

golds
liam elliot



The constant of the prairie is golds. [In the eastern and coastal forests, you find every nuance of green represented in the bright mass of mosses and near blackened spruce.] By September the summer heat has bleached the grasses to a sea of golds, their seeds dried and loosened. I reach down and strip the seeds off a stalk with two fingers, forming a brief flower that scatters on the wind whose breaths are echoed by racing ripples in the grasses.

Patches of poplar and aspen trickle the dawn light. By September the shortened days have aged their leaves, turned them to golds, thinning the washes of wind that rattles their leaves and sounds like home.





Performance Notes

As I write *Golds*, I am missing the people and fall colours of the eastern USA, while savouring everything I have missed about this time of year in the Canadian prairies.

Golds is structured as a series of postcards celebrating parts of the prairie fall that bring me a feeling of joy and awe. These postcards are loosely structured to map the course of a day, and like a day, should be thought of as one continuously unfolding gesture rather than as a series of events.

All sections are played attacca. All timings are extremely approximate and all material is open to interpretation and improvisation. Time stamps are approximate and unsynced between players unless indicated by a dashed line. All photos taken by me near where the music was composed.

All strings sound a whole step higher than written.

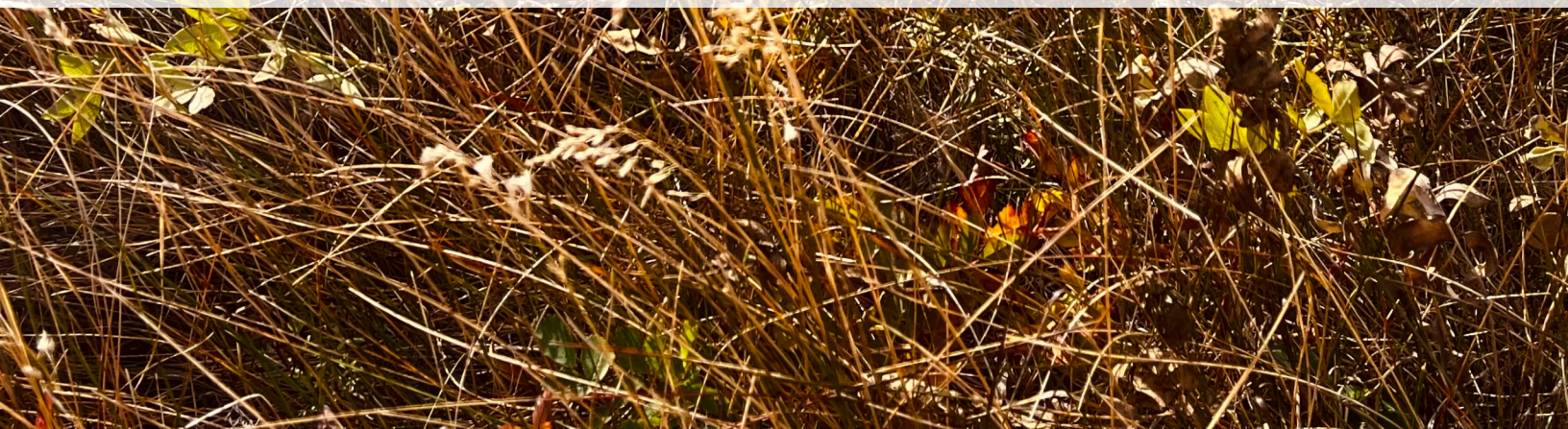
Tuning (bottom to top):

Cello/Viola: bowed strings DADA, resonating strings BDEF#A

Fiddles: bowed strings ADAE, resonating strings BDEF#A

Setup

Golds is composed for Hardanger Quartet and *Resin*, a feedback resonator. All string players should be miked. These signals are fed into *Resin* and out to individual speakers in a quad setup.



sky glow

The day appears from the blue fourth of the open
strings of these instruments. There isn't yet enough
detail in the world to necessitate the concrete
presence of stopped strings. The cello begins and
the rest of us emerge from their partials.
Whether from the low population or the high
altitude, the air is uncannily transparent.

find other IV harmonics using only bow. Keep fundamental sounding. III harmonics might emerge as well.

return to fundamental, like a very slow circle bow

IV
III
V slow bow

repeat until about 1:20

SP ST

fingered cello sounding

mp

1:20 1:30 1:50

f v1 s

mp l.v. create slight gaps by rocking bow

1:20 1:30 1:50

f v2 s

mp l.v. create slight gaps by rocking bow

1:20 SP ST repeat until about 1:40 III trem. N 1:50

f vla s

sim. to cello, slightly faster see instructions above 15va

mp *p* *mp* *p*

1:20 1:50 II III

f c s

fade out previous material over ~20"

high resonances med. speed delay 1:20 1:50

r

p



glimmers of golds

glimmers of golds reveal sunrises
and larches beginning to shed their
summer disguises

continue up series to highest clear partial
typically repeat each box 5-7 times
ad lib moments to stay on boxes longer
new speed every return to open strings

2:10

v1 f *slow to double stop then hold and fade over 20-30"*

v2 f *slow to double stop then hold and fade over 20-30"*

2:10

II
III

c *p* hold and fade over 20-30"

r hold and fade over 20-30"

2:10

II
III

vla f *sim.*

f

2:40

vla when other players are completely silent, do one full repeat of the above pattern, then add the I string and continue sim.

2:50 or when viola switches to triple patterns

v1 arpeggiate up through harmonic series

v2 sim. to viola above. begin together but do not synchronize. 2x per box.

c fiddles: IV + III cello: III + II.

r swells with wide pitch range

3:20 slow **3:30** **3:50**

v1

v2

vla when cello holds on B, finish cycle then stop

c

s

f

r find resonance close to cello and hold in stasis



grass feathers

Feathers form in the grasses as seeds dry and pollen emerges. You can see and hear the waves of wind before they reach you and feel the grasses stumble against your legs as the breeze arrives to offer them passage.

Noise only, bowing
perpendicular to strings.

Each repeat of gesture
a different pace, roughly
set by V1. If slower
space out entries more.

Last player always start
before first finishes.

Repeat until cue from
Resin.

3:50 4:00 4:10 4:30 or cue

v1

f

s

3:50 4:00 4:10 4:30 or cue

v2

bow noise only

3:50 4:00 4:10 4:30 or cue

vla

3:50 4:00 4:10 4:30 or cue

f

c

s

3:50 4:00 4:10 4:30 or cue

r

to full spectrum noise over ~20"
then hold for ~5" then cue ensemble

high distortion, SSR, and delay


The musical score is written for five parts: v1, v2, vla, vc, and r. Each part has a staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The score is divided into measures by time markers: 3:50, 4:00, 4:10, and 4:30 or cue. The v1 part starts with a forte (f) dynamic and a bowing gesture. The v2 part starts with a bow noise only gesture. The vla part starts with a bowing gesture. The vc part starts with a forte (f) dynamic and a bowing gesture. The r part starts with a bowing gesture. The score includes dynamic markings (f) and bowing gestures (indicated by wavy lines and arrows). A yellow box highlights the section from 4:00 to 4:30, containing instructions for noise and bowing. A yellow box at the bottom right contains instructions for the r part: 'to full spectrum noise over ~20" then hold for ~5" then cue ensemble' and 'high distortion, SSR, and delay'.



poplar

Poplar and aspen are the sound of the prairie. Their small, sturdy leaves clatter to create a wash of calm noise that implies their shelter. As their greens turn to golds the sound mellows and as golds fall, the clattering of their thin branches brings a lower, rarer percussion.

| | | |
|------------|---|------|
| | 4:30 | 4:50 |
| v1 | <div>unsynced, unpitched, very long, accelerating, spiccato bounces</div> | |
| v2 | | |
| vla | | |
| c | | |

r highpass & fade into thinner noise 

| | |
|------------|-----------------|
| | 5:00 or cue |
| v1 | <div>sim.</div> |
| v2 | |
| vla | |
| c | |



sea of light

You're the tallest thing around. In every direction the horizon falls away to join the sky. The sun is straight overhead, pressing sweat from your scalp and shoulders and bleaching every shadow. [The few trees shelter in depressions where the dry ground directs enough moisture for them to slowly rise.] Allan tells me how important the vulnerability of existing in this place is. Nana liked saying you could stand on a fence post and watch your dog run away for a week.

3-4" per gesture. Do not sync changes. Play with relentless energy and a harsh edge. Vary volume per gesture individually.

Score for V1, V2, and Vla.

V1
f/s

V2
f/s

vla
f
s

sim.

Score for V1, V2, and Vla.

V1
f/s

V2
f/s

vla
f
s

6:00

sky feathers

The high clouds are
scattered into feathers,
gathering plumage
that warms into greys

all notes played as faint and ghostly as possible
 vary rhythms subtly with each repeat
 v2 enter after 2 v1 cycles, lagging behind like a delay
 vla & c enter after v2, remaining loosely in sync with their melodies

The musical score consists of four staves, each with two systems of music. The first system for each staff is highlighted with a yellow box. Time markers 6:00, 6:10, 6:15, 6:30, and 6:40 are placed above the staves. Dynamics include *p*, *pp*, *ppp*, and *mp*. A section labeled "becoming more present" with an arrow points from "SP" to "N".

Staff v1: Treble clef, key of D major. First system (6:00-6:10) starts at 6:00 with dynamics *p*. Second system (6:30-6:40) starts at 6:30. Tempo marking: ~5" per cycle.

Staff v2: Treble clef, key of D major. First system (6:00-6:10) starts at 6:00 with dynamics *pp*. Second system (6:30-6:40) starts at 6:30. Tempo marking: ~5" per cycle.

Staff vla: Alto clef, key of D major. First system (6:00-6:15) starts at 6:00 with dynamics *ppp*. Second system (6:30-6:40) starts at 6:30.

Staff c: Bass clef, key of D major. First system (6:00-6:15) starts at 6:00 with dynamics *ppp*. Second system (6:30-6:40) starts at 6:30. Dynamics include *mp*. A section labeled "becoming more present" with an arrow points from "SP" to "N".

sage songs

After the hottest days
the whole world smells
of sage. Heat radiates
from baked ground
and burnt skin.

V1 f/s *mp* III

V2 f *p* III

Vla f/s *mf* II

clo f/s *mp*

r play faint echoes on D and F# strings with slide

7:10
7:40
at least 8:10

V1 f/s repeats first time only x2

V2 f

Vla f/s repeats first time only

clo f/s repeats first time only

like a cowboy playing
pedal steel at the end of a
hot day

play first round together,
then end up in loose
canon and your own time

c. 30" per round

play at least 3x total

v2 stay with vla

ad lib. add slides

finish in the order you
start last round

v2 carry on after all end,
then fade over c. 10" as
next section starts

r find high feedback over
the last repeat

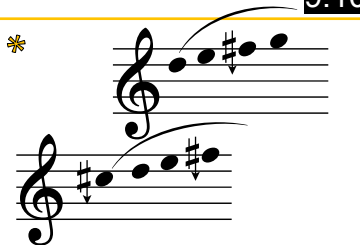


frost whispers

The whispers of frost on the air
and the scent of dried husks of
foliage. The eyes of the white
poplar bark are revealed as
golds fall away.

Near the mountains, it's easy to
imagine that the frost wind has
been chilled by the palliative
glaciers and not by November.

The sting and decay of the air on your
cheeks makes you feel more
alive than you have all summer.

| | | |
|------------|---|-------------|
| v1 | long tones on high I string harmonics, finding tones that crunch against resin | 9:20 |
| v2 | join after completing previous section long tones on high III string harmonics, finding tones that crunch against resin | 9:20 |
| vla | <div data-bbox="138 1029 500 1270" style="border: 1px solid orange; padding: 10px; display: inline-block; width: 223px; height: 115px; vertical-align: top;"> <div data-bbox="430 987 500 1029">8:40</div> <p data-bbox="138 1123 487 1165">improv with swells of noise</p> </div> <div data-bbox="527 987 917 1270" style="border: 1px solid orange; padding: 10px; display: inline-block; width: 240px; height: 135px; vertical-align: top;"> <div data-bbox="836 987 909 1029">9:10</div>  </div> | 9:20 |
| clo | [tacet] | |
| r | find and sustain very high feedback. Clean tone and minimal effects. | 9:20 |

* loop one or the other gesture several times before moving to the other. Play fast, legato, and unsynchronized. Sounding pitch.

sky glow II

As the blue dome of the sky becomes the only light, golds are the first to fade. The ground becomes muddled silhouettes.

The sky remains, improbably bright in the long northern twilight.



fiddles

gradually enter after viola

v1 stay with vla, v2 stay with cello

gradually begin ad lib. other harmonics on II string

molto bow noise

viola & cello

very still, organ-like but not chorale-like

viola enter seamlessly at *

gradually drift out of sync

V1
V2
f/s

vla
f
s

cello
f
s

r

long drones, beginning low and gradually moving high never filling the full range

9:20

9:20

9:20

4-6x
c. 30" each

4-6x
c. 30" each

4-6x
c. 30" each

pp

mp

mp

f

f

f

sim.

*

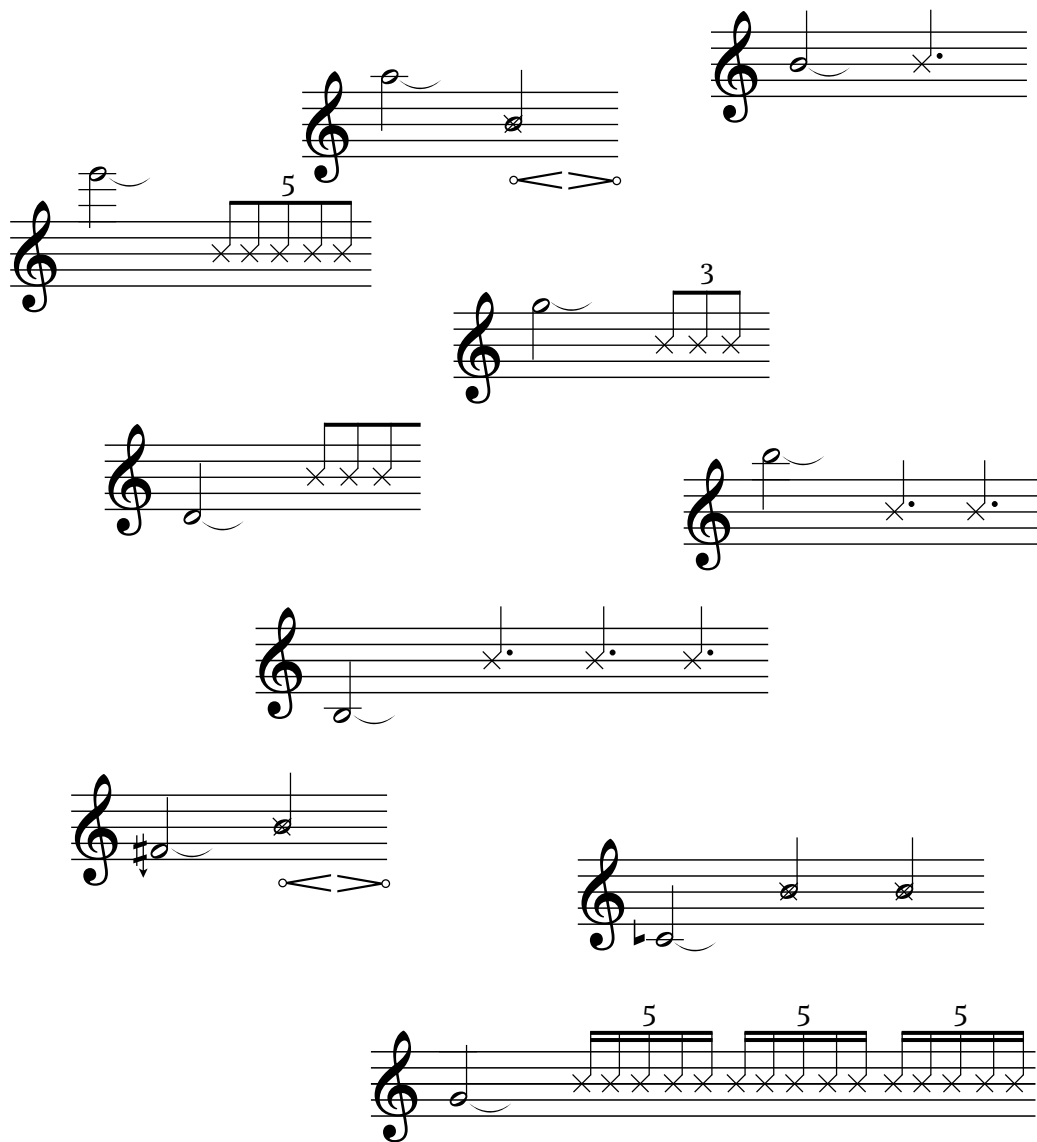
*



spine

brown gold grass &
frozen dirt waiting for snow
waiting (to be hidden or born)
skies a perfect blue or perfect grey
the spines of the forest revealed
as golds turn to ground

v1 v2 vla clo



♩ = c. 70
 × = noise only
 vary amount of grit
 sounding pitches
 loosely coordinated
 each pitched note sul
 tasto, sfz., l.v., bell-like
 and coyote-like
 as soon as cell is finished,
 choose another one
 at cue from r (c. 30"), shift
 to long tones with the
 same pitch set
 gradually lengthen notes,
 slowing to a stop
 hold those pitches with
 fast bows, non dim. and
 unchanging timbres until
 all players have stopped
 end together

Resin

shifting harmonies,
 gradually speeding and
 cresc.

cue switch to long tones at
 peak, after c. 30"

gradually fade as others slow

add only after change to long tones
 (as instrument range allows)



Thank you all! <3