matthew sergeant

bet denagel

for solo baroque violin

matthew sergeant (b.1984)

bet denagel (2013)

for solo baroque violin

for Emma Lloyd,

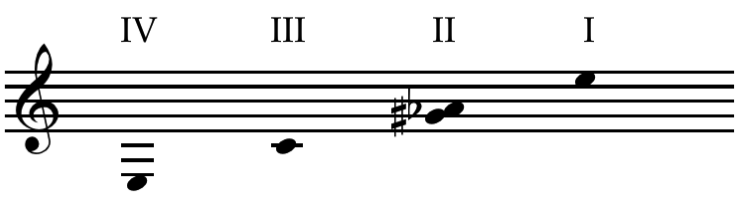
Performance Notes:

Instrument

bet denagel is intended performance on a baroque instrument, with short(er) fingerboard, gut strings and baroque bow. Performance on all other instruments must be approved in advance by the composer.

Scordatura

bet denagel uses the following scordatura throughout (see below). Depending on context, string II is often written enharmonically (as Ab/G#) for ease of reading. The score is notated at 'concert pitch' throughout (see important note below for further explanation).



Absolutely crucially, all four strings should be tuned down additionally (retaining their intervallic relationship in minor 6ths) to the lowest pitches possible on the instrument (i.e. the lowest possible pitches that maintain 'safe' tensional support of the bridge). The score is then read as if the pitches above were employed, the sonic result being automatically transposed.

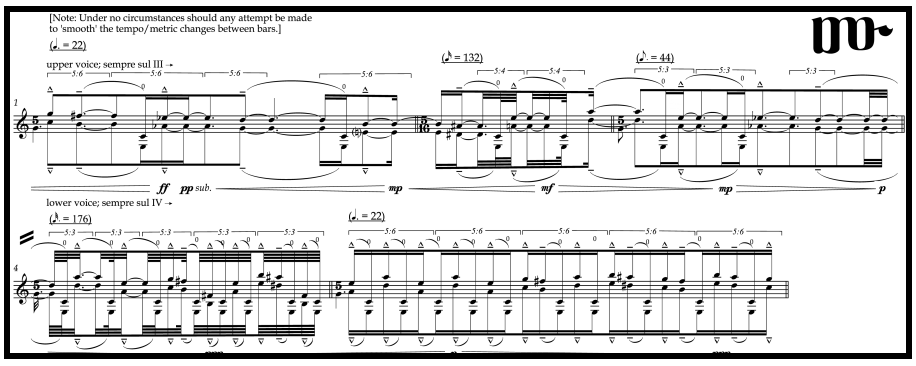
Amplification

Depending on acoustic context, it may be necessary to amplify the violin. It should be noted when deciding upon amplification that conventionally 'auxiliary' noises (such as bow noise) are intended to be audible (although to greater and lesser extents) throughout the performance.

Score Layout

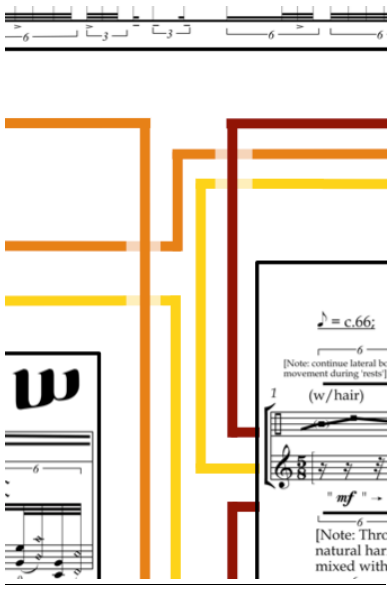
Distircts

The score of *bet denagel* is comprised of twelve interconnected sections of music, henceforth referred to as 'districts'. Each district is defined by a black square/box and by an Amharic character in the top left-hand corner (see example below). (For the principles governing the interconnection of the districts, see 'network', below.)



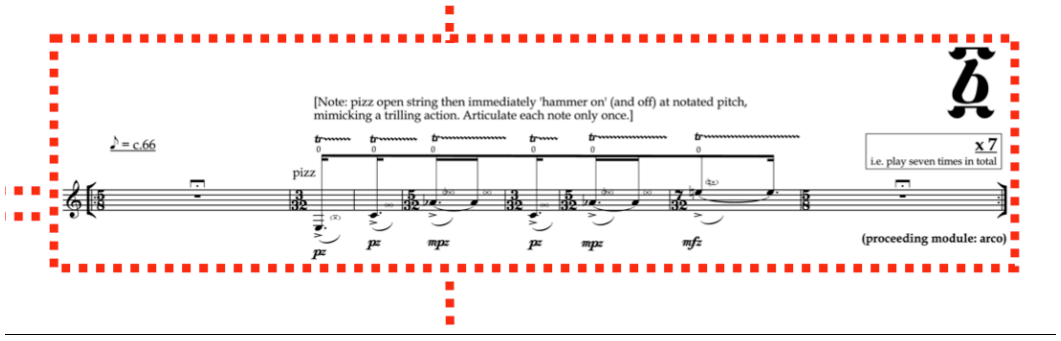
Network

The twelve districts are interconnected via a network of lines (henceforth referred-to as 'paths'), colour coded for ease of reading. Once a given district is performed, the performer must move immediately to any distirct conjoined to it via a path of any colour. (For ease of reading, the available network paths are doubled at the beginning and end of the stave-notation to allow quick/efficient visual transition between districts).



Where the nature of the network has forced paths to cross (as in the above example), small sections of the paths have been faded to show the overlay, this is for ease of reading only: **switching between paths mid-transit is strictly forbidden in performance.** Transition between districts should be as close to 'segue' as possible: **a pause/silence between districts (unless specifically indicated in the score) is absolutely not intended.**

The Landmark



A single district is boxed with thick dotted red-lines (see above). This district is henceforth referred to as the 'landmark'. The landmark may be approached and exited via its own dotted red paths in the same manner as all other constituent parts of the network, but with the following additional caveat: including its own internal repeats, **the landmark must be performed once only in a given performance.**

Traversing the network: beginning and ending a performance

A performance must begin in the top-left hand district (marked with the Amharic character "**ሀ**") and then proceed through the network in any way determined by the performer. A performance **must** include a single statement of the landmark. Once the landmark has been performed, the performer can conclude a performance by returning (through the network) to the opening district ("**ሀ**").

Whilst the route a performer takes through the network is left ultimately undetermined, as part of the preparation process the following thoughts may wish to be considered:

- A certain district may be returned to, perhaps even excessively,
- A certain district may be omitted from performance entirely,
- Progress to/from the landmark may be direct/efficient or meandering/inefficient,
- A route may be pre-planned in advance of performance, or decided in realtime,

Duration

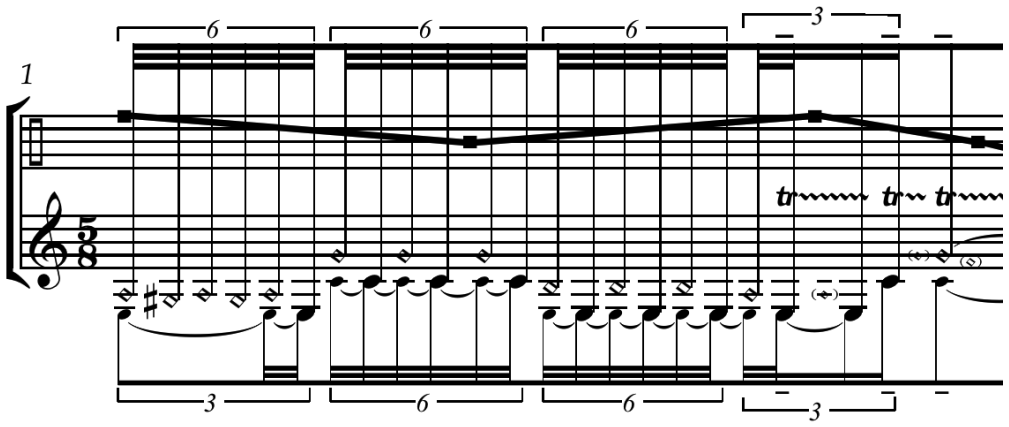
It is expected that a typical performance will last 10-15 minutes, although (much) longer performances are also absolutely permissible.

Notation

Two additional clefs

1) Bow position clef:

This replaces conventional sul pont., ord. and sul tasto indications, as demonstrated by the following example.

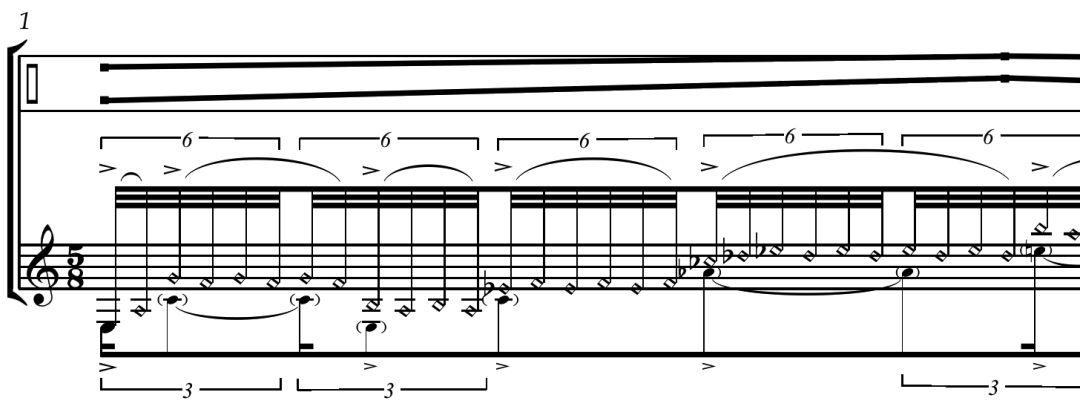


In the above example, the lower stave indicates (left-hand) finger-movement in the conventional manner, the top stave indicates the position of the bow relative to the bridge. Here, the five lines represent, from low-to-high: (1) molto sul tasto (bow over the tip of the fingerboard); (2) sul tasto; (3) ordinario; (4) sul ponticello; (5) molto sul ponticello (bow in partial *contact* with the bridge). It is important to note that, in such passages, the bow position is in a constant state of flux and this should be reflected in performance. 'Nodal' points (i.e. changes of gradient) are indicated with black squares for ease of reading, but carry no sonic emphasis. It should also be noted that such lateral bow movement(s) continue even when the left hand has notated (although bracketed) 'rests', resulting in scraping unpitched bow 'noise' across the open strings.

Rhythm is notated approximately in bow position clef: the timing/duration of techniques is indicated by space (relative to the overall bar-length).

2) "Bow space clef":

This indicates the area(s) of the bow to be used for a given passage of music, as demonstrated by the below example.



Akin to the bow position clef, the lower stave in the above example indicates left-hand finger movement in the conventional manner. **The (upper) stave graphically represents the length of the bow - the upper line denoting the heel, the lower line, the point – the two thick lines enclose the space within the bow 's overall length that must be used to execute the music notated beneath.** All available bow space should be utilised at all times. As with the first example, rhythm is notated approximately, where time/duration is indicated by space (relative to the overall bar-length). 'Nodal' points (i.e. changes of line gradient) are indicated with black squares for ease of reading, but carry no sonic emphasis.

In effect, the bow space clef provides an indication of bow speed: a long(er) passage coupled with a consistently small bow area will obviously facilitate a much slower bow speed than the opposite scenario (short passage, large bow area). In passages where slurs are marked over the left-hand (finger) stave, the start/end of each the bow stroke should correspond to the indicated bow space at each 'end' of the slur.

"Col legno" indications

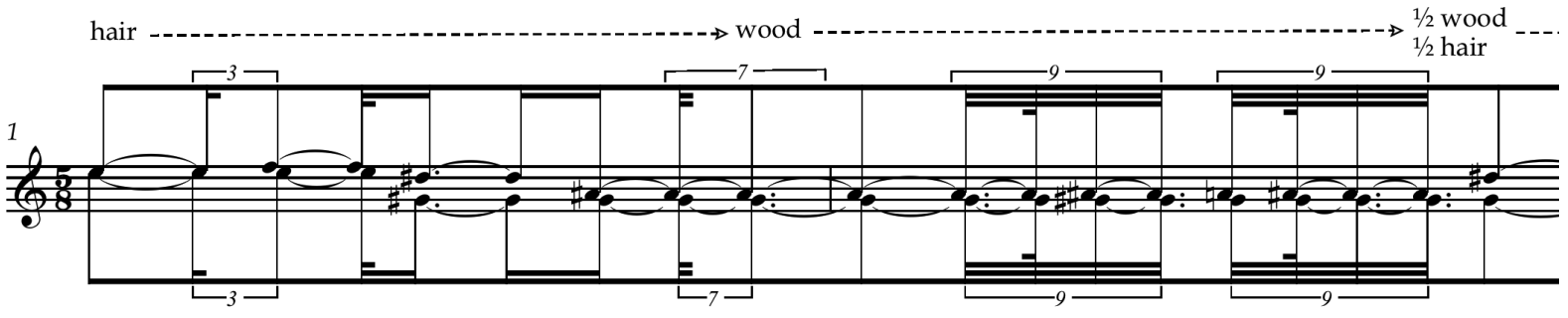
At several points in the score, the performer is asked to perform using the wood of the bow in different ways, these are notated as follows (with accompanying explanations):

wood — bow totally inverted: col legno tratto,

½ wood
½ hair — bow on its side, utilising both wood and hair simultaneously,

hair — bowed with the hair in the conventional manner,

The performer is also asked to transition as seamlessly as possible between these states (by slowly and gradually rotating the bow), indicated by the following notations:



Dynamics

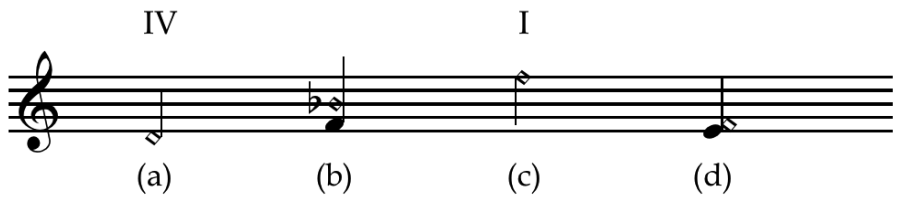
Alongside conventionally notated dynamics, the following indications are also employed:

" *p* " →

Such dynamics can be considered 'input' or 'effort' dynamics. During such passages, the performer should use a consistent amount of physical exertion appropriate to the dynamic contained within the inverted commas, however, it is expected that the sonic result will actually naturally fluctuate (possibly even substantially) in relation to the changing additional performance techniques (e.g. sul pont, col lengno, harmonics) within the material. During these passages the performer should under no circumstances attempt to compensate for such naturally occurring dynamic fluctuations.

Finger pressure

Extremely light LH finger pressure, normally used to produce harmonics, is notated with clear/unfilled diamond-shaped noteheads (in the conventional manner, see below).



Both conventional natural (a) and artificial (b) harmonics are employed within *bet denagel,* alongside non-harmonic nodes, demonstrated by examples (c) and (d). It is expected that non-harmonic notes will crack/squeak or simply amplify bow-noise in an unpredicatable manner (especially when coupled with other playing techniques).

General Remarks

Throughout the piece, *bet denagel* uses combinations of performance techniques that will often confuse and distort one another. Often this will unpredictably cause individual pitches to crack/squeak or entirely not sound. Passages of visually consistent music 'on the page' will often contain gross timbral inconsistencies when executed in performance. **This is an entirely expected aspect of the piece:** the score can perhaps be considered as a set of physical, rather than audible, instructions; the sonic outcome being simply the result of the collision of the demands of the moment.

Programme Note:

bet denagel is an ancient rock-hewn church, part of eleven such churches at the Lalibela world heritage site in Ethiopia. One of the smaller structures on the site, *bet denagel* has little external vista and is instead is principally comprised from a single substantial subterranean space, delineated by columns into twelve smaller areas.

The piece is comprised from a network of interrelated blocks of musical materials that share characteristics or traits to those that immediately conjoin with them. Sometimes the similarities are substantial – materials / kinetic behaviours – and sometimes they are tenuous – merely similar fluctuations in tempo. At every juncture however something is retained and something is preserved – perhaps implying a larger structural impression of dislocation and disorientation.

The piece was written in collaboration with the violinist Emma Lloyd and is dedicated to her in friendship and gratitude.

MS 2013

bet denagel

for emma lloyd,

matthew sergeant (b.1984)

a

(ord. bow pos.)

[a] = 66

[a] = 99 — [a] = 176 — [a] = 44

[a] = 176 — [a] = 176 — [a] = 176

[a] = 176 — [a] = 176 — [a] = 176

[a] = 176 — [a] = 176 — [a] = 176