

In flesh

for amplified violoncello and electronics

Kitty Xiao

Composed for Hamish Jamieson

Commissioned by the Australian National Academy of Music (ANAM)

The ANAM Set (2021)

Commissioned by the Australian National Academy of Music (ANAM) as part The ANAM Set (2021) and written for Hamish Jamieson and given its world premiere on 30 October 2021 at the Abbotsford Convent, Melbourne. The ANAM Set was funded by the Restart Investment to Sustain and Expand (RISE) Fund – an Australian Government Initiative.

In flesh is a work about body, contact and tactility.

The composition and electronics take on a Frankenstein-esque approach, composed entirely from samples of the cello; field recordings, which are stripped down, taken apart and put back together.

There is a gestural persistence and compulsiveness in the work, a desire for sound to envelop, enter, leak or seep through, to completely embody one's own skin.

Performance Notes

The piece uses spatial notation in realising duration.

The performance of this piece requires a stopwatch, the performer is encouraged to engage and respond to the electronics with the material and notation prescribed. The use of spatial notation gives special emphasis to the non-metric nature of the piece, and encourages freedom in its interpretation. The rhythm is not exact, and proportional to the timing indicated.

The cello is to be amplified and the electronics are for stereo playback for two speakers. The notation of the electronics is a graphical representation; not exact, of cues and sound events. The performer must be situated in front, in clear range of the speakers or with speaker foldback. The electronics can be downloaded here:



The gestural and performative aspect of the work is of central importance. Much attention should be given to the ways in which the bow comes in contact with the strings, the movement, and how the weaving of these gestures create a timbral counterpoint. There is a merge and diverge relationship between the cello and electronics throughout. The dynamics refer to the overall balance between the two and encourages an awareness of how the sound is projected and filling the space.

Notations

Scordatura:



string III fingering is notated throughout with sounding pitch on ossia staff above. Sounding pitch is a tone lower than fingered pitch throughout.



length of beaming indicates the duration of the note



quarter tones



three quarter tones

Accidental only applies to note it precedes.



marcato distorted down bow



marcato distorted/crunch up bow



longer crunch tone, distorted effect (sul tasto most effective)

Bow pressure and speed is determined by the intensity of the dynamics, ie the softer the passage the lighter and more minimal the bow pressure and speed and vice versa.

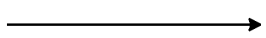
s.t. sul tasto

m.s.t. molto sul tasto

s.p. sul ponticello (overtones)

m.s.p. molto sul ponticello (overtones and distortion)

ord. return to ordinary bow position



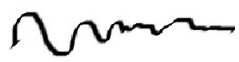
move between one technique of playing to another

n vib. no vibrato

p vib. poco vibrato (narrow and fast)

Vib. vibrato

m vib. molto vibrato (wide and fast)



graphic notation for vibrato is used in addition to indicate additional changes in speed
eg. wide and slow vibrato to narrow and fast vibrato

Vibrato should never be performed expressively and never mechanically.



fingering harmonic, sounding pitch is indicated in parentheses the first time it appears only



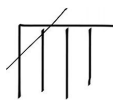
artificial harmonic



dampen strings with left hand to create white noise effect



vertical bow from fingerboard towards bridge with pressure to create a distorted effect



jete or ricochet bowing in one bow action, the amount of rearticulations should be followed

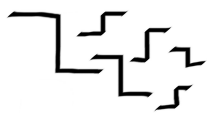
Techniques which involve any open/combination of open strings:



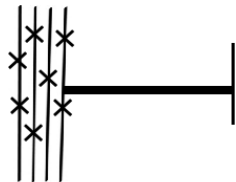
vertical tremolo across the body as fast as possible, to be performed with momentum



circular bowing over all the open strings - allows timbre to move between sul ponticello and sul tasto. Follow the direction of movement indicated by the graphic, graphics encourage movements which can vary with size and speed. A faster falling momentum is indicated by an arrow. Graphic notation does not need to be followed precisely.




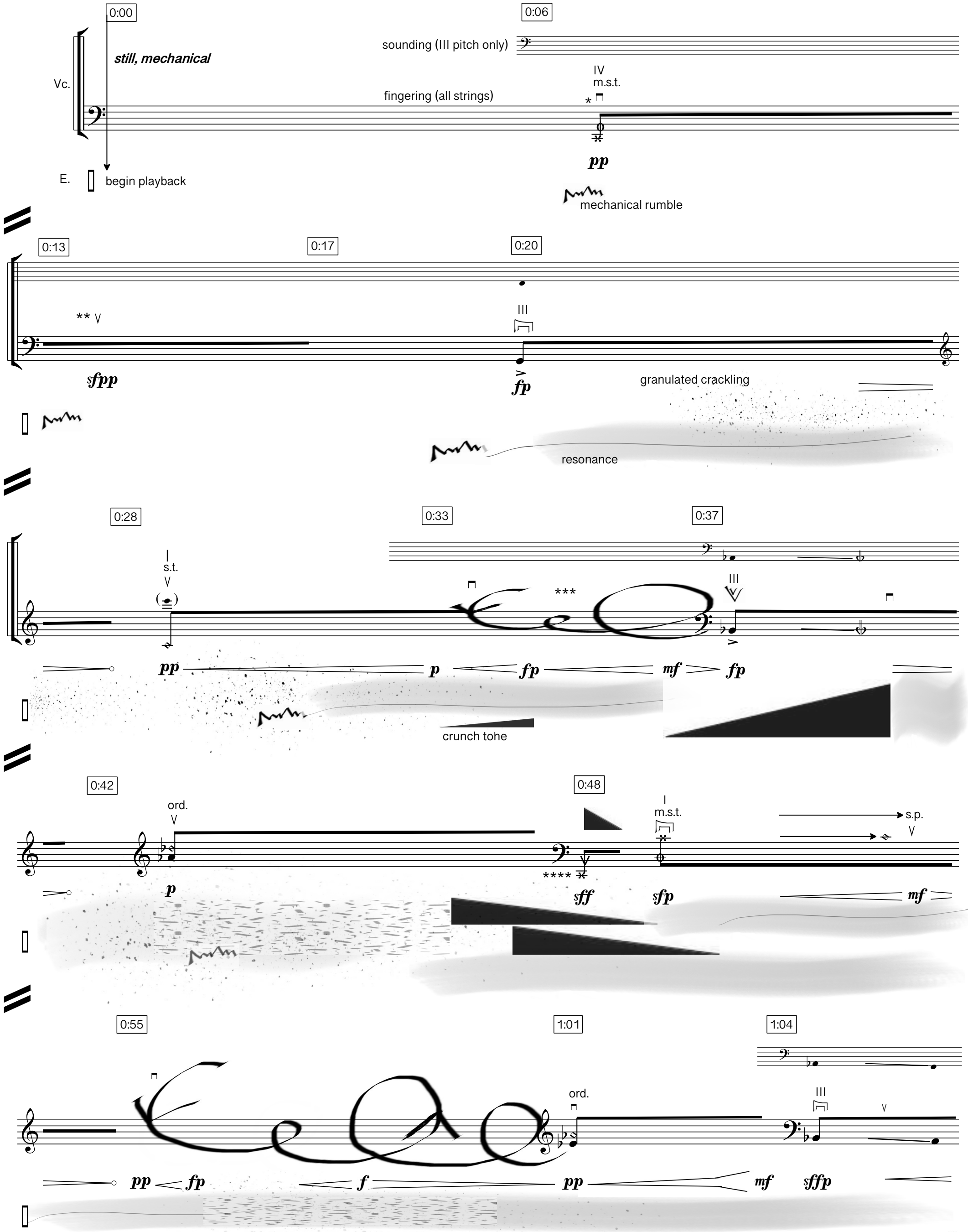
irregular granulated crunch tone created by moving bow in a stop-start static manner



tap fingerboard rapidly, percussive and granular effect

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Scordatura: 



0:00 **still, mechanical**

0:06 sounding (III pitch only) **pp** **mechanical rumble**

0:13 **** v** **sfpp**

0:17 **fp** **granulated crackling** **resonance**

0:20 **III**

0:28 **s.t.** **pp** **p** **fp** **mf** **fp** **crunch tohe**

0:33 *******

0:37 **III**

0:42 **ord.** **p** **ff** **sfp** **mf**

0:48 **I m.s.t.** **s.p.**

0:55 **pp** **fp** **f** **pp** **mf** **sfp**

1:01 **ord.**

1:04 **III** **v**

*begin immediately after electronics enter with minimal slow bow movement and light bow pressure
 **increase bow speed and pressure with increase in dynamics each time, then return to slow bow movement and light bow pressure
 ***circular bowing across towards the left side of the body at varying intensity and speed, arrow indicates beginning of the gesture has a faster and sudden momentum
 ****vertical bow at frog of bow

1:07

1:10

1:16

1:19

enveloping gestures, impulsive

1:24

1:27

1:31

+12.715 cents throughout

1:33

1:36

1:39

1:42

1:44

texture continues similarly

1:47

increasingly expressive

1:53

*irregular granulated crunch in a single down bow action, an effect similar to the feeling of crunching aluminium foil

1:58 2:01 2:05

II s.p. m.s.p. III m vib. → p vib. m vib. n vib. ord. v

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

2:08 2:10 2:13 2:17

→ m vib. I III V p vib. s.t. V II

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

2:21 2:25

vib. m vib. m.s.p. n vib. ord. V

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

2:29 2:34

m vib. n vib. I II s.p. m vib. III jete ord. I p vib. II

pp *ff* *sfp* *mf* *p* *f* *mf* *p*

shorter crunch tone occur increasingly

2:38 2:43

m vib. m.s.p. n vib. ord. I V m.s.p. ord. m vib. vib. II

f *sf* *p* *ff* *sfp* *ff* *mp*