

evan johnson

Quintet, camera lucida

for viola, cello and double bass
with guitar and percussion

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Quintet, camera lucida (2008)

Duration: 3'00"

Instrumentation:

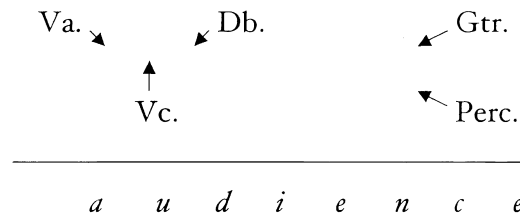
viola
cello
double bass

guitar
percussion

(nylon-string acoustic, or electric with piezo pickup)
(one suspended metal plate, or another resonant metal object
with a somewhat low and quite indefinite pitch)

NB. The percussion could, if absolutely necessary, also be played by the guitarist.

Seating of performers (arrows indicate direction the performer is facing):



Program Note:

Roland Barthes is beside the point; I mean the *camera lucida*, the optical device that allows an image or scene to be superimposed upon a blank drawing surface for tracing purposes. Here, the two ensembles—the string *trio basso* and the guitar/percussion duet—are in a state of equilibrium, projected image upon blank surface, trading stripped-down, more or less repetitive gestures that each make their own attempts at transparency and traceability but are each also resigned to a fundamental obscurity that will not lift.

Quintet, camera lucida was commissioned by the Ensemblia Festival in commemoration of their thirtieth anniversary.

Notation

General

All *grace notes* should be relatively slow, free, and utterly without urgency.

→ Arrows generally indicate a smooth transition from one performing state to another.

∩ A rest of an irrational or indeterminate duration that is clear from context.

Tuning

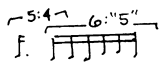
The strings and guitar are detuned by an imprecise amount before or during the performance (see below); all notated pitches are therefore at *fingered* pitch, *in this regard*. However, the scordatura in the double bass and guitar is written as sounding. In other words, all pitches are written at the sounding pitch of their initial (scordatura or standard) tuning, which is then distorted by adjustments of the tuning peg. (All pitches are given as fingered in the performance parts.)

The initial tunings of the guitar and bass are given at their first entrances.

III, IV: -1/4 These indications for the guitar and strings mean that the given strings should be detuned by the *number of turns of the tuning peg* shown. (Roman numerals are used for the strings, circled Arabic numerals for the guitar.) In the first example, that is, the pegs for third and fourth strings should each be turned by approximately a quarter-turn (ninety degrees) in the slack direction. The resulting tuning will of course not be precisely determinable or reproducible. *No attempt should be made to avoid incidental noise from the instrument while detuning.*

⊙ - ⊙: -1/4

Rhythm



Overlapping tuplets involve a total duration that is itself irrational (that is, fractional); the overall duration of these tuplets is given in terms of a common, if distorted, unit in a way that is clear from context (e.g., 6:5", as seen here and in m. 2, means six sixteenths in the space of five "sixteenths," where the first of the latter in fact has the duration of 4/5 of a sixteenth note due to the preceding, overlapping tuplet.)

General Accents

() (()) Parentheses around any accent represent a mild, attenuated accent without any particular energy or emphasis. Double parentheses: more attenuated still.

Strings

As noted at the start of the score, all three string instruments should be muted throughout and played entirely without vibrato.

Bowing

▣ ∨ These symbols do *not* have their accustomed meaning of downbow and upbow. Instead, they refer to the endpoints of the bow – the frog and the tip, respectively. Bowing indications are thus made by horizontal lines connecting these endpoints; these lines are often interrupted in notationally dense passages or when the symbols are quite far apart on the score.

▣ | ∨ When these symbols are surrounded by brackets, they refer to a point *towards* that end of the bow but not reaching it (about 2/3 to 3/4 of the way across the bow); brackets are used to indicate that a single bowing motion should not reach the "far end" of the bow before it is terminated.

Slurs in the score, therefore, have *nothing* directly to do with bowing!

SP, MSP, MISP *sul ponticello, molto sul ponticello, massimo sul ponticello*. The last of these, **MISP**, means that the bow should be placed literally adjacent to the bridge, so that there is some noise from the contact between the bowhair and the bridge.

ST, MST, MIST *sul tasto, molto sul tasto, massimo sul tasto*. The last of these, **MIST**, means that the bow should be placed literally adjacent to the stopping finger (or fist), so that the bow touches and brushes against the left hand throughout its motion.

CLT, 1/2CLT *col legno tratto, 1/2 col legno tratto* (i.e. bow with wood and hair). See below regarding "clt accents."

∅ CLT *non col legno tratto* – i.e., normal bowing.

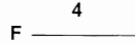
Fingering

F, K, T **F** means that the left hand should be formed into a **fist** that is then used to stop the string. The resulting pitch is expected to be slightly approximate. **K** means that the **knuckle** should be used to stop the string; if no specific finger is given (see below) any knuckle may be used.




Notes that are to be stopped with the fist or the knuckle are given in brackets at their inception, to reinforce the fact that their pitch will be approximate.

T means that the **thumb** (on the cello or bass) should be used to stop the string; **TK** refers to the knuckle of the thumb.

(Strings: Fingering, cont'd.)

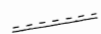
- 4** The numbers 1-4 refer to the four fingers of the left hand; thus, 4 (the only numeral used in the score) specifies the little finger.
- F**  In this configuration, the fist should be used to stop the string, and then (without moving the fist) the fourth finger should be extended to stop another, higher note on the same or an adjacent string (as specified).
- ▲** The highest possible pitch on a specified string, with a specified left-hand finger or other stopping agent, in a specified situation.
- +** Left-hand pizzicato (with or without bow)

Accents and Ornaments

-  "finger (or fist!) percussion": the onset of the pitch should be accompanied by a slight but audible noise from the striking of the fingerboard by the left hand.
-  A small, improvised turn or mordent *above* the given note. Sometimes a finger or other stopping agent will be specified above the symbol, referring to the "ornamental" pitch. The symbol with two slashes represents a slightly longer, more elaborate ornament than that with only one slash.
- < >** A broad, extremely "gentle" dynamic accent, *almost* a brief crescendo/decrescendo pair.
- >** *clt* accent; during the bowstroke, the wood of the bow should strike the string with some force, enough to make a small, brittle accent, and then bowing should continue with both bow and hair.
- ½ CLT**
-  "tremor": simultaneous with the onset of the pitch, the muscles of the left forearm must be clenched as tightly as possible, making the left hand tremor uncontrollably, and then gradually loosened to normal. The result should be a slight, brief and unpredictable wavering of the pitch, a sort of vibrato, that fades smoothly.

Glissandi


All glissandi should be as smooth as possible, and no emphasis should be placed on starting or ending pitches unless an accent of some sort is independently indicated.


 A double glissando line, a dotted line above a solid (standard) glissando, indicates a "creaking glissando"; during the slide, the finger (or other stopping agent) should press with great force *into* the fingerboard, so that extreme friction is created, resulting in unpredictable sticking and mechanical noise as the glissando proceeds.

Guitar

Glissandi noted in the guitar part are always to be achieved via the appropriate tuning peg. They only occur on open strings.

N.B.: The left hand of the guitarist is *only* used for tuning-peg glissandi. All notated attacks, including percussive depressing of strings on the fingerboard (see below), are done with the right hand, which will therefore play much of the material over the fingerboard.

 Forcefully depress the string at the appropriate fret, creating a faint pitch accompanied by a percussive attack. A dotted line connects these events with the subsequent release of the string, notated with a parenthesized notehead as below.

 Release the appropriate string, producing a faint resonance on the given pitch (which will be an open string).

Percussion

The percussion instrument is to be a freely hanging, resonant metal plate or similar object with only a vague sense of (low) pitch. Each stroke should be left to resonate freely.

K Both percussion attacks should be made with a knuckle, as specified by this symbol.

Quintet, camera lucida

Commissioned by the Ensemble Festival for their 30th anniversary.

EVAN JOHNSON (2008)

Trasparente, bizmo, opaco. Senza entusiasmo... ♩ = 34

VA
 III, IV: -1/4
 V
 MST
 con sord. scupre, senza vib.
 III (IV)
 12

VC
 III, IV: -1/4
 V
 MST
 con sord. scupre, senza vib.
 (IV scupre)
 8

DB
 V
 MST
 con sord. scupre, senza vib.
 begin bowing imperceptibly
 SP
 6:5
 6F:5

Initial bow tuning:



(Do not use C extension!)

(*) With the first in position, extend little finger for grace-note glissando (on same string).

(**) Keep first in position for lower glissando - use little finger, extended as far as possible, for upper line.

