Aaron Perrine

In the Open Air,
In the Silent Lines
**Program Note**

*In the Open Air, In the Silent Lines* was inspired by a portion of the preface to Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*.

This is what you shall do: Love the earth and sun and the animals, despise riches, give alms to everyone that asks, stand up for the stupid and crazy, devote your income and labor to others, hate tyrants, argue not concerning God, have patience and indulgence toward the people, take off your hat to nothing known or unknown, or to any man or number of men—so freely with powerful uneducated persons, and with the young, and with the mothers of families—re-examine all you have been told in school or church or in any book, and dismiss whatever insults your own soul; and your very flesh shall be a great poem, and have the richest fluency, not only in its words, but in the silent lines of its lips and face, and between the lashes of your eyes, and in every motion and joint of your body.

I am moved by the directness of Whitman's words: an elegant, idealistic call to action. Given our country's political climate, the text feels particularly fitting. I was first drawn to the phrase, “and your very flesh shall be a great poem, and have the richest fluency not only in its words, but in the silent lines of its lips and face, and between the lashes of your eyes, and in every motion and joint of your body.” For me, this illustrates the great beauty and potential found in all of us. My hope is that we listen, reflect and find new and creative ways to make meaningful and positive change.

Musically, this phrase evokes an analogous idea of fragile melodic fragments emerging from the opening overlapping and intersecting lines. As the fragments took shape, they were then juxtaposed with the textural lines, informing the structure of the work. Further, “open air,” (a phrase found earlier in Whitman's preface but not in the included excerpt) alludes to the space found throughout the work.
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