

**The Unseen Gumboot**  
for tape, junk metal, body percussion  
and 5-10 performers

**by Patricia Ann Repar**

copyright Patricia Ann Repar 1998

## PERFORMANCE NOTES

### **Program Note**

Darkness--thin air--tight spaces--twelve-hour shifts--Day in day out.

Working in the gold mines of South Africa black labourers developed a body percussion sequence, the *Gumboot*, as a way of surviving the intense physical and emotional stresses imposed upon them. Musically demanding and highly entertaining this piece is now internationally known and appreciated.

*The Unseen Gumboot*, however, reminds us of that which we would probably rather not remember--the context in which the piece was born--the harsh realities of Apartheid and our own potential (yours and mine) for creating horrific moments in human history.

### **Structure**

The piece is comprised of six sections alternating live performance **with** tape and live performance **without** tape. As the piece proceeds the tape sections become shorter and the sections without tape become longer. When performers play with the tape they are hitting pieces of metal piled on top of one another in the center of the stage. The sounds should be dry and crisp. If possible the sounds of the metal should be electronically processed (basic multi-delay) and amplified through the same sound system as the tape. (The same microphone, effects machine, and amplifier used to amplify the junk metal can be used to amplify Section B and Section D up to measure 20 as well.) When performers play without the tape they begin to pick up the metal pieces and discover their resonant qualities along with the sounds of their own bodies. Eventually performers stop playing the metal altogether and allow their own body sounds to take over.

### **Interpretation of Score/Teaching Music Through the Score**

The piece is designed so that both beginning and accomplished musicians (and any of the musicians inbetween) can work together to create an interpretation of the piece. In Sections A, C, and E performers make choices about what they play given their respective levels of ability. In Sections B, D, and F the parts vary in difficulty and types of skills required. Player 5, for instance, should enjoy and be skilled at improvising and keeping a steady pulse. Player 1 should have a thorough understanding of the piece and be able to lead the group much as a conductor would in a traditional piece of music. Player 4 should have facility with polyrhythms. Any of the musical materials can be shifted among the parts as needed. It is certainly possible to adapt the piece for several players by doubling the parts or dividing the parts. The whistle part is not scored for any one player. Do what works best for your ensemble.

It is suggested that all performers participate in the search for appropriate junk metal pieces. In general, aim for a diversity of timbre and pitch, size and shape. If students are involved they will learn much from this experience and understand more deeply the 'orchestration and instrumentation' aspect of the compositional process. Each junk metal piece should have the capacity for at least two different pitches and sound quite resonant when hung. Players should explore all kinds of mallets and tools for hitting and/or scraping the metal. Rehearsal time needs to be allotted for exploring how and where the instruments need to be hit in order to produce the various timbres required at different points in the piece. Polyrhythmic sections work best with dry sounds. There are some indications in the score but these decisions will depend primarily on the quality of sounds with which you are working. Ample consideration needs to be given as to how the pieces will be hung and how they will look when all of them are hung together. Music students may want collaborate with art students on the design and hanging of the junk metal pieces.



Choice of costume is entirely at the discretion of the performing group. Be aware that body percussion sounds may change drastically with costume changes.

### **Improvisational Elements In Regard to Notation**

Sections B and D begin with melodic and rhythmic motifs respectively, out of time (i.e., not in the framework of a regular beat). Commas indicate pauses, the length of which should be determined by the players. Ample rehearsal should be given to varying the length of the pauses overall and in particular shortening them as the music approaches the metered sections.

The improvisational sections for Player 4 and Player 1 are enclosed in square brackets [ ]. Some examples of melodic and/or rhythmic phrases have been provided within the brackets in the event that a novice improviser is playing the part. In general, however, all of the notation in brackets should be disregarded in performance. The improvisations should be lively and playful and vary from rehearsal to rehearsal.

### **Stage Design**

The piece should begin with the following elements in place:

- a pile of junk metal pieces downstage as far as possible and centred, some of which will be carried to the stands eventually and some of which will remain there

- players on their knees slightly bent forward holding sticks and/or mallets and/or tools (files, hammers, chisels) frozen in position in a small tight semi-circle around the junk metal facing the back of the stage

- the stands for the junk metal placed in a large open semi-circle facing the audience approximately six feet upstage from the centre pile of junk metal; some pieces of junk metal might already be hung on the stands

- the performance needs to happen on a wooden floor so that foot stomps and floor slaps will be heard; a sound system is required that adequately fills the space

### **Notation**

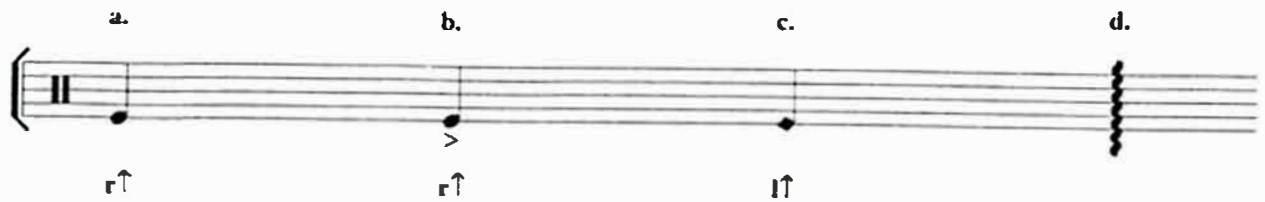
1. The pitched melody around which the entire piece is based is notated in the treble clef but can be started on any pitch. Player 4 will sing the melody a Perfect 5th above the initial pitch.

2. The percussion parts are notated as follows:



3. r = right and l = left (if neither are indicated either will do)

4.



- a. raise indicated knee (in this case, the right one)
- b. raise indicated knee but brush foot forward on floor as knee raises
- c. raise left knee and place left ankle behind right knee:  
'thigh slap' above this symbol is always with the right hand on the left foot
- d. symbol for one or more blows of the whistle

5. The 2-beat motif (beginning in measure 21, beat 3) is performed four times in total. The motif is performed by stepping forward, middle, back, middle with the indicated foot. At the end of each 2-beat motif the performer must spin 90 degrees to change direction and perform the motif again. The four directions are, in order of performance: facing the back of the stage, facing the performer's left, facing the audience, facing the performers' left (now having come full circle). Finally the performer spins back 90 degrees to face the audience and perform the body percussion phrase in measure 23 beat 4 and remains facing the audience until the whistle is blown.

6. Pronunciation of text is as follows:

ay	sounds like the pronoun 'I'
e/me	'e' sounds like 'e' in 'be'
u/ku/lu	'u' sounds like 'u' in 'true'
z/ma	'a' sounds like 'a' in 'alright'
i/zi	'i' sounds like 'i' in 'it'

7. Tape and score are available from:

Patricia Ann Repar  
P.O. Box 248  
Montezuma, NM 87731

Please contact the composer at [repar@unm.edu](mailto:repar@unm.edu) for additional materials.

# The Unseen Gumboot



## Section A

*Over the course of this section of tape (approximately two and a half minutes long) each player should improvise with the tape using the following set of guidelines:*

-listen carefully to the tape; you should always be able to hear the sounds and nuances on the tape well

-after the first 35 seconds or so gradually introduce the following gestures and sounds--**hitting, miming the action of hitting, and panting**; the density of action and sound in this first section should be thin throughout; no more than **two** people should ever make sounds at the same time

-when you hit, mime, or pant--

choose one of the sound-beats on the tape and establish a relationship to it with your own regular beat; for example, play one beat for every 2 or 3 or 5 1/2 (etc.) beats you hear; change this relationship each time you play thereby attempting to perform a different tempo each time you hit, mime, or pant

-listen for the conclusion of this tape segment at which point you should **freeze for 10 seconds** and then collapse into a more open, expansive, stretched, relaxed position

## Section B

*humming and singing gruffly*

[illegible][illegible]

3 ♩ = 69 approximately

Player 1

ay e e u za ma i zi ku lu me ay e e u za ma i zi ku lu me

*mp*

Player 2

*mf*

Player 3

Player 4

Player 5



*repeat and gradually speed up until whistle blows*

5

Player 1

Player 2

Player 3

Player 4

Player 5

ay e e u za ma i zi ku lu me

7

Player 1

Player 2

Player 3

Player 4

Player 5

*improvisation emphasizing off-beats, one pitch only, increasingly more active*

## Section C

*Over the course of this section of tape (approximately one minute long) each player should improvise with the tape using the following set of guidelines:*

-listen carefully to the tape; you should always be able to hear the sounds and nuances on the tape well

-perform the following gestures and sounds--**hitting, miming the action of hitting, and panting**; the density of action and sound in this section should be slightly thicker than in the first section but not yet dense; no more than **three** people should ever make sounds at the same time

-when you hit, mime, or pant--

choose one of the sound-beats on the tape and establish a relationship to it with your own regular beat; for example, play 3 or 4 or 7 (etc.) beats for every one sound-beat you hear; change this relationship each time you play thereby attempting to perform a different tempo each time you hit, mime, or pant

-listen for the conclusion of this tape segment at which point you should **freeze for 5 seconds** and then collapse into a more open, expansive, stretched, relaxed position with your backs on the floor and your knees bent



## Section D

10

*breathy*

*mp* Hah

Player 1

Player 2

Player 3

Player 4

*breathy*

*mp* Hah

Player 5

*mp*

11

*speaking*

*mp* Hah

Player 1

Player 2

Player 3

*mp*

Player 4

Player 5

12

Player 1

Player 2

Player 3

Player 4

Player 5

*speaking*

Hah

13

Player 1

Player 2

Player 3

Player 4

Player 5

*all players sit up*

*accelerando*

*accelerando*

16

Player 1

Player 2

Player 3

Player 4

Player 5

*return to* ♩ = 69

*(all amplification off)*

18

Player 1

Player 2

Player 3

Player 4

Player 5

Hah

Hah

*stand up facing back of stage*

*f*

Hah

Hah

*f*

Hah

Hah

*f*

*f*

Hah

Hah

*f*

*f*

Hah

Hah

*f*

*f*

Hah

Hah

*f*

*f*

Hah

Hah



*accelerando*

16

Player 1

Player 2

Player 3

Player 4

Player 5

*return to* ♩ = 69

*(all amplification off)*

18

Player 1

Player 2

Player 3

Player 4

Player 5

*stand up facing back of stage*



25

Player 1

Player 2

Player 3

Player 4

Player 5

*improvise*

*improvise*

27

Player 1

Player 2

Player 3

Player 4

Player 5



## Section E

*Over the course of this section of tape (approximately thirty seconds long) each player should improvise with the tape using the following set of guidelines:*

-listen carefully to the tape; you should be able to hear some of the sounds and nuances on the tape some of the time

-perform the following gestures and sounds--**hitting, miming the action of hitting, and panting**; this section should be dense; **all performers** should be active from the beginning to the end of the tape segment

-when you hit, mime, or pant--

choose one of the sound-beats on the tape and establish a relationship to it with your own regular beat using either of the methods previously discussed in Section A or Section C; change this relationship each time you play thereby attempting to perform a different tempo each time you hit, mime, or pant

-listen for the conclusion of this tape segment at which point you should **freeze for 2 seconds** and then collapse into a more open, expansive, stretched, relaxed position; Player 4 briefly pauses and then begins the next section

## Section F

$\text{♩} = 52$  (time inbetween added voices is variable)

stand, pick up 1 piece of metal, play

28

Player 1

Player 2

Player 3

Player 4

Player 5

*p*

*stand, pick up 1 piece of metal, play*

*p*

*stand, pick up 1 piece of metal, play*

*p*

31

Player 1

Player 2

Player 3

Player 4

Player 5

*p*

*stand, pick up 1 piece of metal, play*

*p*

*stand, pick up 1 piece of metal, play*

*stand, pick up 1 piece of metal, play*

34

Player 1

Player 2

Player 3

Player 4

Player 5

*crescendo*

*crescendo*

*crescendo*

*crescendo*

*crescendo*

36

all players hooting etc.

Player 1

Player 2

Player 3

Player 4

Player 5

*f* Yeah

*f* Hah

*f* Hah

*f* Yeah

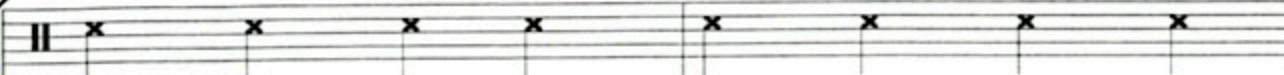
*f* Hah

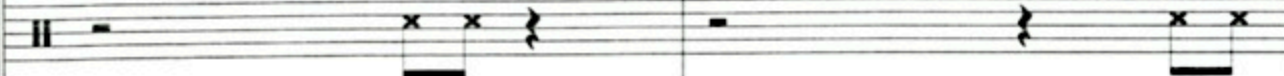
*stomp over to instrument stand and hang metal*

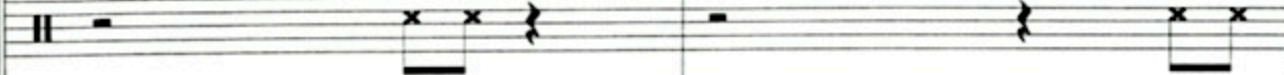
*shortly after Player 1 begins quietly walk over to instrument stand and hang metal*




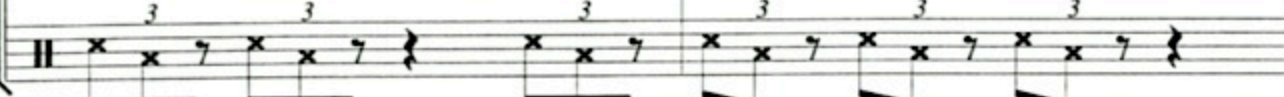
39

Player 1   
*dampen metal to produce clear beat*

Player 2 

Player 3 

Player 4 

Player 5 

41

Player 1   
*walk to instrument stand and hang metal*

Player 2 

Player 3   
*walk to instrument stand and hang metal*

Player 4   
*walk to instrument stand and hang metal*

Player 5 

43

Player 1

Player 2

Player 3

Player 4

Player 5

45

Player 1

Player 2

Player 3

Player 4

Player 5

*let metal resonate*



49



51

Player 1

Player 2

Player 3

Player 4

Player 5

This musical score system covers measures 51 and 52. Player 1 has a melodic line with eighth and quarter notes, including some beamed eighth notes. Players 2, 3, and 4 have a simple accompaniment consisting of a double bar line followed by a single eighth rest in each measure. Player 5 has a complex bass line with many eighth notes, some marked with an 'x', and is divided into four groups by horizontal lines.

53

Player 1

Player 2

Player 3

Player 4

Player 5

This musical score system covers measures 53 and 54. Player 1 continues the melodic line from the previous system. Players 2, 3, and 4 maintain the same accompaniment pattern. Player 5 continues the complex bass line with eighth notes and 'x' marks, also divided into four groups by horizontal lines.

55

Player 1

Player 2

Player 3

Player 4

Player 5

Detailed description: This system contains measures 55 and 56. Player 1's part consists of eighth notes with accents. Player 2's part is a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes and rests, with some notes marked with 'x'. Player 3 has a whole rest. Player 4's part consists of eighth notes with accents. Player 5's part is a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes and rests, with some notes marked with 'x'.

57

Player 1

Player 2

Player 3

Player 4

Player 5

Detailed description: This system contains measures 57 and 58. Player 1's part consists of eighth notes with accents. Player 2's part is a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes and rests, with some notes marked with 'x'. Player 3's part consists of eighth notes with accents. Player 4's part consists of eighth notes with accents. Player 5's part is a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes and rests, with some notes marked with 'x'.

59

Player 1

Player 2

Player 3

Player 4

Player 5

This system contains measures 59 and 60. Player 1 plays a steady eighth-note melody. Player 2 plays a complex rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes. Player 3 plays a melody with dotted notes and rests. Player 4 plays a complex rhythmic pattern. Player 5 plays a complex rhythmic pattern. The system is divided into two measures by a vertical bar line.

61

Player 1

Player 2

Player 3

Player 4

Player 5

This system contains measures 61 and 62. The parts for all five players continue from the previous system. Player 1's melody remains consistent. Player 2's pattern continues. Player 3's melody continues with similar phrasing. Player 4's pattern continues. Player 5's pattern continues. The system is divided into two measures by a vertical bar line.



63

Player 1

Player 2

Player 3

Player 4

Player 5

Detailed description: This block contains the musical notation for measures 63 and 64. Player 1's staff shows a melodic line with slurs and accents, starting on a half note and moving to a quarter note. Player 2's staff shows a rhythmic line with 'x' marks on the first and third beats of each measure. Player 3 and 4 have rests. Player 5's staff shows a rhythmic line with 'x' marks on the first and third beats of each measure.

65

Player 1

Player 2

Player 3

Player 4

Player 5

*step forward in front of instruments*

Detailed description: This block contains the musical notation for measures 65 and 66. Player 1's staff shows a melodic line with slurs and accents, starting on a half note and moving to a quarter note. Player 2's staff shows a rhythmic line with 'x' marks on the first and third beats of each measure. Player 3's staff shows a melodic line with slurs and accents, starting on a half note and moving to a quarter note. Player 4 has rests. Player 5's staff shows a rhythmic line with 'x' marks on the first and third beats of each measure. The instruction *step forward in front of instruments* is written below Player 3's staff.

67

Player 1

Player 2

Player 3

Player 4

Player 5

*step forward in front of instruments*

69

Player 1

Player 2

Player 3

Player 4

Player 5

*step forward in front of instruments*



72

Player 1

Player 2

Player 3

Player 4

Player 5

*continuous accelerando during which one player blows playful rhythms on the whistle, ending with one long squeal*

74

Player 1

Player 2

Player 3

Player 4

Player 5

*step forward in front of instruments*



*all players freeze and then turn to face back of stage; Player 1 begins singing in free time at pianissimo*

78

ay e e u za ma i zi ku lu me

*gradually all players join in still at pianissimo with one voice a Perfect 5th above; then Player 1 begins repeating the body percussion phrase notated below while continuing to sing; again Player 1 is joined by others one by one; all players crescendo while exiting the stage and decrescendo when all have arrived backstage; end on a sustained pianissimo 'ay'*

79

ay e e u za ma i zi ku lu me

r↑ r l↑ l r↑ r

*(left crosses over right in order to travel offstage)*

*fine*