

st130.1.48



sumtone

:

michael edwards

skin

for 7-string bass viola da gamba
and computer

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programme note

The form and rhythmic structure of *skin* is closely based on (generated with, even) the following poem by Eugenio Montale (1896-1981), as translated by William Arrowsmith:

Ciò che di me sapeste
non fu che la scialbatura,
la tonaca che riveste
la nostra umana ventura.

What you knew of me
was only a whitened skin,
the cowl that cloaks
our human destiny.

Ed era forse oltre il telo
l'azzurro tranquillo;
vietava il limpido cielo
solo un sigillo.

And perhaps behind the blue veil
the air was blue and still;
between me and the clear sky
lay a simple seal.

O vero c'era il falòtico
mutarsi della mia vita,
lo schiudersi d'un'ignita
zolla che mai vedrò.

Or else it was that wildfire
changing of my life,
the disclosure of the kindled clod
I'll never see.

Restò così questa scorza
la vera mia sostanza;
il fuoco che non si smorza
per me si chiamò: l'ignoranza.

So then this husk remained
my true substance;
the name of unquenched fire
for me was—ignorance.

Se un'ombra scorgete, non è
un'ombra—ma quella io sono.
Potessi spiccarla da me,
offrirvela in dono.

If you glimpse a shade,
it's not a shade—it's me.
If I could strip that shade away,
I'd give it to you, gladly.

Technical Details

Along with amplification, sound file playback, and diffusion, the computer is used to perform real-time granular synthesis (with transposition) of the viol signal using a custom Max/MSP external written by the composer. The viol part was made using the composer's *slippery chicken* algorithmic composition software, as were the pre-prepared sounds triggered during the piece (using the same data and algorithms as the viol part, as well as sounds from that part as input to the sound processing).

Motivations

The nature of the piece is a reaction to a reaction from Mark Summers when he was considering whether to play a previously-written cello piece of mine: "Don't you ever write any long notes?"

Long notes combined with unnatural playing techniques create the potential for all kinds of wonderful failures over and over again. Rather than be avoided, these are desired, amplified, and celebrated. There is beauty there. As well as a detached structural rigour applied almost remotely, coldly, like destruction at a distance, technical sophistication applied to ugly, violent ends.

Which naturally leads to:

programme_note_version_2.0.the_other_side.neither_sophisticated_nor_elevated.but_heartfelt

Rant

and so I finally come back to britain with a real job paying real taxes and what do the bastards spend them on in my name? : bombing the shit out of some poor oppressed people several thousand miles away (as always)

and with a view to robbing them (as always)

and calling it "acts of liberation" (as usual)

and still calling this a democracy (as if)

pisses me off

yeah right 51st state land of the free (free to

shut up

put up

fuck up (collectively of course))

I really tried I did I tried to concentrate on beauty even found myself a nice poem didn't work though it came out really nasty this time shocked even me felt like dr (dj?...nah) frankenstein

consumed by monstrous algorithms

yeah skin

shards of it

dripping off your neighbours' wall

imagine that and tell me you still want those bombs

(it's not the actual crime of this war that gets to me most it's the boundless cynical audacity of their lies so-called reasons justifications imagine them sitting in their clinically secure offices marketing their abominations "[laughing] oh come on no one could believe that" "damn straight they're gonna believe it 'cause we got the best goddamn pr firm ever existed an' if they can sell bud to beer lovers..." (substitute suitably stiff limey equivalent for the downing street version)

saddest thing is they (we!) do believe

because that's what makes it possible again and again and again (and again))

performance requirements

essential equipment:

- the Max/MSP audio programming environment (version 4.5 or above) running on a suitable Macintosh or PC computer
- multi-channel sound card (minimum 2 channels mic/line-in, 8 channels line-out)
- the Max/MSP performance patches supplied by the publisher on CDROM (email hire@sumtone.com, order online at <http://www.sumtone.com/performance-materials.php>, or write to the address at the front of this score)
- MIDI faders (8 minimum) plugged into the computer's sound card. These should send volume messages to Max/MSP on separate MIDI channels. If controller numbers must be sent instead of MIDI channels, then the "midi-faders" patcher in Max will have to be suitably reprogrammed. The MIDI faders attached to the computer are used to control playback level of the viol (no diffusion necessary from the mixing desk); the levels of the pre-prepared sound files; and the live granular synthesis.
- one overhead and one clip-on microphone for the viola da gamba, connected to the sound card either directly or via a mixing desk
- sound system: eight loudspeakers are preferred. They are to be placed around the audience as follows:

1	2
3	4
5	6
7	8

Performances with less loudspeakers are possible by combining two or more channels onto one speaker on the mixing desk or in software (the outputs of Max/MSP or the sound card configuration).

For more details about the software or performance of this piece, please send email to info@sumtone.com or write to the address at the front of the score.

performance directions

A 7-string bass viola da gamba is required for performance. Tuning is as follows:



Figure 1: viola da gamba tuning

Accidentals carry throughout the bar but are repeated in parentheses as necessary.

Except where otherwise indicated, meter changes necessitate rhythmic units to retain the same temporal duration, i.e., when changing from 2/4 to 5/8, an eighth note is equal in both meters.

The first 32 bars of *skin* are optional. Almost no sound is made during this section, rather, a sort of theatre is made out of the act of preparing to play. (The exception is the "seat" direction which should be a shifting or readjustment of the seat: this may or may not result in an audible sound.) The aim of this section is to focus the

audience's attention onto the first sound, which appears in bar 33. This sound is very quiet (though amplified) and thus will benefit enormously from a concentrated audience with a heightened sense of aural expectation. If, however, the performance situation is not suited to this kind of preparative theatre, it may be omitted; the piece would then begin at bar 33.

key to symbols

prepare



Notes with strokes through their heads indicate that no sound is to be made; the rhythm indicated is the duration of a silent event. When "prepare" is written above the note, then the player should prepare to play, with the bow positioned over the string; no note will occur however, as this is merely a theatrical gesture.



Play on the bridge; try to avoid the strings completely (though accidents will happen and this is not necessarily a bad thing).



Dampen the (open) string(s).



Battuto attack.



Arrows indicate a transition from one playing state to another.



Harmonics: the desired partial number is indicated in square brackets below the notes.

ric.....

ricochet

spe

sul ponticello estremo

ste

sul tasto estremo

cl

col legno

vert

Bow vertically up and down the strings as opposed to across; also necessary as tremolo where indicated.

scratch

Scratch tone: lightly dampen the indicated string(s) at a non-nodal point and draw the bow flatly across the string(s) with a continuous downward pressure.



Sub-harmonic tone (on open string). This is a rough sound created by extreme bow pressure (pulling) on the string with little horizontal movement; the string stutters and produces a tone lower than that of the open string.

Nod ↓ 215:g2

All blue notations are for the computer performer. An arrow indicates a trigger point (space bar on the computer keyboard); the number indicates the current bar number; g2 indicates that granulator 2 should be brought into the mix if not already present; g1> means fade out granulator 1 etc. "Nod" means that the viola player should cue the computer player at a trigger point.

skin

duration 17–19 mins.

michael edwards 2003–4

Bass Viol $\text{♩} = 52$ prepare (head down) (relax) seat prepare
 [1.1] $\frac{3}{4}$ $\frac{3}{4}$ $\frac{3}{4}$ $\frac{3}{4}$

6 head up $\frac{3}{4}$ x2 [1.2] (relax) prepare
 $\frac{3}{4}$ $\frac{3}{4}$ $\frac{3}{4}$ $\frac{3}{4}$

13 seat (hold prepare) (relax) seat (then relax) prepare
 [1.3] $\frac{3}{4}$ $\frac{3}{4}$ $\frac{3}{4}$ $\frac{3}{4}$

20 seat (hold prepare) (relax) seat (then relax)
 [1.4] $\frac{4}{4}$ $\frac{7}{8}$ $\frac{4}{4}$ $\frac{6}{4}$

26 prepare cough (hold prepare) (relax)
 $\frac{4}{4}$ $\frac{4}{4}$ $\frac{4}{4}$ $\frac{4}{4}$

32 prepare play! hair; bow barely moving pochissimo Nod 35
 [2.1] $\frac{12}{4}$ $\frac{5}{4}$ $\frac{4}{4}$ $\frac{13}{4}$

36 play, quick start Nod 39
 $\frac{13}{4}$ $\frac{8}{4}$ $\frac{5}{4}$ $\frac{7}{4}$ $\frac{8}{4}$

40 high bow pressure low bow pressure VII SPE
 [2.2] $\frac{8}{4}$ $\frac{4}{4}$ $\frac{4}{4}$ $\frac{4}{4}$ $\frac{4}{4}$ $\frac{4}{4}$

47 Nod 47 [2.3] 7 49
 $\frac{12}{4}$ $\frac{8}{4}$ $\frac{4}{4}$ $\frac{4}{4}$

ppppp *pp sub e sempre* *ppppp* *ppppp* *ppp ppppp sub*

Nod 55: g1>

53 *pppp* *ppppp* *mf* *cl* [24]

Nod 56: g2

57 *pppp* hair *quasi ricochet*

Nod 63: g2, g1>0

63 *ppp* *sub* *cl* *spe* [3.1] *poco ric...* (ord)

69 *1/2 cl* *spe* *hair* **Nod 71** *prepare*

74 (relax) *cl* *spe* [3.2] (M) *cl* (ord) *1/2 cl* (ord) *V*

78 (spe) *cl* *sim* *f* *poss(L.H. loud)* *fall off over bridge* *mf/ppp* **Nod 81: g2<** *ord* *spe* *cl* *1/2 cl* *VIV* [°7]

84 *1/2 cl* *Vcl* *ord* *1/2 cl* *cl(V)* *spe* *p* *ppp* *sub* [°7]

Nod 92

92 *1/2 cl* (spe) *cl(V)* **Nod 94** [°7] *ppp*

Nod 95

95 *IV* *sp* *ste* *1/2 cl* *sp* *g1>0* *ppp* *v* [°5] [°7]

The image shows a musical score for a clarinet part, likely from a contemporary or experimental work. It consists of several staves of music, each with various performance instructions and dynamic markings. The score is annotated with blue arrows pointing to specific measures, labeled with 'Nod' (Nodules) and their corresponding instructions. The dynamic markings range from *pppp* (pianissimo) to *mf* (mezzo-forte). The score includes complex rhythmic patterns, such as triplets and sixteenth notes, and various articulations like 'hair', 'quasi ricochet', and 'fall off over bridge'. The time signatures change throughout the piece, including 6/4, 8/4, 3/8, 6/4, 4/4, 2/4, 3/4, 2/4, 3/4, 2/4, 4/4, and 4/4. The score is divided into measures, with some measures containing multiple notes and rests. The overall style is highly detailed and technical, with a focus on precise performance instructions.

behind but very close to bridge

146 *p* *mf sub* *f* *ff* *pppp*

147:g3<

tailpiece

150:g1<

behind bridge

153 (bow and LH fingers towards bridge) *p* *ff* *f* *f pass.* *mp* *mf*

155:g2<

damp high

157 (harmonic gliss)

158

160 *p* *mp* *pp* *p* *pppp*

160 vert trem rit *

* speed of trem decreases, height of up/down increases

166 *pp* *p* *pppp*

sndfiles>

166 Begin suddenly without any visible preparation

168 *ff* *ffpp* *ff*

171 *ff* *p cresc* *f* *ff*

174 *ff* *[°6]* *[°7]*

176 *ff* *[°6]* *[°5]*

178 *[°6]* *[°5]* *[°6]* *[°6]*

182:g3

183 *sub p* *ff* *[°5]* *[°6]* *[°7]* *[°5]* *mp*

185

185 ric... ric... ric... V sim VI

185 vert

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