

Being and Becoming

(2010)

for toy piano and electronics

Lou Bunk

Being and Becoming, *for toy piano and electronics*

Program Notes

Chick: Our way of organizing the data which rushes by in gestalt style -that is, in increasingly abstract forms –speeds up experience into a dangerously topsy-turvy fast forward comedy. Our need for rapid disposal eliminates the details that bewitch, hold or delay children. Art is one rescue from this chaotic acceleration. Meter in poetry, tempo in music, form and color in painting. But we do feel that we are speeding earthward, crashing into our graves.

Socrates. And a thing is not seen because it is visible, but conversely, visible because it is seen; nor is a thing led because it is in the state of being led, or carried because it is in the state of being carried, but the converse of this... It does not become because it is becoming, but it is in a state of becoming because it becomes.

Cooper: Wait a minute! Wait a minute! [sips, sighs blissfully] This is-- excuse me--a DAMN fine cup of coffee.

This iteration of Being and Becoming was written for and is dedicated to pianist Xenia Pestova.

Performance Notes

Toy Piano

Any toy piano with any register can be used. I wrote with a 3 octave toy piano in mind, with a register from F2 to F5, which sounds an octave higher. If you have a toy piano in which these pitches do not fit, then just compress the register as needed, always starting with the lowest possible F in measure 1.

Dynamics

There are four gradations of loudness: p, mp, mf, f. Some toy pianos will more successfully produce these dynamic differences, others may just create more key sound, which is OK, and desirable.

Tempo

On some toy pianos, it may be difficult to cleanly produce repeated notes at the written tempo. This is OK, and it is desirable to have repeated notes not speak on occasion. Only reduce tempo if a majority of repeated notes are not speaking.

Extended Techniques (ask me about a video I made that demonstrates these) (coming soon)

Bow Body of T.P.: Draw a bow across a resonant edge of the body of the toy piano. A rough edge works well. Try many out, and choose an edge that appeals to you. It is OK if a tone is produced. On my toy piano, the edge below the keys works well. Feel free to choose multiple edges to bow, and change at will during performance.

Key-noise friction tremolo: This technique produces a variable key clicking sound by gently touching the tops of the keys (of the written notes) and moving them left to right (tremolo) without the keys depressing to hit the sounding rod. The tips of your fingers should stick to the keys (friction), causing the keys to wiggle with the motion of your hand.

Key-noise tremolo (black keys): This technique produces a variable key clicking sound by using the black keys. In this case, friction is not used to pull the keys back and forth. You should gently place the fingers in between the black keys and then move the hand left and right (at indicated speed), pushing the black keys back and forth producing the key-noise. Again, the keys should not depress and hit the sounding rods.

Tremolos: Standard and key-noise tremolos are noted with 1, 2 and 3 lines indicating slow, medium and fast speed of tremolo. These are rough estimates and in performance need not be consistent from one group of tremolos to another. Tremolos should not sound too even.

Blow on Keys: Blow on the keys with a focused pinched air-stream, almost as if you are whistling but not closing your lips tight enough. Do this across the black keys while moving your head left to right, up and down the keyboard. You will notice a tremolo like sound applied to your blowing as you move across the black keys. When performing the blowing, freely move up and down the register creating a dynamic and changing blowing timbre.

Get up, Position 1 and Position. 2: At the instruction “get up”, you will move from the toy piano to a position in the performance space half way to position 2. This is position 1. Take with you the score and the bow as you will bowing the score at these two positions and while walking in-between them.

Position 2 should be across from speaker 2, not in the performance area (stage). See diagram below (coming soon)

Bow Score: After you “get up” (from above), you are instructed to “bow score”. To do this, fold the score in half without creasing, creating a roundish tear-drop shape when looking directly at the edge of the paper. Hold score with rounded edge in between your thumb and fingers and draw the bow across the two edges of the teardrop. There are many ways to hold the paper so experiment. The sound should be fairly loud, complex, noisy and unpredictable.

Notation

Square Note Heads: Square note heads indicate non-pitched sounds, and imprecise pitch notation (in the electronics).

Electronics Cues: Cues are numbers 1-37 and placed in circles. In most cases, a cue will trigger a sound. In a few instances, cues will stop a sound (and sometimes simultaneously start another) these cues are notated with the work “OFF”.

The Notation of the Electronics: In this performance part, only information critically needed for performance is given. If you would like a more complete notation of the electronics, ask me and I will send you a score.

Technical Requirements

2 channel playback, stage and rear
Max/MSP, patch provided by composer
MIDI pedal (for performer to trigger cues in Max/MSP)
Amplification of toy piano (only for larger halls)

Notes on Speaker Arrangement:

- The stage speaker (channel 1 of audio from Max) should be opposite the toy piano creating a stereo effect between the stage speaker and the toy piano.
- The rear speaker (channel 2 of audio from Max) should be diagonal from the stage speaker. Near the end of the piece, the performer leaves the stage and enters the hall and moves to a location opposite the rear speaker. The performer will be bowing paper in this new location and will create a stereo effect with the rear speaker.

- Amplification speaker: The toy piano should be amplified through a speaker behind, or near, the toy piano. The effect should be to reinforce the toy piano in a natural sounding way, not to fill the hall.

Amplification speaker
Toy Piano

Stage Speaker (ch1. from Max)

(stage)



(hall)

Rear Speaker (ch.2 from Max)

New performer location

Notes on Diffusion

Through much of the piece, electronics are only sent to the stage speaker. Towards the middle and end, electronics are sent to the rear speaker. This is all worked out in the Max/MSP patch, so no live diffusion is necessary.

Being and Becoming

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$\text{♩} = 100$

Toy Piano

p

sounds an octave higher

6

T.P.

mp

p

11

T.P.

mp

p

mp

16

T.P.

p

mp

p

22

T.P.

mp

p

mp

27

T.P.

33

T.P.

Q1

Cues

8^{va} sine tones [3356]

8^{va} [2226]

Elec.

39

T.P.

45

T.P.

p *mf*

Cues

Q2

Elec.

sine tones
8^{va} [3356]
8^{va} [2226]
pp
p
p
pp

51

T.P.

The image shows a musical score for two instruments: Tuba (T.P.) and Electric Piano (Elec.). The Tuba part is written in bass clef and consists of six measures. The first measure is a whole rest. The second measure has a 6/4 time signature and contains a sixteenth-note triplet with a '5' above it, followed by a dotted quarter note, and a dynamic marking of *mp*. The third measure has a 7/4 time signature and contains a sixteenth-note triplet with a '5' above it, followed by a dotted quarter note, and a dynamic marking of *p*. The fourth measure has an 8/4 time signature and contains a sixteenth-note triplet with a '5' above it, followed by a dotted quarter note, and a dynamic marking of *mp*. The fifth measure has a 9/4 time signature and contains a sixteenth-note triplet with a '5' above it, followed by a dotted quarter note, and a dynamic marking of *p*. The sixth measure has a 10/4 time signature and contains a sixteenth-note triplet with a '5' above it, followed by a dotted quarter note, and a dynamic marking of *p*. The Electric Piano part consists of seven staves. The first two staves are in treble clef, and the last five are in bass clef. The first measure of the Elec. part contains several chords and notes, with a dynamic marking of *p* and an accent (>) over the first note. The remaining five measures of the Elec. part are mostly whole rests.

Elec.

57

♩ = 92

T.P.

Q3

Cues

63

♩ = 100

T.P.

Musical score for T.P. (Tape Piano) in 4/4 time. The score consists of two staves. The upper staff features a complex rhythmic pattern with five-measure rests and sixteenth-note runs, marked with *mf* and *p*. The lower staff provides a steady accompaniment of eighth notes.

Q4

Q5

Cues

Cues section of the musical score, consisting of a single staff with a series of rests and short musical phrases in various time signatures (4/4, 6/4, 4/4, 2/4, 4/4).

Elec.

Musical score for Elec. (Electric) in 4/4 time, consisting of five staves. The score includes various textures and dynamics. The top staff is marked *p* and includes the instruction "toy piano, filtered, a little flat" and "sine tones". The second staff is marked *p* and includes "sine tones" and "15^{ms} [3192]". The third staff is marked *pp* and includes "15^{ms} [4619]". The fourth staff is marked *mp* and includes "8^{ms}". The fifth staff is marked *mp* and includes "[1260]". The score concludes with a *mp* dynamic marking.

70

T.P.

Cues

Q6

Elec.

76

T.P.

Cues

Q7

Q8

Elec.

83

♩ = 92

T.P.

Cues

Elec.

Musical score for T.P., Cues, and Elec. sections. The score is in 4/4 time and consists of 8 measures. The tempo is marked as ♩ = 92. The T.P. section is in bass clef and includes dynamics *mf*, *f*, *mf*, *p*, and *f*. The Cues section is in treble clef and includes a cue mark **Q9**. The Elec. section consists of 8 staves in treble clef, including performance instructions such as "toy piano, filtered, a little flat", "sine tones", and various dynamic markings like *p*, *mp*, *mf*, and *p*. The Elec. section also includes frequency markers such as 15^{ms} , δ^{ms} , and δ^{ob} with associated numbers in brackets.

89

♩ = 88

T.P.

mf

mf

mf

Detailed description: Tuba part notation in bass clef, 2/4 time signature. It consists of six measures. The first, third, and fifth measures feature a complex rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with a five-fingered fingering (5) above the notes. The second, fourth, and sixth measures are rests. Dynamics include *mf* and a crescendo hairpin.

Q10

Cues

Detailed description: Cues part notation in 2/4 time signature. It consists of six measures, all of which are rests.

Elec.

from T.P. sustain.

sine tones

15th [4619]

8th

mp

p

mp

mp

mp

Detailed description: Electric guitar part notation in treble clef, 2/4 time signature. It consists of six measures. The first measure has a fermata over a chord. The second measure is marked 'from T.P. sustain.' and contains a chord with a 'sine tones' annotation. The third measure has a '15th [4619]' annotation. The fourth measure has an '8th' annotation. Dynamics include *mp* and *p*.

95

T.P.

Cues

Elec.

102

T.P.

Cues

Elec.

109

T.P.

mf

mf

key-noise
friction tremolo

mp

Cues

Q14

Q15

Elec.

toy piano, filtered, a little flat

mp

sim.

sine tones 15^{ma} [4143]

15^{ma} [3356]

8^{va} [3192]

mf

mf

mp

118

key-noise friction tremolo

2 hand key-noise friction tremolo hands not synchronized

rit. trem. not too fast

gliss.

slowing

slowing

T.P.

mf mp mf mp

key-noise trem. (black-key)

Q16 Q17 Q18

Cues

Elec.

6 mp

6 p

sine tones 15^{ma} [4619]

15^{ma} [4143]

15^{ma} [3192]

6 slower T.P. (muted timbre) rit.

p

125

2 hand key-noise trem. (black keys) hands not synchronized

bow body of T.P. (under keys)

bow a little faster

T.P.

mp p mf mp mf

Q19 Q20

Cues

Elec.

key clicks

growing texture becoming processed key clicks

key clicks

mp mf p

137

♩ = 84

T.P.

142

♩ = 80

T.P.

Cues

Elec.

147

T.P.

5 *f* *p*

bow body of T.P.
(under keys)

mp > *mf*

Detailed description: This block contains the musical notation for the Tuba (T.P.) part. It consists of two staves. The upper staff has a treble clef and contains a series of eighth-note patterns, some marked with a '5' above them. The lower staff has a bass clef and contains rests. Dynamics include *f* (forte), *p* (piano), *mp* (mezzo-piano), and *mf* (mezzo-forte). A performance instruction 'bow body of T.P. (under keys)' is written above the lower staff, with a wedge-shaped dynamic marking pointing to it.

Q28

Cues

Detailed description: This block shows a single staff labeled 'Cues' with a treble clef. It contains a series of rests, indicating when other instruments should enter.

Elec.

mf >

mp [Q27] *mp*

mp

Detailed description: This block contains the musical notation for the Electric guitar (Elec.) part, consisting of five staves. The top staff has a treble clef and contains a melodic line with a slur and a dynamic marking of *mf*. The middle three staves have treble clefs and contain various accompaniment patterns, including chords and single notes, with dynamic markings of *mp* and a reference to [Q27]. The bottom staff has a bass clef and contains a bass line with a dynamic marking of *mp*.

158 $\text{♩} = 72$

T.P.

Cues

Elec.

Q29 Q30 Q31

mp *mf* *f*

sine tones
15^{ma}

mp

mf

mf

mf

mf

from T.P. sustain.

slow blowing air

buzz rumble

buzz rumble (muted)

f *mf*

171

T.P.

Cues

Elec.

Q32 Q33 Q34 Q35

p

[1222]

mf

mf

slow blowing air

mp

warped T.P.

mf

metallic-like

mf

[999]

mp

10K static

p

500-1K buzz

mp

181

T.P.

Cues

Elec.

Q36 OFF

w/ low rumble

mp

mf *p* *f* *mp*

190 ♩ = 60

T.P. *mf* bow body of T.P. (under keys)

blow on keys (see notes)

mp

mf

sim.

f

Q37

Cues

Elec.

Echo of m1 gesture. Filtered, looping, erratically shifting speed and pitch.

mp

sim.

slowly becoming higher and faster

rhythm slows start of each looping figure approximated to the 16th note. [rear speaker]

blowing air (muted timbre)

T.P. *mf*

mf

blowing air (natural sounding)

mp

201

T.P. *p* *f* GET UP (see notes)

Elec.

T.P. *mf*

rubato

mp

mp

mp

breath

blowing air (natural sounding)

mf

breath

mp

breath

mp

211 ARRIVE AT POSITION 1

bow score (see notes)

WALK TOWARDS POS. 2

ARRIVE AT POS. 2

T.P.

Elec.

mf

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

mf

mf

breath (exaggerated)

mf

223

bow slow and hard (to mimic scratch in electronics)

T.P.

Elec.

p *mp* *p* *f* *mf* becomes static-like *p* fading static

faster and faster looping

ff

key click

pp

gliss.