

# Threads of the Social

Scott Mc Laughlin (2017)

Bowed string ensemble, min. 8 players

This piece is an open score, where players are in tension between principles they must adhere to, and behaviours which are optional and can be crafted differently according to their preference. The starting point is the pitch 'A', which is a common to the harmonic series of several different notes: such as 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> partial of A, 3<sup>rd</sup> harmonic of D, but also more exotic partials requiring retuned strings, 7<sup>th</sup> of a slightly sharp B, 5<sup>th</sup> of minutely sharp F. Each player uses only one string, which must have an 'A' harmonic. The piece is structured around a series of solos, where players work with the harmonics of their string, and these are played against a backdrop of competing harmonies, all connected by 'A' but liable to split into factions at any time by the competing pressures and opportunities offered by the score.

## Threads of the Social (LSTwo Strings & Mira Benjamin 2017)

- At least half the group should use scordatura F+14c and B+31c strings. e.g. detune G string to F+14c (with A as 5th partial), or detune C or D strings to B+31c (with A as 7th partial), or more exotic retunings that have A in their harmonic series
- Choose seven soloists. The piece is ordered by solos.
  - Solos: 1; 2; 3+4; 5+6+7; all solo (to end). List the soloists by name in order.
  - When soloists play, it must be obvious to the other players.
- All players (except current soloists) continuously sustain a sounding 'A' harmonic.
  - The piece starts with everyone playing sounding 'A' harmonics, with the first solo entering after about 60 seconds.
- At any time, players may gently modify their harmonic<sup>1</sup> by one of the following:
  - Dynamic swell
  - String bend
  - Flautando bowing
  - Molto sul pont
  - Molto sul tasto
  - Harmonic glissando to same harmonic in another position. gliss should be slow and unobtrusive ideally, though a soloist may be more explicit
- During a solo, other players may (or not) take any one of these three actions and sustain it until after the solo finishes: then slowly returning to 'A'.
  - Very long harmonic gliss, c.30–40sec: Lely-style, bring out any harmonics encountered on gliss. 'Lely-style' is a reference to John Lely's piece 'The Harmonics of Real Strings', on which this piece is based.
  - Open string molto sul pont *ppp*
  - Move to another harmonic.<sup>2</sup> These must be done in order:
    - First time: move to the nearest harmonic (up or down)
    - Second time: move two harmonics away (up or down)
    - Third time: move three harmonics away (up or down)
    - Fourth time: move four harmonics away (up or down)'nearest' here is subjective. Try to find harmonics within a semitone: Don't move to 'known' harmonics, try to find what's close but possibly hidden.
- Generally these are all done independently, but for each of these actions once in the piece everyone (except current soloists) should do it together. Whenever you hear someone in the group doing one of these actions, you may choose to join in (even if that means changing from your own action). Sometimes only a few will join in, but at some point most or all of the group will join in. Full-group versions of these actions take place **only once** in the piece for each action.
- The piece finishes with all players soloing. Their solos slowly become loops, which slowly become drones, which is sustained for a minute before all fading out over 30 sec. This whole section will need to be cued. 'loops' are any short section of your solo that you repeat. Then slowly drop bits of the loop and stretching them out until you only have a single droning harmonic.

**Solos:** must be all harmonics (no open strings), but may include glissando or any other colour (m.s.p, m.s.t, flaut. etc). Create a solo from the harmonics that sound well on your string, a simple pattern of repeating harmonics is fine, it can be as complex or simple as you want but it must be a 'solo', and stand out from the remaining group. Duets/trios can interact with each other (quasi improvisation). Solo should be about 40–60 seconds long.

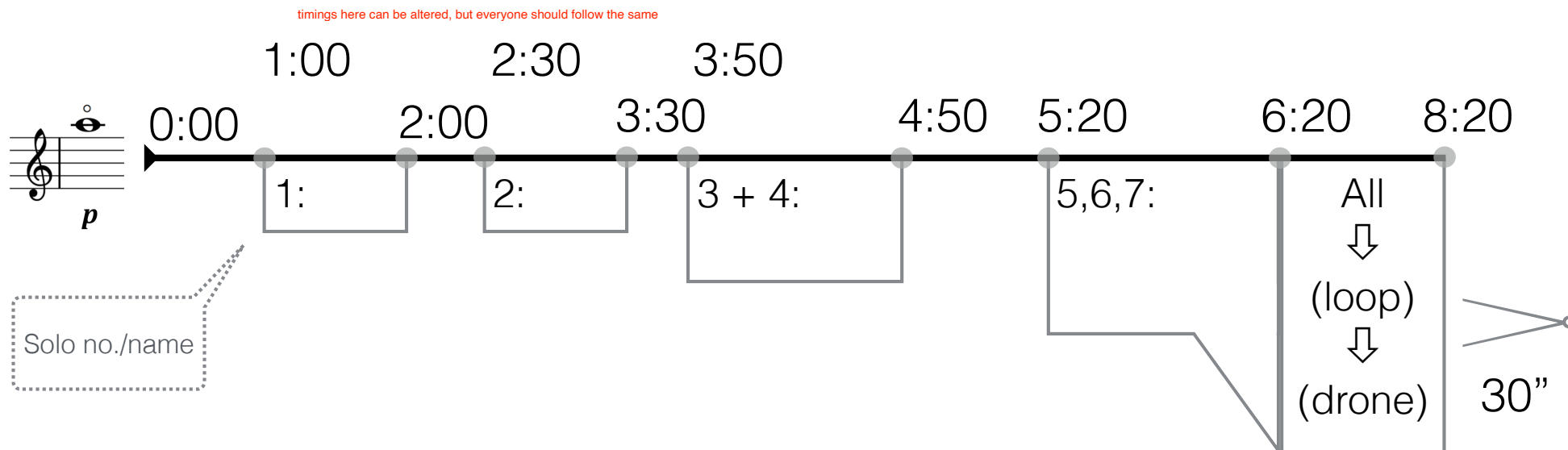
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<sup>1</sup> Not necessarily 'A', this applies to any harmonic.

<sup>2</sup> 'Move to another harmonic' is the action, the amount of harmonics you move by is just a variation on that action. There's only one full-group version of 'move to another harmonic', but when that happens you can move as far as is appropriate for you depending on how many times you've done that action already.

# Threads of the Social v.3 (2017)

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At any time, players may gently modify their harmonic by one of the following:

- Dynamic swell
- String bend
- Flautando bowing
- *Molto sul pont*
- *Molto sul tasto*
- Harmonic glissando to same harmonic in another position.

During a **solo**, other players may (or not) take any one of these three actions and sustain it until after the solo finishes: then slowly returning to 'A':

- 1) Very long harmonic gliss, c.30–40sec: bring out any harmonics encountered on gliss.
- 2) Open string: *molto sul pont, ppp*
- 3) Move to another harmonic. These must be done in order:
  - First time: move to the nearest harmonic (up or down)
  - Second time: move two harmonics away (up or down)
  - Third time: move three harmonics away (up or down)
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