

The Plains

I. Grasslands II. Rock III. Sky

Elena Specht

2016

Duration: ca. 13 minutes

for solo piano

The title of this piece refers to the Great Plains region of the United States. Prior to composing *The Plains*, I took a road trip through western North and South Dakota, visiting the region for the first time. Before taking this trip, I had spent a lot of time in parts of the Midwest further east, especially Illinois, Iowa, Wisconsin. I expected to see the same rolling hills and cornfields in the Dakotas as in those states, since in my mind, it was all a part of the Midwest. However, I was startled to see bigger hills (including small mountains), tall, dry prairie grasses, and fascinating rock formations. Most of all, I saw vast amounts of empty space and land that looks untouched. I was struck by how long we could drive without seeing towns, farmhouses, or any signs of human settlement. The three movements – grasslands, rock, and sky – were inspired by the landscape and open space I saw on that trip.

The Plains was premiered by Grace Burns in Grusin Music Hall in Boulder, CO on March 22, 2017.