Ecstatic Music

for violin and percussion

Taylor Brook

2012

rev. 2013

concert notes

Ecstatic Music was written for Mira Benjamin and Ben Duinker in connection with a recording project of our many collaborations as well as for the 2012 Nu:Nord conference on contemporary music. The work was revised in the Spring of 2013 for a second performance.

This piece attempts to portray the performers in a state of ecstasy, channelling the music from an unknown source. This type of sublime experience may be impossible to embed in the notation and is more connected to the theatricality of a performance (memorization on the part of the performers is key), but never the less this is what I've attempted. A physical theatricality has been embedded in the notes on the page along with an obsessive treatment of the musical materials. Furthermore, occasionally I call for techniques that are unstable and elicit unpredictable results from the instruments. For example, playing a violin with extra bow pressure while performing a glissandi of harmonics will always create a rich overall sound, but the exact result cannot be repeated precisely.

The violin and percussion are closely linked throughout the work as the two parts are most often playing in rhythmic unison, functioning as a single compound instrument. The violin as well as the two guitars played by the percussionist are all retuned to obtain a precisely-tuned palette of microtonal pitches. Although the harmonies are often obscured, the piece is in an extended just intonation harmonic system rooted on E.

general notation

arrow - Signifies a gradual change from the marking at the beginning of the arrow to what is marked at the end. For example, if you find in your part an "ord" marked with an arrow leading to "alto sul tasto" then it should be executed as a gradual movement of the bow from the ordinary playing position to the alto sul tasto position for the duration between the beginning and end of the arrow.

Glissandi must be performed for the entire duration of the note.

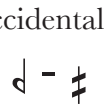
 - unmeasured tremolo (fluttertounge)

 - dampen sound

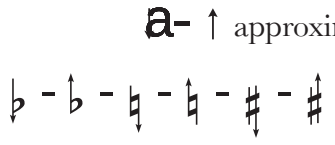
microtonality and just intonation

Although there are many microtones in this work, much of the harmony is quite consonant. The microtones are used to approximate just intervals, therefore small adjustments should be made by ear to play these intervals perfectly in tune. I advise the performers to listen for the root of the chord (when present) in order to understand their particular role in the harmony.

The following acccidental nomenclature is also used to approximate exact pitches:

 approximately 1/4 tone flat or sharp

 approximately 1/6 tone flat or sharp

 approximately 1/12 tone flat or sharp

The accidentals showing the twelfth-tone (one sixth of a semitone) alterations should be thought of as extremely small inflections of the pitch. This minute alteration in pitch equals the difference between the just major third (the fourth harmonic) and the equal temperament major third. Wind players need not use alternate fingerings for these pitches, instead they should inflect the pitch slightly as one must do in tonal music performance practice when tuning the third of a chord. In other words, it is best to treat the notes with these accidentals as if they required a slight inflection for the sake of good tuning.

The sixth-tone (one third of a semitone) alteration equals the difference between the seventh harmonic and the equal temperament minor seventh. In other words, the seventh harmonic is a sixth-tone flat of the equal temperament minor seventh. This difference may be demonstrated by sounding the seventh harmonic on the fourth string of the cello; the pitch of this harmonic will be a sixth-tone flat of an equal temperament B-flat.

The quarter-tone alteration should be precisely halfway between the equal tempered pitches. The quarter-tone alteration can be heard at the 11th partial of the harmonic series, which is exactly halfway between the perfect fourth and the tritone. Again, the difference can be tested by playing the 11th harmonic on the low C string of the cello to produce an F-quartertone-sharp.

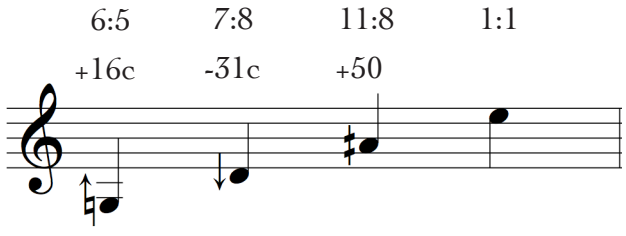
The most important thing to keep in mind is that the goal of these microtones is often to realize acoustically consonant harmonies; if the performer can recognize their role in the harmony, this will ensure optimal tuning of the microtones.

violin notation

scordatura:

The violin must be retuned thusly. An audio file to tune to for reference can be found here:

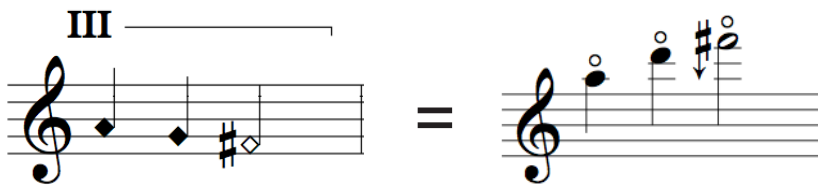
http://www.taylorbrookmusic.com/ecstatictunings/



natural harmonics:

Natural harmonics are notated in two different ways, depending on the context

1. For the second through fifth partial, diamond noteheads show where to touch the string along with a roman numeral indicating the string.



bow placement indications:

ord. - ordinario position

s.t. - sul tasto - (Bow over the end of the fingerboard.)

s.p. - sul ponticello - (Bow close to the bridge.)

a.s.p. - alto sul ponticello - (Bow so that part of the hair is on the bridge and part is on the string, thereby producing a quiet but harsh sound. This technique will often silence the fundamental pitch of the string.)

p.s.p. - poco sul ponticello - (Bow slightly closer to the bridge than ordinario position.)

bowing technique indications:

norm. - Use a normal bow technique.

scratch - Produce a scratching sound by using a slow bow stroke with extra pressure.

vibrato indications:

vib. - with some vibrato

s.vib. - no vibrato

m.vib. - with a lot of vibrato

slow, wide vib. - a slow and wide vibrato, up to a quarter-tone of bending

percussion notation

instruments:

two steelstring guitars
three medium-large tomtoms
kick drum

mallets:

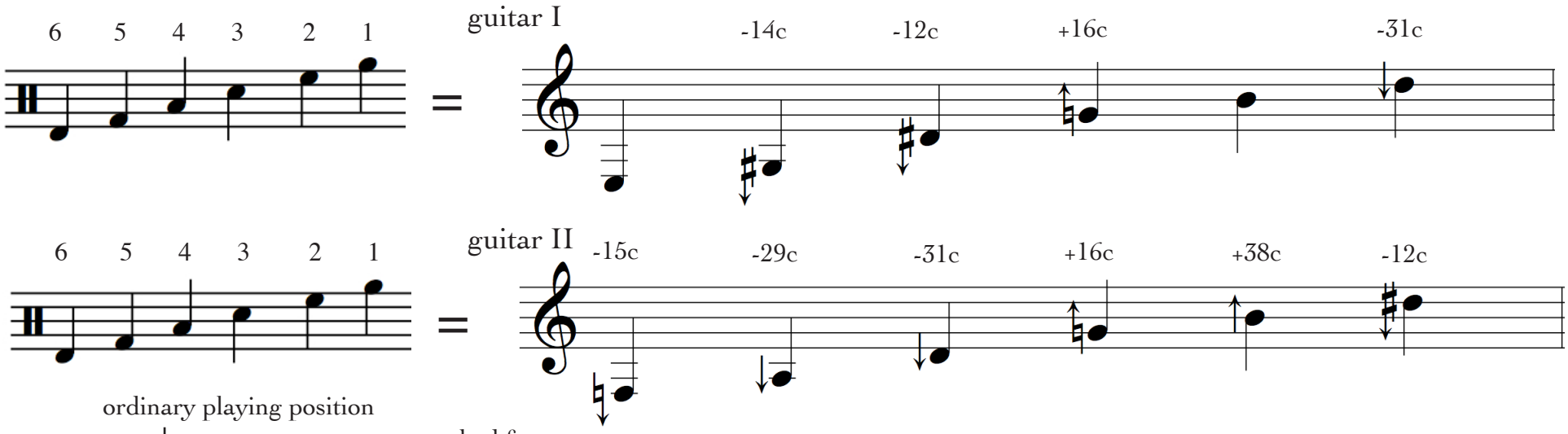
the following mallets should be used and are called for thusly:

dowels - 2 wooden dowels, covered with moleskin or electrical tape
mallets - 2 medium-hard wool marimba mallets
drumsticks - two wooden drumsticks

guitars:

The guitars should be strung with high tension steel strings in order to be played most effectively with mallets and bows. The tunings for the open strings of the guitars are provided below. The numbers given above the microtonal pitches in the tunings signify the deviation of those pitches in cents (hundredths of a semitone) from the nearest equal temperament note. To perform the playing techniques correctly, the guitar must be secured on its back to a table that covered in foam or some other soft material.

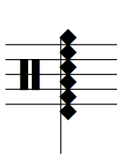
I have notated the guitar on a staff with a percussion clef, where each of the six guitar strings corresponds to a space on the staff, including the spaces just above and below the top and bottom lines. For example, the string with the highest pitch is notated in the space above the top line of the staff. Harmonics are notated as diamond noteheads along with a roman numeral indicating at what fret one must stop the strings in order to produce the correct harmonic.



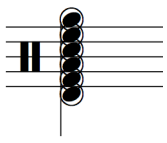
A soundfile that exemplifies the tuning can be found here:
http://www.taylorbrookmusic.com/ecstatictunings/

preparations:

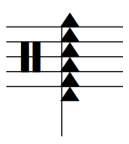
The second guitar begins the piece with pieces of cork wedges between the first and second, third and fourth, and fifth and sixth strings respectively. The cork should be cut to fit snugly and be placed an inch or two from the end of the strings near the bridge.



- harmonics — Press lightly on the strings with the left hand pointer finger on the fret indicated by a roman numeral.



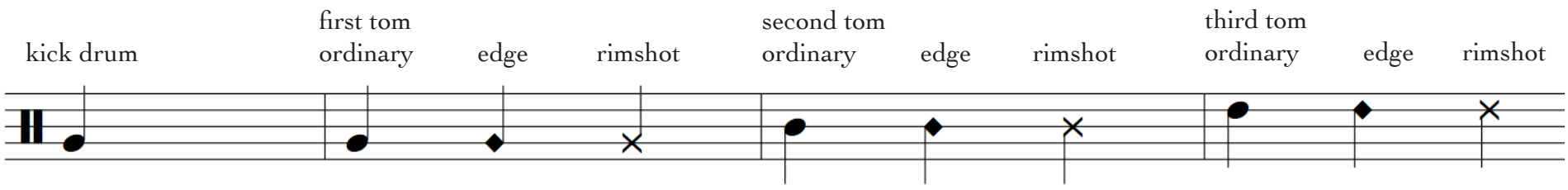
- stopped with drumstick — Press down on the strings with the left-hand drumstick on the fret indicated by a roman numeral.



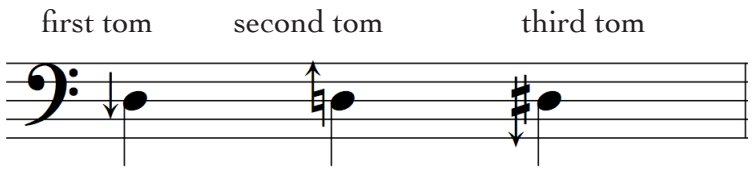
- other side of nut — Play the small area of string between the tuning heads and the nut.

tomtoms:

The third staff is for the tomtoms, which are notated thusly:



The toms should all be the same size and tuned to the pitches shown below. It is understood that this level of accuracy of tuning is not possible, but an effort should be made to tune to these pitches as precisely as possible.



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for Mira Benjamin and Ben Duinker

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♩ = 72 ACCEL ♩ = 92

Violin untransposed

Violin transposed

p.s.p. → s.p. → ord.

s.p. → ord.

ffp *ff* *mf* *f* *ff*

dowel

V

Guitar 1

ff *f*

Guitar 2

With 3 pieces of cork between the strings of guitar 2 near the bridge.

Tomtoms

f

5

♩ = 72 ACCEL (♩ = 92) ♩ = 76

Vln. untrans.

Vln.

s.p. ord. s.p. ord.

mf *f* *ff* *fff* *fp* *ff* *ffp* *ff* *mf*

VII IV

Gtr. 1

Gtr. 2

f *ff* *f* *ff*

2 wooden drumsticks

Toms

f *ff*

9

ACCEL

Vln.

s.p. s.p. → ord. s.p. → ord. s.p. → ord. s.p. → ord.

ff *f* *fp* *f* *ff*

ricochet

s.p. VII → IX

Gtr. 1

Gtr. 2

s.p. ord.

mp *ff*

Toms

f *ff* *f*

2

14

♩ = 114

POCO ACCEL → (♩ = 124)

POCO RIT. → A TEMPO (♩ = 114)

Vln. untrans.

Vln.

scratch →

norm.

s.p.

ord.

gliss up beyond the fretboard

XII → XIX

Gtr. 1

Gtr. 2

Toms

(♪=♪) ♩ = 74

ACCEL → (♩ = 92)

19

p.s.p.

ord.

gliss harmonics

ricochet

wool mallets
ricochet

♩ = 72

23

varied scratching
bow as needed

extra bow pressure

s.p.

remove corks

♩ = 80

26

ord.
m.vib. → s.vib.

m.vib.

RIT.

VII → I

bow

V

strum
ord.

VII → III → XII

strum
s.p.

♩ = 58 ACCEL (♩ = 110)

32

Vln. — ffp, ff, f, f, ff, f, ff — s.p., ord., p.s.p., ord.

Gtr. 1 — V→I, V→I, III, strum s.p. ff

Gtr. 2 — VII, strum s.p. ff, XII f, VII

♩ = 72

36

Vln. — slow, wide vibrato; ffp, mp, p — p.s.p., s.p., ord.; ff, f, ff, f — ff — m.vib., s.p., s.vib., ord.; f

Gtr. 1 — strum ff — pluck with fingers f, f

Gtr. 2 — V fff — ff — pluck with fingers ff, ff

Toms — f, mp — ff

ACCEL (♩ = 110)

40

Vln. untrans. — ffp — fff

Vln. — ffp, mf — vib. — s.vib. ff, fff — f, ff, f, ff — s.p. f, fff

Gtr. 1 — plectrum s.p. VII ff — IV

Gtr. 2 — V ff

♩ = 84

45

Vln. untrans. — ord. — at frog, scratch — norm. — s.t. — ord. III II I II — III III II III — II

Vln. — ffp, fff — p, mp — p, mp, p — mp — p, mf — mp — mp

Gtr. 1 — ff

Gtr. 2 — dowel mp, f — ff — s.p.

Toms — wool mallets mp — mp — p, mp, mf — p — p

51

Vln. untrans.

Vln.

III I II III III IV III II I II III

gliss harmonics

8va 15ma

mp mf mp pp mf

Gtr. 1

pluck

pp mf pp

Toms

ricochet

p mp mp

56

ACCEL

s.p. ord. s.p. ord.

Vln.

ff fp fp fp ff mp fp f

Gtr. 1

2 dowels

f fp f mf ff fp f

59

(♩ = 110) RIT. ♩ = 84

Vln. untrans.

Vln.

s.p. ord. s.p. ord. s.p.

p.s.p.

fp f ffp f ff

Gtr. 1

dowel

fp f fp f

Gtr. 2

pluck with l.h.

s.p.

f

Toms

mf

63

♩ = 126

Vln. untrans.

Vln.

s.p. ord.

f ff f ff fff p p

Gtr. 1

dowel

s.p.

pluck with l.h.

fp ff

Gtr. 2

f ff

Toms

ff

66

♩ = 72

♩ = 92

Vln.

vib. → s.vib.

vib. → s.vib.

→ s.p.

→ ord.

→ scratch → norm.

Gtr. 1

bow → scratch → norm.

Gtr. 2

bow

I → V

strum

strum

strum

70

ACCEL → (♩ = 120)

Vln. untrans.

Vln.

m.vib.

s.vib. ord.

s.p. → ord.

bow

Gtr. 1

bow at frog

2 dowels

Gtr. 2

Toms

74

♩ = 88

Vln. untrans.

Vln.

s.p.

s.t. → s.p.

scratch

norm. → scratch

norm. III IV

gliss harmonics

Gtr. 2

wool mallets

Toms

80

Vln. untrans.

Vln.

III

s.p.

Toms

2 wooden drumsticks

84

Vln. untrans.

Vln.

ord. → m.vib.

→ scratch → norm.

Toms

87

RIT. ♩ = 72 ♩ = 92

Vln. untrans.

s.vib. vib. → s.vib.

→ scratch norm. → scratch

Vln.

V → I → IV

Gtr. 1

Gtr. 2

Toms

94

ACCEL

Vln. untrans.

s.p.

with one finger

vib. → s.vib. vib. → s.vib.

p.s.p. → ord.

Vln.

s.p. → ord.

→ s.p.

dowel V

Gtr. 1

Toms

98

♩ = 124 ♩ = 92

ord.

→ s.p. → ord.

→ s.p.

Vln.

Gtr. 1

ricochet VII IV V

Gtr. 2

Toms

102

Vln. untrans.

Vln.

ord.

p.s.p. → s.p. → ord.

Gtr. 1

VII IV

Gtr. 2

Toms

105

Vln. untrans.

Vln.

p.s.p.

ord. → s.p.

ord. vib.

II III IV

Gtr. 1

pluck

Gtr. 2

Toms

109

8va

ACCEL → ♩ = 114

Vln. untrans.

Vln.

s.p.

Gtr. 1

Gtr. 2

wool mallets

Toms

RIT. ♩ = 92

112

Vln. untrans.

Vln.

Toms

8va

m.s.p.

gliss harmonics
ord.

mp ff mp ff f

ff fff ff f

118

Vln. untrans.

Vln.

Gtr. 1

Gtr. 2

Toms

tr

p.s.p.

ord.
slow, wide vibrato

ffp ff f sffz mf fff

strum

strum

2 dowels

f ff f ff

ff

RIT. ♩ = 58

123

Vln. untrans.

Vln.

Gtr. 1

Gtr. 2

s.p. ord.

vib. s.vib.

f fff ff mf ff mf ff f fff

III III IV

bow

V I XII VII V

pp f f f f f

132

Vln. untrans.

Vln.

Gtr. 1

Gtr. 2

s.p. ord. s.t.

mp ff mp f

V IV VII IV XII

f f ff ff ff

♩ = 92

RIT. ♩ = 58

138

Vln. untrans.

Vln.

s.p. → ord.

s.p.

Gtr. 1

V → I → III

V → I

VII → III

XII → III → VII

Gtr. 2

144

Vln. untrans.

ord.

slow, wide vibrato

I II

gliss harmonics

scratch

norm.

Vln.

pluck

bow

high as possible → XII

Gtr. 1

III

Gtr. 2

♩ = 72 ACCEL → (♩ = 114)

149

Vln. untrans.

gliss harmonics

III II

IV

Vln.

sempre p

rasguedo (flam with fingernails)

s.p.

strum with fingers (throughstroke)

s.p. (l.v.)

Gtr. 1

Gtr. 2

s.p. (l.v.)

2 wooden drumsticks

Toms

♩ = 92

155

Vln. untrans.

fast as possible

s.p. → ord.

III II I

Vln.

pluck

(l.v.)

Gtr. 1

(l.v.)

Gtr. 2

ricochet

Toms

159

Vln. untrans.

Vln.

gliss harmonics

III

II

f

ff

mf

mp

ff

mf

f

Gtr. 1

pluck

mf

ff

(l.v.)

Gtr. 2

ff

(l.v.)

Toms

ricochet

mf

ff

f

ff

163

ACCEL

= 114

Vln. untrans.

Vln.

IV

III

ff

ffp

ff

mp

fff

Gtr. 1

pluck

ff

Gtr. 2

ff

Toms

f

ff

ff

f

ff

168

ACCEL

Vln. untrans.

Vln.

III

II

I

II

f

fff

f

fff

8:6

Toms

173

= 114

= 92

Vln. untrans.

Vln.

ffp

ff

ffp

ff

mf

ff

Gtr. 1

ff

ff

Gtr. 2

ff

ff

Toms

ffp

ff

f

ff

178

Vln. untrans.

Vln.

m.s.p.

p.s.p.

gliss harmonics

Gtr. 1

Gtr. 2

Toms

182

Vln. untrans.

Vln.

IV III

Gtr. 1

Gtr. 2

Toms

Immediately walk off the stage at the point of the final note. Returning to bow is fine, but ok please walk of briskly and take your time before coming back for the bow. This applies to both performers.

184 fast as possible, marcato throughout

Vln. untrans.

Vln.

strum

strum

bow

VII

XVII

high as possible

Gtr. 1

Gtr. 2

Toms