

**Ingrid Stölzel**  
**Univ. Missouri – Kansas City**  
**The Road is All**

Instruments: violin, cello & piano

Duration: ca. 12'

2007

*The Road is All* takes its title and inspiration from a quote by nineteenth-century French historian, Jules Michelet: “Le but n’est rien; le chemin, c’est tout.” (The end is nothing; the road is all.)

Beauty and intelligibility are at the core of my compositional work. I strive to write music that communicates directly and powerfully with the audience. Much of my thinking about music and its communicative power has been influenced by the writings of the philosopher Susanne K. Langer, especially her concept of *The Musical Matrix*.<sup>1</sup> She writes: “The essence of all composition – tonal or atonal, vocal or instrumental, even purely percussive, if you will – is the semblance of organic movement, the illusion of an indivisible whole.”

The organic unfolding in time is at the heart of *The Road is All*. The work emanates from its opening gesture. The piano chords in the upper register are spaced openly, allowing a soundworld to emerge from within. Musical motives surface and become vital agents in the *auskomponieren* of melodic, harmonic and rhythmic potentialities. The musical materials presented throughout the piece are rather simple (one such motive is the sixteenth note and dotted eighth note), yet the journey through time is a complex one in terms of rhythmic precision. Langer argues that “the essence of rhythm is the preparation of a new event by the ending of a previous one. Rhythm is the setting-up of new tensions by the resolution of former ones.” Similarly in *The Road is All*, the rhythmic flow of the composition is informed by the materials themselves and their inherent need to stretch and contract in order to create forward momentum, in which the ending of one movement indeed sets up the rise of another. The guiding principle behind my rhythmic language is a sense of direction and directedness in terms of energy. This rhythmic complexity is, however, not audible to the listener who will perceive the unfolding in time as most organic and direct.

“What we hear in listening to sounds “musically” is not their specific pitch and loudness, duration and timbre. What we hear is what Hanslick has properly described as ‘*tönend bewegte Formen*’—‘sounding forms in motion.’ We hear movement and rest, swift movement or slow, stop, attack, direction, parallel and contrary motion, melody rising or soaring or sinking, harmonies crowding or resolving or clashing; moving forms in continuous flux.”

In this sense, the *töned bewegte Form* of *The Road is All* is one that embraces the journey, the twists and turns, the unpredictability that is life, the lingering in the space between, and the simple enjoyment of a moment in passing time.

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<sup>1</sup> All quotes from: Susanne K. Langer, “The Musical Matrix,” in *Feeling and Form: A Theory of Art* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1953), 120-132.