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An Essay on the Human Absurd

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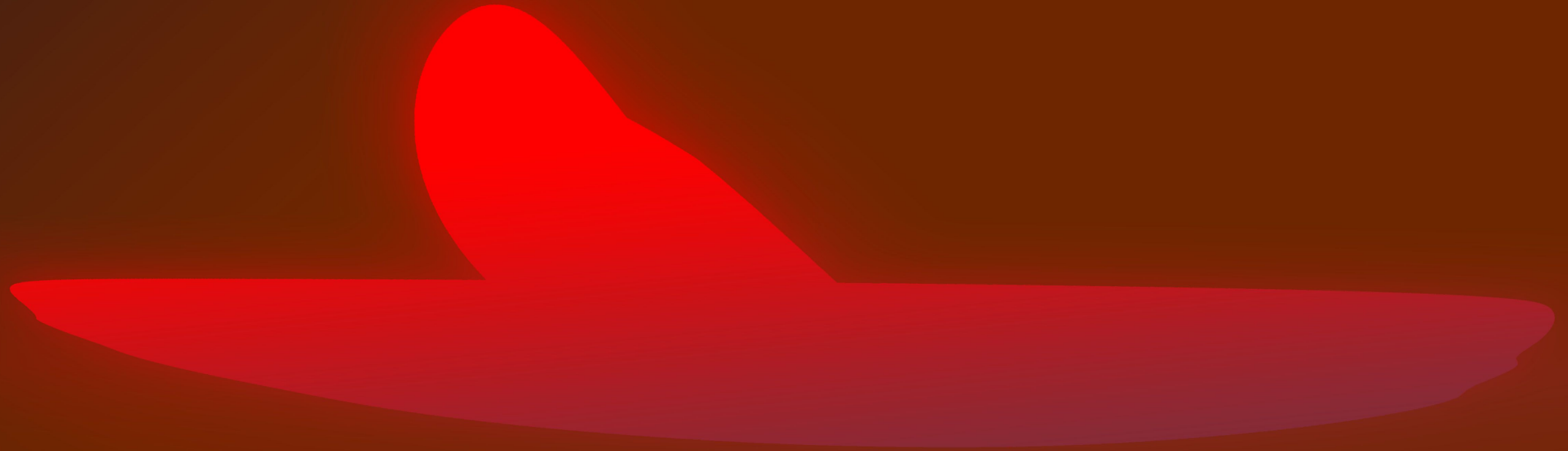
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# An Essay on the Human Absurd

For viola and cello

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Lucas Quínamo

2019

*'We get into the habit of living before acquiring the habit of thinking.  
In that race which daily hastens us toward death, the body maintains its irreparable lead.'*

**Albert Camus**

# Introduction

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In an existence where nothing is fully objective and the existentialist doubt surrounds us all, living becomes a painful and slow race to the inevitable death. All the infinite possibilities of living contained in the finite time and space of life. What decisions should a human make? When one is faced with the feeling that everything is utterly meaningless and even god, if one believes in it, lacks the answers to life's question, what should be done?

This piece is about this human tragedy. About the daily self-consuming existence. About the efforts that humans take to stay alive and about how these efforts inevitably fail to make us last.

The following myth was written as a poetic compass to the piece and from it was taken the form of the piece.

*'There's a Human that, for six days, cooks and eats slices of himself to satisfy its hunger.  
At the end of one day, it'll have eaten its left leg.  
At the end of the second day, it'll have also eaten its right leg.  
The two arms will no longer be at the fifth day, when it eats its torso.  
Lastly the head, at the end of the sixth day.  
What's left: excrements.*

The myth has three sections that are also translated into music on the piece. The first large section of the myth comprises the myths Humans body sections on the piece (the two legs, the two arms, the torso and the head). The second is represented by the six days of anthropophagy (Day 1, Day 2, Day 3 and so on). And the last section is represented only by the "What is Left" section.

Lastly, but probably the most important: **the myth must be told by the cellist at the beginning of the piece**, just before the first bar. When the cellist tells the myth he must not tell it in a dramatic way, but rather in a neutral and almost scientific way.

*Lucas Quínamo*

# Performance Notes

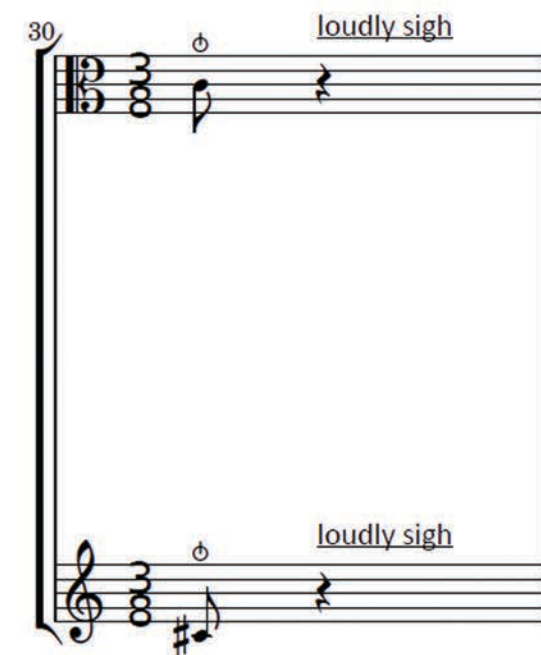
## Vocal sounds -

In this piece, the violist and the cellist must also make vocal sounds such as breathing loudly, gasping and sighing. These sound must be loudly enough to be heard – but must also mix well with the instrumental sound. Sometimes there are indications of dynamics but when there's any, the player should make it as loud as the instruments dynamics.

These vocal sounds must be made in a dramatic way – often with the interpretation specified on the sheet. It should also affect the instrumental playing – so, the performer should take the vocal sound indications as an indication to both make the sounds with the voice and play in the way the vocal sounds are supposed to be. For example, an “agony moan” indication above a long glissandi passage indicates that the performer should moan sporadically while the indication is valid but should also play the glissandi in a “agony moan” way.

These indications are expressed with a brief underlined text (pic.1). Sometimes the vocal sound must be made in a specific rhythm (and it is noted with a slash shaped note - pic.2). Sometimes it is indicated that the performer must “take deep breaths” until it plays again – a more vague indication, that says that the performer should “breathe” freely.

The performer must take an actor attitude to these expressions indications and made them the way they feel it's more suited to the piece. So, interpretation of these vocal sounds are not rigid.



Picture 1





Musical notation for two staves. The top staff is in G major and the bottom staff is in C major. The top staff has a measure with a whole note and a fermata, with the instruction "loud gasps" written above. Below the staff, there are dynamic markings: p, mp, p, and h.p. (fortissimo). There are also performance instructions: "s.p." (sporadically) and "molto s.p. til end of section". The bottom staff has a measure with a whole note and a fermata, with the instruction "loud gasps" written above. Below the staff, there are dynamic markings: pp, p, and pp. There are also performance instructions: "molto s.p. til end of section".

Picture 2

# Performance Notes

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## Accidentals -

-  - One Quarter sharp
-  - Three quarters sharp
-  - One quarter flat
-  - Three quarters flat

## Bowing pressure -

In this piece there are four bowing pressure indications. They should be made accordingly:

L.p. – Low pressure (should be played in a flautando way).

n.p. – Normal bowing pressure, the normal bowing pressure to produce a clean intonation.

h.p. – High pressure, the pressure should be higher than ‘n.p.’ but not too high that you can’t hear the tone (you’ll probably hear some high harmonics coming up too)

Molto h.p. – Molto high pressure, the pressure should be really high, producing a white-noise-like sound.

These indications sometimes will appear with an arrow connecting it to another indication, stating that a gradual transition from one bowing pressure to another should occur.

## Bowing position -

There will be another five indications for bowing position. Four of them are:

s.t. – Sul tasto position.

ord. – Ordinario position.

s.p. – Sul ponticello position.

Molto s.p. – Molto Sul Ponticello, almost above the bridge, should produce a full of harmonic noisy timbre.

These indications sometimes will appear with an arrow connecting it to another indication, stating that a gradual transition from one bowing pressure to another should occur.

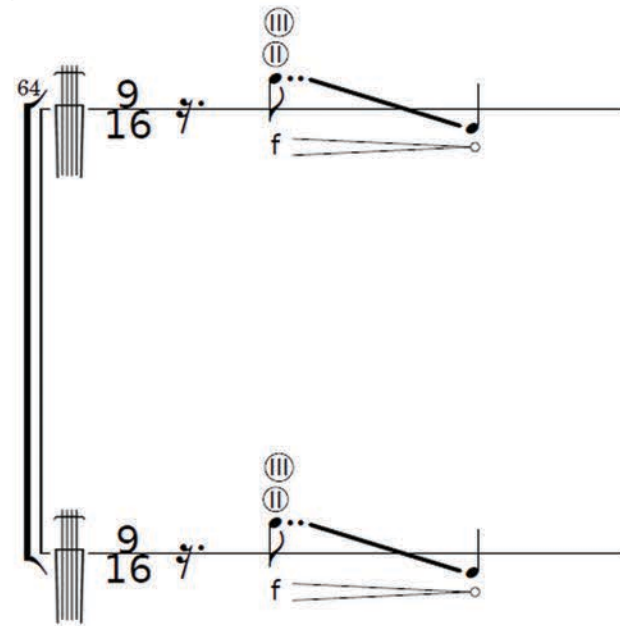
The fifth position is beneath the bridge and is indicated with a triangle shaped note with a string indication above so the performer know in which string he should play (as in the Picture below).

# Performance Notes

## Vertical bowing -

There is a special clef (Pic. 3) in this piece that indicates that the player should bow the instrument vertically, producing a noisy sound. The clef is a representation of the instrument arm and the glissandi between notes should be considered a continuous vertical bowing between the notes positions. The pentagram have just one line for visual guiding purpose. Above the starting note there are string numbers indicating in wich string the player must bow.

Note that when making the vertical bowing, the player should mute the strings with the left hand.



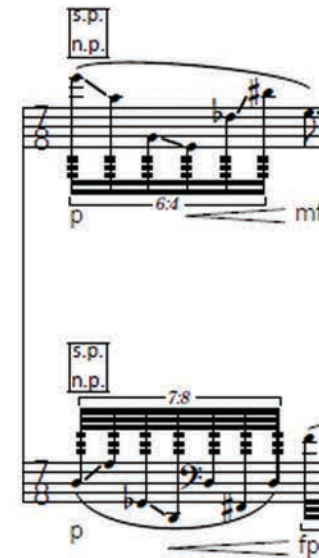
Picture 3

## Glissandi -

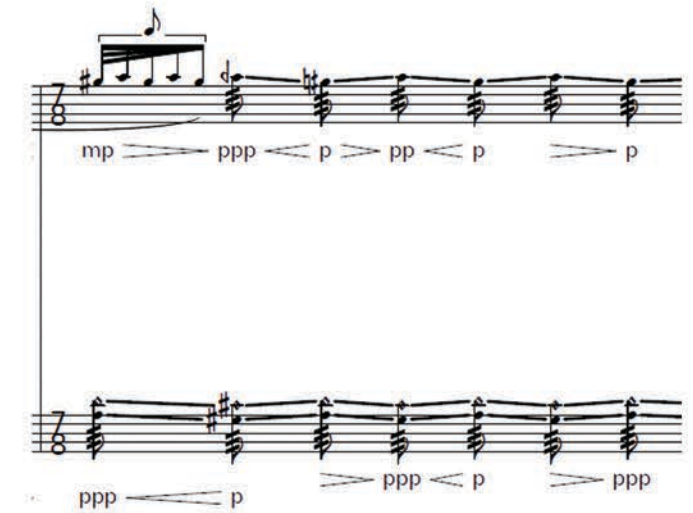
Glissandi should be played legato between two notes without making a final attack to the last note unless there is an accent mark or a staccato mark above the final note (wich is also valid for accent marks and staccatos on notes during the glissandi). It is noted with a thick line between the notes.

## Tremolos -

Tremolos are always supposed to be played as fast as possible and are notated as in Picture 4 and Picture 5 below.



Picture 4



Picture 5

## Accelerandos -

There will be some individual accelerandos. Sometimes when their duration is not clear, a bracket above stating how long the accelerando takes will be seen (Pic. 6).

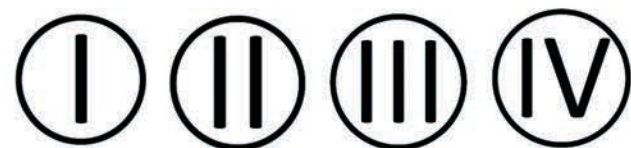


Picture 6

# Performance Notes

## String Numbers -

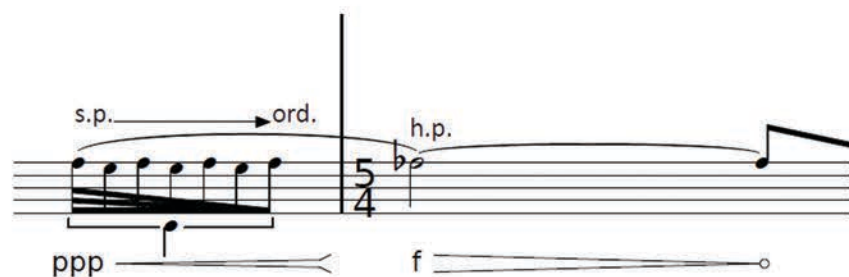
String numbers are indicated by roman numerals within a circle (Pic. 7):



Picture 7

## Dynamics -

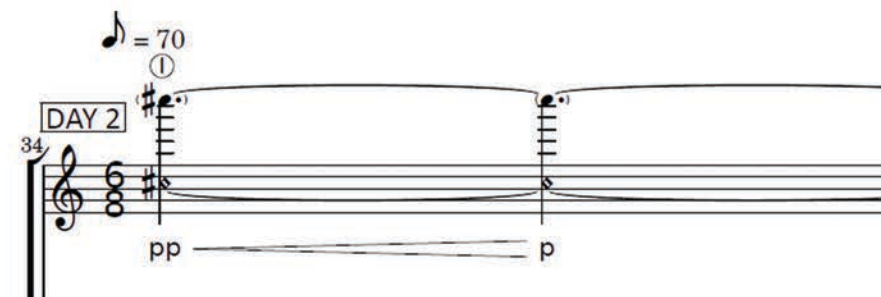
*dal niente* crescendo and *al niente* decrescendo are indicated with a small white circle on the edge of the crescendo and decrescendo, as in the Picture 8 below.



Picture 8

## Harmonics -

Natural harmonics are noted as a diamond shaped note head with a string number above the note. The number indicates the string at which the harmonic must be played and the note in the sheet indicates where the finger must touch the string (without pressing it). The resulting sound can also be parenthesized (Pic. 9).



Picture 9

Artificial harmonics are notated by one normal shaped and one diamond shaped note heads together. The normal shaped note head indicates where one finger must press the string and the diamond shaped indicates where another finger must touch (without pressing) to produce the harmonic, as in the Picture 10 below:



Picture 10



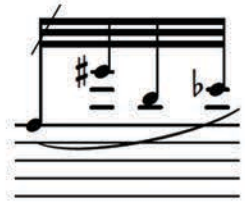
# Performance Notes

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## Other informations



- Bartok Pizzicato



- As fast as possible



- Notes with x-shaped heads are supposed to be played by left hand in a “tapping” way without bowing.

***Once again: The myth to be read before the piece***

***‘There’s a Human that, for six days, cooks and eats slices of himself to satisfy its hunger. At the end of one day, it’ll have eaten its left leg. At the end of the second day, it’ll have also eaten its right leg. The two arms will no longer be at the fifth day, when it eats its torso. Lastly the head, at the end of the sixth day. Whats is left: excrements.***

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**HEAD**

Viola

Cello

ord. s.p. ord. s.t. s.t. s.p. pizz. bow - ord.

pp ff mp mf mp ff p ff

arco ord. pizz. s.p. ord. ord. s.p. pizz. bow, ord.

mp p mp ff mf p ff p ff

**TORSO**

Viola

Cello

s.p. ord. s.p. ord. s.p. ord. s.t. ord. n.p. s.p. h.p. ord. n.p.

p mf p mf p mf f p mp f p

s.p. ord. s.t. s.p. ord. ord. s.p.

p mf p mp pp mf p mf mp mf f mp

**RIGHT ARM**

10

ord. n.p.

3:2

5:4

pizz. 3:2

bow 3:2

3:2

col legno bat. 5:4

ord. 3:2

s.p.

< mf mp ff mf

pp p pp mp

pizz. 3:2

bow-ord. s.p.

pp p pp

mp

molto s.p.

ord. 3:2

s.p.

ff

**LEFT ARM**

14

pizz. 3:2

bow-s.p.

3:2

col legno bat. 5:4

3:2

3:2

bow-s.p. 3:2

mf

pp

ff

pizz. 3:2

pp

mp

3:2

col legno bat. 3:2

ord. 3:2

5:4

s.p.

p

ff

pp

f

mp

mf

p

RIGHT LEG

19

ord s.p. mf ff pp < mp ff

s.t. 3:2 s.p.

s.t. 3:2 s.p. pp < mp ff

s.t. p ff pp < mp ff

LEFT LEG

23

s.p. L.p. ord. s.p. h.p.

p mp ppp mp pp p h.p.

ord. s.t. s.t. s.p. L.p. h.p.

ord. 3:2 s.t. s.t. s.p. L.p. p pp 5:4 5:4 p 5:4 3:2

DAY 1

26

♩ = 55  
h.p.

col legno bat. —————

molto s.p.

ff ffff p 3:2 5:4

ff bow beneath bridge mp s.p. tired gasps pp

h.p. molto s.p. s.p. L.p. tired gasps pp p

30

loudly sigh

s.p. loudly sigh

p mp p

h.p. mf

gutural loud blow

p mp p mp f

loudly sigh

molto s.p. til end of section

loud gasps

pp 3:2 p pp p 3:2 f

①

**DAY 2**

♩ = 70

pp ————— p

really gentle at first  
s.p.  
L.p.

pizz.

pppp

5:4 5:4 5:4 5:4 5:4 5:4 5:4 5:4 5:4 5:4 5:4 5:4

exhale air loudly  
molto s.p.  
molto h.p.  
really noisy

pp ————— f >

keep it noisy, but quieter

mf mp

col legno bat...

③

b.b.  
h.p.

pizz.

mf

mp

④

h.p.  
s.p.

3:2

p

ff

**DAY 3**

♩ = 80

take a deep breath

loud grumpy shout

take a deep breath

loud grumpy shout

s.p.  
h.p.

mf

h.p.  
s.p.

3:2

p

ff

41 *ord. n.p.* *s.p.* *agony moan* *rall.* *♩ = 80* *fff* *9:8* *mf* *p* *mp* *p* *♩ = 70 vib.* *senza vib.* *3:2*

*ord. n.p.* *s.p.* *fff* *7:8* *mf* *p* *mp* *p* *mf* *n.p.* *molto h.p.* *ord. s.p.* *p* *7:8* *mf*

44 *n.p.* *molto s.p.* *angry shout* *DAY 4* *♩ = 50* *mf* *f* *7:8* *p* *ff* *ff* *pp* *mf*

*n.p.* *molto s.p.* *angry shout* *h.p.* *angry shout* *s.p. h.p.* *mp* *mp* *mp*

47

s.p. molto h.p. ord. n.p. s.p. h.p.

mf pp ff

pizz. 3:2 mf f pp mp f

bow - s.p. pizz.

L.p. 3:2 s.t. n.p. 3:2 ord. p p

51

ord. h.p. DAY 5 exhausted gasps s.p. n.p. pain scream

p f p mf mp fff

6:4 7:8 6:4 5:4 3:2 3:2 5:4

h.p. exhausted gasps p fp pppp mp fff

ord. n.p. s.p. pain scream



55

mp

L.p.

pp

mf

pp

mf

p

s.p.

ord.

s.p.

ord.

h.p.

ord.

n.p.

mp

ord.

ord.

s.p.

f

58

DAY 6

$\text{♩} = 50$   
take deep breaths until play

ord.

n.p.

ord.

n.p.

h.p.

3:2

10:8

p

mf

p

s.p.

L.p.

f

p

61

mf

s.p.  
L.p.

ppp mp ppp p pp p p

L.p. molto h.p.

ff

9  
16

9  
16

ppp mp ppp p ppp p ppp

ff

64

f

s.p.  
L.p.

make pain gasps while playing the harmonic glissandos

pp

f

f

<mf> pp mf p mf

f

9  
16

9  
16

ppp <mf> pp mf p mf

WHAT IS LEFT

♩ = 80  
breath loudly  
until next measure

68

ord. n.p.

mf

p

mf

s.p.

ord. n.p.

mf

p

mf

s.p.

3:2

breath loudly  
until next measure

73

p

f

h.p.

ff

L.p.

p

ppp

h.p.

L.p.

p

3:2

78

mf

ppp

mf

fp

fp

left hand on x-noteheads

'seagull effect'

ppp

mp

fp

fp

82

♩ = 50

fp

p

ff

p

ord.  
n.p.

p

mp

mf

f

ff

ppp

h.p.

changes between strings  
should be as legato  
as possible