# cell

2005-2011 alto saxophone, accordion and contrabass



## (resistance & vision part 3)

(2005-11) for alto saxophone, accordion and contrabass

commissioned by POING

duration: approximately 14 minutes

### to Paul Obermayer

#### General notes

All three instruments should be amplified. In particular the sound of the accordion should be picked up by two microphones, one on either side, and these outputs panned slightly left/right so that the right and left hand parts sound spatially distinct.

The score is transposed. The alto saxophone sounds a major 6th lower and contrabass an octave lower. Accordion notation is at sounding pitch, that is at 8' pitch wherever an 8' register is in use, and otherwise at the pitch of whatever other register is present, except where the right hand uses only 16' + 4' in which case notation is at 4' pitch.

] in any instrument indicates cutting off the end of a sound as sharply as possible. For the saxophone this means a tongue-stop at the end of the sound, and for contrabass an audible stopping of the bow on the string should occur (and if the following sound begins with [, the bow should be started again from its stationary position on the string).

**Saxophone** multiphonics are numbered after Daniel Kientzy, Les sons multiples aux saxophones (Paris: Editions Salabert 2003) - for example, K1 = multiphonic no.1 in the Alto section, and so on. Microtones in the multiphonics have been rationalised and approximated to the nearest quartertone.

The accordion part is written for an instrument with one 16', two 8' and a 4' stop in the right hand, and 8' and 2' stops in the left hand. Instruments with more stops than this may use additional registrations in the non-notated sections (see below).

A notated tremolo implies "bellows-shake".

#### Contrabass:

- (a) **psp, msp** = poco and molto sul ponticello respectively, the former already being noticeably different in timbre from **nat**., the latter being as extreme as possible consistent with the fundamental pitch remaining audible. **pst, mst** = poco and molto sul tasto (similarly).

  (b) **clb** = col legno battuto, **clt** = col legno tratto
- (c) v v v = ascending degrees of bow pressure: flautando; "normal"; exaggerated and distorted (pitch only just discernible); completely pitchless scraping.



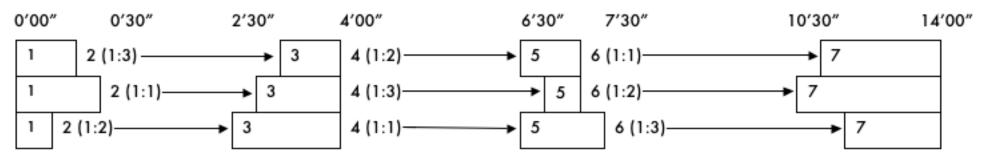
= rapid change of fingering while keeping the pitch as constant as possible (the result being an indistinctly microtonal fluctuation in pitch) - this can also be applied to glissandi, and is not to be confused with (though it may be combined with) a bowed gettato.

#### **Structure**

**Cell** consists of seven sections. with the approximate durations given below. While the durations of sections 1, 3 and 5 are determined by their tempi, the others may vary to a greater or lesser extent since they contain improvisation, which shouldn't be compromised by a sense of having to keep to the clock. All bars are numbered sequentially for ease of reference even though for example bars 85-109 (saxophone), 110-134 (accordion) and 135-159 (contrabass) will take place simultaneously.

- 1 30" (to end of accordion part), fully-notated. The contrabass moves on to section 2 at the end of bar 7, the saxophone at the end of bar 10.
- 2 minutes (from end of accordion part in section 1 to entry of contrabass in section 2). Each instrument here has an unsynchronised part, alternating between fully-notated bars and improvisations/silences (indicated by ∞). The instruments have notated parts of different lengths, so that the overall proportion between notated and improvised behaviour is different for each instrument. For the saxophone this durational ratio is 1:3, for the accordion 1:1, for the contrabass 1:2, that is, the saxophone has three times as much improvisation as the summed duration of the notated bars, the accordion an equal amount, and the contrabass twice as much. The contrabass cues the beginning of section3 but the accordion continues playing section 2 until its entry at bar 5 of section 3, and the saxophone until its entry at bar 7.
- 3 90" (from contrabass entry), fully-notated. All three performers end section 3 together and move on immediately to section 4.
- 2'30" (to entry of saxophone and contrabass in section 5). Unsynchronised parts as in section 2, but now the ratio notation: improvisation for saxophone is 1:2, for accordion 1:3 and for contrabass 1:1. Saxophone and contrabass together cue the beginning of section 5, and accordion continues section 4 until its entry in bar 5.
- 5 60" (from saxophone/contrabass entry to end of contrabass part), fully-notated. Saxophone and accordion move on together to section 6 at the end of bar 22 (in which they are silent!).
- 3 minutes (from end of contrabass part in section 5 to entry of accordion in section 7). Unsynchronised parts again, but this time the ratio notation: improvisation for saxophone is 1:1, for accordion 1:2 and for contrabass 1:3. The accordion cues the beginning of section 7, with the saxophone continuing section 6 until its entry in bar 4 and the contrabass until its entry in bar 6.
- 3'30" (from accordion entry), fully-notated except for bars 36 and 40 which are free improvisations for all three players with the approximate durations given.

#### Summary of the structure:



#### **Improvisation**

The "infinity signs" in the lacunae between notated bars are intended to imply that there are no restrictions on the musical material of these improvised passages. While their summed duration during each section should be borne in mind, the duration of any one of these lacunae in the score is free. (The horizontal extent of the lacunae shouldn't be interpreted as having anything to do with their duration.) The interpolated material may be **silent**, may relate in some way to the preceding notated section, or the following one, or both, or neither. It may or may not relate to the overall character of its notated context: while that of section 2 is a mixture of many characters, that of section 4 emphasises sustained sounds and phrases, that of section 6 emphasises short sounds and that of the end of section 7 consists exclusively of long sustains, the improvised material might be in a "dialectical" relationship with these aspects rather than necessarily "agreeing" with them. It should be a spontaneous reaction to the musical context in terms both of the preceding and following notations and (**especially**) of whatever the other two performers are doing, whether these in turn are playing notated or improvised music. Each performance should therefore use the spontaneity of the improvisational elements to discover new combinations and possibilities, textures and correspondences. The improvisations should not be limited to the playing techniques used in the notated material. In general the notated fragments shouldn't be given special prominence; in general they should not be completely submerged. It is therefore essential that each player is familiar with the parts of the other two as well as having learned their own.

