

**Spherical**  
for piano solo  
with optional narration

2009

(ca. 8:00)

Christopher Gainey (b. 1981)

poetry by Alan Felsenthal

# Spherical

for piano solo  
with optional narration

to:

Victoria Tsangari

special thanks to:

Patrick Fitzgibbon, David Gompper,  
Bruno Amato, Thomas Benjamin,  
and Ray Chester

This piece is a musical setting of the poem, **Spherical**, by Alan Felsenthal. The music provides an environment for the spoken words, reflecting an emotional response to the images of barren radiance, distorted reality, and the overall circular design. In order to reflect these ideas, the technique of anamorphosis is used, in which fixed objects seem to change according to the viewer's perspective. The music is constructed from a very limited number of sonorities and motives presented in gradually shifting contexts, skewing the listener's perspective through the changing interaction of the musical material.

**For more information or  
to contact the composer  
please visit:**

[www.christophergainey.com](http://www.christophergainey.com)

## **Spherical**

When dull I write until  
my life becomes a rose  
window looking out  
at the treeless yard.

I imagine a sphere  
cut out of firmament  
where you are  
a flickering tremor.

Radiance uprooted,  
ripe I have grown  
for excision from  
this barren monastery.

Show me my face  
wet with hallelujahs.  
Please tell me no  
surgery is senseless.

Prickly stems outside  
display dissolving cells.  
The local ether clamps  
in my ventilated room.

I want you coming to  
remove this mask.  
I am asking again  
for the anaesthetic.

- Alan Felsenthal (2008)

### **Performance Notes:**

1. The poetry is broken up in the score as it should be read in performance. Any boxed text is to be read aloud by the narrator (if a narrator is used). The arrow extending from the box shows the approximate place in the music at which the reading should begin.
2. The narrator (if a narrator is used) should be amplified for any performance of this piece.
3. The narrator (if a narrator is used) should give a highly stylized reading of the text, responding to the emotions implicit in both the words and the music.
4. The sustain pedal should be used throughout this piece. The symbol (\*) shows where the performer should change the pedal.
5. If the poetry is to be read in performance, it may be read by either a separate narrator or by the pianist, if he or she is so inclined.

*to Victoria Tsangari*  
**Spherical**

Christopher Gaineys (2009)  
Text by Alan Felsenthal

$\text{♪} = 84$

Piano

*Ped. semper*

$\leftarrow \text{♪} = \text{♩} \rightarrow$

5

*p*

*mp*

9

*mf*

*f*

13

*mf*

*mp*

*mf*

17

21

25

29

*rit.*

33

$\text{♪} = 100$

36

***When dull I write . . .*** \*\*      ***until my life becomes a rose window . . .***

39

***looking out at the treeless yard.***

43

\*\* The narrator should read any boxed text aloud. The arrow shows the approximate place in the music at which the reading should begin

46

48

*I imagine a sphere ...*

(r. h. only)

50

*cut out of firmament ...*

$\leftarrow \text{♪} = \text{♪} \rightarrow (\text{♪} = 144)$

(8)

52

3

*where you are . . .*

(8)

54

p

p

*a flickering tremor.*

$\text{♩} = 96$

$\text{♩} = 96$

56

mf

6

6

6

6

6

6

6

6

l.v.

$8^{\text{vb}}$

*mf*

*Radiance uprooted . . .*

8va

58

6

6

6

l.v.

l.v.

\*

$8^{\text{vb}}$

*l.v.*

*ripe I have grown . . .*

60 (8) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Measure 60: Treble staff has eighth-note pairs (6). Bass staff has a sustained note. Measure 61: Treble staff has eighth-note pairs (6). Bass staff has eighth-note pairs (6).

62 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Measure 62: Treble staff has eighth-note pairs (3). Bass staff has eighth-note pairs (7). Measure 63: Treble staff has eighth-note pairs (7). Bass staff has eighth-note pairs (6).

\* l.v.  
8vb

*for excision from this barren monastery.*

64 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Measure 64: Treble staff has eighth-note pairs (7). Bass staff has eighth-note pairs (3). Measure 65: Treble staff has eighth-note pairs (l.v.). Bass staff has eighth-note pairs (7).

\* l.v.  
8vb

(L. H.)

66

*l.v.*

*l.v.*

\*

*8vb*

(B<sub>b</sub>)

67

*8va*

*p*

*p*

*p*

*5*

*←*  $\frac{5}{\text{♪}} = \text{♪} \rightarrow (\text{♩} = 120)$

69 (8)

*mp*

*mp*

\*

71

*mf*

*mf*

73

75

*rit.*

77

(unmeasured: reading  
should begin when  
most, but not all,  
sound has dissipated)

**Show me my face  
wet with hallelujahs.**

82

$\text{♩} = 60$

85

*mp*

\* *mp*

\*

88

\*

\*

\*

91

*mf*

\*

*mf*

\*

94

l.v.

l.v.

97

(r. h. only)

*8va*

99 (8)

*mp*

*mfp*

\*

101 (8)

\*

\*

103 (8)

\*

105

107

**Please tell me ...**

**no surgery is senseless.**

116

5/4 6/4

5/4 6/4

6/4

l.v.

\*

\*

\*

***Prickly stems outside display ...***

119

5/4 4/4

p

5/4 4/4

p

\*

\*

121

4/4 6/8

4/4

\*

\*

\*

***dissolving cells.***

123

5/4 4/4

5/4

\*

\*

*The local ether...*

125

126

127

128

*clamps in my ventilated room.*

accel.

129

130

*I want you coming...*

$\text{♩} = 84$

rit.

l.v.  $\downarrow$

*ff*

*mf*

*ff* l.v. *mf* l.v.

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

131

132

*J = 60*

134

*to remove this mask.*

137

*I am asking again . . .*

139

*for the anaesthetic.*

141 (8)

143

*8va*

3

3

3

3

*rall.*

145 (8)

3

3

3

3

*mp*

147

*pp*    *p*    *mp*    *mf*

5

*mf*

\*

completed 1/19/09  
Iowa City, IA