

Sonata
for a
Felled Tree

For solo violin and electronics

7'20"

Ellie Cherry

Equipment and Electronics

- * 1 close mic attachable to the violin
- * 2 loudspeakers
- * Pre-processed tape part
- * Live electronic processing with Max 8

Audio Setup

The two loudspeakers should be placed on stage in front of the performer to their right and left side.

The close mic should be attached to the violin in a position where it will not be in the way of the performer, yet will easily be able to pick up nuanced sounds the performer is asked to produce on the violin body and bridge.

About the Piece

"Sonata for a Felled Tree" is so named to prompt a renewed contemplation of the violin not only as an intricate work of human craftsmanship, but also the remnant of numerous living organisms, of which every cell, as well as the experiences that shaped them during their lifetimes, plays a vital part in the sound escaping the violin and entering our ears. In this sense, the ebony, rosewood, maple, spruce, poplar, boxwood, and willow trees that constitute modern violins are as much musical performers as violinists themselves. Much of my inspiration for the piece draws from the book *The Hidden Life of Trees* by forester Peter Wohlleben (for example, the intriguing fact that tree roots generate a frequency of 220 Hz, the same pitch as the lowest A on the violin). Much like Wohlleben's book, I wanted to deepen the audience's understanding and appreciation for the the expansiveness of time, complexity of species interaction, and diversity of natural phenomena that all contribute to a violin's sonic properties by creating a work of music that allows listeners to experience life from the perspective of a tree.

Sonata for a Felled Tree

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Violin

220 Hz

Electronics

Start track

freeze

freeze

freeze

48" water trickling

scramble delay 1 on

Vln.

58" rapidly drum fingers on strings below the bridge, producing light metallic pings

continue drumming motion with fingers on strings, but move to the other side of the bridge and shift up and down neck

1'48" release and let ring

ff

chorus of birds

pp

Elect.

gurgling sounds

pp gradually increase freezer gain

scramble delay 2 on

1 and 2 off

simple delay on

Vln.

2' mp portamento

2'4" freeze

2'10" = 82

mf Play each chord with this arpeggio figure; each / indicates a repetition of this figure on the same chord

2'23" mp senza mensura

freely tremolo between the highest two notes, occasionally resting on the lower one

2'30" freeze

2'38" freeze

molto rall.

Elect.

freeze

freeze

Until c. 4', continually freeze each time the violinist plays a prolonged tone (i.e. not arpeggios or tremolos)

simple delay off

3' 3'17" 3'24" 3'32" 3'42"

Vln. *gliss.*

Elect. freeze freeze freeze freeze

p ————— *mf*

increase freezer gain

3'54" 4'10" 4'14" 4'18" 4'22" 4'28" 4'32" 4'36" 4'42" 4'46"

Vln. *ppp* play partially on the bridge to produce a soft, breathy sound immitating the wind

Elect. *gentle wind* *portamento* *pileated woodpecker call*

decrease freezer gain OFF

5' 5'28"

Vln. rub the violin at different places on the body and at varying speeds to produce light airy sounds

Elect. *creaking tree branches and distant drumming of woodpeckers* *scramble delay 1 on*

5'58" 6'4" 6'55" 7'20"

Vln. knock on the body of violin in various places, imitating the ax blows

Elect. *nearby drumming* *axes cutting into wood* *tree groans and falls* 220 Hz

f

scramble delay 2 on *1 and 2 off*