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# A negative of knowledge

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BOSTON UNIVERSITY  
COLLEGE OF FINE ARTS

Dissertation

**A NEGATIVE OF KNOWLEDGE**

by

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Musical Arts

2018



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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the faculty at Boston University for their invaluable insight and guidance over these four years of intense academic and artistic growth. In particular, I would like to thank Joshua Fineberg for his compositional advice and always insightful critique of my work. I would also like thank Andrew Shenton, Marié Abe, Davide Ianni, Ketty Nez, and Susan Conklin for their commitment to teaching and generous support of my ideas and aspirations.

I am also grateful for all the visiting artists who were in residence at School of Music through the BU Center for New Music in between 2014 and 2018, whose presence enriched our community with tremendous talent and artistry. During this period, I feel particularly privileged to have had the chance to work repeatedly with the JACK Quartet as well as receive the mentorship of Lisa Lim, Pierluigi Billone, Beat Furrer, and Philippe Leroux.

Finally, I would like to thank my parents, Augusto Mestre and Regina Rabello, for their never-ending support of my artistic and intellectual life; my friends and colleagues at the College of Fine Arts; Dominique and Jonathan Haughton, whose kindness and example I will always inspire me; and Isabela Darcie, who made these years in Boston the happiest years.

The present work was conducted under the support of CAPES, Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior – Brasil.

**A NEGATIVE OF KNOWLEDGE**

**ANDRÉ RABELLO MESTRE**

Boston University College of Fine Arts, 2018

Major Professor: Joshua Fineberg, D.M.A., Professor of Music, Composition and Theory

**ABSTRACT**

This dissertation for the Doctor of Musical Arts degree in Composition and Theory consists of a seventeen-minute work for two clarinetists and electronic media. *A Negative of Knowledge* is based on a secular song by the 15th-century Burgundian composer, Gilles Binchois. His song, titled *Triste Plaisir*, is at moments heavily abstracted but can be heard throughout the work in the pre-recorded, countertenor voice of Wee Kiat Chia.

The piece was premiered by David Angelo and Shannon Leigh at Boston University's Marsh Chapel on April 30, 2018.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgments.....	v
Abstract.....	vi
Index.....	viii
Performance Notes.....	ix
Electronics, Click Track, and Clarinet Preparations.....	x
A Negative of Knowledge.....	1
Footnotes from a Portrait of Binchois.....	2
Sines of Someone or Something.....	6
Seven Ways to Measure the Distance Between Two Things.....	8
Divided by One’s Own Constitution.....	11
Reversed Archaeology.....	13
Audio Artifacts.....	16
Vita.....	17



a negative of knowledge

for clarinet duo  
& electronics

- |      |   |       |
|------|---|-------|
| i.   | footnotes from a portrait of binchois                 | 3'48" |
| ii.  | sines of someone or something                         | 1'28" |
| iii. | seven ways to measure the space<br>between two things | 3'42" |
| iv.  | divided by one's own constitution                     | 2'30" |
| v.   | reversed archaeology                                  | 2'54" |
| vi.  | audio artifacts                                       | 2'37" |


## performance instructions

### footnotes from a portrait of binchois

this section is played in Bb clarinets lacking their lower joints and sealed in the bottom. nevertheless, pitches are played 'as if' the instrument were whole: the left hand should execute its half of the ordinary fingering for the given pitch. if at a given point the instrument is completely sealed, the performer should maintain air pressure, but no sound will result from that action.

### sines of someone or something

in both this and the closing section, it is important to blend as much as possible with the electronic track. a successful performance will reinforce the ambiguity between live and pre-recorded sounds through careful intonation and inflections.

accidentals: 

### seven ways to measure the space between two things

a fairly static section where block sonorities are separated by rhythmic electronic interventions.

### divided by one's own constitution


this section calls for a prepared instrument made of a long tube containing four holes connected to the Bb clarinet mouthpiece. each space in the staff indicates one of the four pitches, from lower to higher.


T. Cl. 

### a live artifact, an original ruin


this section calls for a gentle interplay between the pre-recorded voice and the clarinets. the fast microtonal runs should be perceived as a soft bending - a lingering partial that went its own way.

 - air noise produced by open embouchure. no pitch content.


 - same, but inhaling

 - embouchure closer to ordinary, resulting in both air noise and a veiled pitch.

 - clear pitch, still partially colored by air noise

 - slap tongue

 - tongue ram

 - teeth on the reed (extremely high and fragile)

 - spectral multiphonic

 - bisbigliando

reg key:  - opening and closing of the register key resulting in the quiet appearance of a lower fundamental

## electronics

a fixed media track accompanies the instrumental performance of a negative of knowledge. the work relies on carefully timed events, which are accomplished by the use of a click track.

the click track contains reference to a number of measure numbers which are indicated in the score. these are meant to facilitate performance, particularly during multiple pauses and instrument changes.

## amplification

performers should be amplified. this is meant to both highlight soft passages and to bring instrumental and fixed media together.

ideally, two microphones should be used in order to guarantee a robust amplification of all clarinets and through their optimal positions.

## tube clarinet

in addition to the Bb and Bass Clarinets, the work also calls for a "tube clarinet". this instrument can be constructed with some kind of flexible tubing with an outer diameter of 15 mm and an inner diameter of 10 mm - enough for the tubing to fit tightly inside the Bb clarinet's mouthpiece. the length should be close to a meter.

the ending should be sealed and four wholes should be made on the tubing. the holes should be placed so that a player can comfortably finger all of them at the same time. from low to high, they account for the four pitches asked for in the work. precise pitches are not important for this particular instrument.

andré mestre

**a negative** of knowledge  
2018

for clarinet duo  
& electronics

# a negative of knowledge

andré mestre

2018

## i. footnotes from a portrait of binchois

$\square = 80$

Clarinet in B $\flat$   
(upper joint)

Bass Clarinet in B $\flat$   
(upper joint)

Cl.

B. Cl.

1 3 6 9 12 15 18

always between *p* and *ppp*

3:2

Detailed description: The score is for two instruments: Clarinet in B $\flat$  (upper joint) and Bass Clarinet in B $\flat$  (upper joint). It is in 3/8 time with a tempo of 80. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The score is divided into three systems. The first system (measures 1-6) shows rests for both instruments. The second system (measures 9-12) shows the Clarinet playing a melodic line starting at measure 9, with dynamics ranging from *p* to *ppp*. The Bass Clarinet plays a rhythmic accompaniment. A 3:2 ratio is indicated between measures 11 and 12. The third system (measures 15-18) shows more complex rhythmic patterns for both instruments.

Cl. 21 3.2 24

B. Cl. (vib.)

Cl. 27 3.2 30

B. Cl.

Cl. 33 36

B. Cl. 3.2

Cl. 39 42 (vib.)

B. Cl. 3.2

Cl. 45 48

B. Cl.

Cl. 51 54

B. Cl. 32

Cl. 57 60

B. Cl.

Cl. 63 66 (vib)

B. Cl. 3:2

69 77

Cl.  
B. Cl.

75 78

Cl.  
B. Cl.

81 84

Cl.  
B. Cl.

87 90

Cl.  
B. Cl.

93 96

Cl.  
B. Cl.



99

s.vib

102

ppp

change to B $\flat$  clarinet (whole)

## ii. sines of someone or something

$\square = 72$  circular breathe as much as possible proportionally notated

105

108

resemble clarinet

ppp

111

114

pp mp

mp f ppp

Cl. 117 *mf* 120

*pp* *mp* *p* *mf* *mp* *p* *pp* *ppp*

Cl. 123 (slow hsb) 126 tr

*pp* *mf* *mp* *mf* *p* *f* *p*

Cl. 129 tr 132

*mp* *pp* *mf* *pp*

Cl. 135 vib. poco a poco

*f* *f*

### iii. seven ways to measure the distance between two things

still  $\square = 72$

133 (poco vib.) 141 144

Cl.  
*pp*

Cl.  
*pp*

(poco vib.) 147 150

Cl.  
*p* *pp*

Cl.  
*mp* *mp*

153 156

Cl.

Cl.

159 162 165

168 171

(s.vib.)

*p* *mp* *p* *mp* simile

legato

tr.

*mp* *p* *mp* *p* simile 3:2

174 177

180 183 186

*p*

*p*

189 reg key: 192

Cl.  
Cl.

*p*  
*pp*

195 198

Cl.  
Cl.

201 (growl) 204 207

Cl.  
Cl.

*pp*  
*pp*

210 213

Cl.  
Cl.

216 219 222 225

Cl.  
Cl.

iv. divided by one's own constitution

still  $\square = 72$

228 231

Tube Clarinet  
B. Cl.

*ff*  
*mp*  
*f*

234 237 240

T. Cl.  
B. Cl.

*f*  
*mf*  
*mf*  
*mp*

243 246 249

T. Cl. *f* 3.2

B. Cl. *f*

252 255 258

T. Cl. *mf* *mp*

B. Cl. *ff* *mf*

261 264 267

T. Cl. *f* *mp* *ff*

B. Cl. *f* *mf* 3.2 *ff*

270 273 276

T. Cl.

B. Cl.

## v. reversed archaeology

still  $\square = 72$

with a gentle vibrato, blending as much as possible  
generally legato

The musical score consists of three systems, each with two staves for Clarinet I (Cl. I) and Clarinet II (Cl. II).  
- **System 1 (Measures 279-282):** Cl. I starts with a long note at measure 279, marked *ppp*. Cl. II has rests until measure 281, then enters with a melodic line. Dynamics include *ppp* and *pp*. A 5:4 ratio is indicated over a cluster of notes in measure 282.  
- **System 2 (Measures 285-288):** Cl. I has a melodic line starting at measure 285, marked *p*. Cl. II has a melodic line starting at measure 286, marked *mp*. Dynamics include *pppp* and *pp*. A 3:2 ratio is indicated over a cluster of notes in measure 285.  
- **System 3 (Measures 291-294):** Cl. I has a melodic line starting at measure 291, marked *mf*. Cl. II has a melodic line starting at measure 292, marked *ppp*. Dynamics include *p* and *ppp*. A 3:2 ratio is indicated over a cluster of notes in measure 291. A *bisb* marking with a sequence of notes is present at the end of the system.



Cl. *ppp* *pp* *ppp* *ppp*

Cl. *ppp* *ppp*

294 297 32

tr.

Cl. *ppp* *ppp*

Cl. *ppp*

300 303

5:4

tr.

3:2

Cl. *pp* *p*

Cl. *mf* *pp* *ppp*

306 309

(vib.)

Cl. *ppp* *ppp* *< pp >*

Cl. *ppp* *pp*

312 315

(vib.)

tr.

tr.

3:2

Cl. *pp* *pp* *p*

(vib.) (s.vib.)

318 321

Cl. *ppp* *ppp* *< p >*

324 327 tr. *< p >*

5-4 3-2 *< p >*

Cl. (vib.) *pp* *p*

330 333 reg. key. (sim.)

5-4

Cl. *p* *mp* *p*

336 339

(reg. key sim.) 3-2 3-2 3-2 5-4 6-4 3-2

*ppp* *mp*

Cl. *p* *pp* 342

Cl. *pp*

Cl. 345 *mp* vib.

Cl. *mf* vib.

vi. audio artifacts

Cl. *electronics*

Cl.

VITA

