

# SCORE

## Coast

by David Mahler

*Coast*, for gamelan, consists of three contrasting sections, each of which is a different treatment of the same single-page cipher score.

### Section 1A

Tempo, one pulse = *circa* 200.

Only *bonang*, *bonang panerus*, *kenong* and *kethuk* play. Beats where numbers occur are treated as rests. When the players encounter an actual rest (-) in the score, they should sound pitch 6 on that beat where the rest occurs. The notes should be played loudly, vigorously, and each note should be played with a damped stroke and not allowed to sustain. *Bonang* may double at the octave (*gembyang*). The first note sounded would be on the eighth beat of the third line; the next note would sound on the second beat of the fifth line, and so on. For example:

-----  
-----  
-----6  
-----  
-6-- ----- *etc.*

### Section 1B

In this section, each number in the score corresponds to a pitch played in unison on the *peking*, *saron*, *demung*, and *slenthem*. In addition, each number also represents the duration of that pitch, that is, the number of pulses which that pitch lasts. If these durations were notated out as pulses, the score would appear as follows:

2-6-----15-----7-----5-----13---*etc.*

Dynamics should be fairly loud and the saron instruments should dampen previously sounded notes in the conventional way to create a legato effect.

In addition to the above procedure, the *bonang*, *kenong*, and *kethuk* repeat their procedure from section 1A. In other words, when a rest occurs, these instruments will sound their damp stroke on pitch 6. The result is that when the saron instruments are resting the other instruments will be playing. In the last line of this section, the *bonang*, *bonang panerus*, *kenong*, and *kethuk* decrescendo and also ritard. to approximately 100-120. They should continue

playing through the first six pulses of Section 2, continuing to decrescendo as they do, thereby effecting a smooth transition into this new section, while also establishing the new tempo.

### Section 2

Tempo, one pulse = 100-120.

In this section, each consecutive pitch in the score is pulsed evenly four times, with entrances staggered in the following manner in order to create a canonic effect.

peking 1	22226666111155557777
peking 2	22226666111155557777
saron 1	22226666111155557777
saron 2	222266661111555577775555
demung 1	222266661111555577775555
demung 2	22226666 11115555 777755551111
slenthem	22226666 11115555 777755551111
kempul	2 6 1 5 7
b., b.p., ken., ket.	6666666 <i>tacet</i>

Continue through the whole score in the above manner, carefully observing the rests, which also receive four counts each. Play softly and without damping. (Use soft mallets so that the attacks are minimized.) In addition to the above procedure, the *bonang barung* and *bonang panerus* silently follow the *slenthem* and *demung 2* parts, respectively. In following these parts, they will occasionally encounter a number that is enclosed by a circle or a triangle, or sometimes both. These symbols indicate that the *bonang barung* (circle) or *bonang panerus* (triangle) should effect a rapid roll on that note, which is then continued for twenty pulses or until a new circled pitch is encountered, whichever comes first. When not rolling, the *bonang* are silent. When rolling, the dynamic level of the *bonang* should rise subtly to a level just above that of the rest of the gamelan, so as to provide a reinforcing of these other parts.

### Section 3

Tempo, one pulse = 35-45.

After the last pitch of section 2 is sounded, a designated leader conducts the entrance to the next section, establishing the new tempo. Saron 2, demung 1 & 2, *bonang barung* and *bonang panerus* play the notes of the score just

---

*David Mahler is a composer living in Seattle, Washington.*

as written. They should play in a manner that is stately, full, and resonant. The regular mallets should be used (not the softer mallets of section two) and the notes should not be damped at all. Gong plays pitch 6 and *kempul* plays both pitch 6 and pitch 3 on the first beat of each line. On the fifth beat of each line the *kempul* and *slenthem* play both pitches 3 and 7 in unison. These unison pitches from gong, *kempul* and *slenthem* should be played at a moderate volume.

In addition, *peking* 1 & 2, *saron* 1, and *slenthem* should sound the last pitch in each line. They should double at the octave where possible (each player using two mallets), and each of these notes should be played very loudly by all players and allowed to sustain as long as possible through the following beats.

Beginning with the ninth line from the end, the *kempul* and gong should play the first pitch of each line as usual. Then, after the note is struck, a common pencil, well-sharpened, should be held so that it just touches the vibrating gong or *kempul*. It should be held loosely, so that the vibrating of the instrument causes the pencil to bounce up and down rapidly, thereby creating a buzzing sound. Other possibilities besides the pencil may be explored, such as a metal rod, small bells, or what have you. However, the effect should always be subtle and its rhythm reflect the true vibration of the instrument. Please note that once the *kempul* has begun to implement the buzzing effect, it should not attempt to play on the fifth beat of the line. Rather, it should play only on the first beat of the line, leaving the fifth beat to the *slenthem*.

*Coast* was written for the aluminum-style American gamelan, with key-gongs and *kempul*. However it may be adapted to any type of gamelan. The tuning used for performing the piece combines pitches from *sléndro* and *pélog* into one set in the following manner:

tuning	p1	s2	3	s5	6	p7	s1
score equivalent	1	2	3	5	6	7	8
approx. ratio	1/1	16/15	6/5	7/5	8/5	9/5	28/15

The extended range of the instruments, above or below the octave given above, may be used when appropriate (i.e. the doubling of notes at the octave). Traditional gamelan practices have been adhered to in this piece only in the most general sense, and only when doing so is of help to the players. There is no attempt here to recreate the coincidental counterpoint so prevalent in traditional Javanese gamelan music. Rather, *Coast* is concerned with time, resonance, and the sonorous ringing qualities of the gamelan. Color and specialized ensemble techniques are two additional matters of interest in this music.

The word "coast" is, of course, both a verb and a noun. Without belaboring the point and thereby inviting a listening which seeks a literal link between title and music ("Oh yes, I can hear the waves crashing over the beach!"), I nonetheless attempted here to create a music which "idles" through much of the piece, and I do intend this music to

conjure up something of the breadth and mystery of the Western America Pacific Coast, a region which has generated such a revolutionary interest in the musics of non-Western cultures.

This piece was commissioned by Gamelan Pacifica in Seattle as part of a consortium with the Berkeley Gamelan, Gamelan Son of Lion, and Gamelan Si Betty. I am grateful to Paul Drescher and the members of Gamelan Pacifica for their care and interest in working through this music with me. For a composer to work with an ensemble during the formulation of a piece of music (as opposed to simply turning over a finished product) seems to me the most logical and healthy way in which new music may be generated. ▀

