

Richard Barrett

***codex XXV – seasonal words***

2023

vocal/instrumental ensemble (9 or more performers)  
on texts compiled and translated by Harry Gilonis

performing score

# ***codex XXV***

(2023)

for vocal/instrumental ensemble (at least 9 performers)  
on texts compiled and translated by Harry Gilonis

for 113 Composers Collective  
duration 17 minutes

## **instrumentation**

At least 9 performers on any instruments and/or voices are required. There is no upper limit. At least 3 of the performers should be (principally or exclusively) vocalists. Other performers may also use their voices as they feel appropriate.

All performers require a stopwatch. The composition consists of 17 sections, each lasting one minute, although the transitions between them need not be abrupt or even immediately apparent. Individuals may begin earlier or later (or not at all) according to spontaneous musical considerations, as long as there is a sense of the music passing through different “scenes” as it unfolds. A performance should begin with a measured silence after the stopwatches are synchronised, so that for example each minute of the performance begins ten seconds (or some other duration to be agreed in advance) after the elapsed time shown on the stopwatches, so that the music begins from a point of rest rather than with everyone scrambling to find their first sounds.

Each section is based on a different *haiku* poem from a sequence entitled *seasonal words*, collected and translated by Harry Gilonis, which span a range between the 13th century and the present day. Each poem is given in the original (transliterated) Japanese and in English translation. Performers may refer to either or both of these. My selection of 17 poems is, unlike the original sequence, placed in chronological order of the poets’ birthdates. This may play a role in how they are interpreted by performers.

While *codex XXV* is intended to have a certain kind of musical character influenced by the texts and the suggestions for their use, it shouldn’t be conceived as a score with spaces opened in it for improvisation, but as a free improvisation with the score functioning as a network of points of structural/expressive focus. It’s probably preferable for rehearsals not to attempt to converge on a supposedly optimal performance, but rather the opposite: to work towards opening *more* possibilities, so that the eventual performance has the freedom to be radically different from any of the rehearsal versions.

Each performer may choose, in advance or spontaneously when beginning each of the 17 sections, from the following possibilities:

- (1) 5 times: remain silent.
- (2) 5 times: make an *extremely* quiet, pitched or unpitched, continuous and hardly changing sound which forms a kind of backdrop or horizon upon which other events may be projected. Real or imitated field recordings (not necessarily of “natural” phenomena) might be a suitable example, although this is only one among many possibilities.
- (3) 7 times: produce between one and seven sound-forms corresponding imaginatively to syllables in the text. One of these sections should involve one sound-form, another should involve two, another three and so on. Again, this may be decided by each performer individually either spontaneously or in advance.

The text may be conceived as spread out through the one-minute duration (thus with one syllable of either the Japanese or English text every 3.5 seconds or so), or clustered together at one or more points during the one-minute section. A sound-form may be a single sound or a longer event such as a melody or a texture or a constellation of points, but it should have a definite shape like a syllable, which might be brief and percussive, or extended in time, whispered or spoken or sung, elaborated into a melisma etc. Of course a sound-form (for the vocalists) may consist of an actual syllable, sounded in one of these ways or in some other way. Vocalists may combine syllables into words, and/or mix the Japanese and English syllables at will.

The poetic identities of the texts should always be borne in mind by performers, although of course not in a precious or culturally appropriative way. Like Harry Gilonis’s translations, the composition is a particular view of the original material, which both respects it and transposes it into a new context with a freedom implied by the nature of this act of transposition. Performers are improvising/orchestrating their own “translations”. At the same time it shouldn’t be necessary for the audience to know what the texts are, or what role they may be playing. The translation into music involves both gains and losses in clarity and expressivity, and the texts may sometimes be almost clear if fragmentary, at other times withdrawing below the surface of the music, or disappearing altogether (since it’s possible that a section might have all performers choosing possibilities (1) and/or (2) above).

0'00"

*kasumu to mo  
kumo o ba ideyo  
haru no tsuki*

even if misty  
o appear from those clouds  
you first moon of spring

Tamesuke **Reizei** (1263-1328)

1'00"

*mizu-tamari  
ume chiru niwa no  
nagame kana*

the plum blossom is  
scattered in garden puddles  
well, what a prospect

Takayama **Sōzei** (1368-1455)

2'00"

*ara tōto  
aoba wakaba no  
hi no hikari*

how estimable!  
the green leaves the new young leaves  
brilliant in sunlight!

Matsuo **Bashō** (1644-1694)

3'00"

*harusame ya  
nukedata mama no  
yogi no ana*

spring drizzle outside —  
having struggled free from the  
hole in the bedclothes

Naitō **Jōsō** (1662-1704)

4'00"

*sakanu ma mo  
mono ni magirenu  
sumire kana*

hardly visible  
as they're not yet in flower  
the wild violets

Shiba **Sonome** (1664-1726)

5'00"

*harusame no  
agaru ya noki ni  
naku suzume*

so the spring drizzle  
has lifted! under the eaves  
tree-sparrows chirrup

Nozawa **Ukō** (c. 1688-1704)

6'00"

*musubō to  
tokō to kaze no  
yanagi kana*

perhaps knot it up,  
perhaps disentangle it,  
wind in the willow

Kago-no **Chiyo** (1703-1775)

7'00"

*shoku no hi wo  
shoku ni utsusu ya  
haru no yū*

light from one candle  
moved to another candle  
an evening in spring

Yosa **Buson** (1716-1784)

8'00"

*haru tatsu ya  
shizuka ni tsuru no  
ippo yori*

spring is beginning  
unhurriedly as a crane's  
one step at a time

Kuroyanagi **Shōha** (1727-72)

9'00"

*hana o terashi  
tsuki mata hana ni  
kumoru kana*

it's that self-same moon  
illuminates the blossom,  
is clouded by it

Miura **Chora** (1729-1780)

10'00"

*kerorikan  
to shite karasu to  
yanagi kana*

so there's a willow  
and wholly insouciant  
there's also a crow

Kobayashi **Issa** (1763-1828)

11'00"

*yo o kōte  
hito o osoruru  
yokan kana*

loving the wide world  
yet in dread of humankind  
winter cold lingers

Murakami **Kijō** (1865-1938)

12'00"

*kōjō no  
tachi hirogaru oto mo  
kyō mo seifū no hare*

from the factory  
come the noises of its expansion  
brought on today's westerly

Kawagahishi **Hekigotō** (1873-1937)

13'00"

*ki no me  
nureru hodo wa hito no  
nurete yuku*

the trees' buds  
get wet precisely as people do  
when they are wettened

Ogiwara **Seisensui** (1884-1976)

14'00"

*haru ga kita  
to ōkina  
shinbun-kōkoku*

**spring is coming home!**  
so says the giant  
newspaper advertisement

Ozaki **Hōsai** (1885-1926)

15'00"

*katō no ue  
kyu — n —  
to sentōki*

high above the tadpoles  
**kyu — nnnnnnn —**  
go the fighter aircraft

Sanki **Saitō** (1900-1962)

**16'00"**

*manekin no  
sasayaki aeru  
orobo kana*

window-mannequins  
whispering between themselves  
half-seen in the gloom

Mayazumi **Madoka** (b. 1962)

**17'00"**

end