

Traces: Matthew

for amplified mbira and computer (2017)
Tom Baker

Performance Notes:

- 1) Score (8.5 x 14) is a graphic notation for improvisation with live-electronics
- 2) All playing should be sparse and soft; less is always more
- 3) Listen and communicate with the sounds that are filling the space
- 4) Horizontal dashed lines denote improvisation using the technique indicated. It does not necessarily mean actively sounding the whole time; see #2
- 5) The FILTERIZER is a patch in MAX/MSP that creates whispers of energy around harmonics and frequencies that are otherwise inaudible.
- 6) The HENRY part is a fixed media soundfile, which also plays through the MAX/MSP patch.

Program notes:

Traces: Matthew is the latest in a series of works for acoustic instruments with live-electronics and fixed media. The pieces in the "Traces" series are created by making relationships in spaces (with and without musical events) and with performers and instruments. Through electronic means, both the acoustic instrument and the sounds of the space are transformed by an emphasis on sonic layers that are barely or not audible; capturing and processing them brings them forward and honors the essence of the space and the instrument.

In *Traces: Matthew*, the means for this result is two-fold. First, the Mbira is played through a MAX/MSP patch that includes a contraption that the composer calls the FILTERIZER. It is a pass-filter that randomly picks frequencies, both harmonic and non-harmonic, that are present in the sound but very quiet. Sounds occur for a very short time (1-3 seconds) before moving on to another frequency. The FILTERIZER also creates complexity with a random Q effect, which changes the "sharpness" of the filter. The result is a whispered, ghostly music that arises from the simple means of bowing and plucking the Mbira. Secondly, there is a fixed-media sound file that plays throughout the work (labeled in the score as MATTHEW) that has been manipulated by several processes that also emphasize inaudible parts of the original file. The original file contains the "traces" of Henry. Together, these processes create a sonic landscape that is both new and old, living and dead, audible and inaudible.

MBIRA (also called Kalimba or thumb-piano)

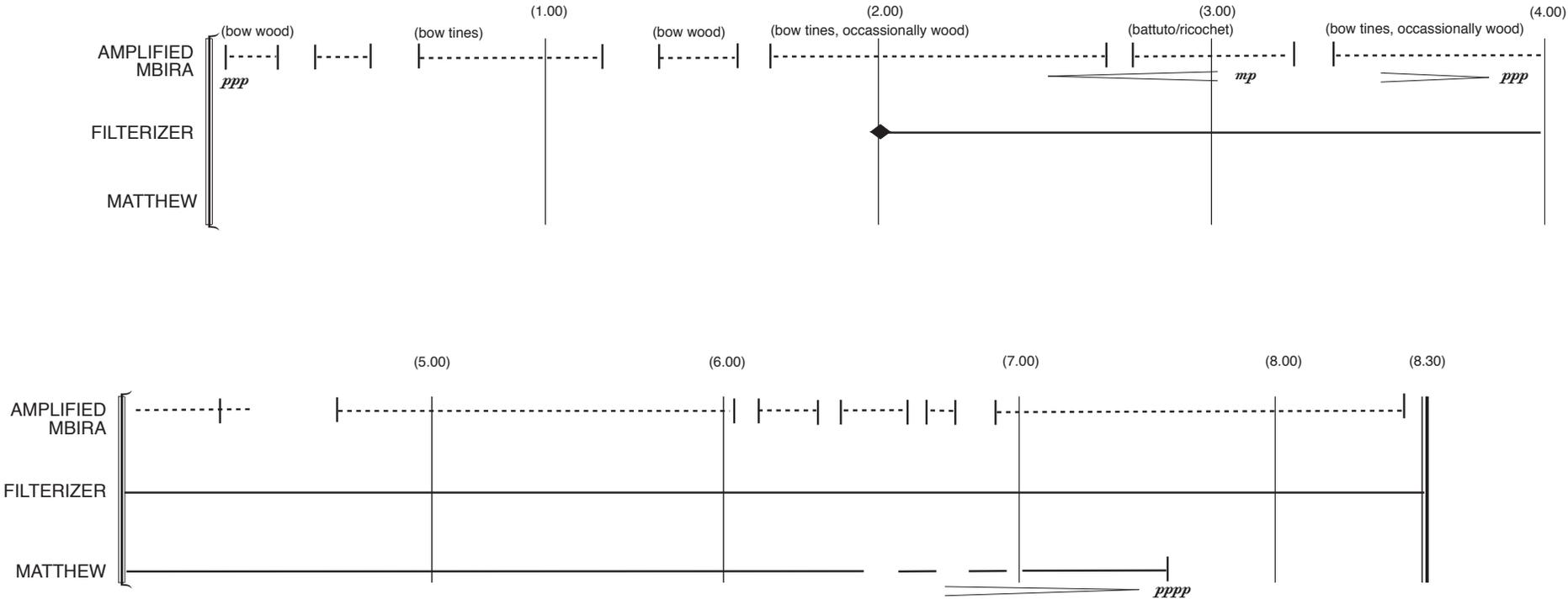
The Mbira used in the origination of this work was a 7-note model, with the tuning specified below (any size and tuning is possible for this piece).

From left to right in HZ: 230.6 , 145.5, 63.3, 94.8, 139.2, 160.0, 220.0

For max patch, contact the composer at tom@tombakercomposer.com

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- Performance Notes:
- 1) Always pppp (ignore any temptation to dynamically shape the piece)
 - 2) Less is always more
 - 3) All playing should be sparse and soft
 - 4) Listen and communicate with the sounds that are filling the space
 - 5) Follow time markings as closely as possible
 - 6) Horizontal dashed line denote improvisation at that time using the technique indicated. It does not necessarily mean actively sounding the whole time; see #2
 - 7) The FILTERIZER is part of a patch in MAX/MSP that the amplified MBIRA plays through. It is a random filtering patch, that creates whispers of energy around harmonics and frequencies that are present, but inaudible without the FILTERIZER.
 - 8) The MATTHEW part is a fixed media part, which also plays through the MAX/MSP patch.