utterances, wanderings

for flexible string instrumentation

tina tallon

(2025)

commissioned by VIVO Music Festival
with funding provided by the
Johnstone Fund for New Music

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for flexible string instrumentation
duration: open

Program note:
utterances, *wanderings* pays homage to the works of Italian composer Giacinto Scelsi, whose compositional process often embraced improvisation, collaboration, and new technologies. He would often record his improvisations on the ondiola and then transcribe (or have trusted friends and collaborators transcribe) those recordings, arranging them for different combinations of acoustic instruments. Drawing inspiration from this process, utterances, wanderings uses a custom AI model to place a detailed analysis of Scelsi's music in conversation with an analysis of my newly-composed piece in real-time during the performance. The software I've written "listens" to the performers and adapts, dynamically presenting them with new modules of my score to use as starting points for improvisations in a way that is (theoretically) characteristic of some of the musical decisions at play in Scelsi's music. The audience is later invited to join in the improvisation as well, creating an immersive soundscape together using a custom app built on the same model, as well as recordings made during the performance. In a time when AI is increasingly playing an exploitive role in music-making, this piece aims to demonstrate that when used thoughtfully, it can be a tool for collaboration and co-creation. It aims to prove that as the world becomes more fractured (in part, due to these new technologies), artists and musicians can act as agents of repair and unity.

NOTES TO PERFORMERS

General Notes

This piece uses an algorithm trained on Scelsi's music to suggest newly-composed materials in real-time using a dynamic score program, accessed via tablets (explanation of interface below). The score modules are meant to be starting points/prompts for improvisation; some take the form of standard music notation; others incorporate graphic notation and/or text.

You are more than welcome (and even heartily encouraged)! to completely ignore the materials suggested by the algorithm. If you're really feeling the materials that you're working with and the relationship to what others are playing, please lean in into them for as long as you'd like!

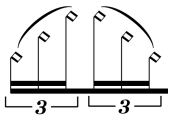
You do not need to play for the entire 30 seconds of each module (or at all), and the number of events in the module do not represent the exact number of events to take place over the 30 seconds. They're merely a demonstration of the types of things that you might do. Feel free to repeat, vary, or stop playing whenever and however you'd like.

Any information not specified in the module is left up to the performer's discretion and imagination. Exploration of the full range of timbral capabilities (from molto sul ponticello to molto sul tasto to col legno) is highly encouraged!

You do not need to begin playing new materials as soon as the module changes; sometimes gradual crossfades (or a few seconds of rest) will make for far more interesting ensemble dynamics and changes in texture and density (for instance, if everyone changes immediately at the module change, the piece tends to sound very sectional, which is not entirely desirable in every circumstance).

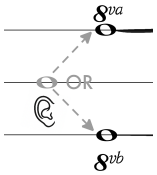
Notation Key

STAVES



No Line
Any pitch can be chosen

Three narrow lines
Materials should be relatively constrained around the center pitch (though you can choose the octave you like best)



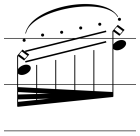
Three wide lines
Intended to drastically expand the frequency ranges encompassed by the ensemble as a whole, this staff is used to designate materials across the full range of your instrument.

GRAPHIC ELEMENTS

Ear
Indicates a suggestion to sync up with other performers, either in terms of pitch or rhythm.

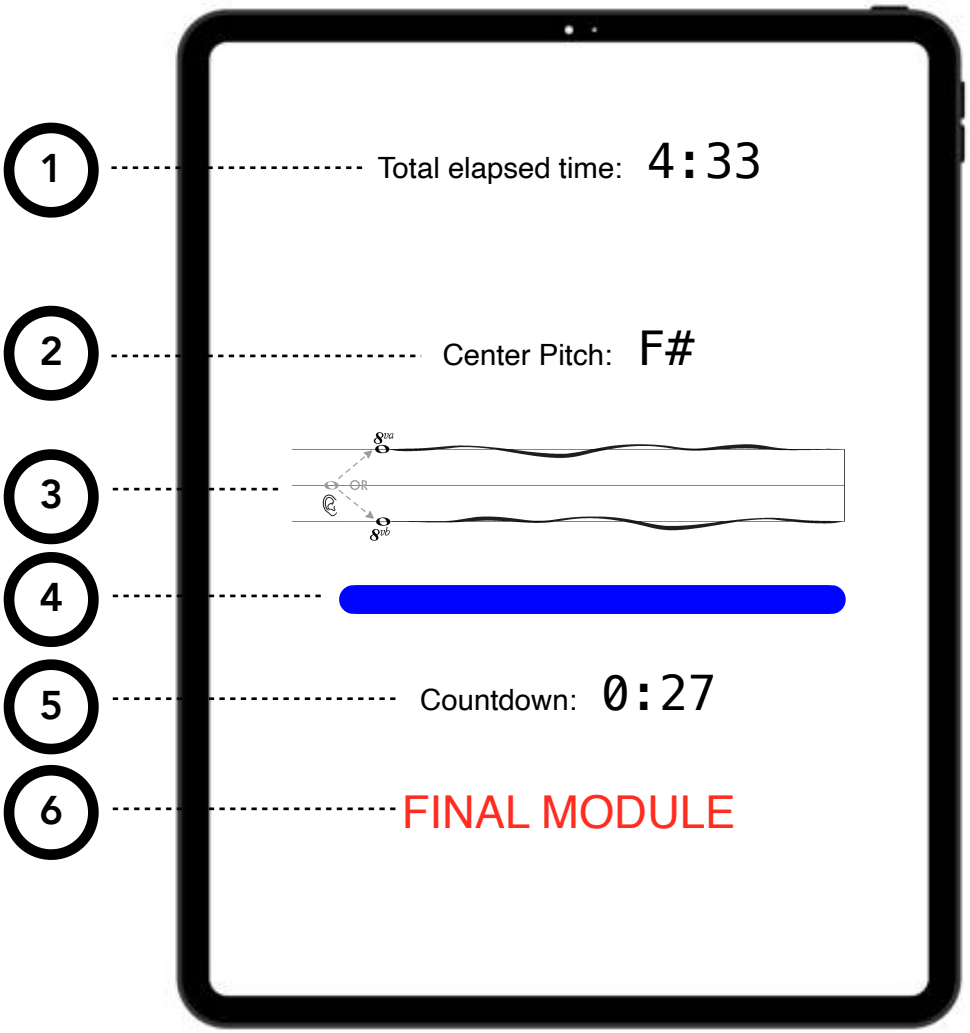
Wavy Lines
The width of wavy lines extending from whole notes doesn't necessarily denote specific dynamic, bow pressure, or bow placement changes; it merely suggests subtle variation and general gesture.

Fuzzy Lines
Indicate primarily noise-based sounds, which can be accomplished with overpressure, circular bowing, or your favorite noisy technique.



Diamond Noteheads
In general, a diamond notehead indicates harmonics and/or light finger pressure (such as you would use for a harmonic). You're welcome to use whichever harmonics you'd like (I've defaulted to touch-fourth for ease of glisses, but you can mix it up however you see fit).

Dynamic Score Software Interface



1) **Total Elapsed Time:** how much time has elapsed since the start of the piece
2) **Center Pitch:** a new center pitch may be given each module (it is also possible that you will not be given a pitch at all, in which case it will say "(any)")
3) **Score Module:** the algorithm's suggested module (you can completely ignore it and do your own thing if you'd prefer!)
4) **Progress Bar:** a proportional visual representation of the amount of time remaining in the module. It will turn red when there are 5 seconds left.
5) **Time Remaining:** the number of seconds remaining in the module
6) **Final Module Warning:** the text "FINAL MODULE" will be displayed when you have reached the final module of the piece

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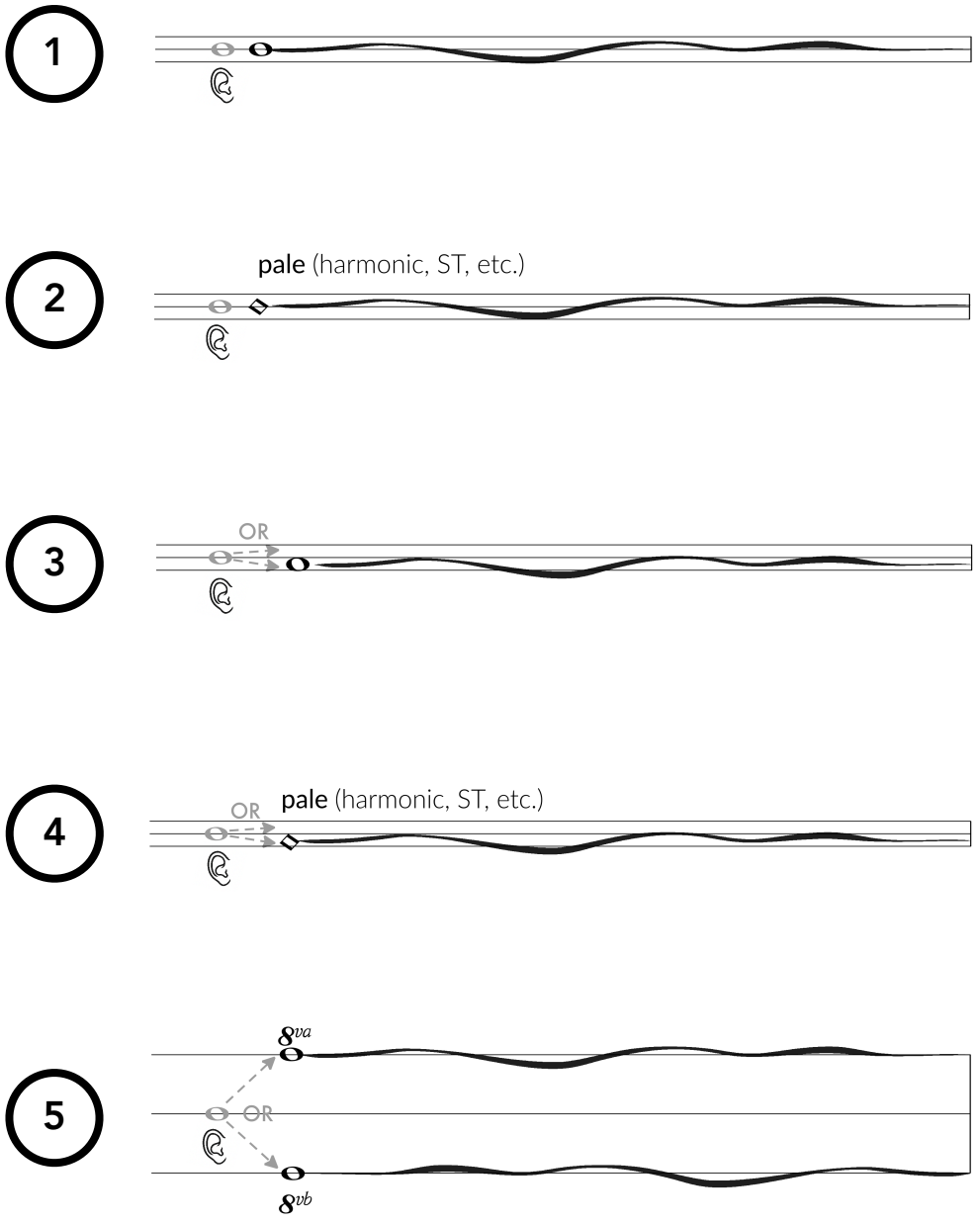
The score is accessed via the dynamic score software; below are possible modules that may be suggested by the algorithm.

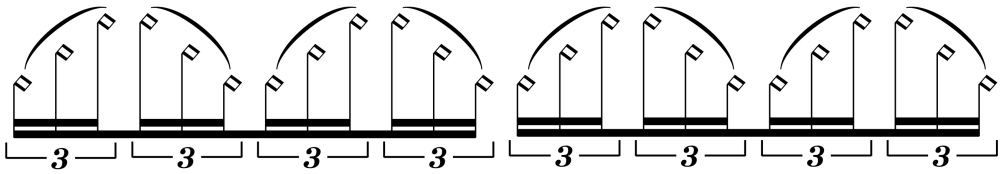
Coordinated Constrained Pitch Materials



Variable Pitch Materials

6

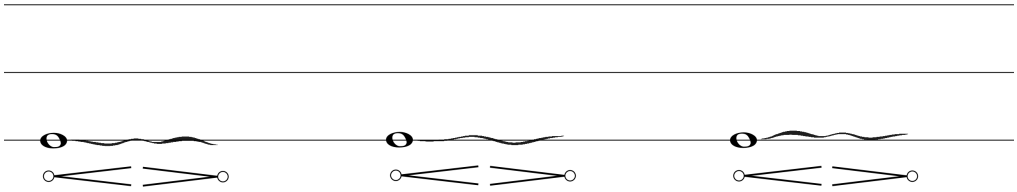
vary harmony, speed, dynamics, and bow position throughout as desired



: feel free to sync up with other performers' rhythmic materials

7

vary duration of note, duration of rest, max dynamic, and bow position



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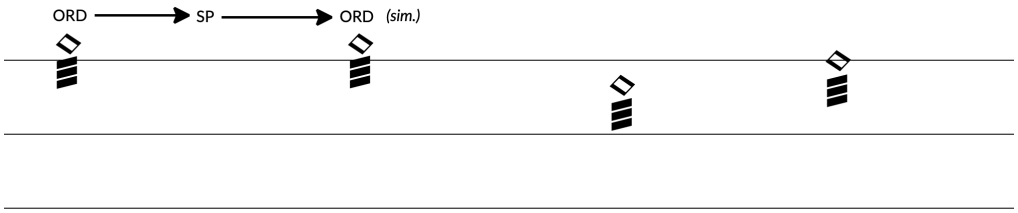
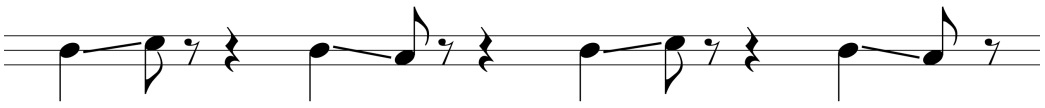


vary speed of tremolo, dynamics, bow position, and pitches as desired

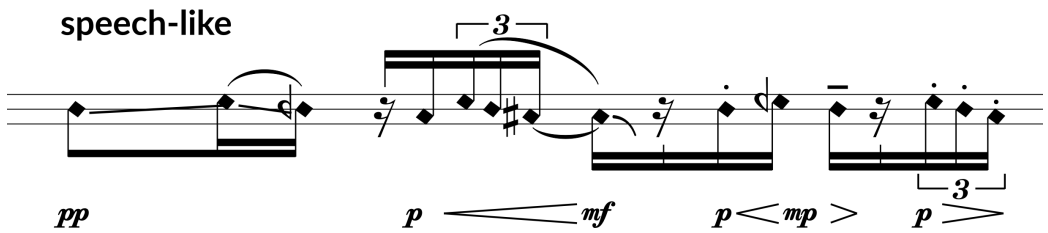
9

vary speed, dynamics, bow position, and direction & interval of gliss as desired



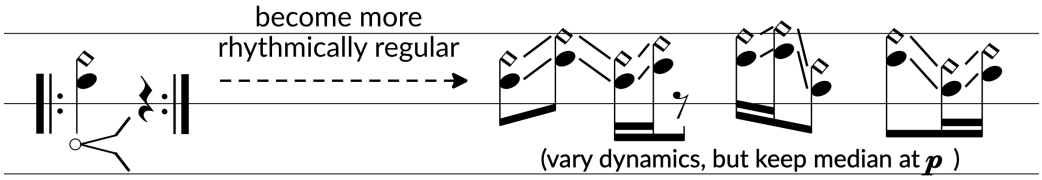
: feel free to sync up with other performers' rhythmic materials

10



this is merely a suggested starting point, demonstrating general materials;
vary dynamics, articulations, bow position, and intervals

11

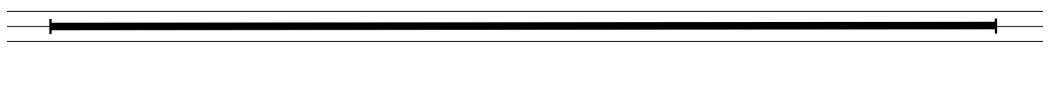


: feel free to sync up with other performers' rhythmic materials

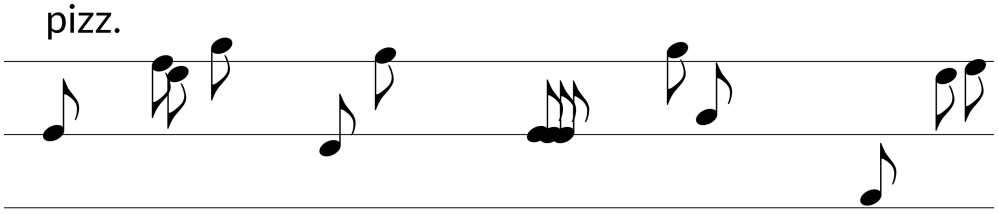
Percussive, Chaotic, and Other Miscellaneous Materials

12

(tacet)



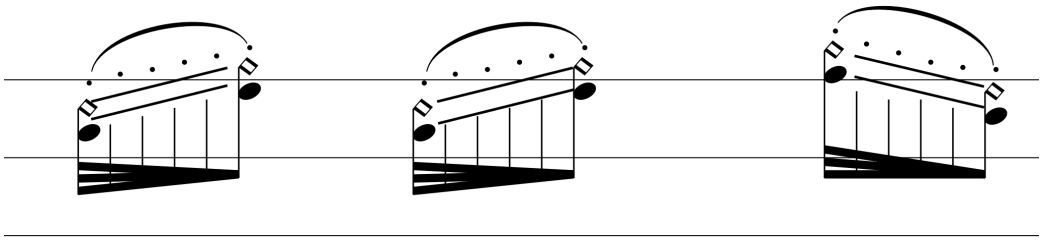
13



this is merely a suggested starting point, demonstrating volatility;
vary dynamics, spacing, repetitions, and gestures as you see fit

vary duration of note, duration of rest, max dynamic, and bow position

14



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