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chopsticks

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Chopsticks
for Soldier's Tale Septet
Brendon Randall-Myers

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Chopsticks

for Solider's Tale Septet
Brendon Randall-Myers

Program Note

Chopsticks is part a set of pieces about memory and technology. Each of these pieces draws on older music that I know and love, and uses technology to reimagine, amplify, and distort that music. This particular piece started with my childhood memories of hammered dulcimer music and barn dances in West Virginia, filtered through a propensity for modifying instruments and a love of Scelsi and mosh pits. The sonic focus of the piece is an acoustic guitar both prepared and played with chopsticks, run through a 4W tube amplifier.

Chopsticks was commissioned by Exceptet and MATA.

Duration: ca. 8'45"

Instrumentation: violin, double bass (doubling woodblocks), Bb clarinet, bassoon, trumpet (doubling picc. trumpet), trombone, percussion (acoustic/electric guitar, see below)

Performance Notes

General notes:

- All instruments should be miked and amplified for balance. The violin and double bass should match the volume of the brass.
- Repeat numbers indicate total numbers of times to play a cell - e.g. 3x means play the material in repeats a total of three times.
- The bass player begins the piece playing two woodblocks, ideally sitting on a high stool on their right side.

Percussion preparation and amplification:

The percussion part for this piece is played entirely on an acoustic/electric steel-string guitar laid flat on its back on a table and played like a hammered dulcimer using chopsticks. The guitar needs to be prepared and amplified as follows:

- The guitar should be tuned to an open D Minor chord (low to high DADFAD) and prepared with a hair tie wrapped loosely around the 5th fret, and a chopstick threaded over/under through all six strings at the node where the 24th fret would be.
 - The guitar should be amplified using the output from the guitar's quarter inch output, run into a lunchbox guitar tube amp to distort the sound a bit. The amp needs to be low enough wattage (1-4W) that it starts distorting at a volume low enough to balance with brass. The amp itself should be miked for balance with the rest of the ensemble.
 - You should use light, cheap wooden chopsticks for both preparation and playing, which shouldn't damage the strings or pickguard. I personally like to use a flatter chopstick for preparation and rounder chopsticks to play.
 - Though the chopsticks shouldn't damage the pickguard or strings, they may harm the finish of the guitar. Therefore the guitar should be a cheap one that you (and/or the owner) don't mind beating on a bit.
- For more detailed instructions and photos of preparations and playing techniques, please visit:
www.brendonrandallmyers.com/chopsticks-guitar-prep
- For a live recording that gives a good sense of audio balance (and how the guitar should sound), please visit:
youtu.be/WB7d6QTw2vA
- If you have questions, you should feel free to contact the composer at brendon.randallmyers@gmail.com.

Percussion key and techniques:

The image shows two rows of musical notation on a five-line staff. The top row illustrates four different ways to strike a guitar string with a chopstick:

- On strings, right side of stick
- On base of stick
- On pickguard
- Above nut

The bottom row shows two more techniques:

- 3 thickest strings anywhere on right side of threaded stick
- On pickguard w/ l.h. on head of threaded stick
- On base of stick w/ r.h., remove mute on head of threaded stick w/ left hand
- Smack strings left side of hair tie
- On base of stick w/ r.h. while holding down head of threaded stick w/ l.h.

Chopsticks

Score in C

Brendon Randall-Myers

A

=176-180

Clarinet in B♭

Bassoon

Trumpet in C

Trombone

Percussion
Amplified acoustic guitar prepared w/ chopsticks- see performance notes

Violin

Double Bass
start out on 2 woodblocks

harmon mute

harmon mute

p - 3 - **f**

woodblocks

mf

Cl.

Bsn.

C Tpt.

Tbn.

Perc.

Vln.

Db.

Chopsticks

2

B

11

Cl.
Bsn.
C Tpt.
Tbn.
Perc.
Vln.
Db.

Dynamic markings: **f**, **p**, **3**, **ff**, **p**.

15

Cl.
Bsn.
C Tpt.
Tbn.
Perc.
Vln.
Db.

Dynamic markings: **p**, **3**, **3**, **f**, **3**, **3**, **p**, **p**, **3**, **ff**, **p**, **3**, **ff**.

Chopsticks

3

19 C

Cl.

Bsn.

C Tpt.

Tbn.

Perc.

Vln.

Db.

off the string

mf

ff

23

Cl.

Bsn.

C Tpt.

Tbn.

Perc.

Vln.

Db.

p

f

mp

p

f

ff

Chopsticks

4

D

Cl.

Bsn.

C Tpt.

Tbn.

Perc.

Vln.

Db.

31

Cl.

Bsn.

C Tpt.

Tbn.

Perc.

Vln.

Db.

Chopsticks

5

Musical score for orchestra, page 10, measures 39-40.

Measure 39:

- Cl.**: Treble clef, key signature of B-flat major. Dynamics: **p**, **3**, **3**, **3**, **3**, **3**, **ff**, **5**.
- Bsn.**: Bass clef, key signature of B-flat major. Measures consist of eighth-note pairs.
- C Tpt.**: Treble clef, key signature of B-flat major. Dynamics: **p**, **3**, **ff**, **p**, **3**, **ff**.
- Tbn.**: Bass clef, key signature of B-flat major. Measures consist of eighth-note pairs.
- Perc.**: Measures consisting of eighth-note pairs. Dynamics: **p**, **f**.
- Vln.**: Treble clef, key signature of B-flat major. Dynamics: **mp**, **ff**.
- Db.**: Bass clef, key signature of B-flat major. Measures consisting of eighth-note pairs.

Chopsticks

6

F

43

Cl.

Bsn.

C Tpt.

Tbn.

Perc.

Vln.

Db.

Musical score for orchestra and percussion, page 47. The score includes parts for Clarinet (Cl.), Bassoon (Bsn.), C Trumpet (C Tpt.), Trombone (Tbn.), Percussion (Perc.), Violin (Vln.), and Double Bass (Db.). The score shows various musical staves with corresponding dynamics and performance instructions like '3' and 'ff'.

Cl. -
 Bsn. -
 C Tpt. -
 Tbn. -
 Perc. -
 Vln. -
 Db. -

Chopsticks

7

51

G

Cl.

Bsn. *mp* *ff*

C Tpt. *f*

Tbn. *p* *f*

Perc.

Vln. *off the string* *mp* *ff*

Db. *ff*

This section of the score begins with a dynamic of *mp* for Bassoon, followed by *ff*. The C Trumpet and Trombone play eighth-note patterns. The Percussion part consists of eighth-note pairs. The Violin part is labeled "off the string" with dynamics *mp* and *ff*. The Double Bass part features sustained notes with dynamics *ff*.

55

Cl.

Bsn. *mf* *f*

C Tpt. *mp* *f* *mp*

Tbn. *p* *p* *f*

Perc.

Vln. *mf* *ff*

Db.

This section continues with the Bassoon playing eighth-note patterns. The Trombone and C Trumpet play eighth-note patterns with dynamics *f* and *mp*. The Trombone has dynamics *p*, *p*, and *f*. The Percussion part consists of eighth-note pairs. The Violin part is labeled "off the string" with dynamics *mf* and *ff*. The Double Bass part features sustained notes with dynamics *ff*.

Chopsticks

8

H

59

Cl. Bsn. C Tpt. Tbn. Perc. Vln. Db.

mp f p 3 f 3

ff

This section of the score consists of six staves. The Clarinet (Cl.) and Bassoon (Bsn.) play eighth-note patterns. The C Trumpet (C Tpt.) and Trombone (Tbn.) play eighth-note patterns with dynamic markings *f*, *p*, and *3*. The Percussion (Perc.) part consists of eighth-note patterns. The Violin (Vln.) and Double Bass (Db.) provide harmonic support with sustained notes and eighth-note patterns. Measure 59 concludes with a dynamic *ff*.

63

Cl. Bsn. C Tpt. Tbn. Perc. Vln. Db.

mf 3 3 5 5 3

mp f mp pp 3 p 3 f 3

ff

This section of the score consists of six staves. The Clarinet (Cl.) and Bassoon (Bsn.) play eighth-note patterns with slurs. The C Trumpet (C Tpt.) and Trombone (Tbn.) play eighth-note patterns with dynamic markings *mp*, *mf*, *f*, *5*, *mp*, and *pp*. The Percussion (Perc.) part consists of eighth-note patterns. The Violin (Vln.) and Double Bass (Db.) provide harmonic support with sustained notes and eighth-note patterns. Measures 63-66 feature dynamics *mf*, *f*, *5*, and *5*. Measures 67-68 feature dynamics *mp*, *pp*, *p*, *f*, and *3*. The section concludes with a dynamic *ff*.

Chopsticks

9

I

67

Cl.

Bsn. *mp* *f*

C Tpt. *f*

Tbn. *p* *f*

Perc. *p* *f*

Vln. *mp* *ff*

Db.

71

Cl.

Bsn. *mf* *f* *ff*

C Tpt. *mp* *f* *ff*

Tbn. *pp* *p* *f* *ff*

Perc. *p* *f* *ff*

Vln. *f*

Db.

on fretboard,
towards nut

Chopsticks

10

J

75

Cl.

Bsn.

C Tpt.

Tbn.

Perc.

Vln. *Sul E* (fingered pitch)

ff

Db.

behind nut of guitar

79

Cl.

Bsn.

C Tpt.

Tbn.

Perc.

Vln.

Db.

ppp

mp

ff

f

Chopsticks

11

K

83

Cl.

Bsn.

C Tpt.

Tbn.

Perc.

Vln.

Db.

87

Cl.

Bsn.

C Tpt.

Tbn.

Perc.

Vln.

Db.

Chopsticks

12

Musical score for orchestra and percussion, page 91. The score includes parts for Clarinet (Cl.), Bassoon (Bsn.), C Trumpet (C Tpt.), Trombone (Tbn.), Percussion (Perc.), Violin (Vln.), and Double Bass (Db.). The score shows measures 91-92. Dynamics include *ff*, *p*, and *f*. Measure 91 starts with a rest for the first three instruments, followed by eighth-note patterns. Measure 92 begins with eighth-note patterns for the first three instruments, followed by eighth-note patterns for the remaining instruments.

L

95

Cl. *ppp* ff

Bsn. - p ff

C Tpt. - p ff

Tbn. - pp ff

Perc. L along neck towards threaded stick right side of threaded stick f

Vln. -

Db. -

Chopsticks

13

M

101

Cl.

Bsn.

C Tpt.

Tbn.

Perc.

Vln.

Db.

simile

105

Cl.

Bsn.

C Tpt.

Tbn.

Perc.

Vln.

Db.

Chopsticks

14

109

Cl. *f*

Bsn. *p* — 3 — 3 3 *ff* — 3 — 3 *ff*

C Tpt. *p* — 3 — 3 — 3 — 3 *f* — 3 — 3 *p*

Tbn. — *p* — — — — *pp* — — — — *ff* — — — — *pp* — — — — *ff*

Perc. + - l.h. mute top of chopstick

Vln. pizz

Db.

N

113

Cl. *f* — 3 — 3 — 3 — 3 *p* — 3 — 3 — 3 *ff* — 3 — 3 — 3 *ff*

Bsn. *p* — 3 — 3 — 3 — 3 *ff* — 3 — 3 — 3 *ff*

C Tpt. *p* — 3 — 3 — 3 — 3 *f* — 3 — 3 — 3 *p*

Tbn. — *p* — — — — *pp* — — — — *ff* — — — — *pp* — — — — *ff*

Perc. l.h. ord.

Vln. arco

Db.

Chopsticks

15

Musical score for orchestra and percussion, page 121. The score includes parts for Clarinet (Cl.), Bassoon (Bsn.), C Trumpet (C Tpt.), Trombone (Tbn.), Percussion (Perc.), Violin (Vln.), and Double Bass (Db.). The score features various dynamic markings such as *f*, *p*, *pp*, and *ff*. The Percussion part uses a unique notation involving chopsticks, with instructions like "l.h. mute top of chopstick". The Violin part is marked "pizz". The Double Bass part consists of sustained notes.

Chopsticks

O

125

Cl.

Bsn.

C Tpt.

Tbn.

Perc.

Vln.

Db.

l.h. ord.

pp — *ff*

pp — *ff*

129

Cl.

Bsn.

C Tpt.

Tbn.

Perc.

Vln.

Db.

p

pp — *ff*

pp — *ff*

Chopsticks

133

Cl. *f*

Bsn. *p* 3 3 3 3 *ff* *p* 3 3 3 *ff*

C Tpt. *p* 3 3 3 3 *f* 3 3 3 *p*

Tbn. — *pp* — *ff* — *pp* — *ff*

Perc. l.h. mute head of chopstick

Vln. pizz

Db. to bass

Musical score for orchestra and percussion, page 137. The score includes parts for Clarinet (Cl.), Bassoon (Bsn.), C Tpt., Trombone (Tbn.), Percussion (Perc.), Violin (Vln.), and Double Bass (Db.). The score shows various musical measures with dynamic markings such as *p*, *mf*, *pp*, and *ff*. The Percussion part features a unique notation system using symbols like circles, crosses, and plus signs.

Chopsticks

18

Chopsticks

19

149

Cl.

Bsn.

C Tpt.

Tbn.

Perc.

Vln.

Db.

154

Cl.

Bsn.

C Tpt.

Tbn.

Perc.

Vln.

Db.

Chopsticks

20

159

Cl.
Bsn.
C Tpt.
Tbn.
Perc.
Vln.
Db.

Q **3x**

165

Cl.
Bsn.
C Tpt.
Tbn.
Perc.
Vln.
Db.

Chopsticks

21

Musical score for orchestra and percussion, page 21, measures 173-174. The score includes parts for Clarinet (Cl.), Bassoon (Bsn.), C Trumpet (C Tpt.), Trombone (Tbn.), Percussion (Perc.), Violin (Vln.), and Double Bass (Db.). The key signature changes between measures. The first section (measures 173-174) features woodwind entries with eighth-note patterns. The second section (measures 175-176) features brass entries with eighth-note patterns. The third section (measures 177-178) features a complex rhythmic pattern for the Percussion part. The fourth section (measures 179-180) features woodwind entries with eighth-note patterns. The fifth section (measures 181-182) features brass entries with eighth-note patterns. The sixth section (measures 183-184) features a complex rhythmic pattern for the Percussion part. The seventh section (measures 185-186) features woodwind entries with eighth-note patterns. The eighth section (measures 187-188) features brass entries with eighth-note patterns.

180

Chopsticks

22

184 **T** **4x** **3x** **U**

Cl. Bsn. C Tpt. Tbn. Perc. Vln. Db.

come sopra
p-f
come sopra
p-f

mp *f*
arco
f

191

Cl. Bsn. C Tpt. Tbn. Perc. Vln. Db.

p-f *p-f* *p-f* *p-f*
p-f *p-f* *p-f* *p-f*

Chopsticks

23

198 **4x**

Cl.
Bsn.
C Tpt.
Tbn.
Perc.
Vln.
Db.

V **4x** **4x**

Cl.
Bsn.
C Tpt.
Tbn.
Perc.
Vln.
Db.

Chopsticks

24

206

3x

Cl.

Bsn.

C Tpt.

Tbn.

Perc.

Vln.

Db.

210 **W**

Cl.

Bsn.

C Tpt.

Tbn.

Perc.

Vln.

Db.

ord. (mute out)

ord. (mute out)

f

pp

Chopsticks

25

214

Cl. *f* *p*

Bsn. *pp* *f*

C Tpt. *pp* *f* *p*

Tbn. *pp* *f*

Perc. *p* behind nut of guitar

Vln. *p*

Db.

218

Cl. *pp* *f* *p* *ff*

Bsn. *p*

C Tpt. *pp* *f* *ff* To Picc. Tpt.

Tbn. *p*

Perc. *p*

Vln. *ff*

Db.

Chopsticks

26

222

Cl.

Bsn.

C Tpt.

Tbn.

Perc.

Vln.

Db.

Piccolo Trumpet in B♭

227 X

Cl.

Bsn.

Pic. Tpt.

Tbn.

Perc.

Vln.

Db.

Chopsticks

27

231

Cl.
Bsn.
Picc. Tpt.
Tbn.
Perc.
Vln.
Db.

235 Y

Cl.
Bsn.
Picc. Tpt.
Tbn.
Perc.
Vln.
Db.

Chopsticks

28

239

Cl.
Bsn.
Picc. Tpt.
Tbn.
Perc.
Vln.
Db.

244 Z

Cl.
Bsn.
Picc. Tpt.
Tbn.
Perc.
Vln.
Db.

Chopsticks

250 29

Cl.
Bsn.
Picc. Tpt.
Tbn.
Perc.
Vln.
Db.

255

Cl.
Bsn.
Picc. Tpt.
Tbn.
Perc.
Vln.
Db.

Chopsticks

30

AA

260

This section of the score consists of two staves of six measures each. The first measure (measures 30-31) includes parts for Clarinet (Cl.) and Bassoon (Bsn.). The second measure (measures 31-32) includes parts for Piccolo Trumpet (Picc. Tpt.), Trombone (Tbn.), Percussion (Perc.), Violin (Vln.), and Double Bass (Db.). Measure 31 concludes with a repeat sign.

262

This section of the score consists of two staves of six measures each. The first measure (measures 32-33) includes parts for Clarinet (Cl.) and Bassoon (Bsn.). The second measure (measures 33-34) includes parts for Piccolo Trumpet (Picc. Tpt.), Trombone (Tbn.), Percussion (Perc.), Violin (Vln.), and Double Bass (Db.). Measure 34 concludes with a repeat sign.

Chopsticks

31

264 **3x**

This section of the score shows six staves of musical notation. The instruments are: Clarinet (Cl.), Bassoon (Bsn.), Piccolo Trumpet (Picc. Tpt.), Trombone (Tbn.), Percussion (Perc.), and Double Bass (Db.). Measure 264 begins with a dynamic of **3x**. The Clarinet, Bassoon, and Trombone play eighth-note patterns. The Piccolo Trumpet, Percussion, and Double Bass provide harmonic support. Measures 265-266 continue this pattern, with the Double Bass providing sustained notes.

BB **3x**

266

This section of the score shows six staves of musical notation. The instruments are: Clarinet (Cl.), Bassoon (Bsn.), Piccolo Trumpet (Picc. Tpt.), Trombone (Tbn.), Percussion (Perc.), and Double Bass (Db.). Measure 266 begins with a dynamic of **BB** and **3x**. The Clarinet, Bassoon, and Trombone play eighth-note patterns. The Piccolo Trumpet, Percussion, and Double Bass provide harmonic support. Measures 267-268 continue this pattern, with the Double Bass providing sustained notes.