

Guitar Conduction #1: Taut Steel

for electric guitar, effects, and fixed media

by Jon Christopher Nelson

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Program Notes

Guitar Conduction #1: Taut Steel was commissioned by Stefan Östersjö. The composition is a structured improvisation that explores a variety of contemporary electric guitar techniques within an acousmatic context. The score is intended to provide a rough framework within which the guitarist improvises in response to the fixed media. The work constitutes an acknowledgement of the influential role rock music played during the formative years of my musical training.

Performance Notes

Guitar Effects: The electric guitar must be processed through a variety of effects. The work includes 3 presets, which are saved as Guitar Rig (Native Instruments guitar effects processing software) presets that can be obtained for performance from the composer. If the guitarist does not have Guitar Rig software, the effects may be achieved through the use of other software or guitar effects boxes. The three presets primarily consist of the following:

- 1) Preset #1 is a very long delay with feedback that will create sustained clusters as the electric guitar performs glissandi. In Guitar Rig, the effects included consist of a Quad Delay, Tape Echo, Studio Reverb, and Spring Reverb with volume controlled by a foot controller to facilitate seamless crescendos and decrescendos to mask guitar entrances and endings.
- 2) Preset #2 is a compressed, hot signal that creates a crunchy rock guitar signal. In Guitar Rig the preset includes a Stomp Compressor, CryWah, Cat, Transamp, Mezone, Demon Distortion, Gain Booster, Tweedman Amp, Dynamic Shure SM57 and Sennheiser 421B mic emulation with Tweedman cabinet emulation.
- 3) Preset #3 is a rock lead guitar setting with a very hot signal. The Guitar Rig present includes a CryWah, Skreamer, Lead 800, Quad Delay, Lead 800 Matched Cabinet, and Studio Reverb.

The Ebow, an electromagnetic devices that results in sustained/bowed sounds on electric guitar, is used extensively throughout the first and final sections of this composition. The Ebow has two "on" positions, with position 1 generating lower harmonics and position 2 generating higher harmonics as a result of faster vibrations. During the first section of the work the guitarist will generally alternate between positions 1 and 2 to produce harmonics.

The composition also utilizes a metal slide. During the first section the slide is used on the left hand pinky to facilitate sustained glissandos while using the Ebow in position 2. During the second section the slide is used in the right hand in lieu of a standard pick in order to facilitate slow scrapes and other tonal production techniques.

× = stopped clicks with the left hand or other short, percussive noisy sounds using either hand and/or the metal slide

▲ = high squeal or high pitched distorted sound

⋈ = slowly scrape metal slide on wound strings

∧ = glissando



= continue to perform as per the boxed notation and accompanying instructions

Ebow 1 = use Ebow in position 1 (generating lower frequency harmonics)

Ebow 2 = use Ebow in position 2 (generating higher frequency harmonics)

Guitar Conduction #1: Taut Steel

Commissioned by Stefan Östersjö

Jon Christopher Nelson

1 Guitar Rig Preset #1

0:00" metal slide on l.h. 4, Ebow in r.h.

⑤ 1
III Ebow 1

1:00"

Electric Guitar
(drop D tuning)



Fixed Media



ppp < *p*

1:00"

1:15" gradually bend note

⑥ 4 (slide)
IV Ebow 2

Improvise slow, subtle Ebow harmonic glissandi, gradually increasing in speed and depth

Ebow 1 Ebow 2 Ebow 1 Ebow 2

2:15"

E.Gtr.



mp *p* *mp*

elec.



2:15"

2:50" ⑥ 4 (slide)
IV Ebow 2

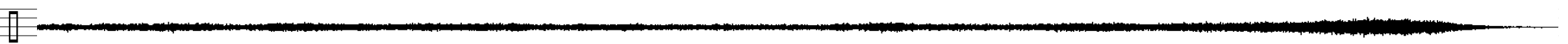
3:20" 3:30"

E.Gtr.



mp *mf*

elec.



Guitar Conduction #1: Taut Steel

2
3:30" 3:41" 3:56" 4:10" 4:15"

2 Guitar Rig preset #2
metal slide in r.h.

stopped l.h. clicks on ①-③
mp *mp* *mf*

E.Gtr.
elec.

4:15" feedback squeal (with r.h. slide)
4:24" 4:35" 4:45" 5:00"

f *mp* *f* *mf* *f* *mp* *f* *mf* *f* *mf* *f*

slow slide scrape on ④
slow slide scrape ⑤

E.Gtr.
elec.

5:00" 5:10" 5:45"

random stopped l.h. clicks
mf

slide scrape *f*

improvise playing clicks, squeals and scrapes, gradually increasing in tempo and interspersing occasional "power" chords (open fifths)

E.Gtr.
elec.

Detailed description: The score is divided into three sections. The first section (3:30-4:15) features a guitar rig preset change at 3:41 and a metal slide in the right hand. The second section (4:15-5:00) includes feedback squeal, a slow slide scrape on the 4th fret, and various dynamics. The third section (5:00-5:45) involves improvisation with clicks, squeals, and scrapes, interspersed with power chords. The score uses standard musical notation for guitar (treble clef, 8th notes) and includes a waveform for the electric guitar signal.

Guitar Conduction #1: Taut Steel

5:45" *ff* screaming scrapes 5:52" *fff* *ff* 6:08" 6:15" *ff*

E.Gtr.

elec.

(factory buzzer)

6:15" 6:28" screaming glissandi *fff* improvisation continues *ff* 6:45"

E.Gtr.

elec.

6:45" 7:00" pitched, sustained scrape with glissando *mf* 7:15"

E.Gtr.

elec.

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4

7:15" **improvise slow scrape clicks with random percussive sounds**

E.Gtr. *mf* *mp* 7:45"

elec.

7:45" *p* 8:00" **pitched, sustained scrape with glissando** 8:20" **3** Guitar Rig preset #3 Ebow in r.h. 8:30"

E.Gtr. *mp*

elec.

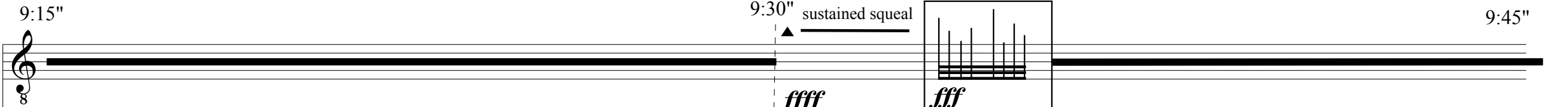
8:30" 8:35" ⁵ 1 V Ebow 1 *ppp* 8:53" *fff* *fff* 9:15"


E.Gtr. **lead guitar solo with fast, pitched eBow arpeggiations that avoid functional harmonic progressions and any sense of traditional meter**

elec.

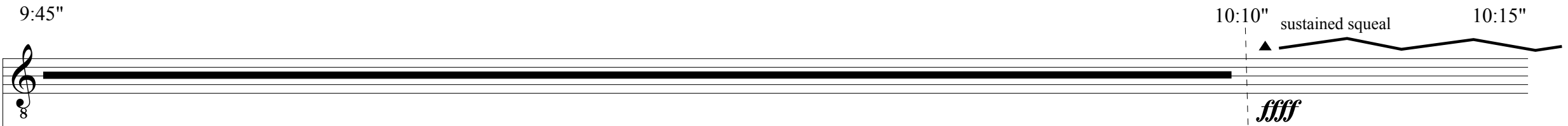
Guitar Conduction #1: Taut Steel


9:15" 9:45"

E.Gtr. 

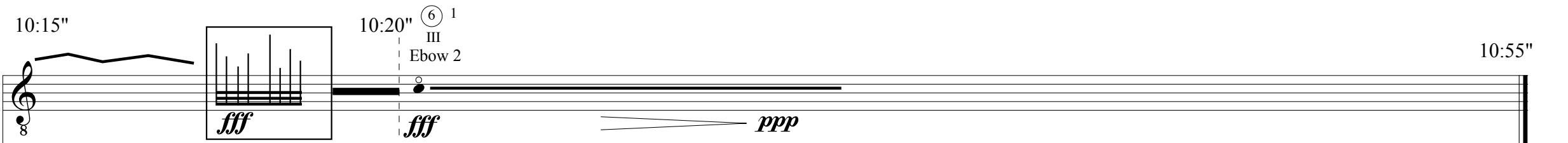
elec. 

9:45" 10:10" 10:15"

E.Gtr. 

elec. 

10:15" 10:55"

E.Gtr. 

elec. 