

Robert Guthrie

Centric

for Double Bass

duration: ca.19 minutes

Programme Note

Centric is an exploration of colour and sound, inspired by and adopting techniques from improvised Contrabass music. This music, its aesthetics and techniques have greatly inspired the expressive and sonic world of the composition, which explores gestural sound objects as flashes and fragments with occasional drawn-out extended passages.

The style and structure of the piece aims to reflect, through the means of notation, something of the essence and energy of improvised music. It is not an attempt to imitate it, nor recreate it, as of course the writing down of the music removes the fundamental condition of this music, but it is concerned with the possible function of notation to explore and highlight some of these techniques.

This work explores a descriptive and physical notation, concerned with the performer's interaction with the instrument as a means to create sound, rather than signalling the exact sound to be created.

Performance instructions

As a guideline, every stave lasts 30 seconds unless otherwise indicated.

Within this guide timings are relative, not intended to be precisely to scale yet show the sense of movement and space. Individual gestures, sound objects and silence should be interpreted intuitively and dramatically by the performer.

Commas ' , ' indicate a 'breath' or brief pause before moving on. These should be treated as indicators of a change of character/scene/atmosphere etc.

Fermatas indicate a longer pause, intended for dramatic effect.

Due to flexibility in timing, bowing is not notated and may be used by the performer to enhance their realisation of the music.

The performer will also require a tuning fork, ideally one tuned to 440hz.

Notation

s.t. sul tasto
 s.p. sul ponticello
 m.s.p. / m.s.t. molto...
 N. Normal (used with s.p. and s.t.)

batt. battuto (hit/strike/ricochet with hair of bow)

c.l. col legno
 c.l. batt. col legno battuto (X)
 c.l. tratto col legno tratto

ord. ordinary (used with c.l.)

s.v. sans vibrato
 m.v. molto vibrato
 (if not specified assume usual level of vib.)

s.t. —> s.p. gradual change of timbre / technique


i, ii, iii, iv. string numbers

i —> iv gradual move from one string to another (crossing any inbetween)


||| ||| || | number of strings to play/use/activate (used above a note/gesture)


[] repeat notated tone group in brackets as rapidly as possible

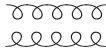
 sustain to fade out



 indicates bow/hand pressure increase towards noise (sometimes supported by 'b.p.')

 repetition of the same pitch(es)


 as quickly as possible


 finger approximate pitches


 move bow in circular motion


 use palm of hand (as indicated, but usually to stop all four strings)

















o • light / hard pressure (with above)












 using the nut of the bow

 trill alternating between normal and light (harmonic) finger pressure

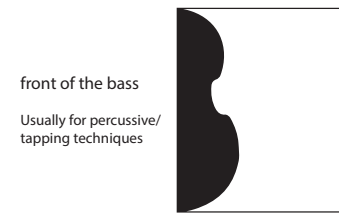
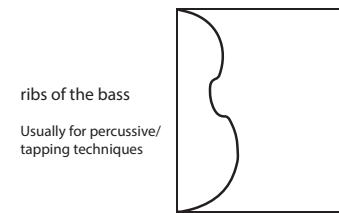
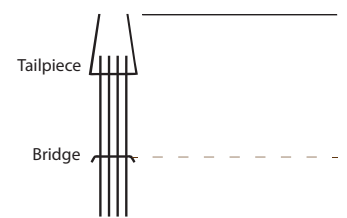
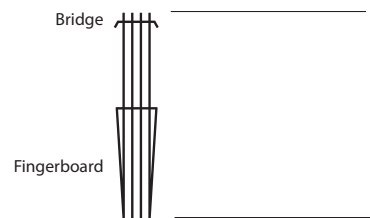
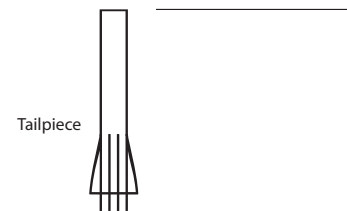
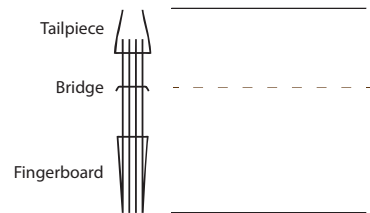
 pull strings to bend pitch (beneath bridge)

 tuning fork (440hz if possible)

 natural harmonic
 raised by 1/4 tone
 raised by 3/4 tone
 lowered by 1/4 tone
 lowered by 3/4 tone
 microtonal adjustment (expressive rather than exact pitch)
 adjust tuning fork by a 1/4 tone (sharp/flat depending on direction of arrow)
 highest note possible
 lowest note possible
 trill action/effect
 slow vibrato
 quick vibrato
 uneven vibrato
 pitch bend
 uneven glissando
 glissando to undetermined pitch

 play between the bridge and the tailpiece (one string)
 likewise (two strings)
 likewise (three strings)
 likewise (arpeggiated across four strings)
 to be played on the tailpiece (with heavy bow pressure to create rumble/drone sound)
 to be played on the side of the bridge (rectangular to right-hand edge)
 play on the bridge
 play strings from behind (allows for bowing strings i, iv or both as indicated)
 indicates percussive technique (col legno battuto, on body of the instrument etc. as indicated)
 left hand pizz.
 bartok pizz. (snap against fingerboard)

Clefs



Notes on clefs:

- When there are two staves, the upper stave indicates the action of the left hand, the lower of the right.
- Any instrument clef is oriented with the bottom of the body of the instrument corresponding to the upper edge of the stave, with the top of the instrument at the lower edge.
- Throughout, pitches are written assuming regular tuning, and should be fingered as such even when the strings are detuned with the pegs. This means that resulting pitches are not always aligned with what is notated.

Centric

for solo Double Bass

Robert Guthrie

distant, atmospheric

30"

arco. b.p. batt.

pp *mp* *mf* *mp* *f* *sf* *mp* *ff* *sf*

intense, disturbing

L.H. c.l.batt. arco. c.l.batt.

p *sf* *f* *mp* *mf* *f* *sf* *ffz* *mf*

*bow tailpiece in circular motion

** using heavy bow pressure to create rumble/drone sound

2

creeping, pattering

ppp *mf* *f*

ff *f* *ff* *mf* *fff* *mp* *f*

arco.

mf *fff*

sf *mf* *ff* *p*

attack ***

slap strings

arco. *fff* *mp* *f* *batt.* *mp* *mf*

*finger approximate pitches as rapidly as possible

** bow behind the strings beyond the bridge

*** using light pressure (as for harmonics) rub palm of hand up and down the length of the fingerboard (all four strings)

mute strings with palm

nervous

mf

sim.

f

b.p.

c.l.batt.

arco.

ff *f*

arco.

pp *mp*

curious, like dialogue

mf

f

pizz.

f

ff

arco.

mf

*rapid trill effect using nut of the bow between first and second string (following rough movement vertically between bridge and fingerboard)

**finger these pitches as rapidly as possible

***pizz with the nut of the bow

musical score for a single staff, likely a cello or double bass. The staff begins with a dynamic marking of *mp* and a first finger (i) fingering. A crescendo leads to a section with three measures, each marked with *mp*, *sfz*, and *mf* respectively, and each measure has a plus sign (+) above it. This is followed by a long, sustained note marked *mf*, which then transitions to a section marked *p* and *ppp*. The word "unsettled" is written above the staff. The section concludes with a wavy line indicating a tremolo or oscillation, followed by a section marked *fff* and *ff*.



musical score for a single staff, likely a cello or double bass. The staff begins with a dynamic marking of *f* and a second (ii) and third (iii) finger fingering. A section labeled "c.l.batt." (cello/bass) is enclosed in a box, showing a sequence of notes with fingerings ii, iii, iv, iii, iv, and ii, iii, each with a dynamic marking of *mp* or *mf*. This is followed by a section marked *f* and *pizz.* (pizzicato). The section concludes with a section marked *arco.* (arco), followed by a section marked *mf*, *mp*, *f*, *ff*, and *mf*.

pattering

pp *mf* *dramatic*

p *mf* *ff* *f*



mysterious

p *ppp* *s.p.* *N.* *m.s.p.* *N.* *>(s.t.)*

tr *pp* *sfz* *f* *mp*



The musical score for 'The Wind' by Gustav Mahler, measures 1-10, illustrates various dynamics and articulation. The score is written for a single melodic line on a five-line staff. The dynamics range from *fff* (fortissimo) to *ppp* (pianissimo). The articulation includes a trill (tr) and a tremolo (tr). The score is divided into measures by vertical bar lines. The first measure is marked with a repeat sign and a first ending bracket. The second measure is marked with a repeat sign and a first ending bracket. The third measure is marked with a repeat sign and a first ending bracket. The fourth measure is marked with a repeat sign and a first ending bracket. The fifth measure is marked with a repeat sign and a first ending bracket. The sixth measure is marked with a repeat sign and a first ending bracket. The seventh measure is marked with a repeat sign and a first ending bracket. The eighth measure is marked with a repeat sign and a first ending bracket. The ninth measure is marked with a repeat sign and a first ending bracket. The tenth measure is marked with a repeat sign and a first ending bracket.

ppp

p

ff

largo

fff

fff

p

ff

p

ff

distant

N.

s.t.

m.s.t.

N.

approaching

N. >(s.p.)

pp

mp

ppp

p

ppp

f

*hit tuning fork on something hard (chair/table etc) and let it resonate on body of instrument

Diagram illustrating the first system of the musical score. The top staff shows a bass clef with a glissando (indicated by a dashed line and a wedge). Below it, a right-hand staff (R.H.) shows a tuning fork icon and a glissando. The bottom staff shows a double bass clef with a pizzicato (pizz.) instruction, a forte (ff) dynamic, and a bowing instruction (bow takes over gliss) with a mezzo-piano (mp) dynamic. The system concludes with a forte (f) dynamic and a bowing instruction (batt.) with a mezzo-piano (mp) dynamic.



Diagram illustrating the second system of the musical score. The top staff shows a bass clef with a pizzicato (pizz.) instruction, a forte (f) dynamic, and a bowing instruction (arco.) with a mezzo-forte (mf) dynamic. The bottom staff shows a double bass clef with a bowing instruction (arco.) with a piano (p) dynamic, a forte (f) dynamic, and a bowing instruction (arco.) with a forte (ff) dynamic. The system concludes with a mezzo-piano (mp) dynamic and a bowing instruction (arco.) with a mezzo-forte (mf) dynamic.

*hold tuning fork to the bridge while it resonates

**squeeze strings two and three together beneath the bridge while the harmonics sound to manipulate their pitch

ominous, swelling thunderous... ...dissipating atmospheric

N. m.s.p. i, ii i - iv

pp *fff* *mf* *mp* *p*

mf *mf* *mf* *pp*

mf *mp* *mp* *p*

batt.

mysterious
(take bow)

musical score for a single system, featuring a bass staff and a piano diagram.

Bass Staff:

- First measure: *mf* (mezzo-forte), notes with accents.
- Second measure: *p* (piano), note with accent.
- Third measure: *f* (forte), notes with accents, labeled "footsteps..." with fingerings ii and iii.

Piano Diagram:

- Left side: A hand icon above a series of 'x' marks on the keyboard, with *p* below.
- Middle: A section labeled "ord." (ordine) showing a spiral line on the keyboard, starting with *f* and finger i.
- Right side: A large black trapezoidal shape representing a sound envelope.

musical score for a single system, featuring a bass staff and a piano diagram.

Bass Staff:

- First measure: Notes with accents, enclosed in brackets.
- Second measure: *arco.* (arco), notes with accents, labeled "persistent yet unsettled".
- Third measure: *mf* (mezzo-forte), note with accent.
- Fourth measure: *fff* (fortissimo), note with accent.
- Fifth measure: *f* (forte), note with accent.
- Sixth measure: *mp* (mezzo-piano), note with accent.
- Seventh measure: *f* (forte), note with accent.

Piano Diagram:

- Left side: A section labeled *ff* (fortissimo) with a large black trapezoidal shape.
- Middle: A section labeled *p* (piano) with a large black trapezoidal shape.
- Right side: A section labeled *fff* (fortissimo) with a large black trapezoidal shape.

sinister
this section ca. 10"

c.l.tratto
i
p *mp* *mp*

c.l.batt.
(c.l.tratto)
i
ppp *mp*

ord.
ii
pp

arco.
p *f*

animated, excentric
mf

x8

arco.
b.p.
fff *fff*

s.p.

c.l.
fff

(take bow)

x19

c.l.batt. *chaotic*

mf *mf* *p* *p* *ff*

c.l.batt. *ord.* *batt.*

ppp *f* *p* *f* *pp* *mp*

The first system of the musical score consists of two staves. The upper staff is a cello/bass staff (c.l.batt.) with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. It contains a series of notes, some marked with 'x' and others with a '+' sign. Above the staff, the word 'chaotic' is written. Below the staff, the dynamics *mf*, *mf*, *p*, *p*, and *ff* are indicated. The lower staff is a piano staff with a grand staff (treble and bass clefs). It contains a series of notes, some marked with 'x' and others with a '+' sign. Above the staff, the words 'c.l.batt.', 'ord.', and 'batt.' are written. Below the staff, the dynamics *ppp*, *f*, *p*, *f*, *pp*, and *mp* are indicated. The system is flanked by two double bar lines.

f *ff*

anxious... *...fading...*

mf *mp* *p*

tr *i* *ii* *i* *ii*

mf *p* *pp* *mp*

The second system of the musical score consists of two staves. The upper staff is a cello/bass staff (c.l.batt.) with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. It contains a series of notes, some marked with a '+' sign. Above the staff, the words 'anxious...' and '...fading...' are written. Below the staff, the dynamics *mf*, *mp*, and *p* are indicated. The lower staff is a piano staff with a grand staff (treble and bass clefs). It contains a series of notes, some marked with a '+' sign. Above the staff, the words 'tr', 'i', 'ii', 'i', and 'ii' are written. Below the staff, the dynamics *mf*, *p*, *pp*, and *mp* are indicated. The system is flanked by two double bar lines.