

short quartet with improvised response [performance instructions]

### Idea:

The first half of the piece is semi-improvised but composed, and mainly explores using open strings and natural harmonics. To get an idea of the sound world, listen to some music in just intonation, for example: GF Haas *String Quartet No. 2*, Wolfgang von Schweinitz *Plainsound String Trio KLANG auf Schön Berg La Monte Young*

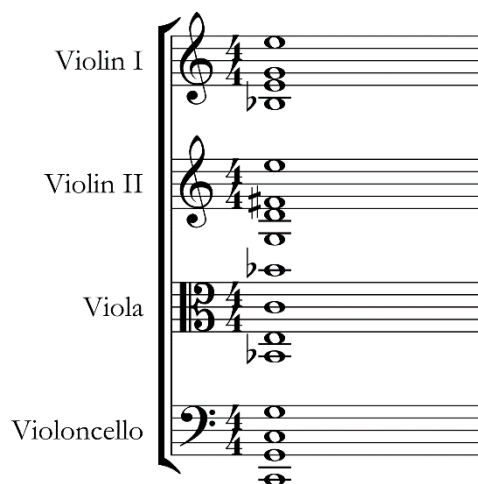
The second half of the piece should be totally improvised **but** there is a conceit that changes the piece: there should be absolutely no discussion between individuals in the quartet about how they will play the second half. They are also not allowed to discuss it with the composer, nor with any individuals giving a masterclass or workshop. The point is that the improvisation should totally emerge from the performance of the initial section without prejudice created by conversation or by the instructions of the composer (beyond this explanation).

The embargo on discussion continues after the performance, so the quartet are not allowed to say (for example) what they liked or disliked about a previous improvisation. I hope that this strange rule will enable the improvisation to be a pure, democratic representation of the quartet's personality as four musicians (and one ensemble), without being affected by the members' non-musical personalities, or by having to interpret the wishes of a composer.

### Scordatura:

All instruments are retuned. If players are uncomfortable retuning their instruments in such extreme fashion, backup instruments can be provided by the composer. The score is notated at sounding pitch.

The tuning below is ideal, but any tuning using only pitches tuned to the overtone series of C could work.



The pitch of the notes given should be adjusted to correspond to the C overtone series' deviations from equal temperament, as below:

B flats = 31 cents flat (compare to 7<sup>th</sup> harmonic of cello C string)

E natural = 14 cents flat (pure major third)

G natural = pure fifth as normal

F sharp = 49 cents flat (a quarter tone – 11<sup>th</sup> harmonic of C)

# short quartet with improvised response

this system lasts 1 minute approximately

Remaining Players

Any two open strings

***ffp***

Ebb and flow, varying bow pressure and position. Aim to bring out different partials at various times

then *sempre* ***pp***

Violoncello

Hold mute in Left Hand.  
React and improvise a texture by pressing your mute to the low C string and bowing directly on top of it, touching both mute and string with the bow. The sound should be full of interference.

***ff***  $\rightrightarrows$  ***ppp*** *sempre* ***ppp***

All Gradually come to a stop.

Silence  
(approx. 5 seconds)

this system lasts 1 minute approximately

Remaining Players

1) play extremely quiet open strings (sustained sounds)  
2) occasionally brush off a natural harmonic of your choice on an adjacent string  
- as this passage goes on, gradually do (2) more often - and gradually play higher harmonics also  
- play so quietly that the whole quartet sounds like the viola is just being slightly augmented

Vla.

III  
IV

molto pont. vary the predominant partials that sound - react and improvise within these constraints

***ff***  $>$  ***p***

this bar lasts 20 seconds approximately

Remaining Players

CONTINUE PREVIOUS GESTURES: Build to a constant saturation of instruction (2) from last system.

*cresc. poco a poco to ff*

SUDDEN G.P. total silence

CONTINUE PREVIOUS GESTURE

*cresc. poco a poco to ff*

SUDDEN G.P. total silence

this system lasts 1 minute approximately

6 III

Vln. I *p* *tasto* - very woody, veiled sound

Vln. II *p* *tasto* - very woody, veiled sound

Remaining Players - TACET - (c. 30 seconds)

*gliss.*

interject with occasional very staccato, sul pont. notes on IVth string. Do this gradually more often over 30 seconds.

this system lasts 1 minute approximately

7 III

Vln. I *p* *tasto* - very woody, veiled sound  
now with light finger pressure  
(to produce unstable harmonics)

Vln. II *p* *tasto* - very woody, veiled sound  
now with light finger pressure  
(to produce unstable harmonics)

Remaining Players - TACET - (c. 20 seconds)

*gliss.*

interject with occasional staccato natural harmonics on IVth string. Do this gradually more often over 40 seconds.

duration of this system is not specified

All Short silence | TUTTI SLASHING CHORDS (USE ALL FOUR STRINGS) *fff* - shocking! | Short silence | TUTTI SLASHING HARMONIC CHORDS (USE ALL FOUR STRINGS, lay a finger across them on a harmonic node of your choice) *f* - begin violently. Then become more subdued (and quiet)

improvised continuation [3 to 4 minutes]

All

From here on, the performers should improvise a continuation of the piece. This should be c. 3 to 4 minutes long and should be a repercussion of the written out section of the piece. The players should never discuss their intentions verbally, nor may they discuss previous improvisations afterwards. See performance notes for further details.