

You Are Here

"...you are given just one momentary glimpse of the entire unimaginable infinity of creation, and somewhere in it a tiny little mark, a microscopic dot on a microscopic dot, which says, 'You are here.' "

- Douglas Adams, *The Restaurant at the End of the Universe*

"...But you are here. You have always been here. The world is all forgetting, and the heart is a rage of directions, but your name unifies the heart, and the world is lifted into its place...."

- Leonard Cohen, excerpt from *Poem 50 "Book of Mercy"*

The inspiration for this piece came from a thought my wife had one night when we were lying in bed together. She said how amazing and moving it was that here we were, the two of us, alone together in our bed, our lives completely bound up together, in the midst of this mind-bogglingly enormous universe. I immediately had an image of the vastness of space, galaxies and stars and nebulae, then of zooming in and in and in, through the Milky Way, into our solar system, toward earth, and on down into a small house in Princeton, New Jersey, where my wife and I were lying in bed, holding hands. It was a beautiful image, and it suddenly clarified for me how to approach this percussion trio I had been struggling to compose.

The piece begins with the glockenspiel gently playing a steadily repeating pattern of cosmic bells, the empty void of space, while the crotales and vibraphone repeat bits of material over and over again against it at different rates, aligning in different ways, like cosmic objects, galaxies, stars, planets orbiting through space. This process stops and begins again, at three different speeds. The third time, the vibraphone and crotales start aligning, the tempo gradually increases, galaxies and stars rush by as we zoom in and in, until finally the crotales and glockenspiel land together in a dancing melody, over a steady pulse in the vibraphone. The huge, impersonal universe has coalesced into a cosmic dance of two souls.

The quotations above indicate the two meanings of the title, *You Are Here*. The Douglas Adams quote, from a description of a science fiction torture device called the "Total Perspective Vortex" refers to our unbelievable tininess and insignificance in an unimaginably vast universe. But the Leonard Cohen quote shows another meaning: you, my beloved one, the one who makes life meaningful and worthwhile, you are also here, with me. In the endless infinity of space, somehow we are here together.