

metastable

for flute and vibraphone

Thomas J Dempster

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West Columbia, SC

metastable for flute and vibraphone :: May – June 2014, West Columbia, SC

approximate performance duration: 8'30"

for the A/B Duo

Program Notes

Metastability is the extended time spent by an isolated system in a long lived configuration other than the state of least energy (rest). In other words, something that is metastable has an unstable stability. Something positioned to go tumbling to earth may break free of its temporary stability and careens out of control until it reaches a point of greatest stability and comes to rest. Perhaps the best idea of something that is metastable is a snowy slope, or a sand dune: tiny avalanches are indicative of metastability of the entire slope, and just one more grain of sand or snowflake could send the entire wall tumbling into chaos. In chemistry, one peculiar property of metastability is that of pure, super-cooled water remaining liquid far below the freezing point, and will remain so until vibrations or seeding creates crystallization, and thus, ice.

These ideas of stasis, real or perceived, and the potential for great force borne out of a single motion, all enter into this work: the coolness and glassiness of the first microtonal gesture is repeatedly perturbed, and as it moves in and out of stable places, it gathers more momentum. The flute and vibraphone both take turns being “kinetically persistent,” with the performers moving into, and out of, chaotic passages, until, at last, the entire motivic system expands, breaks free, rolls downhill, and seeks some sort of final rest...

Performance Notes

Time Signatures: Time signatures, when they appear, are basically there to reinforce a (stronger) sense of pulse. Much of the first half of the piece is unmetred or has passages that don't “fit” with the previous time signatures. This is intentional. To clarify this, measures that have a large X where a meter should be do not have a specific time signature and therefore shouldn't necessarily adhere to metrical accentuation, etc.

Accidentals: Accidentals apply only to the octave and measure in which it appears. Cautionary accidentals appear as often as is feasible for legibility.

Pulse: Unless otherwise marked, divisions/subdivisions remain constant through odd meter changes.

Pizz.: (flute) Lip pizzicato is desired for the specified note. The “pizz” marking applies *only* to the note underneath it. There are a few passages marked “pizz. - - - - -” – in such cases, all notes under the dashed line should be attacked as a lip pizz.

Whistle tones (flute): I expect resultant tones to occur an octave or two above notes requesting whistle tones. At one point (m. 39) I would like the performer to create a sort of harmonics glissando, freely moving back and forth between partials. (If whistle tones aren't feasible for the performer, please substitute breath tones.)

Breath tones and whistle tones (flute): Only pitches marked “whistle tone”, “breath tone,” or “breath” should be executed as such. In rare instances, the dashed line notation appears (as in lip pizz, above).

Overblow fluttertongue (flute): In a few passages, I request a forceful exhalation during the fluttertongue, sort of mixing a jet whistle and fluttertongue.

D.S.: (vibraphone) Dead stroke. These are marked by “D.S.,” a staccato, and a + mark underneath. These apply *only* to the note specified. There are a few instances where “D.S. - - - - -” is marked – in such cases, all notes under the dashed line should be played as a dead strokes.

Arco (vibraphone): Bowed keys. Understanding the idea that, in execution, there is only one attack possibility for the bowed vibes, I have tried to write in the attack time and the natural swell in volume. That said, if a more rapid bowed attack is possible, I would favor it.

Mallets (vibraphone): I don't specify mallet types in the score. I trust the performer's judgment.

Pedaling (vibraphone): I have tried to be clear as possible regarding pedaling. For passages not specifically marked, pedal ad lib.

Glissandi are abundant in the work for the flute. I use a slightly different notation – a straight line with the word “glissando” or “gliss” and occasionally over or under a pair of notes; the idea and desired effect is the same. Where a glissando mark is placed over a series of notes and there is a sharp or flat above the staff before and/or after the series, (m. 23; m. 49, e.g.) I request the performer move from slightly higher (sharp) or lower (flat) by rolling the flute into or away from the embouchure. Some glissandi terminate with a stemmed note without a notehead (e.g., m. 10) – simply go as flat (or as sharp) as possible without worrying about a “landing” pitch.

The **jet whistles** in m. 37 should follow the line-shape: that is, don't terminate the whistle at its most intense point, and instead bring it back to a normal dynamic level and lowest partials. In m. 58, a “normal,” aggressive, loudly-terminating jet whistle is requested.

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Thomas J Dempster
(BMI)

Placid; glassy. ♩ = c. 60

Flute

Vibraphone

fp *mp* *p* *p*

pp *mf* *pp* *mp*

Led. mp

Fl.

Vib.

mp *mp* *mp* *mp*

Led.

A **Faster; flexible**

Fl.

Vib.

mf molto vib. *p* *mf*

f *mp* *p* *mf* *f*

Led.

Fl.

Vib.

f *con brio*

non arpegg.

Led.

Fl. *f* *energetic* *f+* *Red.* *

Vib. *f* *energetic* *f* *Red.* *

B (a tempo) ♩ = c. 60

Fl. *mf* *p* *Glissando* *p* *Glissando* *mf* *mp* *pizz.*

Vib. *mp* *arco* *mp* *loco* *mp* *p* *D.S.* *5*

Fl. *mp* *misterioso* *p* *Gliss.* *p* *Gliss.* *p* *Gliss.* *mp* *5*

Vib. *mp* *arco* *mp* *loco* *mf* *arco* *mp*

Fl. *mp* *5* *3* *pizz.* *click* *6*

Vib. *mp* *arco* *mp*

12

Fl. *mp-mf cantabile* *pizz.---* *mf* 6 3 5

Vib. (arco) *mp* *mp* *mp* *mp* *

C A little faster; flexible ♩ = c. 63-66

14

Fl. *pizz.---* *whistle* *POP breath tone* *mf* *pp* *mp* 3

Vib. *loco* *D.S.---* *mf* *p* *p* *mp* 3 3 3 3
Ped. ad lib.

16

Fl. *whistle* *p* *pp* *mp* 3 *Gliss.*

Vib. *mp* *mf* 5 3

19

Fl. *flzg.* *mp* *mf* *f+* 5

Vib. *mf* *fp* *fp* *f* *non arp.* 3 3 5

Fl. 22 *Glissando* *Glissando* **Lento** ♩ = 48-52

Vib. 22 *non arpegg.* *mp* *mf* *p* *arco* *mp-mf*

Fl. 25 **D Tranquil** ♩ = c. 69 *increasingly more emphasis on pulse*

Vib. 25 *loco* *p* *mp* *mf* *mf dolce* *Ped. ad lib.*

Fl. 29

Vib. 29 *mp* *mf*

Fl. 32 **E Lyrical; some rubato in tempo**

Vib. 32 *mf* *p* *mf* *p*

34

Fl. *fp* < *f* *mf*

Vib. *mf*

Gliss.

35

Fl. *f*

Vib. *f*

Glissando

F

Fl. *pizz. pizz.* *jet* *jet* *starting to rush a bit...*

mp *p* *mf* <> *mp* <> *f* *mf*

Vib. *f* *mf*

38

Fl. *breath tone* *pizz.* *keep sounding pitch as low as possible; whistle move between harmonics* *pizz.*

p *mp* *p* *mf* *p* *sfz*

Vib. *mf* *mp* *sfz*

Sudden. ♩ = c. 100

G

rit.-----

40

Fl. *f* out of nowhere; ragged; explosive

Vib. *f*

(rit.)-----

42

Fl. pizz. pizz.

Vib.

Mid-air. ♩ = c. 80

44

Fl. *p* overblow fluttertongue

Vib. *p* 8^{va}

Red. *

Rushed ♩ = c. 100

46

Fl. *f*

Vib. *f*

Suspended ♩ = c. 96

Fl. 47 *f* 3 5 5

Vib. 47 *f* *mf* *

Fl. 48 *mp* *pp* *f* pizz. Glissando (#) → (b)

Vib. 48 *mp* *p* *

H Flexible ♩ = c. 80

Fl. 49 *mf* 5 Gliss. 6 Gliss. 5 3 3 *p* Gliss. 3 Gliss.

Vib. 49 *mf* rushed

Fl. 51 *f* 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3

Vib. 51 *mf* 3 5 5 3

(a tempo) ♩ = c. 80

53

Fl. *mp* *f* *mf* *ff*

Vib. *mp* *f* *mf* *ff*

54

Fl. *f* *mf* *pizz.* *pizz.*

Vib. *f* *mf* *D.S.* *dry*

I Steady, even. ♩ = c. 96

57

Fl. *f* *jet* *mf*

Vib. *f* *mf* *mf*

very little pedal until §

62

Fl. *mf* *mf*

Vib. *f* *mf* *mp*

65

Fl. *mf*

Vib. *mf* *mf*

67

Fl. *mf* *f* spirited

Vib. *mf* § - no more than half-pedal until marked "Ped."

70

Fl. 3

Vib.

72

Fl. *f* *mp*

Vib. *f* *mp*

75

Fl. *mp* *mp*

Vib. *mf*

Rec. *

78

Fl. *mf*

Vib. *mp*

Rec. *

80

Fl.

Vib. *f*

Rec. *mf* 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 *

K A little faster. ♩ = c. 100

83

Fl. *f marcato*

Vib. Rec. *

85

Fl. *mf* *f* *f* *mp* *f* *mf* *mp* *f*

Vib. *mp* *f* *mp*

88

Fl. *mp* *f* *mp* *f*

Vib. *f* *mp*

90

Fl. *mp* *f* *mp* *f*

Vib. *f* *mp* *f* *mp* *f*

92

Fl. *ff* *f* *mf* *mp*

Vib. *mp* *f* *mp* *mf*

94

Fl. *mp mp mp mf f*

Vib. *f mp f mp f*

96

Fl. *f mp mf*

Vib. *f mp f*

98

Fl. *f p mp*

Vib. *f mp f p mp*

100

Fl. *mf f* *accel.*

Vib. *f*

(accel.) -----

L Clear, urgent ♩ = c. 104

102

Fl. *f*

Vib. *f*

104

Fl.

Vib.

106

Fl. 3

Vib.

108

Fl.

Vib.

110

Fl.

Vib.

111

Fl.

Vib.

accel. -----

113

Fl.

Vib.

M Brilliant, unchained ♩ = c. 112

114

Fl.

Vib.

ff

ff

116

Fl. *n.*

Vib. *mf*

119

Fl. *mf* **N** *f* (so far as is possible...) pizz. pizz.

Vib. *p* *f* half-pedal ad lib

122

Fl. pizz. pizz. *f* pizz.

Vib. *f*

125

Fl.

Vib.



127

Fl. *mf*

Vib. *mf* Ped. ad lib. *espress.*

3

130

Fl.

Vib.

5

132

Fl. *p* *mf* *p*

Vib.

3

134

Fl.

Vib.

3

Fl. 136 *f* *mf* 3

Vib. 136

Fl. 138 *p* *mf* 3 *overblow fluttertongue*

Vib. 138

P Fl. *p* 3 *mp* 5 *mf* *mp*

Vib. 141 *p* *mp* *p*

Fl. 143 *f*

Vib. 143 *mp* *mf*

146

Fl. *mp*

Vib. *mp*

148

Fl. *mp* *p*

Vib. *mp*

150

Fl. *mf* *pizz.*

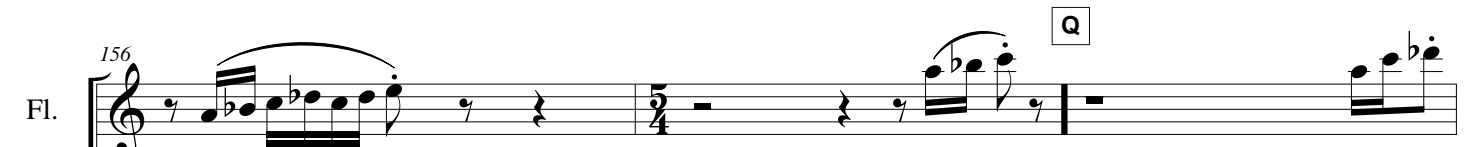
Vib. *mf*


153

Fl. *mp*

Vib. *mp*


156

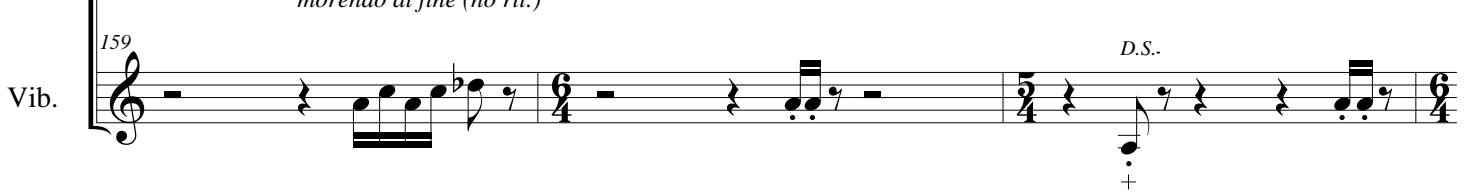
Fl. 

Vib. 

p *morendo al fine (no rit.)*


159

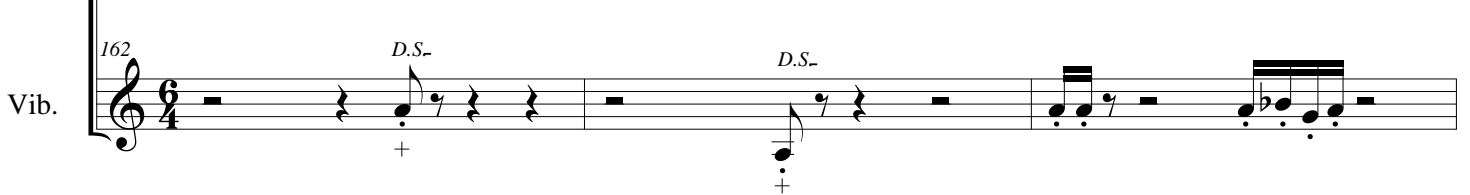
Fl. 

Vib. 

pizz. *pizz.* *morendo al fine (no rit.)* *D.S.*

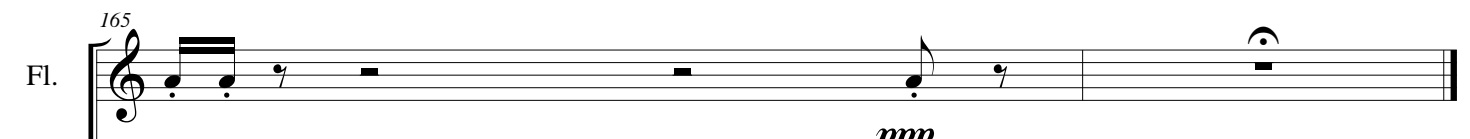
162

Fl. 

Vib. 

pizz. *D.S.* *D.S.*

165

Fl. 

Vib. 

ppp *ppp*

