

jef chippewa

“... unless he senses when to jump”

for alto sax, accordion, violin, cello, piano and drumset

[ACCORDION]

“... unless he senses when to jump” (2011, rev. 2012)

for alto sax, accordion, violin, cello, piano and drumset

chamber ensemble

duration: ca. 10'00

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commissioned by LUX:NM contemporary music ensemble (berlin)

with the support of the canada council for the arts

<http://www.luxnewmusic.de>

première 3 november 2011

HBC, berlin GERMANY

LUX:NM — ruth velten (sax), silke lange (accordion), ines hu (violin), jacob shaw (cello),

małgorzata walentynowicz (piano) and lucía martinez (drums)

première of the revised version 23 november 2012

heilig kreuz kirche, berlin GERMANY

LUX:NM — ruth velten (sax), silke lange (accordion), benedikt bindewald (violin), beate altenburg (cello),

małgorzata walentynowicz (piano) and matthias engler (drums)

[edition: june 2013]

“... unless he senses when to jump”

under the quirky title “*effervescent powder*” oder “*spuren des populärmusikalischen in der neuen musik*” [“effervescent powder” or “traces of pop musicality in new music”], berlin-based LUX:NM contemporary music ensemble framed a concert in which this work, commissioned by the group, was to be premiered. not having a clue what was meant by the first part of the title, i began composing the work by interpreting the second part of the phrase in various ways, confident the first would eventually also become clear.

in *spalt* (german for “fissure” or “cleft”), the musicians try (successfully as often as not) to play in time with a metronome played by an assistant at a tempo of 15 bpm (i.e. one click every 4 seconds). the entire performance of each musician is a choreography of sounds, gestures and actions, some of which are not meant or likely to be heard in “normal” playing circumstances. then, *eleven* different materials or objects chosen by each musician

instruments

alto sax	played with a jazz embouchure
accordion	a small accordion is best for <i>spalt</i> ; a free bass accordion is needed for the remaining pieces
violin	a carbon fibre bow works wonders for the bow whip actions in <i>spalt</i>
cello	a carbon fibre bow can be used
piano	must be a grand with sostenuto pedal
drumset	see below for details
metronome	played by an assistant (<i>spalt</i>)

each musician must also find and prepare 11 unique materials to be used in *eleven*. see below for details.

drumset

a standard jazz setup can be used as basis for the kit:

- large thick ride (60s jazz ride)
- heavy sizzle cymbal (rivets, not chain!) – some of the rivets can be removed if the sound is too strong in *spalt*
- crash cymbal
- splash cymbal (or very small crash)
- hi-hat
- cowbell
- snare drum (tuned very high)
- tom
- floor tom
- 18” bass drum (very resonant, thin skin)

are used to make their instruments sound in as many different ways. *spur* – a track (recording) or a groove (record), a trace or residue, a path or a lane... the final section is a musical conglomerate (not a collage!) built almost exclusively of citations and stylistic paraphrases from classical, popular, rock and folk music literature – mostly “western” cultural references – played in the character of the source, except where contrary indications appear (e.g., the indication to “swing” debussy’s *violin sonata* “like a drunk cowboy at the end of harvest”)... richard strauss high-fives john bonham while michael jackson sulks in the corner during a punk-ass bavarian beer garden frenzy. feel free to sing along.

i suppose i never did really come to understand what was meant by “effervescent powder”, nor do i suppose it actually matters.

spalt – eleven – spur

this three-piece “set” is not a group of individual “movements” of the larger work. the three titles can be included in programmes in one of the forms given below, or similar (do not use “i, ii, iii” or such). all spelling and punctuation, as well as the use of lowercase, is intentional and must remain as indicated.

“... unless he senses when to jump”: spalt – eleven – spur

“... unless he senses when to jump”:
spalt (the delicious residue of the imperfect)
eleven (effervescent powder)
spur (7 frivolous & somewhat incompatible encounters of the sacred & the profane)

between *spalt* and *eleven*, a brief pause is needed for the accordionist to change instruments; *spur* is played *attacca*.

score and parts

<i>spalt</i>	no score exists, only individual parts
<i>eleven</i>	all have the same score, no parts
<i>spur</i>	score and individual parts exist

performance

notation

- ↓ ↑ downwards / upwards action
- ♯ dampened with the finger or other (as indicated)
- extreme bow pressure (violin, cello) causing a violent rough noise (“scratch tone”) rather than pitch
- ✕ typically used to differentiate from non-standard playing

[∅] dynamics used for actions performed where no sound is expected to result

“*sfz*” dynamic of the *intensity* of the action; the actual resulting sound may diverge greatly

↓ ⇄ heavy / light pressure, of the finger, bow or other

↓ ↑ set or place finger or object downwards / upwards

SET a silent action which serves to prepare the following action

HOLD! unless otherwise indicated, always remain in position after performing any action. “HOLD” is a *security measure*, a reminder in cases where the performer might be inclined to continue movement

spalt (the delicious residue of the imperfect)

assistant – metronome

the assistant plays the metronome manually at a tempo of 15 beats per minute (i.e. one click every four seconds). *only* the assistant may use a stopwatch, or a silent visual metronome (set to play 4/4 at 60 with a different flashing colour on the downbeat) to help play “accurately” – with mechanical precision.

the assistant sits at a distance of at least 3 metres from and facing the musicians, either in the frontmost section of the audience or at the mixing console. this distance contributes slightly to the inaccuracy of the musicians trying to play “on the beat”; the assistant may *not* sit on the stage with the musicians.

the metronome used in the performance must be one of those wooden metronomes with a nice and clear sound. modern plastic makes of this classic model sound cheap and **MUST NOT** be used. the metronome can be positioned over a wooden box (or similar) to slightly amplify (acoustically, do not use electronic amplification!) the clicks.

notation

unless otherwise specified (or obvious), in the sax, violin, cello and drumset parts, stems up indicate right hand actions, stems down left hand actions. for the accordion and piano, as is customary, the upper staff is for the right hand, the lower for the left.

actions notated as a short duration (usually a sixteenth note) should be performed very quickly (but not aggressively); quarter note durations span the entire measure and end either just before or right on the next “beat”. a held note going through a repeat bar indicates that the action continues over the number of resultant repeats indicated.

performance

always play “on the beat”. there will be discrepancies due to the imprecision of playing the very slow tempo and because some of the actions are more difficult to control than others. such discrepancies are essential to the piece but should not be made intentionally; let them occur naturally.

all sustained actions should be played with extreme fluidity, as if they were rapid actions played back in slow motion. similarly, play the entire piece as if the individual actions were all connected parts of a single, fragile, broad phrase. much of this piece is more a choreography of musical action than musical phrasing.

the cello part is slightly longer than the others and is likely to play “solo” with the metronome at the end of this piece.

[dur. ca. 3:30 min.]

eleven (effervescent powder)

11 materials

each musician individually selects 11 materials or objects of greatly varying manufacture that are used to “play” the instrument by rubbing, rolling, scraping them over, around or through the various surfaces and parts of the instrument body.

examples of materials/objects: styrofoam, chopsticks, comb, sandal, tealight candles, hair ball. avoid paper, aluminium foil or other materials that make sound just by moving them; there should only be “audible” sound when a selected material comes into contact with the instrument surface(s).

particularly encouraged are “sound actions” related to the maintenance of your instrument, e.g., wipe/clean the violin/cello strings with a cloth, causing difficult-to-control squeaks; drag a duster along the tuning pins/keys/buttons; wipe the frame of the instrument; lovingly caress a portion of your instrument; etc.

11 times

each musician uses each of their materials once only, without pre-determining the order. start the piece using any material and choose the next material ad lib., possibly in reference to something just played by another musician.

performance

while playing, listen to all other parts and balance your sound accordingly. the sustained sound can vary slightly in dynamic, or even be slightly fragmented, so that other more delicate sounds are able to come through. think more about complementing and helping other sounds to come through than making sure your own sound is heard.

because of the extremely low dynamic, certain precautions should be taken, such as:

- violin/cello: dampen, no open strings should sound
- piano: no pedal (except possibly when strings are otherwise dampened)

begin and end each sound more or less individually but nonetheless as a group, playing the sound more or less constantly over the indicated duration. the sustained sound can of course be reiterative (rattling, vibrating, rubbing back and forth).

always play extremely softly, with small variations around the more or less constant *pppp*.

this conglomerate “chord” is played 11 times. near the end of the 11th reiteration, the accordion slowly and imperceptibly brings in the C-drone to lead into *spur*.

in order to maintain balance with the surrounding pieces, do not go (excessively) over the durations indicated.

enjoy the imperfections of the individual and composite sounds.

[dur. ca. 4:00 min.]

spur (7 frivolous & somewhat incompatible encounters of the sacred & the profane)

performance

musicians are encouraged to make individual contributions – supplements – to the music notated in the score. think of this piece as a pop or jazz chart and add your own personal flair as you see fit!

drumset

the recurring drum beat should be played as heavy and sexy as possible, obsessively in tempo but with imaginative yet relevant variants, such as sporadic and irregularly occurring snare accents, cymbal and/or bass drum accents, but no chops or fills (well, maybe one good and cheesy spinal tap toms triplet could be nice). the few

intervening styles that do occur should be played in character, with a slight punk rock character, but always rigidly in tempo.

others

spur is composed almost exclusively of citations and stylistic paraphrases from classical, pop, rock and folk music literature, predominantly from “western” cultural references. the citations should be played *in character* except where contrary indications appear (e.g. the indication to “swing” debussy’s *violin sonata* “like a drunk cowboy at the end of harvest”).

[dur. 2:30 min.]

[1] move RH thumb into playing position touching – but not depressing! – the key pause as if you started in error

making an obvious effort, LH presses the bellows firmly so that the air slowly escapes, almost soundlessly

slap the thumb hard, depressing the air button and immediately let the button up as the thumb slides off the button to the side (continue pressing the bellows)

suddenly stop pressing the bellows and slowly (visibly) release the hand pressure

[2] RH thumb strikes the key forcefully, making a sharp clicking sound (LH no movement!)

madly play wild, romanian-style gypsy music in C (range in parentheses) – RH extremely fast and energetic scales, arpeggios, trills and ornaments / LH syncopated chordal accompaniment – both hands playing “normally”, but with the bellows action an extremely fast but tiny vibrato rather than push-pull, so light that *only traces* of the music escape... end with bellows ~1/3 open

LH stops bellows just before RH releases the key sharply as if it were the real conclusion of the “gypsy” music

a somewhat metaphysical pause

[3] LH slowly changes the angle of the bellows so that the top parts touch (bottom parts remain in position)

the top parts of the bellows touch each other soundlessly

invert the bellows angle (top parts open, bottom parts close), creating a dull thud

[4] extremely fast LH-RH trill, with as little movement and sound from the buttons as possible, ...

... ending with RH pinky on (but not depressing) the button / LH slowly moves upwards along the keys (audible key clicks) towards and...

... presses the air button, then opens the bellows slowly / RH thumb rests on the button (pinky remains in place)

with a sudden, forceful crescendo ending on the “beat”, release LH thumb suddenly, and immediately increase the LH pressure, timed so that the sharp accent brings out the sound of the valve closing (not the air sound!!!)

RH depresses the buttons, suddenly look at another musician and prepare to...

... cue him / her and keep staring

[5] extremely fast – gypsy speed – and very small bellows tremolo as quiet as possible, slowly looking away from the musician to your instrument, then...

... suddenly remove LH and slowly move it to a resting position as an almost theatrical representation of the sound the instrument makes as the weight of the bellows continues to cause the instrument to sound

suddenly lean the body to the left (volume increases) and hold, letting the bellows continue to empty

initially keeping keys depressed, extremely rapid vibrato and gradually lift the thumb from the key, leaving upper note sounding as lower note fades

stop the vibrato and allow to fade

stop the tremolo and allow any final squeaks to sound

pause

[6] trill as you slowly sit up straight (some tiny traces of sound may occur as the bellows moves about) and...

... sharply depress the D $\flat$ button

calmly sit back in your chair to a relaxed position, allowing traces of the accordion to sound (if they happen to feel like doing so)

pause, pensively (extend as appropriate)

[7] release the button with intention and slowly move RH to a resting position listen intensely to one sound in the room

ACCORDION

“... unless he senses when to jump”

spalt (the delicious residue
of the imperfect)

STARTING POSITION:

RH resting on thigh / LH holding bellows wide open
(bellows only half open if using concert accordion)

EACH PLAYER ENTERS INDIVIDUALLY after approximately
6-13 clicks of the metronome; always play “in time” with it,
although slight divergences are expected / desired

jef chippewa

♩ = 15
METRONOME ① 6-13x SET (oops!) subito! ↓ on verge of audibility “gypsy” release HOLD!

SMALL FREEBASS [∅] press hard thumb “sfz” (no air!) ppp poss.

BELLOWS [∅] “sfz” STOP!

③ close top of → bellows STOP! “mfz” “pppppppp” along keys poco cresc. “sfz” cue some-one shake like a gypsy trill LH out +to rest “sfppp”

④ like a bat out of hell SET [∅] [∅] “sfz”

⑤ +SET

⑥ tr^b “pp” “sfz” straighten up lean back to rest

⑦ “mfz” RH to rest “??x” “mfz” ~7x METRONOME

lean to left “sfz” raise thumb senza vib. 2-4x listen...

once the last performer has come to a resting position,
ALLOW ANOTHER 7 (or so) CLICKS OF THE METRO-
NOME BEFORE IT IS STOPPED UNCEREMONIOUSLY

eleven (effervescent powder)

new material each time

change materials quickly, pause only long enough to cue entry and continue

10x

ppp poss.

acc

ATTACCA

ca. 10-15"

ca. 10-15"

pppp

spur (7 frivolous & somewhat incompatible encounters of the sacred & the profane)

approx. 10" **1** ♩=69 SEHR BREIT

[DRUM enters]

pp

mp

sub. *mf*

f

2 BANAL GEEK POP

secco, forzato mechanically

pp

BASS CHANGER

"*sffz*"

"*sffz*"

"*sffz*"

"*sffz*"

"*sffz*"

"*sffz*"

SEHR BREIT

10

3 more a yell than singing

punk *ff*

[sing] re - bel gr - rl, re - bel gr - rl, re - bel girl you are the queen of my world

f

f

f

f

4

independent tempi (sx acc vln pno)

starting sort of on the downbeat, play several very short but immediately recognizable fragments (fade-in/out) of “popular” works, songs, tunes etc. for your instrument; play “out of tempo” according to each fragment...

... and quickly fade out or stop immediately as the rock beat returns

SEHR BREIT

14 16

pp *ff* *feierlich*

5

DOUBLE TEMPO

20

E♭ *B♭7* *E♭* *B♭7* *E♭*

TEMPO PRIMO

6

crazy gypsy music (or sexy tango)
26 independent tempo

TEMPO PRIMO

fade-out /
stop individually

7

DOUBLE TEMPO

sing along with
the pianist! (*giocosu*)

24 26

f [DRUM beat returns] *mp* *molto*

like a church organ at a marriage

31 34 36 G.P.

fff *ska*

