

matthew sergeant (b.1984)

bet merkorios (2012)

for solo violoncello

for Tom Bayman,

Performance Notes:

In addition to these general performance instructions, notes concerning specific passages are also provided in the score.

Scordatura

bet merkorios uses the following scordatura throughout (see below). Depending on context, string II is often written enharmonically (as C#) for ease-of reading. The score is notated at concert pitch throughout.



Notation

In addition to conventional abbreviations and indications of finger and string numbers, the following notations may require additional explanation:

Hand-position/Fingering

As a learning-aid, the score often contains tablature-like notations, largely to denote fingerings and string numbers within the required scordatura. As part of these shorthands, a system for denoting hand position has been devised for labelling purposes, detailed in the chart below (and explained underneath):

A musical score for a string quartet, consisting of eight staves. The staves are numbered 1 through 8 on the left side, with the numbers circled. Above each staff, there are four measures of music. Above each note in these measures, there are numbers 1, 2, 3, and 4, representing fingerings. Below the first four staves (1-4), there are Roman numerals I, II, III, and IV, representing string numbers. The bottom staff (8) has a treble clef and a flat symbol, and contains a single note with a Roman numeral I above it. The music is written in a 4/8 time signature.

Circled numbers (ascending up the left hand edge) denote required hand positions; roman numerals (from low to high across left to right respectively) denote string numbers (in the conventional manner).

Using the chart (previous page) the above example can be understood in the following manner: the LH remains in first position for all three chords (indicated by the circled Arabic numeral '1') utilising, in the case of the first chord (and working top to bottom), open I, 2nd finger on II, 1st finger on III and 4th finger on IV.

String Number:

The following notation provides an indication of (rapidly changing) string number (the music is notated across two staves in this example to avoid frequent changes of clef):

The annotations below the staff indicate the string(s) on which the pitches are to be played at any one moment, the thick black line indicating the duration of their applicability. Instructions continue until cancelled by another. In such passages as above, the upper voice (i.e. 'stems up') always indicates the higher of the two strings specified and, likewise, the lower voice (i.e. 'stems down') the lower string.

Where string numbers are indicated, they are to be strictly observed (even if 'easier' or 'more effective' fingerings may be found elsewhere on the instrument).

Independence of hands

During several passages of the piece (e.g. b.115-244), rhythmically independent music is written for the right (bow) and left (fingerboard) hands. These are to be played simultaneously. Additional notes for material of this nature are provided at relevant points in the score.

Harmonic finger pressure

Extremely light LH finger pressure, normally used to produce harmonics, is notated with clear/unfilled diamond-shaped noteheads, as shown below:

This level of finger pressure is often employed on non-harmonic points on the string. During such passages, it is expected that the sound will crack and squeak with unpredictable pitch content.

Amplification

Depending on instrument and acoustic, it may be necessary to amplify the 'cello - although acoustic performances are wholly acceptable.

Duration:

Approximately 20 minutes

Programme Note:

bet merkorios is an ancient rock-hewn church, part of eleven such churches at the Lalibela world heritage site in Ethiopia. There is archaeological evidence to suggest that at some point in the distant past the chapel was reappropriated for use as a prison.

The piece is constructed from juxtaposed blocks of music, each defined by certain pattern-based materials (or 'comportment' to use terminology from my sketches). The panels were composed for each of the 'cellist's hands independently and then, retrospectively combined – although perhaps *collided* is a better word to use here. Essentially, this is a process of distortion – the 'purity' of each panel being corrupted (to greater or lesser extents) by that with which it is collided and/or superimposed.

A cyclic procession of such materials is presented which itself breaks down. In a sense, the larger-scale architecture of the piece also concerns issues of disruption, although perhaps disorientation is a better way to describe the experience.

The piece was written for the 'cellist Tom Bayman in friendship and gratitude. Tom gave the first performance of *bet merkorios* on 23rd July 2012 in the Nexus Arts Café in Manchester.

MS 2012

IMPORTANT:
Please consult performance notes prior to rehearsal.

for Tom Bayman,

bet merkorios

matthew sergeant (b.1984)

♩ = 96; starting as if in mid-sentence

*fleeting/
transparent/
'gossamer'*

con sord.

mp ppppp mp ppppp p

6 ppp mf ppppp

12 pp mfz

18 ppppp p ppp mp ppp mfz fz

24 ppppp mp ppppp mp ppppp mf

[Note: bow always on the string]

30 mp: pp mp: pp mp: pp mfzpp fzpp fzpp fzpp mp: pp f fzpp mfzpp mfzpp

36 fzpp fzpp fzpp mfzpp mp: pp mfzpp fzpp ffzpp mfzpp mfzpp mfzpp fzpp fzpp

42 f mfzpp fzpp ffzpp f fzpp f fzpp fzpp ff ffzpp f mfzpp mfzpp mfzpp mfzpp ff ffzpp ff mfzpp

*stuttering /
nervous / growing wilder*

[note (i): grace notes are *always* played on open strings]

48

mf mfzpp mf mfzpp mf *poco* *mf* *f*

53

mf mf f mf poco mf poc. p mf f mf *senza sord!*

crazed / ferocious / wild!

← $\text{♩} = \text{♩}$ → [Note: continue glissandi even when strings are not being bowed; crossed noteheads indicate (very) approximate pitches]

58

ff f

fff (accents considerably louder!)

63

suddenly serpentine

fff f

[note (iv): LH (approximately) follow glissandi; RH follow string-crossing pattern]

73

poc. sim.

ritualistic

← ♩ = ♩ → (♩ = 48 →)

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* Add pitch (approximately) a perfect 5th below that being played on III; use hand position as guide.

frenzied / almost melodramatic

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