String Quartet No. 1

(Tubular – Mondo)

Martin Hiendl
(2018)

Notes

This string quartet consists of **two movements**. In the first movement all four musicians perform with their instruments on stage. In the second movement, only the viola keeps playing on stage, whereas the violins and the cello put down their instruments, leave the stage and perform gestural actions throughout the hall. Detailed instructions for the second movement can be found on p.10.

Throughout the first movement all strings play a **unison melody**, interpreted in different ways as detailed by the instructions provided in text boxes in the score. **4 shorthands specify the octave transpositions** of the unison line for each instrument, which should be maintained until the next instruction follows (unless notated otherwise).

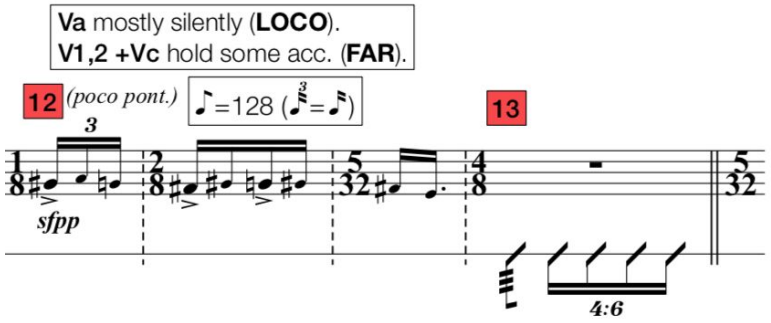
LOCO	Play the line as written.
CLOSE	Play the line one octave above or below.
FAR	Play the line two or more octaves above or below.
XRTM	Play the line at either of the extreme ends of your instruments' range.

Arrows on accidentals indicate a deviation of about a quarter tone from equal temperament. The exact amount of deviation is not as important as that it is the same for all players.

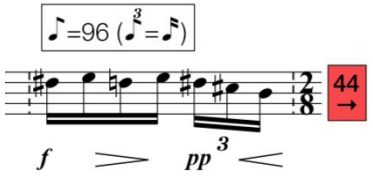
Electronics

The string quartet uses a **live-electronic patch** written in the free, open source software Pure Data. The patch is provided with the score. Each instrument should be amplified with a close mic (the DPA 4099 seems to be a good choice as of 2018).

The patch simply records short passages of the musicians and plays back small, cut-up, glitchy grains of the recorded passage. The **viola** is responsible for triggering cues with a foot pedal. The patch reads the actual performance tempo of the musicians by measuring the distance between cues, and it adjusts the playback tempo of the grainy rhythms accordingly. **It is therefore crucial that the cues are triggered precisely at the downbeat of each bar.** Here is an example of how the electronics are notated:



Top staff is the unison line of the strings, the electronics are the bottom staff, and cues are indicated in red number boxes. The viola will read the score from the computer and additional cues with arrows at the bottom right are given to indicate page turns, which do not need to be triggered precisely in time:



The string quartet should be slightly amplified so that the electronics and live sound merge as much as possible, using a close speaker position to the instruments. Monitors for the performers should be provided. Details on how to run the electronics can be found in the patch.

String Quartet No. 1

I. Tubular

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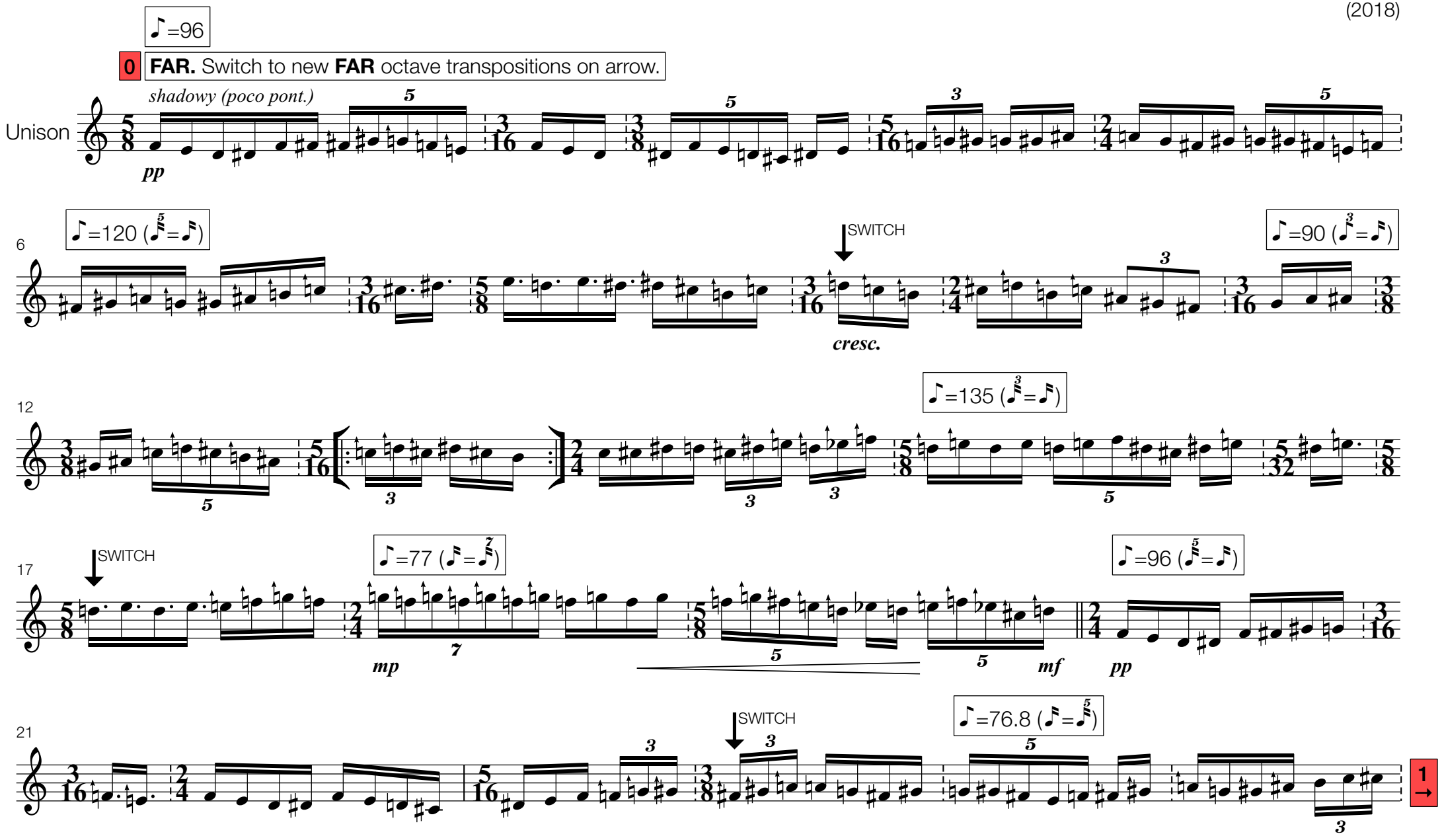
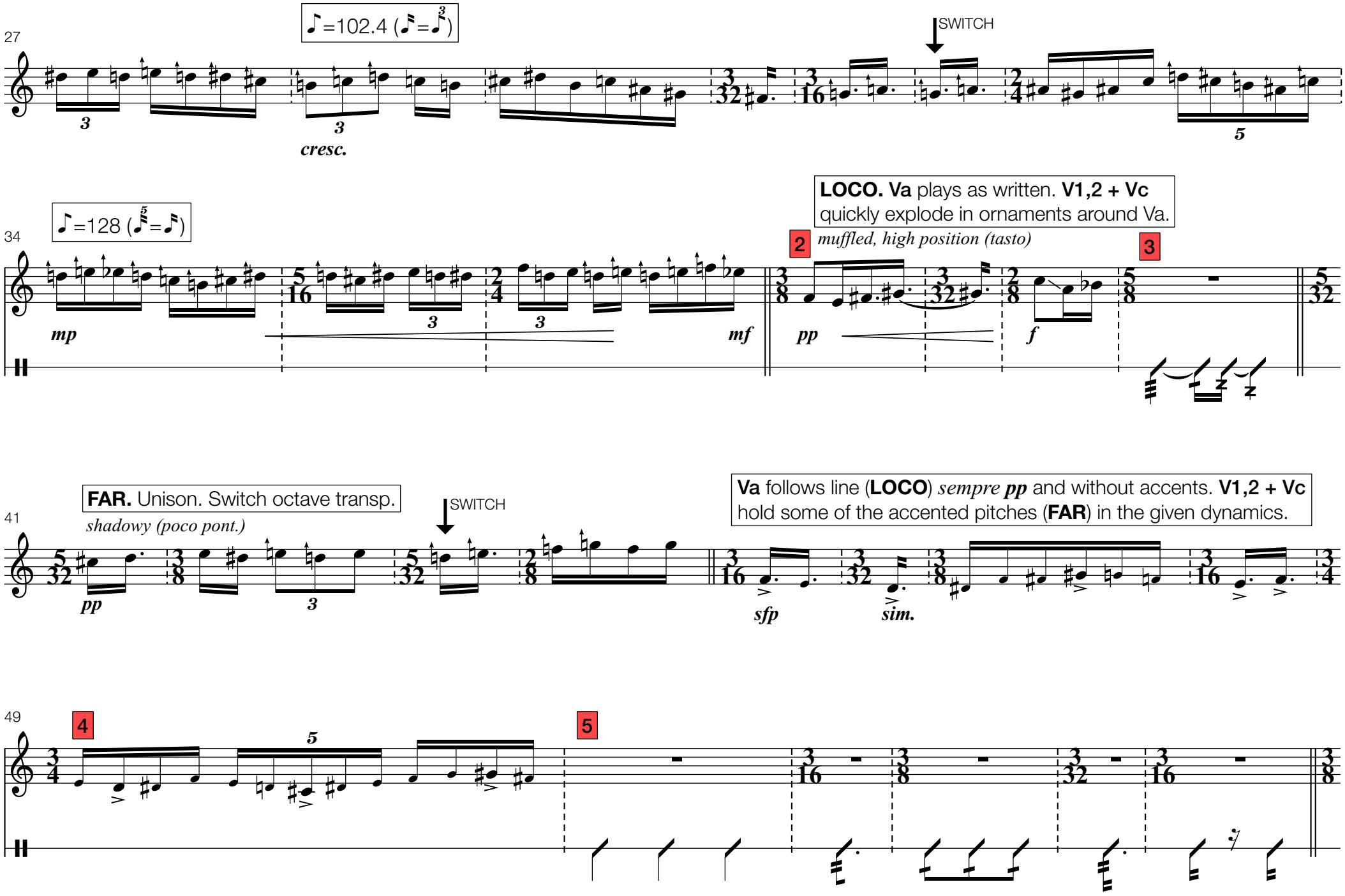
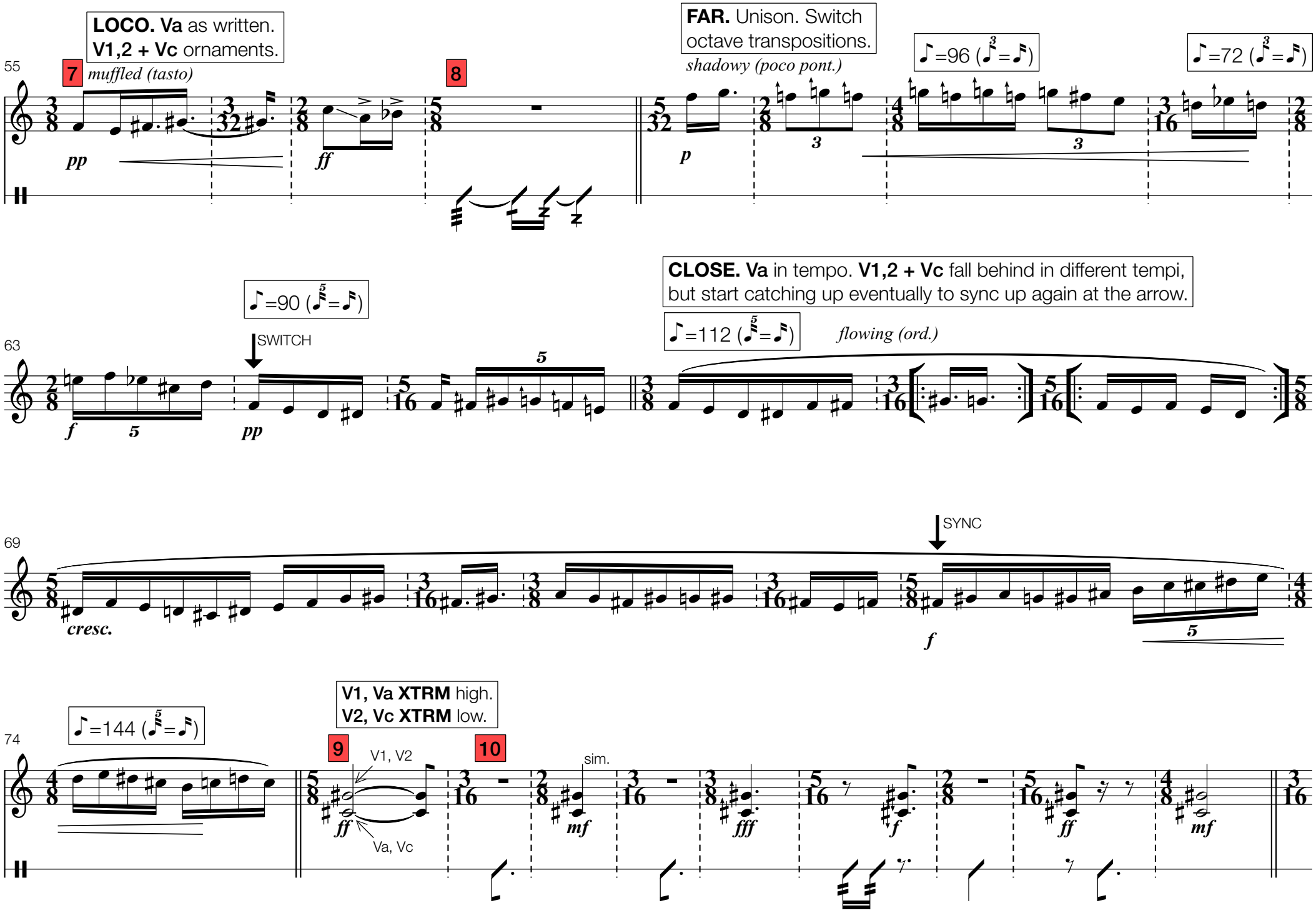



27
♪=102.4 (𝅘𝅥𝅯=♪³)
SWITCH
cresc.
34
♪=128 (𝅘𝅥𝅰⁵=𝅘𝅥𝅯)
LOCO. Va plays as written. V1,2 + Vc quickly explode in ornaments around Va.
muffled, high position (tasto)
mp
mf
pp
f
41
FAR. Unison. Switch octave transp.
shadowy (poco pont.)
SWITCH
Va follows line (LOCO) sempre pp and without accents. V1,2 + Vc hold some of the accented pitches (FAR) in the given dynamics.
pp
sfp
sim.
49
4
5
6


55
LOCO. Va as written.
V1,2 + Vc ornaments.
7
muffled (tasto)
pp
ff
8
FAR. Unison. Switch
octave transpositions.
shadowy (poco pont.)
p
♪=96 (♪³=♪)
♪=72 (♪³=♪)
63
♪=90 (♪⁵=♪)
SWITCH
f
pp
CLOSE. Va in tempo. V1,2 + Vc fall behind in different tempi,
but start catching up eventually to sync up again at the arrow.
♪=112 (♪⁵=♪)
flowing (ord.)
69
SYNC
cresc.
f
74
♪=144 (♪⁵=♪)
V1, Va XTRM high.
V2, Vc XTRM low.
9
V1, V2
Va, Vc
ff
10
sim.
mf
fff
f
ff
mf
11
→

II. Mondo

Viola proceeds attacca, looping its entire ending passage (m. 319–392). **V1,2 + Vc** put down their instruments, get up from their chairs and **slowly walk through the audience over the course of 4-6 minutes** towards the back of the hall, spreading apart throughout the hall. During this process each instrumentalist performs gesture combinations with their arms and hands that ought to produce very **intimate air and breath sounds**, audible only to the nearby audience members.

There are two gestures in each combination, consisting of alternating and synchronized arm movements. Each gesture has to be **repeated rapidly** to produce subtle air sounds with the hands. In addition, always **keep your mouth slightly open**, so that the modulation of your breath through the gestures becomes audible. Images of the three gesture combinations are provided on the last pages of the score.

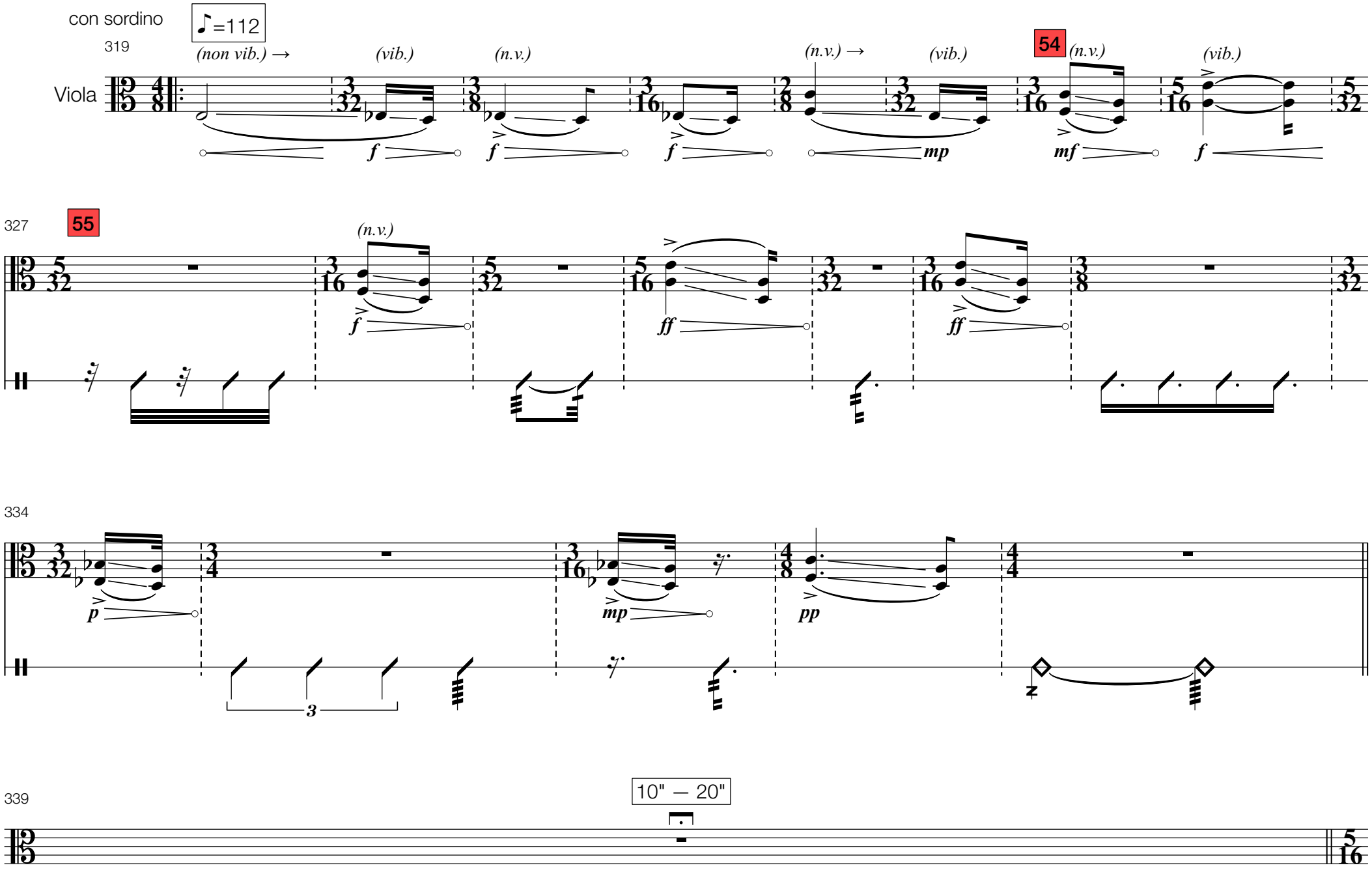
Alternating movements are always an increase in intensity (speed, range), synchronized movements always a decrease in intensity. Together each combination should last about 20 seconds, followed by 10–20 seconds of rest. **Focus less on the gestures and more on the sounds they produce.** The gestures may be performed and repeated **in any order** over the course of 4-6 minutes. Each performer maintains their individual pacing.

Keep walking through the audience, avoiding “slow theatrical walking” as much as possible. During the gestures, eyes should focus on the hands. During the rests, try to **establish eye contact** with nearby audience members. Don’t audibly interact with them but **acknowledge their presence** (nod, smile, etc.), especially if there are familiar faces in the audience. The light in the hall should be bright enough to make this visible.

The piece ends with a very **brief, collective, but uncoordinated shout**. After about 4-6 minutes, one of the three performers may end the performance **only during one of the long silences in the viola part** by shouting one of the following (meaningless) phrases:

– “BOULD OF ANGS”
– “LEAP”
– “NO WARMS”

The performers should coordinate on who uses which phrase, but they should not coordinate on *when* it should be shouted. Rather, as soon as one shout is heard, the others should **follow as soon as possible**, resulting in an uncoordinated, staggered, but collective shout. The viola may not continue after that—the shouting marks the end of the piece.


con sordino
♪=112
319
Viola
(non vib.) →
(vib.)
(n.v.)
(n.v.) →
(vib.)
54
(n.v.)
(vib.)
327
55
(n.v.)
334
339
10" — 20"
56 →

Images of the three gesture combinations:

	alternating movements → increase intensity → 5, 10 or 15 sec. →	synchronized movements decrease intensity 15, 10 or 5 sec. → followed by 10–20 sec. of rest
1		