The Stream (Admonitions)
for voice and percussion ensemble
on a text from the Journals of Henry David Thoreau

by Kyle Gann
1987
The Stream (Admonitions)

Percussion: crotales (F#, G, A, B), vibraphone, triangle, wood block, large and small cymbals, large and small tam-tams, tenor drum, bass drum

I wrote this piece in April of 1987, totally forgot about it, and ran across it in my manuscripts 27 years later. The text is a fabulous paragraph from Thoreau’s Journal for July 16, 1850:

Do a little more of that work which you have sometime confessed to be good… Do what you reprove yourself for not doing. Know that you are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with yourself without reason… [C]ultivate the tree which you have found to bear fruit in your soil. Regard not your past failures nor successes. All the past is equally a failure and a success… Have you not a pretty good thinking faculty…? Does not the stream still rise to its fountainhead in you? Go to the devil and come back again. Dispose of evil… Die, if you can. Depart… If you know of any risk to run, run it. If you don’t know of any, enjoy confidence. Do not trouble yourself to be religious. You will never get a thank you for it… Do not entertain doubts if they are not agreeable to you. Send them to the tavern… Do not read the newspapers. Improve every opportunity to be melancholy. Be as melancholy as you can be, and note the result. Rejoice with fate… Do not engage to find things as you think they are. Do what nobody can do for you. Omit to do everything else.

The piece needed some revision; in particular, the vocal line was too slow, and I had too timidly omitted too much of the text, so it was easy to speed up the vocal phrases and insert more of the text in the gaps that resulted. Cymbals and tam-tams should be hit with soft mallets, and all percussion sounds should be allowed to ring.
The Stream (Admonitions)

Henry David Thoreau
July 16, 1850

Kyle Gann
1987

Voice

Crotales

Vibraphone

Triangle

Wood Block

Small cymbal

Large cymbal

Small Tam-tam

Large Tam-tam

Tenor Drum

Bass Drum

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work which you have some time confessed to be good
Do what you re-prove your self
for not do-ing

Know that you are nei-ther sa-tis-fied, nor dis-sa-tis-fied with your-self
without reason. Cultivate the tree which you have found to bear fruit in your soil.
Regard not your past failures nor successes. All the past is equally a
failure and a success. Have you not a pretty good thinking faculty? Does not the stream
still rise to its fountain-head in you?
Go to the devil and come back
The Stream (Admonitions)
to run run it. If you don't know of any, enjoy confidence.
Do not trouble yourself to be religious. You will never get a thank you for it. Do
not entertain doubts if they are not agreeable to you. Send them to the tavern.
Do not read the newspapers. Improve every opportunity to be melancholy.
Voice

Be as me-lan-cho-ly as you can be and note the re-sult._ Re-joice with fate. Do not en-gage_

Crot.

Vib.

Tri.

W.B.

S Cym.

L Cym.

T.-t.

T.-t.

T. D.

B. D.

The Stream (Admonitions)
to find things as you think they are.

Do what no-bo-dy can do for you.
The Stream (Admonitions)

Voice

Omit to do everything else.

Crot.

Vib.

Tri.

W.B.

S Cym.

L Cym.

T.-t.

T.-t.

T. D.

B. D.

(or Ah...)
The Stream (Admonitions)