

Argrophylax

Michael Young

Performance Notes

Electronics

The Max/MSP patch has mono input (oboe mic) and stereo output. The patch progresses through a series of pre-set functions which are instigated either by MIDI pedal (oboist) or at the computer. The balance of live/electronics should always ensure that the live instrument is immersed, but not obscured, by the electronics.

Timing

Each time frame is c. 8-10s. Rhythmic timing is open to interpretation by the performer, depending on his/her response to the Max/MSP computer behaviours.

Multiphonics

Performers should, if there are problems, try to find fingerings which match as closely as possible the stated pitches. Bar 9 is a double trill on the f# key whilst trilling the lh g# key as well. Bar 17 moves from the multiphonic to the individual pitch and back again. Use embouchure to create stated effects e.g. multiphonics 'form gradually' (bar 20) or 'dissipate intermittently' (bar 21) the embouchure should be used to create these effects. The second stave at the beginning of the work indicates where the jaw should be dropped in order to facilitate a move from the trilled pitches to the multiphonic sounds.

Air tone

The air tone in bar 5: the fingering should hint at the pitches stated but should be unstable and fluctuate freely from noise-pitch.

High notes

Bar 19 has a high c: this should be intermittent, the pitch should also fluctuate using fingerings.

Fast notes

From bar 64 onwards the demi-semi quavers should be tongued quickly (double/triple tongue when possible) using the written pitches as a guide and filling in the others. Bar 119 onwards is as fast and furious as possible pushing the breathing as far as possible – snatch a breath where needed but do not make big gaps.

Other instructions

Bar 34: finger pitches in the lower part of the instrument from Bb to Gb – maintain a very high pressure embouchure so that most of the pitches do not speak and only the occasional pitch escapes sfz. If they will not speak then drop the embouchure pressure violently and return it to the high pressure immediately.

In myth, Argrophylox is a silver stone with magical properties found in the river Pactolus, bought by wealthy Lydians and placed at the threshold of treasure houses. If thieves ever tried to enter, it emitted piercing trumpet-like alarm sounds and, deranged, the would-be robbers would “go over the cliffs” as if chased by guards. This story can be found in *Concerning Rivers*, a text attributed to Plutarch. The term itself does not exist outside of this source, but is close to other words; “argos” (bright) and “arguros” (silver). An “agrophylox” was a rural guard in charge of farmlands where as an “argurophylox” was a church father and keeper of silver. All these references have served as inspiration for this piece; although not ‘programme music’ as such, it intends to create strong musical evocations of these references: alarms and surprise, intensely shining objects, the swirling waters of a river, maddening confusion and flight.

The oboist negotiates a proportional score with rhythmic and pitch freedoms while the computer processes the live sound in real-time. It employs spectral and granular techniques creating drastic timbral transformations, reiterations, webs of echoes and sheets of dense sound. The player has to react and adapt to these events. The Max/MSP system 'listens' to the oboe, and is at times empathetic, reactive or provocative, but generally unpredictable in behaviour.

Composed for Chris Redgate and first performed at the BMIC Cutting Edge Series concert in October 2004.

With thanks to Chris Redgate, John Birchall for his additional research into the title and its historical sources and Goldsmiths Electronic Music Studios.

M Young 2006.

unusually strident and aggressive!

trills vary in speed always

Oboe

ff

M - jaw

TP

G#

E♭

ebbing away.....

weak, struggling

4

f

ppp

pp:(mf/f)

1st oct

G#

E♭

air tone: M speaks at will

pulsating

air tone: pitch established gradually

leisurely at first

(tr)

wild!

TP

G-G#tr

double tr

speed varies

E♭

7

pp <> :||

pp

ff

hesitant...emerging

10

ppp

sub f

pp

subff

pp

fff

TP

1st oct

2nd oct

B tr

C#

pulsating

airy harmonic

emerging...

13

ff > mf

pp

||: <mf> :||

pp sempre

TP

E♭

Sfz

2
16

TP bells

ff <> <> <> *p* < > *f* > *mp* *sub f* *p* < > *f*

weedy

shaky: allow to break up/reform

TP 1st oct

G# form gradually

TP 1st oct

TP 1st oct

G#

EB

dissipate intermittently

mf < > *p* < > *f* < > *ff* < > *p* < > *f*

TP

TP or C

flamboyant!

1st oct weak, struggling

G# air tone: M speaks at will

EB

f *pp* < > *ff* *pp:(mf/f)*

TP

G#

hesitant at first, loud

tr

TP 1st oct 2nd oct

B tr

C#

ebbing away.....

ff *f* < > < > < > < > *pp*

TP

F

(tr)

dissipating to air...

ff *ppp*

G#tr

trills vary in speed always

tr

falling away with shudders.....

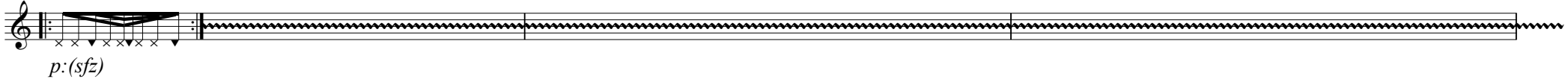
C#

31

fff

rattling with bumps

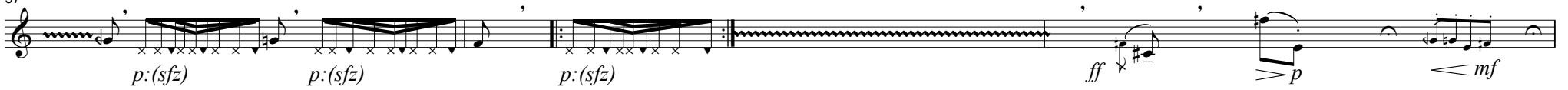
34 low oct., high press. pitches speak at random



p:(sfz)

37

as if listening



p:(sfz) p:(sfz) p:(sfz) ff >p <mf

40



p f mp f p <f p

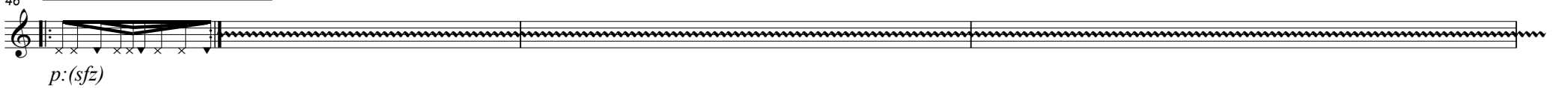
43



p f pp f pp

bumps again

46 low oct., high press. pitches speak at random



p:(sfz)

1st oct

G# air tone: M speaks at will

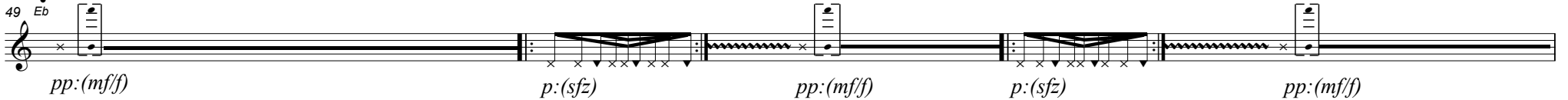
low oct., high press. pitches speak at random

air tone: M speaks at will

low oct., high press. pitches speak at random

air tone: M speaks at will

49 Eb



pp:(mf/f) p:(sfz) pp:(mf/f) p:(sfz) pp:(mf/f)

4
52

low oct., high press. pitches speak at random

air tone: M speaks at will

f *p:(sfz)* *pp:(mf/f)*

Detailed description: This musical staff spans measures 4 to 52. It begins with a dynamic of *f* and features a melodic line with a wavy, oscillating contour. A box above the staff contains the instruction "low oct., high press. pitches speak at random". The dynamic shifts to *p:(sfz)* in the middle section, which includes a series of repeated notes with a tremolo effect. The dynamic then changes to *pp:(mf/f)* in the final section, which consists of a single note with a wavy line above it. A box above this note contains the instruction "air tone: M speaks at will".

55

...shuddering

meandering, legato, flat, fluid

p *mf > pp* *mf > pp* *p* *mf > pp* *mf > pp* *pp* *mp*

Detailed description: This musical staff spans measures 55 to 60. It starts with a dynamic of *p* and features a melodic line with a wavy, oscillating contour. A box above the staff contains the instruction "...shuddering". The dynamic shifts to *mf > pp* in the middle section, which includes a series of repeated notes with a tremolo effect. The dynamic then changes to *p* in the final section, which consists of a single note with a wavy line above it. A box above this note contains the instruction "meandering, legato, flat, fluid".

58

Detailed description: This musical staff spans measures 58 to 60. It features a melodic line with a wavy, oscillating contour. The dynamic is *mp*.

61

...into a rush!

molto *ff*

Detailed description: This musical staff spans measures 61 to 63. It features a melodic line with a wavy, oscillating contour. The dynamic is *molto* and *ff*.

64

t-k-t-k

ff

Detailed description: This musical staff spans measures 64 to 66. It features a melodic line with a wavy, oscillating contour. A box above the staff contains the instruction "t-k-t-k". The dynamic is *ff*.

67

ebbing away to shudders...

explosive!!

t-k-t-k

p *mf > pp* *mf > pp* *mf > pp* *mf > pp* *fff* *ff*

Detailed description: This musical staff spans measures 67 to 70. It features a melodic line with a wavy, oscillating contour. A box above the staff contains the instruction "ebbing away to shudders...". The dynamic shifts from *p* to *mf > pp* in the middle section, which includes a series of repeated notes with a tremolo effect. A box above this section contains the instruction "explosive!!". The dynamic then changes to *fff* in the final section, which consists of a single note with a wavy line above it. A box above this note contains the instruction "t-k-t-k".

1st oct
G# | air tone: M speaks at will

70 Eb

...shuddering every time

pp:(mf/f) p *poco* p mf mf p mf p 5

73

still fluid, with hiccups

mf p mf > pp mf > pp mf pp mp

76

79

losing it

1st oct
G# | air tone: M speaks at will

82 Eb

pp:(mf/f)

sort of tentative

f p mp f > p f p

85

then in a red mist

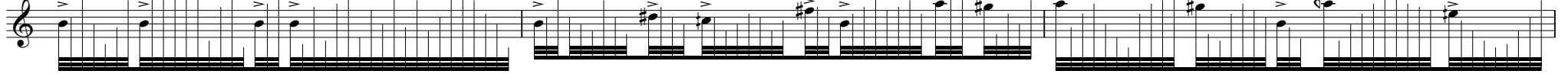
mp pp ff

6

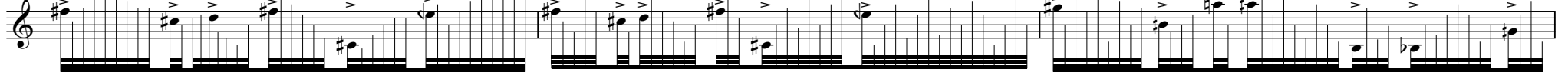
88



91



94

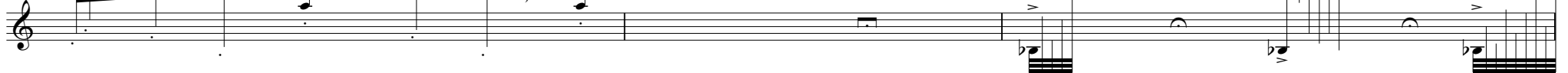


97



fizzling out

100



ugh

p

pp

ff

103



fff

106 shy ,

pp *pp* *p* *f*

109

p *p* *f*

112

p *ff*

TP
G
G-G#tr
double tr
Eb tr speed varies

115

ff *ff*

118

tk-t-k *beyond frenzy* *fff!!*

121

ff *fff!!*

X5

124

disintegrating

fff *p* *ppp*

X 11

127

as if decapitated

n. vib. vary each time 2" - 11" vary each time 2" - 6"

mf *pp* *p*

130

shaky!

to sound higher than reasonable (*not B!*) allow pitch to drop out at will: c. 45"

allow electronic sounds to continue...

pp:(mf/f)