ROGER REYNOLDS

MARKed MUSIC

for Contrabass and Computerized Musician

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MARKed MUSIC prefatory notes
by Mark Dresser and Roger Reynolds

INTRODUCTORY:

MARKed MUSIC is a watershed work for me. It is to date, more than any other, a result of close collaboration, a circumstance that will, ideally, mark not only our musical, but also our societal future.* In the present case, I first composed two short, complementary works for solo, unamplified contrabass: *imAge/contrabass* (**A**ssertive) and *imagE/contrabass* (**E**vocative). These involved an extended period of close interaction with Mark Dresser, try-outs and frequent re-writings. These two source pieces were then recorded by Dresser for his ***Guts*** DVD production. Mark's wizardry as an explorer of his instrument's resources nourished the emergence of the two solo pieces that are completely written out. His mastery of improvisation aroused the present work, which is not fully notated.

My strategy was to devise a sectional structure with "filled" and "empty" parts. Those that are filled quote directly from the source solo pieces. The longer "empty" sections are often framed by initializing and cadential passages, but leave the remainder to what could be called "contextually-guided improvisation". I provide the frame; the performers (contrabassist and computer-musician) create an appropriate picture within it, freshly in each performance.

The solo instrument's progress throughout (essentially, a journey from pizzicatto *assertiveness* to arco *evocation*) is supported, illuminated, and constantly inflected by a computer-musicians who manages the evolution and inflection of four, multidimensional algorithms in real time. There are 33 such "Cues" over the course of MARKed MUSIC.

My exploration of algorithmic processes began at IRCAM in the early 80s, with David Wessel. The original pair (SPLITZ and SPIRLZ) have continued to be useful in the intervening decades, and have recently been joined by four new ones (PROLIF, SMEARZ, MATRIX, and THINNR). These are, in turn, indebted to collaborative interaction with Ian Saxton, and Peter Otto, but most extensively with Jaime Oliver, the co-dedicatee of MARKed MUSIC. It was Jaime whose musicianship and programming skills propelled early versions of my algorithmic aims into a fully dimensional form (each in an entirely distinctive way) and into performative fluency.

* I also note, here, the path breaking collaborative interaction I have had since the mid-90s with percussionist Steve Schick. Together, we brought into being *Watershed* and the *Chatter-Clatter* movement of SANCTUARY. More recently, I have collaborated intensely with violinist Irvine Arditti on our *Shifting/Drifting* Project.

PERFORMANCE NOTES:

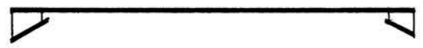
As indicated in the INTRODUCTION, MARKed MUSIC is sectional. Its parts are indicated by double bar lines (e.g., at 16", 76", 85", ...). Each section is meant to have a distinct profile, in its sonic content, in its relational identity. The drama of the whole experience depends on the vitality with which its parts are characterized.

The score shows the source musical materials in explicit notation, and also their extrapolation in sections that involve continuous interaction in partnership with the computer-musician. In the latter case, the "specification" is of a different sort. Sometimes specific pitches are given, more often not. The approach has been, rather, to indicate the appropriate musical references, and the modes of performance that are desired in each section. In each case, the surrounding notated music and the performing techniques called for shape, without fully determining, what will occur within each section.

A similar approach is used for the computer-musician. At each Cue point the operational Algorithm is given, the Sample that will serve as seed, and the duration of the Cue.

Eg., Cue 2 MATRIX: S 101 (21")

The Samples are marked and labeled throughout with double-arrow bars:



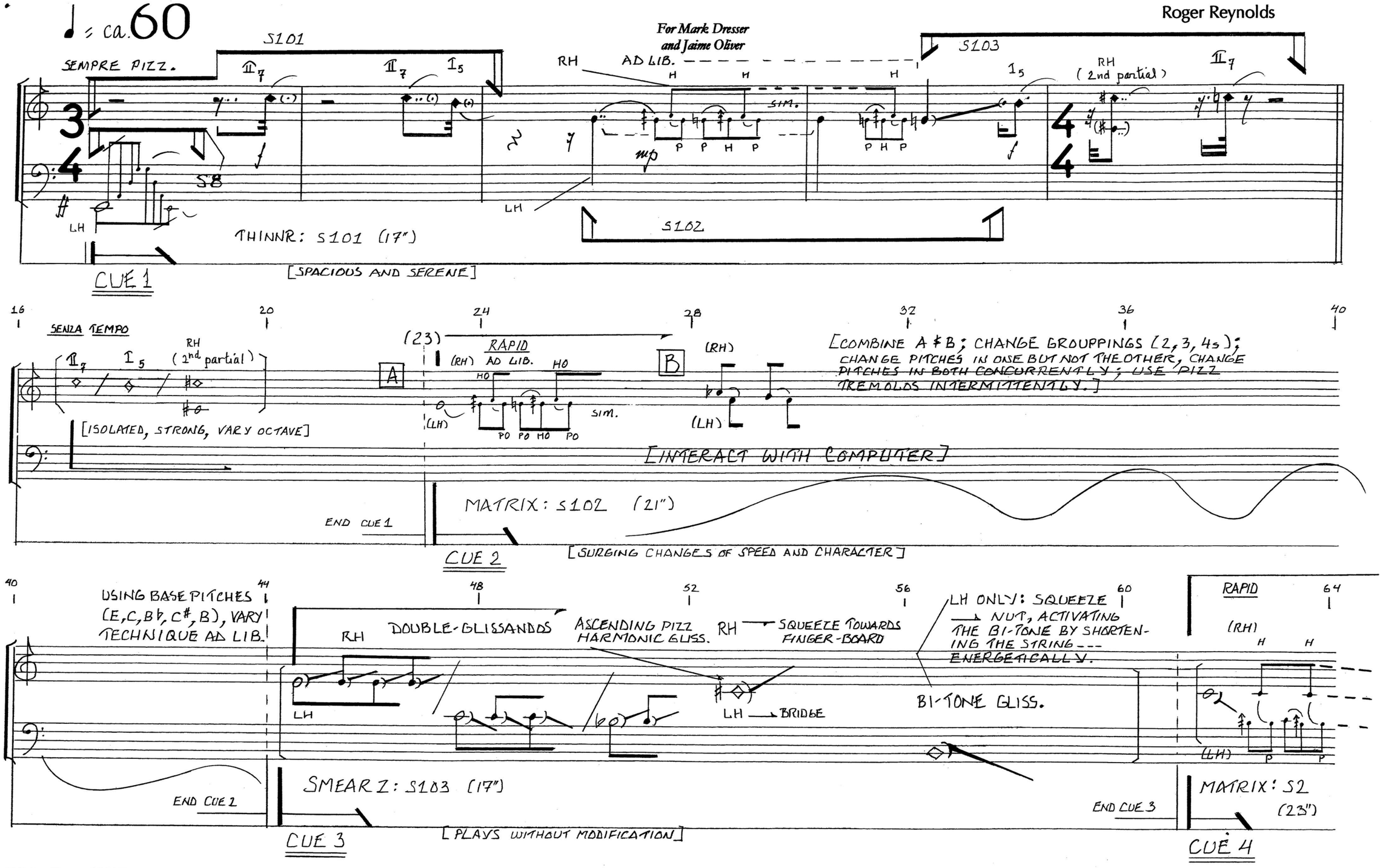
A publication available from the Publisher (*Four Real-Time Algorithms*, Peters Edition No. 68491), explains in exhaustive detail, the concept and management strategies for each algorithm. There is also a set of programmed "scores", one for each Cue, that sets the values of all applicable algorithmic variables. Thus, the initial sound of the Cue is optimized in relation to the musical moment. It is expected that each Cue will then be subtly adjusted throughout, in a parallel way to which the instrumentalist adjusts his contribution in performance. In some Cues (e.g., 2, 6, 8, etc.) a desired variation in assertiveness, growth and subsidence over the course of the Cue's duration is also shown by curved lines emanating from the computer's reference line. The computer-musician's part also has various admonitions regarding the shaping of his resource.

With *all* Cues, there is an expectation from both computer-musician and contrabassist of a continuing, performative dialog that includes subtle adjustment, provocation, and responses.

1.

MARKed MUSIC

Roger Reynolds



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