Meeting the Universe Halfway (2018)

matthew sergeant (b. 1984)
Performance Information

Instrumentation:

Flute (concert ‘C’ instrument)
Soprano Saxophone
Electric Guitar (with bottleneck, cello bow, chopstick, and scordatura, see below)
Cello (with chopstick, rope-bow and scordatura, see below)

The piece makes use of three custom-built instruments, know as APPARATUSES I, II and III.
Instrumentalists operate these APPARATUSES throughout the piece. Further information may be obtained from the composer.

At the end of the piece, all instrumentalists play (unlaquered) ceramic tiles, scraped and explored with small shards of tiles.
(For further details regarding the use of the ceramic tiles, please see the appendix to the score, pp.47-48).

Duration:

Approximately 20 minutes
Performance/Notation Guide

a) General

In addition to the information provided within this guide, extensive notes regarding specific indications are provided in the score proper. These should be additionally consulted (in detail) when preparing the piece for performance.

Notation of rhythm:

Rhythmically, the score is presented in a format where horizontal space equates to time. An approximate pulse grid is provided along the top of each system via a constant series of notches, where each notch represents a beat of approximately 60-66 bpm:

Articulation-points placed within this grid are played with their starting point relative to it. *I.e. articulations closer together occur in quicker succession to those further apart.*

The *duration* of events is indicated with a line extending from the notehead.

Within this context, pitched/unpitched events and even fingerings, are rhythmatised. Rhythmic precision is provided to the nearest mm.
**Ensemble co-ordination**
Throughout the score, events that are aligned vertically are expected to only approximately align in time, although it is expected that players will generally be occupying the same ‘beat’ (i.e. space-time ‘notch’) at any one given moment.

Events that are expected to align more precisely share stems across staves in the score, although the written notes within the score itself should be read carefully within such contexts (e.g. p.25).

**Notation of pitch**
The score contains passages of music that are notated with both precise and relative pitch contents.

Passages of precise pitch are notated in the conventional manner, although convening to the rhythmic space/time relations detailed above. Such passages are accompanied with standard clefs (within the instrumental context) and staves. **Accidentals only apply to notes they directly precede.**

Passages of relative pitch are notated in a manner akin to the rhythmic notation, where vertical space in the score corresponds to register.

**Dynamics**
Throughout the composition, dynamics should be considered as an indication of input energy and not resultant sound (i.e. it is acknowledged that certain combinations of performance techniques will result in a more scaled bandwidth of dynamic output).

**(b) Flute**
Instrument
The piece is to be performed on a concert (C) instrument with a B foot.
Multiphonics (Flute)
Multiphonics within the piece are notated as fingerings, with the sounding result left unspecified (and thus resultant to the performative context in which they occur). Multiphonic fingerings are often rhythmatised and the diagrams can be explained in the following way:

(b) Soprano Saxophone
Instrument
The piece is to be performed on a standard soprano saxophone in Bb. The score has been trasnposed.
Fingerings
When fingerings are supplied within the piece, the diagram used can be explained in the following way:

(d) Cello
Scordatura and strings:

The strings intended for performance of particular articulations are notated with boxed roman numerals (often positioned within the stems).
Preparations (cello):

Chopstick:
For the second section of the piece, a wooden chopstick (or similar) is threaded between the open strings to cause rattling in performance. The chopstick is also struck with the palm of the hand to create a percussive buzz. Instructions are provided within the score but are also duplicated here:

Rope bow:
At the end of the composition, the cello is to be bowed with a length of coarse rope. The rope is held at both ends and pulled across all four strings simultaneously. A mixture of pitch and noise is the expected outcome. Instructions are provided in the score but are also duplicated here:

(d) Electric Guitar

Scordatura and strings:

Note:
It is not expected that strings 6, 5 and 4 will hold a consistent pitch at this level of detuning. Activity on this string will result in severe pitch destabilisation and this is both expected and encouraged in performance.

Sound/Amplification
The sound should be clean and be balanced in such a way as to support both pitched and noise-based sounds. Balance the amplification to blend with the remainder of the ensemble.
Preparations (electric guitar):

Chopstick:
For the second section of the piece, a wooden chopstick (or similar) is threaded between the open strings to cause rattling in performance. The chopstick is also struck with the palm of the hand to create a percussive buzz. Instructions are provided within the score but are also duplicated here:

Other equipment
The following implements are also required during the course of the piece:

1. ebow
2. cello bow (note: only strings 1 and 6 are used with the cello bow to facilitate access)
3. bottleneck/steel slide

Decoupling
At certain times in the score, different areas of instrumental physicality (e.g. fretboard and strings) are rhythmically decoupled. Such passages should be executed simultaneously on the instrument, the sonic results being the collision of the layers. For example:

During such passages, often contradictory performance states will often be superimposed, resulting in many ‘glitches’ or additional sound to be produced. This is both expected and encouraged in performance.
Meeting the Universe Halfway

[Note: If breath cannot support extremely long tones, fade out when necessary and re-join at next articulation. Do not mordent.] 
No vib.

[Note: Accent at slightly higher dynamic, then return to that which is notated. Scale this process as dynamics increase until p (page 7). Like gentle bells.]

Accidentals apply only to notes they directly precede.

for The House of Bedlam, Meeting the Universe Halfway
matthew sergeant (b.1984)

Dropping nails audibly onto the top plate, letting them cascade further down the structure in their own time.

mf
x = hammer-on/tap (then sustain w/ebow), dynamics relate to force of strike.

Start with first sound from Apparatus I
w/ebow (until fig 2)

Scord:

1 2 3 4

2

FOR THE HOUSE OF BEDLAM,
MEETING THE UNIVERSE HALFWAY
MATTHEW SERGEANT (B.1984)

- 1 -
[Note: If breath cannot support extremely long tones, fade out when necessary and re-join at next articulation. Do not re-articulate.]

[Note: Accent at slightly higher dynamic, then return to that which is notated. Scale this process as dynamics increase until p (page 7). Like gentle bells.]
RALL.
Gradually reduce drop-rate, coming to a complete stop after Fig. 4.

**Apparatus I**

**DISTORT:**
(overblow, change embouchure, growl, etc.)

Matthew Sergeant | Meeting the Universe Halfway
Score
to cello.
Apparatus II

(   )
(   )
(   )
(tr)
(   )
0
(   )
0
(   )
0
(   )
0
(   )
0
(pizz (until fig.13)

Note: tremolandi are 'pizz-trems' using fingers 1+2. Do not synchronise L/R hands when trills/trems are combined. The chopstick is fully expected to rattle and/or distort pitch.

Insert chopstick between strings as shown:

mf = 72 - 80

[Over IV, under III, over II]
[Over 6, under 5, over 4]

Note: Jerking lever left and right, working against natural internal forces as much as possible.

Over IV Over III Over II Over I

Flute Sop Sax E. Guitar Cello
Note: It is both expected and encouraged that moves to extreme dynamics on the slackened strings will cause unpredictable chokes/clatters/glitches in the sound. Let the strings 'do as it wishes' at all times.
Note: Articulations of extreme register (for the notated string) are not expected to resonate or hold discernable pitch contents.

Flick chopstick, let rattle.
(Flick towards/into body of instrument)

Note: Timing always taken from position of long stem

Dynamics of key-clicks should always be foregrounded over breath.

[key sounds only]

breath sound only

(key sounds only)

Dynamics of key-clicks should always be foregrounded over breath.

(key sounds only)

Dynamics of key-clicks should always be foregrounded over breath.

(key sounds only)

Dynamics of key-clicks should always be foregrounded over breath.

(key sounds only)

Dynamics of key-clicks should always be foregrounded over breath.

(key sounds only)

Dynamics of key-clicks should always be foregrounded over breath.

(key sounds only)
Flick chopstick, let rattle. (Flick towards/into body of instrument)

(Note: Timing always taken from position of long stem)
Ceramic Tile

[See APPENDIX for performance score for tiles.]
Matthew Sergeant | Meeting the Universe Halfway
Score

- 22 -

Flute Sop Sax E. Guitar Cello

½-breath ½-tone

p ppmf p ppmf p

ffz ffz ffz

flz flz flz
IMITATE/FOLLOW the sounds being made by the ceramic tile (flautist) with your instrument in as close to real-time as possible, *sotto voce*. Use pitched and/or unpitched sounds as necessary (key clicks, multiphonics, etc.).
Mutually co-ordinate rhythmic unison when stems are shared (see note).

[Note: Rhythmic unison between gtr/vc should be co-ordinated by the players in realtime when stems are shared across staves. Whilst players should strive to make the unison as absolute as possible, it is entirely natural that this process will result in occasional imperfections/glitches (i.e. moments where co-ordination is not quite absolute). This ‘human’ aspect of the performance is absolutely expected.]

Faz = scratch-tone, 
Ord = ord, 
Flautando = flautando,

w/cello bow (RH) & bottleneck (LH)

(continue on indicated string until instructed to change)

[Note: Within the context of changing bow pressure, dynamics refer to bow speed. It is entirely expected that ‘inappropriate’ combinations of bow speed/pressure will result in cracks/squeaks and glitches.]

Flute
Sop Sax
E. Guitar
Cello
- 25 -
13
Slowly decrease density of actions and fade out...

to flute

Slowly decrease density of actions and fade out...

to APPARATUS III
[Note: Rhythmic unison between gtr/vc should be co-ordinated by the players in realtime when stems are shared across staves. Whilst players should strive to make the unison as absolute as possible, it is entirely natural that this process will result in occasional imperfections/"glitches" (i.e. moments where co-ordination is not quite absolute). This 'human' aspect of the performance is absolutely expected.]

Mutually co-ordinate rhythmic unison when stems are shared (see note).

[Simultaneously placing wooden balls on peg boards. Wait until balls have rolled to the bottom before placing another pair at the top.]
Note: It is not expected that slack strings will hold stable pitch-content.

B
B
II
(0)
Note: The notated fingerings will produce multiphonics of differing levels of stability. Execute the fingering notated within the dynamic context, it is entirely expected that some multiphonics will crack/squeak under certain contexts.
Put down bow, take rope, use length of medium coarse rope as bow. Hold at both ends and keep taught over strings. Move left/right over all four strings simultaneously (as much as possible).
Note: Vertical height of stave now corresponds to lateral position of the rope relative to the string/instrument.

[Note: Always on the strings. Slurs show phrasing.]

[Jerking lever left and right, working against natural internal forces as much as possible.]

mf

= 72 - 80

Matthew Sergeant | Meeting the Universe Halfway
Score
put bow down, take plectrum, pp mppp pp

Flute Sop Sax E. Guitar Cello

659

Matthew Sergeant | Meeting the Universe Halfway
Score
Note: Vertical height of stave now corresponds to lateral position of the plectrum relative to the string/instrument.
to APPARATUS I

(very slow bow speed)
[Dropping nails audibly on to the top plate, letting them cascade further down the structure in their own time.]
IMITATE/FOLLOW the sounds being made by APPARATUS III (saxophonist) with your instrument in as close to realtime as possible, *sotto voce*. Use pitched and/or unpitched sounds as necessary (scraping with objects, preparing strings, standard tones (etc.) are all permissible).
IMITATE/FOLLOW the sounds being made by the cellist with your ceramic tile in as close to real-time as possible. Use any playing techniques required (scrapping, tapping, fingernails, implements, etc.) as necessary.

Stop following cellist, move to independent actions with tile. (see APPENDIX).
Ceramic Tile
[See APPENDIX for performance score for tiles.]

to guitar
(retake place in ensemble)
Slowly decrease density of actions and fade out...
to guitar
(retake place in ensemble)
IMITATE/FOLLOW the sounds being made by the ceramic tile (flautist) with your instrument in as close to realtime as possible, *sotto voce*. Use pitched and/or unpitched sounds as necessary (scraping with objects, preparing strings, standard tones etc.) are all permissible.

Flute
Sop Sax
E. Guitar
Cello

- 42 -

C.20”
C.10-15”
C.20”
C.10-15”
C.20”
C.10-15”
C.20”
C.10-15”
to ceramic tile
(remain in ensemble position)
Slowly decrease density of actions and fade out...

Flute
Sop Sax
E. Guitar
Cello

920

- 43 -
c.10”
c.10-15”
c.10”
c.10-15”
c.10”
c.10-15”

to ceramic tile
(remain in ensemble position)
[See APPENDIX for performance score for tiles.]
Keep exploring the action on which you find yourself. Do not move to another score region. Do not decrease density of actions. Do not fade out, just stop when ready...
NOTATION

The score is comprised of a network of eight types of movement/action to be performed on the large ceramic tile. A performance may begin with an instance of any of eight actions and then proceed to any other action to which it is conjoined with a line (see additional performance instructions, below). The style of line indicates the type of transition to be made:

- Move abruptly to the new action,
- Transition gradually into the new action,

Free movement between conjoined tiles continues throughout a performance of the piece (see performance instructions, below).

For each action, text and graphic descriptions of the movement are provided, although the following symbols will require additional explanation:

- Graphical indication of shape of movement/action,
- Use ceramic shard to undertake action*
- Use fingertips and/or fingernails to undertake action*
- Extremely strong pressure, moving as slowly as possible across the surface, grinding**
- Normal pressure, medium speed, comfortable movement for high levels of control**.
- Extremely light pressure, quick light movements, the weight of fingers or shard only**.

* Where multiple symbols are included for the same action, the action may be performed with either fingertips/nails or the ceramic shard, although only one of the two may be used in a given instance of that action (i.e. it must be departed from and returned to before switching from fingertips to shard, or vice versa).

** Where multiple pressure symbols are included within the same action, the included levels should be considered as a bandwidth within the action can fluidly move. This also applies to movement speed.

PERFORMANCE

- Remain in physical contact with the tile throughout the performance (either with fingers or via the shard),
- Stay on a given action for as long or as short a time as desired before moving on to the next, with the following guidelines:
  - An action should be completed before moving on to the next action,
  - Dwell on or return to actions that provoke rich responses from your particular combination of ceramics,
  - The general pace should be slow and evolving (although occasional exceptions are permitted).
Quiet irregular tapping,

Circles of maximum size,

Fast tight circles,

Fast tight circles along apex of edge,
[Travel full length of tile then change direction if desired]

Linear movements along apex of tile,
[Travel full length of tile then change direction if desired]

Linear movement,
[Travel full width of tile then change direction if desired]

Irregular linear movements all over surface,

Quiet irregular scratching/tickling,