

ben smith

traces of oil
(night music)

(solo cello)

Performance Notes

Accidentals refer only to notes they immediately precede. (Nevertheless, natural signs are occasionally employed for ease of reading.) Quarter tones should in general should be treated as tempered pitches. However, when employed chromatically - and especially when marked *legato* - intonation may be considered more flexible (inflectional).

The numerous silences which punctuate the work should not be considered in any way 'rests'. They can, however, convey absence of material; whether it be obscured, or imagined as shifting between realms of perceptible and imperceptible (*inécoutable*). Either way, a sense of a concentrated *will* to sound/hear should be maintained throughout these passages.


Though the work is not intended to be explicitly 'dramatic', the ritualistic aspect of the physical gestures in performance (especially within the intended stillness of any silent/extremely quiet passages) should be carefully considered. That is, rests should ideally not be 'cluttered' with preparations for upcoming gestures, page turns, and the like.











The vocal elements mm.1-48 are all hummed with a neutral vowel shape. The single, interrupted utterance in m.21 should be spoken in the performer's natural speaking tone. The vocalizations in mm.49 *al fine* are whispered/unvoiced throughout, and should be calmly executed and somewhat machine-like in intensity (always blended with the general musical context). Generally, take care not to rush or shorten any sound, so that a palpable sensuality is communicated.

The spoken text comprises of mostly monosyllabic fragments of a poem from the *Pillow Book* (枕草子 - *Makura no Sōshi*) by Sei Shōnagon, and as such, pronunciation should reflect the original language as far as possible.







The scordatura is notated at **written pitch**.

Cello

<i>flaut.</i>	flautando - to be played sul tasto and <i>non vib.</i> (unless specified otherwise) the sound should be hazy and with a significant loss of pitch-content
	<i>molto vibrato</i> - somewhat exaggerated
<i>non vib. (n.v.)</i>	without vibrato
<i>poco vib. (p.v.)</i>	very slight vibrato
pst/mst	<i>poco/molto sul tasto</i> (the latter bowed or plucked as near to the left hand as is practical)
psp/msp	<i>poco/molto sul ponticello</i> (the latter bowed as near to the bridge as possible, or with the bow hair partly on the bridge; the resulting sound should be slightly airy and almost entirely devoid of the fundamental pitch)
clb/clt	<i>col legno battuto /col legno tratto</i> - for the latter a small proportion of hair should be retained
<i>gett.</i>	(gettato) a single, rapid bouncing bow action
<i>gett. poi sost.</i>	a throw bow action transitioning smoothly to sustained pitch

	Bartók pizz (when preceded by a dampening sign <i>all</i> strings should be completely choked, so that only a sharp 'rebound' attack is heard)
	toneless 'air noise' - bow along the bridge at a sharp angle (all strings completely choked) dynamics in inverted commas signify the intensity of the physical gesture
	half-harmonic pressure (always combined flautando bow pressure)
	harmonic pressure (N.B. the harmonic pressure <i>e♭</i> in m.9 et seq. is to be placed a semitone higher than the preceding harmonic on the D string, creating an airy, unstable tone with more noise than pitch content.)
	forcefully tap the finger onto the string
	dampen the strings completely
	left hand pizzicato
	nail pizzicato
	overpressure downbow
	overpressure 'crescendo' - moving towards scratch tone

Voice

	mouth closed
	mouth slightly open; dull and lacking resonance (m. 62)
	mouth open
	whispered /voiceless
	inhale
	exhale

Programme Note

'musical performances are best at night, when you can't see peoples faces'

- Sei Shōnagon, *the pillow book* (枕草子 *Makura no Sōshi*), fragment 200

Made from hundreds of small sections of lists, diaries, aesthetic theorisings, poems, other things, *the pillow book* (c. 1002) contains within it a incredible insight into the world/worldview of a lady-in-waiting in Heian Japan. A time in which women, who while severely restricted with regard to their daily interactions (communication with men only possible while hidden behind veils, room dividers, or curtains), nevertheless - in the royal court, at least - enjoyed a great deal of artistic freedom, and created, without exception, the most lasting works of medieval Japanese art.

This piece, then, is an attempt to come to terms with an intensely constricted mode of communication, in which a love poem from *the pillow book* is repeated over and over again; but always hidden, somehow.

The title is derived from an anonymous eighteenth century *senryū*:

枕の草子つまみにも油あと
traces of oil, even, when turning the pages of the pillow book

47 *sub. calmo* ♩ = ca. 38

fffz *pp* *intenso sempre*

pst flaut. (ten. sim. al fine)

yo ko te to no ra wa ha ru mo yo a sa no se wa ru ji

54 (o) me to no ra wa ha - k to yo a sa no se wa ru ji

ffz *pp*

(pizz.)

59 (o) me to no ra ha ru mo ni fu ka (n) se sa

ord. d. ---> harm.

64 ko te to so ha to a sa se sa

69 *h* *III* *o11* *III/II* *III* *III/II* *III/II* *IV/III* *molto flaut. (poco gett.)*

ko te to ka a - fu - s e - k ji

pp *poco* *pp* *poco* *pp* *poco*

74 *sub. ♩ = 48* *mst clt* *portato molto legg.* *pppp* *3*