

An Archive of the musical compositions by Herb Bielawa

Composition: **Pentarc**s – piano solo

*With a Crystalline Delight – From Out the Sounding Cells
In the Clamor and the Clangor of the Bells*

Date: 1982

Duration: 10:15

Recording: by Herb Bielawa

Program Note:

*Pentarc*s was written while I was an artist-in-residence at the MacDowell Colony in New Hampshire during a 1982 sabbatical leave. I coined the term “Pentarc” to refer to a complex of five-note diatonic major scales that individually span only a perfect fifth instead of the normal octave. In the same way that conventional scales fill the complete pitch range with stacked octaves, this work stacks perfect fifths. If chromatics were to be included in the Pentarc, it would be no different from the conventional major scale. No inter-diatonic chromatics are used in Pentarcs, however. If and when a specific chromatic pitch is required for one reason or another, the particular place in the Pentarc has to be found where that pitch class occurs naturally in the series. No octave transfers are allowed. A whole Pentarc can be transposed, but only by octaves. This system is used strictly throughout the piece. One of the natural consequences of using Pentarcs is that sonorities and melodies turn out to be pandiatonic where their tones are in close proximity to each other and quasi-dodecaphonic if spread out. This also gives the piece a harmonic quality that is quite bell-like. While working on the piece, the bell qualities brought to mind the Poe poem *The Bells*. It was a natural step then to use the words and phrases from the poem as movement titles as well as expression marks in the music itself.