This PDF contains excerpts from the score. For the complete score, please contact the composer directly at www.mark-barden.com

Diese PDF enthält Auszüge aus der Partitur. Für die vollständige Partitur, bitte kontaktieren Sie den Komponisten direkt über seine Webseite www.mark-barden.com
cleft

(2017)

for violin and cello

– Score –

Mark Barden
cleft for violin and cello
dedicated to Séverine Ballon and Ashot Sarkissian

Program Note

The English verb ‘to cleave’ has two contradictory modern meanings, both of which derive from the same Middle English verb cleven: ‘to adhere to’ (German klieben) and ‘to split or divide’ (German klieben). ‘Cleaved’ and the archaic ‘clave’ are past tense forms of the former meaning and ‘cleaved’, ‘clove’, and ‘cleft’ are the past tense forms of the latter. ‘Cleft’ also recalls the German Kluft, which describes the gap that results after a cleaving. Though strictly speaking the meaning of ‘cleft’ is narrower, the title is a shorthand that refers to this entire etymological assemblage. It implies a situation in which division and adhesion are similar or even indistinguishable and in which it is unclear whether what is perceived is present (that which has been cleft) or absent (Kluft).

At its outset cleft establishes a quiet yet tense musical texture, with musicians using light finger pressure to tenderly ‘choke’ the strings to the point of near-silence. As they suppress what might be called the ‘natural sound’ of their instruments, the question of what lies beneath this surface arises. When clearly defined pitches emerge, they could be heard as a splitting open of this quiet layer that reveals a contrasting layer beneath. But can this contrast be heard as something integrated or ‘stuck to’ what has come before? Can we imagine that a gap created between cleft layers is not empty but instead rages with chaotic violence? Might violence represent a form of absence?

Performance Notes

• Cello C-string is tuned an octave lower. All 8vb indications or octave-transposing clefs in the cello part always apply only to IV. (So for double-stops on III and IV, the upper note on III sounds as written.)
• Many explanations of sounds and techniques appear directly in the score. (Players read from score.)
• Accidentals apply for the entire bar (conventional usage).
• The metric modulation from 72 to 120 occurs frequently. This should be precise. The ratio (quintuplet 16th in 72 = triplet 8th in 120) is given the first two times.

\[ \frac{4}{3} \]

\( \text{exponential dynamics: cresc. with sudden explosion at end / dim. with sudden implosion at start} \)

\( \text{exponential dynamics dal / al niente} \)

\( \text{dynamics in quotation marks correspond to effort. sounding result is sometimes given in parentheses.} \)

\( \text{octave-transposing clefs (sounds an octave higher / octave lower)} \)

\( \text{cancels previous octave-transposing treble clef} \)

\( \frac{1}{4}\text{-flat flat } \frac{1}{4}\text{-flat natural } \frac{1}{4}\text{-sharp sharp } \frac{1}{4}\text{-sharp} \)

arrows indicate slight microtonal deviation (approx. 8th-tone)

pitch may vary microtonally in either direction

IV III II I

the strings (I = highest). For harmonics, the partial is often given with the string, such as IV\textsuperscript{5} or III\textsuperscript{7}

SP+ SP SP SP-

extreme sul ponticello, molto sul pont., sul pont., poco sul pont.

N

normal bowing position (avoid sul pont or sul tasto timbre)

ST ST+ STx

poco sul tasto, sul tasto, molto sul tasto, extreme sul tasto

SPx/N

extreme sul pont followed subito by normale

\textbf{Finger}

\textbf{N}

bow directly at finger. This may require depressing neighboring strings or adjusting bow angle. If impossible, play STx and approximate the sound.

normal bowing position for this sound deviates from what N usually designates, but the sound should nonetheless have as neutral a timbre as possible.

\textbf{SY/2}

bow exactly halfway between the finger and the bridge. In other words, the bow is exactly one octave above the finger directly on the node for the 2nd partial (octave harmonic). This produces a unique hollow timbre like a wooden flute.

heavily damped air sound with the faintest amount of pitch. Use 3 fingers with light pressure on the same string and light bow pressure. Volume is controlled by speed of bow. Dynamic range: ppp-p (loudest dynamic is notated either “PPP” or “PPP”, which are equivalent). Because 3 fingers are required, frequent leaps and shifts are necessary: this juxtaposition of fast physical movements and very quiet sounding results is important. The quality of this sound varies depending on the string and register. (Thinner strings will naturally contain more pitch content, especially with high pitches. Allow these natural variations to speak.) Transitions from ST to SP will be subtle but audible. For trills use the 4th finger if possible; if not, damp with 1+2 and trill 3. When vibrato is indicated, maintain air timbre throughout; err on the side of subtlety.

begin with heavy SPx noise accent on start of note and then move bow subito to the contact point notated. This could also be notated:

multifingered. These are produced either with special fingerings (to activate multiple harmonic nodes simultaneously) or special bowing. See score in each case.
cleft
for Ashot Sarkissian & Séeérique Ballon

Precise, unnerving

violin

[Music symbols]

cello

[Music symbols]

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