My Own Thoughts

Kurt M. Mehlenbacher

Program Notes

My Own Thoughts is the product of getting caught up in my own head. Though this is not technically my first venture into microtonality, it is most definitely the first time someone requested their piece be microtonal, which is quite a game changer. When Dr. Meadows first approached me with this proposal, I was terrified to say the least. No longer was I really permitted to dink around with microtones, spending hours upon hours reworking their purpose and presentation. No, this time someone was ASKING me for a piece that she was going to PERFORM in PUBLIC while also using to complete her dissertation. This was not the same thing at all.

Thus, research ensued, and the mental loops started turning to try and create some sort of sense of my suddenly expanded tonality. How could they be incorporated? And was there a way to do so without the piece coming out as an "exercise" in microtones? As I thought more and more about the project, I found myself starting to sing microtones, and then correct myself verbally when the microtone was 'used in the wrong way.' This would happen while walking down the street, in the shower, and—most animatedly—at my writing location of choice. While I do not think I was being too exaggerated, I did actually have someone ask me if I needed help while in a local coffee shop, which I took as a hint that I needed to tone it down a bit….

And so, I pulled inside. Shut away from sound and visuals blocked by a computer screen, this piece came to fruition through the internalization of what I hope to be a temporary neuroticism borne from the fleeting grasp of microtonality. And though it may sound like this was torturous, it was actually really fun and freeing! All of a sudden, my technical tricks and musical aesthetic was amplified by literally two thirds more melodic possibilities, allowing for more coloring, greater control of timing, and—being the notation nerd that I am—a reason to actually evaluate and establish my desired way of writing these sounds down. This joy was further compounded by the fact that Dr. Meadows is a true collaborator, never afraid to request an adjustment to an unreasonable passage, or flat out telling me when something I wrote was not actually playable by a human.

Of significance for me is now knowing that, when I get caught up in my head again, there is always a way out, and that it is probably better on the other side.

Notes to the Performer

The symbols for the accidentals are derived and refined from a handful of sources. The quarter sharp and three-quarter sharp symbols are called "Tartini sharps," developed in the mid 1700s by Guiseppe Tartini, and seem to me to be the most intuitive approach to microtonal sharps because they have been around for so long AND they are a very clear visual representation of "kinda sharp," "actually sharp," and "more sharp than normal."

𝄲	quarter sharp	𝄳	quarter flat
♯	sharp	♭	flat
𝄰	three-quarter sharp	𝄱	three-quarter flat

The flats are a bit more indirect in their origins, and are a variation of John Corigliano's quarter tones, which appear to be influenced from Giainto Scelsi's earlier system. Simply put, a quarter-tone flat is indicated by a backwards flat. For three-quarter tones flat, the backwards flat is added to a standard flat.

Fingerings were derived from Phillip Refeldt's *New Directions for Clarinet* and reworked with assistance from the commissioning party. As was discovered during recording, these fingers are not universally usable between all players and all instruments. As such, it is strongly suggested that players work to find fingerings that sound best for their setup, rather than blindly follow the fingerings placed in the music.

Bb Clarinet

Commissioned by Olivia Meadows, clarinet

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Caprice for Internal Musings

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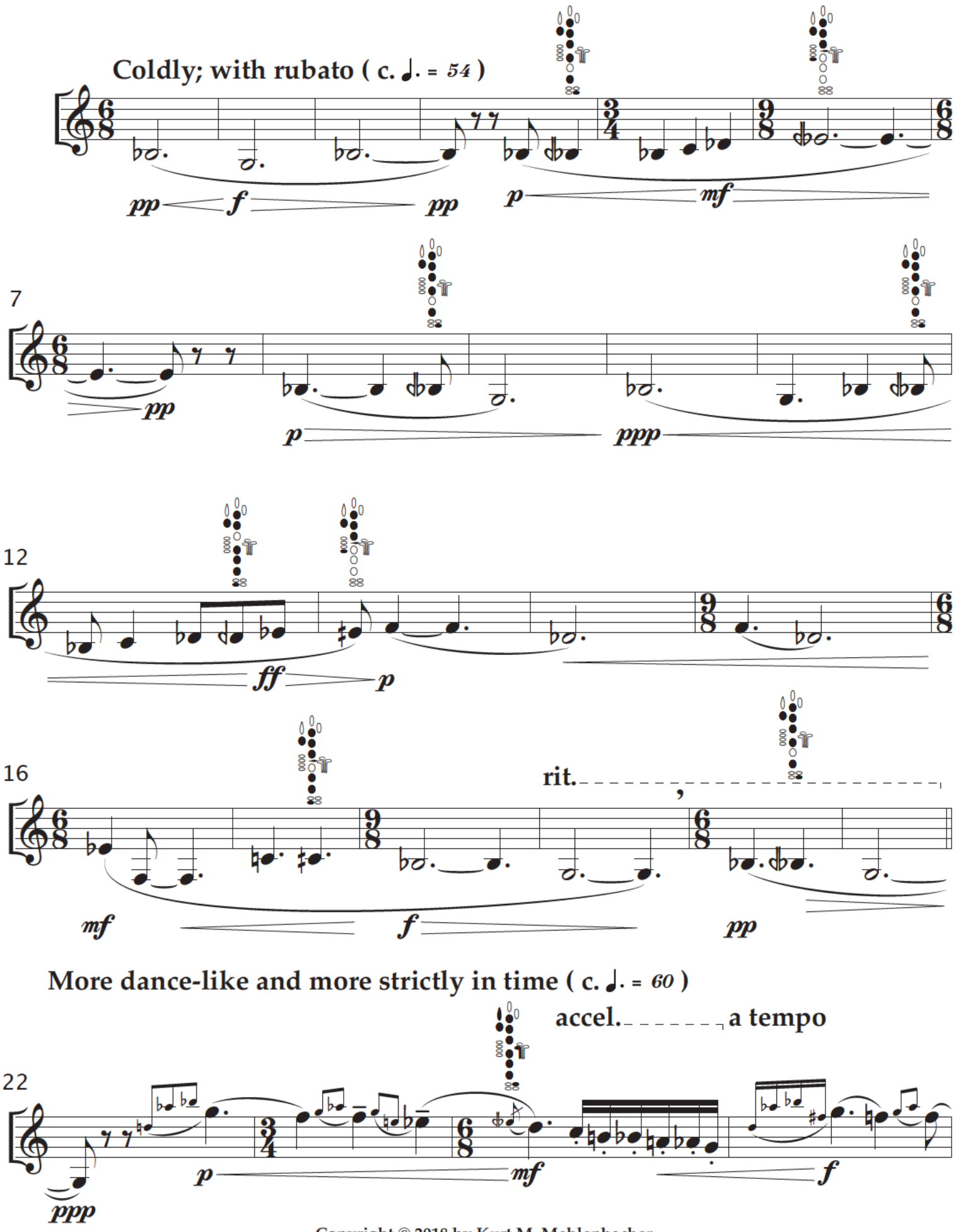

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26

ff mf p

30

rit.

mf p f fp

Triumphantly; a tempo

33

ff pp

37

ff p

41

ff sfz

46

rit.

p

Like the beginning; more hollow (c. ♩. = 54)

50

ppp *sffz* *pp*

54

p *pp* *p*

59

mf *p* *pp*

63

f poco rit. a tempo *ppp*

68

mf

71

p *f*

Flowing forward

74

ff *p* *f* sub. *pp* sub.

77

ff *p* *f* sub. *ff* *p* *f* sub.

80

ff

82

ppp *p* *f*

85

ff

Slightly airy; a little faster (c. ♩. = 60)

87

pp

poco rit. a tempo

90

f *pp*

poco rit. a tempo

92

ff *p*

94

poco rit.

pp *f*

poco accel. a tempo

98

pp *mf*

poco rit.

102

p *ff*

poco accel. Sharp and punchy; a tempo

105

pp *f* *sfz*

107

pp *f* *sfz*

109

pp *p* *sub.f* *ff* *f*

111

p *f* *p* *ff* sub. sub. *p*

113

mf > *pp* *f* *p*

115

cresc. poco a poco

117

ff *sfz*

119

sfz sfz p sfz sfz sfz

120

pp ff fp sfz sfz

122

fp

124

126

Explosively

128

ff fp ff 3

131

p

133

ff

136

139

143

tr

sffz

pp

147

f

149

fff

sffz