STILL SKY BELLS

For large ensemble

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Stef Conner

STILL SKY BELLS (2010)

For large ensemble: flute/alto flute; oboe/cor anglais; clarinet/bass clarinet; percussion: vibraphone/tam-tam/glockenspiel/rin (C4 - C5)/Chinese war drum/Thai gongs (C4 - C5)/bamboo sticks and newspaper in a wooden bowl; harp; piano; mandolin; guitar; violin; viola; violoncello and contrabass.

Premiered at Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival in November 2010, by The Nieuw Ensemble. Composed as part of the HCMF Yorkshire Young Composers’ Professional Development Programme.

Duration c. 20 minutes
Notation Key

General

Senza Misura

Senza Misura passages in this piece use approximate spacial notation and are not strictly proportional. Conductor cues are given, within which performers judge the duration of their material individually (approximate timings are sometimes indicated). Accidentals apply only to the notes they precede. When individuals play un-metered material, barlines are shown if it is necessary to continue to follow the conductor (in order to resume metered material at a particular point); barlines are hidden when it is possible for the player to ignore the conductor for a significant period of time.

Appoggiatura: play the grace notes on the beat, thus within the duration of the note they precede.

acciaccatura: play the grace notes before the beat, thus within the duration of the note or rest before the note they precede.

as high/low as possible

Gradual change from one state to another. Thus, if an arrow appears between two notes, performers should arrive at the new state by the second, having transitioned gradually.

'Extender': spacial representation of note length. In measured passages, duration is indicated by the number of bars the extender covers, unless it is extended by a duration of less than a bar, in which case note values are shown above the stave. In senza misura passages, durations are spacial and approximate.

As above, but indicates the length of time taken by a motive, rhythm and/or pitch collection.

Performers repeat given notation in their own independent tempo. Required parameters (e.g. pitch in this example) are given and others are left to performers' discretion. Extenders are used to show duration. Accidentals apply only to the note they immediately precede.

Each player is given a bell and stick. When this graphic is shown, players strike their bell in any irregular rhythm, beginning with dense, frequent hits and gradually subsiding. Usually, these gestures follow percussion events, which the bells should seem to rebound from. Players should listen to each-other, passing gestures around the ensemble and responding to ideas.
Piano

- **INSIDE**
  
  Play inside piano, striking or plucking the strings as directed.

- 
  
  Play piano strings with percussion sticks.

Percussion

- 
  
  Damped, un-resonant stroke.

- 
  
  Scrunched up newspaper, manipulated to create a rustling sound. Duration of effect is shown on a hidden stave. And speed is indicated by ‘moderate’, ‘fast’ or ‘slow’.

- 
  
  As above, but combined with bamboo sticks, placed in any non-metallic bowl and moved around, to create a rustling, clicking texture.

- 
  
  As above, but without the newspaper.
Plucked Strings

Applies to harp only. All notes should sound for their written duration only and are damped immediately afterwards, with whichever hand is available. Continues to apply until the direction 'ord.' is given, although reminders are sometimes used.

String is damped to created a semi-pitched note.

String is damped completely.

Rustling texture, with as little audible pitch as possible, created by scraping multiple wound strings with fingernails in fast, erratic and interrupted movements. Duration of effect is shown on a hidden stave. And speed is indicated by 'moderate', 'fast' or 'slow'.

Pitched, rustling texture, created by scraping indicated string with fingernail in fast, erratic and interrupted movements; move finger up frets to create a textured glissando.

Bowed Strings

Exaggerated vibrato, distorting the pitch by a microtonal interval.

Natural harmonic glissandi on indicated string. Lines indicated rough speed of glissandi and whether to begin on a harmonic or open string. Otherwise, this notation is very approximate and detail of pitch and speed is left to performers' discretion.
Artificial harmonic glissando, maintaining 4th interval (rather than distance) between fingers and thus creating a pitch bend from one note to another. Do not re-articulate the final pitch.

Artificial harmonic glissando, maintaining the same space between fingers on the string, creating a 'seagull' effect in which pitch slides and leaps.

Bow indicated strings behind the bridge.

Bowed, non-measured tremolo, which accelerates from relatively slow repeated notes to a tremolo played as fast as possible.

Bowed, non-measured tremolo, which begins as fast as possible then decelerates dramatically.

Bowed, non-measured tremolo, which begins slowly, accelerates and then decelerates.

Bowed, non-measured tremolo, which begins fast, decelerates and then accelerates.
Gradually apply more bow pressure to create an increasingly coarse tone.

**Abbreviations (plucked and bowed strings)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>p.s.p.</td>
<td>poco sul ponticello</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>s.p.</td>
<td>sul ponticello</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m.s.p.</td>
<td>molto sul ponticello</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>s.t.</td>
<td>sul tasto</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p.d.t.</td>
<td>Prés de la table</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b.n.</td>
<td>play with bottle neck</td>
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<tr>
<td>bisb.</td>
<td>bisbigliando</td>
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**Woodwind**

Breathy but pitched notes.

Un-pitched breath sounds into instrument without any leakage, unless directed. Pitches indicate preferred fingering, which changes the timbre of the breath sound.

Mouthpiece completely sealed by mouth.

Mouthpiece half open, allowing some leakage.
Mouthpiece open (normal playing position).

Exaggerated vibrato (combined with either 'lip vib.' or 'm.p.b.') creating a rapid alternation between a note and a quarter-tone higher or lower.

Breath glissando, created by adding or removing fingers as fast as possible. N.b. all pitched glissandi involve bending notes and are never fingered in this way.

Change fingering rapidly and randomly.

Strong attack without tonguing

Abbreviations

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</tr>
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<tr>
<td>m.p.b.</td>
<td>mouth piece bend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d.a.</td>
<td>diaphragm accent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>l.b.</td>
<td>lip bend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lip vib.</td>
<td>lip vibrato</td>
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<tr>
<td>fl.</td>
<td>flutter tongue</td>
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<tr>
<td>l.</td>
<td>lip tremolo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n.t.</td>
<td>not tongued</td>
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Phonetic Symbols

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symbol</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[a]</td>
<td>'a' as in 'father'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[i]</td>
<td>'ee' as in 'see'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[u]</td>
<td>'oo' as in 'boot'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[o]</td>
<td>'oor' as in 'door'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[j]</td>
<td>'sh' as in 'shoe'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[§]</td>
<td>blowing - lips pursed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Thai Gongs

Bamboo Sticks (and paper)
in non-metallic bowl

Perc.

replace

Remove reed

Harp

Harp: restoration

Guitar

Mandolin

Viola

Violin

Cello

Harmonic glissandi ad lib. (sul D)

Rin

with G sharp key

middle C fingering

\textit{With C fingering with G sharp key}
Senza Misura: c. 7-10"
A tempo ($\frac{43}{4}$)

A. Fl.

C. A.

Bass Clarinet in Bb

Cl.

Rin.

Tam-tam

Hp.

Pno.

Gr.

Mand.

Vln.

Via.

Vc.

Cb.

Norm.
A tempo ($= 43$)
Vibraphone

Improvise with given pitches, in order. Retain rhythmic character of previous x bars. Begin to incorporate occasional, subtle E' punctuations.

Glockenspiel
\[ q = 47 \quad (\text{e} = \text{e}) \]

142

\[ q = \text{c.} 40 \]

Fl.

Ob.

Glockenspiel

Perc.

Vibraphone

Hp.

Pro.

Gtr.

Mand.

Vln.

Vla.

Cb.
[Musical notation image]