



Fr.II.a-k

Pat  
Muchmore



# Fr. II. a-k

*for unaccompanied scordatura cello*

2011 Oct. 14, Detroit, MI - 2012 Jan. 25, Astoria, NY

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## Fr.II.a-k

The following eleven pieces are fragmentary compositions written in one sitting (though often with relatively extensive revision later) on days that held significance to me in some way. Some were written on vacation, others during important rehearsals, and others on interesting dates. They are sort of like journal entries, although—with a few exceptions—there isn't any conscious attempt to reflect anything in particular about the day or experience. They are written for solo scordatura cello: the **A-string** is tuned down by a half-step and the **C-string** is tuned up by a half-step. The entire piece is shown on two staves. The small upper staff always shows the actual sounding notes (including harmonics), while the larger lower staff shows how the piece is fingered as if it were written for a cello in standard tuning. In the latter, harmonics are notated with diamond noteheads at the position where the finger touches the string; the performer is of course free to substitute different fingering positions as long as they create the same harmonic. In the upper staff, **notes that sound lower** than they are fingered are written with downward triangle noteheads and **notes that sound higher** have upward triangle noteheads. In the performance staff, colored notation is used to easily distinguish notes played on the detuned strings from notes played on the regularly tuned strings. **Green notes are to be played on I' (∴ sounding a minor second lower than written)** and **red notes are played on IV' (∴ sounding a minor second higher)**. I've been shocked to discover just how much like a new instrument this tuning makes my instrument become—actually it even freaked me out a bit at first. I hope these pieces showcase some of the unique or nearly unique musical possibilities that the tuning allows.

The pieces are not ordered chronologically, I put them in an order that seemed both musically interesting and that allows time to relax the hands a bit before particularly grueling movements. Feel free to rearrange a bit, or even take out one or two if you like. What follows in these notes are brief descriptions of the circumstances behind each fragment, and you should just skip ahead to the music if you aren't interested.

I don't mind.

### Fr.II.a

This fragment was written in my apartment in Astoria, Queens on 11/11/11. My old composition teacher, Carolyn Bremer, posted on Facebook that the day was All-Interval Tetrachord day, which seems exactly like the sort of holiday that should exist but doesn't. For those not versed in set-class theory, all-interval tetrachords are four-note harmonies that contain all six possible intervals simultaneously (which kind of sounds like a magic trick). There are only two such combinations possible, labeled (0146) and (0137)—E-F-G#-A# is an example of the former and E-F-G-B is an example of the latter. The “interval vector” for both of these set classes is <111111> (which is an efficient way of labeling interval content, in this case one of each interval), hence the connection to the date. Anyway, the harmonies have four notes and the cello has four strings, so how could I resist? “Pretty easily,” you're no doubt thinking. Ah, but you forget that I am an inveterate music-theory nerd. I figured out every possible all-interval tetrachord that left at least two open strings, and proceeded to sketch out this musical exploration of all of them.

### Fr.II.b

On most Christmases, my wife and I head to our ancestral homeland: Ponca City, Oklahoma. All of our parents live there, and it's always nice to see everyone even if I do hate Christmas pretty badly. This fragment was written in the morning at my Mom's house the day after Christmas, which apparently led me to write a piece composed largely of minor-seventh chords. (?)

### Fr.II.c

This was written one evening after I commuted back home from teaching at Sarah Lawrence College. It was written at my wife's and my favorite bar, Sweet Afton, while I waited for her to get off work. According to my extensive notes, I drank a lovely Winter Ale by Peak Organic during the writing of the first half and downed a couple of Sweet Actions by Six Point during the second half. Huh. I guess Jenny worked kinda late that night.

### Fr.II.d

The first piece composed for this collection. I remember being excited by how easy perfect fifths and fourths are in this strange tuning. This is one of two pieces in the collection written during Anti-Social Music's brief tour of Detroit, and, like the other, it was written at the loft space we stayed in, the home of Warn Defever of His Name is Alive. Halfway through writing it, a group of us made an excursion to Astro Coffee and had some *amazing* java, so if the piece seems to suddenly gather energy at the passage marked “Grandly” that's probably why. The left-hand pizz stuff is pretty difficult, sorry about that.

### Fr.II.e

The other piece written in Detroit, this fragment explores some of the melodic possibilities of natural harmonics created by the funky tuning. The piece works best if you let each harmonic ring as much as possible. This is one of the few pieces in the collection that was written by actually improvising on my cello, and I think it's one of the more idiomatic pieces as a result.

### Fr.II.f

In the Fall of 2011 and Spring of 2012, I've been teaching two advanced theory courses covering 20<sup>th</sup>-century compositional concepts such as set-class theory and serialism. I wanted to find an avenue for discussion outside of the usual all-Germany, all-the-time approach, so I read *Twelve-Tone Music in America* by Joe Straus. I was dismayed to discover that Elliott Carter had written a few pieces (*Catenaire* for example) using a vertical town row—a row ordering the twelve pitches in register rather than time—an idea which I had previously thought was uniquely mine. Anyway, this piece was written during my office hours between the two classes, and explores a few different transformations of just such a “12-note chord.”

### Fr.II.g

For the last several years, I've been involved as a performer in an opera by Kamala Sankaram called *Miranda*. Initially I was just a cellist in the chamber orchestra, but in the course of the opera's development the performers have been increasingly involved in the production as characters. By the final version, premiered in early 2012, I was surprised to find myself in the role of Izzy Wright: still playing cello but now also singing, acting and occasionally getting thrown into an evil supercomputer to be eaten alive. This fragment was written during a so-called q2q or “cue-to-cue” rehearsal, which is a fairly arduous process wherein small chunks of the show are performed in between extensive pauses to set up lighting, video, sound and other cues. The performers have to remain on stage, but have nothing to do other than take up space, so I wrote passages of this movement during the extensive downtime. I generally wrote music using the various themes or soundworlds that had been most recently rehearsed, hence the disjointed nature of the piece. Most of the melodies are by Kamala, although I often used the original fingerings without correcting for the detuning, so they are often warped in various ways. Sorry Kamala!

### Fr.II.h

The second of two pieces in this set written during a quick trip Jenny and I took to Chicago, I wrote this fragment one morning in the apartment we rented for most of our stay, and which we got to share with a sweet little cat named Deuter. We discovered how different living in Chicago could be when we found a particularly striking thing in the basement of the building. It was easy to find: on the same floor as the large laundry room, across from the full-size gym and catty-corner from the movie-screening room. It was also easy to reach, because right there—through a brief maze of pool tables, ping-pong tables and a putting green (!)—was an honest-to-god, shit-you-not, two lane bowling alley. I find this to be one of the most technically challenging pieces in the collection, mostly because of its polyphonic design. The piece works best if you can make the constant, oscillating eighth notes sounds like they are part of a different world than the freer melodies happening above and below it. Oh, and if you're anything like me, you'll find yourself bowling well over 100 after writing it, so there's that.

### Fr.II.i

Anti-Social Music rented a large van for our trip to Detroit, which was dubbed by me and no one else the ASM Mystery Machine. During the trip home I wrote this super-brief piece, cut short by my discovery that composing in a moving vehicle makes me car sick. I'm pretty sure Jean Cook was driving at the time, and that Prince was blasting on the stereo. This fragment is the fault of neither of them.

### Fr.II.j

This is the other fragment written during our Chicago trip. It was written in a fairly fancy room at the Radisson BLU hotel by a window overlooking the city. That was nice.

### Fr.II.k

This piece was also written during the *Miranda* run, when I showed up absurdly early for a dress rehearsal. The *Miranda* set was fairly extensive and included a raised circular daïs on the floor which we called the reënactment disk. The show within the show is a crime recreation program kind of like *Unsolved Mysteries*, and several scenes in the lead-up to the title character's murder were played out on it. I was especially proud of the cello endpin hole that director Rob Reese had cut into it just for me. This movement calls for some fairly extensive thumb-position trickery, and those cellists with smaller hands might have to alter parts of it.

Enjoy!

I' - Ab  
 II' - D  
 III' - G  
 IV' - C#

# Fr.II.a-k

Pat Muchmore

Fr.II.a Astoria, NY — <11/11/11> 11:11 PM

The musical score is written for a double bass, with a treble clef staff at the top and a bass clef staff below. The key signature is one flat (Bb). The score is divided into several systems, each with a measure number in the left margin.

- System 1 (Measures 1-2):** Starts with a bass clef. Measure 1 has a tempo marking "Brash (♩ ≈ 60)". Measure 2 has a dynamic marking "fff" and a performance instruction "relatively fast, light bow".
- System 2 (Measures 3-4):** Measure 3 has a dynamic marking "f" and a performance instruction "pizz\*") mechanical". Measure 4 has a dynamic marking "fff" and a performance instruction "arco brash".
- System 3 (Measures 5-6):** Measure 5 has a dynamic marking "pp" and a performance instruction "slightly slower delicate". Measure 6 has a dynamic marking "mf" and a performance instruction "mechanical".
- System 4 (Measures 7-8):** Measure 7 has a dynamic marking "pp" and a performance instruction "delicate". Measure 8 has a dynamic marking "mf" and a performance instruction "mechanical".
- System 5 (Measures 9-10):** Measure 9 has a dynamic marking "fff" and a performance instruction "Brash (♩ ≈ 90)". Measure 10 has a dynamic marking "p" and a performance instruction "fast, light".
- System 6 (Measures 11-12):** Measure 11 has a dynamic marking "fff" and a performance instruction "fast, light". Measure 12 has a dynamic marking "p" and a performance instruction "fast, light".
- System 7 (Measures 13-14):** Measure 13 has a dynamic marking "fff" and a performance instruction "get nasty, let harmonics break". Measure 14 has a dynamic marking "f" and a performance instruction "pizz\*") mechanical".
- System 8 (Measures 15-16):** Measure 15 has a dynamic marking "fff" and a performance instruction "arco". Measure 16 has a dynamic marking "fff" and a performance instruction "+LH pizz for accent".

The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, slurs, and dynamic markings (pp, mf, f, fff, p). Performance instructions like "mechanical", "delicate", "fast, light", "Brash", "arco", and "pizz\*" are used throughout. The score ends with a measure number "14" in the left margin and a time signature "4/4" in the right margin.

\*) These pizz passages are probably best played using both the thumb and middle finger of the bow hand.

\*\*) This isn't an artificial harmonic, it's a normally stopped C# on II' and a harmonic on I'.

Astoria, NY  
 <11/11/11>  
 11:11 PM

## b. Mom's house, Ponca City, OK — Mon. 26th of Dec. 2011 10:21

**Frustrated** ( $\text{♩} = 90$ )

*p* < *sffz*    *p* < *sffz*    *p* < *sffz*    <    <    *fp* <    <

*fp* <    <    *fp* <    *ff*    <    *p* <    *ff*

*f*    *mf*    *p*    *ppp*

*pp* < *fff*    > *n.* < *sffz* [ $\approx 1'10''$ ]

†) The bottom harmonic is a seventh-partial harmonic creating by touching the III' string at a point slightly lower than a standard B $\flat$ . The resultant should be a G5, one half-step higher than the other harmonic. It's admittedly a touchy harmonic, but I've found that I can find it fairly consistently as long as the bow is close to the bridge.

Mon. 26th of Dec.  
2809 Kingston  
Ponca City, OK  
10:21

## c. Sweet Afton bar, Astoria, NY - Wed. Jan 25 2012 19:38

**Confused**  
Hold open A(§) throughout until rest at end of second line  
long bows, but lightly change as necessary

*ff* *ppp* *very slow gliss*

sudden stop hold breath  
let open string ring

**Heavy** ( $\text{♩} \approx 75$ )  
0 §) [6] [5] [2] [1] [G# - Ab]

*fff* *pp* *fff* *pp* *fff* *pp* *ffff* *pp* *ff*

**Confused**

*p* *f* *mf*

¶) These stemless notes are very fast and fleeting and repeat in order, even while the hand placement glisses up or down.

§) These stemless notes are regular pulsations, as if quarter notes but in a slightly slower tempo than the eighth notes. They should be played staccato but allowed to ring.



Heavy ( $\text{♩} \approx 75$ )

(8)

*f* *fff* *pp* *fff* *pp* *ff*

0 [4] [7]

Hold open C(♯) throughout until the end

heavier on III'

dampen notes immediately (as if interrupted)

[≈1'00"]

Sweet Afton bar  
Astoria, NY  
Wed. Jan 25 2012  
19:38

## d. Warn's loft, Detroit, MI - Fri. Oct. 14 2011 11:09

**Prickly (♩ ≈ 180)**

L.H. pizz *f* → *norm.* → *sul tasto pp* → §§)

*sul tasto pp* → *ff* → *f* → §§)

**Grandly (♩ = 70)**

*norm.* → *espr.* → *ff*

**Prickly (♩ ≈ 180)**

4 bow held note with rhythm ||

*f*

*dampen each*

*pizz l.v.* → *pizz l.v.*

[≈1'30"]

§§) At least, this is how I play it. I've found it far easier to make the notes sound when I use the thumb instead of the index finger. In either case, it definitely seems easier to pluck with the ring finger.

||) The idea here and in the next phrase is that the harmonic should sound as much like a sustained pedal tone as possible. In the first phrase, the note can be omitted if necessary during the changing notes and reintroduced after the G. Frankly, that's what I do, though I suspect a better cellist than I could make it work.

¶) This is a tiny detail, but it's best if you make sure the final *open string* pizz isn't too loud, so that the pizzicato harmonic has a better chance of being heard as a more-or-less equally significant pitch.

Detroit, MI  
Fri. Oct. 14  
11:09

**Introspective** (♩ = 50)

**Tempo I** (♩ ≈ 120)

**suddenly robotic**

**Tempo I**

[≈1'40'']

¶¶) Use full bows for this and similar phrases. Allow all notes that can continue ringing to do so.

#) The dashed slur is merely an indication that when the G (F#) comes in it should sound like a continuation of an upper melody briefly interrupted by a lower melody's movement.

##) This slur should be as smooth as possible, which is admittedly complicated by the need to skip the III' string. I've found the most success when I use a couple of LH fingers to quietly dampen the III' before and during the brief figure.

Detroit, MI  
Sat. Oct. 15  
9:05

f. Sarah Lawrence College, MF1, Bronxville, NY  
- Wed. Jan 25, 2012, before Adv. Theory 13:54

**Robotic (♩ = 85)**

0 4 1 2 3 2 0 \ 1 0 0 \ 1 4 1 0 / 1

4 0 \ 4 1 3 4 0 0 4 1 0 / 2

*ff*

3 2 0 \ 4 1 2 / 1 4 3 3 0 \ 3 1

somewhat more gentle  
legato

*mf* *f* *mf* *p*

**Brutal (Tempo I)<sup>ø</sup>**

6

*fff* *mf* *fff*

fairly short

9

*ff* *p*

ø) N.B. These are ♩ not ♪ and are heavily legato, not staccato like before

12

*fff*

III' (V)  
IV'

*no break*

*no decresc.* [≈1'00"]

Sarah Lawrence College  
Marshall Field House, Rm. 1  
Wed. Jan. 25, 2012  
Before Adv. Theory - 13:54



g. *Miranda* q2q, New York, NY - Jan 2 2012 17:18

virtually all melodies by Kamala Sankaram  
from her chamber opera *Miranda*  
(or maliciously "adapted" therefrom)

oo)

**Gracefully** (♩ = 100)  
*quasi-Baroque*

*f*

*somewhat more aggressive*

*port.*

*fairly short hold before next measure*

*hold open A♭ string throughout next section (as shown above)*

*slower and quite rhythmically free (quasi hindustani music)*

14 ध नि नि ध प नि सा सा नि ध ध प म ग रे सा ध नि सा नि ध ध

*mp* (but with lots of expressive swells)

18 ध

*suddenly Baroque* (Σ)

*faster and aggressive (quasi hip-hop beat)*

*continue from dashed slur*

*f* *fff* *f*

oo) This movement freely shifts between several distinct styles, tempos, rhythmic emphases, meters and moods as if someone is capriciously changing radio stations. Throughout, try to maintain the sense that the audience is only hearing small chunks of several much longer pieces with little to no context. The actual tempo variations should be relatively slight, which actually serves to heighten the sense of discontinuity. "Channel change" moments are marked with a thick barline.

Σ) The idea here is that the A(b) should actually sound like the second half of a quarter note which began while the previous *drone* was still holding. There's no audible pause in the music.

25 *like a reset* *hip-hop* *Baroque* *slightly slower, quasi-recitative very full bows*

*fff* *f* ΣΣ) (You're not mak-ing

34 *p* *ff* *p*

sense I don't have the time the me-mo means NO-THING There's no-thing to talk a - bout you'd bet-ter

41 *f* *hum~)* *Hindustani* *dolce* *ppp*

सा ग म प नि सानिध प म ग रे

48 *mf* *ff* *moderate accel to end* *crunchy*

go) —

[≈1'50"]

Miranda q2q,  
Jan 2 2012  
17:18

ΣΣ) Don't actually sing these, but I thought it might be fun to include the lyrics that originally fit this recitative. Perhaps it spawns some ideas about how to phrase?

~) Begin humming this pitch as it fades on the cello and continue singing it like a drone underneath the following phrase. (as shown in upper staff). Obviously, women should feel free to sing an octave higher.

~) Theoretically, this constant, meditative eighth-note line should be a calm mezzoforte throughout. Achieving this effect should *never* trump expressiveness of the melodic line, it should just be a goal. For example, through greater bow pressure on the **I'** string (and later the **IV'** string), it is somewhat possible to have different volumes between the lines. However, some swells will necessarily include the meditative line, and that is of course perfectly fine.

%) Don't slow down or telegraph this ending at all. It should sound like it was interrupted and could have continued indefinitely.

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FOR PAGE-TURN PURPOSES.

*YOU'RE WELCOME.*

## i. ASM Mystery Machine, Detroit to NYC - 10/16/2011, getting car sick 14:31

Queasy (♩ ≈ 60)

*mf* *p* *mf* *p*

*ff* *p*

*ff* *rit.* *pp*

*a tempo* *fff* *n* [≈40"]

%%) You might choose to play this pattern even longer on the final downbow. It's a cool effect to actually continue fingering the pattern for a while after you've run out of bow, letting just the tiny sound of left hand fingers trail away even after the pitch has died.

ASM Mystery Machine  
Detroit - NYC, getting car sick  
10/16/2011 14:31



# j. Radisson BLU Aqua, CHICAGO, IL - 11/25/11 9:12 AM

**Melancholy** (♩ ≈ 45)

*mp* *poco sub. p* *poco* *ff* *mf*

*p* *mf* *f* *n*

*mp* *ff* *pp* [≈1'30"]

Radisson BLU Aqua CHICAGO, IL 11/25/11 9:12 AM
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Δ) The triangle symbol indicates a "long" beat composed of three rather than two eighth notes. Eighth-note speed stays the same so the actual beat is half again longer than the others. This is precisely like the "3" beat in 7/8's 2+2+3. Of course, several times that this happens in this piece, you're asked to play *two* eighth notes, which means they're a bit slower than their standard brethren. This is exactly like playing duplets in a compound time sig like 12/8.

ΔΔ) That is to say, trill between the normal note and the natural harmonic produced at the same location

k. on the *Miranda* set's reënactment disk, NYC - 1/16/12 17:48

**Maniacal** (♩ = 80)

0 II' III' II'

φ 3 φ

*fff*

*l.v.*

**Noble** (♩ = 60)

3 *l.v.* *pizz*

*mf* *f*

*gliss.* *gliss.*

*mf* *f* *ff* *p*

III' H

13 *arco* *non vib.*

2 1 φ 3 φ 3

*ff* *p*

17 *very slightly faster*

*mp*

continue string and bow pattern as shown above  
change arpeggiated notes as shown  
initially only the note on III' is changing

19 *poco a poco cresc.*

22 *f*

24 *only notes on II' and III' shown*

26 *ff*

28 *wild* *fff*

30 *rit.* 1 ♀ III' III' 0 II' 3 ♀ 0 ♀ *n*

33 *Tempo I* 0 II' III' II' *l.v.* *fff*

*Miranda set, on the reënactment disk – New York, NY – 1/16/12 17:48*

[≈2'00"]