

MYSTIC CHORDS

FOR SOUNDFILE (VIRTUAL PIANO)

BY KYLE GANN
2012

Mystic Chords (2012)

Mystic Chords is based on a sonority that Scriabin dubbed the “mystic chord,” stacked in fourths and approximating the 1st, 11th, 7th, 5th, 13th, and 9th harmonics of a harmonic series, in that order:



Mystic Chords builds up a chordal melody by alternating among seven such chords, each built on the 1st, 3rd, 5th, 7th, 9th, 11th, or 13th harmonics (purely tuned in just intonation) of a very low F#. The harmonics of F# (transposed by octave into the same two-and-a-half-octave range) are distributed among the seven chords as follows:

I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII
3	25	3	91	99	99	91
9	35	9	35	9	143	143
13	55	27	49	27	55	13
5	5	39	77	81	77	39
7	15	15	7	117	121	117
11	45	21	21	45	11	169
1	65	33	63	63	33	65

The effect of each chord varies in perceived dissonance depending on whether the root, 13th, 9th, and so on is in the bass; thus while the “pitch sets” of all the chords are identical, the level of tension is affected by registral placement, illustrating what an inadequate concept “pitch set” is for composing. In addition, the duration of each chord is indicated by a tempo marking, so that the rhythms, entirely unmetrical and presumably impossible to precisely reproduce by humans, are determined by changing speeds rather than any underlying pulse.

Duration: 6’20”

Mystic Chords

Pitch Key

Written:

Sounding:

63/32 1/1 65/64 33/32 21/16 169/128 11/8 45/32 7/4 117/64 15/8 121/64

77/64 39/32 5/4 81/64 49/32 13/8 27/16 55/32

35/32 143/128 9/8 91/64 3/2 99/64 25/16

Mystic Chords

(Rhythm Study)

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2012

ff

233 55 233 55 233 55 233 55 233 55 233 144 55

233 144 55 233 144 55 233 144 55 233 144 89 55

233 144 89 55 233 144 89 55 233 144 89 55 377

233 144 89 55 377 233 144 89 55 377 233 144 89

55 89 144 233 377 233 144 89 55 89 144 233 377

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144 233 377 233 144 89 55 34 55 89 144 233 377

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55 34 55 89 144 233 377 233 144 89 55 34 55

=89 =144 =233 =377 =233 =144 =89 =55 =34 =55 =89 =144 =183
 =70 =183 =70 =183 =70 =183 =113 =70 =183 =113 =70 =183 =113
 =70 =183 =113 =70 =183 =113 =144 =70 =183 =113 =144 =70 =183
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 =144 =113 =233 =183 =144 =113 =233 =183 =144 =113 =233 =183 =144
 =113 =377 =296 =233 =183 =144 =113 =377 =296 =233 =183 =144 =113

Musical score for "Mystic Chords" (Page 3). The score consists of ten staves, each containing a series of chords. The chords are marked with numerical values (e.g., 377, 296, 233, 183, 144, 113, 207, 89, 55, 128, 144, 296, 207) indicating specific intervals or frequencies. The notation is dense, with many notes beamed together, creating a rich, layered sound. The key signature is complex, with multiple sharps and flats. The overall style is experimental and avant-garde.

=144 =296 =207 =144 =296
 =207 =144 =296 =207
 =144 =610 =542 =479 =610 =34 =55 =542 =610 =479
 =542 =34 =55 =610 =479 =610 =542 =479 =34 =55 =610
 =479 =542 =610 =377 =233 =144 =89 =55 =34 =21 =610
 =377 =233 =144 =89 =55 =34 =21 =610
 =377 =233 =144
 =89 =55 =610
 =542 =479 =610
 =542 =479

The musical score is composed of six systems, each with three staves (treble, alto, and bass clefs). The notation is highly complex, featuring dense clusters of notes, often with accidentals (sharps and flats). Numerical annotations are placed above the staves, indicating specific measures or groups of notes. The first system has a tempo marking of ♩=610. The second system has a dynamic marking of *fff*. The third system has a dynamic marking of *fff*. The fourth system has a dynamic marking of *fff*. The fifth system has a dynamic marking of *fff*. The sixth system has a dynamic marking of *fff*.

Annotations for the first system: ♩=610, ♩=55, ♩=144, ♩=55, ♩=89.

Annotations for the second system: ♩=55, ♩=233, ♩=55, ♩=144, ♩=55, ♩=377, ♩=55, ♩=233, ♩=55, *fff* ♩=144, ♩=55, ♩=89, ♩=55.

Annotations for the third system: ♩=377, ♩=55, ♩=89, ♩=113, ♩=55, ♩=144, ♩=113, ♩=55, ♩=144, ♩=183, ♩=55, ♩=296, ♩=183.

Annotations for the fourth system: ♩=55, ♩=144, ♩=183, ♩=113, *fff* ♩=34, ♩=183, ♩=296, ♩=113, ♩=34, ♩=144, ♩=113, ♩=89, ♩=34.

Annotations for the fifth system: ♩=113, ♩=144, ♩=70, ♩=34, ♩=89, ♩=113, ♩=70, ♩=34, ♩=144, ♩=89, ♩=113, ♩=34, ♩=21.

The musical score consists of four staves, each containing a series of chords. The chords are written in various key signatures (including major, minor, and augmented) and are accompanied by time signatures (such as 27, 16, 21, 13, 144, 113, 128, 34, 144, 128, 113, 34, 128, 144, 113, 34, 21, 233, 89, 34, 233, 89, 55, 233, 89, 21, 233, 55, 21, 377, 21, 377, 21, 377, 21, 377, 13, 377, 8, 377, 5). The chords are written in a complex, multi-measure format, often spanning multiple staves. The notation includes various accidentals (sharps, flats, naturals) and stems, indicating a highly complex and experimental musical style.

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