

Binary Experiment for James Tenney
for four contrabasses

Jeffrey Treviño, 2005 – 2006

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Designate ensemble members Bass I, Bass II, Bass III, and Bass IV, and arrange the ensemble in a semicircular arc from Bass IV at stage right to Bass I at stage left.

This composition requires a chronometer that measures time absolutely in seconds in a manner visible to all four performers.

A

Start the chronometer counting up from 0:00.

When the chronometer reaches 1:00, everyone begins simultaneously at **I**.

Begin by playing any of the three notes at a dynamic of *mp*.

Always play one note per bow. Play an up-bow or a down-bow.

From this note, move either clockwise or counter-clockwise to the next note;
play the new note at the dynamic through which you pass on the way.

Repeat the last two lines of instructions until you move to the next mobile.

Begin the next mobile as above.

When the chronometer reaches 4:00, any note underway is the last note of **A**. Perform this note's entire duration, and then perform silence until **B** begins at 4:10.

B

Dynamics are *mp* throughout.

With regard to the bow hand, all notes are arco gettato (the bow bounces off the string and rebounds to make successive attacks). The bowing location should be chosen to maximize the resonance of upper partials and can change throughout as exploration demands.

With regard to the string hand, each player performs a glissando with harmonic touch from the lowest possible note on the fingerboard to the highest possible note on the fingerboard—Bass I on the E string, Bass II the A, Bass III the D, and Bass IV the G—over the course of the three-minute duration.

Temporarily suspend the glissando while playing a note, and keep the string finger in the same place throughout the note's duration, still with harmonic touch. Continue the glissando when playing silence.

As before—this time when the chronometer reaches 4:10—everyone begins simultaneously at **I**.

Begin by bouncing the bow for any of the three encircled durations.

From the last duration, move either clockwise or counter-clockwise to the next duration.

Before bouncing for the next duration, perform silence for the duration through which you pass; then bounce.

Repeat the last three lines of instructions until you move to the next mobile.

Begin the next mobile as above.

The improvised “solo” circle in **II**. should be undertaken in the spirit of the piece. The player should keep the fingerboard finger in the same position throughout. In **III**., a duration of 0” indicates a sound that is less than one second long.

When the chronometer reaches 7:10, any note underway is the last note of **B**. Perform this note's entire duration, and then perform silence until the piece has ended.

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A

Bass I	1:00 Begin at I.	1:40 - 1:50 to II.	2:30 - 2:40 to II.	3:40 - 3:50 to III.	4:00 Finish. Wait 10 seconds.
Bass II					
Bass III			2:40 - 2:50 to II.		
Bass IV				3:10 - 3:20 to II.	

I.

Diagram I shows three circles representing musical positions. The top-left circle contains a bass clef with a single note on the first line (G2). The top-right circle contains a treble clef with a single note on the second line (D3). The bottom circle contains a treble clef with a single note on the second line (D3). Dynamics are indicated: *mf* between the top two circles, *mp* between the top-left and bottom circles, and *f* between the top-right and bottom circles.

Move to II

- I, 1:40 - 1:50
 - II, 2:30 - 2:40
 - III, 2:40 - 2:50
 - IV, 3:10 - 3:20
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II.

Diagram II shows three circles representing musical positions. The top-left circle contains a treble clef with a single note on the second line (D3). The top-right circle contains a treble clef with a single note on the second line (D3). The bottom circle contains a treble clef with a single note on the second line (D3). Dynamics are indicated: *p* between the top two circles, *p* between the top-left and bottom circles, and *ff* between the top-right and bottom circles.

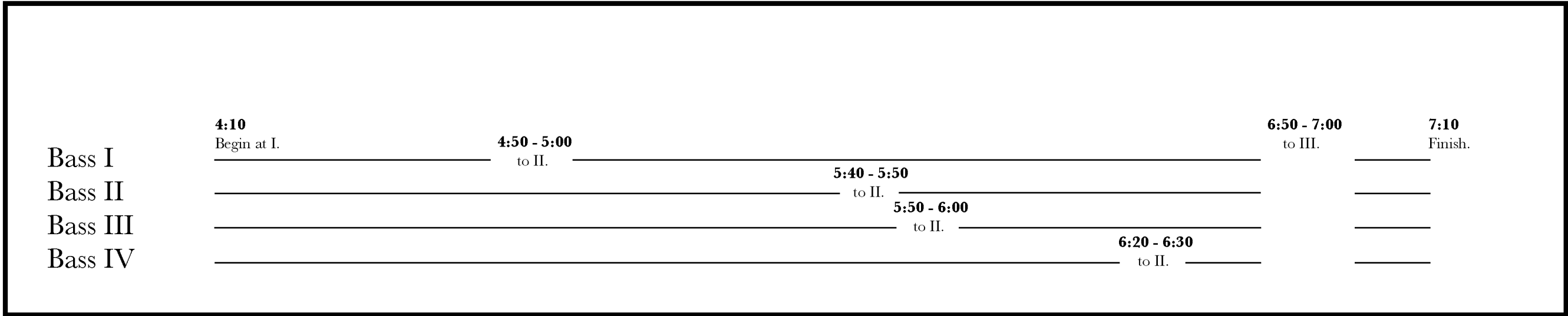
Move to III

- All, 3:40 - 3:50

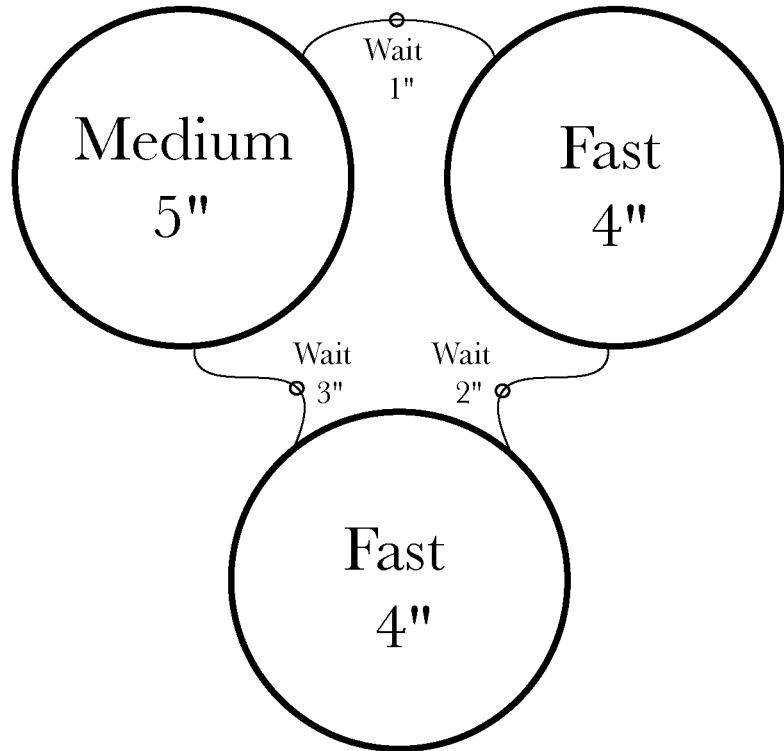
III.

Diagram III shows three circles representing musical positions. The top-left circle contains a treble clef with a single note on the second line (D3), with a sharp sign and an 8va marking above it. The top-right circle contains a treble clef with a single note on the second line (D3), with a sharp sign and an 8va marking above it. The bottom circle contains a treble clef with a single note on the second line (D3). Dynamics are indicated: *ppp* between the top two circles, *p* between the top-left and bottom circles, and *mf* between the top-right and bottom circles.

B



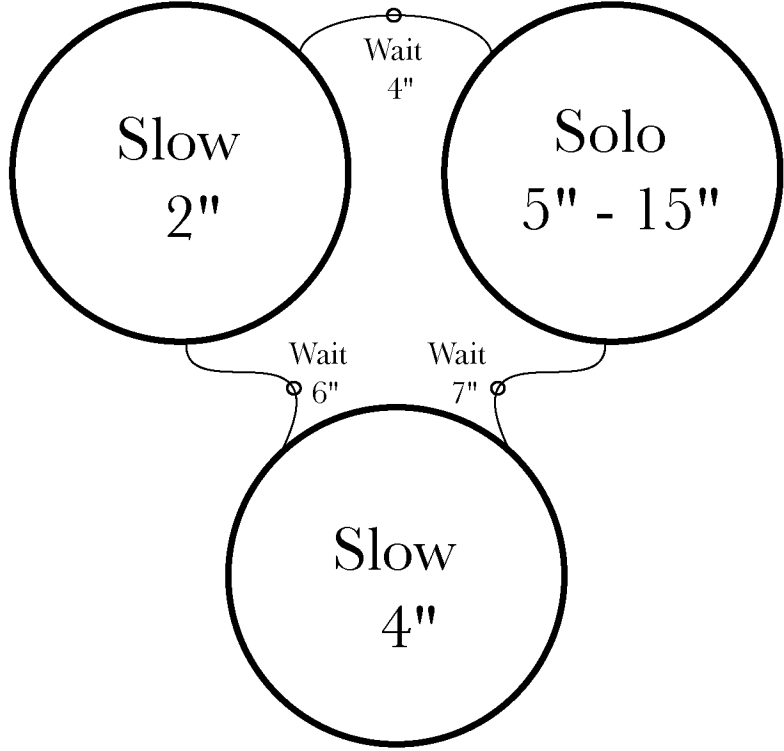
I.



Move to II

- I, 4:50 - 5:00
- II, 5:40 - 5:50
- III, 5:50 - 6:00
- IV, 6:20 - 6:30

II.



Move to III

All, 6:50 - 7:00

III.

