

For viola, piano, alto saxophone, percussion (2 players), and live electronic sound-processing. Duration; 15m.

INTRODUCTION

I have travelled in Buryat country, on the shores of Baikal, and among the stone circles of Khakassia, gazed down the long valleys of Tuva, and followed the Katun down to the edge of Mongolia. This music is a tribute to the musicians, the morin-khuur and toshpular and khomus players from whom I stole not so much the tunes as the hint of another kind of conversation with the world.

Kenin Lopsan said; a man who trembles in fear from having seen a snow-lion may be cured by an infusion made from the charred splinters of a lightning-struck tree. Violins were also made from such trees and used in curing rituals.

GENERAL

Interpretation: the percussion plays the part of lightning; it must sound emphatic and precise, cutting into silence fearlessly. The viola is intuitive, sometimes fragile, breathless, vulnerable; the part may be played very freely, once the sound-making principles of each section have been grasped, and the pitch-outlines committed to the ear. Wind multiphonics and other sustained sounds are atmospheres which hold still or slowly evolve. Often calm, detached, serene, the piano is also unafraid to use its physical power. Together, the instruments enact a journey.

Pitch: the piece is written mainly in D#: I use the 4#s key signature for a D# minor scale with persistent E's and A's. (A Greek Mixolydian or Medieval Hypophrygian scale.) However, many of the actual vibrations - those of electronically sustained pitched gongs, saxophone multiphonics, and loose-stringed viola for example - will, and should, fall between the steps of the tempered scale.

Rhythm: appoggiaturas w. stem in same direction as main note occur where main note would otherwise have been, and so push it slightly later. A stem in the opposite direction makes the appoggiatura an up-beat to the main note.

The presence or absence of accents has (in theory) no bearing on timing.

VIOLA: PREPARATION

Tuning: 1 down to E, 2 down to F#, 3 down to D#, 4 down to F#

Played in cello position on lap; so "below" means nearer tail-piece.

Bow in german position, plenty of rosin.

Stereo mic placed directly in front of instrument and routed L and R in PA.

Contact-mic tucked under tail-piece, set to pick up max high frequencies; output passes to volume pedal which remains at "off" position except in "string-loop" section; i.e. potentiometer of vol ped must be set so that no signal at all passes through when pedal is in raised position. Signal should then be passed to a delay, with original signal and delayed signal routed L and R in PA.

For "string-loop" section, a ball of string of at least 10 meters length should be placed to the L of the player with the string-end in easy reach. Use coarse string so that the flicking of the hairs is caught by the contact-mic.

At bar 107, put down bow, pick up end of string w. L H, pass end to RH, pulling string through LH, move LH behind and to right of instrument, depress vol. ped. and on 3rd beat of 109, begin to pull string smoothly across all four open viola strings in direction 1 > 4. Speed should be c. 1 meter every 16 seconds. Positioning the hands as indicated will enable hand alternation to give a continuous and smooth movement of the string with accurate control of its resistance across the viola strings. Duration of string-loop passage is c. 2m40secs.

abbreviations

bow pressure = b.p.

finger board = f.b.

bow-wood = b-w


near bridge = n.b


pizzicato = pizz.

on the strings = o.s.

right hand, left hand = RH,LH.

little finger of left hand = LHF

little finger of left hand under 3 = LHF3, also indicated by 

raising of pitch by finger pressure on nut side of LHF indicated by 

normal bow = n. bow

let a string ring in a passage where otherwise damped = LV

PIANO

Graphic notation used in fast sections; try to reproduce irregularity of note spacing within the beats.

PERCUSSION

SET UP: 2 players;

player 1)

xylorimba (high A to C in bass clef)

medium wood-block (WB)

medium temple block/ small mokugyo (TB)

2 bongos (B1,2)

2 snare-drums, 1 metallic (met SD) , 1 medium (SD)

player 2)

2 moveable microphones on boom-stands, each connected in series to a vol. ped. , a pitch shifter and a sustain unit, such as Korg Pandora PX2. (Pre-sets for this unit used are 9, 25 & 33, but noise-reduction may be altered for specific acoustic conditions). Stereo outputs of both Korgs routed L & R in PA.

Where mics are open, this is indicated by (f-sus); where pitch is shifted, by (f-sus) + the required pitch. Mics are required to pick up primarily the 2 gongs, but also the tamtams and a chinese cymbal.

2 pitched gongs, D# in bass clef (GLo), D# above bass clef (GHi).

2 unpitched tamtams, large (TTL) and small (TTS)

2 chinese cymbals large (CL) and small (CS)

1 pair small domed cymbals set up as hi-hat (HH)

1 bell in D (B)

2 oil-drums (OD 1 & 2)

1 large mokugyo/ temple-block, low C, (TB)

2 maraccas (M)

2 rototoms/ tomtoms (RT 1 & 2)

1 large hour-glass drum (HG)

1 large deep resonant bass drum (BD)

ALTO SAXOPHONE

Sounding pitches written in concert pitch in score, w. fingering diagrams for multiphonics. Circular breathing required.