

Decoupler

for string instrument


Ben Rieke
2023


Duration: 5:00 approx

Performance notes:

No discrete pitches are given in this piece – accordingly, it may be played on a violin, viola, cello, or double bass (though the last may be significantly more tricky). The clef indicates where the string should be fingered, moving towards the nut at the bottom of the staff and towards the bridge/end of fingerboard at the top. The string to be fingered is always given by a roman numeral; in long passages without a new one, remain on the same string until one is given. Any notes on the bottom line of the staff indicate an open string.

Diamond noteheads are to be played with harmonic finger pressure. Lines drawn between diamond and regular noteheads above the staff indicate a transition between harmonic and ordinary finger pressure.

 - indicates ricochet. When a bracket is drawn after this symbol, all new strokes underneath are also to be played ricochet.

 - indicates continuous rapid descending fingering of fingers 4,3,2,1 with harmonic pressure at the position indicated on the staff. Basically the character of a trill, but always the same descending 4-3-2-1 pattern with the fingers as close together as possible.

Any notes within glissandi that are not slurred are to be reattacked, including the non-accented notes in e.g. 11.

From 13 to 15, the position of the bow on the string (as normally determined by s.t. , s.p. etc) is also given. More information is present in footnotes in the score at this location.

The rhythmic content in this score is precisely indicated, but the main purpose of this is to indicate relative speed rather than, for instance, mandating exact subdivisions of a $q=60$ beat. As long as septuplet sixteenths are clearly faster than sextuplets but slower than 32nds in passages where there is alternation between such values, this is enough. It is in fact acceptable to deviate from $q=60$ for logistical or expressive purposes so long as this kind of relative rhythmic integrity is maintained.

Program notes:

The ubiquity of discrete pitch in string music is weird, given that there aren't any frets! Vocal chords are strings too, but we think of speech as sliding up and down through a frequency spectrum rather than cycling through a collection of pitch choices.

Traditionally expressive melodic content is actually constantly correlated with pitch indiscretion — gooey shifts, portamento, wide vibrato. Maybe removing the discrete identity of the parameter altogether makes greater room for maximum expression, or at least greater expression in other parametric worlds like rhythm, texture, or whatever is made possible by the mechanical potential of the way the instrument is designed: a blind man developing a wicked ear.

Written for Cameron Chase
Ben Rieke
Manhattan, March 2023

6

f *p* *mf* *pp* *p* *mf* *fp* *f*

7

fp *f* *ff* *f*

8

p *ff* *p* *ff*

9

mf *mf* *pp* *p* *ff*

10

f *ff* *f* *ff* *fp* *ff*

11 (always separate bows) > II. > III. > I. II. 6 IV. III. IV. 6 III. > >

ff *fp* *f* *mp* *ff* *p* *fp* *fp* *fp* *fp*

12 I. II. III. IV. II. III. I. II. III. IV. III. II. I. II. III. I. II. III. I. II. III.

ff *mf*

13 II. I. II. III. IV. * (ord.) (m.s.t.) (m.s.t.) (s.p.) etc.

mp *p*

14 *

pp

15 (lateral c.l.t. NOT ricochet) c.l.t. ord. (still IV.) III. IV. III. IV. III. IV. III. IV. III. IV.

pp *p* *mf*

*Both bow and finger position on strings are shown. Continue the ricochet bowing so long as the indication is present. Bow and hand recouple on the third beat of m15.
 **Continue the ends of these longer ricochets with lateral ("windshield wiper") bowing

16

III. IV. III. IV. 3 6 III. II.

p *mp* *pp* *mf* *p* *ppp*

10

Detailed description: This measure features a series of string techniques labeled III, IV, III, IV, 3, 6, and III. The dynamics range from *p* to *ppp*. A ten-measure bowing pattern is indicated by a wavy line above a box containing three dots. A diamond symbol marks the end of the measure.

17

II. I. II. I. II. I. 5 II. I. II. 3 III. IV. III. IV. III.

pp *mp* *pp*

Detailed description: This measure includes techniques labeled II, I, II, I, II, I, 5, II, I, II, 3, III, IV, III, and IV. Dynamics are *pp*, *mp*, and *pp*. A diamond symbol marks the end of the measure.

18

IV. III. IV. 5 III. IV. 10 5

mf *pp* *f* *pp* *p* *ppp*

6 6 *pp*

Detailed description: This measure features techniques labeled IV, III, IV, 5, III, IV, 10, 5, and 6. Dynamics range from *mf* to *ppp*. A ten-measure bowing pattern is indicated by a wavy line above a box containing three dots. Two six-measure bowing patterns are indicated by wavy lines above boxes containing two dots. A diamond symbol marks the end of the measure.

19

I. IV. 5 III. II. III. II. III. 5 *

ppp *fff*

Detailed description: This measure includes techniques labeled I, IV, 5, III, II, III, II, III, 5, and *. Dynamics are *ppp* and *fff*. A diamond symbol marks the end of the measure. A small musical notation is shown at the bottom right.

*Bar finger across all four strings and gliss upward while oscillating through all strings with bow as indicated

20

I. II. III. IV. 5 5

mp

21

3

pp

22

3

p

23

3 5 3 3 5 6

p *mp* *p* *mp* (cresc. poco a poco to 29)

24

3 5 3 7 9 III.

mf (cresc...)

25

IV. III. 7 5 IV. III. IV. 6

26

III. II. 3 III. II. III. IV. III. II. 5 5

f (cresc...)

27

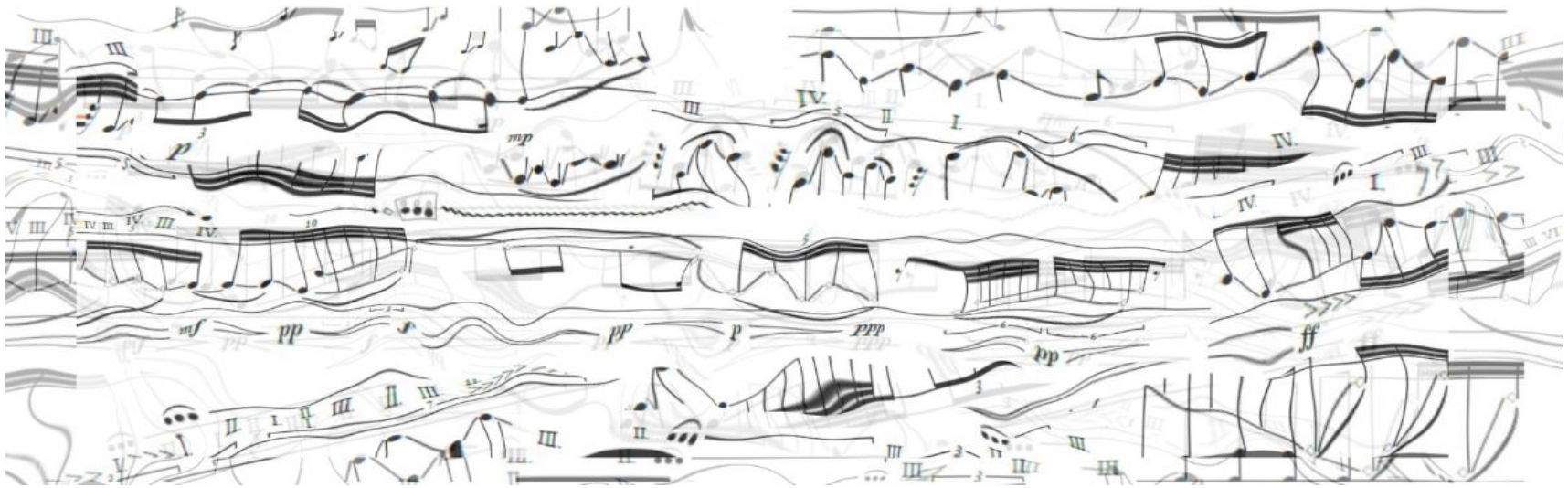
III. 7 II. III. IV. III. II. I. 6 III.

ff (still cresc, now quite frantic, losing control)

28

IV. 6 II. I. 5 II. III. IV. III. II. I. 3

20"



Go nuts. Remember distortions of passages from before. Wild, desperate, using the whole instrument.
After about 20 seconds, reach the highest point of intensity and suddenly jump to 30.

30 IV. (bow as needed but as change imperceptibly)

fffpp

31 *

ppp

*Use the tuning peg to lower the pitch further at roughly the rate of the preceding gliss. Go down as far as you are comfortable with.
The notation here is technically at odds with the bridge clef, but no big deal.