

II

for solo double bass

Adam Buffington

Composed in Reykjavik, autumn 2016

The length of this work is approximately 60 minutes.

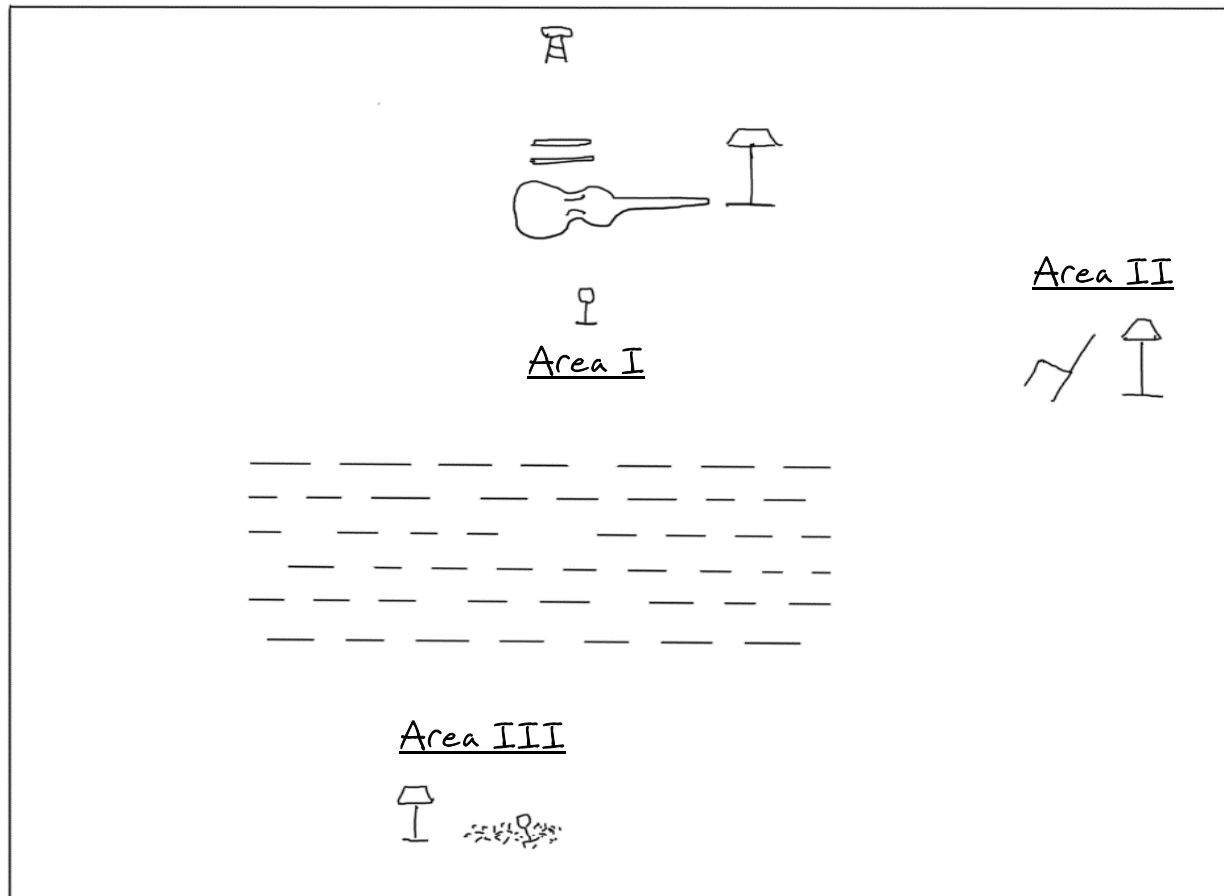
In addition to being performed as a single, continuous 60-minute piece, it may, if desired, also be performed as two individual 30-minute works. If so, divide the piece as such:

Part I: Beginning of piece up to and including the direction "Suddenly, without forewarning...", located on page 7.

Part II: Begin with the direction "Suddenly, without forewarning..." until ending of piece.

Even if performed as a 60-minute piece, it may be beneficial for the performer to initially conceive the piece as two 30-minute segments, so that the complete work does not greatly exceed a total duration of 60 minutes.

Actions noted with approximate durations should be faithfully adhered to; all others should develop organically and freely, in accordance with the performer's own instincts. If desired, a timer may be used during the performance, though its exact location should be kept hidden from the audience.



Area I - Stage Area: Double Bass, 2 bows, 1 stool placed further back stage area, 1 lit floor lamp placed stage right of the bass, 1 stemmed wine glass situated in front of the stage area. The bass should be laid flat on its back, with the scroll pointing stage right, and the end pin pointing stage left. 2 bows should be placed beside the bass opposite side of the audience, hidden from view.

Area II - Stage Right of audience: 1 chair overturned on its side, with front facing stage, and legs positioned towards the audience. 1 lit floor lamp positioned behind the chair.

Area III - Behind audience: 1 pile of random objects, 1 small lit lamp positioned closely to pile. The pile must consist of one stemmed wine glass, and various small metal objects that could be placed inside of it, such as nails, screws, coins, washers, etc. (see page 8) The rest of the pile can consist of any like-sized objects of any material, and should appear as random, broken, and weathered as possible.

*The piece should be performed in an open venue, large enough so that there is ample space for the performer to move.

The audience should be arranged in parallel rows, yet staggered to create a jagged path for which the performer can travel through during the piece. One small Bluetooth speaker should be inconspicuously located underneath one chair in the audience, to be operated remotely at the end of the piece. (see page 13) The identity of this device's operator should be kept hidden from the audience, and never formally acknowledged.

Walking Instructions - Whenever required to walk during the performance, the performer must wear shoes which possess either wooden soles, or any other sole conducive to creating noise during movement. Walk in a slow, hesitant shuffle, but not in any overtly dramatic or humorous manner.

String Tunings - All tunings are approximate, and may be changed slightly in order to resonate more fully with the performer's instrument.


I - G^d

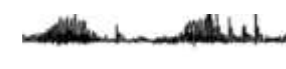
II - D^d

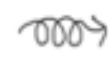
III - F[#]


IV - Maximum Scordatura: the string should vibrate loosely, with no exact discernible pitch.


Notation

 - sustained bowing motion

 - increase/decrease bow speed/pressure freely

 - bow in a circular motion, with freely changing bow speed/pressure

 - bow tremolo freely

 - actions, unless noted with specific durations, should develop organically and freely



(Complete action before beginning of performance: Lie down next to the bass, with your head near the lower bout, and your feet near the scroll. Your body should be obscured by the bass' profile as much as possible.)

Pause (≈ 4 minutes)

(Slowly arise, and carefully shuffle over, gradually entering a kneeling position above the bass, oriented over the end pin.)

Pause (≈ 2 minutes)



(Hesitantly at first, slowly reveal a bow with your right hand, and gently suspend it above the end pin at shoulder height.)

Pause (≈ 30 seconds)


(As subtly as possible, begin to lower the bow until it touches the end pin. Do so at an incredibly slow pace, so that the exact duration of time passing is imperceptible.)

Pause (≈ 2 minutes)


(After pausing, commence a gentle bowing motion, hesitantly at first, without creating sound. Gradually, a soft, brittle, airy sound should arise, initially unnoticeable, as if it was always present in the performance space.)

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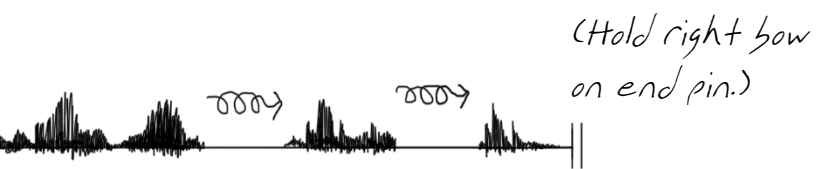
(While bowing the end pin, slowly
reveal the left bow, and lower
it onto the tailpiece.)

(end pin) 
PPP



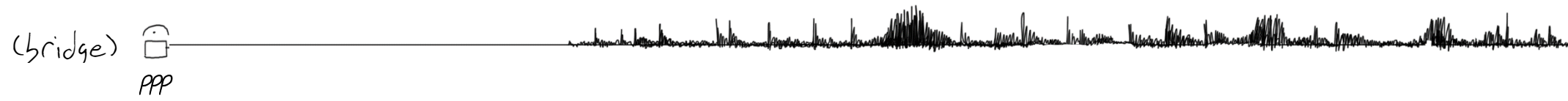
(tailpiece) 
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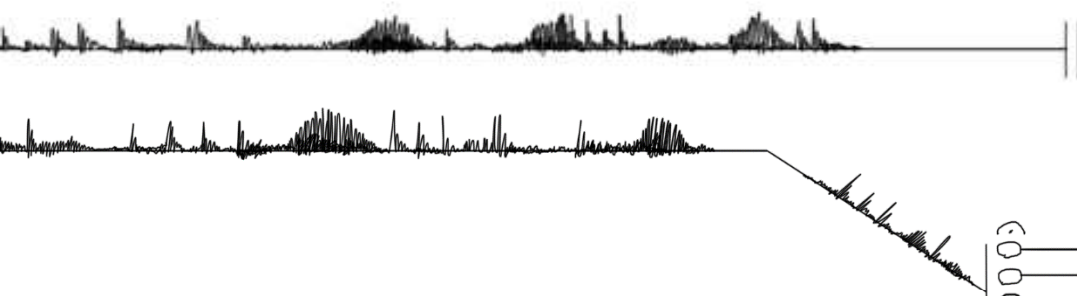




(Move right bow to top of the bridge, and bow vertically.)

(Gradually move left bow to bottom of bridge, so both left and right bows are moving parallel to strings simultaneously.)



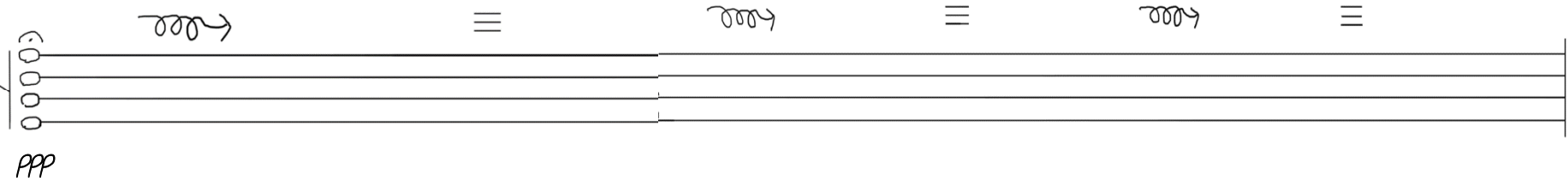


(Hold left bow on bridge.)

(Lift left bow from bridge slowly, and gradually place the hair on top of strings over fingerboard.)

(Hesitantly at first, gently rub the bow up and down the length of fingerboard freely at various rates, creating incidental noise and harmonics.)

(Slowly progress right bow from bridge to open strings, playing sustained drones at the bridge. Move between strings, or play more than one simultaneously, freely.)



(fingerboard)



(Look over at the tailpiece, as if being beckoned by the sound it once made.)

(After a few moments, move right bow to tailpiece.)

(Slowly move right bow to bridge, grinding against the strings in-between the tailpiece and bridge.)

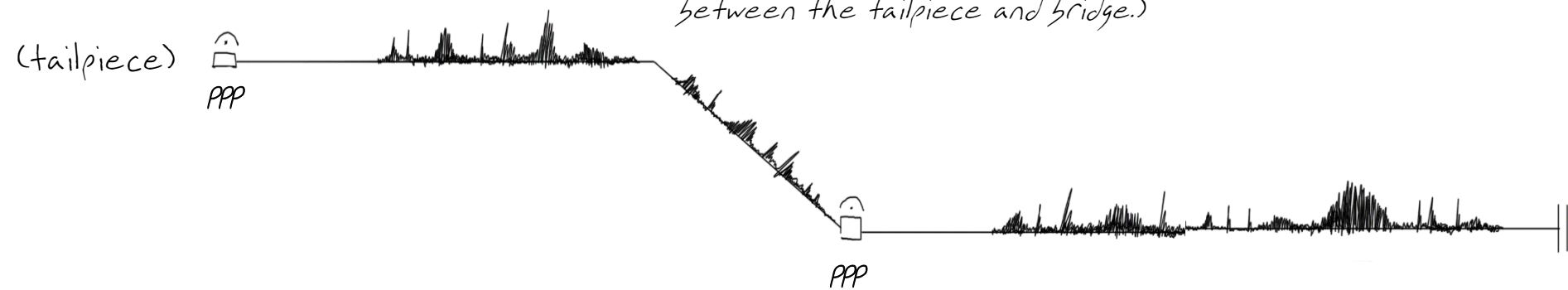
(Once the left bow drops to the floor, pause, frozen in position.)

(Then gently lay the right bow on the floor.)

(Slowly shuffle your body over towards the neck of the bass. In an incredibly prolonged manner, slowly commence to lift the bass off the floor and into standing position.)

(While doing so, gently alternate between plucking the "II" and "III" strings with your thumb. Space each pluck naturally, at a calm breathing pace, allowing each string to fully resonate.)

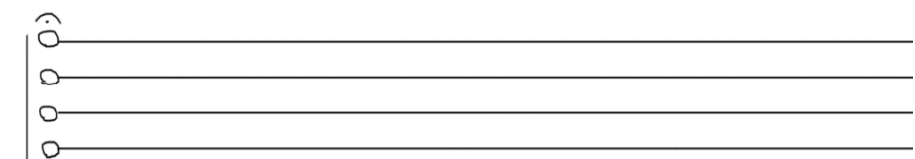
(Once in standing position, in an agonizingly slow fashion, center the bass into playing position.)



(Gradually lift the left bow off the fingerboard, and faintly trembling, lower it onto the right bow.)

(Use the left bow to bow the right bow haphazardly, alternating with moments of trembling and stillness.)

(Eventually, with hand trembling, loosen grip, finger by finger, until it drops lifelessly to the floor.)





(Suddenly, without forewarning, freeze in position. Stand motionless, silent. Head directed to the floor, eyes shut.) (≈ 15 seconds)

(Still trapped in position, begin to breathe slowly, deeply, and audibly, with a pronounced pause between each inhalation and exhalation.) (≈ 1 minute)

(Suddenly change your breathing pattern by inhaling swiftly, from a soft to a loud dynamic, ending with a pronounced accent. Hold breath and pause.) (≈ 5-10 seconds)

(Exhale inaudibly.)

(Continue this quick inhaling and inaudible exhaling gesture, though without the brief pause as before. While doing so, after a few repetitions, begin to raise the head vertically until it is in normal upright position. Do so as if the neck muscles are incredibly stiff and resistant, and ache from the head's weight.)



(Once the head is in normal upright position, pause for a few moments, breathing normally and quietly. Then, begin to open your eyes, revealing a weary, dazed stare, as if awakening from a trance. Stare ahead into the audience, but do not acknowledge their existence, as if there is only darkness.)

Pause (≈ 15 seconds)

(In a rigid, almost mechanical fashion, slowly turn your head until facing stage left. Pause for a few moments, then return head to previous position. After pausing briefly, turn your head in the same slow and rigid manner towards stage right until you suddenly turn back to normal position. Squint your eyes and direct your head and upper body slightly forward, suddenly noticing a dull radiance inhabiting Area III.)



(Take one step forward, and suddenly stop. Slowly turn your head down diagonally to peer at the bass for a few moments, then gradually turn away and look down at the floor. Realizing you cannot take the bass with you, turn your body towards the bass, and gradually move until you are repositioned behind the bass. Gently lean the bass back towards you, until you are grasping the bass' scroll with your hands.)

(As slowly as possible, begin to walk backwards, dragging the bass by the scroll in front of you, allowing the end pin to slide along the floor, until you reach the stool placed further back in the stage area. Lean the bass back, with the scroll resting upon the stool, the front of the bass facing slightly upwards.)



(Cautiously, take a few steps back. Extend your arms towards the bass with the palms of your hands facing it, as if the bass might fall. Turn, and proceed towards the front edge of the stage area.)

(Just as you reach the edge of the stage area, turn your head stage right, and suddenly stop. Another faint aura, initially unnoticed, catches your attention. Compelled to investigate, carefully move a few steps away from the stage area towards Area II, and then suddenly freeze in position. Beside the light lies an overturned chair. While staring at this, your body should be stiff and tense, your hands should tremble subtly and intermittently, your fingers nervously rubbing together, your breathing slow yet audible.)

(After a brief period of time, take a few steps backwards from the area, still breathing audibly, until you have returned to the stage area. Once there, stop, and slowly walk towards the light located in Area III.)

(Just as you reach where the audience is seated, unexpectedly bump into a chair in the front row. Greatly startled, stop with a sudden jolt. Carefully survey the darkness surrounding you by slowly turning your head stage left, then stage right, then return to normal position. Pause briefly, and after one deep audible exhale, continue moving through the chairs in a slow, hesitant shuffle until you reach the light.)



(Once you have reached the light, stop and lower your head down to stare at the luminescent glow. Tilt your head right, pause, then left. Pause, then return head to normal position.) (≈ 15 seconds)

(Gently crouch down to examine what the light is illuminating: a useless pile of debris, its origins known only to the darkness surrounding you. Begin to gently sift through the pile for several moments, until you suddenly stop and look over at the light. Slowly extend your hand, with a slight tremble, until you grasp the light switch. After a brief pause, quickly shut the light off, and resume searching through the pile in darkness.)

(After several more moments have passed, cease searching when you discover a stemmed wine glass. Pick it out of the pile and hold it up, slowly turning it as if examining for any significant damage. Place it down on the floor next to you, and sift through the pile until you find an assortment of several small metal objects. Place them one by one in the glass.)

(Arise from crouched position, and stand upright. Then, bend your body forward, arms rigidly extended downward, your fingers placed on the glass' base. As hesitantly as possible, begin to slowly push the object across the floor to the stage area. Return using the same path as before. Much pressure should be placed on the glass, so it produces a loud, abrasive rattling as it scrapes across the floor.)



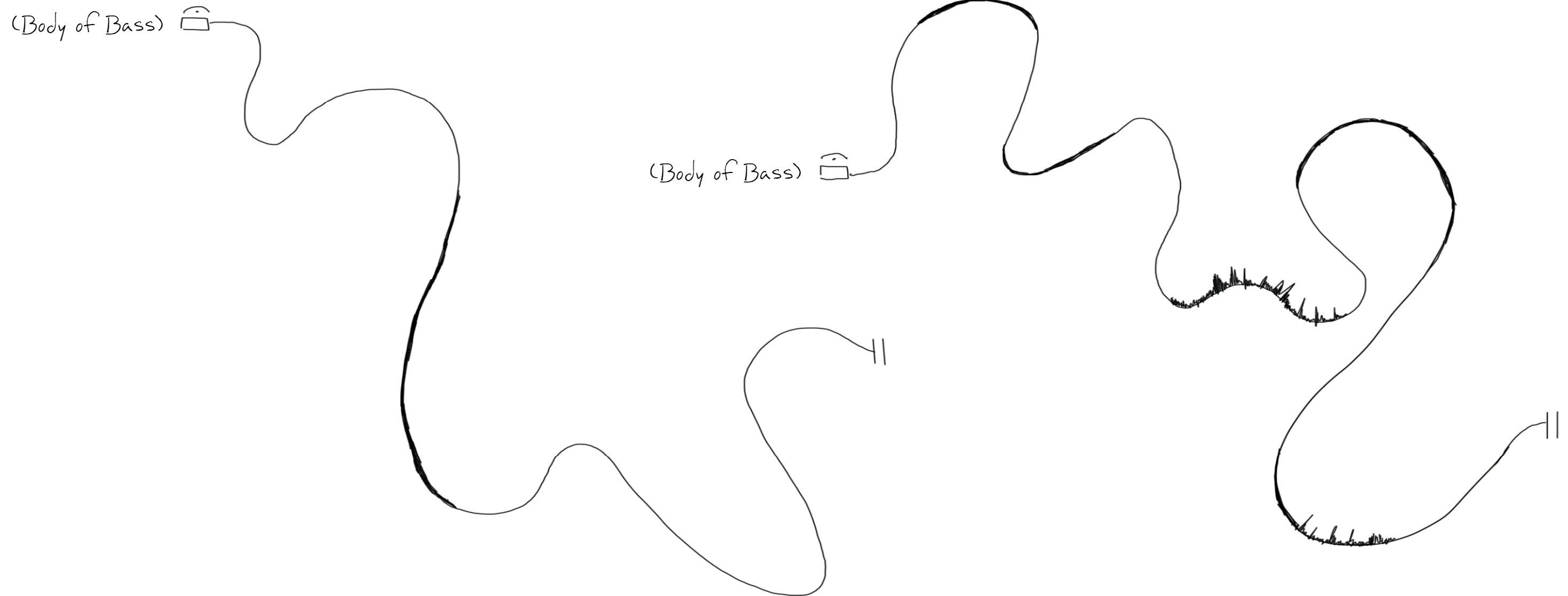
(As you approach the front of the stage area, stop moving, pause briefly, and slowly rise to upright position, leaving the new wine glass sitting next to the wine glass already situated there. Walk over to the bass, stage left side, and crouch down beside it. Spend a few moments examining it with your eyes. Then, as if hearing a faint murmur, gently place your ear against the bass, eyes closed, silent, still. Slowly inhale and exhale once.)

Pause and Listen (≈ 30 seconds)

(With your eyes still shut and your ear against the bass, raise your right hand, slightly trembling, and place it on the body of the bass. Begin to slowly caress the bass.)

(Caress the body of the bass with right hand. Do not treat given lines as a definitive score, but rather just as inspiration for which to freely shape original improvised material.)

(Contour of lines suggest possible direction of hand motion on the body of the bass. Thickening of lines represents increase of pressure placed on the body by the hand. The darkest, most rigid lines represent heaviest pressure and slowest movement of hand, creating a loud creaking sound.)





(Suddenly cease caressing the bass. Freeze in position, with hand still on the body of the bass, your eyes still closed.) (≈ 15 seconds)

(After slowly inhaling and exhaling once, open your eyes and stand up. Turn and grab the scroll of the bass. Lift the scroll up off of the stool, until you are able to move and position yourself behind the bass. Gradually push the bass forward until you reach the location of the bows.)



(Once situated, pause briefly, with your right arm resting at your side, your head directed downwards.)

(After a few moments, slowly bend forward, your right arm fully extended, and pick a bow up off of the floor. Slowly rise up, and gently place the bow where the IV string meets the tailpiece.)


Pause (≈ 10 seconds)

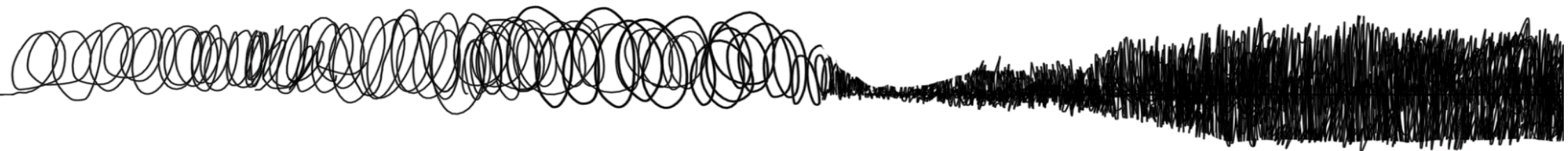
(Commence a gentle bowing motion, creating quiet, distant white noise.)

(Gradually transition to middle of string, halfway between tailpiece and bridge. Quietly drone.)

(As you gradually approach the bridge, begin to lift the string off the fingerboard with your left hand to create a ghostly whining sound. Start slowly and subtly, then increase in intensity, lifting at varying rates.)

(As you continue the whining sound, the bow should gradually transition back down to where the string meets the tailpiece. Once there, cease lifting the string off the fingerboard, with great pressure, bow to create an abrasive, distorted, relentless drone, one which possesses an oppressive weight and an unbearable sense of finality.)

(IV) 
PPP





(As you continue the drone, a sound of static white noise will arise from the audience, though its exact location cannot be sensed. Beginning at the quietest dynamic, the static shall gradually increase in volume at a very slow pace until it simply cannot be ignored.)

(At this point, while still droning, slowly raise your head and stare out into the audience. Continue until the static sound slowly dwindles into silence.)



(Once the static sound has disappeared, cease playing. Continue staring for several moments. Then, slowly lower the bass flat on its back, with the scroll pointing stage right and the end pin stage left.)

(Loosen the bow, and gently place it on the floor between the bass and you.)

(Gradually lower your body onto the floor, and lie down on your back behind the bass, with your head at the lower bout, your feet at the scroll, your body obscured by the bass' profile.)

Silence. Slowly fade to darkness.