Frances White

Birdwing

for shakuhachi and tape

Commissioned by the International Computer Music Association

© 1996 by Frances White. All rights reserved.

Dedicated to

Tomie Hahn

Birdwing (for Frances)

James Pritchett

1

I am lucky to be at the lake so early, while everything is frozen and unmoving: I can see the three little marks a sparrow's wing left in the snow.

In a moment the wind will blow over them and they will be gone.

2

We know of a place where woodcocks live. They are secretive and mysterious birds. Every spring we go to witness their nocturnal flight.

To do this requires standing in an open field at dusk and waiting: waiting for the daytme birds to go to sleep, waiting for stillness, waiting for the sun and the moon. Only when it is too dark to see will they appear. You can't see them, but you can hear the songs their wings make as they fly, spiralling up and then dropping down.

One year we stood and waited, but they were not there. Neither seen nor heard, the birds flew only in our memories, their wings whistling.

Text © 1996 by James Pritchett. All rights reserved.

Performance notes

General

This piece came out of my study of shakuhachi, and was to some extent inspired by my love and admiration of *honkyoku*. I have attempted to express the shakuhachi part in both western notation and in Kinko school shakuhachi notation. Neither representation is entirely orthodox, and neither representation is wholly accurate, but hopefully between the two of them, the music is communicated.

The shakuhachi should be slightly amplified. This is strictly for the purpose of blend with the tape part: it should never sound "amplified."

Tape part

No attempt has been made to notate every aspect of the tape part. Only the most prominent events are indicated in very general form for the purpose of cues.

The tape part consists of roughly three elements:

(1) Flute-derived sounds:

Whistle tones, slowed down and lowered so that the evolution of the harmonics begins to resemble tunes. In the score, these are indicated by the diamond-shaped noteheads on the approximate fundamentals of the whistle tones (no attempt is made to notate the "tunes" played by the harmonics).

Flute sounds that are more focussed in pitch, which are either air tones or "contrabass shakuhachi" tones are indicated as whole notes.

The duration of all the flute-derived events are indicated by the horizontal lines. Crosses mark the ends of these events.

(2) A constant sound of rainsticks (not notated).

(3) Very quiet "background" processed natural sounds.

These occur sporadically, and are generally not notated, except when they provide a very clear cue. In these places they are notated in parentheses.

Shakuhachi part

My hope is that the performer will bring some of the feeling of *honkyoku* to the performance of *Birdwing*.

The shakuhachi part is notated both in western-style notation (above the tape part) and in Kinko school traditional notation. In both versions, time is indicated in stretches of 30 seconds (horizontally in the western notation; vertically in the Kinko notation). The performer should place the musical events in a more or less proportional fashion within these 30 second durations; this is extremely flexible, however. It is most important to the spirit of the piece that the performer develop a sense of the pacing in terms of breath, and in terms of phrasing with the tape part (although there are no exact coordinations with the tape part). There should never be any feeling of adherence to "clock-time" or any sense of timing external to the music.

In the western score, the relative durations of the notes are indicated by the horizontal lines (thus similar to the way that duration is indicated in the Kinko score). Phrase ends in the western score are indicated by the cross marks. Where the cross appears in parenthesis (in the Kinko score, this is indicated with a circle in parenthesis) a breath or pause occurs in the phrase, but the phrase is not felt to end.

Western dynamic markings are used in both scores. However, dynamics are only indicated where a special effect is needed; otherwise, they are up to the performer.

Vibrato should be used as the performer would normally in *honkyoku*-style playing, except in the places where the score is marked “no vibrato”.

In those cases where finger-hit articulations are to take place at the beginnings of notes, they are indicated by the finger number in both the western and the Kinko notation.

The western score indicates *ori*, *suri*, and *ori-suri* type bends verbally as well as with curving lines. In those cases where an asterisk occurs next to the ori, the bend begins immediately, and is rather deep. In some cases, these happen while tremolos (either *tamane*-style or finger tremolos) are happening. In these cases, the bend and tremolo occur simultaneously.

Special techniques in *Birdwing*

(1) Whistle tones

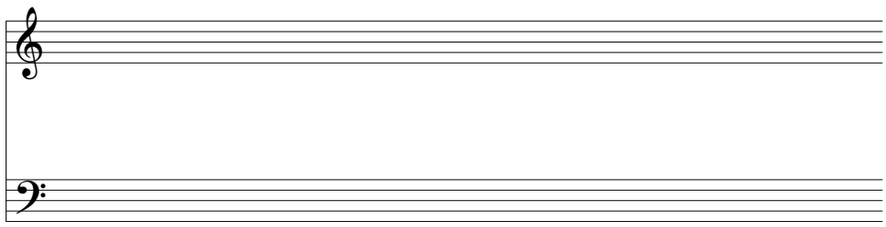
Blowing so that only the harmonics—not the fundamental—sound. Allow the harmonics to sing in their own order and pacing. In cases where the fundamental is to be allowed to emerge and recede try not to let the fundamental “speak” fully, but rather try to pull back from it as soon as it begins to emerge. Where the emerging fundamentals can be in either *otsu* or *kan* octaves or both, the fundamental is written out in that octave which can be thought of as the more prominent, but this can be interpreted very loosely, and in accordance with the way the sound itself seems to want to evolve.

In the Western score, whistle tones are indicated by diamond-shaped noteheads on the fundamentals. In the Kinko score whistle tones are drawn in gray.

(2) Finger tremolos

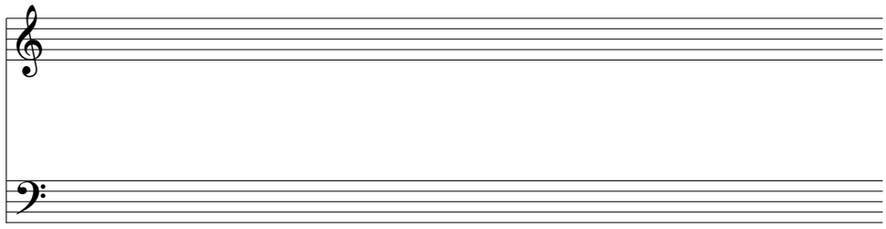
The finger to be used is indicated. These tremolos should be quick and smooth. In those cases where the tremolo is to happen while blowing through multiple octaves, the sound can be allowed to become quite large, and any harmonics that wish to emerge should be allowed to. Also, the evolution through the octaves of the tone is extremely free; the sound can move among the octaves at whatever pace and in whatever order it seems to want.

Frances White — Birdwing



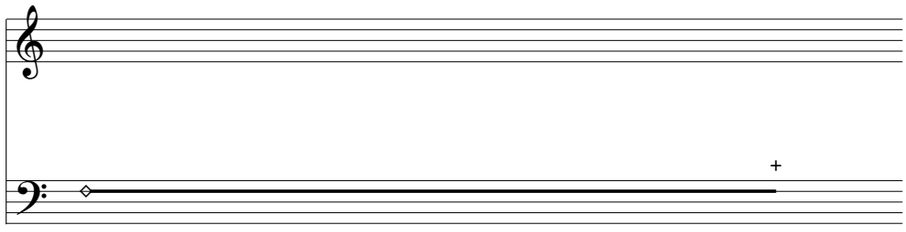
00:30

00:30



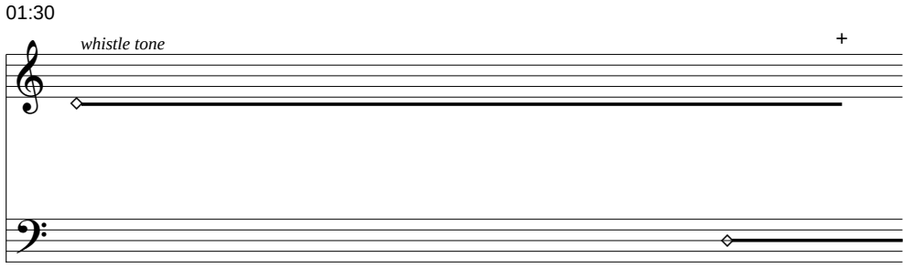
01:00

01:00



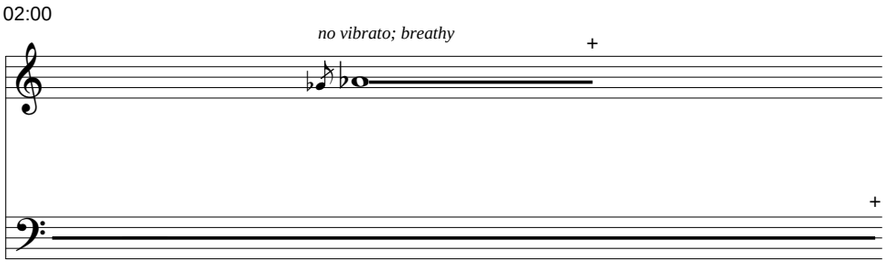
01:30

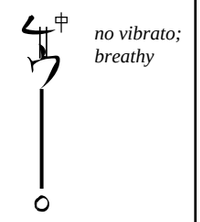
01:30



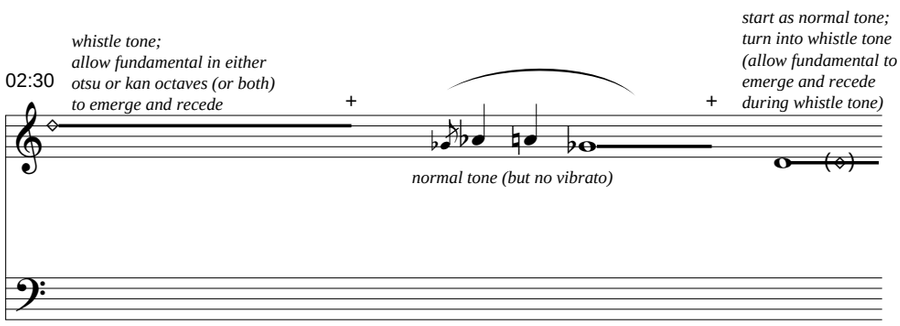
© 1996 by Frances White. All rights reserved.

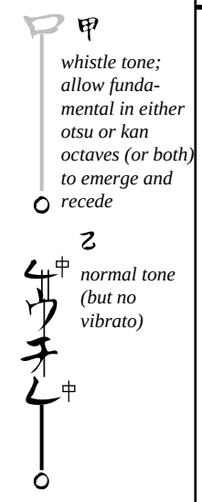
02:00



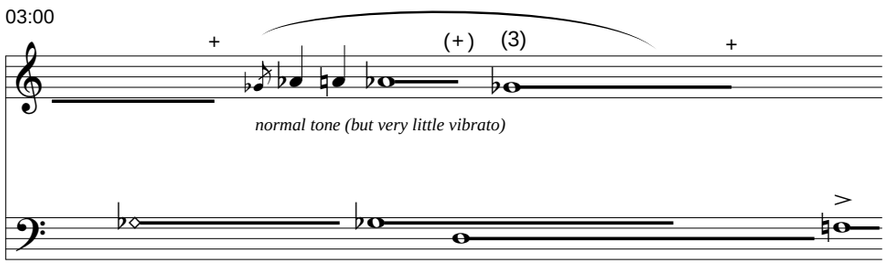


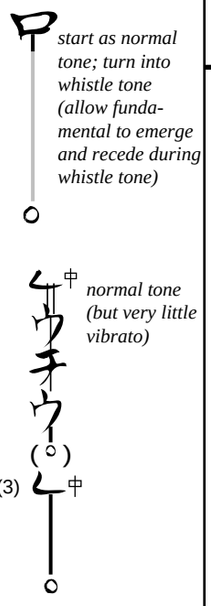
02:30



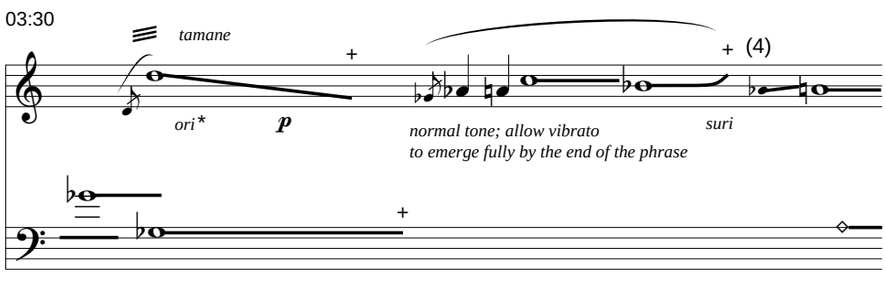


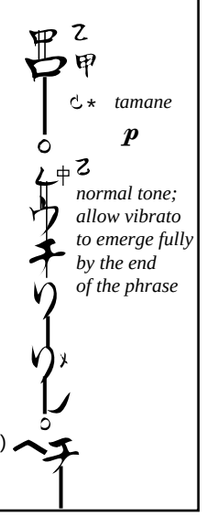
03:00





03:30





04:00

with vibrato ad. lib from here

ori-suri

04:30

04:30

whistle tone; allow fundamental in either otsu or kan octaves (or both) to emerge and recede

05:00

05:00

(2)

(normal tone)

ori

(2)

ori

05:30

05:30

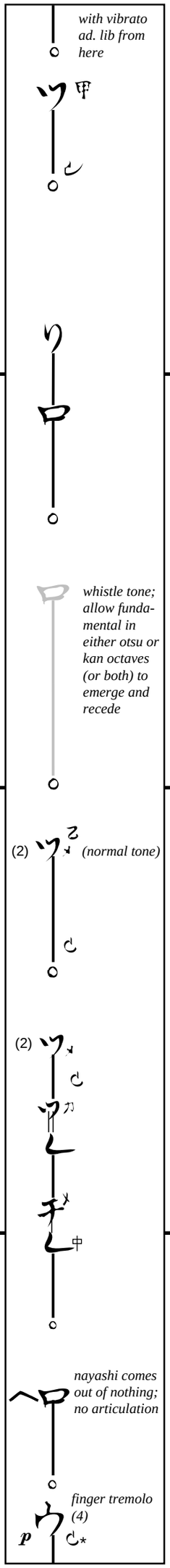
finger tremolo (4)

nayashi comes out of nothing; no articulation

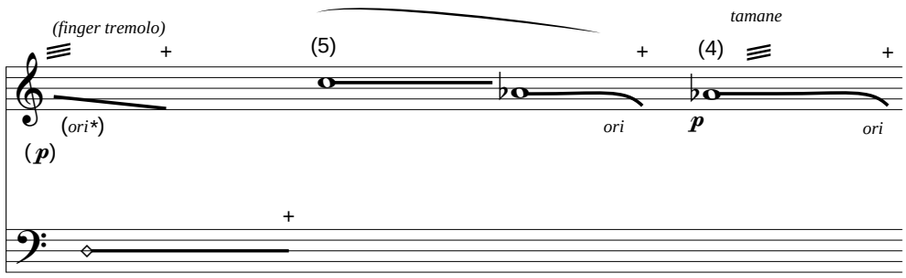
p

ori *

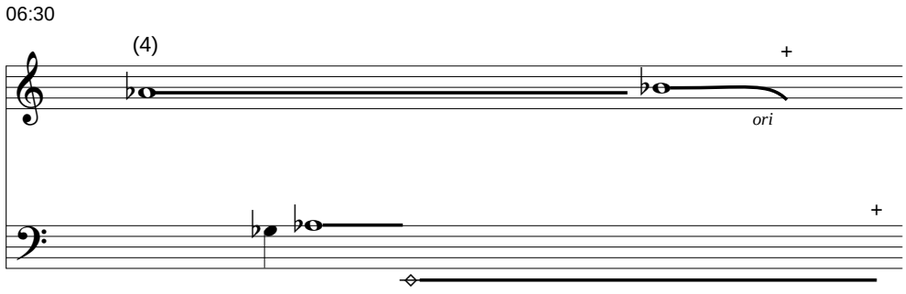
( )



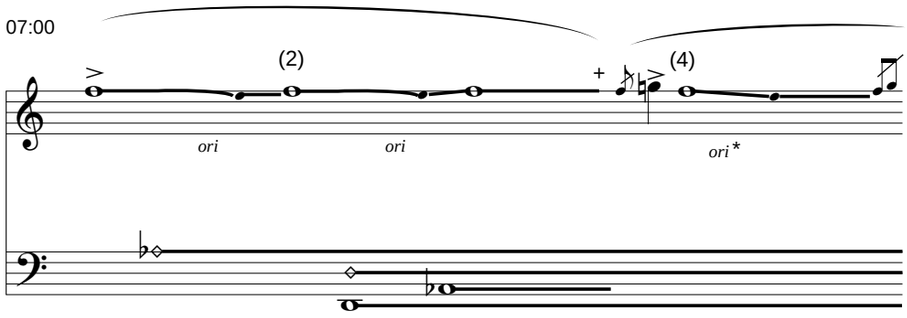
06:00



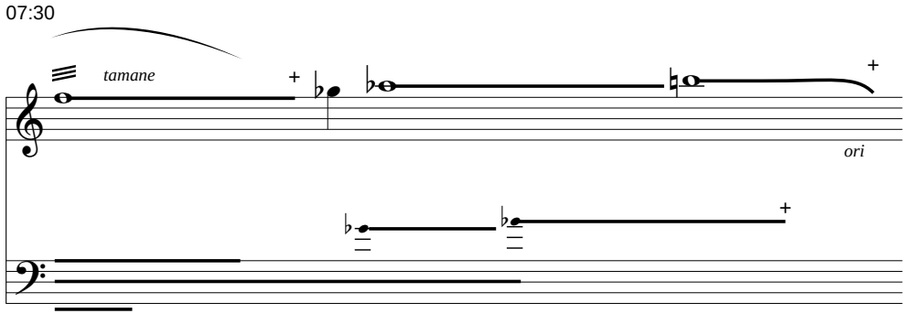
06:30

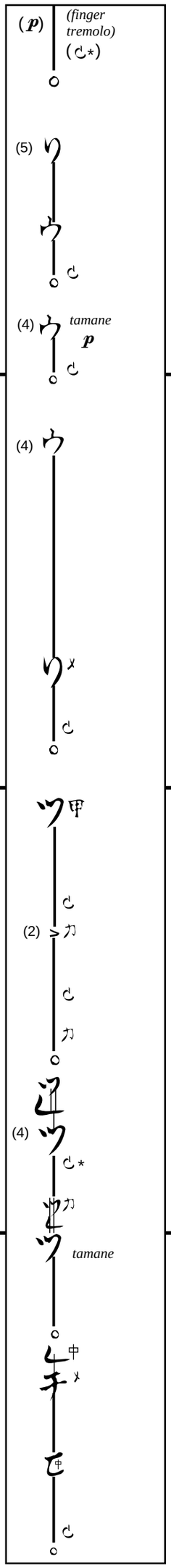


07:00

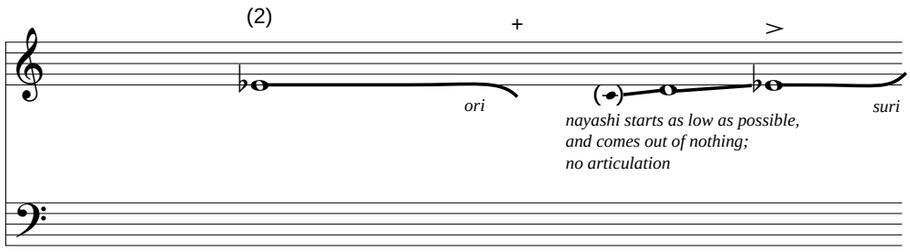


07:30

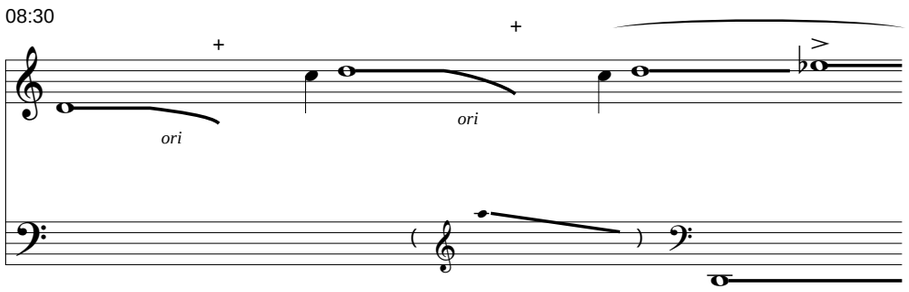




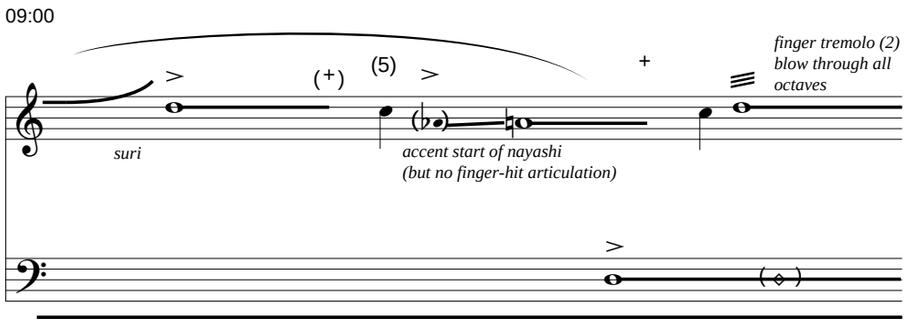
08:00



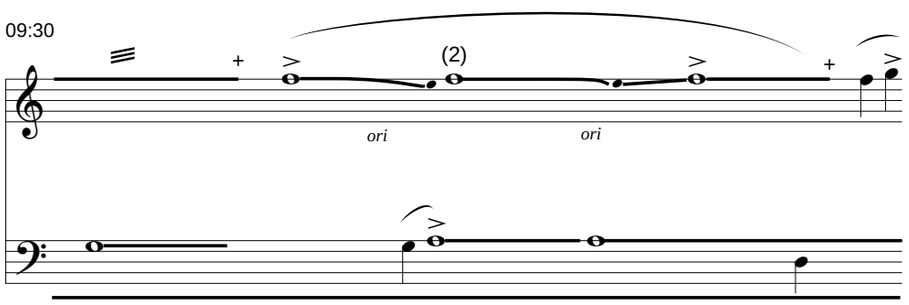
08:30

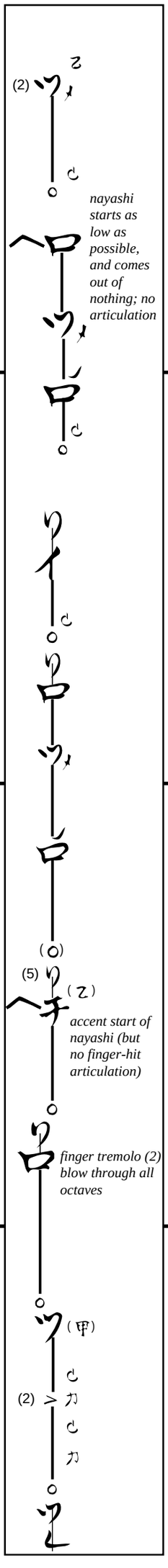


09:00



09:30





10:00

Start as normal tone; becomes a koro-koro style tremolo (2+4)

(4) (2)

ori *

p

10:30

10:30

11:00

11:00

(2) (1) (4)

ori *ru* *ori*

11:30

11:30

(+)

tamane

ori *

( )

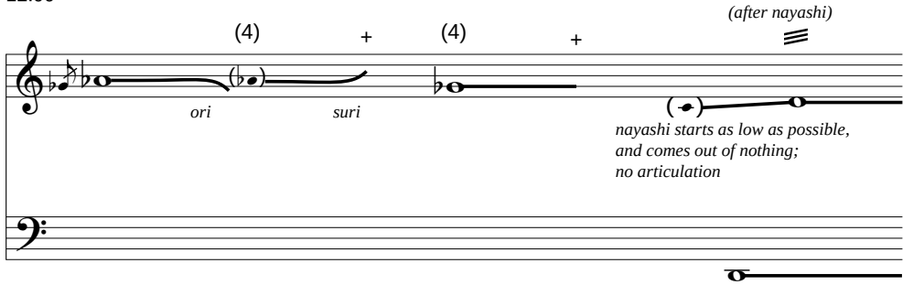
tamane

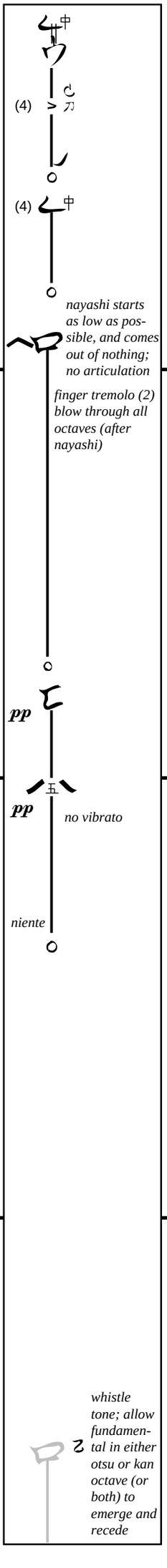
(4)

(2)

*Start as normal tone; decrescendo to **p**; note becomes a koro-koro style tremolo (2+4)*

12:00



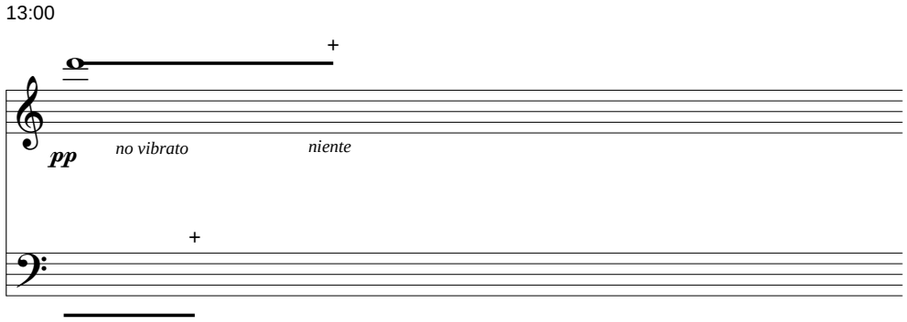


12:30

12:30

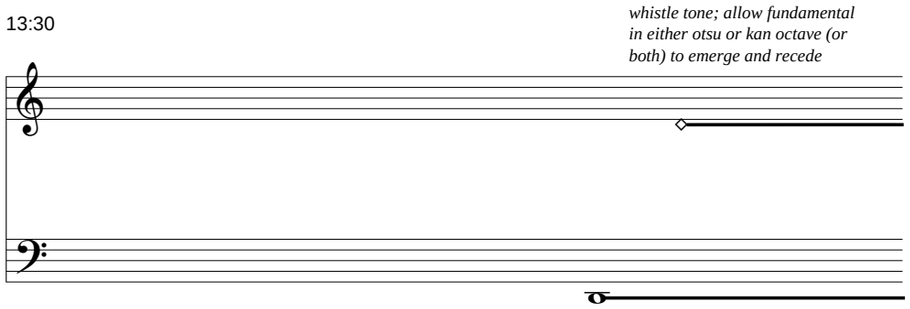
13:00

13:00

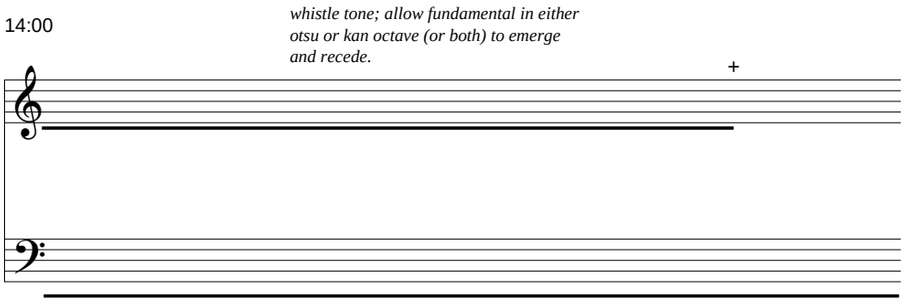


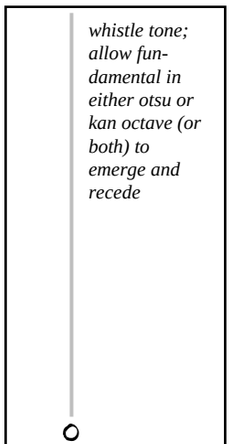
13:30

13:30

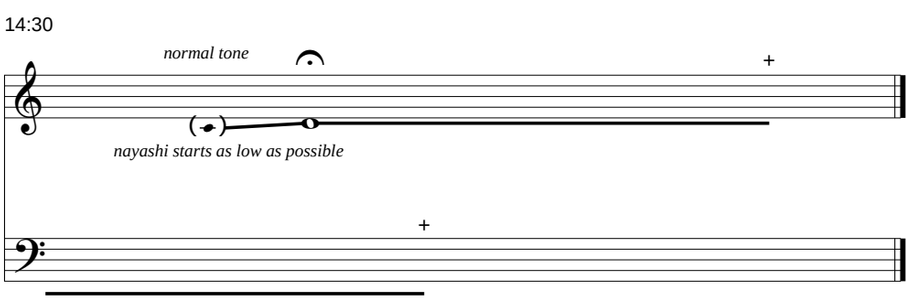


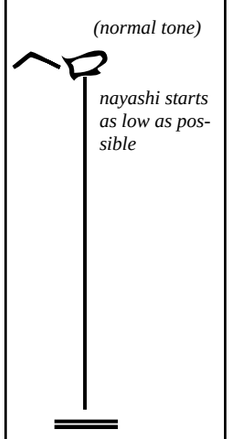
14:00





14:30





Princeton, June 1996