

Edge of Sound

for
1 string instrument (violin, viola, cello or bass)
and live electronics

2016 (ca. 8')

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Edge of Sound explores the boundaries between the audible and inaudible or imagined. The piece is inspired in part by the phenomenon of a slowly decaying sound (e.g. bell or gong) that fades so gradually that it becomes difficult to discern the exact point at which the sound has completely stopped.

The piece requires one performer of a stringed instrument (violin, viola, cello or bass), live electronics (using max/MSP), and an optional engineer (the patch is designed to self-regulate its overall dynamic output, but it might be helpful to rely on the engineer to manually calibrate the overall levels in the space to keep them generally quiet).

Score

Events in the score are presented in sequence along a timeline, each in its own 'lane'. The first event, I, and its variant, III, are present (though intermittently) through out the entire piece. There are instances where the performer has a choice of events: choosing alternative events or presenting multiple ones simultaneously.

Event I: the desired sound is a breathy one, similar to a throat exhalation with the mouth open, or rubbing two pieces of rough paper against each other. It should not have any pitch. This may be achieved in a number of ways: bowing the body (taking care to not damage the instrument), bowing on the bridge (taking care to not let the strings speak), bowing the bridge with the bow under the strings (bow turned sideways towards the bridge), bowing the tailpiece or the nut, etc. The performer is free to choose any method as long as it achieves the result described above.

Timings: all indicated timings are approximate. However, the actual time should not vary *drastically* from the indicated minimums and maximums.

Dynamics: with the exception of the first two events, both of which should begin very softly, the indicated dynamics are not presented in order--performer is free to affect them as they see fit, keeping in mind the following:

- The piece is an interplay amongst generally quiet sounds that hover on the edge between being audible and inaudible, and
- Overall, the piece should be generally on the quiet side. Occasional loud sounds are fine, especially when used as a means of exploring the interplay the interplay between the audible and the inaudible.

Silences are not indicated but always possible, either sudden silences (stops) or fading into silence.

Event Lanes:

-----> = possible to overlap this event with others (play both simultaneously)

— — — → = possible to overlap this event with others or alternate with/replace other events

{ } = when simultaneous events in different lanes appear in brackets, performer may choose to perform only one of them or to *alternate* freely between the two.

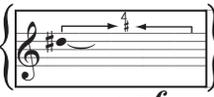
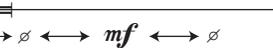
Pitched events:

Primarily in the indicated register, but all registers possible. *Always without vibrato.*

—————⁴————— = play the indicated pitch on two strings, then move one of them (up) from unison to a de-tuned unison to create beatings (less than a 1/4 tone), and back.

Electronics

The electronics can be played back on 2-6 channels. A microphone is required for the instrument: either a lavalier mic placed directly on the instrument or a directional condenser mic placed close to it. The microphone amplifies the instrument and feeds its sound to max for processing. The max patch can be started at the beginning; all processing will run automatically throughout.

I	II	III	IV	V	VI
40" - 90"	≥ 40"	≥ 40"	40" - 90"	≥ 40"	1' - 3'
			<p>Vary articulations, rates and intensities. Choice of short/single events and longer ones. Events may be interspersed with silence(s).</p>  <p><i>snap pizz col legno finger tapping (pitched)</i></p> <p><i>pp ↔ f</i> variable</p>	(intermittent and brief)	
			<p>Irregular percussive rapping and rubbing with fingers on the instrument (body, neck, strings). No pitch. Change locations, rates and intensities. Events may be interspersed with silence(s).</p>  <p><i>flesh nails knuckles</i></p>	(intermittent and brief)	
				<p><i>non-vib.</i></p>  <p><i>∅ ↔ mf</i> variable</p> 	
	 <p><i>∅ ↔ mp ↔ ∅</i></p>		(intermittent and brief, no more than 2-3 times)		
<p>Bow very lightly to produce a light, breathy sound. Begin very softly, then vary intensities.</p>  <p><i>∅ ↔ mf ↔ ∅</i></p>		<p>Continue. Alternate same breathy, non-pitched sound with dragging the bow slowly on a string with a lot of pressure to create only noise.</p> <p><i>∅ ↔ f</i> variable</p>		(intermittent and brief)	