

sum inanes

(2022)

Max Chung

For violin and live electronics

Full Score

PIECE TITLE: sum inanes

PREMIERED BY: Alice Ivy-Pemberton

DURATION: ca. 8'-0"

INSTRUMENTATION: violin, live electronics

PERFORMANCE NOTES: *Sum inanes* is a phrase that is translated from Latin as “I am empty”, and refers to much of the premise of the story—the performer wakes up in a blank void and over the duration of the piece, explores a world with increasing sensation before jolting back to reality. Exploring such contrasts is key as well as creating textures while responding to the electronics, especially going into the slow buildup to the climactic moment of the piece. The piece represents a personal experience of a seizure.

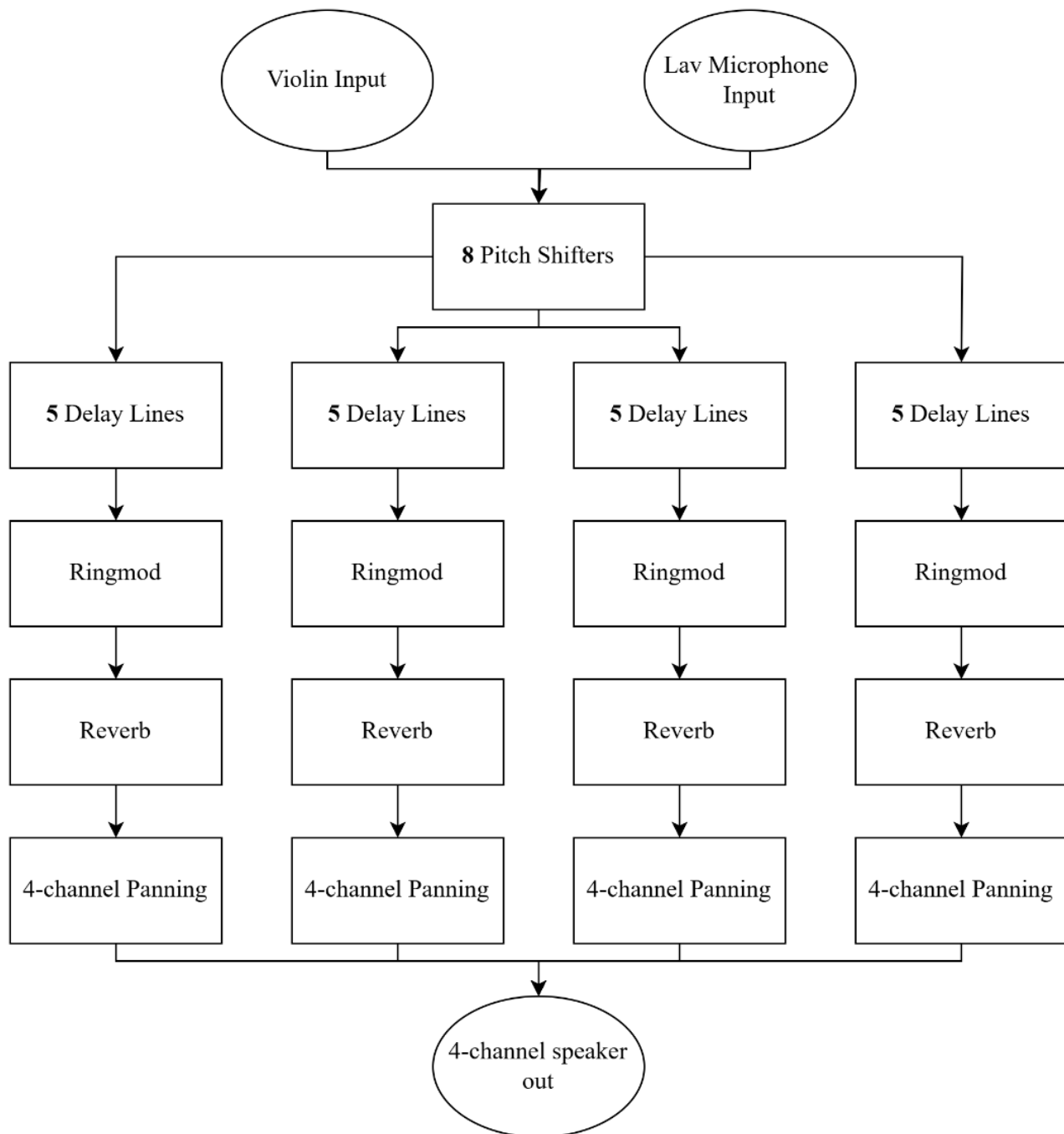
The score is a guided improvisation, a combination of text and classical notation. The performer should focus on trying to emulate the feelings that the text evokes. The piece revolves around the meter of “breaths”. On fully notated sections, a breath in is notated as a downbow’s length and a breath out is notated as an upbow’s length. A breath mark implies the lifting of a bow as well as counting as one breath. Ideally, sections flow into each other as smoothly as possible.

Any directives only apply to notation within that box. Numbers indicate what cue number the performer should be on in the MAX patch at that given moment. If there is no written musical notation, the performer can assume that the only action required is to breathe. The performer should attempt to make breaths as clear as possible to the point of exaggeration, particularly in the sections without any other performance.

The piece is electroacoustic and audiovisual, and works off a cue-based MAX patch which can run on its own. It runs off a 4-channel speaker setup. The violin is live processed and should have a microphone, as well as having a lavalier microphone to amplify breathing separately. There should be a projector and both MAX patches should be open on the same computer. The last requirement is a MIDI pedal, or someone to trigger the cues in the desired order. Further instructions can be found in the MAX patch itself.

MAX Patch Details:

Please email mc@max-chung.com for the patch. The audio effects of the patch are configured like below:



1. [As long as you need]

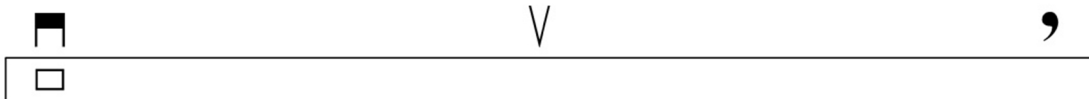
Take deep, slow breaths.

You awaken.

You find yourself in a vast expanse of nothing. It is less than a pure void—you know you are able to walk as you do not simply fall, whatever that foreign sensation may have been. Whatever this may be, a thick blanket of nothing covers everything around you. Although you feel like you can walk, it is almost as if you are walking in place, like a binding, thick, murky resistance.

Focus on the feeling that stays with you while imagining this, and stay in this state for the next cue.

bow on tailpiece



ppp

2. 1 breath

3. 1 breath

4. 0.5 breath

You take note of anything in your surroundings. The only thing you hear is your breath. You try and reach for anything around you, but there is nothing. Not even touching your arms or feet yields any result.

ord. —————> col legno



pp

5. 1 breath

6. 1 breath

It becomes clear that whatever void you are currently in only seems to recognize your soul. What was once your corporeal body clearly no longer exists. The only thing you do have to cling to know you are alive at all is your breath.

col legno, senza vib.

Violin

pp < *p* > *pp* < *mp* > *pp* < *p* > *mp* > *p*

s.v. —> m.v. —> s.v.

Vln. *mp* < *f* > *mp* < *f* > *p* < *f* > *p* < *f* > *mp* > n

col legno battuto ,

half-bow, half-wood

s.v. —> m.v. —> s.v.

Vln. *pp* < *mp* > *p* < *mp* > *pp* < *p*

s.v. —> m.v. —> s.v.

Vln. *mp* > *pp* < *f* > *mp* < *p*

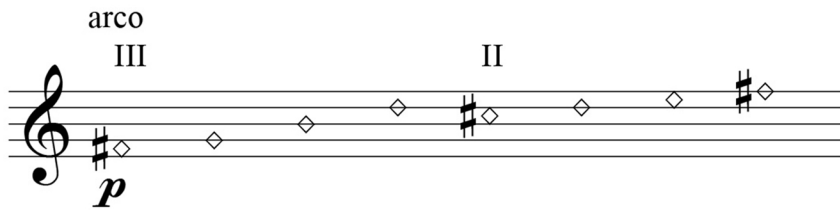
bow freely

Vln. *mp* *sub. p*

3 6 3

7. [Read Score]

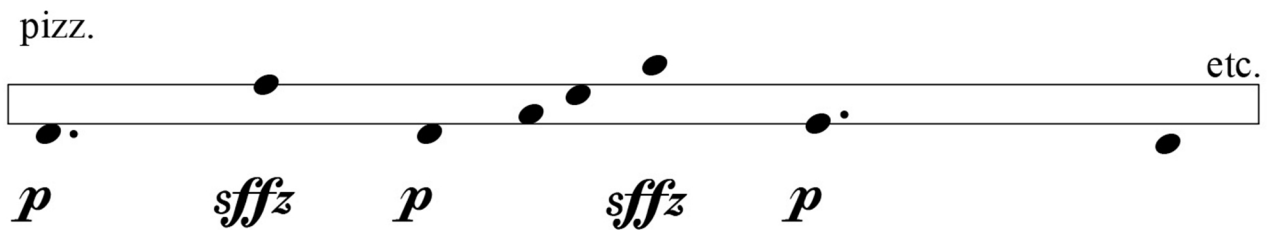
Your consciousness drifts around for a little while as you reach a meditative state. With a deep breath, you slowly begin to assimilate yourself with the surrounding void around you.



play written harmonics at extremely fast and random rhythms, bow freely

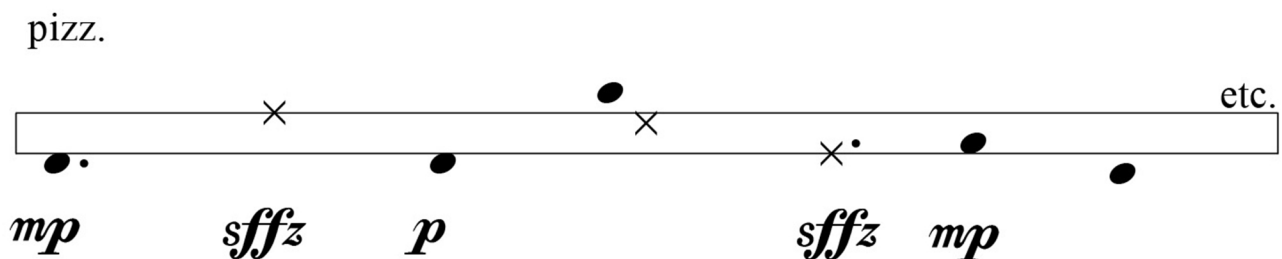
- 8. 1 breath
- 9. 1 breath

The light of life in your eyes begins to flicker as you begin to dissipate. You stay in this world for what seems like ages. You feel nothing, but there is nothing wrong with this lack of emotion. There is only calm in your heart.



- 10. 1 breath

Suddenly, something catches your attention. Darting across your peripheral vision is a flash of light. Or perhaps it was a sound? The sudden sensory input jolts you back, as if you are reminded that there is another world you have left.



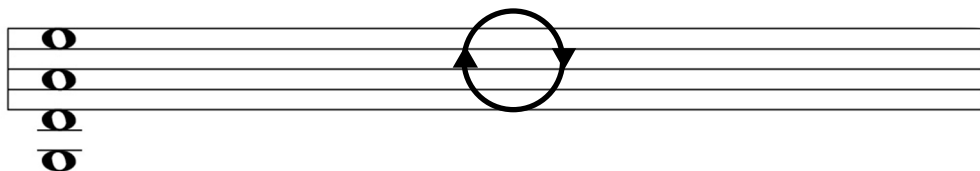
- 11. 1 breath
- 12. 1 breath

The sensory deprivation begins to haunt you. Whispers. Shadows. Footsteps. Air. Faint auras of shapes and distinct senses dance around you. It's unclear whether these are hallucinations or not. You want to reach out to them, to grasp them, to feel once more.

13. 5 breaths (accel.)

Speed up your breathing significantly.

You begin to panic and your breathing grows shallow. You stomp on the ground, scream as loud as you can, and clap your hands, but there is nothing. The void swallows any and all senses and you realize the true terror of what you have become trapped in. Where are you?



circular bowing over various open strings, increasing bow speed

14. 5 breaths

15. 2 breaths (rit. to original speed)

There must be a way out. What was the way in? Then, you understand. You try to remember, something you haven't done in a long time. Suddenly a sharp pain pierces your head and something that isn't quite static rings in your ear, and then everything settles again to nothing. You take a deep breath and try again.

And again.

And again.

overpressure



ff

16. 2 breaths

A deep breath. Another. Sensations come and go, like fleeting memories. Your head is pulsing as it feels like these sensations are completely unfamiliar, yet so natural. With jagged breaths, your body attempts to adapt to this constant new stream of stimulus. You begin to realize this is what it is like to feel, to sense things, to understand the world in a new way.

bow behind bridge on any string at irregular rates

ff n

17. 3 breaths

Suddenly, everything happens at once. From nothing to everything, you experience the world. A sensory overload floods you as you fall to the ground, processing everything around you. You cover your eyes and your ears but everything continues to assault you. You curl up into a ball and wait, and wait, and wait...

18. [As long as you need]

Recalibrate your breath. Calm your senses and “reset”. Slump over as if recharging. Once you are ready, continue. But only once you are completely calm.

arco, with wide vibrato

pp *p* *f* *mp* *f* *pp* n

arco

mp *f* *p* *f* *pp* n

arco

f *p* *f* *p* *pp* n

col legno battuto

col legno battuto

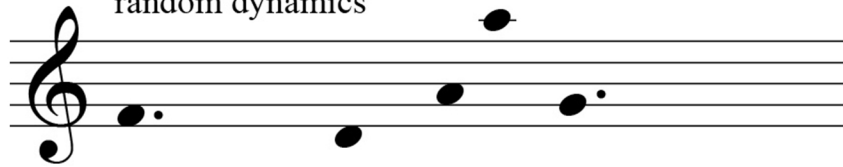
col legno battuto

rit.

19. [Read score]

You awaken. You are on a field. It is a barren field, and you can feel the hard earth below you. The cold wind gently blows on your skin and you shiver slightly. The world around you is monochromatic, and the end of one object blending into another like a charcoal drawing. The only sound is the wind whistling gently.

tap fingerboard on random pitches
in rhythmic groups of 2 or 3 at
random dynamics



20. 2 breaths

You sense shadowy figures all around you, but you can't see or feel them. Their footsteps echo across the bleak plane that surrounds you. You hear sounds of speaking. You try to call out to them, but you do not receive a response in return. These voices are familiar, yet so distant, as if you knew them from somewhere else. You cling onto this sense of familiarity.

21. 2 breaths

You rise and walk around the area. At first, you come across nothing. Then, you see a scarf. A red, vibrant scarf in contrast to everything around it lies on the floor. You pick it up and fit it around your neck, and it feels like it fits perfectly. You continue wandering around until you find a black leather glove. You never find the other glove. As you find more and more objects, slowly but surely, a picture of "you" forms in your head. You slip in and out of a state of focus as you become aware once again. In this frenzied state of collection, you finally remember what you are looking for.

bow on tailpiece



ppp

22. [As long as you need]

Finally, you come across a pair of sky blue glasses, slightly cracked. A gentle glow seems to emanate from them. You hesitate.

Something about the glasses represents a sort of finality, a comforting warmth marking the end of an extremely tumultuous journey. For a moment you think about the world you left, and the world you may enter next.

Then, you take a deep breath and quickly put on the glasses.