vib. *f*

Cel. *f* *p* *mf*

Pno. *ff* *p* *f*

Red.

62

Fl. *o.b.* *ord.*

Vib.

Cel. *f* *mf* *mf*

Pno. *p* *f* *p* *f* *p*

Red. *Red.* *Red.* *Red.* *Red.* *Red.*

68

Fl.

Vib. *p < ff* *p < ff* *p < ff*

Cel. *f*

Pno. *f* *p* *f*

Red. *Red.* *Red.*

77

Fl. o.b. ord. o.b.

Vib.

Cel.

Pno.

ff p ff

ff p f

ff p f

ff p f

Red.

Red.

84

Fl. ord.

Vib.

Cel.

Pno.

f ff

mf mf mf mf

Red.

Red.

89

Fl. *mf*

Vib. *ff*

Cel. *ff* *p*

Pno. *ff* *p*

Red.

95

Fl. *f*

Vib. *p* *f*

Cel. *p* *f*

Pno. *ff*

Red.

102

Fl.

Vib.

Cel.

Pno.

109

Fl.

Vib.

Cel.

Pno.

ff *red.* *p* *f*

ff *p*

red.

115

Fl. *ff* *p* *f* *ff* *p* *f* *ff*

Vib. *ff* *p* *f* *ff* *p* *f* *ff*

Cel. *ff* *p* *f* *ff* *p* *f* *ff*

Pno. *ff* *p* *ff* *p* *ff*

Red. 3

122

Fl. *ff* *p* *ff*

Vib. *p* *f* *ff* *p* *f*

Cel. *p* *f* *ff* *p* *f*

Pno. *p* *ff* *p* *pp*

Red. 3

o.b. ord. o.b.

p.p.

128

ord.

Fl.

Vib.

Cel.

Pno.

f

p *mf* *p* *mf* *p* *mf*

f *p* *f* *f*

Red. Red. Red. Red. Red. Red.

9/16

133

o.b.

ord.

Fl.

Vib.

Cel.

Pno.

f

mf *mf*

p *f* *mf*

Red. Red. Red. Red.

6/8

138

Musical score for measures 138-144. The score is arranged in four systems. The first system contains the Flute (Fl.) and Vibraphone (Vib.) parts. The second system contains the Cello (Cel.) and Piano (Pno.) parts. The Flute and Vibraphone parts play a sequence of chords: G4 (quarter), F4 (quarter), E4 (quarter), D4 (quarter), C4 (quarter), B3 (quarter), A3 (quarter), G3 (quarter). The Cello and Piano parts play a descending eighth-note scale: G4, F4, E4, D4, C4, B3, A3, G3. The Piano part includes 'Red.' markings under the first and third measures of this scale. The Cello part includes 'Red.' markings under the first and third measures of this scale.

145

Musical score for measures 145-151. The score is arranged in four systems. The first system contains the Flute (Fl.) and Vibraphone (Vib.) parts. The second system contains the Cello (Cel.) and Piano (Pno.) parts. The Flute and Vibraphone parts play a sequence of chords: G4 (quarter), F4 (quarter), E4 (quarter), D4 (quarter), C4 (quarter), B3 (quarter), A3 (quarter), G3 (quarter). The Cello and Piano parts play a descending eighth-note scale: G4, F4, E4, D4, C4, B3, A3, G3. The Piano part includes 'Red.' markings under the first and third measures of this scale. The Cello part includes 'Red.' markings under the first and third measures of this scale.

151

Fl. *p* *ff*

Vib. *p* *ff*

Cel. *p* *ff*

Pno. *p* *ff*

gliss.

Red.

160

Fl. o.b. ord. *ff* *p*

Vib. *sfp* *ff* *sfp* *ff* *sfp* *ff* *ff* *p* *f*

Cel. *ff* *p* *f*

Pno. *Red.*

8

Red.

169

Fl. *f* 3 3 3 *ord.* *o.b.* *ord.*

Vib.

Cel. *p* *mf* *mf* *mf*

Pno. *pp* *f* *p* *f*

174

Fl. *o.b.* *ord.* *ord.*

Vib. *f*

Cel.

Pno. *p* *ff* *p* *ff*

177 *rall.* ----- *a tempo*

Fl. *p* ----- *ff*

Vib. *p* ----- *ff*

Cel. *p* ----- *ff*

Pno. *mf* ----- *ff* ----- *f*

mf *ff* *f*

rall. ----- *a tempo*

184

Fl.

Vib.

Cel.

Pno.

rit. ----- a tempo

189

Fl.

Vib.

Cel.

Pno.

sfz *ff*

sfz *ff*

v

v