

John Pax

Air burnt dry

for reinforced violoncello

(2022)

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first performance

Harvard University, May 21st, 2022

Pieter Matthynssens, *violoncello*

John Pax, *live amplification*

NOTES

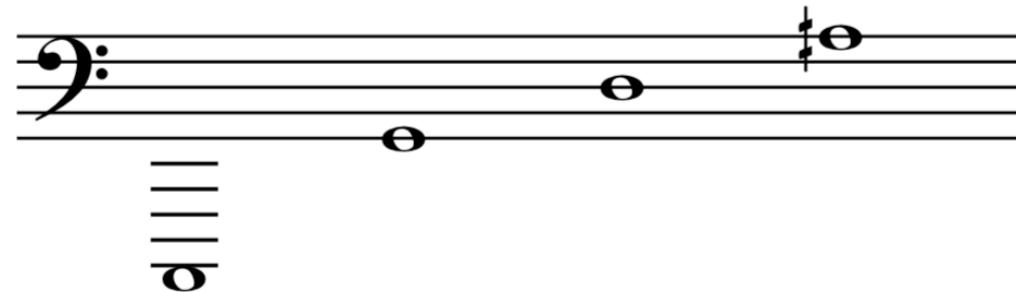
REINFORCEMENT

The work must be reinforced in some way, for example an exceptional reverberant acoustic, or electronic amplification.

In the case of electronic amplification, a single loudspeaker should be placed in front of the live performer. The reinforcement should combine the voice and instrument into one sonority (additional reverberation is encouraged).

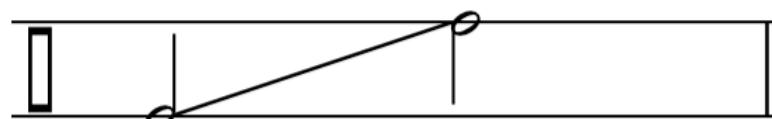
VIOLONCELLO

SCORDATURA



NOTATION

Playing behind the bridge, glissandi from lowest to highest pitch.



'tasto' – away from the bridge (toward the tailpiece)

'pont.' – toward the bridge

wide, fast vibrato



bowing on the bridge



half-harmonic finger pressure



harmonic finger pressure (n.b. not always a harmonic node)



TECHNIQUE

The bow is often moving from one position to another, almost always over the bridge. Except for a few moments, the result should appear as a single sonority; the work is best approached as a series of continuous lines. Accentuate changes in timbral structure through these shifts (harmonics, etc).

Behind the bridge

Always play with a titled bow (little hair), light bow pressure (flautando but ordinary speed), and very sweetly; avoid harsh 'squeaks'. Pitch change (and vibrato) is achieved by pulling the string away from the fingerboard.

On the bridge

Thought of as a transitional space between playing ordinario, and behind the bridge. Aim for a thick, rich sonority during the 'solo' passages.

Ordinario

Always play with a flat bow.

Vocalisations

Always combine with the violoncello sonority, hidden. The vocalizations should be performed uneventfully, plainly as if emerging from the violoncello itself; intelligibility of the text is *not* desired. Text in parenthesis '()' is inhaled. Arrows up or down indicate a change from dark to bright timbre.

TEXT

מִלְאָזֶן קֹלֶךְ וּמַעֲנֵר אַמְרָתָךְ תִּצְפָּנָה:

καὶ πρὸς τὸ ἔδαφος ἡ φωνή σου ἀσθενήσει

and your voice shall whisper out of dust

Book of Isaiah

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Score in C

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Score in C

1 = 42 meno mosso (air in search of form)

violincello

sul IV 'pont.' → 'tasto'
 (sadly, throughout)

60 punta d'arco e poco flautando
 (dust overflows the voice)

punt. → bridge
 'normale' (fine)
 (dust overflows the voice)

ordinario ponticello
 pppp sub. (sharp heat)

morendo
 poco più

52
 IV vib. → non (cold quiver, frail)

con moto
 pp → bridge
 molto (brilliant)

60
 subito f+ (from resonance) → tasto
 subito poco flaut. (yearning)

più mosso (hollow vowels)
 pont. (hazy, melismatic) → bridge
 (hushed response)

20
 'pont.' molto vibrato → norm.
 (subded urgency)

'pont.' molto vibrato → (heat)
 (meandering)

meno mosso
 sul III tasto (yearning)

'pont' molto vibrato (still)

più lento (harsh heat)
 p poss. (furiously) poco cresc. (subdued)

poco 'pont.' molto pont.

più mosso accel.
 tasto (radiant sap) (molto dolce)
 III molto vib. più
 sub. più

$\text{♩} = 40$ sospeso (*a quiet cool*)

whistle (*light*) mostly air (*pale blue*)

31 **pppp** beneath 'cello sonority
norm. III (15th) **pppp** (*clear*)
(14th) poco pont.
(13th) **p poss.** poco più
ppp cresc. poco
ppp (dark)

$\text{♩} = 52$ con moto

(emerging)
pont. poss. tasto molto
tasto bridge
ppp (*a secret*) **pppp** più
ppp (*ghostly*)

 $\text{♩} = 42$ primo tempo

'tasto' IV punta d'arco (senza vib.)

poss. voice: lo → u → e → (o → y → im) → ph → s → norm.
 ppp più ppp pppp ppp ppp
molto espress. tasto + +
+ ppp subito dolce (a little bright)
molto dolce quasi dim e rit.

$\text{♩} = 42$ primo tempo più mosso poco accel.

 $\text{♩} = 90$

behind the bridge 'pont.' molto flautando

47 3 3
pppp pppp
(an echo)

 $\text{♩} = 50$

voice: (i → m) → a → t
'pont.' bridge 'tasto'
p più pp mp
(hot wind, trees whipping)

$\text{♩} = 50$ meno mosso poco rall.

lo → s → (a →)
'tasto'
pont. ppp più f ppp ff sub.

subito più poco accel.

 $\text{♩} = 50$ morendo (*reverently*)

pont. → tasto 5
p pp f ppp pp
(l.v.)

pont. (subito) non vib. → vibrato (slow, wide)
(hot sun) (glowing)
ppp
ppp
ppp
(dry earth)

ph o → vl → e → sh
vib. (fast) pppp
(hot sun through leaves)
III (non vib.)
pppp poco
decresc. (l.v.)

