Negative Horizon

for ensemble

Sam Yulsman

2019

Instrumentation

Flute Oboe Clarinet in Bb Bassoon

Trumpet in C Horn in F

Percussion

Piano

Violin Viola Violoncello Double Bass

Score is transposed

duration - ca. 5'

Performance Notes

Woodwinds

Flute

Pitch, Contour and Whistle Tones

Whistle tones are notated using diamond noteheads. The pitches indicated show fingerings and not exact resulting sounds. Try to bring out the general contour of the melodic line they imply - a sense of reaching, or yearning is important to these little gestures.

Slurs

Dotted slurs above whistle tone passages show gestures almost entirely obscured by air. These gestures can be thought of as the ghosts of the whistle tones themselves - glimmers or hints of pitch are encouraged, but try to infuse these tiny moments with a sense of mystery, as if something is being covered up, or not allowed to come forth.

Solid slurs show normal whistle tone articulation, and changes between dotted and solid lines show transformations in the ratio of air to pitch

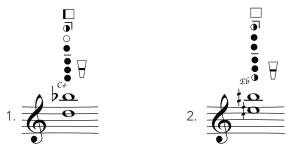
"Whisper-Singing"

Triangle noteheads above the whistle tone fingerings show quite but intense vocalizations that are sung/whispered into the flute using a covered embouchure. Shoot for a note in your highest singing range, and stop at the threshold right before the sung note starts to speak fully. A raspy, whispery sound should result, with glimmers of the sung pitch peaking through occasionally. These glimmers of pitch are encouraged, but every attempt should be made to stay right below the threshold separating whispered and pitched singing.

Oboe

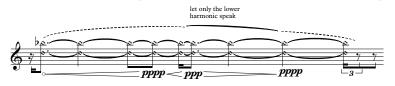
Double Harmonics

Two double harmonics are used in this piece:



Both double harmonics are taken from Peter Veale and Claus-Steffen Mahnkopf's *The Techniques of Oboe Playing*" (Bärenreiter, 2011 pp. 124–125)

Dotted and solid slurs are used to show transitions in and out of pitch and the sound of unpitched air moving across the reed. Dotted slurs show unpitched air, and solid slurs show the emergence of pitch. Towards the beginning of the piece only the bottom harmonic of dyad number 1 should be allowed to emerge:



Quadruple piano dynamic markings are reserved for air sounds - transitions into pitched sound are accompanied by crescendos into triple piano and louder.

Two fundamental venting

A single note appears in m. 39 that calls for two fundamental venting. Open the 2nd octave and half-hole in the top joint. The resulting sound should be similar to the double harmonics - an unstable, air infused pitch.

Bb Clarinet

Multiphonics

Two multiphonics are used in this piece (sounding pitches are transposed):



Both multiphonics are taken from Heather Roche's blog post, "27 easy Bb Clarinet Multiphonics": https://heatherroche.net/category/multiphonic/

Dotted slurs indicate that a multiphonic (or single note) should not be played with enough air speed to fully speak, and should hover on the threshold at which the pitches in question begin to emerge. Mostly air sound, these gestures can be though of as the ghost of the multiphonic - glimmering or hinting at the pitches but always obscuring them.

Slow Breaths

Passages that call for "slow motion exhalation" are played with all the tone holes closed, and with the mouthpiece removed. Very subtly narrow your throat/mouth as if you were about to make a plosive "k" sound (i.e. "car", "can") but stopped about a third of the way into the necessary mouth motion. When breathing out at a normal speed, the resulting sound should sound hollow and distant - like wind moving through a canyon or between tall buildings. Exhale into the barrel joint with as little air escaping outside of the clarinet as possible.

Apart from measures 26-29 however, no attempt should be made to make this wind-like sound audible or "expressive". Similarly, there is no need to strain to keep your breath from being too loud. Instead of focusing on controlling the sound, focus on the action of breathing out in extreme slow motion. Slurs show the duration of a single exhalation.

Bassoon

Airy Multiphonics

The high D# and C multiphonics should almost never be bright or produce beating - they should have a dark, muffled and covered timbre, and emerge from or linger on the threshold separating air and pitch. One exception is in measures 56 and 57 where a smooth transition between the high D# multiphonic and single D# pitch is called for. This transition can have a brighter timbral quality, and produce beating.

Slurs are used to show transitions between air sounds and air sounds infused with multiphonic pitch material. Dotted slurs indicate air sounds, and solid slurs show the darker multiphonic sound described above.

Pitch/Air threshold wavering

Wavy lines above solid slurs indicate that the multiphonic should very subtly waver along the threshold point at which the multiphonic pitches begin to emerge from air sounds. This should have a searching, yearning, pleading or doubt-ful/wavering quality. Avoid big cuts in and out of air or pitch and focus instead on trying to find finer and finer gradations in the sound you are producing and the actions necessary to bring it into being.

Brass

General

Slow Breaths

Passages that call for a slow motion exhalation are played with the lips curled tightly around the either the mouthpiece receiver (horn) or the rim of the mouthpiece (trumpet). All of your breath should be directed through the instrument.

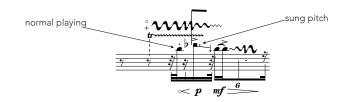
Very subtly narrow your throat/mouth as if you were about to make a plosive "k" sound (i.e. "**c**ar", "**c**an") but stopped about a third of the way into the necessary mouth motion. When breathing out at a normal speed, the resulting sound should be hollow and distant - like wind moving through a canyon or between tall buildings.

Apart from measures 26-29 (horn) however, no attempt should be made to make this wind-like sound audible or "expressive". Similarly, there is no need to strain to keep your breath from being too loud. Instead of focusing on controlling the sound, focus on the action of breathing out in extreme slow motion. Slurs show the duration of a single exhalation.

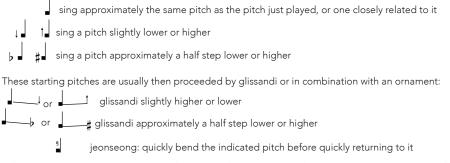
Horn in F

Singing

All singing should be performed directly into the horn through the mouthpiece. Square noteheads appear above the staff with independent beaming to help differentiate normal playing and singing:



All sung pitches relate to the pitch that was played directly before it:

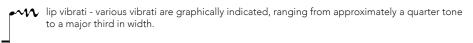


Exact pitch accuracy is not important here, rather a sense that your voice and your horn are speaking and pleading with each other, and that the voice in particular is straining to find and relate to very high and unstable pitch material played on the horn.

Trills and vibratos

*t*r valve trill - very rapidly trill any available valve

 $^\circ_+ \mathcal{W}$ hand vibrati - open and close the stopping hand in a motion that mirrors the graphic indication



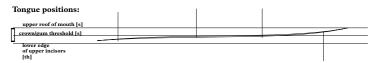
These trills and vibrati are combined with each other, and often begin before the onset of playing/singing or last beyond the point at which it ends

Trumpet in C

"th" and "s" fricatives through second valve slide

The second valve slide is removed for the entire piece. Very quite "th" and "s" colored breath is performed into the second valve slide itself with the second valve depressed. As much breath as possible should be focused through the second valve slide.

The three line staff used for these passages shows the space from the crown of your top two front teeth (incisors), up along their backside to the beginning of the gum, and all the way to the roof of your mouth. The "upper roof" of your mouth should be a point that is comfortable for your tongue to reach without straining.



Curved lines shows the gradual movement of the tip of the tongue across this space. It should barely graze the teeth and gums as it travels - try to find the smallest amount of tongue pressure at which you can sense tongue and teeth/gums have come into contact. The sounds produced should be very soft and delicate, forming high pitched whistles especially along the gums. These sounds should never be forced as "sound effects" however - these passages can be approached as simple, minuscule actions whose sounding results are always secondary and resultant.

"Whisper-Singing"

Triangle noteheads show quite but intense vocalizations that are sung/whispered into the second valve slide as well. Shoot for a note in your highest singing range, and stop at the threshold right before the sung note starts to speak fully. A raspy, whispery sound should result, with glimmers of the sung pitch peaking through occasionally. These glimmers are encouraged, but every attempt should be made to stay in the threshold between raspy whisper and pitched singing.

Fingering, trills, second valve slide pitch material

Fingerings are shown using three dots, black dots indicating the valve to push down.

All trills should be performed on valves one or three, and should be played as rapidly as possible, using a 1/2 valve as the lowest trill point - a sudden fluttering of soft movement at the close of a sung gesture. Often times the finger/-valve movement slightly extends past the sung material.

A very brief passage uses pitched material. The passage should be played as written without changing fingerings to avoid the open second valve slide.

Percussion

Set Up 32" Timpano large cymbal small cymbal soft mallet (as soft as possible)

Both cymbals are placed bell side down on the drum head of the timpano. They should be spaced far enough from each other so they can wobble freely without hitting each other, and to provide room for the small cymbal to be slid across a portion of the drum head in measure 18.

Notation

The timpano drum head itself is never hit, so the bottom timpano staff only shows the actions of the foot on the pedal. The top staff shows material played on or with the cymbals themselves.

Vibrato markings on the upper staff are used to show the depression of a vibrating cymbal into the timpano drum head. The cymbal should be pushed downwards using all five fingers which should be placed surrounding the bottom side of the bell. Follow the general depth and speed of the graphic vibrato line, beginning and ending the gesture approximately where the vibrato marking begins and ends. The result should be a clear undulation/disturbance of the vibrating timpano/cymbal pitches. In the process, the reverberation should be gradually muted.

Finger/fingernail+cymbal

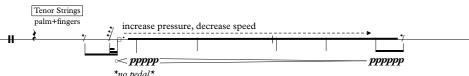
Occasionally a combination of finger and fingernail is slide across the surface of a cymbal in extreme slow motion. Use mostly finger pad, and only a tiny portion of the nail - try to allow only a few atoms of your nail to come into contact with the cymbal.

No attempt should be made to make this action audible and it should be performed with very little dramatic or expressive weight - enter and exit the physical gesture casually without concern for it's place in the sound world of the piece.

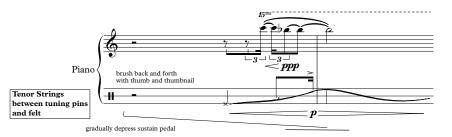
Piano

Tenor string gestures

Two different gestures/actions are performed directly on the tenor strings of the piano:



no pedal Slowly and casually drag the palm of your hand along the middle section of the tenor strings between the hammers and bridge, allowing the fingers to loosely drag along the way. The section of string should be easily accessible and the gesture should be performed at a slow enough speed so that the arm doesn't have to reach or strain to move down any extra portion of the strings towards the end of the indicated duration. A sense of lethargy should be implied by the increasing pressure and deceleration of the hand, but this should not come across very clearly or assertively.



The three line staff for the left hand shows a small range of motion traversed by the thumb as it brushes a set of tenor strings between the tuning pins and felt. An evocative metallic, tinkling sound should result - the portion of strings struck by the hammers should not be activated.

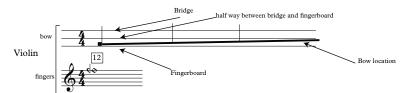
The range of the bottom LH staff should cover approximately 4 or 5 strings, and can be chosen by the performer. Resting the left hand arm on the tuning pins, the palm of the hand can rest on the desired portion of strings, allowing the thumb to move upwards and downwards in a relaxed, tiny pendulum of motion.

The curve of the line shows the speed of this action. Dynamics indicate shifts in the thumbs pressure against the strings; accents show clear articulations of a single string.

Strings

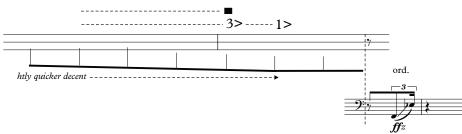
Staves

The actions of the right hand bow and left hand fingers are notated on different staves. The location of the bow between bridge and fingerboard is shown on the upper staff using a black line:



While some passages involve the decoupling of RH and LH actions, the piece centers on the drama of the bow itself. During long passages where the LH is stationary, the bottom LH staff disappears altogether leaving only the RH staff.

The focus on the bow is sometimes interrupted by outside material. In these cases, there is an abrupt shift to a traditional representation of pitch and dynamics, where the actions of the bow serve to bring out a certain sound:



In these cases the location of the bow is shown as secondary information above the staff, and implies a specific timbral coloring of the pitched material below it:

m.s.p = molto sul ponticello s.p. = sul ponticello s.t. = sul tasto m.s.t. = molto sul tasto

Bow Speed

Bow speeds are shown above the top RH staff using numbers 1 > -5 >; dotted lines show gradual transitions between speeds. The five gradations cover only a limited range of slow and extremely slow bow speeds:

- 1> = 110-120 seconds/one full bow stroke extremely slow, barely moving
- 2> = 80-90 seconds/one full bow stroke
- 3 > = 40-50 sec/one full bow stroke: slow
- 4 > = 25 sec/one full bow stroke: medium slow
- $5 \ge 15$ sec/one full bow stroke: medium

Bow contact points/techniques

crine ord. normal bowing - all the bow hairs touching the string

- crine edge turn the bow at an angle so only the outer-most atoms of bow hair are touching the string. Approach the actual "edge" of the bow hair as needing to be found again in every passing moment - the bow may come off of the string or touch the string too forceful during your exploration of this bow hair-string threshold of contact. Making corrections in these moments to try to get back to the edge is part of the sound and expressive quality of the technique.
 - 1/2 CLT "1/2" col legno tratto: bow with a combination of bow hair and wood. The amount of bow hair touching the string should be slightly greater than during crine edge bowing, but only by a few individual strands of bow hair.
 - **CLT** collegno tratto: bow with the wood of the bow.
- CLT------1/2 CLT Transitions between these contact points are shown using dotted lines. Dotted lines don't correspond directly to smooth transformations/transitions between sounds however: they show the duration/speed of the physical action necessary to move between contact techniques; the sounding results can be approached as secondary and indeterminate (within a very small range of possible outcomes). These actions center on very small, often slow motion twisting of the bow between the wood and hair.

Bow pressure

Bow pressure is always very light, or slightly more than normal during passages where speed is also indicated. For passages using traditional notation, bow pressure is "normal" - use the necessary pressure to bring out the indicated pitches and dynamics.

medium over-pressure - slightly more bow pressure than normal. This should never produce a loud grating or distorted timbre. At the slow bow speeds usually called for, a soft but subtly rough and grainy textured sound should emerge during 1/2 CLT playing. Apply the pressure equally across the wood and bow hair, forcing more strands of bow hair down onto the string.

For CLT playing, increased pressure at slow speeds should cause a very delicate roughness in the sound; apply enough pressure so that the wood moves across the string very intermittently, perforating the sound with tiny silences. This should be a tense gesture - the sound and your movements should seem choked as if they are working against an invisible weight.

□ very light pressure. For crine edge bowing this implies the bow should be slightly lifted off the string (see above). For CLT and 1/2 CLT, the bow can rest on the string with no added downward pressure into the string.

Dynamics

Because dynamics are contingent on bow speed, pressure and contact technique, dynamics are not shown directly in passages where each of these actions are notated separately. The actions indicated should result in a very quite sound world - never louder than mezzo piano.

Changes in bow direction

During passages where changes in bow speed are indicated, the bow should change direction as little as possible, allowing as long a length of as possible to come into contact with the string on each bow stroke.

For passages written using traditional notation, slurs show exact bowings. If glissandi appear between two pitches that are not slurred, the starting and ending pitches should be bowed and clearly articulated.

Left Hand



clear diamond noteheads indicate harmonic finger pressure. When a specific natural harmonic is intended as the resulting pitch, the partial number of the natural harmonic is shown above the notehead. For the cello and double bass.



black diamond noteheads are used to show a very slight decrease in finger pressure from ordinary finger pressure; the indicated pitch should have a slightly darker, more muffled timbre with lower overtone content.

Other techniques

- strong jeonseong -- briefly disturb or interrupt an aspect of the ongoing bowing action and then quickly return to it. The disturbance should always be subtle and for a shorter duration than the notehead it appears above a quick flicker of movement. For crine edge bowing, momentarily twist the bow so 1/3 1/2 of the bow hair is touching the string before returning to the crine edge position. For 1/2 CLT bowing, add a small amount extra pressure to the bow hair touching the string, forcing extra bow hair down onto the string. For CLT bowing, transition to and from 1/2 CLT very rapidly.
- 5 weak jeonseong -- the same as above but less intense.



harmonic trill+vibrato (violin only) - trill between the touched fourth artificial harmonic indicated and the corresponding lower stopped pitch two octaves below while shifting both fingers rapidly in the vibrato motion graphically indicated.

composed for Talea Ensemble

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