

Sam Gillies  
Snowden  
For Electric Guitar and Electronics  
2014

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## PERFORMANCE NOTES:

All musical aspects of the performance are driven by the *Snowden* electronics patch. The patch monitors the musical state of the performer and affects the parameters of the electronics accordingly. The notated score is never heard. Rather, the acoustic performance is sampled and granulated according to pitch, amplitude, noise and brightness. What the audience is presented with is an audible representation of the notated scores metadata – it is not the content itself, but rather information about the content that drives the ensuing sound.

The electronics should be set up as follows:

1. The performer should plug in their electric guitar into the gain pedal which is then to be connected to input channel #1 of the soundcard connected to the computer running the Snowden[1.x] application.
2. A microphone should be connected to Input channel #2 of this same soundcard and positioned over the pickups of the electric guitar in such a way was to obtain the clearest possible sound but without interfering with the guitarist's ability to perform.
3. The output channels of the soundcard should be run into the main mixer or PA as one would expect. If a multiple speaker arrangement is available then all speakers should be used and the stereo channels sent to multiple speakers. This should be in a sonically interesting format so that each speaker alternates from left to right as the speaker formation spreads across the room. There should be an equal number of speakers at all times.
4. The performer should sit behind the speakers if possible, to ensure there is minimal spill into the microphones. The performer does not need to receive any fold back of the resulting audio, and should be able to gain enough of an impression as to the state of activity by simply being within earshot of the speakers.
5. The video should wash across the performance space, engulfing the performer. If this is aesthetically unappealing then the video may be projected onto a screen. In such a case the performer can choose to sit behind the screen, or in front of the screen so long as care is taken not to cast a shadow that would interfere with the projection.

The electronics are available in a 2-channel, 4-channel, 8-channel, or 16-channel arrangement as requested.

To begin the piece the performer should push the space bar on the computer. A digital stopwatch will tick past that keeps track of both the bar numbers and the total elapsed time. The patch can be stopped by pushing space bar a second time. Pushing the space bar for a third time will restart the patch from the start.

The entire piece is to be performed at a loud dynamic (approx. *ff*) except for where hairpins are notated. Hairpins denote a variation from this dynamic and should be articulated by the use of the gain pedal. At the end of a hairpin the dynamic should immediately be returned to its original level.

Number above note - Indicates fret number the directed action occurs on

Cross noteheads - Dead note

Cross notehead with arrow above it - Dampen all six strings at the given fret. The note indicates the lowest note that will be dampened as a guide.

Diamond notehead - Perform a harmonic at the notated pitch

Small note - Indicates pitch bend. Perform the note as directed by a large note and then bend the string to read the smaller note.

Ossia Staff - From B.198-227 indicate that the performer should mute strings as directed and articulate the rhythm as notated in the ossia staff. The performer can alternate between strumming and plucking to create unique colours and textures.

**PROGRAM NOTE:**

*Snowden* is available in two versions: one lasting approx. 20 minutes and another lasting approx. 10 minutes. This is the 10 minute version.

Like many people I struggled to understand the real-world implications of the revelations made by Edward Snowden during his initial leaks of the data mining activities of the NSA. So, I accepted this as fact. After all, surveillance of this kind has probably been happening for a while and if so my life has been no worse off than before such suspicions were confirmed. I could satisfy myself that I wasn't giving them anything that I considered to be particularly valuable. It wasn't until several months later, following a change of government and the continued recurrence of media news stories that continued to hark back to the original leaks made by Snowden that it started to dawn on me the truly awesome significance of the data mining activities of the NSA. As I type this, data pertaining to my electronic activities, in part if not in total, are being harvested by PRISM (or some similar program). The exact contents of this communication are not necessarily of interest; rather the surrounding metadata – the data about data – builds an impression of my electronic activities and consequentially me as an individual. From here the temptation is to fall into conspiracy theory. The reality is that we don't know what the repercussions of such surveillance can be, but we can assume it is of some value to someone, somewhere. Perhaps we are all too used to, and preoccupied with, uncertainty in our immediate lives following the GFC that we can happily ignore the more vague, poorly defined uncertainty that surrounds the harvesting of metadata by security organisations.

*Snowden* is a work that engages with this modern day surveillance state. The guitarist performs a musical dialogue that is never heard in its undistorted form. The computer monitors his behaviour and reprocesses his performance according to the values and changes of collected metadata – pitch, volume, noise, and brightness. The guitarist is close-mic'd, and the musical dialogue is constantly monitored and sampled periodically. This exchange is then reprocessed into a whirring, textural soundscape, a manifestation of these processes of surveillance. Ultimately, *Snowden* uses these systems of surveillance in an affirming way – instead of being used to predict behaviour they are used to create music, simultaneously exposing metadata control systems and harnessing them for the good of creating something new and abstract. To make a change we must first understand what we are trying to change, and to that end I hope that *Snowden* contributes to this ongoing discussion.

*Snowden* was commissioned by TURA New Music and the West Australian Academy of Performing Arts as part of the 2012 TURA New Music Commissioning Award.

# Snowden

Sam Gillies

4

Electric Guitar

PRESS SPACEBAR  
MUTE GUITAR

loud

9

16

7 9      9 7 5      7 5

23

12

31

1

39

9 7 5      7 5

46

12

53

61

68

76

MUTE GUITAR

87

6

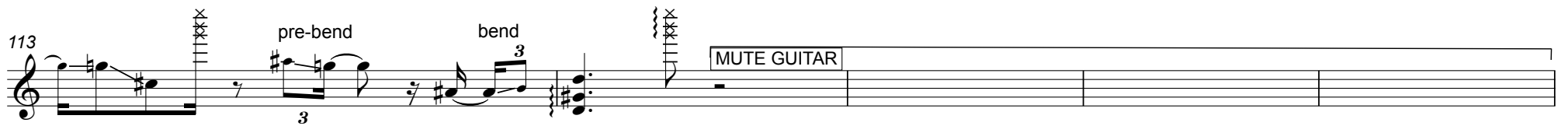
97 bend bend bend bend bend bend bend pre-bend



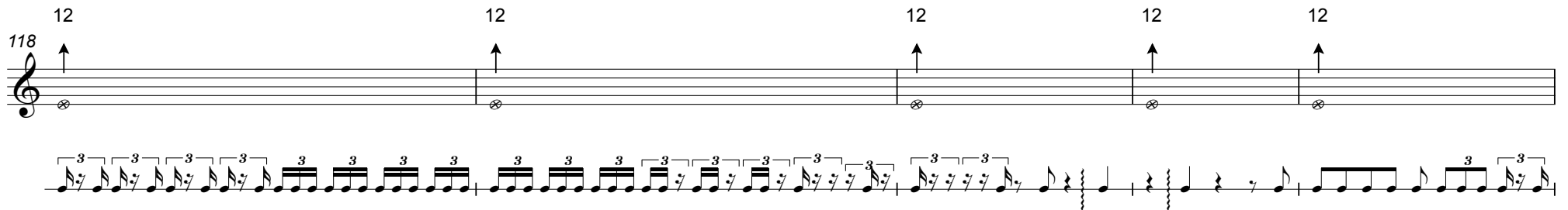
106 bend bend bend bend pre-bend pre-bend pre-bend pre-bend bend 12 bend bend



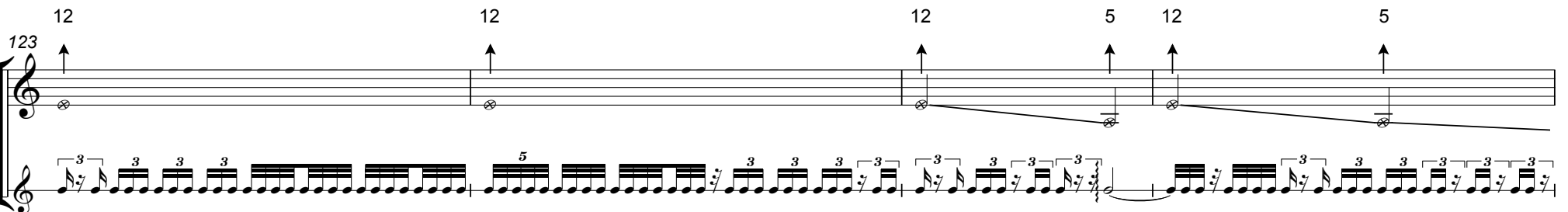
113 pre-bend bend 3 MUTE GUITAR



118 12 12 12 12 12



123 12 12 12 5 12 5



127 7 7 1 12 1 7

Musical notation for measures 127-132. The top staff shows guitar chords with fret numbers 7, 7, 1, 12, and 1. The bottom staff shows a complex rhythmic pattern with triplets and sixteenth notes.

130 1 7 7 1

Musical notation for measures 130-132. The top staff shows guitar chords with fret numbers 1, 7, 7, and 1. The bottom staff shows a complex rhythmic pattern with triplets and sixteenth notes.

133

Musical notation for measure 133. The top staff shows a melodic line with triplets and slurs. The bottom staff shows a bass line with triplets and slurs.

143

MUTE GUITAR

PRESS SPACEBAR

Musical notation for measure 143. The top staff shows a melodic line with slurs. The bottom staff shows a bass line with slurs. A "MUTE GUITAR" instruction is present in the top staff, and a "PRESS SPACEBAR" instruction is in the bottom staff.