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**ærc duos**

(2016/8)

for any two bowed string instruments

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perusal score  
not for performance  
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# ærc duos

for any two bowed string instruments

2016/2018

duration: open (at least 30')

## Introduction

*ærc* is the Old English word for *ark*, derived from the Latin *arca*, a chest. Here it denotes an enclosed space, perhaps of refuge or safety, certainly of intimacy.

*ærc duos* is derived from my ensemble piece *ærc* (2016), for a large number of orchestral string instruments. In that work, the players are paired, as in the ark of Noah, entering the figurative space of the work two-by-two and creating a dense polyphonic texture (a giant viol consort) from breath-like bow-strokes, each pair in rhythmic unison, before exiting in sequence.

In *ærc duos* only one pair of instruments is present. The material is almost identical to that of *ærc*, but I have added a ninth piece (IX) to the original eight.

## Notes for performance

*ærc duos* is a private music to be shared by the two players, but it can also be performed publicly. Any combination of two bowed string instruments (including two of the same instrument) can be used.

The players should sit opposite each other with a single stand to one side.

There are nine pieces, which can be ordered (prior to commencing) in any way. Not all nine pieces need be played; pieces can be played more than once.

Each piece lasts for around 2'00-2'15, with a pause of about 15-30'' between each. Timings need not be exact, and longer pauses may be inserted between pieces as required. However, the sense of a continuous sequence of pieces should be maintained.

No. IX acts as a punctuation in the sequence and should be performed at least twice in total (the players switching roles each time; see below). It should always be followed by a longer pause.

A performance of *ærc duos* should last at least 30 minutes.

## Rhythm

Each of pieces I-VIII uses the same basic unit: a sound followed by a silence.

In pieces I-VI, each sound is a single bowstroke (always  $\sqcap$ ), played by either one or both players as directed, lasting 6-8 seconds, with a warm *piano* dynamic (slight hairpins are possible), *senza vibrato*. The sound should be gentle but never tentative or thin. *Poco sul tasto* is advisable.

In pieces VII-VIII the sounds are double bowstrokes (always  $\sqcap V$ ), each stroke little quicker than the single bowstrokes (5-6 secs each), giving a total sounding time of 10-12 secs.

In every piece, the silence that follows a sound should be roughly 4 secs.

Therefore, in pieces I-VI there will be about 12-16 sounds, and in pieces VII-VIII there will be about 9-12 sounds.

A stopwatch may be used but is not necessary: durations of sounds and silences should be felt rather than counted against the clock, nor should the number of sounds be counted; rather, simply finish each piece when it feels right to do so.

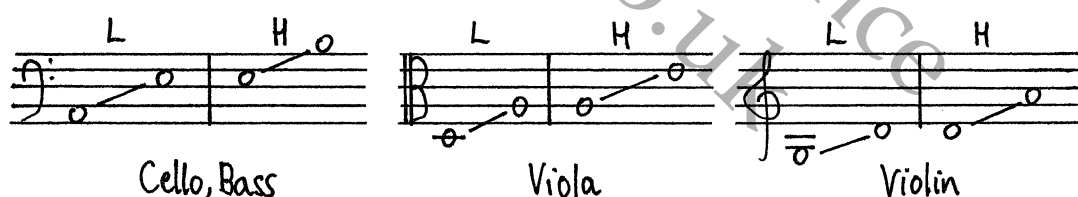
## Coordination

There are three types of co-ordination:

- alternating (player 1, player 2, 1, 2 etc.)
- alternating with additions: players observe the alternating pattern above but occasionally join in on the other player's note as well, before carrying on the alternating pattern
- playing together

## Pitch

Each player chooses his/her pitches freely from the following gamuts, as directed for each piece (see below).



Any pitch, microtonal or chromatic, within the gamut is allowed. Each piece should be played without moving left hand position.

When there is more than one pitch or sound in a piece (e.g. IV – 'Two notes, L-L or H-H'), each player chooses freely from the options each time s/he plays a note. This should not be fixed in advance nor discussed with the other player.

Pitches should be played with normal finger pressure (•) unless  $\diamond$  (harmonic pressure, whether or not on a harmonic node) is given as an alternative.

I

Two unpitched white noise (breath) sounds

Alternating

Single bows

II

One note, L or H

Alternating with one addition each

Single bows

III

One note, L or H, • or ◊ each time

Alternating with additions ad lib.

Single bows

IV

Two notes, L-L or H-H

Together

Single bows

V

Two notes, H-L, one of which may be • or ◊ each time (the other always •)

Together

Single bows

VI

Three notes, H-H-L or L-L-H

Together

Single bows

VII

One double-stopped chord, H&L

Together

Double bows

VIII

Two double-stopped chords sharing one note in common, H&L

Together

Double bows

IX

*(to be played at least twice in a sequence, the players switching roles each time)*

One player holds a natural harmonic (◊) on any pitch (L or H) on which there is a harmonic node, for the duration of the piece.

The other player, after the first player's note is established (at least 15''), plays one note, L or H, 4-6 times, in single bowstrokes (6-8''), across the duration of the piece.

The gaps between notes will be longer than in I-VIII and should be roughly equal.