

# string player

composition for cello, 3 bows, 2 mineral water plastic bottles, sports shoes, 2 objects, string.

1. skipping the intro (4' 30'')
2. side A: speaking behind my back (4' 30'')
3. side B: quantised vibrato on the front seat (5' 15'')
4. orange gravity enhancer (8')
5. orange gravity lift (4' 45'')

## string

String is a central material and medium in the piece. “**skipping the intro**” begins with a quote to Marc Manders’ *slack line* from his sculpture “Nocturnal Garden Scene” (2005). In his words: «At any moment there are slack ropes hanging in many parts of the world, and I think it is an incredibly lovely, melancholy phenomenon. The curve of a slack rope as it hangs is just beautiful». In this scene, string is pulled by the hands away and towards the body in bowing-like gestures or pulled between feet and hands. It hangs when let to rest in the air, but also hangs, paradoxically, against gravity while being used as a skipping rope. In later scenes, string is used to connect the object to the bowing hand, sometimes operating as an additional cello string, or as a bow, or as an imaginary finger.

## joints

In the context of conservatoire cello education, the direction of bowing plays a pivotal role in the organisation of movement in a piece, especially in orchestral playing. Classical cello players are trained to strive for a continuous sound when changing bowing direction and to smoothen out the difference between up and down bow, annihilating the presence of the joints of the arm in the produced sound. **Movements 2-5** celebrate instead the asymmetry between up and down bowing, intensified by the presence of a weight on the arm which enhances one movement quality and hinders the other.

## resonance

A phenomenon that connects working with cello playing with string playing is that of resonance: in the composition many gestures are performed to produce moments of resonance such as: the fast and forte bowed notes played to let the cello strings ring, holding a string in the air and waiting for it to stop moving, bouncing the bow on a cello string to release overtones.

## bow

As mentioned in the section “joints”, bowing directions are central to the composition.

Working with two bows offers the opportunity to further explore body asymmetry, as the training of one hand is much more advanced than that of the other hand.

Synchronous bowing is hence rooted onto two histories of the hands: one trained as a bowing hand since the beginning of cello practice, the other still learning to behave like a bowing hand, borrowing from the experience of the skilled hand while still at an early stage of development.

The use of two bows limits the frequency range of the played notes but opens many possibilities for rhythmical patterns, such as the 3:4 modules that recur in the piece. More generally, bowing is conceived as a quality of movement rather than an merely executive action. In “**skipping the intro**” the hands perform empty bowing hand gestures followed by the use of bows as drum sticks in the air. In “**orange gravity enhancer**” the bows play each other in a square-pattern movement.

## gravity

In this expanded field of cello playing, the large surface of the object and its weight accumulate gravity force which bears on the body of the cellist additionally to the amount of gravity that already falls onto the body. In “side B: quantised vibrato on the front seat”, the weight of the object on the left hand morphs the classical sine-wave-like vibrato into a saw-tooth sounding wave. “**orange gravity enhancer**” and “**orange gravity lift**” offer instead two contrasting conditions to the cellist: the one adds more weight to the arms, making up-bowing more energy consuming and partly impairing it, whereas the other supports the arms to such an extent that the playing position can be kept effortlessly for much longer than without the object.

By focussing on the translation of neuroscience topics into visual and auditory experiences, **Marta Beauchamp** (born 1990, IT/UK) shapes an interface through which to materially encounter this process. She is interested in the difference between understanding based on keeping-in-mind and understanding through experiencing. Sound and objects allow her to inflate dense scientific topics to room-scale installations which offer more space and dimensions for comprehension.

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