

offset v - set-off

— — for ensemble
(picc, ob, b.cl, c.bn, hn, tpt, tbn, 1 perc, cel, str. 1.1.1.1.1)

- Conductor's Part -

Bofan Ma (2018)

Commissioned for RNCM 'In Focus: George Benjamin' Festival

December 2018

This piece is to be performed with a fixed line-up. It explores a subtle and interactive relationship between the conductor and the instrumentalists. The conductor serves to carry out certain physical movements, to which the instrumentalists react and choose what to play accordingly. The piece is structurally sub-divided into 5 sections (attaca throughout). An approximate timeline (c. 8'30" in total) and 'pacing' suggestions are given to the conductor. The length of the performance is entirely dependent on the conductor's 'subjective time'. No stopwatch should therefore be used.

General suggestions for performance:

- All instrumentalists are encouraged to stay as still as possible when not playing, preferably also with their instruments ready at all times.
- A straight face should be maintained throughout the performance (where possible).
- All instrumentalists (whether playing or not) are asked to pause and freeze whenever the conductor does a page-turn, actions resume as soon as the (turned) page is dropped completely.
- Graphics showing conductor's gestures on the conductor's part are given from the audience's perspective.



e.g.

- Graphics showing conductor's gestures on the instrumentalists' parts are given from the on-stage perspective, which may appear flipped in comparison to those shown to the conductor.



e.g.

- Subtitles for all 5 sections are given to the conductor only. They serve to imply how should the conducting gestures within a section be received by the instrumentalists, and therefore responded to through the sound they make.
- The performance starts with the solo celesta. It may even start before the tuning-up session. All other instrumentalists are advised to carry on with their pre-performance routine without being distracted, and to only follow the conductor's actions.
- The performance finishes with the conductor closing the back cover of the score.

(THIS PAGE SHOULD ALREADY BE OPEN PRIOR TO THE START OF PERFORMANCE)

INTRO - peripheral, as if anecdotal, whilst aggressively peaceful

0'00" - c. 1'30" (4 pages)

(Celesta starts playing without being cued, it will carry on repeating itself until Section III)

Give the celesta c.15", stand still, hands off the score.

then

Turn this page over (speed ad lib., make sure the action is clear enough for the performer to see, whilst not making any eye contact).

(1 of 4)

Similarly, stand still for couple of seconds,
then turn the page over.

(2 of 4)

Stand still,
then page-turn.

(3 of 4)

Stand still,
then page-turn.

(SECTION I next page)

I - bendy, inevitably rickety, albeit alluringly discomfoting
c. 1'30" - c. 4'30"

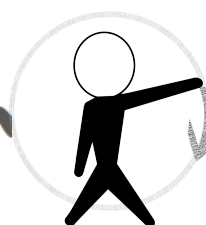
Maintain a relatively steady pace, and always use the spare hand to turn pages
(the length of the wiggly line in-between 'clocks' only implies how long should be
spent on each page):

0 o'clock



(c. 30")

2 o'clock



(c. 30" till "4 o'clock")

WITH:

- picc.
- b.cl.
- c.bn.
- t-t.

WITH:

- 2 x vlms.
- vc.
- db.
- t-t.

4 o'clock



(c. 30" till "6 o'clock", page 1 of 3)



WITH:

picc.

b.cl.

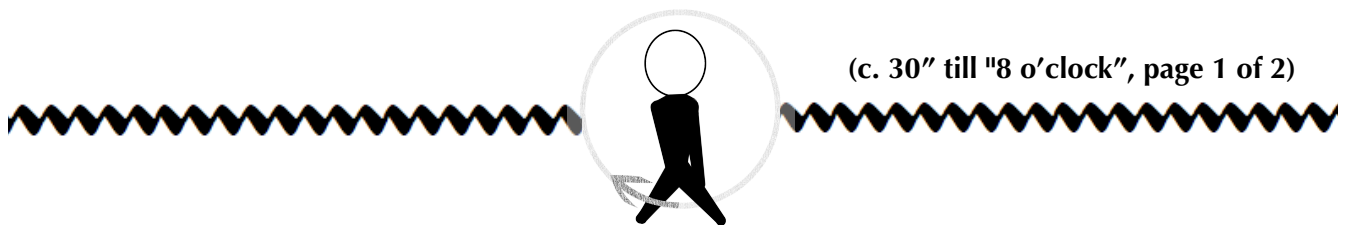
c.bn.

t-t.

(4 - 6 o'clock, page 2 of 3)



6 o'clock



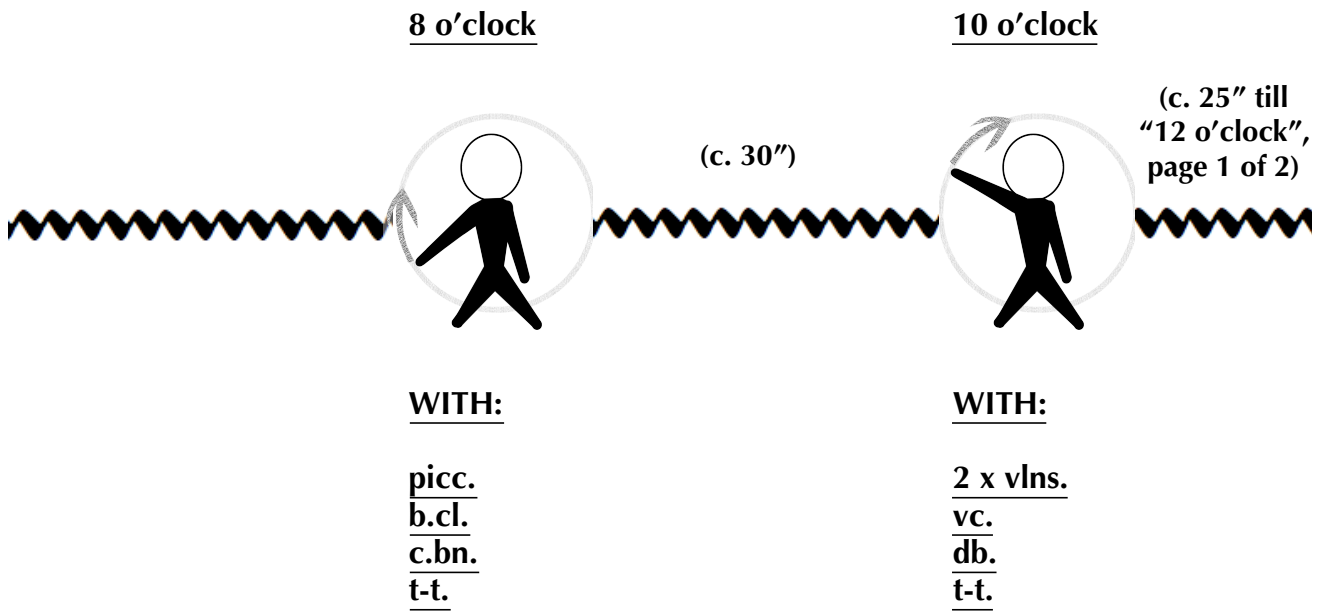
WITH:

2 x vlns.

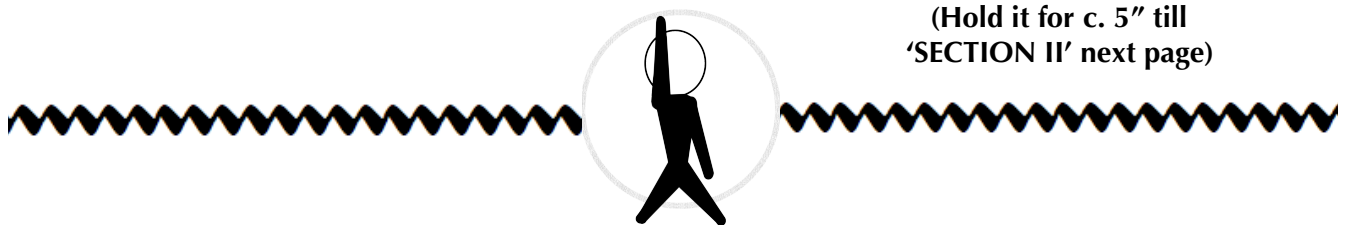
vc.

db.

t-t.



12 o'clock



WITH:

2 x vlns.

vc.

db.

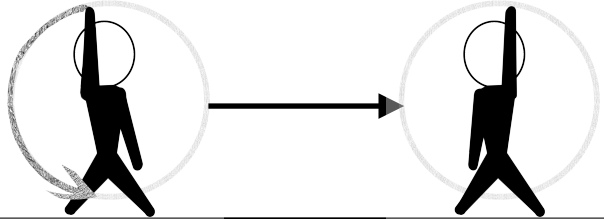
t-t.

II - unnecessary, almost make-believe, why playing instruments?

c. 4'30" - c. 5'30" (7 pages)

Randomly, repeatedly, and continuously carry out following actions:

A. Fast rewind (w/ob. & vla.)



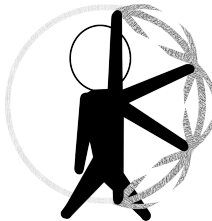
B. 'Retracted' (w/tom-t.)



C. Stretched (w/brass, vln.II, vc.)



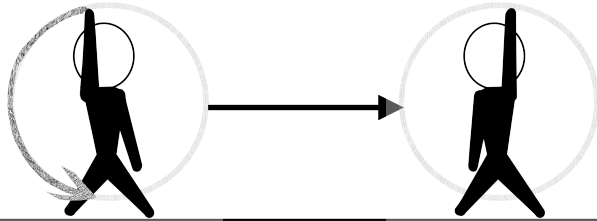
D. Glitchy repetitions (w/picc., b.cl., c.bn., vln.I, db.)



E. Page-turn

(Possibly alongside A. &/or D.)

A. Fast rewind (w/ob. & vla.)



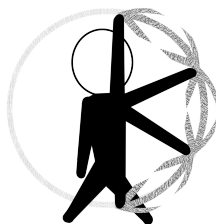
B. 'Retracted' (w/tom-t.)



C. Stretched (w/brass, vln.II, vc.)



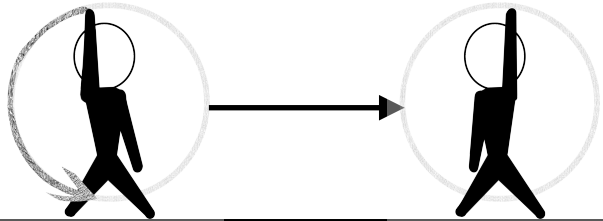
D. Glitchy repetitions (w/picc., b.cl., c.bn., vln.I, db.)



E. Page-turn

(Possibly alongside A. &/or D.)

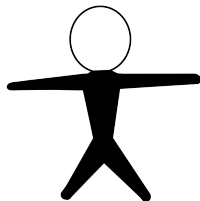
A. Fast rewind (w/ob. & vla.)



B. 'Retracted' (w/tom-t.)



C. Stretched (w/brass, vln.II, vc.)



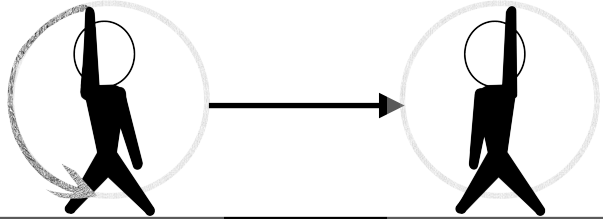
D. Glitchy repetitions (w/picc., b.cl., c.bn., vln.I, db.)



E. Page-turn

(Possibly alongside A. &/or D.)

A. Fast rewind (w/ob. & vla.)



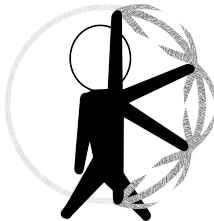
B. 'Retracted' (w/tom-t.)



C. Stretched (w/brass, vln.II, vc.)



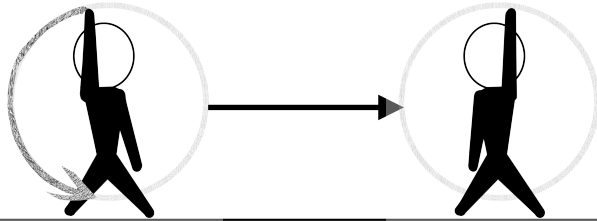
D. Glitchy repetitions (w/picc., b.cl., c.bn., vln.I, db.)



E. Page-turn

(Possibly alongside A. &/or D.)

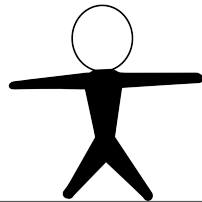
A. Fast rewind (w/ob. & vla.)



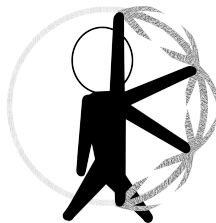
B. 'Retracted' (w/tom-t.)



C. Stretched (w/brass, vln.II, vc.)



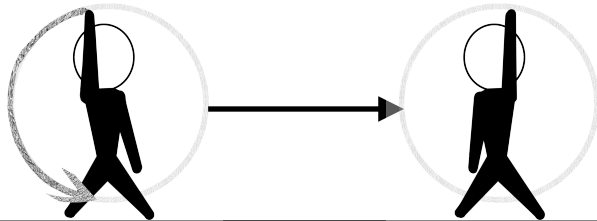
D. Glitchy repetitions (w/picc., b.cl., c.bn., vln.I, db.)



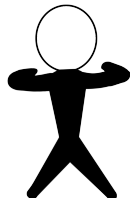
E. Page-turn

(Possibly alongside A. &/or D.)

A. Fast rewind (w/ob. & vla.)



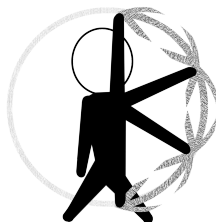
B. 'Retracted' (w/tom-t.)



C. Stretched (w/brass, vln.II, vc.)



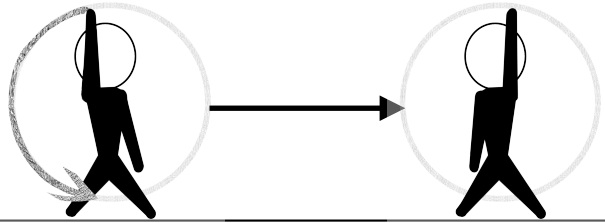
D. Glitchy repetitions (w/picc., b.cl., c.bn., vln.I, db.)



E. Page-turn

(Possibly alongside A. &/or D.)

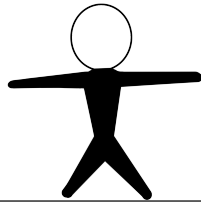
A. Fast rewind (w/ob. & vla.)



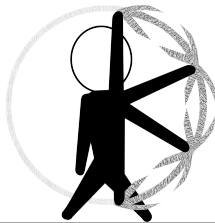
B. 'Retracted' (w/tom-t.)



C. Stretched (w/brass, vln.II, vc.)



D. Glitchy repetitions (w/picc., b.cl., c.bn., vln.I, db.)



E. Page-turn

(Possibly alongside A. &/or D.)

(SECTION III next page)

III - fluid, probably a tad cheesy, whereas unknowingly provocative

c. 5'30" - c. 7'00" (6 pages)

- Tutti throughout -

Truly affectionate and expressive conducting:

Imagine performing the most breathtaking section leading up to the ultimate climax of a Mahler, Tchaikovsky, or Rachmaninoff symphony, with the same level of passion, strength, and anticipation being accumulated.

The section should finish at either the very edge prior to the climax, or when the climax is just about to unfold.

Time signatures, rubato, dynamic shapes et al. ad lib., with a clear sense of overall crescendo and acceleration.

(2 of 6)

(3 of 6)

(4 of 6)

(5 of 6)

(OUTRO Next Page)

OUTRO - cut-off, for the sake of being active, though literally no sound can be made

(c. 7'00" - c. 8'30")

Stand still,
hands off the score,
and wait for the celesta to finish.

Then slowly close the back cover.

Knackered.