

Travelogue: Surat → Hat Yai, sul G for amplified violin & fixed media

Stephen de Filippo | 2024

Travelogue: *Surat* → *Hat Yai, sul G*

for amplified violin & fixed media

Stephen de Filippo | 2024

Composed for Sarah Saviet's residency at the University of California, San Diego, 2024

ca. 23'12"

In June 2023 I spent over two months travelling through Thailand, from its northernmost point, along the Malay Peninsula, through the Gulf of Thailand and to the borders of Thailand and Malaysia. Passing through Chiang Mai, Prachuap Kiri Khan, Surat, Koh Samui, Hat Yai, and George Town, I crossed over 1150 miles by train and ferry.

Throughout this journey, I recorded the ambient sounds of travel using contact microphones, capturing the rattling interior of train cabins. These microphones have been utilized to capture the material sound of the train, which is then processed into a soundscape that carry the drones, movements, and rhythms experienced during long-distance travel – the continuous drone that accompanies travel. These recordings, processed and refined, now constitute a fixed-media component that accompanies Sarah's performance.

The violinist mimics this texture, embedding themselves in this sound of travel to create a conglomerate that slowly shifts and transforms. They perform entirely on the G string, exploring the different qualities of sound that can be produced within this restriction — grainy pitchless bowing, hints of open string, high harmonics, scraping, and other textural sounds.

The arrival point is the Phra Maha Chedi Tripob Trimongkol, an Art Deco inspired stupa made from coiled stainless steel. Within the structure are hundreds of little bells that tinkle in the breeze. The final recordings I have included were taken from within the Chedi — the gentle tinkling of the small bells as they sway in the wind, the sound of distant birds.

This work intersects documentation, a travel journal, field recording, and composition, using this travelling experience to capture and aestheticise the sonic accompaniment that follows us during travel.

Performance notes

Amplification:

The central focus of this composition lies in amplifying the unpitched or barely pitched bowing sounds, seamlessly blending them with the fixed media component. For capturing the friction bow sound, an optimal choice would be a clip-on or instrument-mounted condenser microphone. Alternatively, if such equipment is unavailable, a condenser microphone placed on a stand can serve the purpose effectively.

Bowing:

The objective for this composition is to achieve a continuous, grainy, drone-like texture that dynamically changes and evolves alongside the fixed media component. The performance should be *molto flautando*, creating a hollow sound with a compromised sense of pitch throughout. At times, such as in [N], the pitch quality may be depicted graphically, with the boldness of the line indicating the clarity of the pitch. Other times, the quality of pitch is given through text descriptions.



Intermittent bowing irregularities such as flutterings, stutterings, and unevenness are permissible throughout most of the work. In some instances, like in section [A], these irregularities are left to be performed *ad lib*. In contrast, in passages like [J], such stutterings are rhythmically notated.

Spectrum of quarter tones: ♭♭ ♭ ♮ ♯ ♯♯

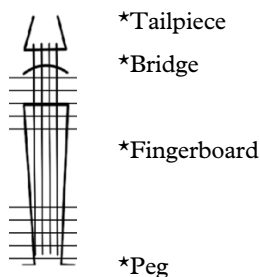
Degrees of bow placement:

ob.	msp.	sp.	norm.	st.	mst.
on bridge	molto sul pont	sul pont	normale	sul tasto	molto sul tasto

Symbols:

pitchless bowing	behind the bridge	loud fingering sound	bow on the body of the instrument, presented as a staff underneath	ricochet

Clef:



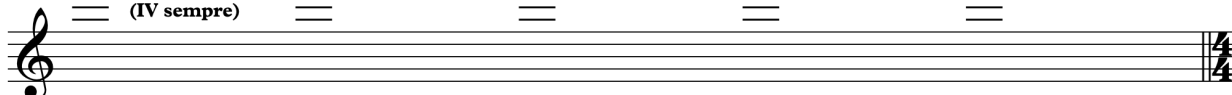
Stephen de Filippo | 2024

23/06/23 - 01:38-06:34: State Railway of Thailand Express Train #171, Surat Thani → Hat Yai, Songkla

molto flautando sempre, bow extremely slowly, almost without pressure, no pitch
ob. ↔ msp., swirling freely between bow positions to create change in the unpitched sound

120"

Violin



fpmp

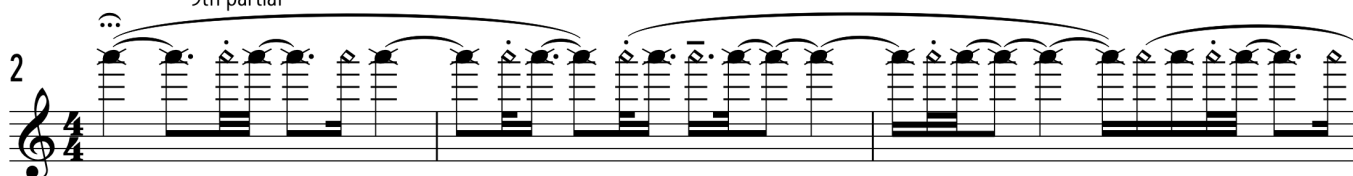
very grainy, textural, continuous, always blended with the fixed media

2:00

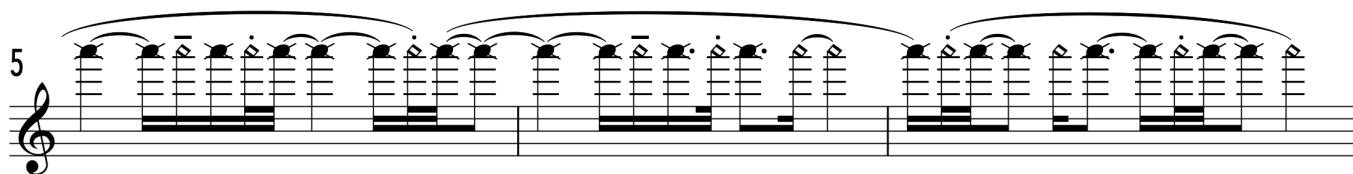
A

♩ = mm. 48

maintain slow pitchless bowing, w/ hints of harmonic
9th partial

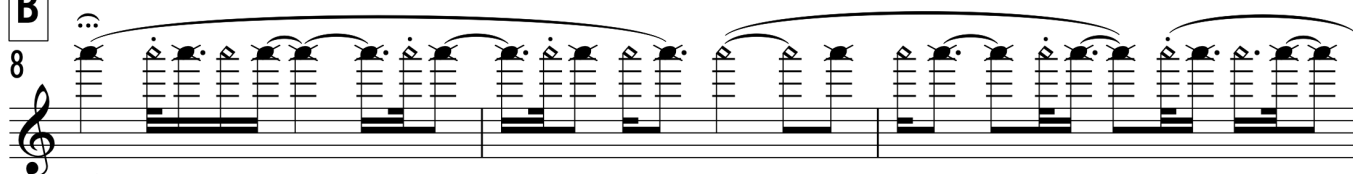


sfzp continuous, harmonics like little pitched squeaks, popping momentarily above the continuous grain sound,
intermittent bowing irregularities (flutterings, stutterings, unevenness) ad lib to [F]

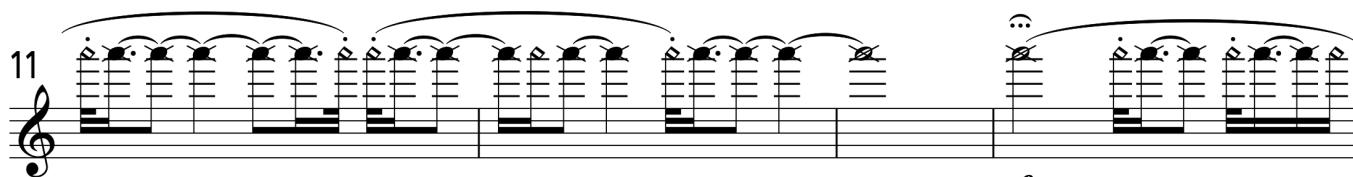


2:30

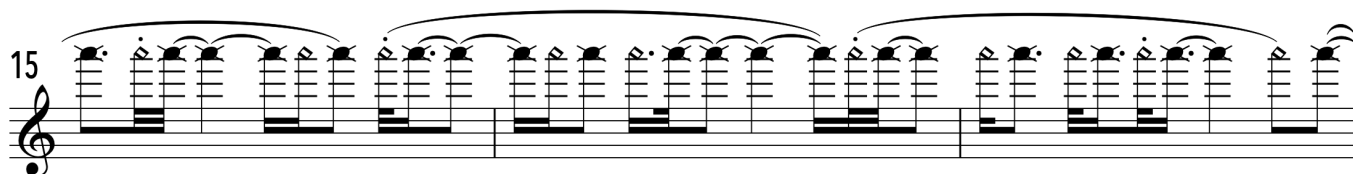
B



sfzp



sfzp



18

Musical staff 18-21: Treble clef, sixteenth-note patterns with slurs and accents. A hairpin crescendo starts at the end of the staff, leading to a *sfzp* marking.

sfzp

3:40

C

22

Musical staff 22-24: Treble clef, sixteenth-note patterns with slurs and accents.

25

Musical staff 25-27: Treble clef, sixteenth-note patterns with slurs and accents.

28

Musical staff 28-30: Treble clef, sixteenth-note patterns with slurs and accents.

4:25

D

31

circular bowing

sim...

Musical staff 31-33: Treble clef. Staff 31 has a whole rest. Staff 32 has six notes with circular bowing symbols (∩) above them, grouped by a brace with the number 6 below. Staff 33 has a series of wavy lines representing a tremolo, followed by a note with a circular bowing symbol. A hairpin crescendo starts at the beginning of staff 32, reaching *mf* at the end of staff 32 and *sfzp* at the end of staff 33.

6

mf

sfzp

chugging, like the rhythm of a train

34

Musical staff 34-36: Treble clef, sixteenth-note patterns with slurs and accents. A triplet of eighth notes is marked with a bracket and the number 3.

4:55

E

37

Musical staff 37-40: Treble clef, sixteenth-note patterns with slurs and accents.

40

becoming exposed from the FM

43

46

48

mf

6:05
 low G#: on bridge, no pitch
 high A: also pitchless, but sounding like a different quality

F 56"

fp *fp* *fp* *fp* *fp* *fp*

like breathing - inhaling and exhaling rattling, less smooth

7:01
G ♩ = mm. 48
 shifting between bowing on the edge of the body to muted pitch → unstable harmonic

52

body: *f* sempre

swelling
pp cresc poco a poco

cont. swelling...

56

60

8:06
H

65

moving ob. ↔ msp. freely

shifting from on bridge into harmonic

bb V (bb.)

(cresc poco a poco)

piercing inhales beyond bridge, and murky, barely pitched exhales

70

(mf)

8:51 ob.

vertical bow, scrape, slow gliss.

9:33 J

still flautando, almost no pitch

light stuttering

sustained bowing

pp sometimes wispy, sometimes crunchy

18"

24"

mst.

73

f

77

80

poco sfz

(mst.) — norm.

84

still very hollow, barely any pitch

88

bb. msp. bb. ob.

tr

ghostly loud fingering

10:58

K

mst.

93

poco sfz on accented accatturas

97

< > — poco — *p pp*

sp.

101

st.

— poco — *p pp*

104

sp.

shifting between bowing the body,
and bowing both the body and string simultaneously
mst + body

L

107

body:

f *pp*

tap string (undefined rhythms)

111

f poss., sempre

tr

115

tr

119

tr

13:38

M

124

(tr) *tr*

128

tr

132 (tr) *sfz p*

136 (tr)

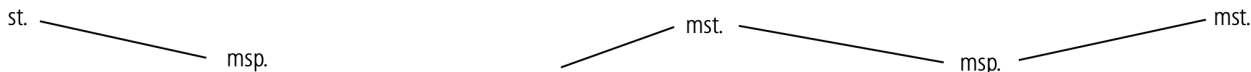
behind bridge

trilling to open string, sometimes stopping momentarily, still w/ heaving fingering sound, glissing freely up & down the entirety of the fingerboard, shifting between hollow almost pitchless tone, and harmonic

14:48

N

88"



pitchiness:

139 tr

rall.

16:16

O

60"

msp, molto flautando

140

feeling continuous, shifting btwn a whisper and rougher pitched sounds, intermittent bowing irregularities are present

17:16

P

46"

141 slow tremolo, bow all the way up the fingerboard, improvise sporadic and agitated fingerings, following up the fingerboard

very grainy

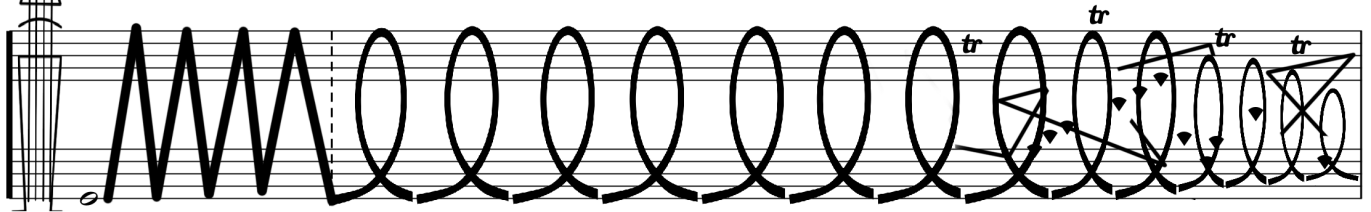
18:02

Q

104"

142

begin with vertical bowing: slowly scraping up and down, sometimes producing pitch, sometimes crunching, then, circular bowing: beginning as slow pressured scrapes, becoming more wild and adding in small tremolos, glissandi, and improvised fingering



beginning very slow and textural, but becoming faster and more present, like a train chugging

crazy! glissing wildly in pitch

46"

143



fff

exposed, continuing, then fading into nothing

21:44

28/06/23: Phra Maha Chedi Tripob Trimongkol

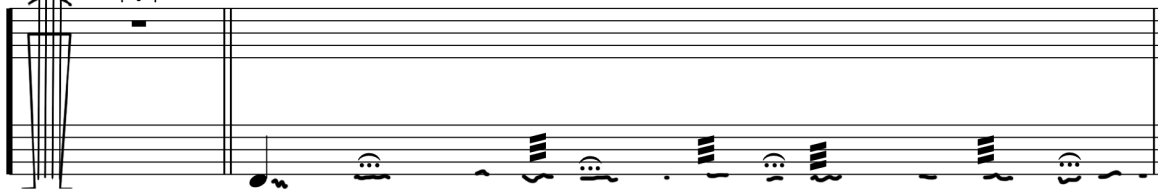
R

84"

144

72"

improvise on the string(s) between the fingerboard and peg
begin with very short and sparse tremolos, then become fuller, adding ricochets and other techniques



p *tinkling, like a chime in the wind, interacting with the FM*

poco

23'12"

2023-2024
Hat Yai, Thailand
La Jolla, California
Nebraska City, Nebraska

premiere:

14/05/2024: Sarah Saviet (violin),
Conrad Prebys Experimental Theater,
University of California, San Diego, California, USA

with thanks to:

Christian Cummings, Michelle Lou, Jeremy Olsen, Roger Reynolds, Sarah Saviet,
Hannah Demma & the Kimmel Harding Nelson Center for the Arts