

something is happening - for flute, piano, electric guitar, and cello - Jack Langdon (2020)

something is happening

for flute, piano, electric guitar, and cello
to *Ensemble Dal Niente*

Jack Langdon (2020)

program note:

This work was composed during June 2020 amidst the tumult and conflict that this summer will undoubtedly become remembered for. I started writing this piece while quarantined in Chicago, in near total isolation, but finished the majority of the material while on the road between Chicago and Missoula, Montana. Spending time in campgrounds and attempting to remain isolated during my travels, I fixated on the mysteries of change and conflict that unite our time to the times of generations past, and which undeniably will unite us with generations in the future. For much of my young life, I felt that nothing was happening at a great detriment to all—passively watching the world happen as if it were a film in a movie theater. Now I feel as if something is happening.

This piece is a poetic occurrence of my reflections on change, stasis, interior/exterior, autonomy/heteronomy, nostalgia, and utopia. It is not methodological nor is it particularly conceptual. It is not attempting to demonstrate anything other than itself.

Sincerest gratitude to Ensemble Dal Niente and DePaul University for facilitating the creation and performance of this work.

materials required:

1. three handheld am/fm radios
2. E-bow and drumstick for guitarist
3. flutist plays bass flute and piccolo

performance notes:

general

1. microtonal accidentals utilize the Helmholtz-Ellis Extended Just Intonation Accidentals system
 - a. Link: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Just_intonation#/media/File:Helmholtz-Ellis_JI_pitch_notation_microtonal_accidents_legend.gif
2. the pianist, guitarist, and cellist all should have access to a portable am/fm radio for use
3. the quartet should be arranged so as to maximize the ability for the flutist and the guitarist to visually connect during the final section
4. italicized performance indications below dynamics are meant to act as subjective (for the performer), poetic evocations for playing technique - they vary in levels of abstraction and ought to be considered as an additional parameter for reflection in preparing this piece

flute



cross notehead = breath through flute only, with mouth completely covering embouchure hole, fingering notated pitch (no pitch sounding)



"up-bow/down-bow" = corresponds to "inhale/exhale" breath into/out through flute



x-circle notehead = breath with clear pitch

piano



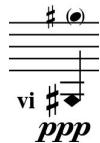
encircled dynamics: these pertain to the volume knob on the am/fm radio - *forte* = full volume
*related, dashed hairpins denote volume adjustment on radio in particular



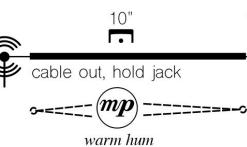
"mute" symbol above note = mute string on piano with flesh of finger - if this is impossible due to the particular piano being used, play as ordinary

pppp

electric guitar



harmonic notation: the lower diamond notehead denotes the pitch location which should be played to create the above notated pitch shown in parenthesis - the number preceding the diamond notehead refers to the string which the harmonic should be played on



input jack hum technique: in measure 4, the guitarist must mute their amp, take out the input jack, hold the jack tip with their hand, then cresc./descresc. with their amp, then silently reinsert the jack into their guitar.



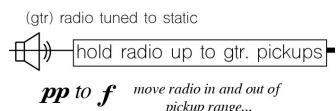
encircled dynamics: in this case, refers to volume/gain control on the guitar amplifier



“upbow/downbow” sign = this sign denotes the usage of a drumstick as a “guitar bow” at the notated pitch



“E-bow sign” = this refers to the usage of an e-bow for the duration of the notated pitch



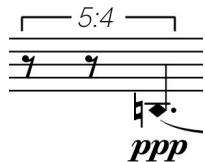
radio on pickups technique: this technique involves holding the radio near the guitar’s pickups, which then cause radio interference, allowing for radio signals to be amplified by the guitar

cello

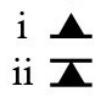
"air noise" "air noise" technique: this technique is achieved by stopping the string with the right amount of pressure to "deaden" the string, only allowing for white noise to sound as a result. In this piece, this symbol is used in tandem with the square notehead, which indicates that the string should be "deadened."



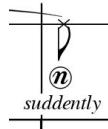
MSP, MST, SP, ST = respectively "molto sul ponticello," "molto sul tasto," "sul ponticello," and "sul tasto."



harmonic notehead: the diamond notehead indicates that finger pressure appropriate for a harmonic to sound should be applied. In this piece, there are several instances where the resulting harmonic notation will result in a chaotic, uncontrollable, and fragile sounding result.



upward facing triangle notehead = highest note possible on notated strings



niente in radio part = turn off radio at coordinated point (in this case, synchronized with the pianist)

something is happening

for flute, piano, electric guitar, and cello

Jack Langdon (2020)

flute
bass flute, piccolo

piano
with small radio

electric guitar
with e-bow, drumstick,
and small radio

cello
with small radio

J = 45

**inhale* **exhale*

ppp *pp* *ppp* *pp*

pitchless breath, like the wind

mf *warm, grounded*

crystalline

*damp. ped. semper
(unless noted)*

*L.V. throughout
(unless noted or impractical)*

ppp *p* *ppp*

crystalline

5:3 *5:3*

cable out, hold jack

jack in (silent)

mp *warm hum*

non vib.

ffff *pp* *pp* *p*

fragile

pure

6

flute (flt) 3:2 V 3:2 V 5:4 3:2 8 hold until breathless, fragile 10 3:2 1

ppp like a whisper *pp* *p* *pp* *pp* solemn *pp* like the wind

piano (pno) 5:4 *mf* sonorous *p* crystalline *pp* follow flute *mp* *pp* *p*

guitar (gtr) 3:2 *p* delicate *pp* *ppp* *mp* *p* jack out from gtr. (silent) cable out, hold jack *p* jack in (silent)

violin (vlc) 3:2 *ppp* *p* "air noise" crossfade in as flute dim. *ppp* like a whisper

11

flt

12

pno

echo trails

5:3

13

5:4

3:2

hallucinatory

14

5:4

3:2

15

5:3

hushed

to picc.

8va

3:2

gtr

pp

ppp

3:2

ppp

pp

ppp

5:4

3:2

like a broken record

3:2

pp

ppp

pp

ppp

3:2

pp

ppp

pp

ppp

3:2

air noise

i

ii

vlc

"mf"

like a cat scratching the opposite side of a door

3:2

pp

pp

gentle, dark

ppp

bright, fragile

16

flt piccolo

ppp *fragile, breathy*

pno

ppp *hallucinatory*

5:3 5:3 5:4 3:2 5:4 4:3

gtr

ppp *pp* *ppp echoes*

5:3 5:4 3:2 3:2 3:2 3:2

vlc

pppp *fragile, flickering pitch*

5:3 5:4 3:2 3:2 3:2 3:2

17

ppp *quiet, pure*

8va

18

8va

19

pp

20

pppp *nearly gone*

MSP

ppp *bright, fragile*

21

flt

pno

gtr

vc

flute (flt)

piano (pno)

guitar (gtr)

cello/bass (vc)

Dynamics and Instructions:

- Measure 21: **ppp**, *forgotten aria*; **ppp**, *nostalgic*; **pppp**, *hallucinatory*
- Measure 22: **8va**, **8va**, **8va**
- Measure 23: **8va**
- Measure 24: **8va**
- Measure 25: **pp**, *echo of the past*; **p**, **pp**
- Measure 25 (continued): **(p) bow with drumstick**; **pp**, *warm*; **ppp**, *sonorous*; **pp**, *air noise*; **mp**, *a gust of air*
- Measure 25 (continued): *turning increasingly fragile, flickering pitches with noise*

26

flt ***p*** blend with guitar tone

pno ***ppp*** 3:2 5:4

grtr ***pppp*** abstracted echo

vlc ***ppp*** noisy, flickering pitch

27

flt ***p***

pno 5:4

grtr ***ppp***

vlc 3:2

28

flt ***p***

pno ***ppp***

grtr ***p***

vlc 3:2

29

flt ***ppppp***

pno

grtr ***p***

vlc 3:2

30

flt ***p***

pno

grtr ***p***

vlc 3:2

31

flt

pno

grtr

vlc

$\text{♩} = 60$

A musical score for four instruments: flute (fl), piano (pno), guitar (gtr), and violin (vlc). The score spans measures 32 to 38. The flute part includes dynamic markings like **ppp**, **p**, **pp**, **mp**, **p**, **pp**, and **p**, with performance instructions such as "warm, breathy" and "strange, vocal". The piano part features a dynamic **f**. The guitar part includes markings like **pp**, **harp-like**, **E** (with "e-bow"), **3:2**, **p**, **MSP**, and **3:2**. The violin part includes markings like **pp**, **noise with changing spectra**, **"air noise"**, **pure beam**, **5:4**, **5:4**, **5:4**, **5:4**, **noisy, unclear harmonics**, **MSP**, **3:2**, and **pp**. Measure numbers 32 through 38 are indicated above the staves.

fl
to bass flit.
(pno) radio tuned to static

pno
pp harp-like

gtr
E "with e-bow"
3:2
p
MSP
3:2

vlc
pp noise with changing spectra
"air noise"
pure beam
5:4
5:4
5:4
5:4
noisy, unclear harmonics
MSP
3:2
pp

flt 39 40 41 42 43

flt *ppp* *mp*

pno 5:4 3:2 5:4 *p*

pno *p*

gtr 5:4 3:2 5:4 *pp*

vlc *ppp* *pp*

vlc *MSP*

vlc 3:2 *pp*

vlc 3:2 *ppp* "air noise" *p*

vlc *like a whisper*

flt

44 45 46 47 48 49

ppp — *p* *pp* — *fff* *mp* > *ppp* — *—* *—* *ppp* *pp*

like the wind *a sudden gust* *—* *—* *strange shadows* *—*

pno

— *—* *—* *5:4* *3:2* *—*

5:4 *—* *ppp* *pp* *ppp*

machinic rumbling *ppp* *—* *sliver of light* *shadow*

grt

pp *—* *—* *5:4* *—* *—*

"air noise" *overpressure* *ord.* *p* *"air noise"* *"air noise"*

deep hum

vlc

ppp — *p* — *mp* — *ff* — *mp* > *pp* — *—* "mf" — *—* — *p* *ppp*

like a whisper... *...transforming into a heavy scratch...* *...returning to a whisper*

i *ii*

fragile, hollow

flt 50 51 52 53 54 55 56
pp shadows lengthening *pp* shadows dancing *ppp* *ppp* 3:2 5:4 *ppp* vocal, strange *ppp* shadow of cello
 8va *ppp* distant flash *pp* sliver of light *ppp* mismatched shadow *pp* sliver of light *ppp* beam of light *ppp* pp distant flash
 pno 3:2 5:3
 gtr 3:2
 vlc pp
p *ppp* blend with piano decay

$\text{♩} = \text{between } 70-80$

A musical score for four instruments: flute (flt), piano (pno), guitar (gtr), and violin (vc). The score consists of three measures (57, 58, 59) in common time (indicated by a '4'). The flute part (measures 57-59) consists of sixteenth-note patterns with dynamics *ppp*, *p*, and *ppp*. Measure 57 includes performance instructions: "distant, hallucinatory". The piano part (measures 57-59) includes dynamics *mf*, *ppp*, *f*, *ppp*, *pppp* (labeled "failed spark"), *f*, *ppp*, and *pppp*. The guitar part (measures 57-59) includes dynamics *p* (labeled "clear") and *pp* (labeled "warm echo"). The violin part (measures 57-59) includes dynamics *p* and *mp* (labeled "gentle shifting wind"). Various performance techniques are indicated throughout the score, such as grace notes, slurs, and dynamic markings like *8va* and *3:2*.

57 V 5.3 58 V 5.3 59 V 5.3

flt piano guitar vlc

distant, hallucinatory

8va

mf distant flash *ppp* raindrop

f

ppp

pppp failed spark

p clear

pp warm echo

p

mp

3:2 "air noise"

3:2 "air noise"

3:2 "air noise"

gentle shifting wind

flt *V*
 60 flt *V* 5:3
 ppp **p**
 61
 8va
 pno { f
 5:4 pp pppp
 3:2
 62
 8va
 f
 5:4 pp pppp
 3:2
 raindrops, dancing
 gtr
 3:2 ppp pp ppp
 3:2
 vlc
 3:2 "air noise"
 p mp
 3:2 "air noise"
 p mp
 3:2 "air noise"
 p mp
 SP
 pp
*a fragment from
an imaginary piece*

flt V
 f *the wind*
 pno 8va
 gtr
 vlc

63 5:4 64 5:3 65 5:3

V 5:4 *V* 5:3 *V* 5:3

ppp *p* *ppp* *p* *ppp* *p* *>*
ppp *p* *ppp* *p* *ppp* *p* *>*
ppp *p* *ppp* *p* *ppp* *p* *>*

f *pp* *pppp* *pp* *pp* *pppp* *pp* *pppp*

ppp *train in distance*
p *ppp* *pp* *ppp* *p* *ppp* *pp* *ppp*

p *pp* *p* *p* *p* *p*

66

flt

pno

gtr

vlc

8va

mp
flashes

pp
frozen shadow

ppp
rolling thunder

8vb

pppp

5:3

3:2

piano shadows

This musical score page contains four staves for flute (flt), piano (pno), guitar (gtr), and cello (vlc). The score is divided into measures 66, 67, 68, and 69. Measure 66 starts with a rest for the flute. Measures 67 and 68 begin with sustained notes on the piano, with measure 67 labeled "frozen shadow" and measure 68 labeled "rolling thunder". The flute and guitar provide harmonic support with sustained notes and grace notes. The piano part includes dynamic markings like *pp*, *mp*, and *ppp*. The guitar part features a 5:3 measure. The cello part includes a 3:2 measure. Measure 69 concludes with a final dynamic marking for the piano.

♩ = 60 ♩ = free, 10-15" per measure

flt 70 molto vib. 71 breath sounds through flute, mimic gtr. gestures
soulful **p>** **pp** **to f**

(pno) radio tuned to static 72 73 74 75
misremembering **f** **8va**
nostalgia **p** **mf** **p** **pp**
flash of light *...becoming dull* *ennui*
suddenly

pno 70 71 72 73 74 75

gtr 70 (gtr) radio tuned to static
warm, nostalgic
mf
hold radio up to gtr. pickups
pp to f *move radio in and out of pickup range...*
start changing radio channels causing erratic sound fragments...
return to radio static gradually...
fade volume to nothing
suddenly

vlc 70 (vlc) radio tuned to static
non vib.
pp *fragile, disappearing*

Chicago, IL
June 2020

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Jack Langdon (2020)

J = 45

bass flute, piccolo
bass flute

*inhaler *exhaler

pitchless breath, like the wind

breath, steady and measured

like a whisper

solemn

hold until breathless, fragile

like the wind

hallucinatory

hushed

to picc.

fragile, breathy

quiet, pure

21

3:2

3:2

3:2

22

23

24

25

ppp
forgotten aria

26

27

28

29

30

31

pp
blend with guitar tone

J = 60

32

33

34

35

36

37

38

to bass flt.

ppp
warm, breathy

p

pp
mp

p

pp
strange, vocal

39

40

41

42

43

ppp
expressive

mp

ppp
breathy, expressive

p

44

45

46

47

48

49

ppp
like the wind

p

pp
a sudden gust

fff

mp
>

ppp

ppp
5:4

strange shadows

pp

50 51 52 53 54 55 56

shadows lengthening

shadows dancing

vocal, strange

shadow of cello

$\text{♩} = \text{between } 70-80$

57 58 59

distant, hallucinatory

60 61 62 63

trails from piano

64 65 66 67 68 69

the wind

frozen shadow

$\text{♩} = 60$

70 71 72 73 74 75

$\text{♩} = \text{free, 10-15" per measure}$

molto vib.

soulful

pp to f

breath sounds through flute, mimic gtr. gestures

something is happening

for flute, piano, electric guitar, and cello

Jack Langdon (2020)

piano with small radio

*damp. ped. sempre
(unless noted)*

2 (pno) radio tuned to static  3:2 3 10" 4

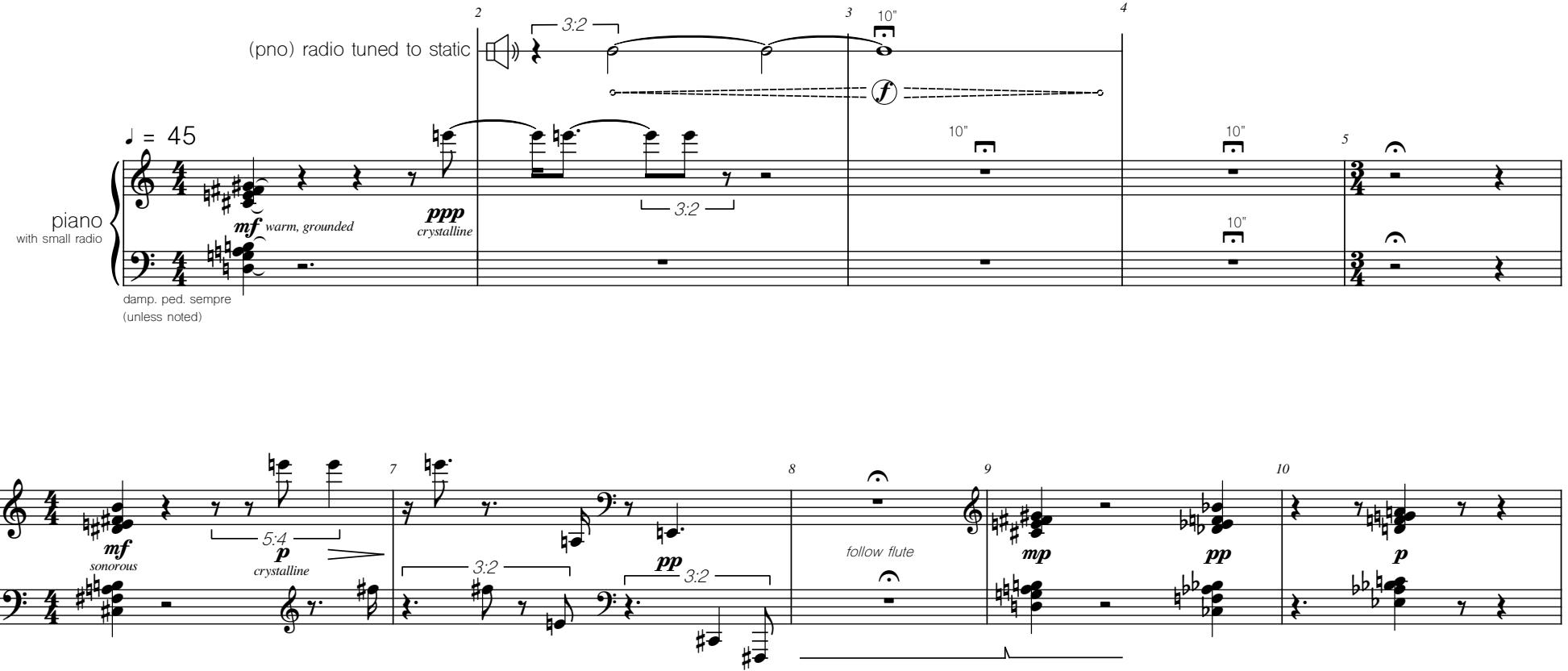
3:2 10" 5

4 10" 5

5

6 7 8 9 10

mf *warm, grounded* **ppp** *crystalline* **5:4** **p** *sonorous* **crystalline** **3:2** **pp** **3:2** **follow flute** **mp** **pp** **p**



The musical score for the piano part consists of two staves of music. The top staff begins with a dynamic of **mf** and a performance instruction *warm, grounded*. It features a 3:2 ratio and a sustained note with a dynamic of **ppp** labeled *crystalline*. The bottom staff begins with a dynamic of **p** and a performance instruction *sonorous*, followed by a 5:4 ratio. Both staves include various dynamics such as **pp**, **ppp**, **mp**, and **p**, along with articulations like **f** (fortissimo), **10"** (sustained note), and **3:2** (ratio). The score also includes performance instructions like "radio tuned to static" with a speaker icon, "damp. ped. sempre (unless noted)", and "follow flute". Measure numbers 2 through 10 are indicated above the staves.

11

12

echo trails

13

5:3

14

5:4

15

5:3

5:4

8va

16

17

hallucinatory

18

8va

19

8va

20

4:3

ppp

nearly gone

5:3

5:4

3:2

3:2

3:2

5:4

8va

21

22

nostalgic

hallucinatory

23

8va

24

8va

25

5:4

3:2

p

echo of the past

5:3

5:4

3:2

5:4

5:4

8va

5:4

26

pppp
abstracted echo

27 28 29 30 31

$\text{♩} = 60$

32 (pno) radio tuned to static 33 34 35 36 37 38

pp
harp-like

f

32 33 34 35 36 37 38

39 40 41 42 43

p

ppp

pp

ppp

ppp

39 40 41 42 43

44

45

46

47

48

49

p

pp sliver of light

ppp shadow

pppp machinic rumbling

50

51

52

53

54

55

56

ppp distant flash

pp sliver of light

#ppp mismatched shadow

pp sliver of light

ppp beam of light

pp distant flash

8va

$\text{♩} = \text{between } 70-80$

57

mf
distant flash

ppp
raindrop

58

f

ppp

3:2

ϕ

59

f

ppp
failed spark

3:2

ϕ

60

f

pp

pppp

5:4

ϕ

3:2

61

f

pp

pppp

5:4

ϕ

3:2

62

f

pp
raindrops, dancing

pppp

5:4

ϕ

3:2

63

f

pp

pppp

5:4

ϕ

3:2

64

f

pp

pppp

5:4

ϕ

3:2

65

f

pp

pppp

5:4

ϕ

3:2

ppp
train in distance

ppp

66

mp
flashes

pp

67

8va

68

mp

69

p p

8va

ppp
rolling thunder

8vb

pppp

$\text{♩} = \text{free, } 10\text{--}15'' \text{ per measure}$

71

(pno) radio tuned to static

72

f

8va

73

ff

74

ff

75

ff

suddenly

$\text{♩} = 60$

70

f

nostalgia

p
misremembering

mf
flash of light

p
...becoming dull

pp

ennui

something is happening

for flute, piano, electric guitar, and cello

Jack Langdon (2020)

electric guitar
with e-bow, drumstick
and small radio

L.V. throughout
(unless noted or impractical)
crystalline

Measure 1: $\text{F} = 45$. Measures 1-5.3. Dynamics: **ppp**, **p**, **ppp**. Action: **cable out, hold jack**, **warm hum**.

Measure 6: Measure 6. Dynamics: **p** (*delicate*). Measure 7. Dynamics: **pp**. Measure 8. Dynamics: **p**. Action: **jack out from gtr. (silent)**. Measure 9. Action: **cable out, hold jack**. Measure 10. Action: **jack in (silent)**.

Measure 11: Measure 11. Dynamics: **pp**. Measure 12. Dynamics: **ppp**. Measure 13. Dynamics: **pp** (*gentle*). Measure 14. Dynamics: **p**. Action: **like a broken record**. Measure 15. Dynamics: **ppp**. Measure 16. Dynamics: **ppp**. Measure 17. Dynamics: **pp** (*echoes*). Measure 18. Dynamics: **ppp**. Measure 19. Dynamics: **pp**. Measure 20. Dynamics: **ppp**.

21

warm

ppp

p

ppp

p

sonorous

"bow with drumstick"
($\text{P} \backslash \text{V}$)

22

23

24

25

26

27

28

29

30

31

p

p

$\text{J} = 60$

"with e-bow"

32

33

34

35

36

37

38

p

pure beam

E

E

p

39

gtr

40

41

42

43

pp

p

pp

44

45

46 5:4

47

deep hum

48

49

50

gtr

51 3:2

52

53

54

55

56

vi $\overline{\text{p}}$

pp

$\text{♩} = \text{between } 70-80$

57

gtr

vi $\overline{\text{p}}$

clear

58

59

60

61

62

ppp

ppp

ppp

ppp

warm echo

ppp

60

gtr

61

62

pp

pp

pp

pp

3:2

3:2

63

p *pp* *ppp* *pp* *ppp* *pp* *ppp*

64

65

3:2 *3:2* *3:2*

66

ppp *pp* *ppp*

67

68

5:3 *5:3*

69

$\text{♩} = 60$

warm, nostalgic

70

mf

71 (gtr) radio tuned to static

72 hold radio up to gtr. pickups

73 start changing radio channels causing erratic sound fragments...

74 return to radio static gradually...

75 fade volume to nothing

to Ensemble Dal Niente

CELLO PART

something is happening

for flute, piano, electric guitar, and cello

Jack Langdon (2020)

Cello with small radio

Measure 1: $\text{J} = 45$. 3:2. Dynamics: ***pppp*** *fragile*, ***pp***, ***p***, ***p***.

Measure 2: **"air noise"** (indicated by a small circle with a dot). 3:2. Dynamics: ***pp***, ***p***.

Measure 3: 10". Dynamics: ***p***.

Measure 4: 10". Dynamics: ***p***.

Measure 5: **non vib.** 3:2. Dynamics: ***p***.

Measure 6: 3:2. Dynamics: ***ppp***, ***p***.

Measure 7: 3:2. Dynamics: **"air noise"** (indicated by a small circle with a dot).

Measure 8: crossfade in as flute dim. Dynamics: ***ppp***.

Measure 9: 10". Dynamics: ***ppp***.

Measure 10: like a whisper.

Measure 11: **"air noise"** (indicated by a small circle with a dot). 3:2. Dynamics: ***mf***.

Measure 12: 3:2. Dynamics: ***pp***.

Measure 13: like a cat scratching the opposite side of a door.

Measure 14: ***pp*** *gentle, dark*.

Measure 15: ***ppp*** *bright, fragile*.

Measure 16: ***pppp*** *fragile, flickering pitch*.

Measure 17: 3:2.

Measure 18: 3:2.

Measure 19: **MSP** (Microsound). ***ppp*** *bright, fragile*.

Measure 20: -

21 3:2 22 *gradually lighten finger pressure
 until harmonic pressure 23 

pp *warm* ..turning increasingly fragile, flickering pitches with noise ***p***

24 3:2 "air noise" 25 

pp *a gust of air* ***mp*** ***p***

26 5:4 27 3:2 28 29 3:2 30 31 

ppp *noisy, flickering pitch* ***ppp*** ***ppp*** ***ppp***

♩ = 60 32 "air noise" 33 5:4 34 5:4 35 MSP 36 5:4 37 3:2 38 MSP
pp *noise with changing spectra* ***ppp*** *noisy, unclear harmonics* ***pp***

39 MSP 40 

ppp 3:2 ***p*** 

 41 3:2 "air noise" 42 43 

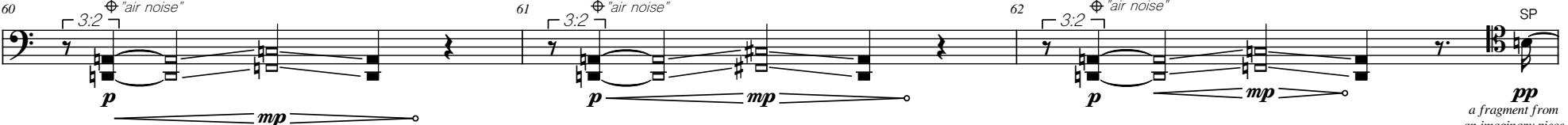
ppp *like a whisper* ***p***

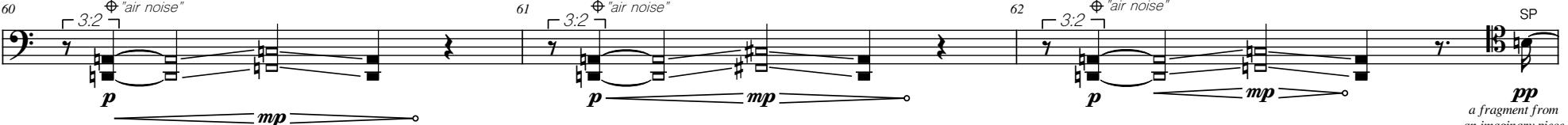
"air noise" → overpressure → ord.
 44 45 46
 ♫. ♫. ♫.
ppp ————— ***p*** ————— ***mp*** ————— ***ff*** > ***mp*** > ***pp*** ————— ○
like a whisper... ...transforming into a heavy scratch... ...returning to a whisper

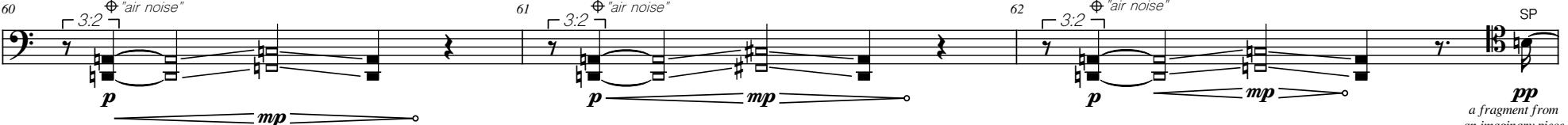
i ♪ "air noise"
 ii ♪ 48
 47 ♪
mf ————— ***p***
 49 ♫ "air noise"
ppp fragile, hollow

50 51
 ♫. ♫.
 ♫. ————— ***p*** ————— ○
 52 53 54 55
 ♪
ppp ————— ○
blend with piano decay

♩ = between 70-80
 57 58 59
 ♪ 3:2 ♪ 3:2 ♪ 3:2
 "air noise" "air noise" "air noise"
p ————— ***mp*** ————— ○
gentle shifting wind

60 

61 

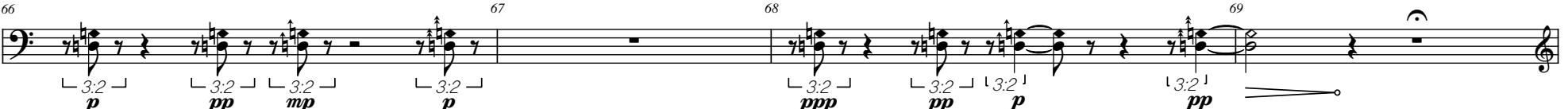
62 

SP
a fragment from
an imaginary piece

63 

64 

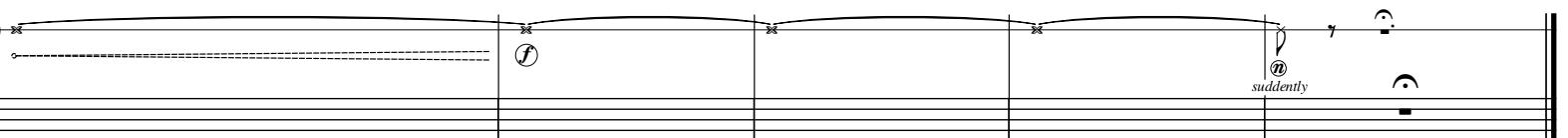
65 

66 

piano shadows

$\text{♩} = \text{free, } 10\text{--}15'' \text{ per measure}$

$\text{♩} = 60$

(vlc) radio tuned to static  

non vib.

fragile, disappearing

suddenly