

mechanical trees

for bassoon, piano, percussion and page turns

Daniel Silliman

(2014)

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instrumentation:

bassoon

piano

percussion (1 player, seated in a drumset-type setup)

- bongos (high and low)
- 3 temple blocks, arranged low-medium-high (can substitute cowbells *ad lib.* so long as pitch gradation is appreciable)
- kick drum
- snare drum
- floor tom
- hi-hat
- guiro (large)
- suspended cymbal (w/ bass bow)

page turns

performance notes:

The fourth instrument listed in the score, the page turn, is played by each of the three instrumentalists with their own parts. This fourth instrument is necessitated by the preparation of the parts themselves: only a single measure is printed on the right-hand page of each leaf. The performers play each measure as written, observing all tempi, fermatae, repeats, and other performance indications before turning the page in order to proceed.

The turns themselves should be executed in as fast and noisy a manner as possible (*sffz*), unless indicated otherwise. Whether playing or resting, the performer waits until *after* the full measure's duration to turn the page, and resumes playing (or resting) from the beginning of the next measure as soon as possible. The first measure is started together, but thereafter the parts are in no way coordinated and are executed at will. The parts may stop (i.e. run out of pages) at different times. The piece ends when the last page is turned.

The parts should be bound with a plastic coil (i.e. not comb-bound!) on the long left-hand side, and printed on a light yet durable paper which is flexible enough so as to be sufficiently noisy when turned without being too susceptible to tearing. This necessarily involves quite a lot of paper, and performance materials are available from the composer.

remarks about the score:

A traditional score was eschewed in favor of one that allows tracking the progress of each part independently without the concern of vertical alignment between the parts, which in performance is necessarily convoluted by the indeterminate nature of the page turns.

To achieve this end, each part is given its own "module" on every page, which is read from left to right starting with the top system and proceeding down through the subsequent systems. Other than the first module, which is started together, these do not serve to indicate any other points of alignment throughout the work. As such, some parts may appear to proceed to the next module on the following page in the score while other parts are still on the previous module, and as stated above, it is unlikely that the parts will finish at the same time. These outcomes are completely acceptable and within the bounds of the work's intended flow of events.

In the score, the page turns are abbreviated with a single-line staff between each of the printed part's pages. For the sake of consistency, the abbreviation is used even when moving from one system to the next within a given part; as such, some systems end with a single line whereas others begin with it (e.g. compare first and fourth systems of bassoon's module on first page of score). As noted above, the turns should be executed as quickly as possible unless otherwise notated, though naturally the duration of each turn will be largely determined by the speed with which the deliberate inefficiencies of the part can be circumvented.

mechanical trees was written for the 48-hour Composers' Concert at the Bowdoin International Music Festival in Brunswick, ME, and the premiere was given on July 28, 2014

duration: ca. 4'

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♩ = 80-84

Bassoon

Bassoon part of the score. It consists of four staves of music in bass clef. The first staff starts with a 6/4 time signature, followed by 4/8, 2/4, 5/4, and 3/4+2/4+3/8. The second staff starts with 3/4+2/4+3/8, followed by 4/4, 7/8, and 4+3/4. The third staff starts with 4+3/4, followed by 4+3/8, 4+3/8, and 3/4. The fourth staff starts with 2/4, followed by 3/4, 3/4, and 3/4. Dynamics include *p*, *sf*, *sfz*, and *sf*. Performance instructions include "(ord.)", "3" (triplets), and "* hard staccato on the reed; sound is more percussive than pitched".

♩ = 84

Piano

Piano part of the score. It consists of three staves of music in treble clef. The first staff starts with a 4/4 time signature, followed by 3/4, 3/8, and 2/4. The second staff starts with 2/4, followed by 4+3/8, 4+3/8, and 4+8. The third staff starts with 4+8, followed by 2/4, 4/4, and 3/4. The fourth staff starts with 3/8, followed by 4/4, 4/4, and 3/4. Dynamics include *pp*, *pp*, *p*, *sfz*, *f*, *f*, *pp*, *f*, *pp*, and *ff*. Performance instructions include "meno mosso (♩ = 63)", "mute strings inside piano", "tempo I (♩ = 84)", "(loco)", "come sopra", and "3" (triplets).

♩ = 88 - 92

Percussion

Percussion part of the score. It consists of three staves of music. The first staff starts with a 3/8 time signature, followed by 4/4, 2/4, 4+3/8, 3/8, and 4/4. The second staff starts with 4/4, followed by 3/8, 4/4, and 2/4. The third staff starts with 3/8, followed by 4/4, 3/8, 3/8, and 4/4. Dynamics include *sf*, *p*, *sf*, *p*, *sf*, *p*, *sf*, *p*, *f*, *ff*, *p*, and *mf*. Performance instructions include "high bongo (hands - finger roll)", "to sticks", "3 temple blocks (sticks - with the tips)", "med. low", "high", "p ³ sf", "p ³ lilting ³ sf", "p ³", "high bongo (hands)", "low bongo", "to hands", "3", "temple blocks (sticks)", "to sticks", "f ³", "ff", "p", and "mf ³".

lunga, ca. 10"

Bsn.

Bassoon part consisting of four staves. The first staff starts with a rest and then has a triplet of eighth notes marked *f*. The second staff has a triplet of eighth notes marked *f*, followed by a crescendo to *p* and a sforzando *sfz*. The third staff has a triplet of eighth notes marked *f*, followed by a decrescendo to *sfz* and then *ff*. The fourth staff has a triplet of eighth notes marked *ff*, followed by a decrescendo to *mf* and then *fff*.

Pf.

meno mosso (♩ = 63) tempo I (♩ = 84)

Piano part with two staves. The first staff has dynamics *fffz*, *mf*, *p*, and *pp*. The second staff has dynamics *fp*, *f*, *ff*, and *p*. The piano accompaniment includes a section labeled "boogie-woogie (loco)" with dynamics *f*, *p*, *mf*, and *ff*. There are also markings for *8va* and *come sopra*.

Perc.

Percussion part with four staves. The first staff includes "3 temple blocks" and dynamics *p*, *f*, *p*, *f*. The second staff includes "kick drum", "snare (cross stick)", "kick + floor tom", "guiro", and "snare". The third staff includes "kick + hi-hat (foot)", "temple blocks", and dynamics *f*, *sfz*, *f*, *sfz*, *p*, *sf*. The fourth staff includes "virtuoso freak-out, ad lib.", "come sopra", "susp. cymbal (l.v.)", and dynamics *ff*, *p*, *ff*, *p*, *ppp*.

meno mosso (♩ = 63)

turn page slowly, don't rush to next measure. . . .

Bsn.

fff fff ff fff
 ff ff p pp
 f f sf

*multiphonic: with low A# fingering, remove F# and B and add both Es; sound should be complex and distorted

Pf.

meno mosso (♩ = 63) tempo I (♩ = 84) (loco)

pp $sffz$ ff p mf pp ff $sffz$
 $8va$ $8va$ $15ma$ $15ma$
 $8va$ $8va$ $8va$ $8va$

(7x-8x, ad lib.)

Perc.

tempo I (♩ = 63) meno mosso (♩ = 63)

tempo I (♩ = 88 - 92) virtuoso freak-out, ad lib.

temple blocks (sticks - with the tips)

low bongo

p ppp ff mf p
 mf pp mf ppp
 f $pppp$ f $pppp$

with the back half of the stick resting on snare drum, cross-stick on the head of the low bongo. At the same time, gradually slide more of the stick onto the head of the bongo. The resultant sound should gradually rise in pitch as the stick moves. Return the stick to its halfway point at the start of each measure.

Bsn.

turn page slowly, don't rush to next measure.

f *sf* *p* *mf* *p* *pp* *mf* *ppp*

fine
slow turn. . . .

Pf.

meno mosso (♩ = 63)

turn page slowly, don't rush to next measure.

mf *pp* *p* *sf* *sffz* *ppp* *sffz*

8va *al fine* *15* *loco* *8va* *15ma* *slow turn. . . .* *fine*

Perc.

ancora meno mosso, ♩ = 52

come sopra

to bass bow

slow turn.

p *pp* (fast turn) *fine*

(begin measure during resonance of bowed cymbal)

susp. cymbal
arco (bass bow) (l.v.) to sticks
temple blocks (sticks)
hi-hat (sticks)

p *pp* *pp* *p*