Field

(2015)

for two violins

Lou Bunk

Field

for two violins
in five movements

By Lou Bunk

Program Notes

Silence and return attain meaning through conditions. A silence in the middle of a phrase is unlike a silence setup by a slow decrescendo, or a silence between movements, or a silence in an empty field, with the moon. The return of musical material, across gestures or longer spans, is shaped by the currently active rush of energy and purpose, perhaps creating a nostalgia for what was, but more importantly showing change and forward motion. In this piece, I question and veil the effects of silence and return through interruption, juxtaposition, disruption, and sometimes messy predicaments on a field of play that (at times) paradoxically attempts to prioritize an uncomplicated narrative. Polyphony and monophony are entangled as the two violins often merge to create a single voice, yet what they play is synchronously similar and different from each other. A stereophonic field created by the antiphonal placement of the violins makes vivid this sonic contradiction.

I began work on this composition in June of 2013, stopped twice along the way, and finishing in October 2015. Somehow, I spent 492 hours writing the music.

“Field” is dedicated to String Noise, who asked me to write them a new piece (and was very patient as I finished), and to my twins Ellie and Eli, who were born while I was writing it.

Performance Notes

Indeterminacy, Freedom and Interpretation

My precision when notating this music is not to try and account for every possible sonic outcome; for example, there are many shades of non-pitched sounds possible on the violin far outnumbering any assortment of symbols and combinations. Also, there is a certain amount of unpredictability to some of these sounds. Shape and control when you can, but at times allow this irregularity to blossom.

Still, the score is intended to produce a certain result; often this is very specific, while sometimes the notation creates the circumstance for a type of result. That said, no part of the score is purely prescriptive. From moment to moment, your interpretation of (and struggle with) the score is essential to creating the music.

Antiphonal Position: The violinists should perform at a noticeable distance from each other, (roughly half to two-thirds the width of the stage), while still remaining on stage, or in the standard performance area. The purpose is to enhance the inherent antiphonal/stereophonic nature of the music by increasing the sonic independence of each instrument. If this distance is impairing the ability to perform accurately, then move closer.

Page Turns: Parts are given unbound, on cardstock, to allow for quiet page slides, in place of louder page turning. This requires having two pages showing at once. Another advantage is the page slide does not have to occur only at the end of the page, but at any rest during the playing of the right hand page.

Duration: ca. 16 minutes

Notation Notes

Accidentals carry through the measure.

Quarter-tones:

quarter sharp

quarter flat

Octave signs

Carry through the measure, but only apply to the note it is attached.

Vibrato: minimal to no vibrato.

Natural harmonics are notated with a diamond showing the note to stop and a standard note-head in parenthesis, to show the resulting pitch. When a second larger diamond is above the staff this indicates a natural harmonic in which the player chooses a fingering; the diamond note-head on the staff gives the sounding pitch, and the letter in the larger diamond indicates how to choose a fingering for the harmonic. The letters show relative strength and clarity of the harmonic pitch for each fingering: 'A' most clear, 'B' middle clear, 'C' least clear. An arrow indicates using the current diamond letter for the following harmonics.

Boxed Descriptions above top staff are for both players. These are not programmatic, but are intended to aid the player with interpretation.

Envelope Staff

An additional staff above the standard staff uses envelope lines to show changes in bow position and bow speed. Dotted vertical guidelines are used to help show rhythmic position of envelope changes, and other indications above the envelope staff.

The following cleffs are used:

bow placement

The top dotted staff line = the bridge. This creates a reference point for degrees of sul pont. When the dots of the top line are hidden by the envelope line, this indicates a pitch-less and airy "on the bridge" playing.

The middle staff line = ord.

The bottom dotted staff line = the edge of the fingerboard. This creates a reference point for degrees of sul tasto.

In some cases, I use SP, MSP, ST, and MST (sul pont, molto sul pont, sul tasto, molto sul tasto) to indicate bow position.

F
S bow speed

The top dotted staff line = very fast bowing

The middle staff line = ord.

The bottom dotted staff line = very slow bowing

In some cases, I use the letters F, N, SL (very fast, normal, and very slow) to indicate bow speed.

Bow Body Cleffs

Correspondence with staff lines indicate different points to bow the body of the violin. Dynamics are bracketed to show they are relative to this playing technique. That is, [f] for bow body is not nearly as loud as "f" (without brackets) for other playing styles.

Bow Pressure Modifiers, for non-standard bow pressure

The following symbols are placed above the envelop staff to show four degrees of bow pressure. As with pizz/arco, bow pressure modifiers are in effect until the next modifier. Vertical dotted guidelines are used to show which pitch/sound they modify.

- Extra light: extreme flautando, airy pitch.
- ord.
- Some extra pressure: mix of scratch and pitch.
- Extreme extra pressure: all scratch without pitch

Bow pressure modifiers are relative to dynamics, and are not a fixed amount. For example, a ppp dynamic with ◒ would mean to use the appropriate amount of extra pressure to make a pitch/scratch, while maintaining a ppp dynamic. Therefore, many more than four discreet sounds will result from these depending on dynamic, bow speed, left hand position, etc.

Finger Pressure

The following note-heads are used to indicate three degrees of left-hand fingering pressure.

Standard notehead: Full stop. Used also with artificial harmonics.

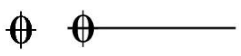
Half-filled diamond: Half-harmonic pressure. The sound should be a veiled coloring of the stopped pitch. Avoid harmonics when possible.

Diamond: harmonic pressure. When resulting pitch is shown, or a second larger diamond with a letter is present (see above), play as a natural harmonic.

Headless stems indicates approximate position of stopped string. Use most recently notated pressure.

A dotted arrow is used to show a gradual transition from one finger pressure to another.

Mute



Non-pitched playing accomplished by using at least two fingers on sounding string while laying fingers across the other non-sounding strings (to the deaden sound). Adjust as need to facilitate faster figures. Avoid natural harmonics or any stable pitch, though some unstable pitch may result depending on bow pressure and speed.

Applies only to the note it is attached, and to notes under the horizontal extension line.

No Muting: Occasionally used as a courtesy to show a return to pitched playing.

Field

I.

Lou Bunk (2015)

opposing, chasing, seeking

♪=84

SL N

V1

V2

p *pp* *ff* *sub* *fff* *mf* *mp* *f* *ppp*

4:3 (4:3) 5 6 7

suddenly

4

[*f*] [*p*]

9:8 3

10

V1

V2

7 5 n 9:8 ppp pp mp (𝅗𝅥) 4:3 ppp p f sub p sub

n pp 3 p 6 mp 7 n 5 p

13

F SL N

SL N

6 5 f 5 5 5 mf mp pp 4:3 mf ff 5 mf p

4:3 f mp 5 (𝅗𝅥) 7 mf 7 ff n 7 7 mf

joining,untangled touched agreement

16

5 5 6 mp 5 6 7 ppp 3 p pp

6 7 6 5 n p 6 5 mp ppp 3 p pp

19

familiar, uninvited

V1

V2

[f]

5

7

11:8

[p]

[f]

4:3

6

n

3

n

7

pp

22

echo

nervous, tense

V1

V2

pp

7

6

7

pp

6

5

6

f

6

5

6

5

f

5

7

5

7

25

V1

V2

6

6

mf

5

p

6

f

5

7

5

7

5

7

mp

5

7

6

f

7

6

5

6

7

27

V1

V2

31

question

rit.

SL

V1

V2

SL

a tempo

a stranger speaking

36

N

SL

N

SL

V1

N

SL

N

V2

39

♩=50 as a vision

V1

F
S

pppp n

n pp

5:3 n

"crossfade"

"crossfade"

V2

F
S

msp ----→ ord

pppp n

3 pp n
sub

5:3 p

n pp

p

43

♪=84 a stranger continues, confused

V1

ff mf

pp 6 mf
sub

3 p

p mp

6 p ppp

SL ----→ N

F ----→ N

V2

f 7 5 mf pp

ff 3 7 p
sub

4:3 pp mp f p ppp
sub sub

46

but!

V1

4:3 pp mp f p 7 ppp
sub sub

7 n

f 5 7 mf pp

SL N

V2

6 p mp

3 ppp p

f mp

6 pp mf
sub

49

but!!

SL

N

V1

V2

52

torn away

6"

♪ = 72

shattered, lovingly

56

60

V1

V2

SL

N

p

pp

6

mp

9:8

5

ppp

7

64

pppp

n

mf

sub

54

48

68

=50

a dimming premonition

F

S

msp

ord

"crossfade"

3

♪ = 66 decay

70

V1

V2

7:4

SL

N

disease

73

L/C
(legno/crini)

77

LT
(legno tratto)

L/C

LT
(legno tratto)

80

LT

L/C

V1

gl.

pp

7

gl.

3

mf

gl.

mf

mp

gl.

3

p

L/C

V2

5

[mf]

gl.

3

mf

mp

gl.

3

p

gl.

3

mf

sub

83

LT

L/C

LT

V1

gl.

mp

3

pp

3

p

pp

ppp

n

LT

L/C

LT

V2

gl.

p

gl.

3

mp

pp

ppp

gl.

n

passing

86

LT

L/C

V1

gl.

p

3

ppp

LT

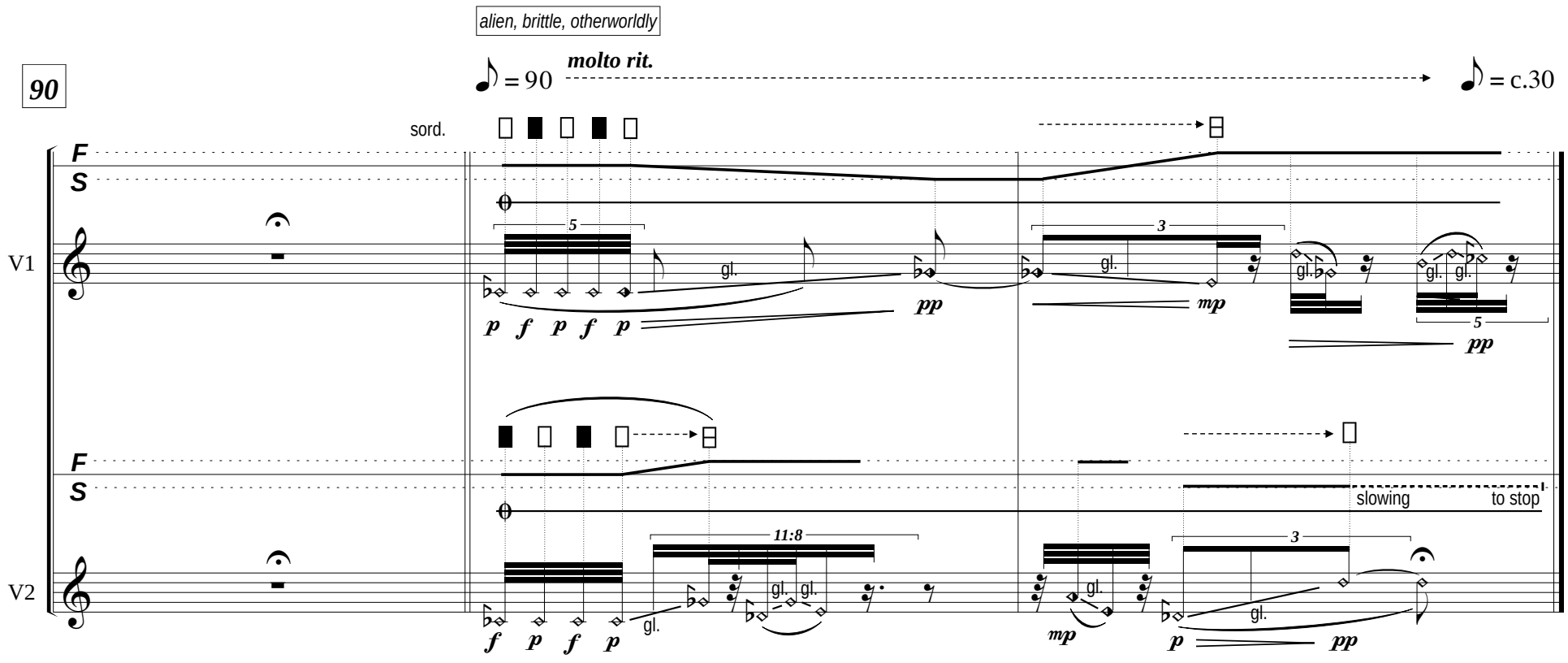
L/C

V2

p

ppp

ppp


alien, brittle, otherworldly
90
♪ = 90
molto rit.
♪ = c.30
sord.
F
S
V1
V2
5
3
gl.
p f p f p
pp
mp
11:8
slowing
to stop

II.

♩ = 50 *fragile, shifting*

senza sord.

V1

V2

F
S

n *pp* 5:3 *n* *pp* *n*

legato "crossfade" between violins

MSP ----► ORD

3 *pp* *n* 5:3 *p* *n* *pp* *p* *n* *pp*

4

faint *interruption*

MSP ORD N 3

III 3 *mp* *n* *pp* 5:3 *mp* (♭) (♩) *mp* (♭) ----► semp *n* *mp*

N 3

III 5:3 3 *mp* *pp* (♩) 8[(♭) ----► semp *mp* *n* *mp* *n*

7

restored yet disturbed

SP ORD MSP ----► ST ORD

III 8[(♭) 3 *mf* 3 *n* *pp* 5:3 *p* *n* 3 *pp* *p* *n* 3 *pp*

MSP ----► ORD MSP ST ----► ORD

III 8[♭ (8[♭) *pp* *n* 5:3 *mp* *n* *pp* *n* *pp* *n*

10

déjà vu

shadowy, slipping away

V1

V2

13

indifferent

V1

V2

16

marking, questioning

V1

V2

19

♪ = 72

muddled nostalgia

F

F
S

V1

pp

p

7

mp

5

pp

SL

F
S

V2

pp

mp

7

pp

23

N

♩ = 50

apathetic

8va

C

II

V1

6

mp

pp

p

N

8va

B

II

V2

5

p

7

mp

5

pp

pp

26

(8va)

B

A

B

A

II

V1

n

p

n

p

n

p

n

pp

n

p

n

p

n

mp

n

8va

A

II

V2

p

n

p

n

pp

n

pp

n

p

n

mp

n

mp

n

29

(8va)

♪ = 60 pale affection

V1

p n p n p mf

pp mp

(8va) 15ma

B A

III I

V2

p n pp n mf

5

p n

32

SL

♩ = 50 still,

V1

6

pp mp ppp n

F S

V2

pp 4:3 p mp ppp n pp

36

rising purpose and concern

15ma 8va

B C B

MSP ORD

F S

V1

5:3 p n pp p n pp 3 n pp n pp n

15ma 8va

C B B

F S

V2

5:3 n p n 3 pp n pp n pp n pp

39

(8va)

8va

15ma

8va

8va

V1

pp> n <pp> n <p> <p > <p <mp > mp f

8va

8va

8va

V2

<pp>n <pp>n <p > <p > mp <mp mp f

42

ST

8va

15ma

SP

V1

mp p ppp

ST

8va

SP

V2

mp p ppp

45

OB

a bewildering, another

ORD

MSP

ORD

3

V1

p ppp mp ppsub

OB

ORD

MSP

SP

3

ORD

V2

p mp pp

48

V1

8va

A

pizz.

5:3

mp

p

ppp

arco

pppp

V2

8va

mp

ppp

pizz.

arco

pppp

51

(8va)

15ma

arco

A

B

C

ppp

mp

pp

(8va)

pizz.

arco

gliss

ppp

mp

pp

54

♪ = 90

postscript, photocopy

sord.

F

S

semp

(to end)

III

V

mf p mf p

f p f

p

pp

57

F

S

III

IV

slowing

slowing to stop

mf

III.

♪ = 90 *authentic, an open window*

senza sord.

F
S

semp *

V1

IV

p *f* *p* *f* *p*
sub sub sub sub

pp

mp

mf

slowing

pp

mf

pp

** VN1: The entire third movement is muted strings except in mm 19-24.*

4

F
S

V1

p *pp*

mf

slowing to stop

intimate, poetic

7

F
S

V1

IV

p *f* *p* *f* *p*
sub sub sub sub

gl.

pp

mp

pp

F
S

V2

semp *

IV

f *p* *f* *p*
sub sub sub sub

gl.

mp

slowing to stop

p

pp

III

f *p* *f*
sub sub sub

mf

** VN2: The enitre third movement is muted strings except in mm 19-23 and 29-30.*

10

F
S

V1

OB

ORD

IV III

III

rate increasing

trem. not synchronized

SP

ORD

F
S

slowing to stop

V2

III II

slowing

III

13

irregular popping

V1

F
S

f

III

11:8

f

p sub f sub p sub

f sub

5

3

p sub

V2

F
S

irregular popping

II

5

mf

pp

5

f sub p sub f sub p sub

mf sub p sub mf sub

16

= 50

misplaced beauty

A

B

A

V1

F
S

3

pp

mf

p

ppp

mf

mp

8[

(* not muted)

B

A

V2

F
S

pp

mf

mp

pp

mf

pp

mp

8[

8[

20

return; absurd, stale

SP

V1

f

p

ORD

F
S

semp

III

5

ST

8[

V2

f

pp

mp

p

pp

psub

mf sub p sub mf sub p sub

24

V1

V2

pp

(to end)

ORD

F

S

V

OB

IV

III

5

mp sub

pp sub

mp sub

pp sub

3

f sub

p sub

f sub

p sub

pp

slowing

27

irregular popping

(wait for vn 2)

rational, distant

ST

B

slowing to stop

poco

ppp

31

nihilism

SP

gl.

mf

ff

4:3

6

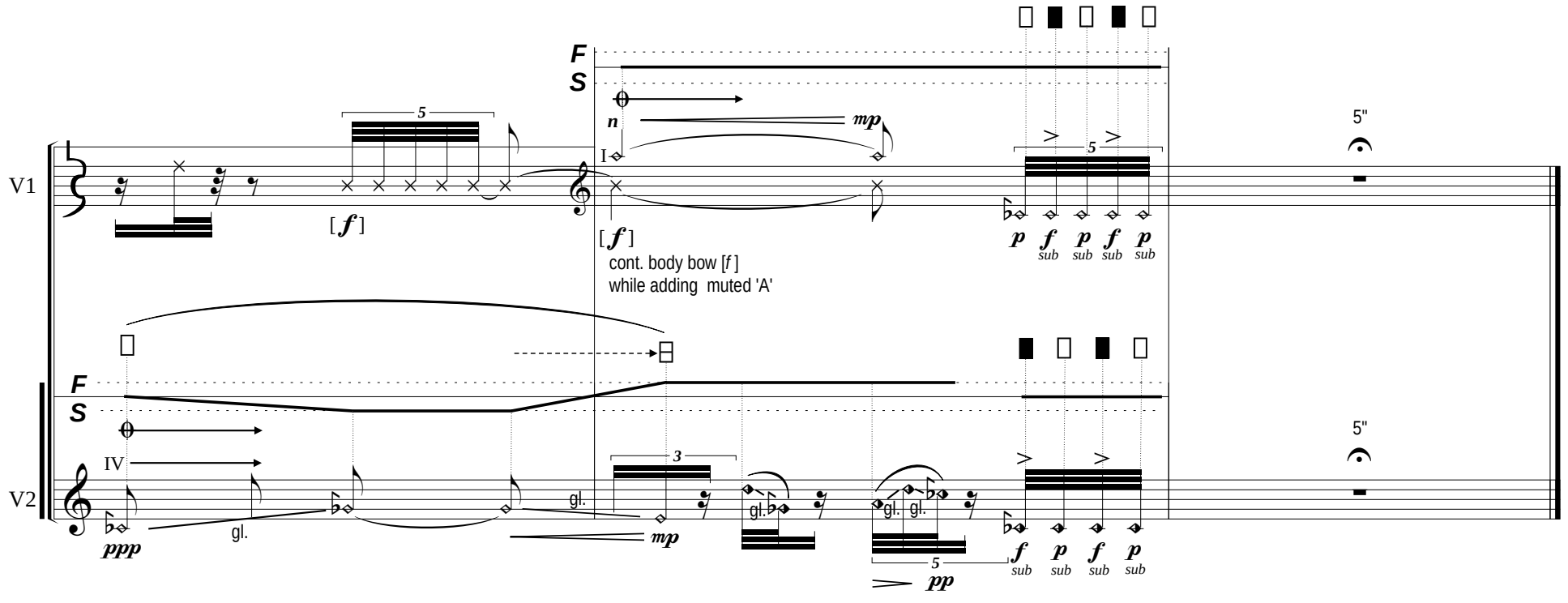
9:8

[f]

[p]

mp

rate increasing


V1
V2
F
S
IV
I
n
[f]
mp
ppp
gl.
3
5
5"
p
f
sub
pp
cont. body bow [f]
while adding muted 'A'

IV.

♩ = 50 *exquisite, harsh, almost meaningless, with visceral essence*

V1

V2

gl.

poco*

ff

* poco is 1/2 step or less

10:8

4

pp

f

ff

7

10

poco

13

V1

V2

poco

gl.

16

V1

V2

SP

ORD

I

II

pp

18

V1

V2

gl.

SP

ORD

poco

ff

22

breathless

V1

V2

gl.

24

more

V1

V2

gl.

27

V1

V2

gl.

SP

31

SP

ORD

poco

mf

mp

ORD

poco

mf

ff

SP

SP

34

ORD

poco

V1

SP

p

f

V2

ORD

gl.

SP

MSP

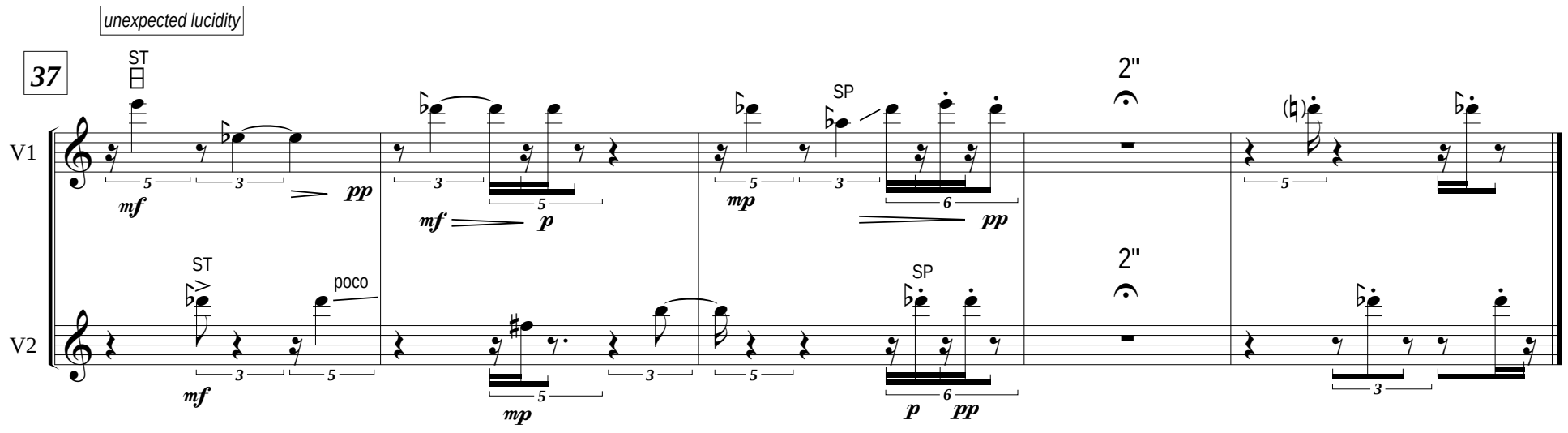
mp

ff

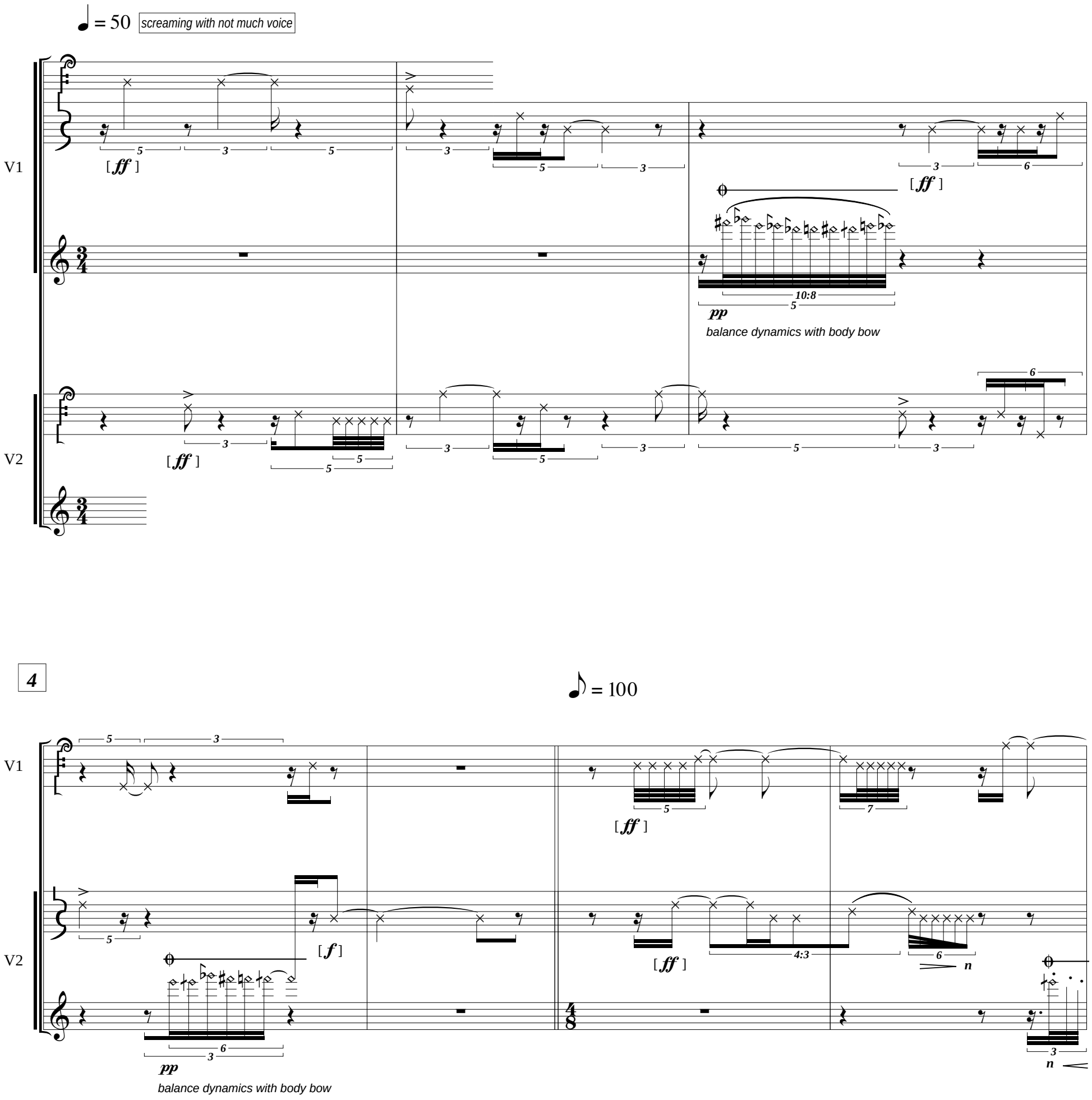
p

f

pp


unexpected lucidity
37
ST
V1
mf
pp
mf
p
SP
mp
pp
2"
(♮)
ST
poco
V2
mf
mp
SP
p
pp
2"

V.


♩ = 50
screaming with not much voice
V1
V2
[ff]
[ff]
[ff]
10:8
pp
balance dynamics with body bow
4
♪ = 100
[f]
[ff]
4:3
n
pp
balance dynamics with body bow
n

8

♩ = 50

♪ = 100

V1

V2

11:8

n

[f]

3

pp

5:3

p

[ff]

5

7

12

♩ = 50

3

17

no decresc.

6

Somerville, MA
10/24/2015