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Matthew Whittall

Sketches before a storm

for flute and kantele

2006

Music Finland

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Composer's note

Sketches before a storm, for flute and kantele, is a product of my fascination over the last several years with various Japanese art forms, poetry and landscape painting especially. The style of fast-sketched inkbrush painting known as *sumi-e* is one I find particularly inspiring. I am constantly attracted by its spaciousness, the limited use of a few controlled gestures in a single color, usually black, to create a simple but sharply defined image; the alternation of emptiness and dense activity, light and shade and, above all, by the overwhelming feeling of balance in such scenes.

The piece is, as the title implies, a series of brief vignettes or panels, some linked, some standing slightly apart from the overall structure, that together create a larger landscape. The two instruments soliloquy and dialogue freely, using and re-using a minimal set of musical "brushstrokes" deployed in improvisational fashion throughout. The "storm" is an image only intimated by the unsettled, slightly volatile nature of the music, like waves of tension mounting before a rainstorm that never arrives (except perhaps for the first heavy drops). Although the influence of Japanese music may occasionally be heard, the relationship is more of a structural one, where small-scale materials are arranged into a form of greater complexity. I like to think the use of extended techniques – airy flute sounds, strings being scratched and buzzed together – parallels the technique in *sumi-e* of letting the paper show through the ink, thereby exposing the material upon which the scene is drawn, the canvas, in the case of music, being silence.

Sketches before a storm was commissioned by Tuuli Lukkarinen and Salla Ruuskanen with the generous assistance of the Kordelin Fund, and is dedicated to them.

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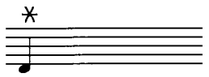
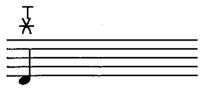
Explanation of extended flute techniques:

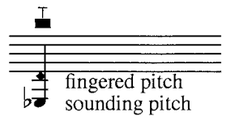
Diaphragmatic
air burst, with tongue
articulation



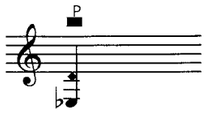
Diaphragmatic
air burst, without
tongue articulation



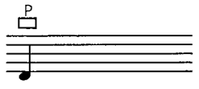
Diaphragmatic
air burst, without
tongue articulation,
ending with tongue stop



Tongue ram



Pizzicato, moutpiece
completely covered



Pizzicato, normal
mouth position

Breath attack
(no articulation)

Air
tone

Air only,
no pitch

⟶ Transition from one method of sound production to another

Upward or downward-pointing arrows attached to notes or accidentals indicate approximate interval of 1/8 to 1/6 higher or lower than standard tuning.
Non-standard flute fingerings are indicated above the note (ex. 12 4 / 3 B).
Underlined numbers for non-trilled fingerings (ex. 12<u>3</u> / <u>2</u>) indicate partially covered finger holes.
Underlined numbers in trill fingerings indicated trilling fingers.
Non-standard trill execution is explained in the score as it happens.

Explanation of extended kantele techniques:

Scratch … thumb and index finger

… sonance from strings

… z together

… as they happen.

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dedicated to Salla Ruuskanen and Tuuli Lukkarinen

Sketches before a storm

Matthew Whittall
(2006)

I- Freely, flexible ♩= 80-88

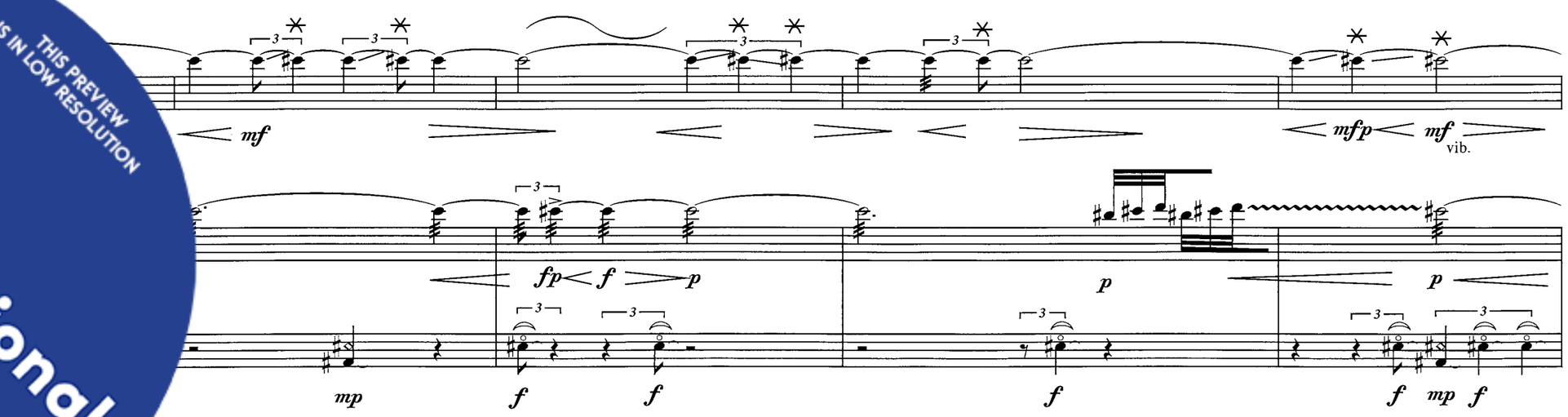
Flute

mp *pppp* *molto* *f* *fpp* *mp* ord. *f* *mp* *accel.* *rit.* tr 12345/23 *mf* 123/ 2 *p* no vib. whistle tone retain F fingering

mp vib. retain Db fingering *f* tr 4/ *p* *mp* *p* *mf* 12345/ 3 1234/ 24

mf *p* *mf* *f* *p* *f* *molto* no vib.

attacca II



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eem continuous. However, if technical considerations require
the as there is no perception of gaps in the tremolo texture.

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III- Declamatory ♩= 76-80

tr 4/

p mf pp

tr 4/ tr /23

r.h. shake

p mf mp pp

Slowing

A tempo

Slowing

no vib.

sffz l.v.

sffz

A♯ mp l.v.

C♮D♮F♯A♭

D♯

*Fingernail snap at base of string

Slower ♩= 60

mp f

mp

A tempo

Slowing

mf C♯F♮A♯B♯ f mp

mf

mf G♭A♭

mf p (echo)

B♭

Slower ♩= 60

p mp mf

poco ten. then accel.

fast

C♭D♭E♭G♮A♮

p mf

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5-6"

7-9"

(breathe as needed)

20

f

20

r.h. slowing

♩= 56-60

5-6"

L

mf

ff

mp

p

ppp

R

p

sub. p

accel.

Slow sweep across strings with flesh of hands. Leave no resonance.

IV- Slow, free

ord.

3

mp

sim.

C♮

p

⊗ *mf*

A♮B♭

G♮A♭

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♩= 76-80

Slower

tr 12345/23

mp no vib.

p

f very fast, frantic

Slowing

C♯F♮

mp ff

f E♯ mf

mp l.v.

C♮F♯

Trill with underlined fingers. When trilling with multiple fingers, they should move independently, not as a unit.

♩= 76-80

tr

12345/ 4 12345/ 123 12 / A B / A B

123/ A B 2 / A B

sfzp < ff

whistle tone

Slow, as in the beginning

p p l.v.

mp

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B♮

V- Very fast; Skittering ♪= 138-152

(air tone throughout)

tktktktktk...

ff *ppp*

tktktktktk...

ff *ppp*

f

C♮D♮E♭F♯G♮A♭B♭

f

f

f

sim.

Strike lowest strings with fingers

"jet whistle" effect

ff

slap side of kantele

take plastic card, zip across wound strings

f

3

sim.

molto

sim.

put down card

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21

f

Slowing

21

knock

take tuning key

27

As fast as possible

mp *quasi gliss.*

Freely

pp *ff* *pp* *ff* *sim.*

27

mf

gliss with tuning key
(pitches approx.)

p *bisbigliando, pitches in no particular pattern*

C♯

E♯

E♮

C♮D♭

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A tempo I

35

tktktktktk...

ff ppp

ff ppp

mp (pitches approx.)

Poco a poco accel.

35

take tuning key

Poco a poco accel.

43

Accel. poss.

43

Accel. poss.

Accel. sub.

pp

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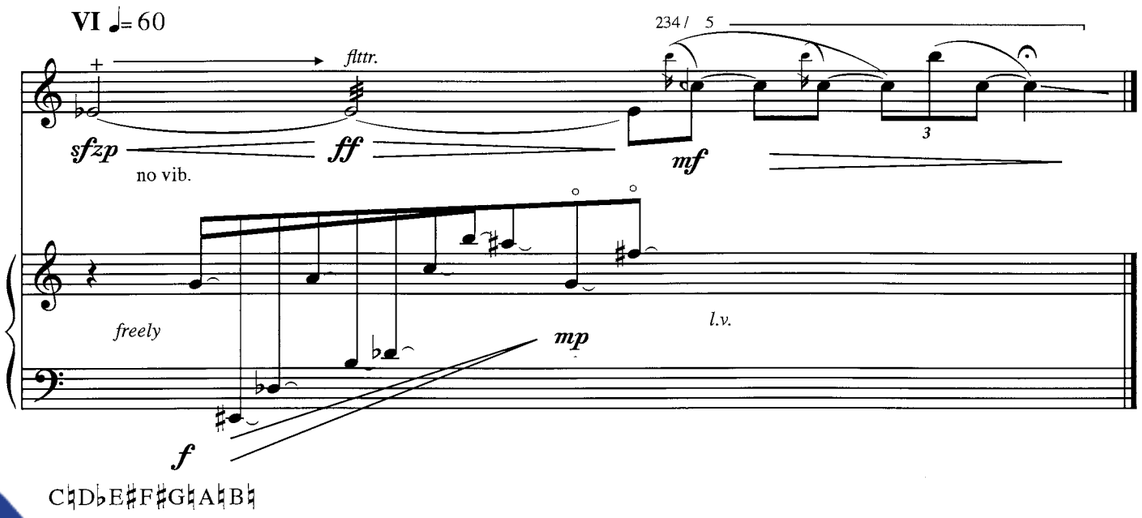

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VII- Volatile ♩=56-60

(sounding pitches)

mp

C♭D♯E♮F♯G♯A♮B♭

Agitated; Moving forward

C♮

G♮

sub. ***f***

pp

mp

Calming

D♭

Forward

7

f

mf

mf

G♯

E♭F♮

Calming

clear

f

F♭

As in the beginning

pp *bisbigliando*

mp

G♭A♭B♯

E♮F♯

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Forward

f

G♮

Calming

ff

snap at base of strings

A♮E♯

C♭

B♮

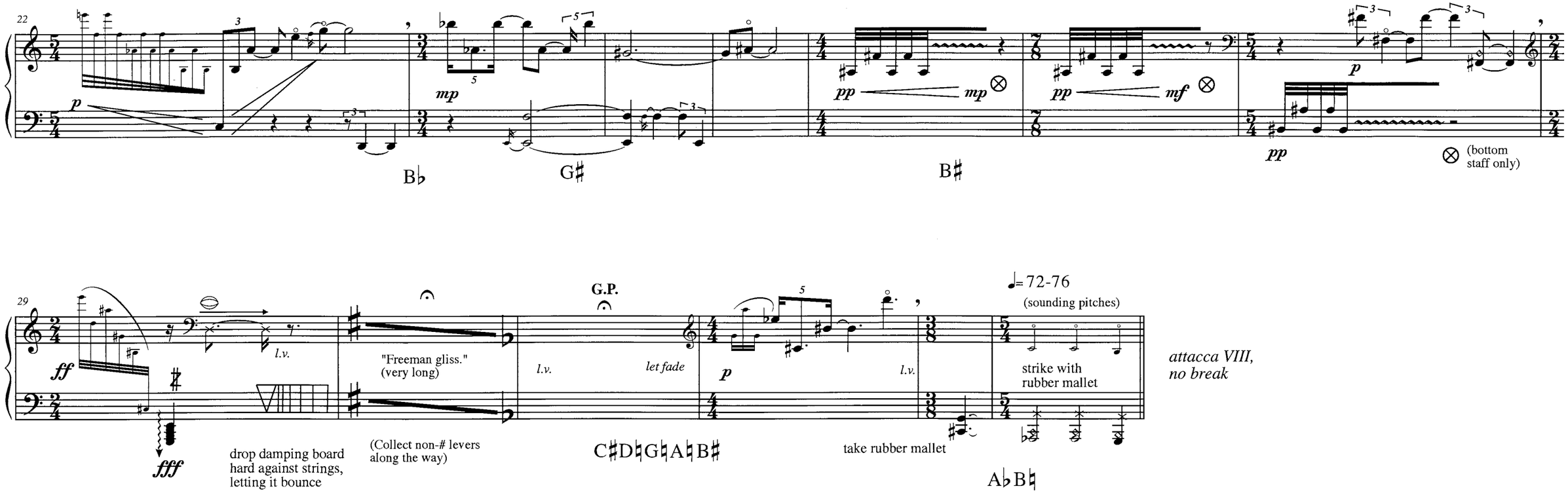
E♯

C♮A♭

p

mp

E♮F♮



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VIII- Graceful, like a ceremonial dance ♩= 72-76

A♭: 12345/ 2

p
warm vib.

p

p

(sounding pitches)

mp

sim.

13

mp

12345/ 23B

no vib.

13

very long, slow bend

sounding harmonic

ten. ad lib.

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35

35

p

sempre ***p***

poco a poco dim.

45

45

Slowing slightly

pp

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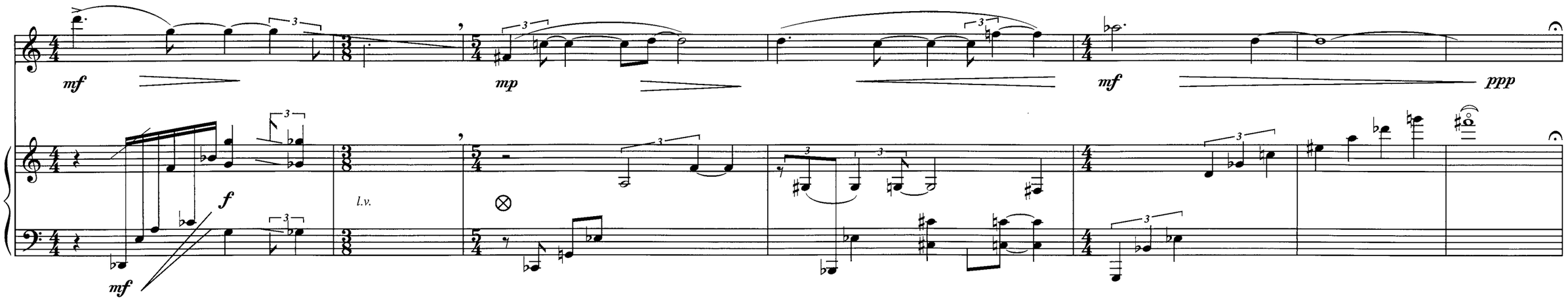
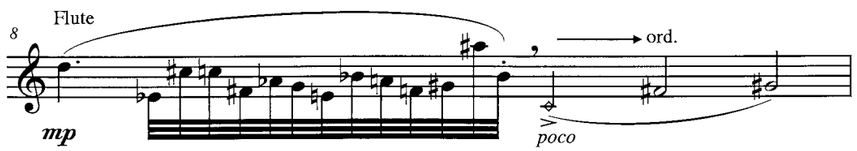
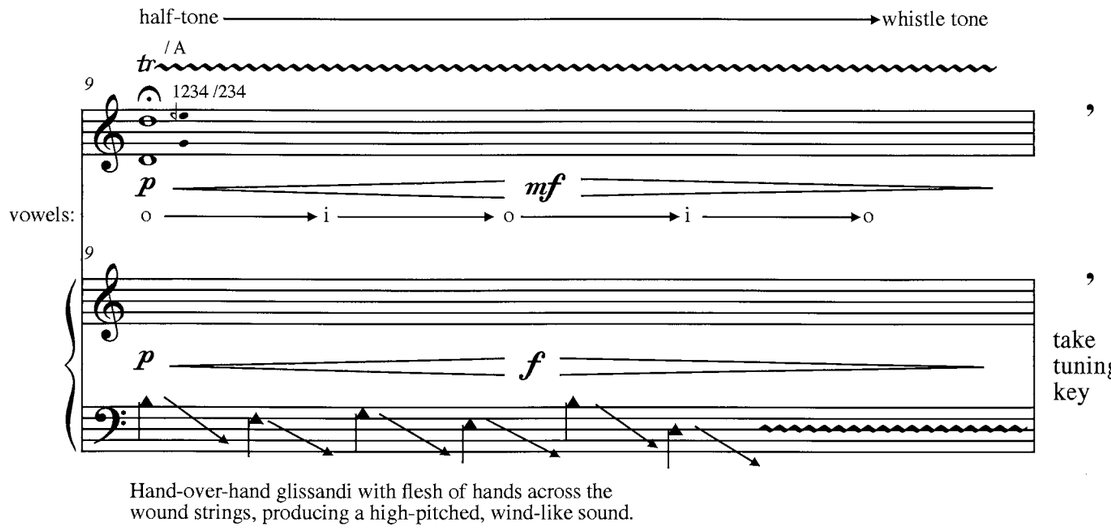
IX- Expectant; Serenely tragic ♩=56-60

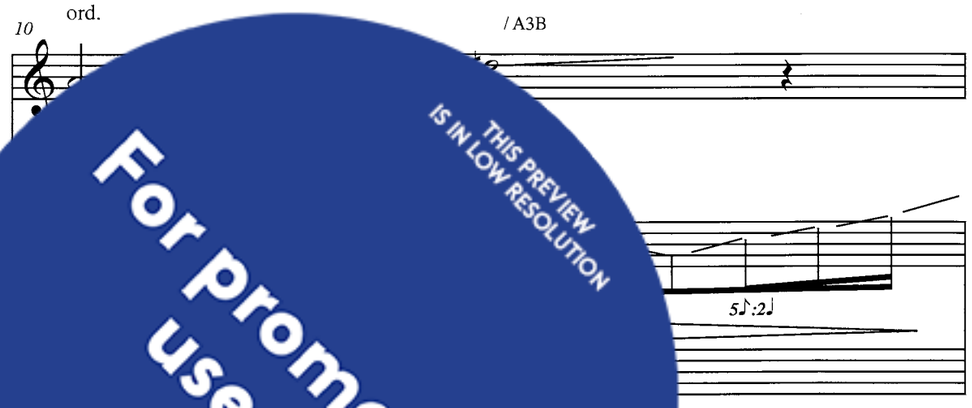


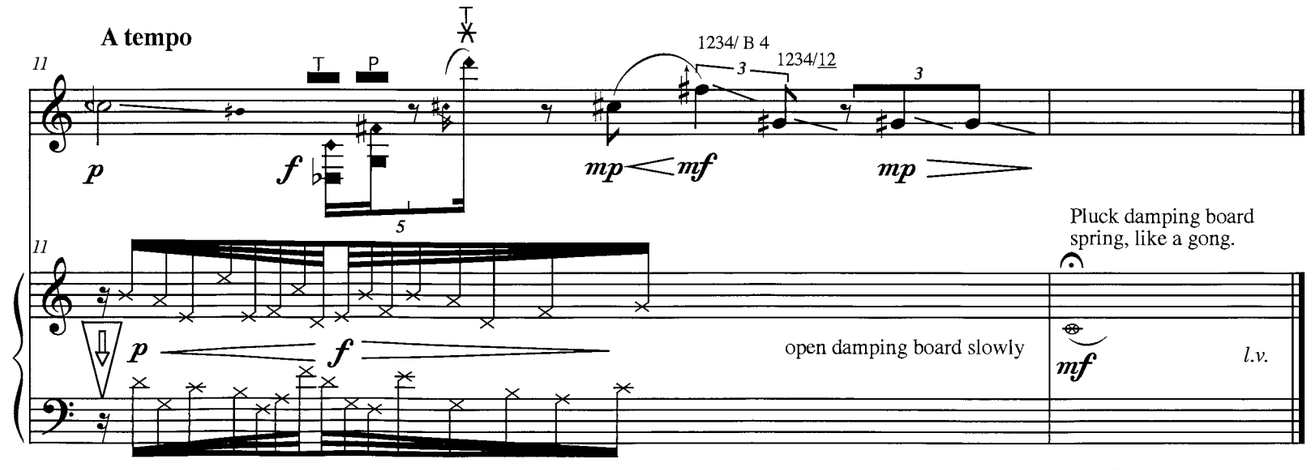




Hand-over-hand glissandi with flesh of hands across the wound strings, producing a high-pitched, wind-like sound.

Quasi in tempo, but still free





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