

Chopsticks (2016)
for Soldier's Tale Septet
Brendon Randall-Myers

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Program Note

Chopsticks is part a set of pieces about memory and technology called *Anthology*, written for the New York-based Exceptet. *Anthology* is a mixtape of misremembered/ reinterpreted music and experiences, and a catalog of technology's continual reinvention of the means to serve basic and timeless needs. It's about versions and facsimiles, the ways humans and machines understand their pasts, and the way those pasts interact with each other in the present. Each piece draws on older music that I know and love; each uses technology to reimagine, amplify, and distort that music; and each showcases a different member of the ensemble as a way to transform the ensemble.

This plays out quite differently in the two pieces I initially wrote for the group, but both draw inspiration from folk music traditions I interacted with as child in West Virginia. *Chopsticks* started with my memories of hammered dulcimer music and barn dances, filtered through percussionist Mark Utley's propensity for modifying instruments and my 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.

Anthology was commissioned by Exceptet and MATA.

Duration: ca. 10'

Instrumentation: violin, double bass (doubling woodblocks), Bb clarinet, bassoon, trumpet, trombone, percussion

Performance Notes

General notes:

- All instruments should be miked and amplified for balance, particularly the violin and double bass.
- Repeats 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 his/her right side.

Percussion preparation and amplification:

The percussion part for this piece is played entirely on an acoustic/electric steel-string guitar, preferably a cheap one that you don't mind beating on with chopsticks. It needs to be prepared and amplified as follows:

- The guitar should 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. 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 chopsticks for both preparation and playing, which shouldn't damage the strings or pickguard, and they have better bounce.
- 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

Percussion key and techniques:

The image shows two staves of musical notation. The top staff illustrates techniques for the guitar neck: 1) 'on strings, right side of stick' (multiple vertical strokes on the strings), 2) 'on base of stick' (vertical strokes on the neck), 3) 'on pickguard' (vertical strokes on the guitar's body), and 4) 'above nut' (vertical strokes above the guitar's headstock). The bottom staff shows techniques for the guitar's head: 1) 'smack strings anywhere on right side of threaded stick' (two slanted strokes on the strings), 2) 'on pickguard w/ l.h. on head of threaded stick' (a vertical stroke on the headstock with a left hand marker), 3) 'smack strings left side of hairtie' (a slanted stroke on the strings near the hairtie), and 4) 'on base of stick w/ r.h. while holding down head of threaded stick w/ l.h.' (a vertical stroke on the neck with a right hand marker and a left hand holding the headstock).

Chopsticks

Brendon Randall-Myers

=172-180

Clarinet in B_b

Bassoon

Trumpet in C

Trombone

Percussion

Violin

Double Bass

Amplified acoustic guitar prepared
w/ chopsticks- see performance notes

harmon mute

pizz

f (1st note pizz on repeat)

woodblocks

start out on 2 woodblocks

mf

6

Cl.

Bsn.

C Tpt.

Tbn.

Perc.

Vln.

Db.

mf

mp

f

p

f

Anthology i. chopsticks

2

A

11

Cl. *f*
Bsn. *mf*

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

Tbn. *p* *3* *ff* *p* *3* *ff*

Perc. *f*

Vln.

Db.

16

Cl.

Bsn. *mf* *3* *3*

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

Tbn. *p* *3* *ff* *p* *3* *ff* *p* *3*

Perc.

Vln. *f*

Db.

21

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

f $\underline{\underline{3}} \underline{\underline{3}} \underline{\underline{3}} \underline{\underline{3}}$ $\underline{\underline{3}} \underline{\underline{3}}$ $\underline{\underline{3}} \underline{\underline{3}}$

mp $\underline{\underline{3}} \underline{\underline{3}}$ $\underline{\underline{3}} \underline{\underline{3}}$ $\underline{\underline{3}} \underline{\underline{3}}$

p $\underline{\underline{3}}$ $\underline{\underline{3}}$

f

B

26

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

mp $\underline{\underline{3}} \underline{\underline{3}}$

behind nut of guitar

arco

I

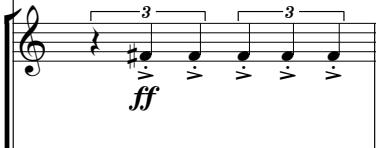
Anthology i. chopsticks

4

32

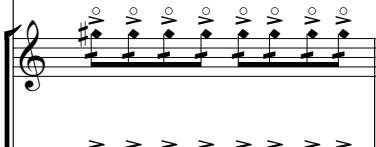
Cl. 

Bsn. 

C Tpt. 

Tbn. 

Perc. 

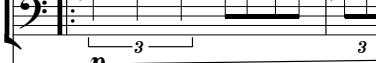
Vln. 

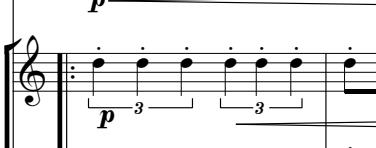
Db. 

C

37

Cl. 

Bsn. 

C Tpt. 

Tbn. 

Perc. 

Vln. 

Db. 

Anthology i. chopsticks

5

42

Cl.

Bsn.

C Tpt.

Tbn.

Perc.

Vln.

Db.

47

Cl.

Bsn.

C Tpt.

Tbn.

Perc.

Vln.

Db.

Anthology i. chopsticks

6

D

Cl.

Bsn. *p* *ff* *f*

C Tpt. *simile* *p>f* *p>f* *p>f* *p>f* *p>f*

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

Perc. *simile* *+ - - +* *+ - - +* *+ - - +* *+ - - +* *+ - - +* *+ - - +* *+ - - +*

Vln. *arco* *pizz*

Db. *f*

E

Cl.

Bsn.

C Tpt. *p>f* *p>f*

Tbn. *p>f* *p>f*

Perc. *+ - - +* *+ - - +* *+ - - +* *+ - - +* *+ - - +* *+ - - +* *+ - - +*

Vln.

Db.

Anthology i. chopsticks

7

67

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

mp

75

F

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

f *come sopra*
p<f *p<f*
come sopra
p<f *p<f*

f *arco*

Anthology i. chopsticks

8

G

83

Cl.

Bsn.

C Tpt. *p < f*

Tbn. *p < f*

Perc.

Vln.

Db.

3x

84

85

86

87

88

3x

90

H

Cl.

Bsn.

C Tpt.

Tbn.

Perc.

Vln.

Db.

ord.

90

91

92

93

94

95

Anthology i. chopsticks

97

9

Cl.

Bsn.

C Tpt.

Tbn.

Perc.

Vln.

Db.

behind nut of guitar

103

3x

I

Cl.

Bsn.

C Tpt.

Tbn.

Perc.

Vln.

Db.

ff improvise variations on pattern in this section when it feels good

Anthology i. chopsticks

10

Cl. 110

Bsn.

C Tpt.

Tbn.

Perc.

Vln.

Db.

Cl. 116 J

Bsn.

C Tpt.

Tbn.

Perc.

Vln.

Db.

Anthology i. chopsticks

120

Cl.

Bsn.

C Tpt.

Tbn.

Perc.

Vln.

Db.

11

124

Cl.

Bsn.

C Tpt.

Tbn.

Perc.

Vln.

Db.

Anthology i. chopsticks

12

128

This musical score page contains two systems of music. The top system, labeled '12', spans from measure 128 to 131. The bottom system, labeled '131', spans from measure 131 to 134. The instrumentation includes Clarinet (Cl.), Bassoon (Bsn.), C Trumpet (C Tpt.), Trombone (Tbn.), Percussion (Perc.), Violin (Vln.), Double Bass (Db.), and Piano (represented by a keyboard icon). The piano part is divided into two staves: one for the left hand (treble clef) and one for the right hand (bass clef). Measures 128-130 show various melodic and harmonic patterns across the instruments. Measures 131-134 introduce a new section where the piano part features sustained notes with grace notes above them, while the orchestra provides harmonic support.

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

131

3x

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

Anthology i. chopsticks

13

134

Cl.

Bsn.

C Tpt.

Tbn.

Perc.

Vln.

Db.