

understanding

for clarinet, violin, cello, and percussion

(2 0 1 5)

by Jacob Beranek

ASCAP

PROGRAM NOTES

To fully grasp the meaning behind this piece, one should be aware of its genesis and goal. *understanding* was written in July 2015 while the composer was attending the Jr. Composers Institute in Minneapolis, MN. The composer was working with Randall Davidson at the time, who gave him an assignment to write an atmospheric, ametric composition with a duration between five and six minutes. It had to be written in only two days, in order to be rehearsed and premiered later that same week.

While writing this piece, the two main concepts the composer was experimenting with were time and overtones. As part of his assignment, he needed to create a composition that could “warp the listeners’ perspective of time” while still functioning as a single unit. More importantly, the true focus of the piece was to be on “the synthesis of overtones.” Before writing *understanding*, the composer spent hours testing special percussive effects and recording the overtones that various instruments produced when played with different techniques. The result: the overtones of indefinitely pitched percussion act as jumping off points for instruments of definite pitch. Each section begins and closes with the introduction of a sound by the percussion. After the overtones of the sound are allowed to ring, the other instruments introduce themselves, slowly forming harmonies around the overtones created by the percussion at the beginning.

This piece follows a modified ternary/arch form: after a short, silent introduction, the “A section” begins at Event 2, transitions into the “B section” at Event 23, and returns at Event 33. The piece concludes with a “coda” at Event 47 with a consonant resolution.

FIRST PERFORMANCE

July 25, 2015, Lloyd Ultan Recital Hall, University of Minnesota-Twin Cities
Yue Lor (clarinet), Collin Arneson (violin), Randall Davidson (cello),
Ethan Watson (percussion), Jacob Beranek (conductor)

PERFORMANCE NOTES

The performers must listen to the overtones that are being produced and shape their own parts to fit the tones already ringing in the air. Each performer will be provided with an events lists, instead of individual parts, in order to be aware of what every instrument is doing all the time. A conductor is encouraged.

Clarinet: The clarinetist may wish to make use of multiphonics, which can be employed anywhere as desired.

Violin and cello: Vibrato is to be used freely throughout. However, the violin may only use harmonics where notated in the score, and the cellist may not use any.

Percussion: See opposite page for “Notes for the Percussionist.”

NOTES FOR THE PERCUSSIONIST

Preparation:

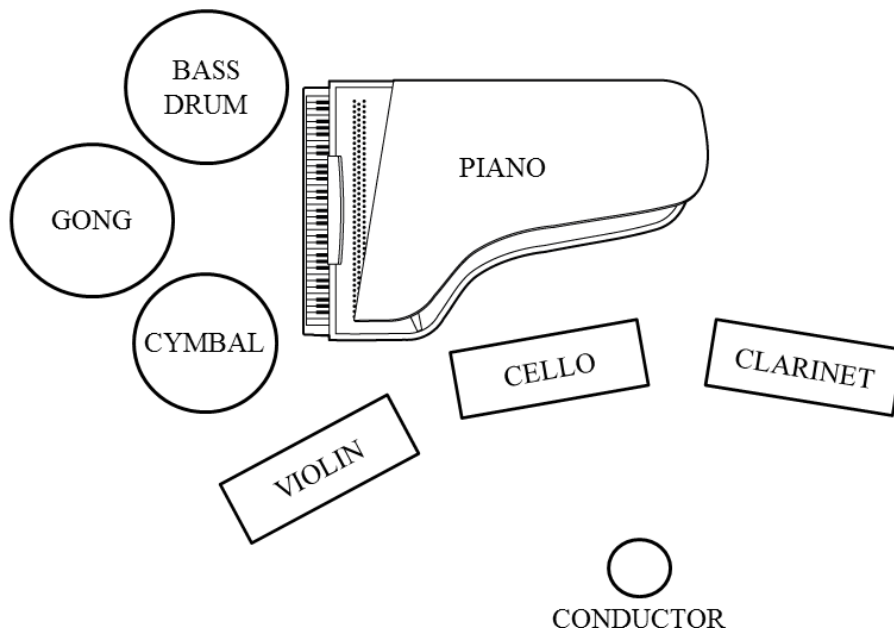
1. Use one bass drum mallet for all striking (gong, cymbal, bass drum, and piano)
2. Play with the lid of the piano completely open, other performers should be seated very close.
3. Place a 1.75-inch long screw between the strings of C2 (see Events 23 and 46), 3 inches away from the dampers (towards the plate). If C2 has three strings, place between the center and right strings.
4. To make damping easier and more accurate, label the following strings inside of the piano:



Reading the events list and score:

1. X note heads represent three different instruments: the gong, cymbal, and bass drum.
2. Regular note heads (preceded by either a treble or bass clef) indicate the piano.
3. A “+” represents muting a given note(s) on the piano. This is achieved by placing a finger(s) on the string(s) between the dampers and the pinblock while striking the corresponding key(s).
4. In Event 17, the percussionist must first press the B0 key without the hammer striking the string (creating a “ghost note”). Then, lift the damper pedal and strike the B0 string (and the strings surrounding it) with the mallet. Reapply the damper pedal once the B0 is the only note ringing.

SUGGESTED SET-UP



duration:
c. 5' 30"

for Randall Davidson
2015 Jr. Composers Institute, Minneapolis, MN

understanding

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Smoothly throughout

System 1:

- B \flat Clarinet:** Measure 4, *ppp*
- Violin:** Measure 5, *sul ponticello*, *ppp*
- Percussion:** Measure 1: GONG, CYMBAL, BASS DRUM, Ped. —> until 17. Measure 2: rim with stick. Measure 3: PIANO, #8.

System 2 (30" duration):

- B \flat Cl.:** Measure 8, *pp*; Measure 10.
- Vln.:** Measure 9, ord., *pp*
- Vc.:** Measure 7, *sul tasto*, *pp*
- Perc.:** Measure 6, *pp*; Measure 11, *sub p*; Measure 12, rim with stick, *mp*

System 3 (1'00" duration):

- B \flat Cl.:** Measure 15.
- Vln.:** Measure 16.
- Vc.:** Measure 14, ord., *mp*
- Perc.:** Measure 13, center with stick; Measure 14; Measure 17, strike strings with mallet; ghost *sub*; Ped. —> to the end