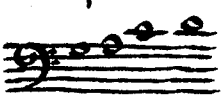
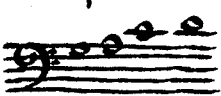


Jade Mountain Soundings

(for bowed string instrument, solo) ~ by Malcolm Goldstein
(for Robert Black) (1983)

The music focuses on aspects of sound-quality/texture expressed through the performance of a bowed string instrument: the physicality of generating the string to sound. Bow pressure, bow speed and bow placement are fundamental considerations in the sound of this music. The graphic score indicates, by thickness and curve of line, changes in these aspects of performance technique. The lines, similarly conceived of as phrases, are always realized as sustained (legato, lyrical) bowings — as varieties of breathing (the bow upon/within the string). The music can also be conceived of as a kind of meditation.

The instrumentalist determines four pitches, prior to the performance, which will be the total gamut of the piece. For example, the gamut can be as simple as  (i.e. for string bass), or as complicated as  desired. Each pitch is fixed in its specific registration but, as indicated with the Roman numerals in the graphic score, can be played on any of the four strings ~ another possibility of expressing variety of sound-quality/texture for each pitch. (The Roman numerals indicate specific strings, (I, II, III, IV) the highest to the lowest.) Harmonics (natural and artificial) are also possible, as long as the sounding pitch is within the same specific registration as the fingered pitch gamut.

Each pitch is sustained until, following a line

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on the graphic score, another Roman numeral is arrived at — at which point the string player changes bow direction and plays another pitch (or the same pitch is possible if a different string is indicated). Bow direction changes, that occur at these points, should be as smooth as possible.



Duration of the sustained pitch — always to be fit into one bow duration — is thus determined by the proportion of length of line transversed from numeral to numeral. (As a guide, 1 inch = 3 to 5 seconds, but this will depend on the string player's bow control and facility.)

Choice of pitch to be played is up to the choice of the performer; to be improvised. (It is possible to use one or two pitches for a while; also, it is possible to change pitch with every bow change — at the discretion of the performer. Note that the apparent structure of the piece relates also to this process of time/spaces, of various rates of change, of pitch focus.)

Dynamics, also, are improvised, from *ppp* to *f*, though never excessively loud. It will become apparent that, to a certain degree, the dynamics, as well as the articulation and decay of a pitch, will be controlled by the bow pressure/speed as indicated in the graphic score. (But dynamics and bow pressure are not synonymous.)

A wide range of non-vibrato → varieties of vibrato should be used, with each pitch having its own quality. (It will happen that a heavy bow pressure and slow bow speed, without vibrato, will sound one way; whereas adding vibrato will radically alter the pitch/noise balance of the resulting sound. So, also, slight alterations of bow speed will alter the balance. In fact, any slight or gross alteration of any aspect of the

total physical gesture ~ relationship of the string player through the bow to the string ~ will be expressed in the sound being generated. This should be explored in the process of preparing the music for performance.

The lines of the graphic score should be thought of as phrases which are expressed as much by varieties of bow pressure, bow speed and bow placement, as by pitch and dynamic changes. The thickness of the line indicates the amount of bow pressure and/or bow speed: thick = more pressure and/or less speed; thin = less pressure and/or more speed. (However, the bow speed, at times, can be interpreted the reverse of the above, since it will also be conditioned by the duration of the sustained pitch.) The notation also indicates manners of articulating and performing these bowing techniques: sudden changes of pressure, ; gradual changes, ; a constant, sustained condition by constant thickness; gradual changes and/or irregular changes by analogous indications in the graphic line, to be expressed literally in the performance technique. (Heavy bow pressure, indicated by the thickest line, should be almost at the edge of noise ~ but always with pitch clearly perceptible.)

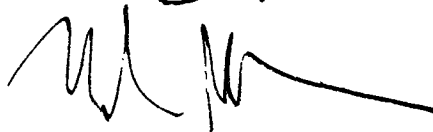
The curvature of the line indicates changes of bow placement: from on the bridge to on the fingerboard and anywhere in between. When the line curves more gradually, so also the shift of bow placement is more subtle; when the line curves more suddenly or extremely, so also the bow placement should change accordingly (but always legato). In what direction these changes take place is up to the choice of the performer. (Other possible interpretations of line curvature include use of bow wood to varying degrees and variety of vibrato ~ but these are secondary to bow

placement.)

Some phrases (lines) are quite long and might last several minutes. Some sustained pitches might last a very long bow length; possibly 30 seconds. The instrumentalist will have to practice so as to be able to experience and thus express these lines as phrases, that is to say, related to the physicality of breathing, rather than as abstract durations. Silences, at the ending and beginning of phrases, are indicated by breaks in the continuity of the line(s). (Occasionally a phrase can be ended with a plucked note.)

The performer starts at the beginning of any line and follows it in any direction. (In the course of the performance, the same line might be read in the opposite direction.) Lines that are crossed can, as well, sometimes be shifted to, so as to create a new phrase. (At points like this, as well as at any times when pitch/string notation is ambiguous or unclear, the performer can choose which string and/or pitch to play.) The performance path is always one of following a line to its end and then proceeding, after the appropriate silence indicated by empty space, to the next line that is suggested by the linear continuity. In the course of the performance, lines may be repeated. However, always allow for unique sound-quality/textures to occur, rather than attempting to repeat exactly or attempting to create patterns of material.

The music lasts as long as desired by the performer, but no less than 10 minutes duration. (More probably, the music will evolve over a long span of time.)



July 4, 1983 Sheffield, Vermont