

# Flight:



Riccardo Scivales performing with Quannah Parker

**F**light is a piece I originally wrote for my "Quannah Parker" progressive rock band in the early 1980s. First active in 1981-1985, this band was re-founded in late 2006 and has been performing since then, with appearances at international festivals such as "MusicaContinua" in Venice. Since the fall of 2007, Quannah Parker's line-up includes myself (keyboards), Andrea Cuzzolin (voice and acoustic guitar), Giovanni Pirrotta (electric guitar), Paolo Ongaro (drums), and Francesco Calabrò (bass). Audio and video downloads of this band can be found at [www.quannahparker.it](http://www.quannahparker.it) and [www.myspace.com/quannahparkerband](http://www.myspace.com/quannahparkerband).

As I have mentioned in previous contributions to *Piano Today*, one of the main features of progressive rock music is its exploration of odd time signatures and mixed meters. For an example of this, see the following excerpt from the opening of Genesis's famous piece, *Firth Of Fifth* (by keyboardist Tony Banks), featuring a 2/4+12/16+2/8+2/4+9/16+2/8 complex pattern, joining melodic beauty and rhythmic interest:

Ex. 1 (*Firth Of Fifth*)

♩ = c. 84

with pedal

## ODD METERS IN PROG MUSIC

BY RICCARDO SCIVALES

Here's another: a basic sketch of an adventurous passage towards the ending of Rick Wakeman's *The Journey* (from *Journey To The Centre Of The Earth*, live 1974), where an electric harpsichord (performed with a Clavinet) plays an ostinato accompaniment figure in 9/8 (here subdivided as a 2+2+2+3 pattern), over which the choir repeats short 6/8 melodic cells in a regular 9/8 (i.e. 3+3+3) pattern, thus creating a strong polyrhythmic effect:

Ex. 2 (*The Journey*)

♩ = c. 93

Choir  
Clavinet

My own *Flight* features two of the simplest and most commonly used odd time signatures found in "prog" music: 7/4 time (see sections A, D and F) and a 9/4 mixed meter resulting from alternating measures in 5/4 and 4/4 time (section B). All odd meters are made up of combinations of "2s" (or "4s") and "3s." In bars 5-8, the broken barlines indicate that the above-mentioned 7/4 time is here subdivided as a 4+3 pattern. Also note the right hand polyrhythmic phrases in bars 47-48 and 56.

Another typical feature of progressive rock is the way it mixes elements of rock music with other genres, such as classical, folk, jazz, jazz-rock, and even experimental music. In my view, *Flight* leans more toward the jazz-rock side of prog music. It's an example of how a new tune can originate from the elaboration of some pre-existent materials in a free way. As you can see, the bulk of this piece is section A, a modal (Dorian) melody built upon the well-known changes of Miles Davis's *So What* and John Coltrane's *Impressions*, while the bass line is a 7/4 variant of the left hand ostinato opening Chick Corea's great piece *Señor Mouse*:

Ex. 3 (*Señor Mouse*)

♩ = c. 100

Meanwhile, the beginning of the improvised-like melody in section F of *Flight* is an adaptation of a Bartók's 7/8 rhythmic drill from *Mikrokosmos*, Vol. 3.

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