

GREAT SYMPHONY IN C in 5 movements

for two double basses and electronics

The image displays three systems of musical notation for two double basses and electronics. Each system consists of two staves. The first system begins with a **Tempo 1** marking and a **più mosso** tempo change to $\text{♩} = 112$. It includes performance instructions: "look at Nick slowly and suspiciously" and a boxed letter **B**. The second system starts with a **meno mosso** tempo change to $\text{♩} = 75$ and a **Tempo 1** marking, with a **più mosso** change to $\text{♩} = 112$ later. It includes the instruction "look at Nick slowly" and a boxed letter **C**. The third system begins with a **Tempo 1** marking and a **meno mosso** tempo change to $\text{♩} = 75$, followed by a **più mosso** change to $\text{♩} = 112$ and a **Tempo 1** marking. It includes the instruction "look at Nick slowly and suspiciously" and a boxed letter **C**. Dynamic markings such as *ff*, *pp*, *pp sub*, *mp*, and *pp* are used throughout the score.

GREAT SYMPHONY IN C
in 5 movements

for two double basses and electronics

MICHAEL EDWARDS

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great symphony in c
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programme note

great symphony in c (in five movements), for two double basses and electronics, was written for Javad Javadzade and Niek de Groot. These two musicians use different open-string tunings: Javad in fifths from low C, like a cello; Niek the more usual fourths from low E. This offers all sorts of possibilities for single and double-harmonic combinations and these are the mainstay for three out of the five movements of my piece.

The title alludes, amongst other things, to Schubert's Ninth symphony, with its grand opening horn melody. This was bold and perhaps risky instrumentation for its time, given that brass instruments were in a transition period between natural instruments that used *transposition crooks* and those which used valves. For instance, the fourth note of Schubert's melody, middle A, was not playable on the natural instruments, so unless new valve instruments were available it would have been played as the seventh partial of the C fundamental, tuned down with hand and lip, with all the attendant risk of not quite making it (in tune). In quoting this melody across the two differently tuned basses, my piece plays with the divergent frequencies arising out of playing ostensibly the same pitches as different harmonics, e.g. a high C as the 16th partial of the low C string, or the 7th partial of the D string—theoretically at least almost 10Hz, or 31 cents apart.

The *five movements* of my title refer not only to the actual separate movements which make up this work but also to five stage movements: starting far apart, and ideally invisible to the audience, the duo eventually meets mid-stage, close enough to play each others' instruments in fact—at least the open strings, with the lowest three forming a lovely sub-bass C Major triad.

Each movement has its own subtitle: 1. *hello again franz*, 2. *sniping from the sidelines*, 3. *double harmonic bliss*, 4. *this'll embarrass ya*, and 5. *this is not what arnold meant*. Furthering the connection to the symphony, which is of course meant only tongue-in-cheek, the fourth movement is a dance, though by no means a tame *minuet and trio*—a *scherzo* is much more apt here, as it was so often in the works of Schubert himself, including his Ninth Symphony in C, the *Great*, though we could argue I take the joke far too far here.

programmtext

great symphony in c (in five movements), für zwei Kontrabässe und Elektronik, wurde für Javad Javadzade und Niek de Groot geschrieben. Diese beiden Musiker verwenden unterschiedliche Stimmungen der offenen Saiten: Javad in Quinten vom tiefen C, wie ein Cello; Niek die übliche Quartan vom tiefen E. Dies bietet alle möglichen Möglichkeiten für einfach- und doppelharmonische Kombinationen, und diese sind für drei der fünf Sätze meines Stücks die Grundlage.

Der Titel spielt unter anderem auf Schuberts neunte Sinfonie, mit ihrer großen Hornmelodie, an. Für die damalige Zeit war dies eine kühne und vielleicht riskante Instrumentierung, da sich die Blechblasinstrumente in einer Übergangsphase zwischen natürlichen Instrumenten, die *Ansatzrohre* verwendeten, und solchen, die Ventile hatten. Zum Beispiel war die vierte Note von Schuberts Melodie, das mittlere A, auf natürlichen Instrumenten nicht spielbar, so dass sie, solange keine neuen Ventilinstrumente vorhanden waren, als siebter Teilton des C-Grundtons gespielt, mit Hand und Lippe nach unten gestimmt und mit dem Risiko, es nicht ganz zu schaffen oder gut zu intonieren. Indem ich diese Melodie über die beiden unterschiedlich gestimmten Bässe zitiere, spielt mein Stück mit den abweichenden Frequenzen, die sich aus dem Spiel der scheinbar gleichen Tonhöhen als verschiedene Obertöne gespielt werden, z. B. ein hohes C als 16tel-Teilton der tiefen C-Saite oder der 7. Teilton der D-Saite - theoretisch zumindest fast 10Hz, oder 31 Cent auseinander.

Die *fünf Sätze* meines Titels beziehen sich nicht nur auf die eigentlichen einzelnen Sätze die dieses Werk ausmachen, sondern auch auf fünf Bühnenbewegungen: Das Duo beginnt weit voneinander entfernt, und im Idealfall unsichtbar für das Publikum, trifft sich aber schließlich in der Mitte der Bühne, nahe genug, um die Instrumente des anderen zu spielen - zumindest die leeren Saiten, wobei die untersten drei Saiten einen schönen C-Dur-Dreiklang im Subbass bilden.

Jeder Satz hat seinen eigenen Untertitel: 1. *hello again franz*, 2. *sniping from the sidelines*, 3. *double harmonic bliss*, 4. *this'll embarrass ya* und 5. *this is not what arnold meant*. Eine Vertiefung der Verbindung zur Sinfonie - die natürlich nur augenzwinkernd gemeint ist - ist der vierte Satz, ein Tanz, wenn auch keineswegs ein zahmes *Minuett und Trio* - ein *Scherzo* ist hier viel passender, wie so oft in den Werken von Schubert selbst, einschließlich seiner Neunten Symphonie in C, der *Großen*, obwohl wir schon argumentieren könnten, dass ich hier den Witz ein wenig zu weit treibe.

instrumentation

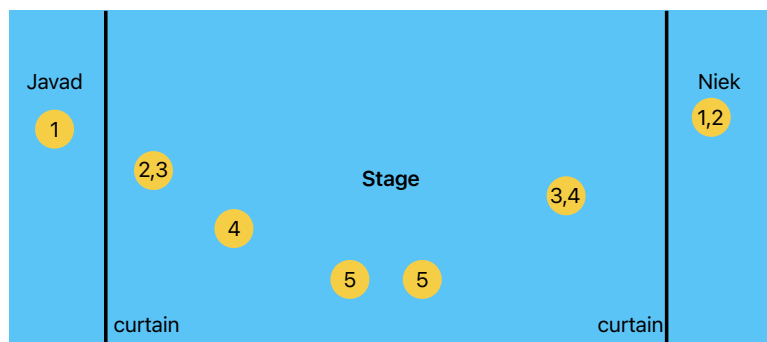
This piece was written for Javad Javadzade (Double Bass 1 in the score) and Niek de Groot. Javad uses fifths tuning, with open strings the same as the cello. Niek uses the more usual fourths tuning (no C extension necessary). As such the natural harmonics in the parts are only available with those specific tunings.

A solo version of the piece (with fifths tuning) is also possible. This will be performable from one stage position (see below). Details forthcoming.

stage positions

The players take different stage positions for each movement, as indicated below and in the score. They begin invisible to the audience, off to the sides of the stage (microphones project their sound however). The curtain is optional of course, but the invisibility is important. The positions could also be changed to suit the venue but starting apart in movement 1 and coming very close together at the end is integral to the piece.

During and as part of the performance, the movement from one position to the other can be slightly comic, exaggerated, scurrying (but there's no rush). On the other hand it could be completely deadpan. This is up to the performer(s).



optional nonsense

A further, more comedic and extreme possibility is offered for your consideration. If you're game and think you can pull it off without it being too stupid, get yourself a cape—something glittery perhaps, or a graduation cape if this is your final degree concert¹—and between movements 2 and 3, and/or 4 and 5, have one of the stage hands bring you the cape and hang it around your shoulders. Before proceeding to play, you shrug it off, melodramatically. You can choose to leave it on the floor or have it put on again before you leave the stage at the end. This is, of course, a reference to the late great James Brown and his cape act; see for instance: <https://youtu.be/vrUY2GRUsV8>

electronics

Max/MSP patches are used mainly to trigger sound files, as indicated by a thick downward arrow in the score. The sound files are in 5th-order ambisonics so can be mapped onto practically any number of loudspeakers, including mere stereo. One of the players should have a mirror of the computer screen in order to confirm triggers and verify other information during the performance. The easiest solution for this would be via the Max/MSP MIRA app on an iPad or a web browser on a laptop.

At least one pedal, preferably two, operated by the first bassist, will be necessary to trigger the electronics. Two pedals are preferred as this facilitates stepping forwards and backwards through the piece, both in rehearsal and should a trigger be executed at the wrong time during performance.

Microphones will be necessary for the bass(es). One clip-on and one condenser on a stand would be best. However, given the stage position movement, and depending on sound quality, it might be easier to use just the clip-on, or have several stands at the given stage positions. Another possibility is that the bassist(s) move their mic stands with their basses between movements. That could be quite comical.

The piece is made to be playable without a computer musician, though it might be more comfortable if one is available, so s/he can start and monitor the patches and make sure that triggers are executed, etc.

A sound engineer will be necessary to manage levels of both the microphone and Max/MSP signals.

See the readme.txt file in the Max Patches folder for more details.

¹In which case your duo partner could wear a mortarboard (academic cap).

for Javad Javadzade and Niek de Groot

1. hello again franz

michael edwards 2024

both players invisible at position 1; begin very nonchalantly—as if trying to get it together, nothing more—with an unpitched held multiphonic; allow a small amount of the open C to creep in, for depth; keep it all going but accept that the spectral contents will shift, perhaps abruptly, as may the dynamic: restart as necessary and hold for about a minute before moving onto the sounding high C; hold that for about a minute too before proceeding to letter A.

IV:16 (i.e. 16th partial on C string) **A** **2** all natural harmonics unless otherwise indicated

♩ = 142

Double Bass 1

p max. (adjust mic blend and keep down to pp/ppp if necessary)

B **12** IV:18 IV:20 don't let this stick out too much: it's a hidden quotation so keep the sound a little dirty

7

C (tiny accent then straight to nothing then cresc.)

16

IV:14 III:10 (or also on IV)

f p mf pp sub. sim. mp

Musical score for measures 27-37. The top staff contains a melodic line with various dynamics: *pp*, *mf*, *mp*, *ppp*, *(ppp)*, and *mf*. A box labeled 'D' is positioned above measure 37, with a downward-pointing arrow and a red box containing the number '37'. The bottom staff shows a long held note with a dynamic of *mf sempre*. A rehearsal mark 'II:7' is located between the staves.

Musical score for measures 40-49. A double bar line is at the start. A text instruction reads: "from here on the long held notes should explore timbre through varying bow position but also with sudden bow and dynamic changes (*ad lib.*)". A box labeled 'E' is above measure 47. Dynamics include *mf* and *f*. A rehearsal mark 'II:8' is located between the staves.

Musical score for measures 50-59. A double bar line is at the start. Dynamics include *mf*, *pp*, and *f*. A text instruction reads: "sim. *ad lib.*". A rehearsal mark 'II:8' is located between the staves.

only restart when
the sound file is
completely out

60 **F** (arco) ♩ = 152 (III:10) (IV:14) pizz. arco freeze

ppp *f* *p*

III:12 II:6 I:4 freeze

ppp *f* *p*

Detailed description: The image shows two staves of musical notation in 9/8 time. The top staff begins with a box containing the letter 'F' and a tempo marking of ♩ = 152. Above the staff are performance instructions: '(arco)', '(III:10)', '(IV:14)', 'pizz. arco', and 'freeze'. Dynamic markings *ppp*, *f*, and *p* are placed below the staff. The bottom staff starts with 'pizz.' and has dynamic markings *ppp*, *f*, and *p*. Above it are performance instructions: 'III:12', 'II:6', 'I:4', and 'freeze'. A red box on the right contains the text 'take position 2,3' and another red box below it contains 'remain at position 1,2'.

take position 2,3

remain at position 1,2

2. sniping from the sidelines

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all natural harmonics unless otherwise indicated (number after : is the partial)

♩ = 101 (minimum)

più mosso ♩ = 112

Tempo I

quick nervous look at Niek

double bass 1

double bass 2

IV:7 III:3 III:4 IV:5 III:7 II:7 III:8 III:5

p *ff sub.* *p sub.*

II:7 IV:5

pp *ff* *p sub.*

4

più mosso ♩ = 112

Tempo I

nervous look at Niek

7

ff *p* *p sub.* *p* *poco* *p sub.*

III:7 III:5 III:8 IV:7 IV:7

7

meno mosso ♩ = 75

Tempo I

più mosso ♩ = 112

14

A

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

II:5 III:3 III:4 III:4

15

più mosso ♩ = 112

23

Tempo I

25

look at Niek slowly and suspiciously

B

Tempo I

21

ff *pp*

I:7

I:5

quick nervous look at Niek

meno mosso ♩ = 75 Tempo I

più mosso ♩ = 112

30

pp *mf* *pp* *mp* *pp*

pp *mf* *pp* *mp* *pp sub.*

meno mosso ♩ = 75 pesante

39

40

look at Niek slowly and suspiciously

più mosso ♩ = 112

C

Tempo I

38

ff *pp sub.* *pp* *mp* *pp*

ff *pp sub.* *pp* *mp* *pp*

Tempo I

46 *mp pp* *rit.*.....

più mosso ♩ = 112

54 *ff* *pp* *mf* *Tempo I*

più mosso ♩ = 112

D **58**

62 *p* *ff* *p* *ff sub.* *p sub.* *ff sub.* *p sub.*

meno mosso ♩ = 75 *Tempo I* *più mosso* ♩ = 112 *Tempo I*

64 **65** **66** **67** (+page turn)

pesante *leggero*

(III:8) II:6 III:8

più mosso ♩ = 112

68 **68** **70** **72** **E** Tempo I **72** più mosso ♩ = 112 rit. Tempo I

ff *pizz.* *p* *ff* *p*

ff sub. *p* *ff sub.* *p*

più mosso ♩ = 112

75 **75** **77** **F** Tempo I **83** molto più mosso ♩ = 152

ff *pizz.* *p* *ppp* *p*

ff sub. *p sub.* *ppp* *ppp* *ppp* *p*

meno mosso ♩ = 128

(when col legno battuto, it is assumed that pitches will not generally sound perfectly but try anyway by tapping at the nodal points)

84 **86** **88** **89** **91** (+page turn)

ord. *clb.* *ff* *p* *ff* *p*

ff sub. *p sub.* *ff* *p*

95 più mosso ♩ = 152

92

93

G

sul pont.

Tempo I

p *ff* *pp*

100

102

H

quick nervous look at Niek

105 (this bar could be repeated ad lib.)

clb crini sim.

pp *mp* *pp*

clb crini clb sim. clb----- crini

pp *mp* *pp*

Tempo I

108

msp (molto sul pont.)

ord.

clb

112

msp

clb-----

114

clb-----

115 (+page turn)

msp-1 clb-----

pp *ff* *pp sub.*

msp (molto sul pont.)

3 ord.

msp

msp-----

clb crini

ff *pp sub.*

116 (clb) msp

122 ↓

nervous look at Niek

mp > pp

125 msp

nervous look at Niek

127 ↓

ord.

132 ↓

pizz. ord. pizz.

pp

ff

pp

meno mosso ♩ = 112

134 J

molto più mosso ♩ = 152

msp saltando

135 ↓

clb

poco (II:3) III:4

pp

143

sul pont. ↓ **143**

Tempo I msp

clb-----

pizz. **K** sul pont.-----

clb-----

mp sub. 0 5 0

pp 3 3

pp 3 3 3 3 3

pp 3 5 3

mp sub. pp

mso-----

sul pont.-----

col legno ord.

from here on, in both parts, when not playing pizz or battuto, play so close to the bridge (msp) that the pitches are really obscured
 meno mosso ♩ = 75

151

152 ↓ pizz.-----

ord. 3

look at Niek slowly and suspiciously

155 ↓

158 ↓ pizz.

mp 5 3

p pp 3

ppp 3

ppp 3 3 3 3 3

ppp 3 3 3 3 3

ord.-----

mso-----

ord.-----

ppp 3

ppp 3 3 3 3 3

160

163 ↓ clb-----

167 ↓ **L**

mp 3 3 3 3 3 3 3

ppp 3 3 3 3 3 3 3

ppp 3 3 3 3 3 3 3

ppp 3 3 3 3 3 3 3

ppp 3 3 3 3 3 3 3

ppp 3 3 3 3 3 3 3

ppp 3 3 3 3 3 3 3

ppp 3 3 3 3 3 3 3

ppp 3 3 3 3 3 3 3

ppp 3 3 3 3 3 3 3

170

171

174

nervous look at Niek

clb

ppp

f

f sub.

ppp sub.

M

rit..... ♩ = 75

Tempo I

179

182

quick nervous look at Niek

pizz.

battuto(crini)

remain at position 2,3

take position 3,4

p

ppp

poco

poco

pizz.

3. double harmonic bliss

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(all double harmonics)
♩ = 112 msp (molto sul pont.)-----

6 msp → sul pont. (no jeté)
9 sul pont. →

Double Bass 1
pp
jeté: the number of bounces is not fixed; proceed fluently to 'normal' bow to fill the duration;
also accept that depending on the playing technique, the jeté pitches may or not sound clearly

Double Bass 2
III
IV msp (molto sul pont.)-----
p msp → sul pont. (no jeté)
sul pont. →

10 ord. → msp
11 ord. → msp
bouncy/dancing battuto (crini)-----

circled-x notehead: crunch sound:
not overpressure but noisy/dissonant
più mosso ♩ = 140
battuto (crini)---
sul pont.
Tempo I
17 ord. →

10
pp → *mp* → *f* → *p*
ord. → msp → sul pont. → ord.
I
II ord.

14 **19** explore the spectral potential ad lib. (e.g. fast bow changes, almost circular)

Musical score for measures 19-29. The score is written for two staves in 4/4 time. Measure 19 is marked with a red box 'B' and a downward arrow. Measures 23, 25, and 29 are also marked with red boxes and downward arrows. The dynamic marking *f* is present at the beginning of the section.

Musical score for measures 31-39. The score is written for two staves in 4/4 time. Measure 31 is marked with a red box '32' and a downward arrow, with the instruction "ord. → crunch". Measure 36 is marked with a red box '36' and a downward arrow, with the instruction "light and airy, delicate but clear accents (though not interrupting)". Measure 37 is marked with a red box '37' and a downward arrow. Measure 39 is marked with a red box '39' and a downward arrow, with the instruction "again: explore spectrum". The dynamic marking *pp sub. < f* is present at the beginning of the section. A double bar line is shown before measure 31. The text "(sounding E (horn) in sound files)" is written to the right of the score.

Musical score for measures 44-49. The score is written for two staves in 4/4 time. Measure 44 is marked with a red box 'D' and a downward arrow. Measure 49 is marked with a red box '49' and a downward arrow. The dynamic marking *f* is present at the beginning of the section. The text "both bow behind the fingers and vary position from very close to the fingers (including some woody noise) and further away, *ad lib.*" is written above the score. The text "III IV" is written above the staff for measure 49, and "I II" is written below the staff for measure 49. The dynamic marking *pp* is present at the end of the section.

58

(sound files: last weird vocal)

E più mosso ♩ = 152

pizz. (two fingers)
bouncy again



when the groovy sound file starts, look at each other in confusion, as if something's gone wrong, then maybe shrug your shoulders and move to position 4

66

(+page turn)

take position 4

remain at position 3,4


4. this'll embarrass ya

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♩ = 101
the first 8 bars will loop; when you're ready, press the trigger to stop the loop: the file will stop immediately and continue with bar 9; the same principle applies to all bars within thick barlines

9 ↓ pizz. (slap)
join in happily ("what the hell?")

Double Bass 1



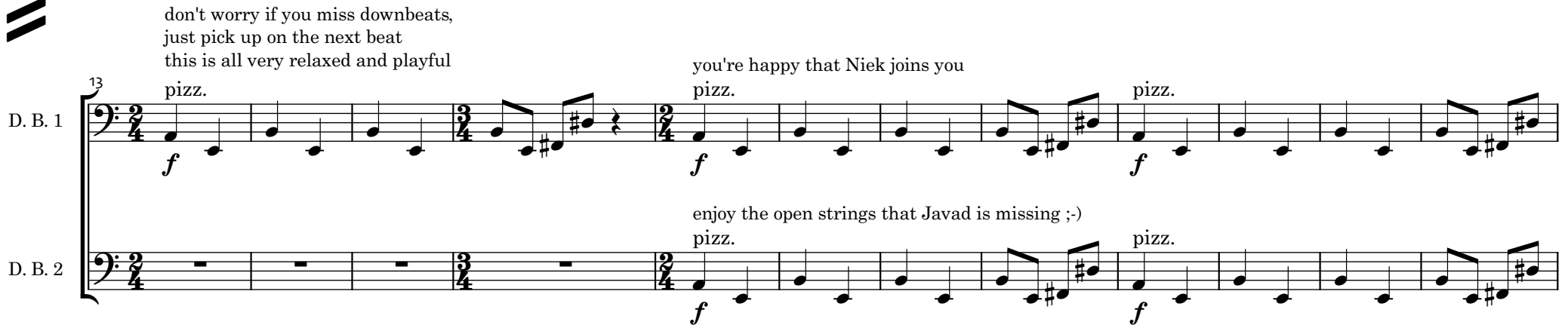
D. B. 1

don't worry if you miss downbeats, just pick up on the next beat this is all very relaxed and playful

you're happy that Niek joins you

D. B. 2

enjoy the open strings that Javad is missing ;-)



D. B. 1

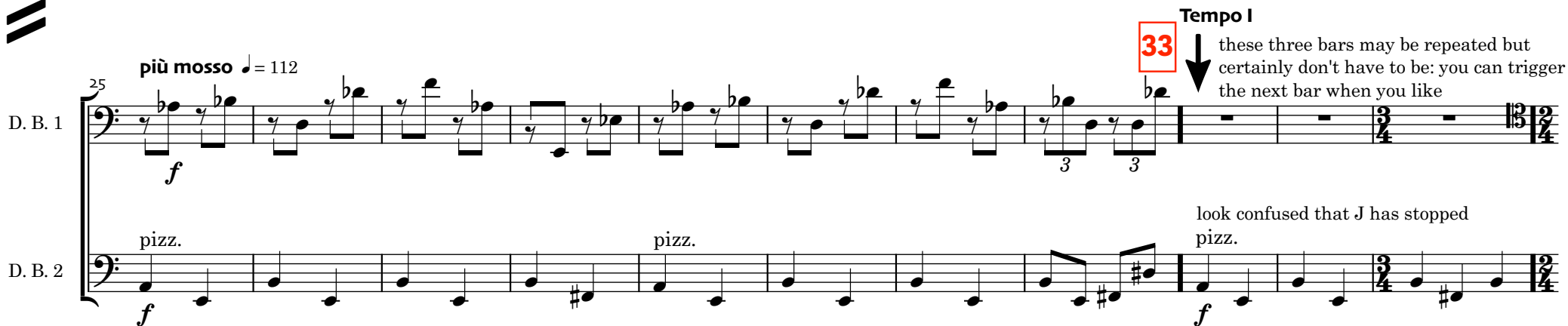
più mosso ♩ = 112

33 ↓ **Tempo I**

these three bars may be repeated but certainly don't have to be: you can trigger the next bar when you like

D. B. 2

look confused that J has stopped



più mosso ♩ = 128

a blatant interruption, a non-sequitur even

A 36 arco

this is now a wild, frenzied face-off (aka a bass battle); it is highly microtonal: do your best, at the given (almost impossible) tempi, but don't sweat it: frenzied microtonality is what counts the most

D. B. 1

ff sempre

these triggers need to be exactly at the end of a solo...

47 Tempo I

if Niek hesitates before the next bar, continue the pizz. *ad lib*

D. B. 1

pizz.

B 51 arco

più mosso ♩ = 128

D. B. 1

ff sempre

...but these triggers at the beginning can be delayed: they're part of the face-off, the 'daring to have another go'; the sound file will loop until the trigger point cuts it off; you can also see the pedal a bit like the stop button in speed chess

arco (note that the solo is very similar each time and is in fact a process of the gradual widening of the intervals of an 'ur-solo', with rhythmic variations and loops)

D. B. 2

ff sempre

D. B. 2

ff sempre

C

Javad brutally interrupts Niek (no trigger necessary)

arco

D. B. 1

D. B. 1

D più mosso ♩ = 140
(trigger only the first time)

81 sim. to letter B

D. B. 1

D. B. 2

D. B. 1

D. B. 2

più mosso ♩ = 140

E **97**

D. B. 1

arco



D. B. 1

103 (104)

gliss.

F

ord. → crunch

sfz *pp* *ff*

D. B. 2



D. B. 1

109

114

Tempo I

pizz.

D. B. 2

pizz.

più mosso ♩ = 152

G

118

arco

D. B. 1

D. B. 2

116

arco

ff sempre

pizz.

D. B. 1

D. B. 2

123

H

129

pizz. Play 5 times

D. B. 1

D. B. 2

129

arco

più mosso ♩ = 164

I

141

arco

D. B. 1

D. B. 2

D. B. 1

D. B. 2

143

fff

a bit crunchy

3

3

fff

D. B. 1

D. B. 2

147

Play 3 times

153

take position 5

(+page turn)

trigger abruptly after a short pause; the low C sound file will continue until the next trigger

take position 5

(tie on repeats)

V

5. this is not what arnold meant

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place the two basses facing each as close as possible so you can reach over and bow the strings of your duo partner's instrument

arrows icon: play the other bass;
triangular noteheads: 'battuto'

(these exchanges might necessitate dropping the tempo to c. 100 so that playing safely and accurately together is prioritised)

circled-x notehead: crunch sound: not overpressure but noisy/dissonant

$\text{♩} = 142$

Double Bass 1

Double Bass 2

f

fff *f*

as big and resonant as possible without forcing the dynamic

these big crescendi should be uneven, rough: dig into the strings, explore the possible timbres, challenge each other with sudden movements and dynamic changes, sometimes together, sometimes in the opposite direction (e.g. accent in 1 causes dynamic drop in 2), etc. etc. ad lib.

8

A

p *f* *sfz* *p* *ff* *sfz* *p*

p *f* *sfz* *p* *ff* *sfz* *p*

still uneven despite constant dynamic but try to swap instruments as smoothly as possible

(sim. on decrescendi: uneven etc.)

20

ff *sffz* *p* *f* *p* *(p)* *f*

B **28**



uneven again, as at letter A, but even more dramatic this time

start irregularly switching in 7th partial of IV until it dominates

big, fat, and resonant

31

p *fff* *f*

C

wild *sul pont.* timbral exploration, using fast left-hand vibrato, light but wide, varying considerably, in collaboration, together and against each other

(the sound is now anything but static and held)

41

all natural harmonics
pizz. (two fingers)

51 III ♩ = 152
IV II

D

bouncy

51

*f*_{poss} *p* *f* *p* *fff* *f* *p* *f*

*f*_{poss} *p* *f* *p* *fff* *f* *p* *f*

58

p *ppp*

p *ppp*

The image shows a musical score for two staves, measures 58 through 61. The music is written in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The first staff features a melodic line with eighth notes and rests, starting with a dynamic marking of *p* and ending with *ppp*. The second staff features a harmonic accompaniment with chords and eighth notes, also starting with *p* and ending with *ppp*. Both staves conclude with a double bar line.

