

Alex Temple

Polycule

(2023)

for voice (C#3–B4), vibraphone (F3–F6) and harp

text by R.A. Briggs
commissioned by Jodie Landau

About the Piece

Polycule is a song cycle in miniature. Its seven songs set seven aphoristic vignettes about polyamorous life, written by R.A. Briggs. The cycle's title is a term often used in nonmonogamous circles; a portmanteau of "polyamory" and "molecule," it refers to a diagram of a group's various romantic interconnections. The second song is also named after a coinage from the community: your "metamour" is your partner's partner.

Except where otherwise specified, these songs should be sung in an informal style, such as indie-pop or jazz cabaret. Pronounce things as you would when speaking. Amplification is welcome.

Special thanks is due to Danielle Kuntz for her expert feedback on my harp writing, and to Jodie Landau for being patient while I took all of eternity to finish this piece.

Intellectual Property

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Texts

1. Polycule

I graph the constellations of our ardor.
I adore the confluences of our graph.

2. Metamour

She folds blueberries into my pancakes.
Her husband grins, folded up in my sweater.

3. Kinky

"I'll protect you," I coo
as I lock her into the cage
with her girlfriend.

4. Breakup

We send two sets of sympathy cards
and rearrange the topology of the graph.

5. The Dream

The three of them, locked in a room together for hours,
breathing softly, their fingers busy
with code, an essay, a poem—
co-working.

6. He's met someone new

We need to talk.
I want to know everything
and tease him about everything.
I love it when he blushes.

7. Blooming

If monogamy were a single rose,
the tree of our love would stretch
from Atlanta to Singapore to San Diego,
sheltering flocks of joyous birds.

I. Polycule

$\text{♩} = 108$

f like you would sing Pérotin

vox

vib

hp

hard mallets
motor: slow

f

Dec.

f

D C B | E $\flat$ F G A

I

graph

6

vox

vib

hp

the con

stel

tions

Rall. ----- ♩. = 90

p

10

vox

of our ar - - - - - dor.

vib

Ped.

p

hp

15

vox

vib

mf

hp

mf

20 $\text{♩} = 108$ *f*

vox *I a - dore the con -*

vib *f*

hp *f*

24 Rall. -----

vox *flu - en - ces in our*

vib

hp

28 $\text{♩} = 90$
p

vox
8 graph. _____

vib
8 *p*
Rall. _____

hp
8 *p*

32 *pp* Rall.

vox
8 Graph. _____

vib
8 *pp* *ppp*

hp
8 *pp* *ppp*

2. Metamour

$\text{♩} = 72$

p light and staccato

vox

vib

hp

hard mallets
motor: off

She folds ex - tra blue - ries

p delicate

p delicate

D# C B | E F# G A b

vox

vib

hp

4

mf

in - to my pan - cakes.

Her

mf

Red.

p

mf

(all
harmonics
written where
played)

p

8

vox

8

— hus - band grins, fol-ded up in — my — sweat-er, — my

vib

mp

hp

mp

like an afterthought

11

vox

8

sweat - er. —

vib

p

hp

p

3. Kinky

$\text{♩} = 76$ ***ff*** ominous and powerful

vox 8 "I'll pro-tect you," I coo, _____ ***mf*** as I lock her

vib hard mallets motor: fast pedal each chord ***ff*** no pedal ***mf***

hp D C# B | E♭ F G A♭ ***ff*** ominous ***mf***

5 ***ff*** ***mp*** suddenly gentle

vox 8 in - to the cage with her girl - friend.

vib ***ff*** ***mp*** ***pp*** an echo

hp ***ff*** ***mp***

4. Breakup

$\text{♩} = 60$ *p* wistful

vox 8 mmm mmm We send two sets of

vib soft mallets motor: slow *p* *Reo.*

hp *bisbig.* *p* wistful

D C B $\flat$ | E F G $\flat$ A

5 *mp* *p* *mp* *p* *mp* *p* *mp*

vox 8 sym - pa - thy cards and re - ar - range the to - po - lo - gy of the

vib *mp* *p* *mp*

hp *mp* *p* *mp*

9

VOX

mf

pp

graph. _____

mmm _____

mmm _____

vib

mf

pp

Ped. _____

Ped. _____

hp

mf

5. The Dream

$\text{♩} = 128$

vox

vib

hp

hard mallets
motor: off

f

(parenthetical notes
are optional)

f D#C#B|E#G A

f simple and clear — think Reich's Tehillim

5

vox

vib

hp

mf

f

mf

f

The three of them, _____ locked in a room to - ge-ther for hours, _____

9

vox

breath - ing soft - ly,

vib

mf

hp

mf

Rall. ----- ♩ = 112

12

vox

their fin - gers bus - y with code, an es - say, a po - em—

vib

mp

p

hp

p

looser, more sensual

$\text{♩} = 120$ *p* delicate

3

co-work-ing. _____

*p**p**pp**ppp*

6. He's met someone new

$\text{♩} = 72$ *f* *ominous*

vox 8 We _____ need _____ to

vib soft mallets
motor: off
f Pedal each chord

hp *f* 6

D C Bb | E F# G A

2 Rit.

vox 8 talk. _____

vib *p*

hp *p* 6

$\text{♩} = 66$ **mp** *sensual, romantic, rubato ad lib*

4

vox 8 I want to know _____ ev' - ry thing _____

vib **mp** *sensual, romantic, rubato ad lib*
Ped. _____

hp **mp**

7

vox 8 *mf* _____ *mp* _____ *f* _____
and _____ tease _____ him a - bout ev' - ry thing. _____

vib *mf* *mp* *mf* *f*
Pedal each chord

hp *mf* *mp* *mf* *f*

10 $\text{♩} = 72$ *p* delicate

vox 8 I love it when he

vib *p*

hp *p* 6

12

vox 8 blush - - - - - es.

vib 3 Pedal ad lib

hp 6

7. Blooming

$\text{♩} = 63$ *p* warm, thoughtful

vox 8 If mo-nog - a - my were a sing - le _____ rose, _____

soft mallets
motor: fast

vib *p* warm, sparkling
ad lib

hp *p* warm, sparkling

$\text{D}^b \text{C B}^b | \text{E}^b \text{F G A}^b$

4 *mp*

vox 8 the _____ tree of our love would stretch _____ would

vib *mp*

hp *mp*

7 *mf* $\text{♩} = 60$

vox stretch, _____ would stretch, from At - lan - ta to

vib *mf*

hp *mf*

10 *f* Rall -----

vox Sing - a - pore _____ to San Di - e - go

vib *f*

hp *f*

13 *in time* $\text{♩} = 63$ *p*

vox shel - ter - ing flocks of joy - ous birds.

vib *in time* *p*

hp *in time* *p*

17

vox

vib *pp*

hp *pp*

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