





# opening hands

Henry McPherson



Violin

Treble/Tenor Recorder

Clarinet in Bb

Alto Saxophone

Trombone

Snare Drum

5 Tuned Bottles

Tubular Bells

Piano

Electric Guitar

Double Bass



## Performance Notes

### Instrumentation/Amplification

This piece was written in 2018 for Decibel, a Birmingham-based ensemble of all amplified instruments. For this piece, in addition to each instrument being amplified, the snare drum should be mic'd as close as possible, either from above or below, to pick up the sound of the grain of the drum-head as the player's hand-position changes.

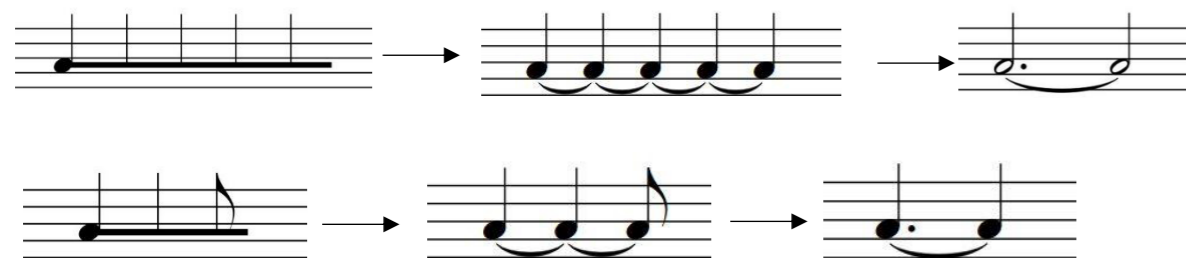
It is suggested that the Violin, Clarinet, Recorder, and Snare Drum should be grouped together onstage, as they play together in the opening quartet.

The 5 tuned bottles should be made of glass, can be of any size, and should be tuned relatively (with water) from high to low (specific pitches are not important).

### Opening Quartet + Rhythms

The opening part of the piece is a quartet for Violin, Clarinet, Recorder, and Percussion. Players should follow each other, and all four parts contain cue lines from the other instruments, with the violin leading throughout. Once a player has been cued, (indicated by a dotted line with a clear arrowhead in the parts), they should continue playing at their own pace of crotchet = 60. The lines will not always be in perfect synchronisation, but should come back together again at the numbered rehearsal marks, where cues should be given by the conductor.

Rhythm in this section is notated as shown below: The initial note should be held for the number of beats indicated by the stems (either crotchet or quaver stems). N.B. The individual beats should not be heard.



### Microtones

Microtones in the piece should be read throughout as quarter-tones. Possible fingerings are indicated in the Clarinet part, but these are suggestions only.



### Specific Playing Techniques

#### Violin

Notes with square note-heads indicate random/approximate pitches.

'Poco scratch' indicates sustained playing with the occasional crackle or stutter in the sound. In the final bar of the piece, the pitch of the note should be barely audible, with a very soft crackling sound produced by very firm pressure and a slow bow-speed.

String numbers, where indicated, should be followed – glissandi resulting from major changes in hand position should be heard.

Vibrato indications should be followed closely, and glissandi should be played for the full duration of the lines.

There is a brief scordatura passage, at the very end of the piece, where the G string is to be tuned down to a low F#.

#### Wind and Brass

"Breath noises" in the wind and brass parts are open to interpretation, but should sound like some form of quiet, sustained, unpitched breathing – just audible (and not too close to the microphone). Players may use instruments to create the sound, parts of the instrument, or just the voice.

Vibrato indications should be followed closely, and glissandi should be played for the full duration of the lines.

#### Piano

Notes with triangle note-heads are to be played pizzicato, either with the nails or with a soft plastic plectrum.

Pedal-markings should be followed closely.

#### Electric Guitar

The guitar should be tuned using the system given at the front of the score/part. The part is written with a fret staff (TAB) and a sounding pitch staff (5-line)

Fret numbers (given in TAB) should be followed.

Vibrato indications should be followed closely, and should be played subtly, like cello/violin vibrato (rather than bending the string)

The part should be played without any additional effects (reverb, delay, etc.)

#### Percussion

The snare drum (snare on) should be played with the hand only, in one of five positions indicated on the score. Each position gives a slight variation in timbre, which will be picked up by the close-mic.

- 1) "Palm" – flat palm and fingers against the surface of the drum-head;
- 2) "finger-pads" – the pads of the fingers traced over the surface of the drum
- 3) "nail-edge" – the edge of the nails, scratched against the drum-head
- 4) "nails flat" – the flat part of the nails, up to the first knuckle joint, against the drum-head.
- 5) "knuckles" – the flat part of the knuckles, between the first and second joint, against the drum.

Changes between hand positions should be as smooth as possible.

The bottles should be played with hard sticks.

#### Double Bass

When moving from "ord." to scratch, pressure should be increased gradually across a sustained tone.

Glissandi should be played for the full duration of the lines.

①  
 c.o.'26"  
 Molto flautando  
 Molto vibrato

Violin

*ppp* *p*

Slow  
 ♩ = 60 sempre  
 Snares on  
 Circular motion on drum head  
 Palm

Snare Drum

(palm) finger-pads

*ppp* *pp* *ppp*



**2**  
c.0'53"

**3**  
c.1'10"

Vln. *ppp* *pp* *ppp* *pp*

Treble Rec. *ppp* *ppp*

Clarinet in B $\flat$  *ppp* *ppp*

Perc. *ppp* *pp* *ppp*

finger-pads nail-edge nails flat knuckles

poco vibrato  
poco scratch

III IV 3 III II I

sul pont. sul tasto ord. no scratch (ord.) sul pont.

Breath noises

no vib. (no vib.)

Detailed description: This page contains a musical score for four instruments: Violin (Vln.), Treble Recorder (Treble Rec.), Clarinet in B-flat (Clarinet in B $\flat$ ), and Percussion (Perc.). The score is divided into two measures by a double bar line. Measure 2 begins at approximately 0'53" and ends at 1'10". Measure 3 begins at 1'10". The Violin part features a melodic line with various fingerings (III, IV, 3, III, II, I) and dynamic markings of *ppp* and *pp*. It includes performance instructions such as 'poco vibrato', 'poco scratch', 'sul pont.', 'sul tasto', 'ord.', 'no scratch', and '(ord.)'. The Recorder and Clarinet parts are marked with *ppp* and include 'Breath noises' and 'no vib.' instructions. The Percussion part is marked with *ppp* and *pp*, with specific playing techniques indicated: 'finger-pads', 'nail-edge', 'nails flat', and 'knuckles'. Circled numbers 2 and 3 are placed above the first and second measures respectively, with arrows pointing to their corresponding time markers.

The musical score consists of four staves: Violin (Vln.), Trumpet/Recorder (Tr. Rec.), Clarinet (Cl.), and Percussion (Perc.).

- Vln. Staff:** Features a melodic line with various dynamics: *ppp* (pianississimo) at the beginning, *p* (piano) in the middle, and *pp* (pianissimo) towards the end. Performance instructions include "I ord." (first order) and "I" (first ending) with bracketed sections. Fingering numbers I, IV, III, and II are indicated above the notes. A "III (harm.) IV" marking is present for a harmonic.
- Tr. Rec. Staff:** Contains a melodic line with a *pp* dynamic marking.
- Cl. Staff:** Contains a melodic line with a triplet of eighth notes marked with a "3" and a *ppp* dynamic marking.
- Perc. Staff:** Shows a single drum hit with a *p* dynamic. Performance instructions include "nail-edge" and "(nail-edge)" with arrows pointing to specific points in the score.

④ c.2'30"

Vln. *p* *pp* *p* *mp* *p* *mf* *p* *mp*

Tr. Rec. *ppp possible* *pp* *p* *poco vib.* *ord. vib.* *p* *mf* *pp* To Ten. Rec.

Cl. *ppp possible* *pp* *p* *poco vib.* *no vib.* *p* *mf* *pp*

Alt. Sax. Breathing noises *ppp* *ppp* *no vib.*

Perc. palm *mf* *p* *(nail edge)* *finger pads*

⑤ 3'03"

5 *very slow vib. on IV* *no vib.* *ord. vib.*

6 *ord. vib.*

Electric Guitar

*mf* *p*

*no vib. let ring*

\*) If no page-turner is available for the violinist: violin holds open III, cue for fig. 5 from conductor.

The musical score is arranged in six staves. The top staff is for Violin (Vln.) and includes time signatures: 4/4, 3/4, 4/4, 6/4, 4/4, 5/4, 4/4, 5/4, 4/4, and 5/4. It features dynamics such as *p*, *mp*, *pp*, *gliss.*, *p*, *pp*, *mf*, *pp*, and *mf*. The second staff is for Tenor Recorder (Tr. Rec.) with dynamics *p*, *pp*, *sempre pp*, *p*, and *pp*, and a *poco vib.* marking. The third staff is for Clarinet (Cl.) with dynamics *pp*, *p*, *pp*, *sempre pp*, and *mp*. The fourth staff is for Alto Saxophone (Alto Sax.) with dynamics *pp*, *p*, *pp*, *sempre pp*, *p*, and *mp*, and a *poco vib.* marking. The fifth staff is for Percussion (Perc.) with a tempo change from *slow* to *medium* to *slow* and a *(finger pads)* instruction. The sixth staff is for Electric Guitar (E. Gtr.) with fret numbers (0, 12, 16, 19) and dynamics *mf*, *p*, and *mf*. A circled number 6 is located above the final measure of the Vln. staff.

4/4 5/4 7/4 3/2 5/4 4/4

23

Vln. *p* *mf* *pp* *mf* *p* *mp*

T. Rec. *pp* *pp* *pp poss.* *p* *ord. vib.*

Cl. *p* *pp* *pp poss.* *p* *ord. vib.*

Alto Sax. *p* *pp* *p* *pp* *p* *ord. vib.*

Tbn. *ppp* *pp* *pp* *p*

Perc. *mf* *p* *mf*

Pno. *p* *mp* *p* *mf*

E. Gtr. *p* *mf* *p* *mf*

E. Gtr. *p* *mf* *p* *mf*

Breath noises

nail edge

slow

fast (nail edge)

no vib.

ord. vib.

poco vib.

7 **5/4** **3/4** **7/8** **4/4** **5/4** **4/4** **3/4** **5/4** **4/4** **5/4** **4/4**

32 Vln. *pp* *p* *mf* *pp* *mp* *mf* *p* *ord.* *poco scratch* *ord.* *sul pont.* *ord.* *no vib.* *poco vib.* *ord. vib.*

T. Rec. *pp* *p* *mf* *p* *gliss.* *no vib.* *pp* *p* *(no vib. sempre)*

Cl. *pp* *p* *mf* *p* *pp*

Alto Sax. *pp* *mf* *p* *pp*

Tbn. *pp* *p* *mf* *p* *no vib.* *ord. vib.* *pp*

Perc. *palm* *slow* *To Tub. B.* *Tubular Bells* *let ring* *mf* *p* *to Bottles*

Pno. *mf* *voice chords evenly* *f* *mf* *p* *8<sup>va</sup>* *do not spread* *mp* *mp sempre* *catch resonance* *8<sup>va</sup>* *Very slightly slower* *= c.55*

E. Gtr. *p* *mf* *p* *mf*

Double Bass *no vib. scratch* *ord.* *p* *mf* *p* *sul pont.* *ord.* *IV* *poco scratch* *ord.* *mf* *p*

45

5/4 7/4 9/8

scordatura (IV down -> F#)

10 Even Slower ♩ = c.50

4/4 7/4 5/4 3/2 7/4 4/4 5/4

"Crackle" scratch-tone very firm pressure

mp p f pp ppp

ord. vib. mp f possible

pp f

p f

ord. vib. f

Bottles to S.D. f

Even Slower ♩ = c.50

4/4 7/4 5/4 3/2 7/4 4/4 5/4

Snare Drum medium speed nail edge back and forth across drum head finger pads

p

c.7'45"

Pno. ff mf p più ppp medium speed

E. Gtr. f mf let ring

scratch f