THE VENTING SPACE

Composer: G. West May 2021

Programme notes

Inspiration for this composition came from the poem 'Echoes' by Audre Lorde.

This composition explores the relationship between the spoken word and the received. The piece is split into two sections (A and B) which look at the opposing listening types of passive and active.

> *"There is a timbre of voice that comes from not being heard and knowing / you are not being heard / noticed only by others / not heard for the same reason."*
>
> *'Echoes' by Audre Lorde*

Section A

This section explores the relationship between the speaker and the passive listener. The recordings have been muffled and in this section the performers navigate through seven cells with no regard or direct correlation to what is happening in the recording.

Section B

This section explores musically the relationship between speaker and the active listener. Performers must listen and engage actively to the speaker and respond to them musically, carefully considering tone, dynamics, speed and the shape of the response and should mimic as close to a natural conversation as possible.

Responses have been split broadly into the three categories of engagement, elborative and empathetic. This is to assist the performers in formulating a response speeedily.

The performers can decide how and when to respond based on the box chosen. Instrumentation, techniques and certain pitches have been suggested at times, these instructions must be observed.

	Passive	Active
Description	Listening without being fully present. Provides no questions or feedaback. One way communication.	Listening and being fully present. Reacts to what is communicated. Two way communication.
Attitude	• Selective and dismissive • Mechanical responses • Poor body language • Non-comittal	• Full attention • Reacts to what is heard, with non-verbal cues, paraphrasing or repi-tion. • Is Listening to gain full understand.
Behaviours	• Yawning • Distracted • Bored • Uninterested. • Not in the here and now • Poor eye contact • Poor body language	• Engaged • React in the moment • Good body language • Reflective • Questioning • Full attention • Patient

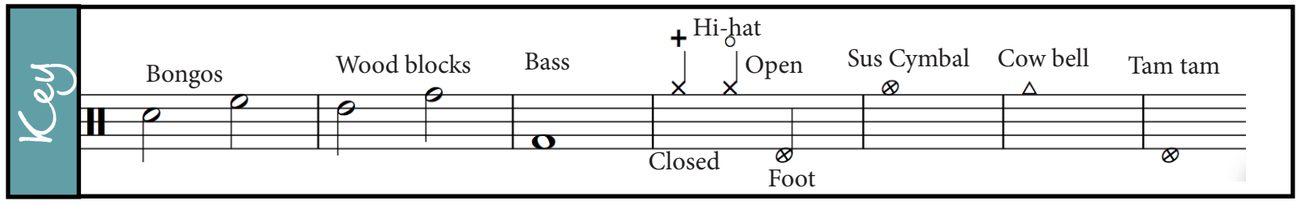
Performance Notes

Section A

- Each instrumental part has seven cells of musical ideas
- Performers choose the start point and can navigate through any of the cells as they deem appropriate.
- Performers can interpret the cells as they see fit with regards to tempo, dynamics and phrasing, but should follow the technique.
- Performers should make use of the middle (resting) cell

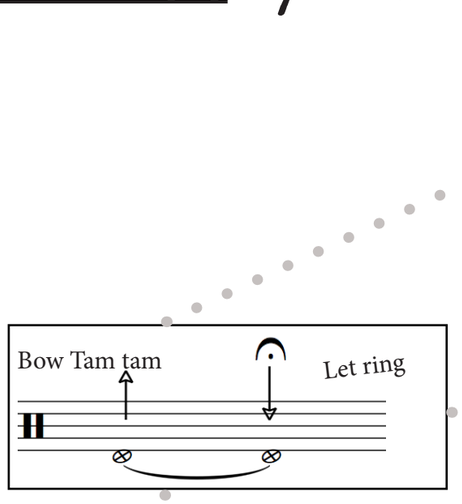
Section B

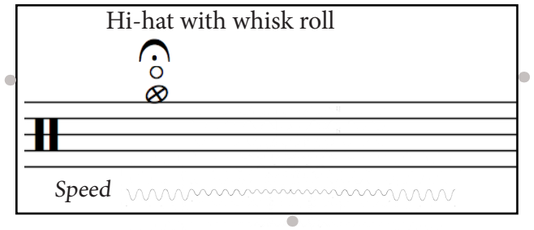
- Performers are requested to listen carefully and respond appropriately to the spoken recording, mimicing a conversation.
- Each instrumental part has mutiple word/ sentence responses and specific instructions with regards to tone, technique and particular pitch/ harmony. Performers need to read the key on the score before performing.
- Responses have been split into three categories to help the performers formulate their response quickly.
- Performers interpret rhythm, tempo, dynamics and phrasing.
- With regards to rhythm, performers are mimicing the natural rhythm of the words and how they would choose to say them naturally with responding to the speaker.
- With regards to suggested pitches/ harmony: Two chordal voicings have been used. If the performers reponse as a natural spoken pitch would normally rise or fall e.g. a question, then performers are requested to use both chords and move to the next chord towards the end of their response.

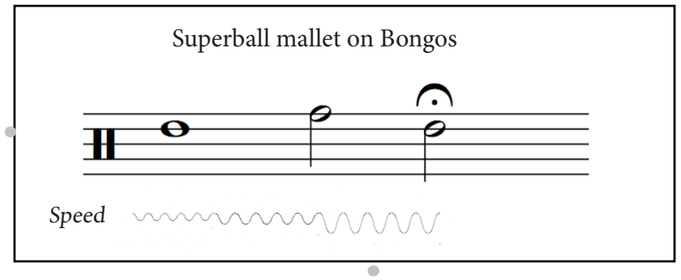


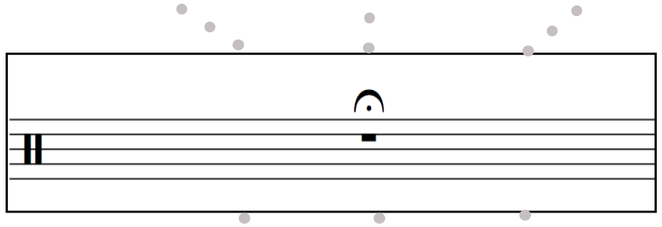
Percussion

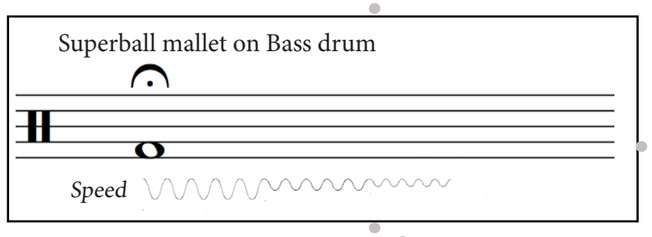
Section A- Passive

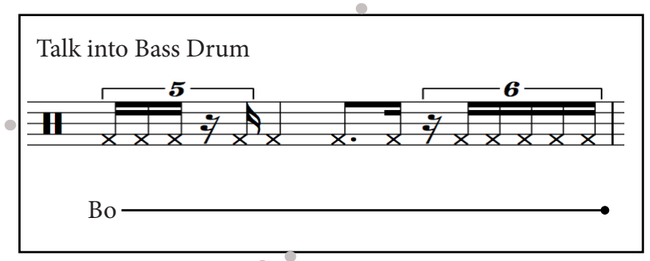


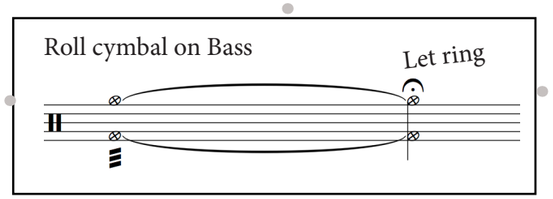












The Venting Space

Section B- Active

Percussion

Engagement

Responses on bongos and woodblocks

- ? I'm here
- Yes
- You're welcome
- Go on
- I understand
- Good
- I suppose
- Great
- I know
- Right
- Yeah, that's true
- Okay
- I'm not sure what you mean
- ? Wow

Elaboratative

Responses on cow bell and Cymbals

- What do you mean?
- Bow Try
- Do you need to talk?
- ? Can you expand?
- Can you explain further?
- How are you feeling?
- How did it make you feel?
- Tell me more
- Bow Why do you think that?
- Are you okay?

Empathetic

Responses on bass drum and Tam Tam

- I'm sorry you're feeling like that
- Bow I hear what you're saying
- I'm sure that's not true
- ? You're right
- You must feel upset
- Thank you for trusting me
- Bow I'm always here for you
- I'm glad you told me
- Bow You're not alone

Key:

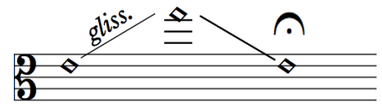
- Drum stick
- Whisk
- Superball
- Brush
- Bow
- ? Free choice

The Venting Space

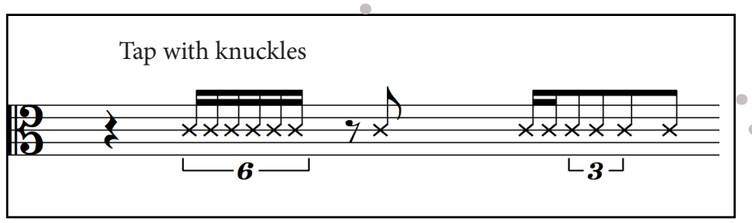
Viola

Section A- Passive

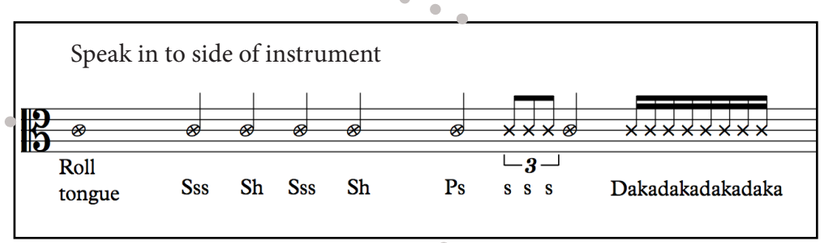
Harmonic gliss

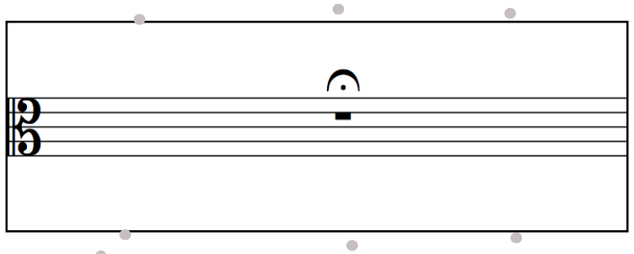


Tap with knuckles



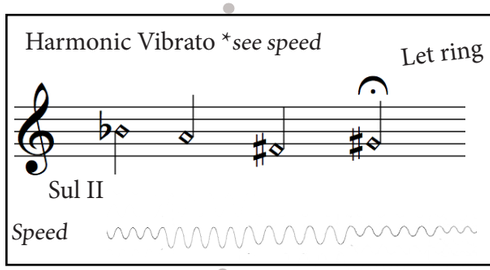
Speak in to side of instrument





Harmonic Vibrato *see speed

Let ring



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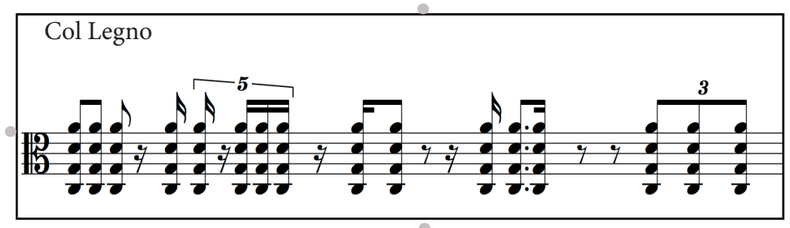
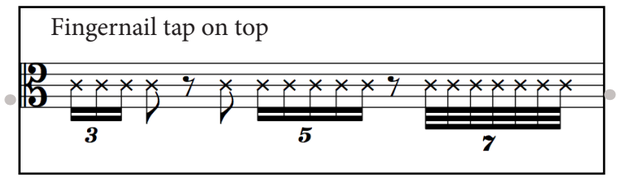


Fingernail tap on top



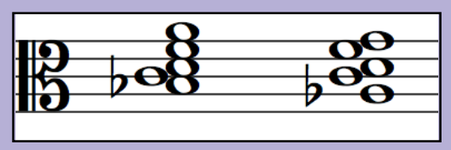
The Venting Space

Section B- Active

Viola

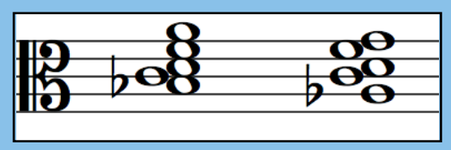
Engagement
Responses on bongos and woodblocks

- ? I'm here
- CS Yes
- Arco You're welcome
- Pizz Go on
- CS I understand
- Tap Good
- ? I suppose
- ? Great
- CS I know
- Arco Right
- Tap Yeah, that's true
- ? Okay
- Pizz I'm not sure what you mean
- Arco Wow



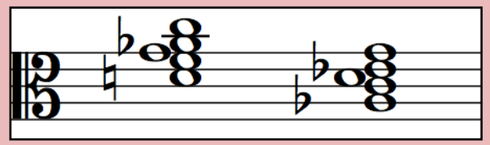
Elaboratative
Responses on cow bell and Cymbals

- Pizz What do you mean?
- ? Try
- CS Do you need to talk?
- Arco Can you expand?
- Pizz Can you explain further?
- Tap How are you feeling?
- ? How did it make you feel?
- Pizz Tell me more
- Arco Why do you think that?
- CS Are you okay?



Empathetic
Responses on bass drum and Tam Tam

- O I'm sorry you're feeling like that
- Arco I hear what you're saying
- Pizz I'm sure that's not true
- ? You're right
- Arco You must feel upset
- O Thank you for trusting me
- Pizz I'm always here for you
- ? I'm glad you told me
- O You're not alone



Key:

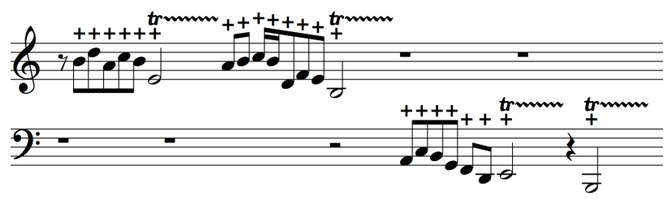
- Pizz Pizzicato
- Arco Arco
- CS Con Sorda
- O Harmonics
- Tap Tap
- ? Free choice

The Venting Space

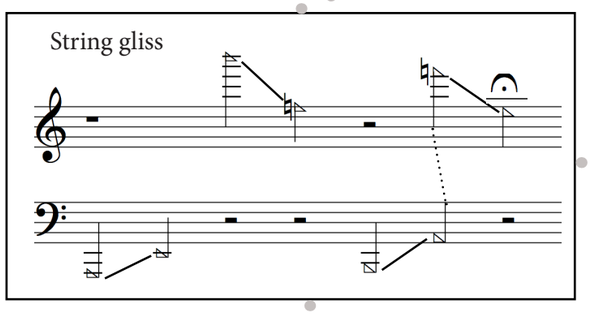
Piano

Section A- Passive

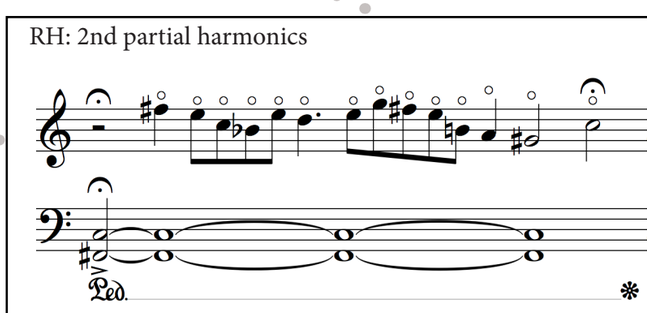
Muted strings

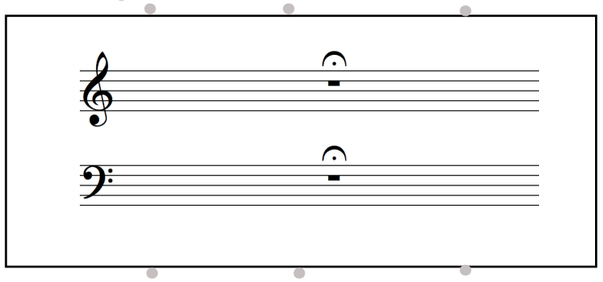


String gliss



RH: 2nd partial harmonics

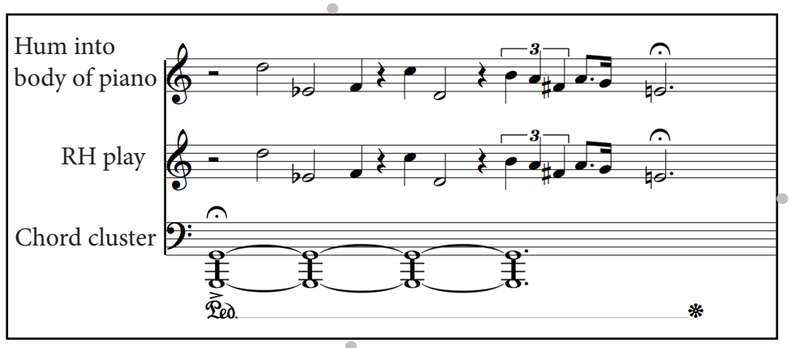


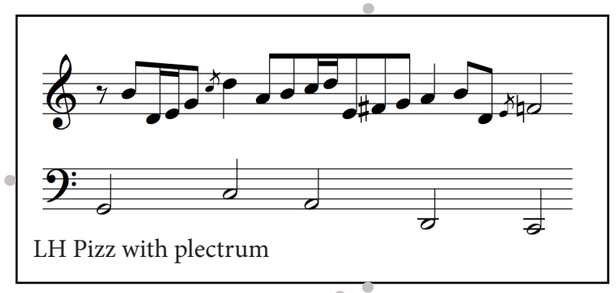


Hum into
body of piano

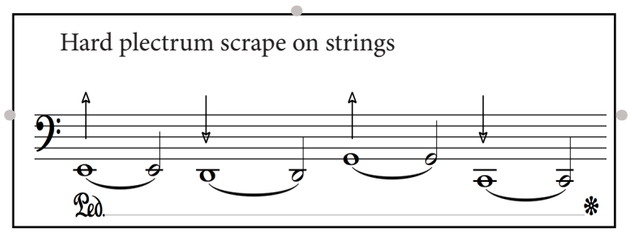
RH play

Chord cluster





Hard plectrum scrape on strings

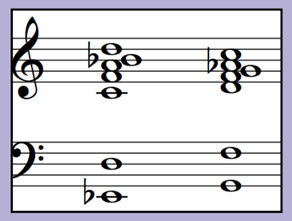


The Venting Space

Section B- Active

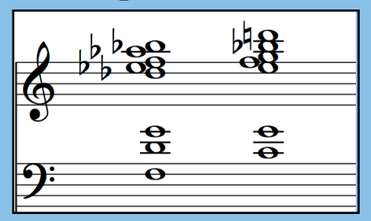
Piano

Engagement
Responses on bongos and woodblocks



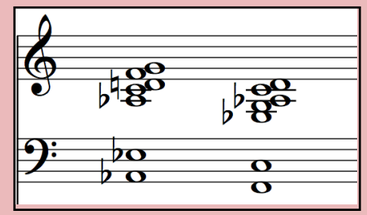
- I'm here
- You're welcome
- Yes
- I understand
- Go on
- I suppose
- Good
- I know
- Great
- Yeah, that's true
- Right
- I'm not sure what you mean
- Okay
- Wow

Elaboratative
Responses on cow bell and Cymbals



- What do you mean?
- Do you need to talk?
- Try
- Can you explain further?
- Can you expand?
- How did it make you feel?
- How are you feeling?
- Why do you think that?
- Tell me more
- Are you okay?

Empathetic
Responses on bass drum and Tam Tam



- I hear what you're saying
- I'm sorry you're feeling like that
- You're right
- I'm sure that's not true
- Thank you for trusting me
- You must feel upset
- I'm glad you told me
- I'm always here for you
- You're not alone

Key:

- Pizz strings
- Play
- Mute
- Harmonics
- Plectrum scrape
- Free choice

The Venting Space