

JESSICA MEYER

Duende

for solo viola & loop machine

2011

PROGRAM NOTE

For as long as I can remember, I have been writing my own music. When I say “writing”, it was more like compiling a series of musical ideas that came to me while improvising on the piano or the viola – which I would then repeat over and over again until I had them mostly memorized. I was fortunate to have a Midi Computer Lab at my High School, where I created a mini-concerto for viola and electronic orchestra (which actually won me an Apple Computer in a competition, very possibility still residing in my parents’ attic). I also wrote an assortment of tunes that can only be described as sounding like the result of Mannheim Steamroller, Yanni, and Enya having a few drinks together, and then hitting the studio.

Upon enrolling at Juilliard, all of that creativity was quickly shut down to make room for the rigors of conservatory training. Since then, my compositional output had been limited to showing up at occasional jam sessions with some Blues folk on Long Island (where my dad is a singer/guitarist), workshops where I got 1st and 2nd graders to compose music to go with a story, and a stint touring with tap-dancer Savion Glover – where a large part of the show was devoted to each musician improvising on stage with the band.

After the birth of my son, I started to feel the desire to compose pieces again. More accurately, I felt the need to. It soon became not only a creative outlet, but an emotional one as I struggled to balance my career, motherhood and marriage, all while trying to maintain (or attempting to find) my own sense of self. I promptly bought an upright piano for our apartment and recorded some “structured improvisations” akin to the ones I wrote in high school. As the date of an impending solo recital drew closer, I felt it was high time I put something together formally.

This piece is an amalgamation of all that musically inspires me: fragile timbres, wailing gestures, percussive grooves, and the zone I hope to enter where all intellectual thought is momentarily silenced and only the soul remains.

Duration: 8 minutes

INSTRUCTIONS

GENERAL NOTES

- This piece was written with a Boss Loop Station RC-20XL Phrase Recorder and a DPA 4099V Clip Microphone. However, the piece could be performed on any loop pedal that can start and stop playback, and loop an 8 beat phrase. The mic should amplify the natural resonance of the viola (I don't think stick-on contact mics would work, but feel free to try them). The following comments refer to the devices I used.
- To record, press the left pedal down. When you press it again, whatever you just played will have been recorded by the machine, and will start to repeat over and over again. Repeat the process to add layers. If you don't like what you just recorded, you can erase the last layer by holding the left pedal down a while. Each new layer of material is marked by a rehearsal #.
- To stop the playback (like on the last page), touch the right pedal. To turn it back on, touch it again.
- To clear all the sounds from the memory bank (like during the Cadenzas, and when it says "Cut"), hold the right pedal down for 5 seconds to erase.
- Once you set the first loop and establish the initial tempo and duration, you could technically hit the pedal at any time to enter in new material (as long as you are lining up the new material with what you are hearing through the playback). However, it is best you follow the directions below while you are learning this piece.
- When it is marked "solo" it means that you are not recording and are just playing along with the loops.

PART ONE

- Always start playing the material first, then press pedal to record until you hear that material coming through the speakers as part of the loop (in other words, don't hit the pedal again to stop recording until you hear yourself doubled while playing that particular material).
- It is not important how fast the tempo light is blinking in the first part (unlike in the second part).
- In measures 6 and 8 after #8, make wide circles with your bow starting on beat 3, oscillating between sul pont and sul tasto. Start slowly, get faster, then slower again.
- Two measures before 9, slide very slowly up and down so you can hear the beating get faster and slower. While you do this, bow random rhythms that get faster then slower again.

PART TWO

- The loop duration must be set exactly at 8 beats of quarter = 96 or this section does not work. A slightly faster or slower tempo is OK, but the duration of the loop must be 8 beats long. If it does not work out on the first try, keep holding the C, erase, and do it again.
- In this section, the red light will blink at the beginning of each measure (every 4 beats). Make sure you are entering new material on the correct beat(s) of the 8 beat looped phrase.
- For #'s 1-8 and 20: press the pedal to record on beat 1 (of 8) of the loop to record. Press pedal again to stop recording on the following beat 1.
- For #'s 9, 11-14, 17-19: press the pedal to record on beat 1 (of 8) of the loop when you go back to repeat it. Press to stop recording when you start playing beat 1 of the next section of new material.
- For #2: You are gently drawing your bow on top of the mic cord to get a deep, spooky, airy, creaking sound. If you are using a different mic, try to create the same effect.
- Use different bow speeds and pressures to get different pitches out of the tailpiece for # 3 and # 4. You might try different locations on the tailpiece. If your tailpiece simply cannot produce those pitches, find a high and a low one that works and sounds good.
- Put your middle finger on the D- string behind the bridge. Tremolo behind the bridge while sliding your left middle finger up and down to change pitch (the ones in the score are just relative).
- The drumming solo: find all of the cool sounds you can make by tapping, thumping, and knocking on your viola and have a groovy good time.

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JESSICA MEYER (b. 1974)

1 Dampen G-string and slowly drag the bow towards and away from bridge. Press pedal and record 4-beat loop.

2 pedal Play on G-string inside the peg box, randomly alternate between arco and tremolo.

3 pedal Dampen all strings around 8th position. Play random col legno up and down string behind left hand.

4 pedal

♩ = 60

pp

5 pedal

6 II

solo
no pedal

p

7 pedal 8 [bow circles]

mp

[bow circles] *accel.* *a tempo*

mp

accel. *a tempo*

mf

random bows 9 pedal

p

mp *mf* 3

f 3 3 *ff* *molto accel.* cut

CADENZA: "Wailing"

accel. 5 3 3 //

Hold pedal to erase all loops

♩ = 96
ord. 1 Pedal tempo set
sul pont.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
(look to make sure tempo is blinking at correct speed)
(blow into mic) *mf* *pp* *mf*

2 "play" mic cord very slowly; dark, creaking sound

3 find these pitches on the tailpiece

4

f *f*

5

6 Finger D-string behind the bridge. Slide finger toward you to adjust pitch.

Voice: "tsh"
mp

7

8

Finger tap 1 Finger tap 2

9

Thumb whack on tailpiece

10

Drumming:
improv solo
on body of viola

11

vamp 8 measures

pitches are different sounding taps on instrument

12

pizz.

mf

record on repeat

13

14

15

improv solo
(pizz.)

16

solo

mp

mf

pedal

17

3 4

mp *pp* (quick blow)

18

sul tasto

mp

mf

playback off

fff

CADENZA: "Gypsy fiddler"

f

Playback ON

ff

20 pedal

21 solo (stop record)

playback off

fff

(blow into mic)