

# 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 with a metronome marking of  $\text{♩} = 112$ . It includes performance instructions such as "look at Nick slowly and suspiciously" and a section labeled **B**. Dynamics range from *ff* to *pp*. The second system starts with a **meno mosso** tempo change to  $\text{♩} = 75$  and a **Tempo 1** marking. It includes instructions like "with nervous look at Nick (tbl.)" and a **più mosso** tempo change back to  $\text{♩} = 112$ . Dynamics include *ppp*, *mf*, *pp*, *mp*, and *pp sub.*. The third system begins with a **Tempo 1** marking and a **meno mosso** tempo change to  $\text{♩} = 75$ , with the instruction "look at Nick slowly and suspiciously". It includes a section labeled **C** and a **più mosso** tempo change to  $\text{♩} = 112$ . Dynamics include *ff*, *pp sub.*, *pp*, and *mp*.



**GREAT SYMPHONY IN C**  
**in 5 movements**

for two double basses and electronics

**MICHAEL EDWARDS**

michael edwards  
great symphony in c  
in 5 movements  
for two double basses and electronics

[m@michael-edwards.org](mailto:m@michael-edwards.org)  
[www.michael-edwards.org](http://www.michael-edwards.org)

ME117  
copyright © michael edwards 2024  
all rights reserved

## 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

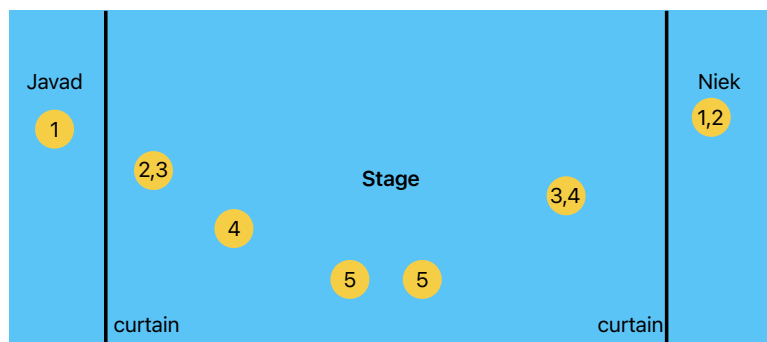
This piece was written for Javad Javadzade (Double Bass 1 in the score) and Niek de Groot. Javad uses fifths tuning, with open strings the same as the cello. Niek uses the more usual fourths tuning (no C extension necessary). As such the natural harmonics in the parts are only available with those specific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

<sup>1</sup>In 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** all natural harmonics unless otherwise indicated

♩ = 142

Double Bass 1

*p*

**B** IV:18 IV:20

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

sim.

*f p* *mf pp sub.* *mp*

The score is written for Double Bass 1 in treble clef. It consists of three systems of staves. The first system starts with a double bar line and a measure containing a note with a box around it, with an arrow pointing down to it. This is followed by a measure with a note and a box around it, with an arrow pointing down to it. The second system starts with a double bar line and a measure with a note and a box around it, with an arrow pointing down to it. This is followed by a measure with a note and a box around it, with an arrow pointing down to it. The third system starts with a double bar line and a measure with a note and a box around it, with an arrow pointing down to it. This is followed by a measure with a note and a box around it, with an arrow pointing down to it. The score includes various performance instructions such as dynamics (*f*, *p*, *mf*, *pp*, *sub.*, *mp*), accents, and natural harmonics. The tempo is marked as ♩ = 142. The score is divided into sections labeled A, B, and C. Section A is marked with a box around the letter 'A' and includes the instruction 'all natural harmonics unless otherwise indicated'. Section B is marked with a box around the letter 'B' and includes the instructions 'IV:18 IV:20'. Section C is marked with a box around the letter 'C' and includes the instruction '(tiny accent then straight to nothing then cresc.)'. The score also includes a 'sim.' instruction and a dynamic marking of *mp*.

27

*pp* *mf* *mp* *ppp* (*ppp*) < *mf* *mf sempre*

II:7

from here on the long held notes should explore timbre through varying bow position but also with sudden bow and dynamic changes (*ad lib.*)

40

*mf* *f* (*f*) *f* (*f*)

II:8

sim. *ad lib.*

50

*mf* *pp* *f* *mf* *f*

II:8

only restart when  
the sound file is  
completely out

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

*p* *f* *p*

III:12 II:6 I:4 freeze

*pizz.* *p* *f* *p*

Detailed description: The image shows a musical score for two staves. The top staff begins with a box containing the letter 'F' and the number '60' above it. The tempo is marked as ♩. = 152. The first staff contains two measures of music with a dynamic marking of *p*. The second staff contains two measures of music with a dynamic marking of *f*, followed by two measures with a dynamic marking of *p*. The bottom staff contains two measures of music with a dynamic marking of *p*, followed by two measures with a dynamic marking of *f*, and finally two measures with a dynamic marking of *p*. Various performance instructions are placed above and below the staves, including '(arco)', '(III:10)', '(IV:14)', 'pizz. arco', and 'freeze'. The score is written in treble clef with a 9/8 time signature.

take position 2,3

remain at position 1,2



# 2. sniping from the sidelines

michael edwards

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

**double bass 1**

$\text{♩} = 101$  (minimum)  $\text{♩} = 112$  **Tempo I**

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

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

**double bass 2**

*pp* *ff* *p sub.*

II:7 IV:5

**7**  $\text{♩} = 112$  **Tempo I**

*ff* *p* *(p)*

nervous look at Niek

II:3

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

**14**  $\text{♩} = 75$  **Tempo I**  $\text{♩} = 112$

*f* *p* *(p)*

A

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

*f sub.* *p sub.* *(p)*

quick nervous look at Niek

più mosso ♩ = 112

Tempo I

look at Niek slowly and suspiciously

Tempo I

21

*ff* *pp*

**B**

I:7

I:5

quick nervous look at Niek clb-

30

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

meno mosso ♩ = 75 Tempo I

più mosso ♩ = 112

*mp* *pp sub.*

meno mosso ♩ = 75 pesante

più mosso ♩ = 112

look at Niek slowly and suspiciously

Tempo I

38

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

**C**

Tempo I

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

46 *mp pp* *rit.* *più mosso* ♩ = 112

*mp pp sub.*

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

♩ = 75 *più mosso* ♩ = 112

**D**

*ff pp sub.*

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

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

*pesante* *Tempo I* *pesante* *leggero*

(III:8) II:6 III:8

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

più mosso ♩ = 112

68

*ff*

*ff sub.*

*pizz.*

**E** Tempo I

*p*

*ff*

*p*

*ff sub.*

*p*

più mosso ♩ = 112

75

*ff*

*ff sub.*

*p*

*pizz.*

**F** II III

*ppp*

*p*

*ppp*

*ppp*

*p*

Tempo I

*p sub.*

*ppp*

*ppp*

*ppp*

*p*

molto più mosso ♩ = 152

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

84

*ff*

*ff sub.*

*p*

*ff*

*ff*

*ff*

*ff sub.*

*p sub.*

*ff*

meno mosso ♩ = 128

ord.

meno mosso ♩ = 128

meno mosso ♩ = 128

più mosso ♩ = 152

clb

clb



più mosso ♩ = 152

Tempo I

92

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

quick nervous look at Niek

**H** clb crini sim.

(this bar could be repeated ad lib.)

100

*pp* *mp* *pp* *pp* *mp* *pp*

Tempo I

msp (molto sul pont.)

108

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

116 (clb) msp I nervous look at Niek

msp

clb

I

msp

poco poco poco poco poco poco poco

I:7

mp > pp

125 nervous look at Niek

msp

clb

ord.

pizz. ord. pizz.

ff pp

msp

pp

pp

msp

pp

meno mosso ♩ = 112

molto più mosso ♩ = 152

134 J

msp

clb

J

pp

poco (II:3)

(III:4)

pp

143

mp sub. 5 0

clb-----

Tempo I  
msp-----

pizz. (pp)

K sul pont.-----

clb-----

mp sub. PP

msp-----

sul pont.-----

col legno ord.

151

pizz.-----

ord. 3

mp 5 p pp

ppp

look at Niek slowly and suspiciously

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

pizz.

ord.-----

msp

ord.-----

ppp 3

160

clb-----

mp

ppp

L

(ppp)

pizz.

mp ppp

ppp

170

nervous look at Niek

clb

*f*

*ppp*

*f sub.*

*ppp sub.*

178

pizz.

**M**

quick nervous look at Niek

Tempo I

rit..... ♩ = 75

clb

*p*

*ppp*

*poco*

*poco*

*pizz.*

*p*

*ppp*

remain at position 2,3

take position 3,4

# 3. double harmonic bliss

michael edwards

(all double harmonics)  
 ♩ = 112 msp (molto sul pont.)-----7

Double Bass 1  
 I  
 II  
*pp*  
 (no jeté)

Double Bass 2  
 III  
 IV msp (molto sul pont.)-----7  
*p*  
 (no jeté)

msp ————— sul pont. (no jeté)  
 msp ————— sul pont. (no jeté)  
 msp ————— sul pont. (no jeté)

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

10

ord. ————— ord. ————— ord. ————— msp ————— sul pont. ————— Tempo I  
 ord. ————— ord. ————— ord. ————— msp ————— sul pont. ————— ord. ————— ord.

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

**più mosso** ♩ = 140

*pp* ————— *mp* ————— *f* ————— *p* ————— *f* ————— *p*

III ord.  
 IV ord.

I ord.  
 II ord.

bouncy/dancing

A

14

explore the spectral potential ad lib.

**B**

*f*

**C**

ord. → crunch

*pp sub. < f*

light and airy, delicate but clear accents (though not interrupting)

*pp* (no jeté)

(sounding E (horn) in sound files) again: explore spectrum

*pp*

*pp sub. < f*

*pp* (no jeté)

*pp*

**D**

both bow behind the fingers and vary position from very close to the fingers (including some woody noise) and further away, *ad lib.*

III  
IV

*f*

*pp*

I  
II

*pp*

*f*

*pp*

*pp*

↓  
**E** **più mosso** ♩ = 152

(sound files: last weird vocal)

pizz. (two fingers)  
bouncy again

53 (II/III)

*mf sub.*

*mf sub.*

*p*

*p*



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

61

*f* *p*

*f* *p*

freeze

freeze

**take position 4**

**remain at position 3,4**





# 4. this'll embarrass ya

michael edwards

$\text{♩} = 101$   
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

pizz. (slap)

↓ join in happily ("what the hell?")

Double Bass 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. 1

enjoy the open strings that Javad is missing ;-)

D. B. 2

≡  
**più mosso**  $\text{♩} = 112$

**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. 1

look confused that J has stopped

D. B. 2

**più mosso** ♩ = 128

a blatant interruption, a non-sequitur even

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

36 **A** arco

*ff sempre*

44

Tempo I

pizz.

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

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

**B** **più mosso** ♩ = 128

51

D. B. 1

...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)

51

*ff sempre*

57

D. B. 2

C

Javad brutally interrupts Niek (no trigger necessary)

65 arco

D. B. 1

72

D. B. 1

Tempo I

pizz.

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

D

sim. to letter B

80

D. B. 1

D. B. 2

90

D. B. 1

Tempo I

D. B. 2

pizz.

**E** più mosso ♩ = 140

arco

D. B. 1



D. B. 1

gliss.

**F**

ord. → crunch

*sfz* *pp* *ff*

D. B. 2



D. B. 1

Tempo I

pizz.

D. B. 2

pizz.

**G** **più mosso** ♩ = 152

D. B. 1

116

arco

D. B. 2

arco

*ff sempre*

pizz.

D. B. 1

123

D. B. 2

**H**

D. B. 1

129

pizz. Play 5 times

D. B. 2

arco

**I** *più mosso* ♩ = 164  
arco

D. B. 1

D. B. 2

D. B. 1

D. B. 2

D. B. 1

D. B. 2

Play 3 times

take position 5

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

take position 5

(tie on repeats)

# 5. this is not what arnold meant

michael edwards

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*

as big and resonant as possible without forcing the dynamic

*f*

*fff* *f*

*fff* *f*

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*

*sffz*  $\text{>}$  *p* *ff*

*sffz*  $\text{>}$  *p* *ff*

*p* *f*

*sffz*  $\text{>}$  *p* *ff*

*sffz*  $\text{>}$  *p* *ff*

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**



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*

*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)

III I  
IV II

D

bouncy ♩ = 152

51

III:10

II I  
III II

arco pizz. II I  
III II

I III  
II pizz. IV

II III  
III IV

arco pizz. II III  
III IV

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 on a half note G4 and moving through A4, B4, and C5. The second staff provides a harmonic accompaniment with chords and single notes. Both staves include dynamic markings: *p* (piano) at the beginning and *ppp* (pianissimo) at the end, with a hairpin indicating a gradual decrease in volume. The piece concludes with a double bar line.



