

# The Glittering Scales

For Piano

2013

Lawrence Kramer

"The Glittering Scales" is a musical paraphrase of Elizabeth Bishop's long lyric poem "At the Fishhouses." Two images in particular hover behind the music. The lyric speaker repeatedly observes the glittering effect of fish scales that cover both the paraphernalia of the fishhouses and an old fisherman's vest; the scales, "the principal beauty" of the place, endow the scene with "iridescence" and bestrew the vest like sequins. In thinking about these images, it struck me that a similar glittering is often associated with musical scales, and this visual and verbal pun forms the basis of the composition. But there is another key image in the poem that also caught my ear. The speaker's attention moves on from the scales to the sea, an "icy gray" medium that she describes as "Cold dark deep and absolutely clear." I wanted to mirror in musical terms this mental plunge into a clarity whose very transparency is a mystery. The turn from scales to sea, or from a glittering in the senses to a glimmering in the mind, gives the piece its narrative arc. Incidentally, music also figures in the poem, which pivots on a seriocomic encounter between the speaker and a seal who, she says, is "interested in music" and to whom she sings Baptist hymns.

True to its title, the composition (nine and a half to ten minutes long) is rather rigorously based on the combination and juxtaposition of three scales, one of six, of one seven, and one of eight notes. Only two notes appear in all three scales, a quality that becomes significant near the end. The scales also provide the harmony associated with the transparent mystery of the sea.

# The Glittering Scales

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♩ = 88

*rit.*

Musical notation for measures 1-2. The piece is in 4/4 time. Measure 1 features a bass line starting with a forte piano (*fp*) dynamic and a treble line with a piano (*pp*) dynamic. Measure 2 continues with the same dynamics and includes a *rit.* marking. Both measures contain a *ped.* (pedal) marking and an asterisk (\*). Measure 2 also includes a triplet of eighth notes in the treble line.

Musical notation for measures 3-4. Measure 3 begins with a piano (*pp*) dynamic and a *ped.* marking. Measure 4 features a piano (*p*) dynamic and a *ped.* marking. Both measures include an asterisk (\*). Measure 4 has a *rit.* marking and a *8va* (octave) marking above the treble line.

Musical notation for measures 5-6. Measure 5 features a piano (*p*) dynamic and includes a *8va* marking above the treble line. Measure 6 continues with the same dynamic and includes a *ped.* marking and an asterisk (\*).

Musical notation for measures 7-8. Measure 7 features a piano (*p*) dynamic and includes a *ped.* marking. Measure 8 features a forte piano (*fp*) dynamic and includes a *ped.* marking and an asterisk (\*).

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Musical notation for measures 9 and 10. The right hand features a continuous eighth-note scale with a slur and a fermata. The left hand has a few notes, including a triplet. Performance markings include *ped.*, *sfz*, and asterisks.

Musical notation for measures 11 and 12. The right hand continues the scale, with an *8va* marking. The left hand has a triplet and a slur. Performance markings include *ped.* and an asterisk.

Musical notation for measures 13 and 14. The right hand has a triplet and a slur. The left hand has a slur and a triplet. Performance markings include *ped.* and an asterisk.

Musical notation for measures 15 and 16. The right hand has a triplet and a slur. The left hand has a triplet and a slur. Performance markings include *ped.*, asterisks, and a *3* marking.

Musical notation for measures 17 and 18. The right hand has a slur and a fermata. The left hand has a triplet and a slur. Performance markings include *cresc.*, *6*, *7*, and an asterisk.

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17 *fp* *accel.*

19  $\text{♩} = 96$  *f p* *ped.*

21 *sfz* *8va*

23

25 *accel.*  $\text{♩} = 88$  *fp*

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27 *accel.* ♩ = 96

*f mp fp fp*

30

*f fp mf p pp f mp*

33 *accel. poco a poco*

*fp fp f ff*

36 *rit.* ♩ = 96

*f ff fp cresc.*

*Led.*

39 *8va*

*8va f*

*Led.*

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41 *8va* *accel.*

*cresc.* *fz* *ff* *Dec.* *sffz* \*

3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3

43 *a tempo*

*fp* *p* *Dec.* \*

45 *accel.*

*fp* *mf* *8va* *Dec.* \*

47 *fp* *f* *8va* *Dec.* \*

*♩* = 116 *♩* = 88

50 *ppp* *rit.* *fp* *8va*

The Glittering Scales

8

54 *accel.* ♩ = 96

*f p fp fp fp*

57 *accel.*

*f fp mf p fp mf p*

60 *a tempo* ♩ = 88 *rit.*

*f fp ppp*

66 *rit.* ♩ = 63 *a tempo* *rit.* *espress.*

*pp espress.*

71 ♩ = 54 *allarg.* *cresc.*

*p fp cresc.*



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74  $\text{♩} = 116$

Musical score for measures 74-75. The piece is in 4/4 time with a tempo of 116. Measure 74 features a treble clef with dotted quarter notes and an eighth note, and a bass clef with eighth notes. Measure 75 features a treble clef with a half note and an eighth note, and a bass clef with eighth notes. Dynamics include *f*, *fp*, and *f*. A *Ped.* marking is present in measure 75. A large slur spans across both measures. An asterisk is located at the end of the system.

76 *accel.*

Musical score for measures 76-77. The piece is in 4/4 time. Measure 76 features a treble clef with eighth notes and a bass clef with eighth notes. Measure 77 features a treble clef with eighth notes and a bass clef with eighth notes. Dynamics include *fp* and *f*. A *Ped.* marking is present in measure 76. An *8va* marking is present in measure 76. An *accel.* marking is present in measure 77. A large slur spans across both measures. Two asterisks are located at the end of the system.

78 *a tempo*

Musical score for measures 78-80. The piece is in 2/4 time. Measure 78 features a treble clef with eighth notes and a bass clef with eighth notes. Measure 79 features a treble clef with eighth notes and a bass clef with eighth notes. Measure 80 features a treble clef with eighth notes and a bass clef with eighth notes. Dynamics include *p*. A *Ped.* marking is present in measure 78. An *8va* marking is present in measure 78. A *a tempo* marking is present in measure 79. A large slur spans across measures 78-80. Three asterisks are located at the end of the system.

81 *rit.*

Musical score for measures 81-84. The piece is in 4/4 time. Measure 81 features a treble clef with eighth notes and a bass clef with eighth notes. Measure 82 features a treble clef with eighth notes and a bass clef with eighth notes. Measure 83 features a treble clef with eighth notes and a bass clef with eighth notes. Measure 84 features a treble clef with eighth notes and a bass clef with eighth notes. Dynamics include *rit.*. A *Ped.* marking is present in measure 81. A large slur spans across measures 81-84. Three asterisks are located at the end of the system.

85  $\text{♩} = 88$

Musical score for measures 85-88. The piece is in 4/4 time with a tempo of 88. Measure 85 features a treble clef with eighth notes and a bass clef with eighth notes. Measure 86 features a treble clef with eighth notes and a bass clef with eighth notes. Measure 87 features a treble clef with eighth notes and a bass clef with eighth notes. Measure 88 features a treble clef with eighth notes and a bass clef with eighth notes. Dynamics include *fp*. A *Ped.* marking is present in measure 85. A large slur spans across measures 85-88.

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10

87 *accel.* ♩ = 96

*Ped.* \*

89 *p*

*p*

91 *rit.* ♩ = 88

*rit.* ♩ = 88

93 *accel.* *a tempo* *fp*

*accel.* *a tempo* *fp*

95 *rit.* *pp*

*rit.* *pp*

The Glittering Scales

♩ = 63

96 *mp*

97 *accel.*

*rit.*

*f*

*ped.* \*

99 *a tempo*

*p*

100 *accel.*

*mp*

101 *ped.* \*

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12

102 *a tempo* *fp* *fp* *accel.*

103 *f* *Lea.* *p* \*

104 *a tempo* *mf* *accel.*

105 *rit.* *p* *pp* *mp*  $\text{♩} = 63$  *3*

108 *accel.* *p* *8va*

109  $\text{♩} = 96$

*fp* *mf* *p*

111  $\text{♩} = 96$

*fp* *mf* *p* *f* *fp* *f* *ppp*

*fz*

115 *rit.*  $\text{♩} = 63$

*p*

119 *rit.* *a tempo*

*p*

122 *rit.* *a tempo* *accel.*

*p* *p* \*

# The Glittering Scales

14

$\text{♩} = 88$

*accel. poco a poco*

126

*Ped.* \* *Ped.* \* *Ped.* \* *Ped.* \*

130

*p*

*Ped.* \* *Ped.* \*

$\text{♩} = 116$

133

*mf*

*gva*

*Ped.* \* *Ped.* \* *Ped.* \*

136

*fp*

*Ped.* \* *Ped.* \*

138

8va

*f*

Ped. \*

140

8va

*f*

Ped. \*

ten.

3

3

142

8va

*fp*

*p*

Ped. \*

3

5

144

8va

*f*

*p*

Ped. \*

5

3

The Glittering Scales

16

146

*rit.*  
3 ten.  
*f*  
*p*  
*ff*  
5  
5  
6  
3  
3  
3  
3

150

♩ = 88

*p*  
*accel.*  
*rit.*  
*a tempo*

155

*rit.*  
*sffz*  
*p*  
*espress. piu rit.*  
8va

159

♩ = 54

8va

*pp*  
*p*  
*mp*  
3  
3  
3  
3  
3  
3  
3  
3



# The Glittering Scales

(8va) -----

162 *p* *mp* *f* *rit.* *cresc.* *cresc.* 8va

165 *a tempo* *mf* *p* *7* *9* *4/4* *4/4*

*7* *9* *5/4* *4/4* *4/4*

167 *rit.* *pp*

*rit.* *pp*

169 *a tempo* *7* *4/4*

*7* *a tempo* *4/4* *Led.*

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18

Musical score for measures 170-171. The piece is in 9/8 time. Measure 170 features a descending scale in the right hand, marked with a '9' below the staff. Measure 171 features an ascending scale in the right hand, marked with an '8va' above the staff. Both scales are connected by a long slur. The bass line consists of sustained notes in the left hand.

Musical score for measures 172-174. The tempo is marked as quarter note = 54. The piece is in 9/8 time. Measure 172 starts with a piano (*p*) dynamic, followed by a fortissimo piano (*fp*) dynamic. Measure 173 includes a *cresc.* (crescendo) marking. Measure 174 ends with a *fp* dynamic. The right hand plays a melodic line with slurs, while the left hand plays a rhythmic accompaniment. The tempo instruction is *accel. poco a poco*.

Musical score for measures 175-177. The piece is in 4/4 time. Measure 175 starts with a fortissimo (*f*) dynamic. Measure 176 continues with a fortissimo (*f*) dynamic. Measure 177 ends with a fortissimo fortissimo (*ff*) dynamic. The right hand plays a melodic line with slurs, while the left hand plays a rhythmic accompaniment.

Musical score for measures 178-179. The piece is in 4/4 time. Measure 178 starts with a fortissimo piano (*fp*) dynamic. Measure 179 continues with a fortissimo (*f*) dynamic. The right hand plays a melodic line with slurs, while the left hand plays a rhythmic accompaniment. The tempo instruction is *Red.* (Ritardando). The piece ends with a *8va* marking above the staff and an asterisk (\*) below the staff.

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180  $\text{♩} = 116$

*fp* *f* *Led.* \* *Led.* \* *8va*

182

*fp* *f* *8va*

184 *rit.*  $\text{♩} = 63$

*dim.* *p*

187 *rit.* *a tempo* *rit.*

*rit.* *a tempo* *rit.*

191  $\text{♩} = 88$  *rit.*

*ppp* *rit.*