Island

2006 two improvising soloists and instrumental octet



(2006)

for two improvising soloists and instrumental octet

commissioned by Liverpool Cultural Capital as part of CONSTRUCTION First performance 18 November 2006, Huddersfield, by ELISION

Duration 11' or more

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solo 1 & 2 - see below

alto recorder

alto flute

flugelhorn in Bb, with plunger mute

The tubing connected to the third valve is to be pulled out to the point where the resultant pitch is a quartertone flatter than normal.

trombone - tenor-bass, with plunger mute

violin

viola

cello

contrabass

The score is at playing pitch: alto flute sounds a perfect fourth lower, flugelhorn a major second lower, contrabass one octave lower. No vibrato except where indicated.

All transitions including glissandi as smooth as possible All trills, tremoli and grace-notes as fast as possible.

Quartertones: (4) (4) Arrows attached to accidentals indicate smaller intervals, whose precise pitch, in the case of woodwinds, is to be inferred from the fingering.

indicate degrees of continuity of articulation: staccatissimo (as brief and dry as possible), staccato,

semi-staccato (still very brief but with a discernible duration), marcato (clearly articulated) and legato (no attack; may apply at the beginning of a phrase as well as within one).

Dynamics: The dynamics given in the score are absolute, ie. after amplification: where recorder and flugelhorn are both marked p what they might actually be playing relative to one another is f and pp respectively, brought into balance at the mixing desk. Where no dynamics are marked they are ad lib, according to context and whatever real-time shaping the conductor (and mixing engineer?) wishes to employ.

Amplification: All instruments should be amplified so as to bring their dynamic ranges as far as possible into line with one another -- in other words, recorders and flutes should be given most reinforcement (changing according to the instruments played), strings somewhat less, brass only enough to give them a presence in the PA system and the soloists according to which instruments are used.

Duration: The more improvised sections of the piece have been given overall durations, but these are intended as a guide rather than as a specification, and may vary under numerous circumstances: the acoustic of the performing space, the choice of instruments for the two solo parts, on-the-spot decision-making by conductor and/or soloists, and so on

- (a) These may be taken by any acoustic/electronic instruments or voices, similar or dissimilar. There is no implied precedence between the two parts.
- (b) Solo 2 must be able to play/sing sustained pitches; solo 1 may do so but doesn't need to.
- (c) The solo parts are completely improvised. The score contains only directions as to where one or both parts enter and exit, and (sometimes) the briefest possible descriptions of what kind of activity might be appropriate. While the entry/exit indications should be closely adhered to, all other indications (eg. "quiet") may be understood as general pointers which don't need to be scrupulously followed all the time. The intention is that the soloists should be as far as possible unrestricted in their choice of musical material. However, the context of the ensemble and its material should always be borne in mind, so that a mutual "influence" between soloists and ensemble is constantly in evidence.
- (d) No musical material should be ruled out a priori on the grounds of taste or consistency.

Ensemble and conductor:

- (a) These parts vary between precise notation and improvisation. Again, improvisatory activity should both reflect the context of the notated music and embody spontaneous interaction between soloists and ensemble, and this applies to the conductor as much as to the instrumentalists. Any instructions may be departed from as long as the structure of the composition isn't thereby confused and disrupted. The eight sections A-H play continuously and should "flow" as naturally as possible into one another.
- (b) The improvised elements should similarly "flow" from the notated ones so that the composition retains an overall coherence. The completely-notated sections thus function to "seed" the overall musical identity, as a context against which spontaneous musical decisions are made.
- (c) The score contains a mixture of conventional and unconventional notation, and verbal indications. It is essential that the verbal indications be "learned" in rehearsal so that they don't need to be referred to at all during performance.

 $\textbf{All} \ \, \text{instruments:} \qquad \exists \quad = \text{abrupt cutoff of sound} - \text{cut off airstream with the tongue (winds) or stop bow on string.}$

Flute: $\int_{\Delta}^{F} = \text{"pizzicato"} \qquad \diamond = \text{"breathy" sound (as opposed to } \bullet \text{)}$

Recorder dynamics:

Dynamic changes should be realised with a combination of breath-pressure (for relative intensity) and moving the instrument relative to the microphone (for volume). The notated pitches indicate *fingerings* (and therefore also timbres) rather than precise resultants. Dynamic profiles of phrases will accordingly be more complex than those notated. A wide range of timbral shades, rather than consistency of tone, is the intention. For multiphonic, very slight shading of some fingerings might be becessary to obtain optimal timbre and/or stability.

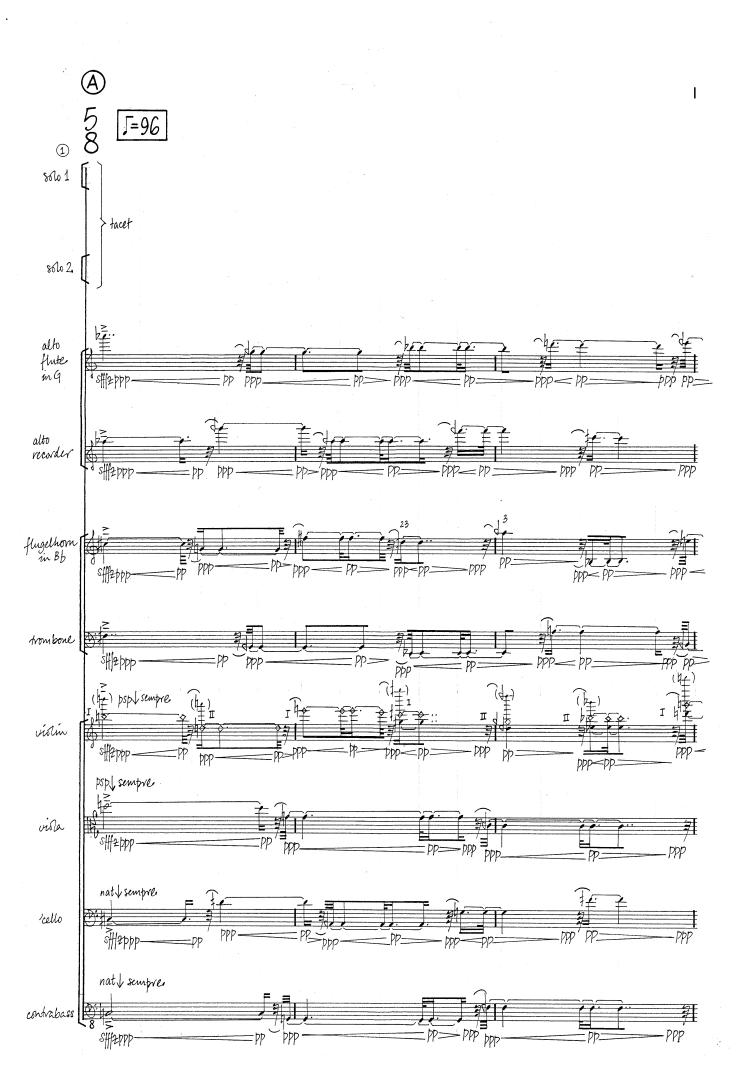
Strings:

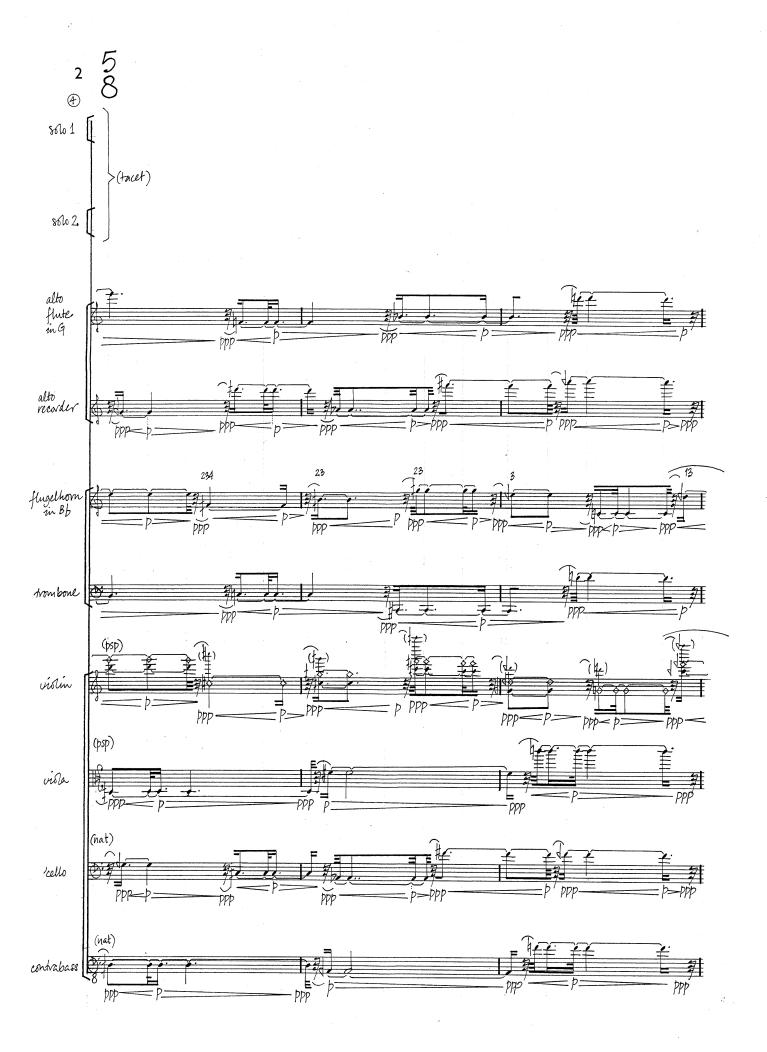
Bow pressure: $\sqrt[1]{}$ $\sqrt[4]{}$ $\sqrt[4]{}$ = flautando, normal, exaggerated and pitchless scraping respectively

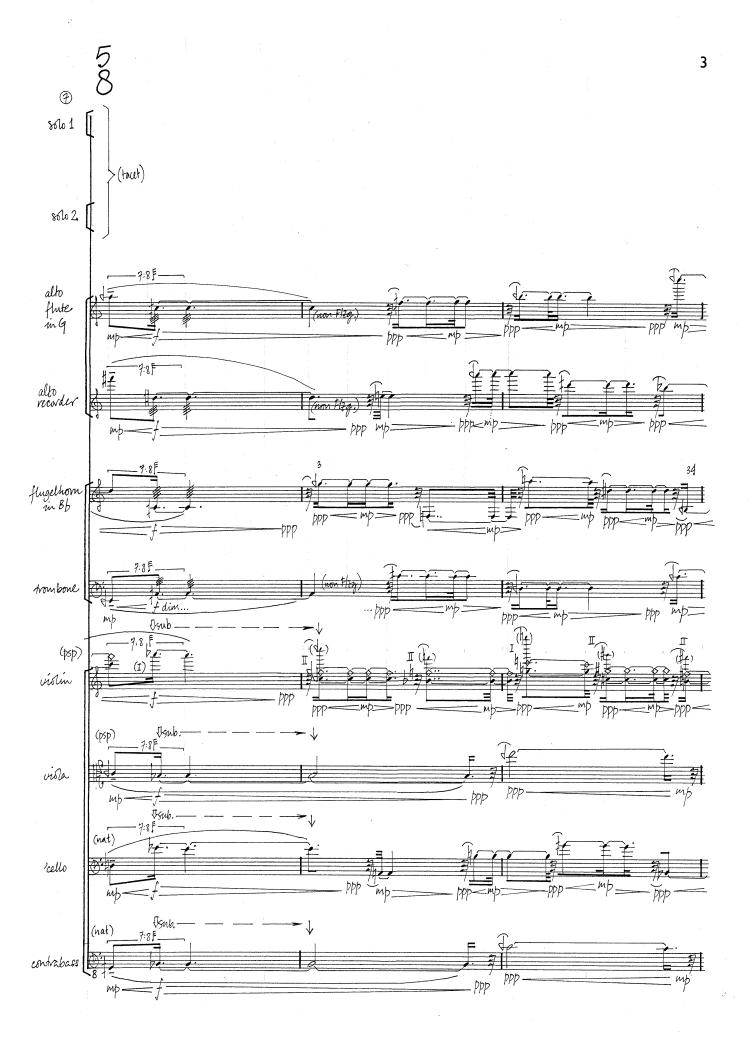
Fingerpressure: \Diamond Φ = "harmonic", intermediate and normal respectively

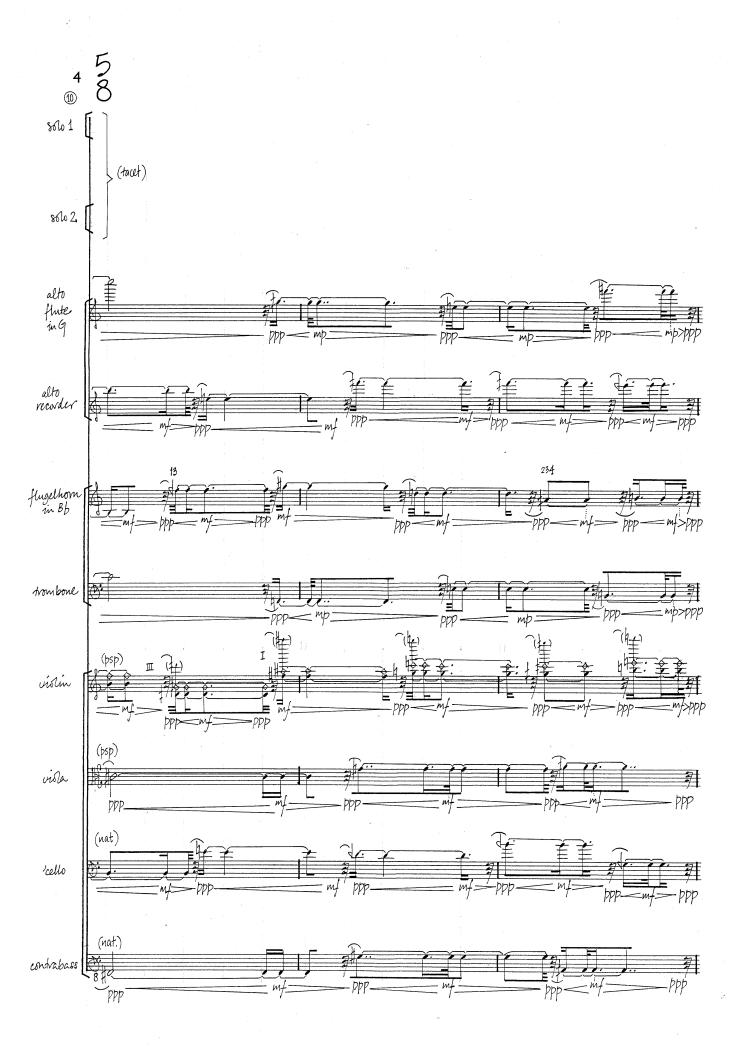
Bow position: msp, psp, pst, mst = molto (!) sul ponticello, poco sul ponticello, poco sul tasto and molto (!) sul tasto respectively

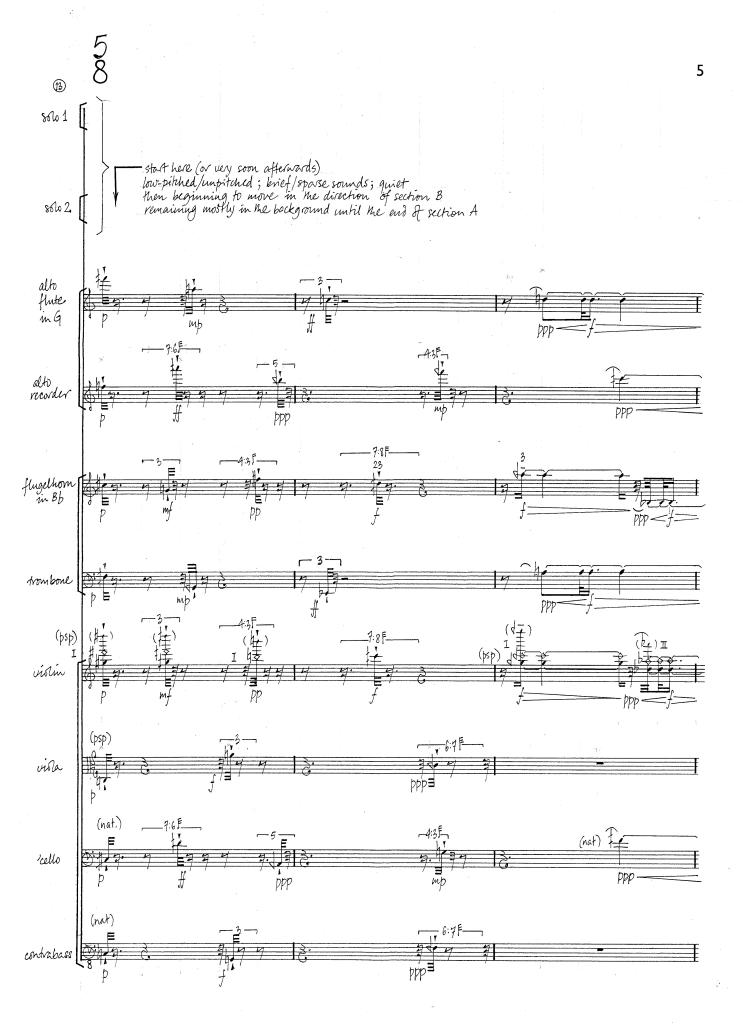
 $clb = col \ legno \ battuto, \ clt = col \ legno \ tratto \ (both \ cancelled \ by \ arco)$

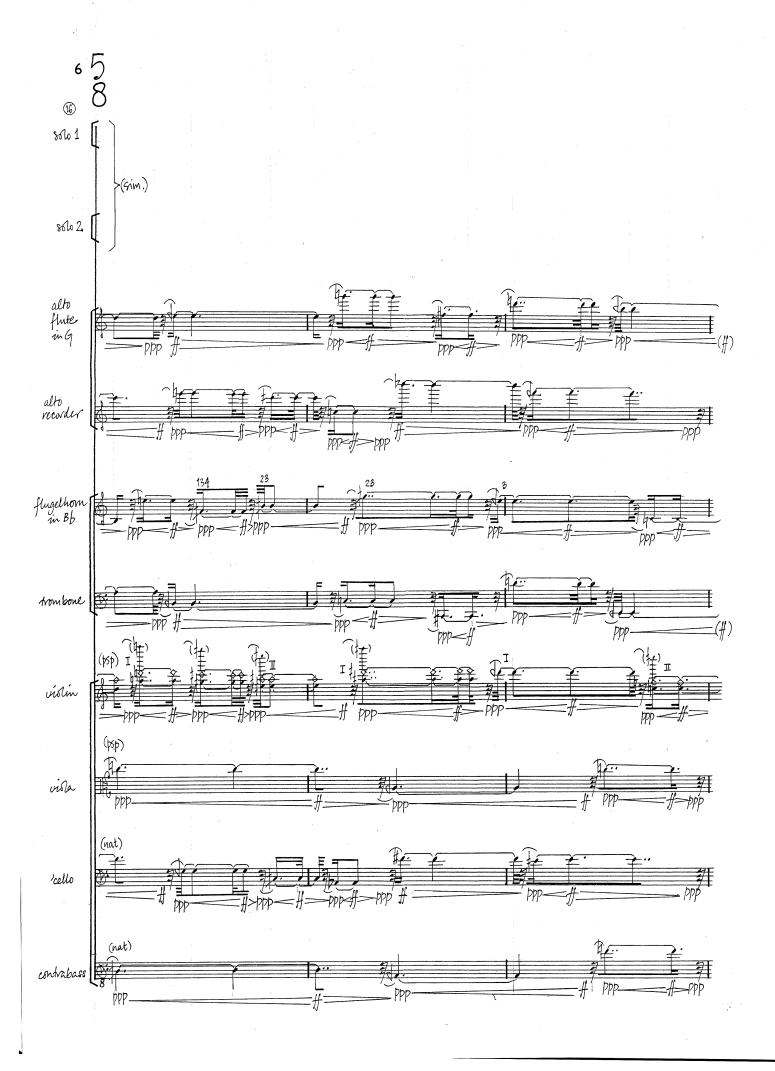




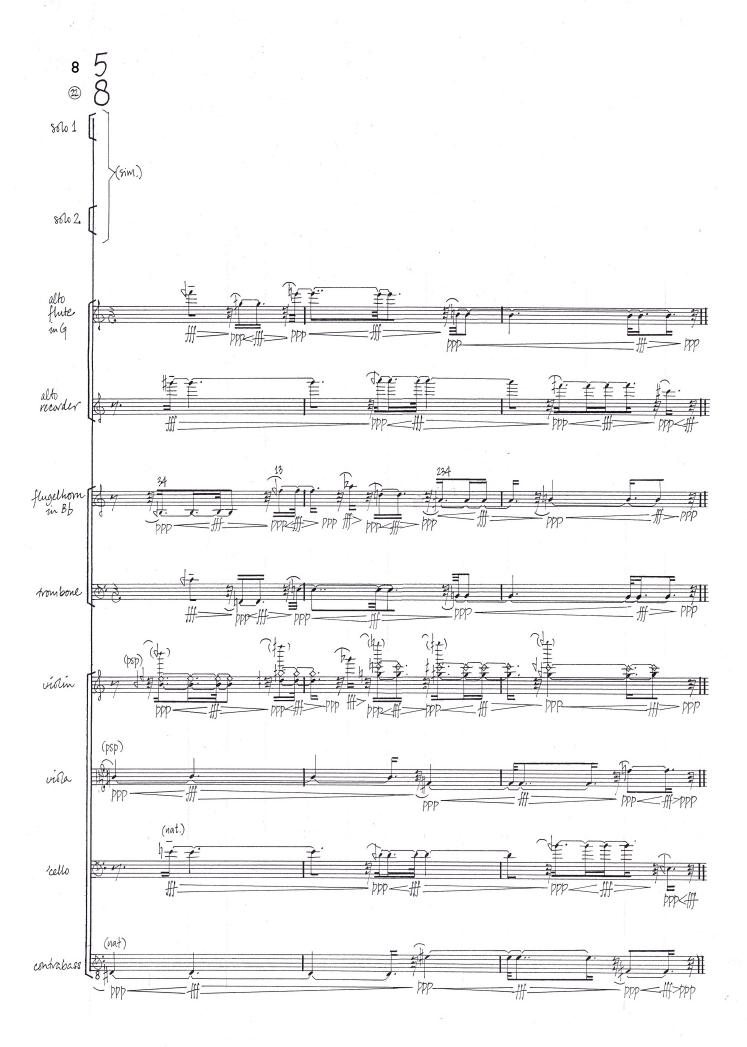


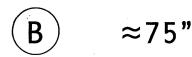












cue section C at the end of this section judge the right moment, during a sustained sound by solo 2, around 75" after end of section A

solo 1 & 2

continue from section A, with increasing variety in pitch/register, speed/density, dynamic

solo 1 & 2 (but especially 2) develop towards: sustained sounds (pitches/textures/multiphonics) separated by other kinds of activity (or silences) which link (or contrast with) the sustains

in other words introducing the kind of material played by the ensemble (and solo 2) in section C which begins at the conductor's next cue

ensemble tacet



cue any instrument to start (one which can reproduce the sustained sound being played by solo 2) thereafter cue the instrumental segments ad lib any instrument not currently playing may be cued at any time each instrument has 8 segments, making 64 in all (their durations between 1 and 8 seconds apart from the last in each part) implying an average duration between cues of a little less than 1.5" but the entries shouldn't be at all regular – sometimes perhaps bring two instruments in simultaneously, sometimes leave a silence or only one player alongside solo 2

sometimes respond clearly to solo 2, sometimes not

when ensemble instruments are all playing their final segment (of indefinite length) and solo 2 has faded to silence, wait a few moments and cue solo 1 to begin section D

solo 1 tacet

fade out quickly or cut off, then wait until conductor's cue for section D to begin

solo 2

continue with alternation between sustains and other activity sustains mostly clearly pitched (but with trills etc.?) and over entire range of instrument sometimes lead, sometimes be led by, the ensemble make sure there are anough audible and clear sustains for the instruments of the ensemble to pick up on

fade slowly when ensemble instruments have all reached their final state

ensemble

each instrument has 8 segments (numbered I-VIII), all with precise durations except the last, plus a sequence of 9 "optional" pitches at the foot of the page each instrument is cued individually by the conductor, sometimes perhaps simultaneously with another instrument

where an unspecified sustained pitch is shown, play a pitch you can hear solo 2 playing, or which solo 2 has just ended if solo 2 isn't playing a sustained pitch or hasn't played one in the last few moments, or if the sustained pitch is out of the range of your instrument, play instead the next pitch from your "optional" sequence if necessary the 9 unspecified pitches can just be taken from this sequence but the more taken from the soloist the better

if a segment contains more than one unspecified pitch these should generally (but not necessarily) be different pitches

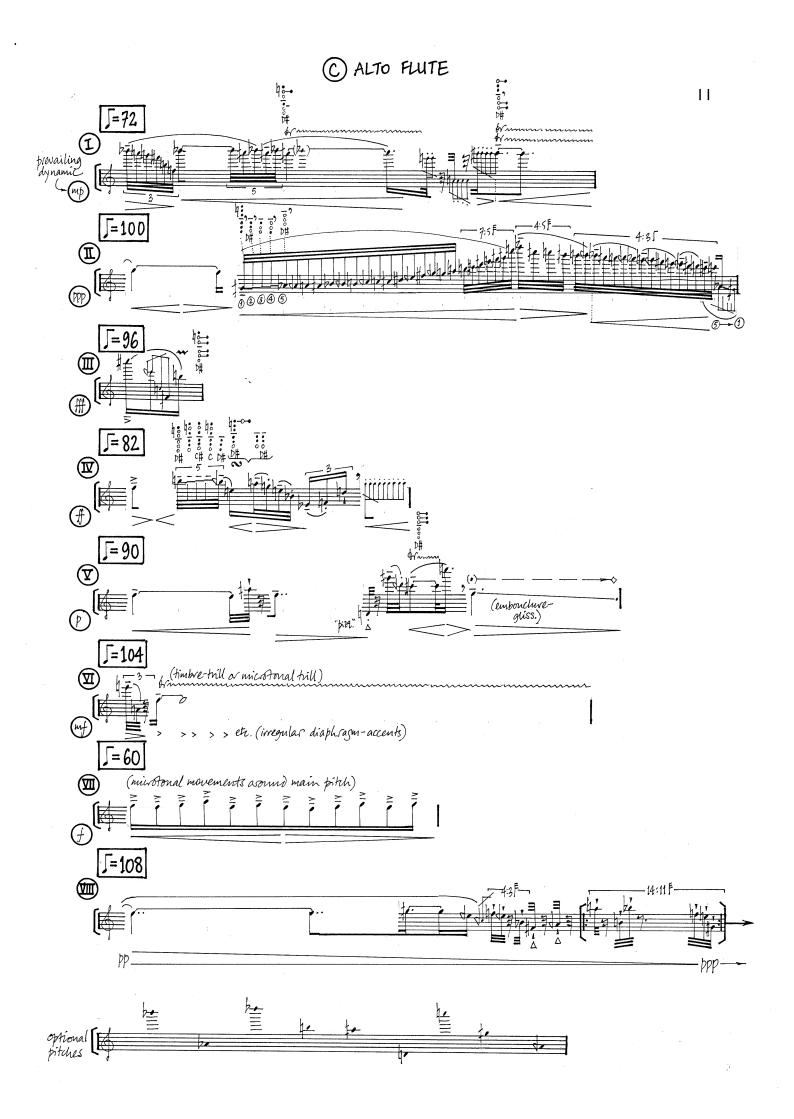
the commas before sustained sounds indicate the briefest "pause for thought" before deciding on the pitch

each segment except the last has a "prevailing" dynamic (in a circle at the beginning of the segment), in relation to which the *crescendi* and *diminuendi* may be more or less extreme according to circumstances for example how loudly solo 2 is playing

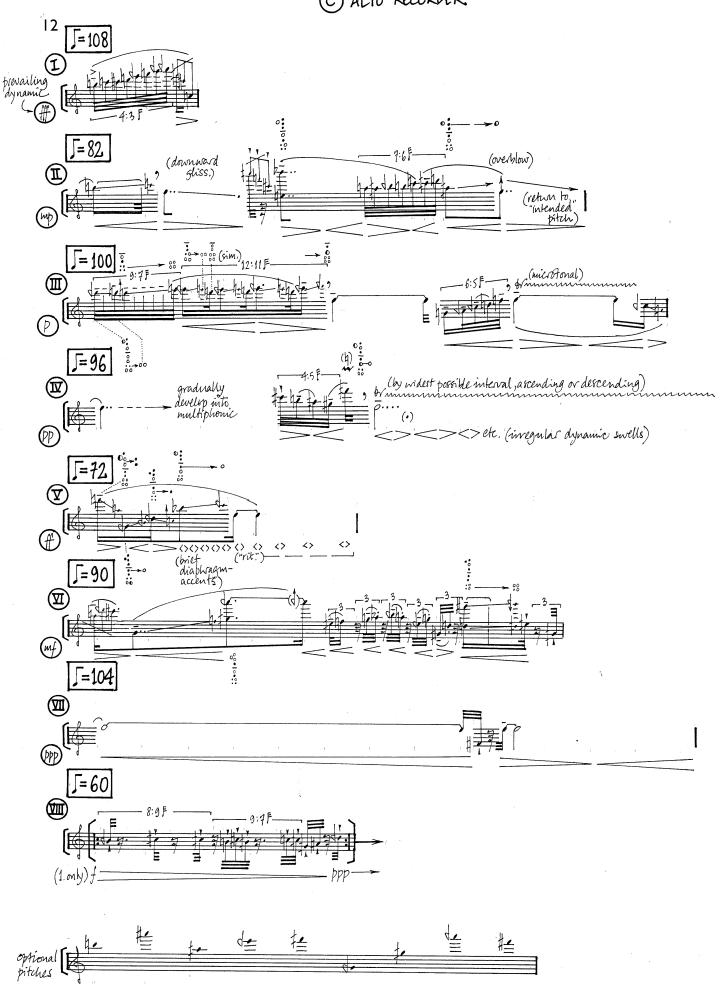
in general, the shorter a segment is the higher its prevailing dynamic level

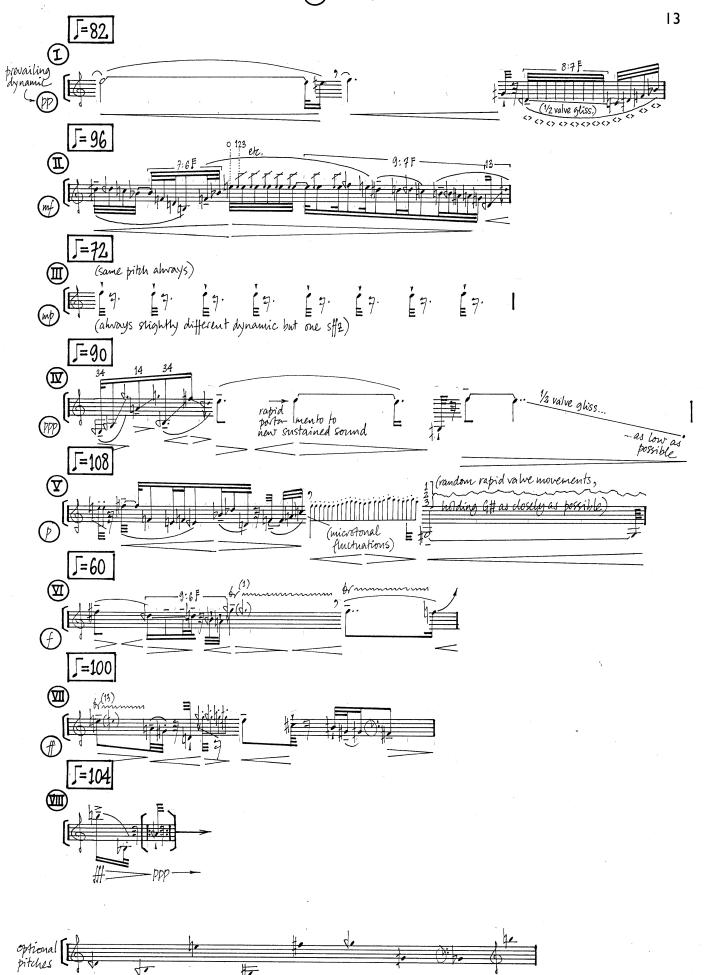
when cued, play the next segment in your sequence when each segment is finished, look up so the conductor knows you are ready to begin the next one

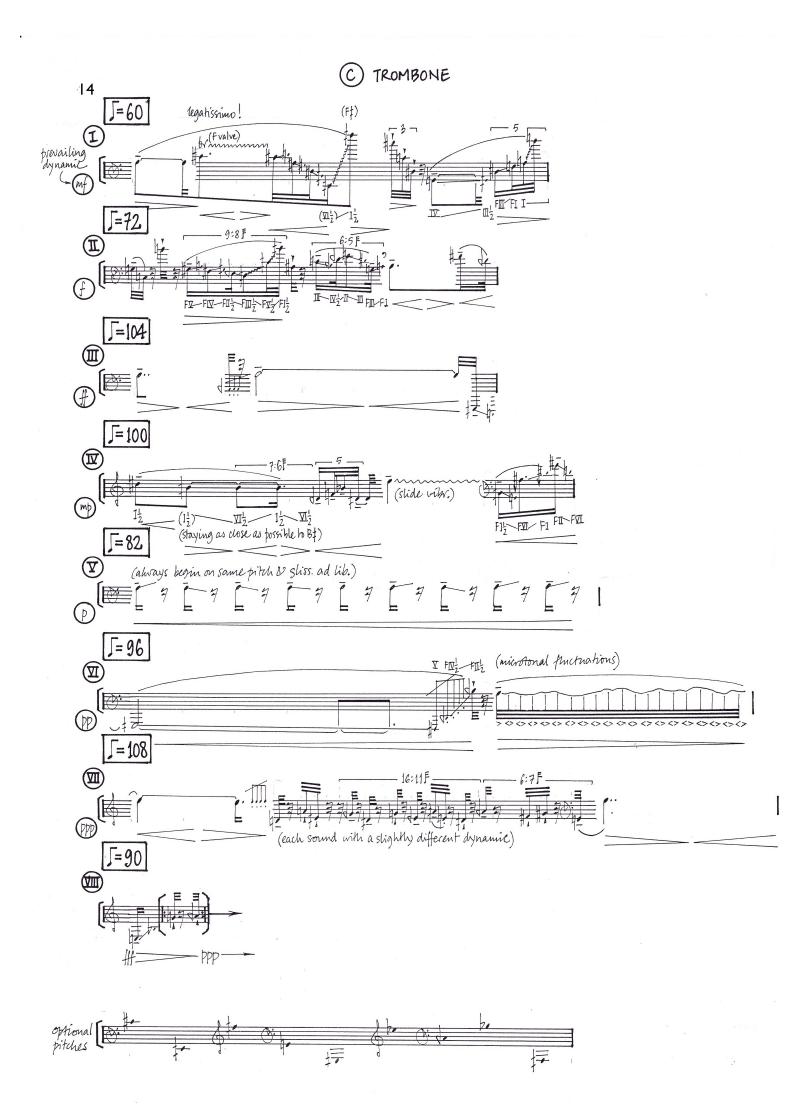
the last segment is of indefinite duration — continue repeating the indicated sound or group of sounds after a few repetitions begin to vary the pitches, durations between individual sounds, timbres, tempo to an increasing extent but remaining *ppp* with the same staccatissimo articulation until the conductor cues solo 1 to begin section D at which point cut off abruptly



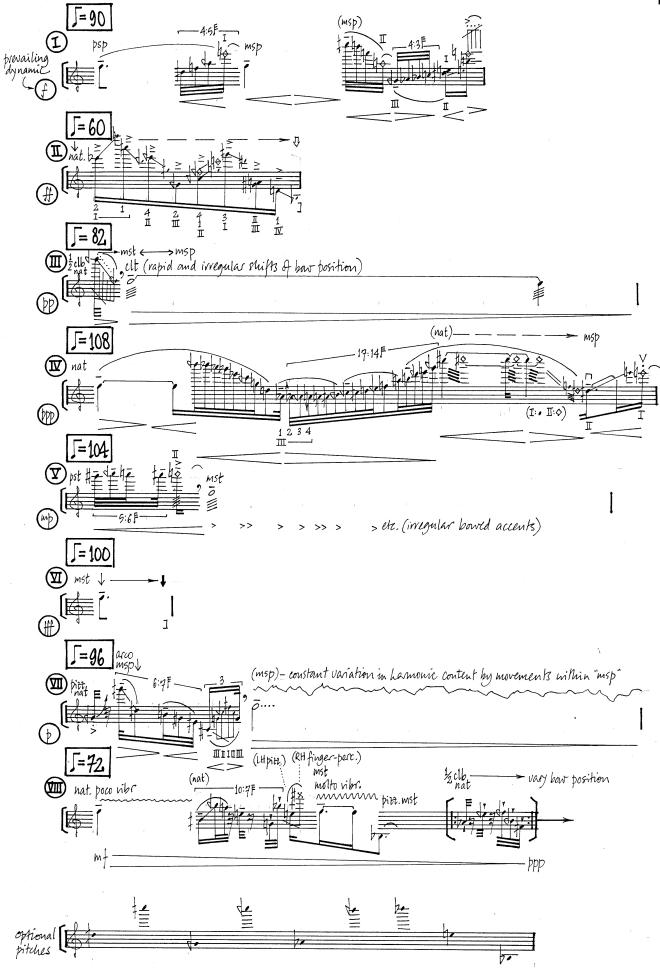
C) ALTO RECORDER.

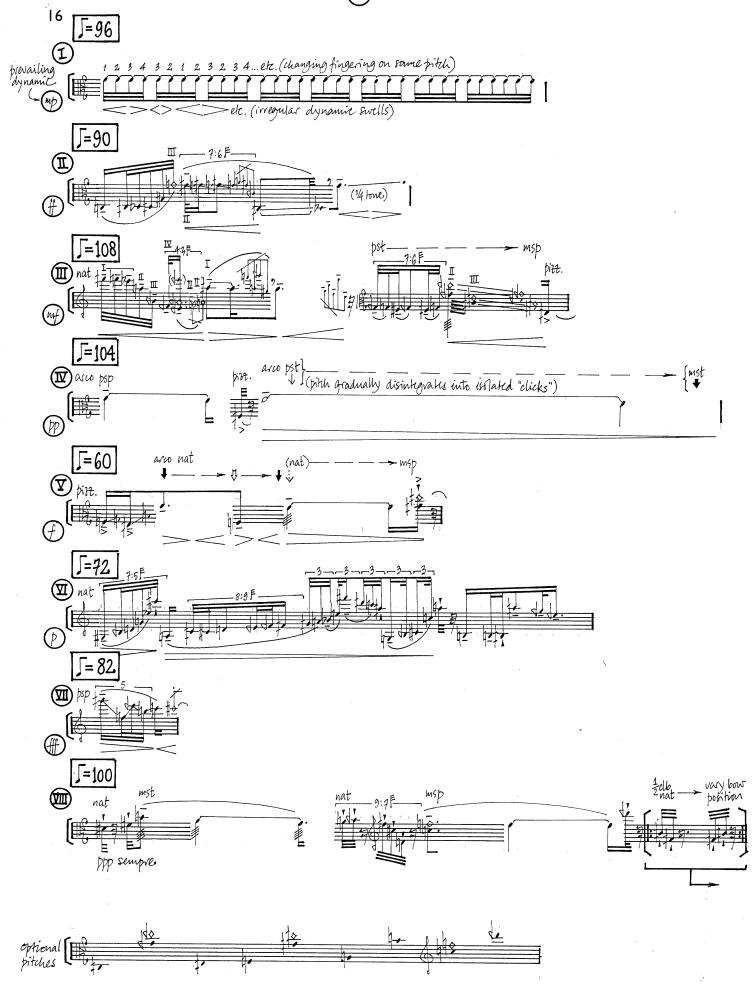


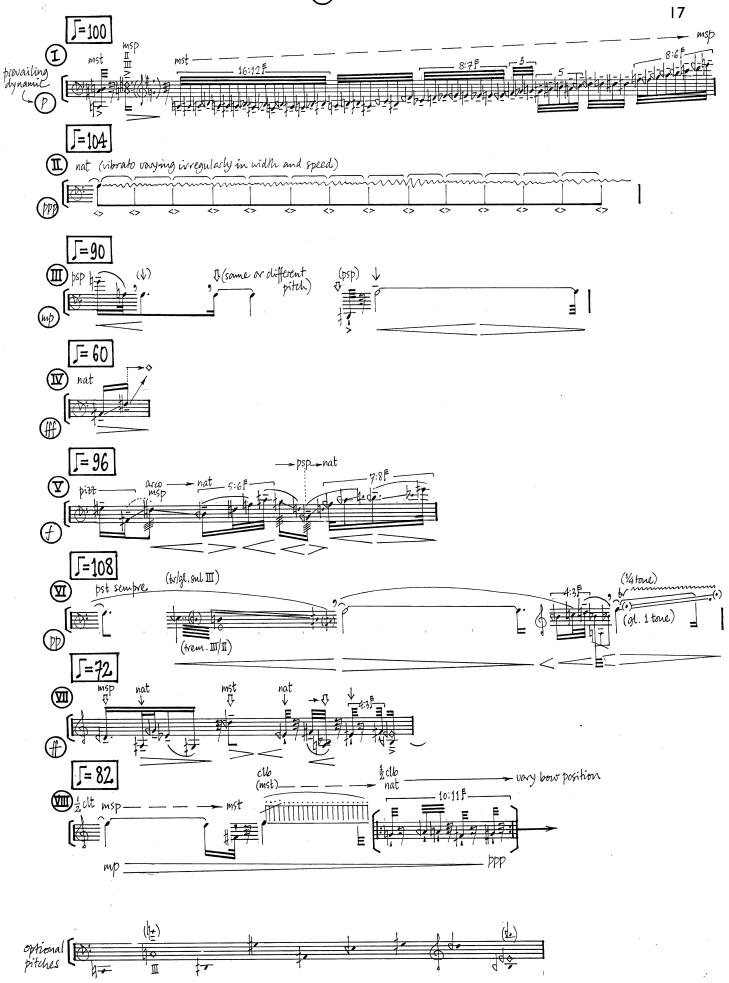




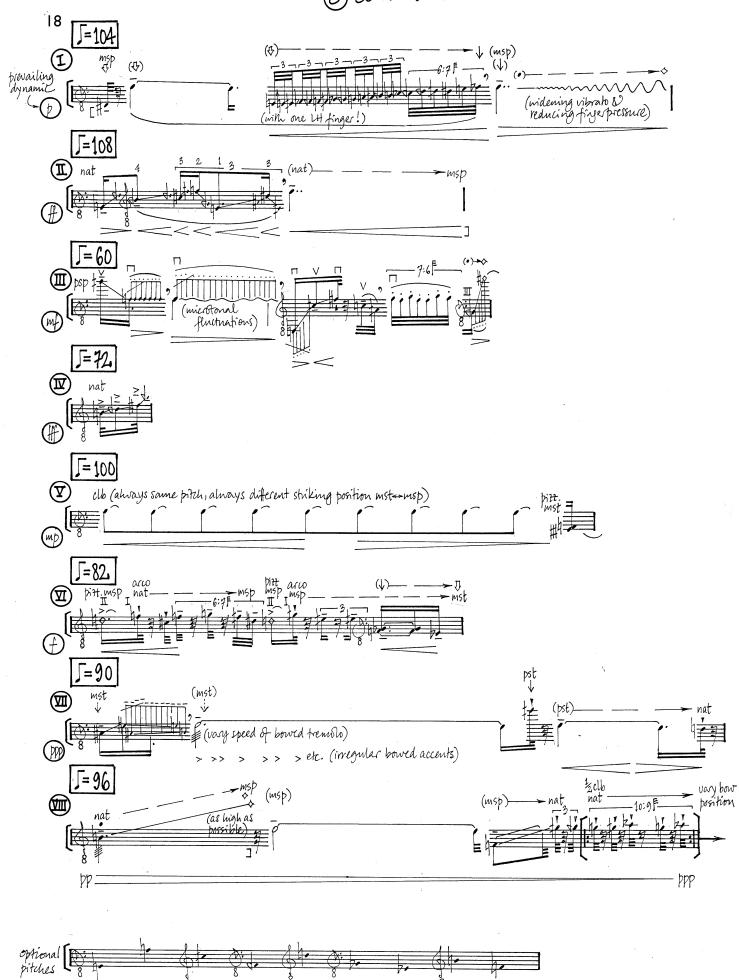
C VIOLIN

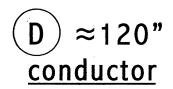






C CONTRABASS





(once the final state of section C has been established)

with left hand, cue solo 1 for brief improvised solo and cut off solo 2

then each left-hand cue alternates between solo 1 (freely improvised) and strings (rotating between their various modes of activity and taking a new one at each cue)

simultaneously with the second left-hand cue (strings) cue solo 2 (freely improvised), after which each right-hand cue alternates between solo 2 and wind quartet (rotating in the same way as the strings)

thereafter continue these two independent sequences of cues simultaneously

typically cueing the two halves of the group at different times but also sometimes simultaneously, creating various combinations, contrasting more rapid changes on one side with slower ones on the other, giving durational emphasis now to the soloist, now to the respective quartet, and so on

each cue for each group should be between 2 and 16 seconds after the previous one

to conclude this section, leave solo 1 playing while giving a double downbeat to stop solo 2 and for recorder and trombone to begin section E, which is "normally" notated and conducted

solo 1& 2

freely improvised "solos" cued and cut off by the conductor (see above), alternating with and reacting to (or not) the respective quartet: solo 1/strings (cued by the conductor's left hand), solo 2/winds (cued by the conductor's right hand), while at the same time weaving through and complementing the overall texture

solo 2 stops for the last time when the conductor begins section E, solo 1 fades into section E, ending at or before all instruments have entered

ensemble

play and stop playing at the conductor's cues, alternating with solo 1 (strings, cued by the conductor's left hand) and solo 2 (winds, cued by the conductor's right hand)

on each cue, each instrument moves clockwise around its "circle of activities" (see p.20) and plays the next one, each instrument beginning from the top ("12 o'clock") of its respective circle - when a circle is completed, begin another rotation but from a different (freely-chosen) starting point from the previous one, and so on, always complete circles but each time beginning from a different point

until the conductor gives the double downbeat for section E

= silence

play a variation on a segment from your part in section C, altering any or all of tempo, durations, pitches, timbres, dynamics etc.

imitate (in any or all parameters) and vary "your" alternating soloist's last entry (solo 1 for strings, solo 2 for winds)

repeat and vary (in tempo, duration, pitch, timbre, dynamic, insertion of silences etc.) a short "loop" taken from "your" soloist's last entry

sustained multiphonic (recorder and contrabass only: contrabass multiphonic involves high bow pressure, slow bowing, *poco sul ponticello*, slightly more than "harmonic" left-hand fingerpressure, on any string at these intervals above the open string: augmented 4th, minor 6th, slightly flat minor 7th, octave + neutral 3rd, etc.)

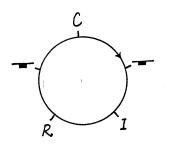
R = recall and vary what *you* played in *your* previous entry

ALTO FLUTE

ALTO RECORDER

FLUGELHORN

TROMBONE

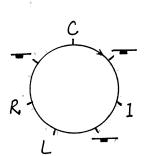


VIOLIN

VIOLA

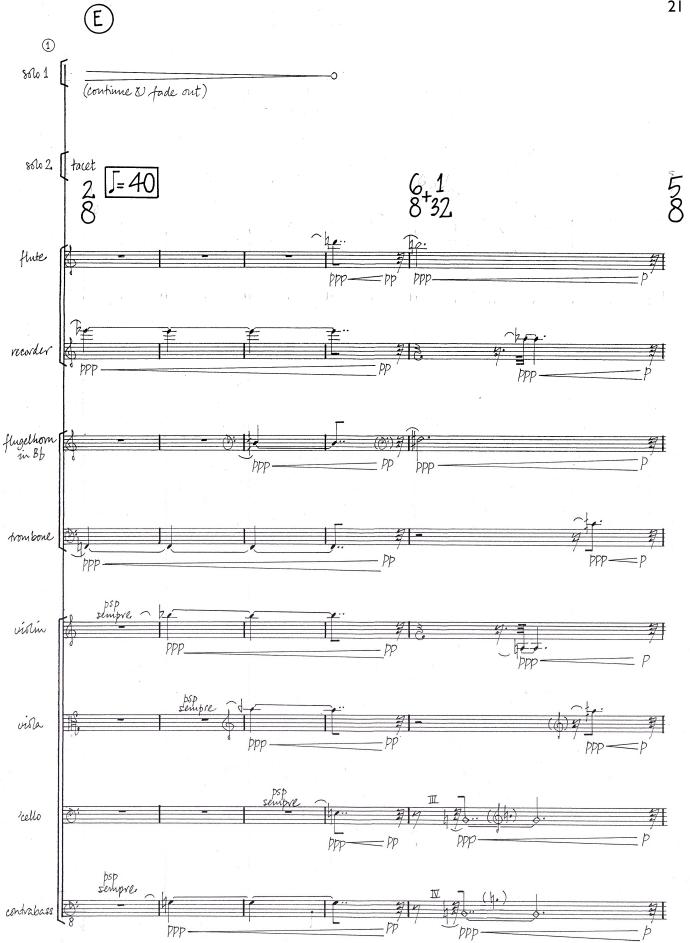
cerro

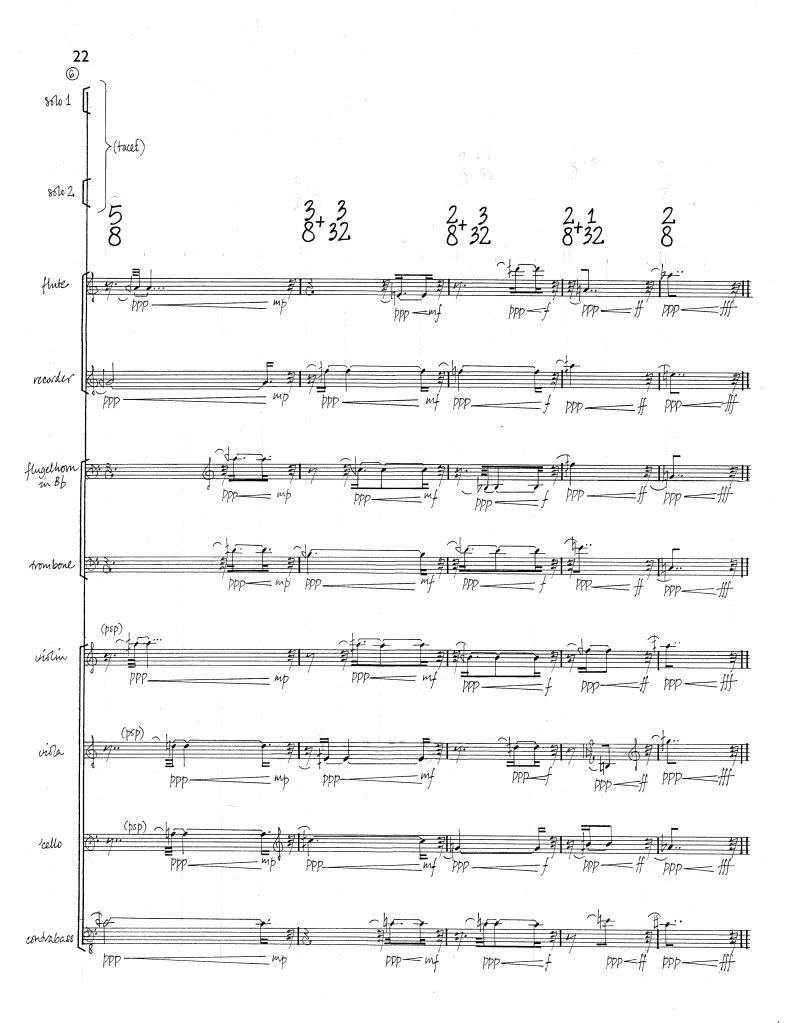
CONTRABASS

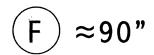


$$L$$
 L
 R









(continue without any break from section E)

cue every 1-8 seconds (mostly), constantly varying — at each cue, solo 1 and 2 alternate (beginning with solo 2) and the ensemble players rotate through their material as in section D

and shape the ensemble music dynamically *ad lib* in response to the soloists, perhaps sometimes even cutting one or more ensemble players off before the following cue, etc.

the whole section should have an overall *diminuendo-crescendo* shape, beginning powerfully, gradually dissipating, and then building up again...

until double downbeat to begin (suddenly!) section G

solo 1 & 2

alternating freely improvised (brief!) "solos" cued and cut off by the conductor (see above), beginning with solo 2 exploring different ways of relating/unrelating to the ensemble "chords"

ensemble

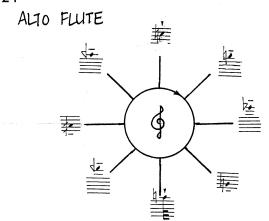
the entire octet plays on each of the conductor's cues (while the soloists alternate)

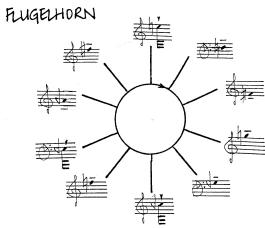
on each cue, each instrument moves clockwise around its "circle of activities" (see next page) and plays the next one, each instrument beginning from the top ("12 o'clock") of its respective circle

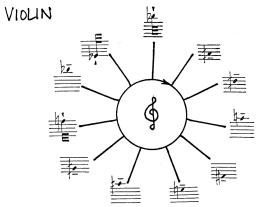
when a circle is completed, begin another rotation but from a different (freely-chosen) starting point from the previous one, and so on, always complete circles but each time beginning from a different point

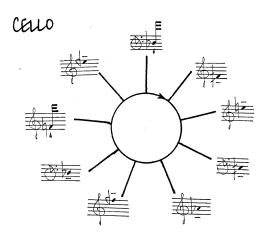
the material consists of staccato and sustained pitches — staccato pitches may occasionally be interpreted ad lib as a short group of gracenotes (with any articulation), beginning with the notated pitch; sustained pitches may occasionally be interpreted ad lib as trills/tremoli, glissandi (not too far away from the notated pitch!), multiphonics or more complex encrustations around the pitch (you can refer to section C for some more examples) up to and including moving the pitch in parallel with whichever soloist is playing, etc. while retaining the essentially accompanimental nature of the ensemble activity in this section.

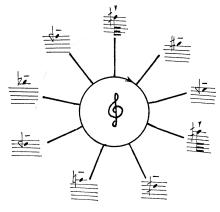
until the conductor gives the double downbeat for ensemble to begin section G

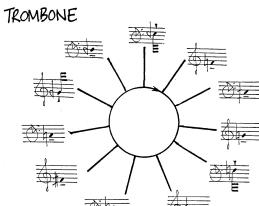


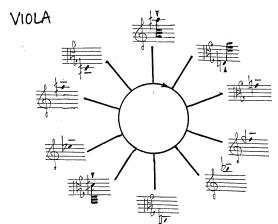


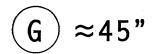












give double downbeat to begin, then interrupt the ensemble improvisation with the 8 conducted fragments each involves a different selection of 4 instruments and the durations of the eight fragments sum to about 21 seconds, that is somewhat less than half of the entire duration of G

solo 1

freely improvised, like ensemble consisting of "points" interrupted by less fleeting events continuing into section H

solo 2 tacet

until first cue of section H, at which point fade gradually in

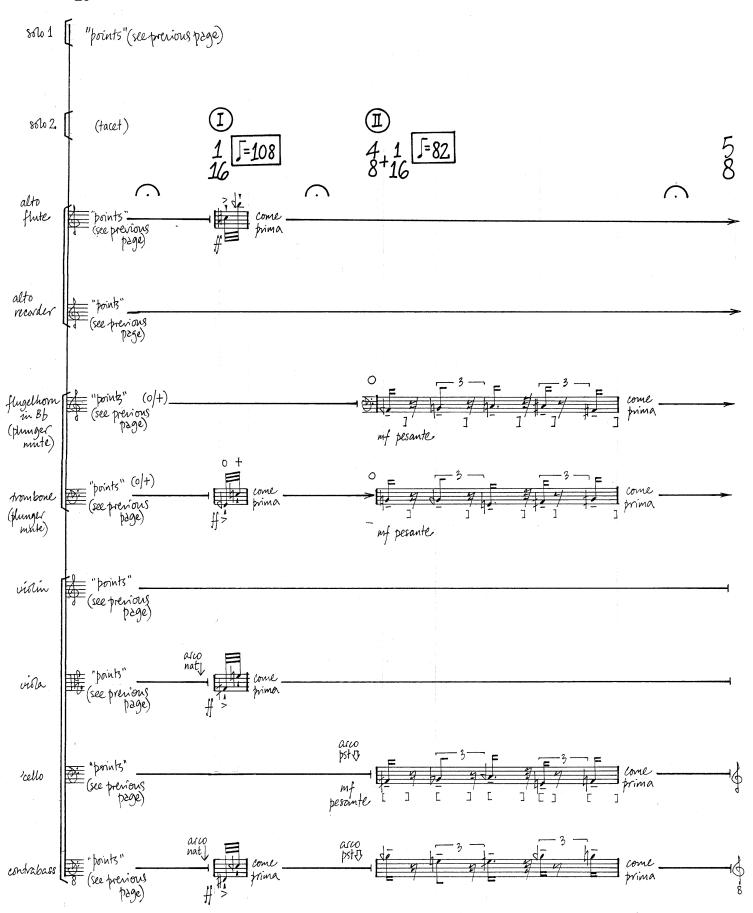
ensemble

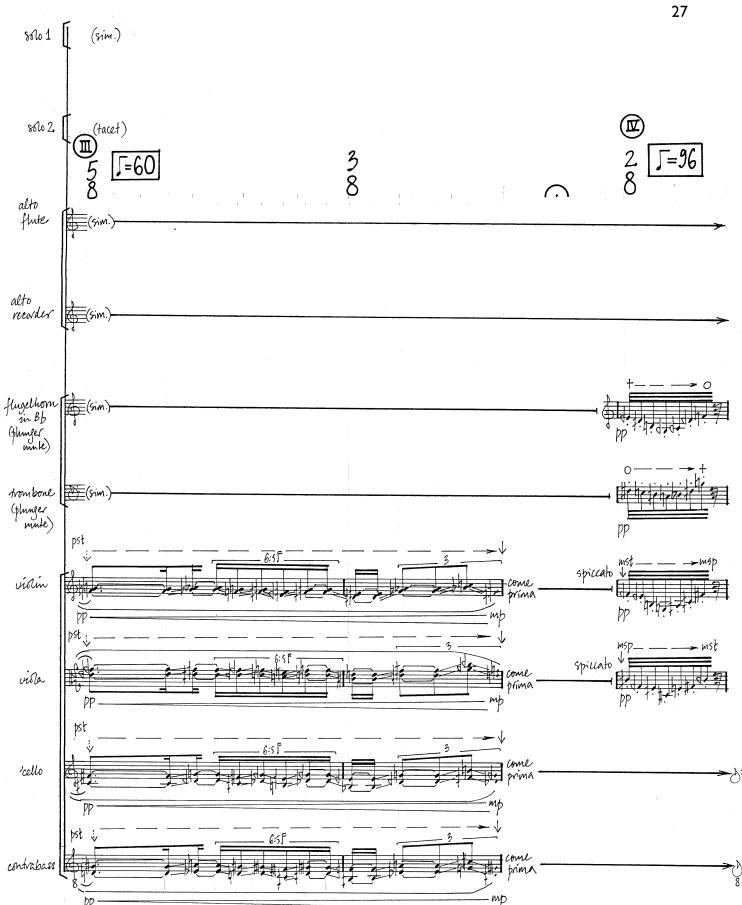
on double downbeat, begin with a dense "explosion" of staccato points each instrument playing a sound every 1-2 seconds every sound with a different dynamic, timbre, articulation etc. using pitches over the entire range of the instrument and also unpitched sounds of every kind sometimes altering density/dynamic in response to solo 1

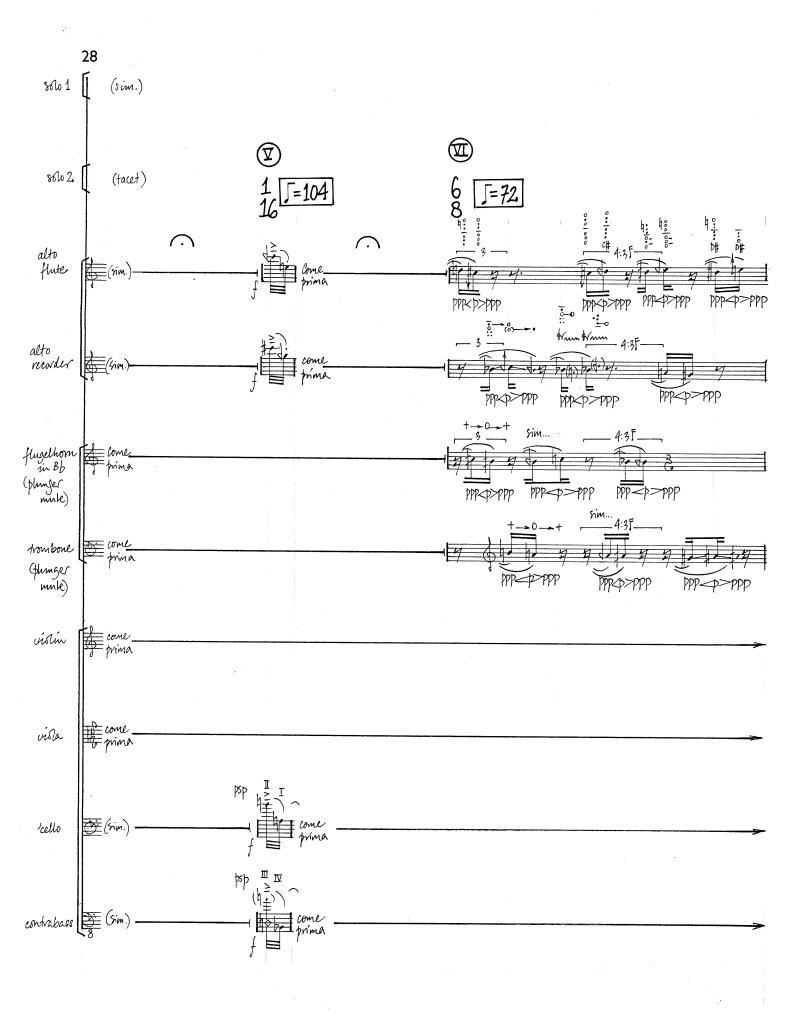
brass take plunger mute as soon as you have an opportunity, use it ad lib. In section G and as specified in section H

continue this through the conducted fragments which do not involve you and return to it after playing a conducted fragment

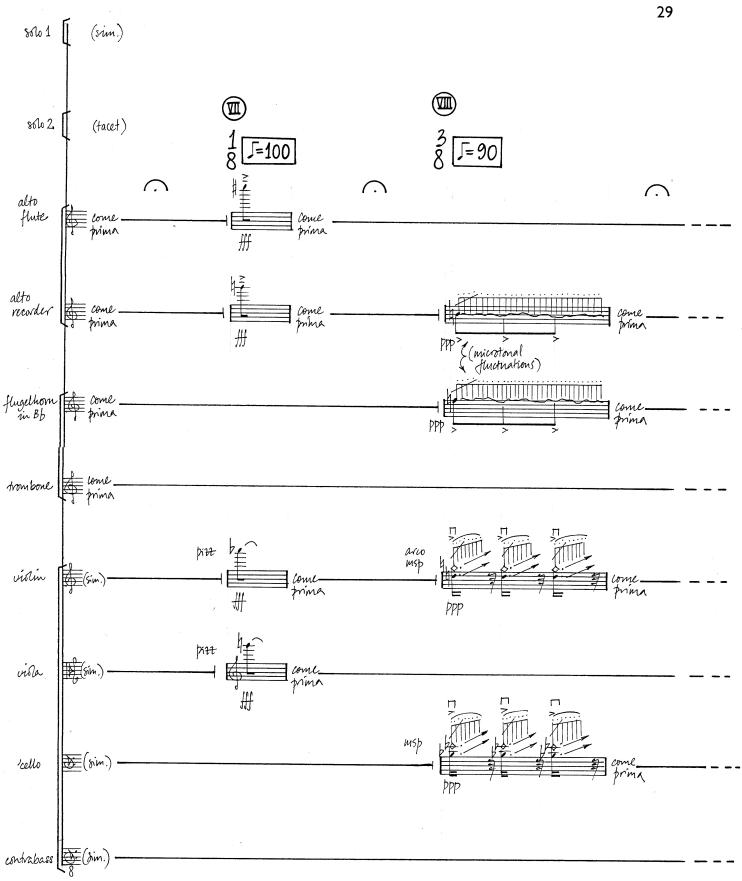
continue this material until your pair of instruments is cued to begin section H so that the transition between sections G and H is a gradual rather than abrupt change

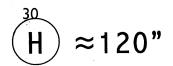












cue beginning of each of the four pairs separately order of entries and durations between them *ad lib.* but all pairs should have begun by 20" into the section and then stop conducting

solo 1 & 2

solo 1 continues and transforms from section G, solo 2 fades in

freely improvised but oriented towards finding an end - the last sound however might not be from either of the soloists

(be aware that there will be silences in the ensemble)

ensemble

continue playing section G material until your pair is cued by the conductor

brass retain plunger mutes

after the first cue from the conductor, each segment is cued by one or other member of the pair *ad lib* each pair plays a different number of segments increasing in duration separated by silences which increase in duration as does the range of duration each silence may take

prevailing dynamic levels are given as in section C

the amount of notated material decreases through the 8 segments so that eventually the part for each pair consists only of unspecified brief improvisations (indicated by ∞) separated by silences the improvised material may continue from or grow out of or contrast with the notated material immediately preceding it the improvisations are given durations but this doesn't mean both players in the pair must fill out each duration

the piece may end with one of these improvisations or with one or both of the soloists

in the improvisations perhaps refer back to previous material but always as a vague memory

