

Matt Sargent

Four pieces for the Generous Ensemble

to sing the most quiet way

for electric guitar and singing bowl (two performers)

to light the most quiet light in darkness

for two percussionists and any number of players, a long period of time

tide (moored and unmoored vessels)

for three sustaining, sliding instruments and three sustaining, non-sliding instruments, approx. 7'

mapping

for a large number of sustaining instruments, variable duration

to sing the most quiet way

for electric guitar and singing bowl (for one or two performers)

Preparation

Place a solidbody electric guitar flat on its back, laying on a table or on the floor. Leave the guitar's volume set to the "on" position. The guitar should begin in standard tuning (EADGBE, low to high)

Place a singing bowl directly on the wooden surface of the guitar.

The guitar's amplifier should be set to a loud, clean volume: a level in which at its resting state the instrument is just below the level of feedback/self-oscillation, and at its fully retuned state (all six strings tuned to the singing bowl) can be coaxed into restrained levels of self-oscillation by sympathetic resonance of the singing bowl.

Performance

(Note that for a solo performance, the first and second performers may be the same.)

The first performer should very softly play the singing bowl by vibrating the edge of the bowl with a wooden stick. This action should produce as soft as consistent as possible: unvaried throughout the piece.

The second performer should gradually detune the strings of the electric guitar, one at a time starting with the high E string.

The detuning should occur as follows:

- 1) Without touching or plucking any of the strings, gradually and evenly detune the highest string (at the tuner) until a pitch is reached in which the string begins to sympathetically ring at the pitch of one of the partials of the singing bowl.

Take time to tune in the string to its most resonant and intonated frequency.

- 2) Proceed to the second highest string, repeating in the same manner as the first step.

- 3) Continue this process in a slow and even manner, one string at a time, until all strings have been retuned. In an ideal performance, the strings will produce a variety of partials emanating from the singing bowl (rather than, for example, ending a unison or stack of octaves).

Once all of the guitar's strings have been detuned, continue vibrate the bowl, allowing the guitar to ring freely for a long interval.

After that long interval, the first performer's choosing, release the wooden stick from the singing bowl. This should be done calmly and evenly, without decrescendo or crescendo.

The piece is completed when the final vibrations of the guitar and bowl have ended.

Additional thoughts

In addition to the standard six-string guitar, this piece may be exceptionally effective on a twelve-string or multi-neck guitar, where available.

Except in cases where another pickup is greatly preferable (due to the tonal properties of the guitar or specialized design of the given instrument), only the bridge pickup should be used during performance.

to light the most quiet light in darkness

for two percussionists and any number of sustaining instruments, a long period of time

Preparation

This piece is to be performed at night in a quiet outdoor place.

Players should spread out across a given area or space in a long, continuous line, with the two percussionists respectively at each end of the line. The distance between players should be so far that they are just barely in earshot of the immediate players on either side.

The percussionists should each have three sustaining metal objects with distinct and independent pitches, such as three tuned gongs or three singing bowls (six total). Arranged these objects in ascending order (1 to 6), giving instruments 1,3,5 to percussionist one and 2,4,6 to percussionist two. It is preferable that the objects be uniform in timbre, have a solid pitch center, and have a very muted and attack-less method of sounding (such as soft yarn mallets on a gong, a singing bowl vibrated with a stick, or a bowed metal object).

Performance

- 1) The first percussionist should begin sustaining their first, lowest instrument. The sound should start from silence and then gradual swell (though always remaining at a soft volume – a sound that could be easily mistaken for a natural sound).
- 2) When the sound of the first percussion instrument is heard by the nearest player in the line, that player should match pitch with the percussion instrument with an even, sustaining tone. Like the percussionist, their sound should start from silence and then gradual swell, while always remaining at a soft volume.

(Note: The players should all be far enough apart that the sound of one player is only discernible from ambient outdoor noise at the height of their soft swell.)

- 3) When the sound of the nearest player is heard by the percussionist, the percussionist should gradually decrescendo back to silence. When the sound of that player is heard by the following player in the line, that player should then match pitch, in the same manner of the first player.
- 4) Likewise, when the sound of the following player is heard by the preceding player, the preceding player should gradually decrescendo to silence. Following these steps, the note from the first percussion instrument should be passed seamlessly (each player entering as they hear the previous player and then fading to silence when they hear the following player) from one end of the line to the other.
- 5) When the sound reaches the second percussionist, they should begin to play their first, lowest instrument (this instrument will have a new, different pitch than the first percussionist's instrument from instruction 1).
- 6) When the sound of the second percussionist's object is heard by the nearest player, steps 2-6 should repeat, sending the new pitch back down the line in a slow, even, and quiet procession.
- 7) Continue this procession using the following change ringing pattern to determine the order of pitches (the odd pitches, 1 3 5, representing the instruments of percussionist one and the even pitches, 2 4 6, representing percussionist two)

Note: pitches in brackets, i.e. {1,3}, indicate that both pitches should be passed at once, starting with the percussionist vibrating both metal instruments, and proceeding with players in the line matching both pitches as a soft, consistent trill or sustained chord.

1 2 3 4 5 6
3 4 5 6 1 2
5 6 1 2 3 4
{1,3} {2,4} 5 6
{3,5} {4,6} 1 2
3 4 {1,5} {2,6}

Additional thoughts

This piece should be a very gentle tuning of an evening outdoor space, not unlike the hum of an HVAC or the songs of insects. The procession of sound, drawing a faint sonic line across the space, should be an intensely private mode of communication: so soft and concentrated that the sound could be heard by a passer by as an anomaly of the landscape, rather than a performance.

tide (moored and unmoored vessels)

for three sustaining, sliding instruments and three sustaining, non-sliding instruments, about 7'00"

Preparation

Download the following file: www.mattsargentmusic.com/tide_moored_and_unmoored_vessels.zip

If needed, install MAX/MSP Realttime (www.cycling74.com) and then open the patch entitled "tide_sixplayers.maxpat".

Follow the instructions in the patch to create a unique set of scores prior to each performance.

Possible Actions

The possible actions in the performance consist of:

rise – slowly rise from your current pitch to another pitch heard within the ensemble

fall – slowly fall from your current pitch to another pitch heard within the ensemble

sustain – hold your previous note

return – rise/fall to the original note that you played in the performance

silence – remain silent

Each action should last about 15-20 seconds (performed within a single, very soft breath/bow)

Non-sliding instruments

Non-sliding instrument parts contain only the *sustain*, *return*, and *silence* actions, and should be played as softly as possible throughout.

Add'l *rise/fall* instructions

At times, the intended note a player is rising/falling to may leave the ensemble (as other players move through their actions). Where this situation occurs, continue heading toward the originally intended note, like a memory, rather than following that player to their new note.

When no higher/lower pitch is possible, octave transpositions are acceptable.

In the case that all notes present in the ensemble are in unison with the player's previous note, the rise/fall gesture will be a unison (unison "rising/falling" to unison)

In the case that the rest of the ensemble is silent (such as near the end of the piece), the rise/fall gesture will take on the quality of a decrescendo into silence (the previous sound "rising/falling" into the absence of a sound)

Performance

- 1) Each player is to select a pitch to play first and remember it. This will be their *return* note.
- 2) Each player is to move independently down the list of action on their part, letting each action last for about 15-20 seconds.
- 3) Once all twelve actions are completed, start again from the top of the score and play through again, this time omitting and skipping over all *return* actions. (Note: depending on the number of *return* actions in each part, players will resultantly end at different times.)
- 4) The piece ends when all players have finished playing through their part for the second time.

mapping

for a large number of sustaining instruments

Preparation

Prior to the performance, the players should determine a single harmonic series which can be easily reproduced (in just intonation) on all instruments within the ensemble, through use of natural harmonics, open fingerings, etc.

The given ensemble of players should spread out across a large outdoor space. The players should be such a distance that they are just barely within earshot of one another.

Based on the topography of the space, players should select a note from within the harmonic series which fits between the notes of the player that is next lowest in elevation and the player that is next highest in elevation. This should be done prior to the performance, preferably with a topographical or area map, as it assumed that players may be out of earshot of one another to make these determinations within the field.

Performance

Once performers are assembled in the area, they should begin steadily playing their given note calmly and evenly. For string instruments, this may be a single continuous drone, while for wind instruments or voices, it may be long sustained tones, followed by periods of rest.

The ensemble volume should stay consistent and present throughout the duration, with each player maintaining a soft, even volume that is just loud enough to be heard by the players closest in distance to them.

The performers are intended to become a harmonic representation of the topography of the surroundings, as if draping a resonating body across the landscape like a sheet.

Additional thoughts

The piece is to be performed as a live installation – occurring over a long period as listeners and/or passersby move through the space – rather than a performative/concert gesture.

The piece may also use laptops, or other consistently sounding electronic sound devices, with battery-powered speakers.

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