Tristan Rhys Williams

cleave

string quartet

“ – a body split down the middle like sunlight and shadow - ”

William Burroughs: The Ticket That Exploded
Performance notes

See Scordatura at beginning of score. Score written at actual pitch (with strings specified for each block of material), performers should play from the score.

½ sp  Some sul ponticello quality but more clear pitch
sp    sul ponticello
xsp   Extreme sul ponticello – very near bridge (a lot of distortion)
br    Play directly on the bridge – faint overtones only
st    sul tasto*
xst   extreme sul tasto*

*When fingers of left hand are depressing high up on string, bow directly in front of fingers – the term is relative.

---  Gradual change of position

ʃlaʃ  Light, low pressure, floating bow

→  In conjunction with any of the above positions, denotes a constantly shifting point of contact between two positions – like a vertical swishing, brushing motion.
Scratch-bow (very heavy pressure, resulting in little pitch – let lots of noise through)

Ricochet-bow, drop the bow onto the string and allow, or cause to bounce for specified duration

Percussive action with bow hair – ensure that wood of bow makes contact with the instrument (experiment with a sort of ‘half col legno tratto’ angle)

½ c.l.t
Half col legno tratto: Draw some of the wood of the bow across strings (ghostly sound)

c.l.t
Col legno tratto: Draw only wood of bow across strings

Sub ponticello (play between the bridge and tailpiece – resulting in non-determinant, high frequency)

The passages that are to be bowed under the strings are always marked and cancelled out in context. This allows strings IV and I to be played simultaneously. Because the bow has to be held upside down, try playing with lower half of bow to allow more control and strength.

Intense and expressive vibrato

Glissando (should be equally distributed)

Cross note-heads for the unspecified pitches, created by gliss. between two notes (sometimes over extended time periods and interrupted by other notes – see dotted lines)

Glissando trill (like out of control vibrato), always as fast as possible to the bracketed note

Fanning out trill between specified bracketed notes

Tremolo (scrubbing) always as fast as possible
Snap pizzicato

Strum, use thumb nail or fingers to produce a violent sound

Slap fingerboard with palm of hand from above, while fingerling the previously plucked chord. This effect will provide a non-determinant pitch but aim for the predominant ‘wood’ sound

Immediately release fingers after plucking chord, allowing open strings to resound

Four-note plucked chord – not spread. Use claw-like hand position.

Highest possible note on strings

Literally tonelessly fingered tone – place (dampen) finger over string without depressing

Natural harmonic

Artificial harmonic (strings usually specified)

Crescendo from ‘niente’/diminuendo to ‘niente0

Crescendo to the most extreme loud dynamic possible in context

All dynamics in quotation marks represent the intensity of playing not the resulting volume

Approx. ¼ tone lower

Approx. ¼ tone higher
Continuum (free material), from b.251+:

The layout on the page does not represent duration or hierarchy of material. The player should use their discretion to determine the duration of specific sound-events. Play free material once in its completion before measured material enters.

The ‘clef’ represents the four strings of the instrument. These are to be played ‘tonelessly’ by lightly covering the strings (denoted by a sign) and moving fingers up and down (denoted by -\(\uparrow\downarrow\) -, depending on context e.g. – if bow in st position) to reveal slight shifts of timbre and sounds suggestive of harmonics. The indication ‘toneless’ should not be taken literally (do not fully mute strings) as the resultant shift between a whistling and dry brushing sound is encouraged. Experiment with varying mute finger pressure for a varied timbral palette. The overall effect of this material should be that of ‘white-sound’.

Play this cell continuously until –\(\uparrow\downarrow\) – which denotes an abrupt stop (at whichever point of cycle reached).

Some ‘senza tempo’ bars are given an approximate duration in seconds, while others are marked: ‘commodo’ or ‘colla parte’ to allow for a shift from one playing position to another. Do not linger unnecessarily.

The work can be performed by amplified quartet. The use of 4x Sennheiser MKE2 clip mics (or similar) is recommended.

Duration: ca. 10 minutes.
Tempo of \( \text{c}\) 54 (3 10/3, \( \text{c}\) 21/4) should be taken at maximum speed for 3 5/7 bars.