Andreas Tsiartas

Pnoé

for ensemble

2018
Instrumentation

-- Full score in C --

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Clarinet in $B^b$

Violin

Piano

additional items for the pianist:

▪ 1 plectrum/pick (medium-hard/plastic)
▪ loose bow hair (4 sets) firmly bound on both edges (see notes below)
▪ wooden block (see notes below)

Violoncello
This work was commissioned by the Pharos Arts Foundation and premiered by the Ensemble Modern on 05 October 2018, during the 10th International Pharos Contemporary Music Festival, at The Shoe Factory, in Nicosia. Following its premiere, this work won the DYCE competition (Discovering Young Composers of Europe) in May 2019.
In Greek, Pnoé (πνοή) stands for ‘breath’. Reflecting further on the semantics of the word, the phoneme pn- (πν-), in particular, is directly associated to a linguistic set connoting the notion of spirit (pneuma, Gr. πνεύμα). This, in turn, is a synonym of the word Psyche (or soul), the etymology of which is interpreted as ‘breathing in life’: the act of inhaling and exhaling, thus to imbrue an entity with life. Interestingly, the word Psyche in ancient Greek was also symbolically applied as an alternative to the word ‘butterfly’, metaphorically indicating the process of transformation from life to death and vice versa.

-Andreas Tsiartas, July 2018
General glossary

Non-metric tremolo (of short duration)

Vibrato degrees:
from non-vibrato (0) towards small quarter tone oscillando (3), leading to a trill. Intermediate degrees (1), (2).

Sul ponticello degrees:
From senza pont. (0), towards max. pont. on the bridge (3)/ Intermediate degrees (1), (2).

Feathered figures indicate a relative number of pulsating beats and are not to be taken literally. The culmination of each feathered figure, usually lies in the centre and it matches with a respective dynamic marking. This kind of pulsation should be performed vividly and in a fast speed, independently from the passage’s tempo.

Percussive, acute sforzando and subito piano (quasi pp) with immediate gradual crescendo to the next acute, percussive sforzando/pp.
Instrument-specific Glossary

Clarinet

Breath in, breath out

Key clicks

Pure air (in a closed position)

From pitch-less (i.e. air) to full pitch effect (i.e. ord.)
There are four stages: a white circle is pure air, black circle is pure pitch.
Two intermediate stages, one with more air and some pitch
and the other with more pitch and some air.
Small harmonic glissando within air (on D).

Violin/ Violoncello

Mute on/off: practice mute (*sordina da studio*), ideally a metallic one, which will create the desired timbre for the passage.

Circular bowing:
Dampen strings with the left hand: high position/ Medium velocity of bowing.
For best noise result, bow near the left-hand fingers.
NB: Dynamics in this passage suggest noise intensity and **NOT** velocity of bowing.
Harmonic glissando (on the open string indicated). Medium pace and *molto flautando* (as if from afar).

Repeat the figure within the repetition bars as long as suggested by the horizontal curve (within the time given).

Drag the bow on the tailpiece of the instrument (cello ONLY)
Piano

Place a block to dampen the strings (see notes below), creating the dry/percussive sound required. The crossed sign: remove the block.

X-shaped notes are within the dampened range and will sound very dry/percussive, as opposed to the other regular keys/notes. Placing the solid block (as above) will approximately dampen the range from F3 to C5.

Plectrum/Pick to be applied on the specific pitch in the piano interior. Choose a medium-hard pick so that it is easily controlled.

Repeat the figure within the repetition bars as long as suggested by the horizontal curve (within the time and tempo given).
Gradually lifting up the right pedal allowing the sound and its overtones to die out gradually.

Bowed string (See guidelines below).
Velocity of bowing: slow and steady, not accelerating, nor reducing speed by means of the dynamic markings.

Non-metric passage:
(The crossed sign cancels the previous one, returning thus to time signature as indicated)
Piano Preparation Guidelines

For the premiere of the work in Cyprus, the piano part was finalised with the kind consulting of the Pharos Arts Foundation’s piano technician, Mr. Constantinos Loizou. The following indications were applied on The Shoe Factory’s Steinway D, so that all techniques were in compliance with the Foundation’s strict regulations concerning the use of the specific piano:

• On all occasions, please press and pre-hold the right pedal in order to perform in the interior of the piano and to avoid any damage to the dampers’ sensitive felts.
• To perform the passages with the bow hair: prepare the 4 sets in advance. To insert and remove the hair, you may use any palpable object of less than 5 mm width. You may attach pins to the sides of the hair (the hair must be firmly bound on both sides) to make it easier. For performing the passage, ideally the string should be bowed in a 90-degree angle (as held by both hands). Make sure the sets have not much hair in order to be easily inserted, but also in order to produce a more resonant, vibrant, airy sound. It might possibly require rosin to facilitate sound production.
• To perform the passage with the block: although performers usually use a heavy item rapped in felt to generate the percussive sound required, it is recommended to use a solid wooden block (preferably maple wood) that is completely covered with a felt or cashmere lining underneath to dampen firmly the strings. Dimensions (indicatively- as it varies in piano construction for the range required): 8cm width x max. 24 cm length (height flexible). The resulting sound should be very percussive, dry and should mingle well with the timbre of the other instruments at the specific passages requested.

Notes

• Each instrument retains two staves on the score, one for the regular five-line stave (named in the score as Pitch) and the other one a single line (named as Noise). For both the cello and violin during bars 69-71 in C, there is a third stave (ossia) for humming the pitch indicated.
• Rests: the smallest rest in the piece is the single caesura ‹ (like a breathing rest), following a small fermata ^, which is 2” and finally, the long fermata ▼, ca. 4”.
• Accidentals apply for a single bar.
Cl.

Vln.

Pno.

Vc.

Humming
(raise or lower octave register if not suitable)

R.H.: interior

stand up while using the pedal, to perform on both the interior and keyboard.

L.H.: Keyboard
For the harmonic: sounding an F6 - lower note A is the fingering (slightly audible); ossia: if not soft enough, then trill on both pitches as harmonics, sounding E6-F6. Credits: Heather Roche
timbral trill (harmonic and regular pitch)

R.H.: keyboard
ossia: if the octave leap is not soft enough, perform timbral trill on E6.

Both hands: Interior with loose bow hair sets.
*: sustain the duration of the figures
a bit longer upon the fermata
(strings need to set the mute on)
Place the block to dampen strings as in section A.
Remove F and A hair sets (as before)
Cl.

Vln.

Pno.

Vc.