Paul McGuire

MARSHES

(2013)

Awarded first prize at the Pablo Wendel - Performance Electrics International Composition Competition (2013).

PERFORMANCE NOTES

Instrumentation

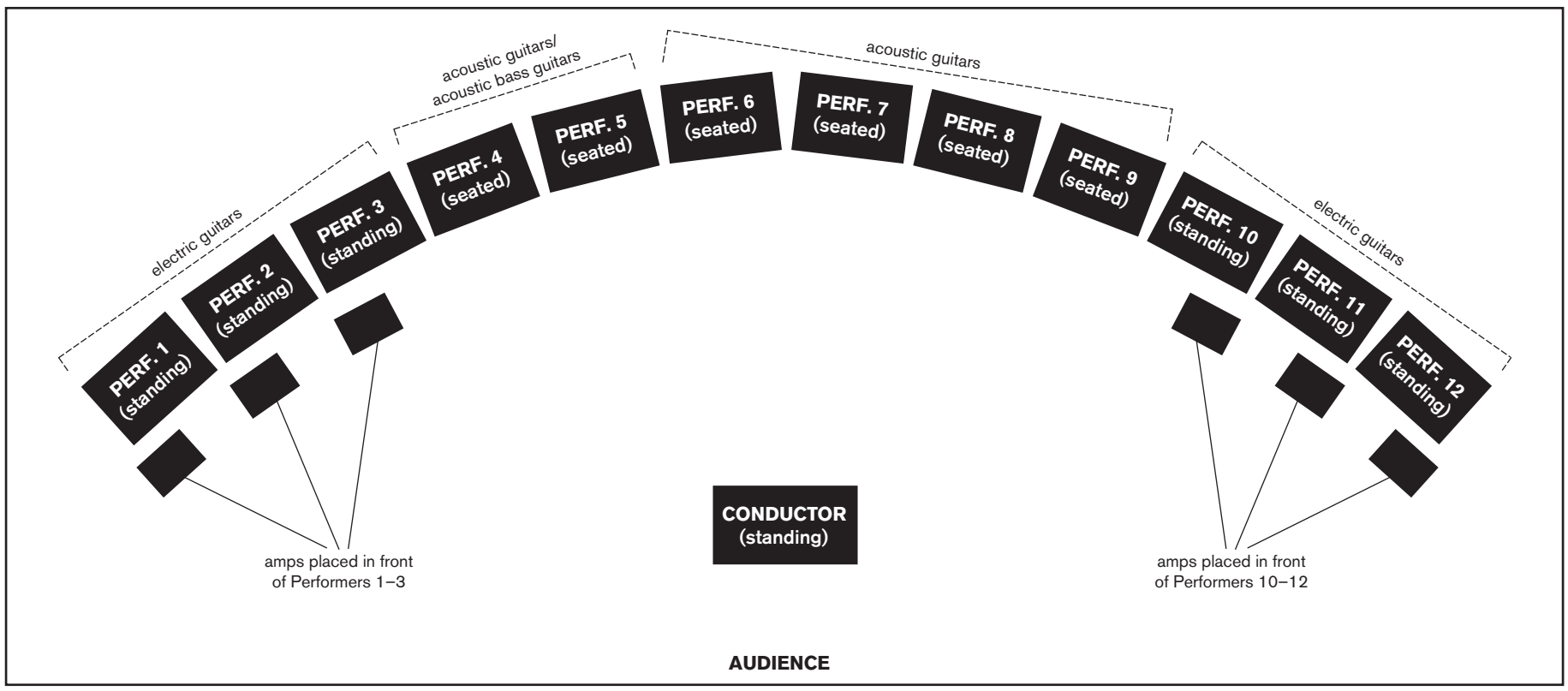
Performer 1 (Electric Guitar 1)
Performer 2 (Electric Guitar 2)
Performer 3 (Electric Guitar 3)
Performer 4 (Acoustic Guitar 1 and Acoustic Bass Guitar 1)
Performer 5 (Acoustic Guitar 2 and Acoustic Bass Guitar 2)
Performer 6 (Acoustic Guitar 3)
Performer 7 (Acoustic Guitar 4)
Performer 8 (Acoustic Guitar 5)
Performer 9 (Acoustic Guitar 6)
Performer 10 (Electric Guitar 4)
Performer 11 (Electric Guitar 5)
Performer 12 (Electric Guitar 6)

To be conducted.

Duration: ca. 9 minutes

The conductor should follow a stopwatch. There is 15 seconds of silence at the beginning of the piece. This ensures that the conductor can cue Performers 1–3 to enter at precisely 0:15 (min:sec).

Stage Setup



Setup for Performers 1–3 (Electric Guitar) and 10–12 (Electric Guitar)
Performers 1–3 and 10–12 should stand throughout, and should therefore make use of a guitar strap to hold their instrument with.

Each electric guitar should be routed to a volume pedal, and from there to an amplifier set to a clean tone with a moderate amount of spring reverb (approx. 40% wetness). If possible, the bridge pickups should be used at all times. It is preferable, though not essential, that these be humbucker rather than single coil pickups. If a guitar with a single coil bridge pickup must be used, the instrument's tone control should be set to 3 or 4 in order to blend with the humbucker equipped guitars, which should have their tone control set to 10. The amplifiers should be located in front of the performers (see Stage Setup).

The electric guitars are tuned so that each string is a quartertone apart (see fig. 1). There is no need to re-string these instruments as it is intended that the higher strings hang with considerably less tension than usual.

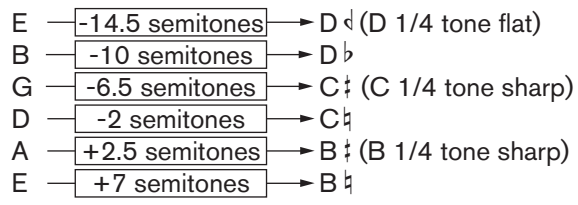


Fig. 1: Tuning of electric guitars (Performers 1–3, 10–12).

The particular spelling of the cluster shown in fig. 1 is used because it is the neatest possible option when it is written on a stave. Each instrument should have a capo placed on a different fret so that, when played in unison, a larger cluster is formed. For Electric Guitar 1, a capo is placed on fret 11, for Electric Guitar 2, a capo is placed on fret 10, for Electric Guitar 3, a capo is placed on fret 9, for Electric Guitar 4, a capo is placed on fret 8, for Electric Guitar 5, a capo is placed on fret 7, and for Electric Guitar 6, a capo is placed on fret 6.

Performers 1–3 and 10–12 are each required to use a piece of wooden dowel to bow their instruments with. This is an inexpensive cylindrical wooden rod that is available in most hardware stores. It should measure ca. 1 cm or less in diameter and between 75 and 100 cm in length. If possible, the dowel should have a smooth finish. Alternatively, the wooden stick of a violin, viola, or cello bow may be used. Additionally, Performers 1–3 and 10–12 are each required to use a soft or extra-soft headed marimba mallet to beat on the back of their guitar with.

Setup for Performers 4–5 (Acoustic Guitar and Acoustic Bass Guitar) and Performers 6–9 (Acoustic Guitar)
Performers 4–9 should be seated throughout the performance. Each performer should rest their acoustic guitar or acoustic bass guitar upright on their lap and hold it in the style of a miniature cello.

The acoustic guitars and acoustic bass guitars should be steel-stringed instruments. It is preferable that these instruments are not amplified. If they are too quiet in the overall balance, their sound should be subtly augmented with microphone based, rather than pickup based amplification.

The acoustic guitars are tuned so that each string is a quartertone apart (see fig. 2). There is no need to re-string these instruments as it is intended that the higher strings hang with considerably less tension than usual.

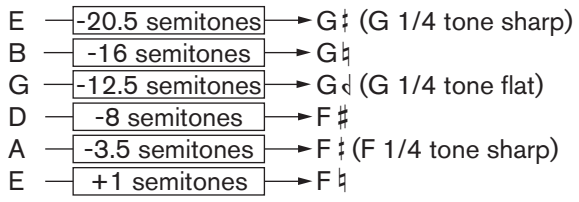


Fig. 2: Tuning of acoustic guitars (Performers 4–9).

The particular spelling of the cluster shown in fig. 2 is used because it is the neatest possible option when it is written on a stave. Each instrument should have a capo placed on a different fret so that, when played in unison, a larger cluster is formed. For Acoustic Guitar 1, a capo is placed on fret 5, for Acoustic Guitar 2, a capo is placed on fret 4, for Acoustic Guitar 3, a capo is placed on fret 3, for Acoustic Guitar 4, a capo is placed on fret 2, for Acoustic Guitar 5, a capo is placed on fret 1, and for Acoustic Guitar 6, no capo is used.

Similarly, the acoustic bass guitars are tuned so that each string is a quarter tone apart (see fig. 3). There is no need to re-string these instruments as it is intended that the higher strings hang with less tension than usual.

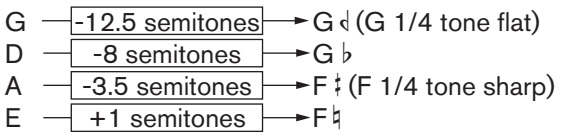


Fig. 3: Tuning of acoustic bass guitars (Performers 4–5).

The particular spelling of the cluster shown in fig. 3 is used because it is the neatest possible option when it is written on a stave. Each instrument should have a capo placed on a different fret so that, when played in unison, a larger cluster is formed. For Acoustic Bass Guitar 1, a capo is placed on fret 5, and for Acoustic Bass Guitar 2, a capo is placed on fret 4.

Performers 4–9 are each required to use a violin, a viola, or a cello bow on their instruments. For approximately the first 6 minutes of the piece, each bow should have its hair loosened to the point where it hangs with little or no tension.

General Notation
Rhythmically, this piece is non-metrical. In other words there is no discernible pulse. For this reason, traditional bars and beats have not been notated. Instead, graphic musical cells have been plotted on a horizontal timeline. These cells indicate when the performers should be playing, and the blank spaces in between represent a period in which they should either be silent or allowing their previous statement to ring out. The time is written at the top of every page and is indicated every fifteen seconds. Each page equates to one minute. As the instruments in this piece are used in unconventional ways, traditional staves and dynamic markings have been eschewed in favour of a series of visual graphs that indicate the subtly changing dynamic and timbral parameters of each instrument. Playing begins at the triple vertical line to the left of each graph, and then ceases at the double vertical line to the right.

Each system is divided into four groups, and each of these groups represent between two and four of the performers. The visual graphs that correspond with a particular group are intended to direct all of the performers within that group.

Specifics of Notation
Performers 1–3 and 10–12 (Electric Guitar)

The example shown in fig. 4 is a modification of guitar tablature notation. The tablature to the left of the triple vertical line indicates at which frets, if any, the strings should be interacted with. In this case, a piece of wooden dowel should be held against the muted strings, above the metal wire of fret 6 (note that the fret numbers are transposed according to where the capo is placed on each instrument). The three staves located above the tablature indicate the resulting harmony for each of the three instruments within the group. Playing commences after the triple vertical line at 0:00 (min:sec). The modified tablature stave thereafter (i.e. the Bowing Focus stave) conveys which of the strings each performer should focus their piece of dowel on. In this example, only the top three strings are bowed initially, then all six at 0:15. Playing ceases at the double vertical line at 0:30.

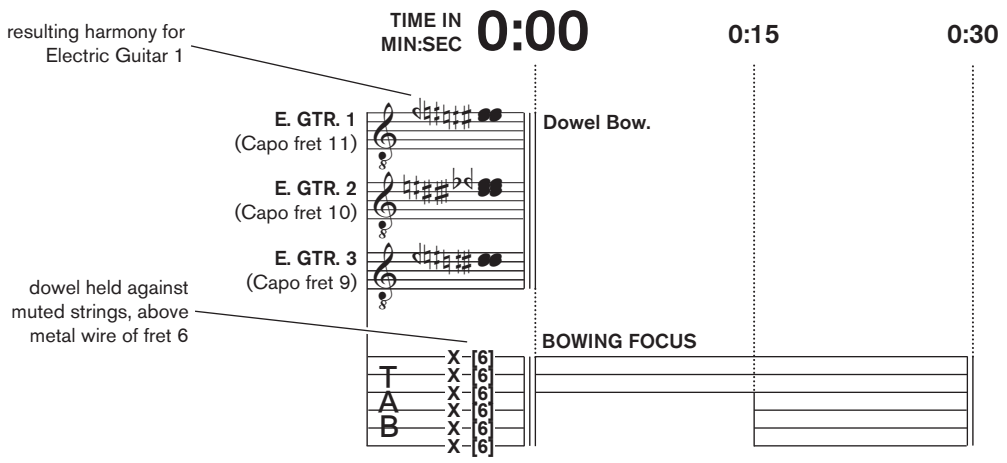


Fig. 4: Fretting hand position and Bow Focus stave
(relevant to Performers 1–3 and Performers 10–12).

(Continued on the next page).

PERFORMANCE NOTES (CONTINUED)

Specifics of Notation (continued)
Performers 1–3 and Performers 10–12 (continued)

Because the instruments are manipulated in unusual ways, various parameters, such as the speed and pressure at which they are bowed with pieces of dowel, or the speed and velocity at which they are beaten with mallets, greatly affect the dynamics as well as the tone of the overall sound. As traditional markings would be insufficient here, the speed and pressure (or velocity) of the action in question are conveyed using wedges that are plotted on graphs. These graphs lie on top of one another, with mirrored extremes, as if they are two sides of the same object (i.e. the dynamic envelope). In the example shown in fig. 5, the performers begin bowing (with pieces of dowel) at a minimum speed and pressure after the triple vertical line, and steadily increase both parameters. These parameters peak at one point, and then steadily decrease until playing ceases at the double vertical line.

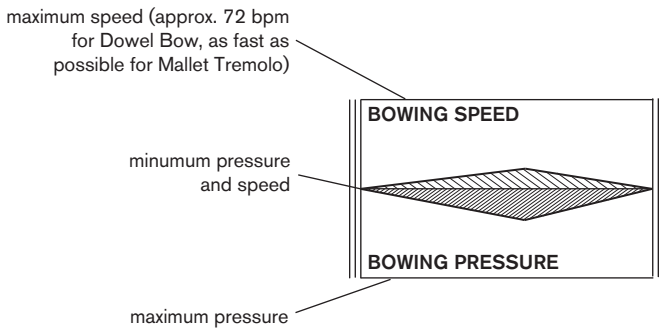


Fig. 5: Bowing Speed and Bowing Pressure graphs (relevant to Performers 1–3 and Performers 10–12).

All other notation is explained within the score itself.

Performers 4–5 (Acoustic Guitar and Acoustic Bass Guitar) and Performers 6–9 (Acoustic Guitar)

The example shown in fig. 6 is a modification of guitar tablature notation. The tablature to the left of the triple vertical line indicates at which frets, if any, the strings should be interacted with. In this case, the natural harmonic above the twelfth fret should be barred across all six strings (note that the fret numbers are transposed according to where the capo is placed on each instrument), while the strings are bowed using the Loose Bow, Tight Grip action. The three staves located above the tablature indicate the resulting harmony for each of the three instruments within the group. Playing commences after the triple vertical line at 0:00 (min:sec). The modified tablature stave thereafter (i.e. the Bowing Focus stave) conveys which of the strings each performer should focus their bow on. In this example, only the top three strings are bowed initially, then all six at 0:15. Playing ceases at the double vertical line at 0:30.

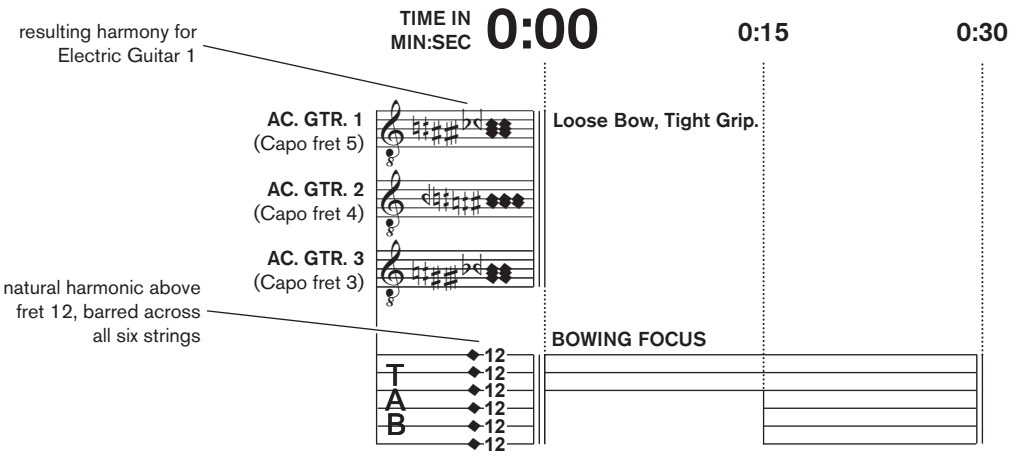


Fig. 6: Fretting hand position and Bow Focus stave (relevant to Performers 4–9).

Because the instruments are bowed in unusual ways, the speed and pressure of the bowing greatly affect the dynamics as well as the tone of the overall sound. As traditional markings would be insufficient here, the speed and pressure of the bowing are conveyed using wedges that are plotted on graphs. These graphs lie on top of one another, with mirrored extremes, as if they are two sides of the same object (i.e. the dynamic envelope). In the example shown in fig. 7, the performers begin bowing at a minimum speed and pressure after the triple vertical line, and steadily increase both parameters. These parameters peak at one point, and then steadily decrease until playing ceases at the double vertical line.

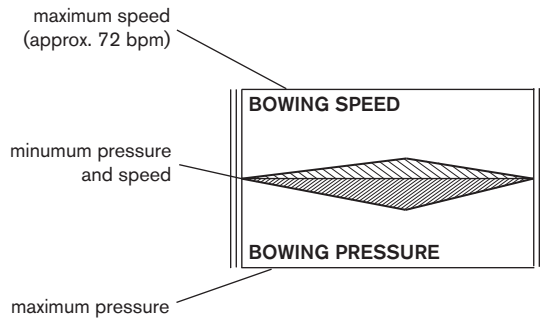


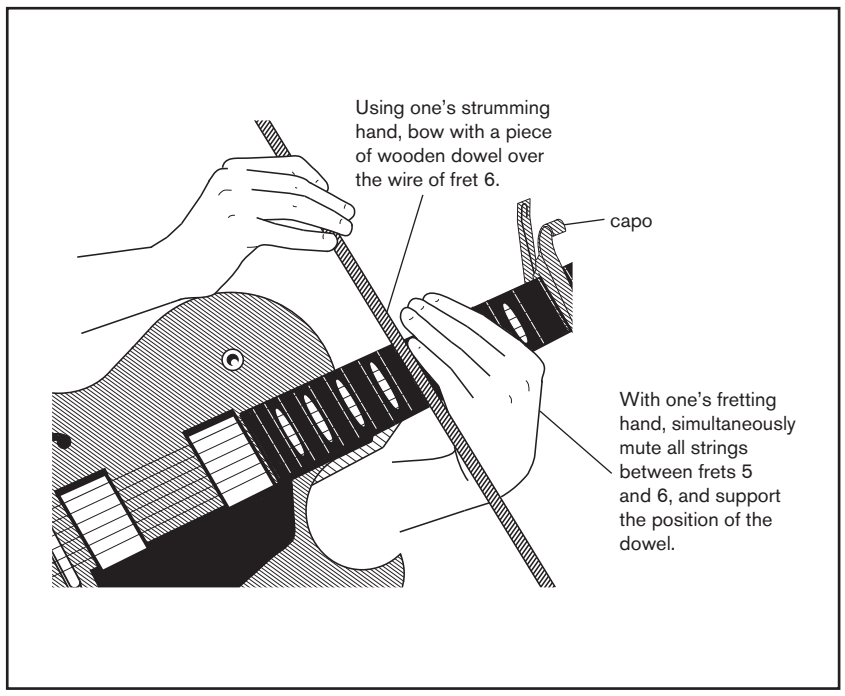
Fig. 7: Bowing Speed and Bowing Pressure graphs (relevant to Performers 4–9).

All other notation is explained within the score itself.

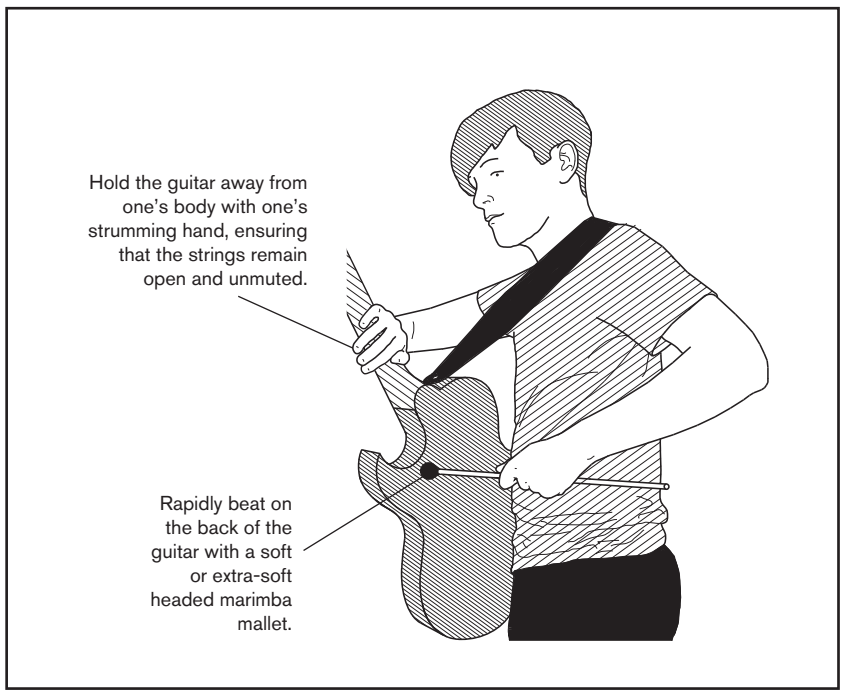
PERFORMANCE NOTES (CONTINUED)

Illustrations of Gestures

Performers 1–3, 10–12 (Electric Guitar)

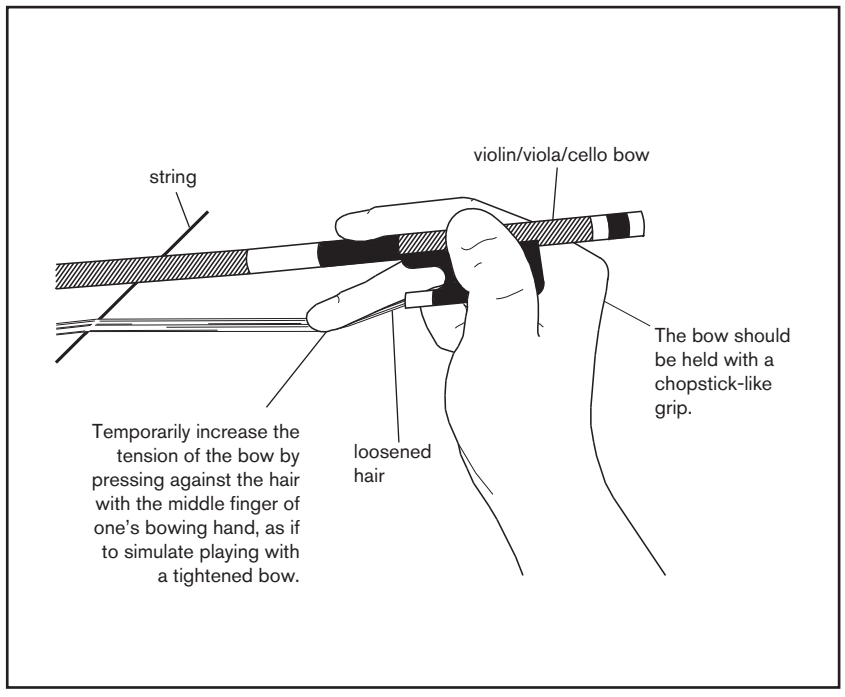


Dowel Bow
(0:15 for Performers 1–3, 1:15 for Performers 10–12).

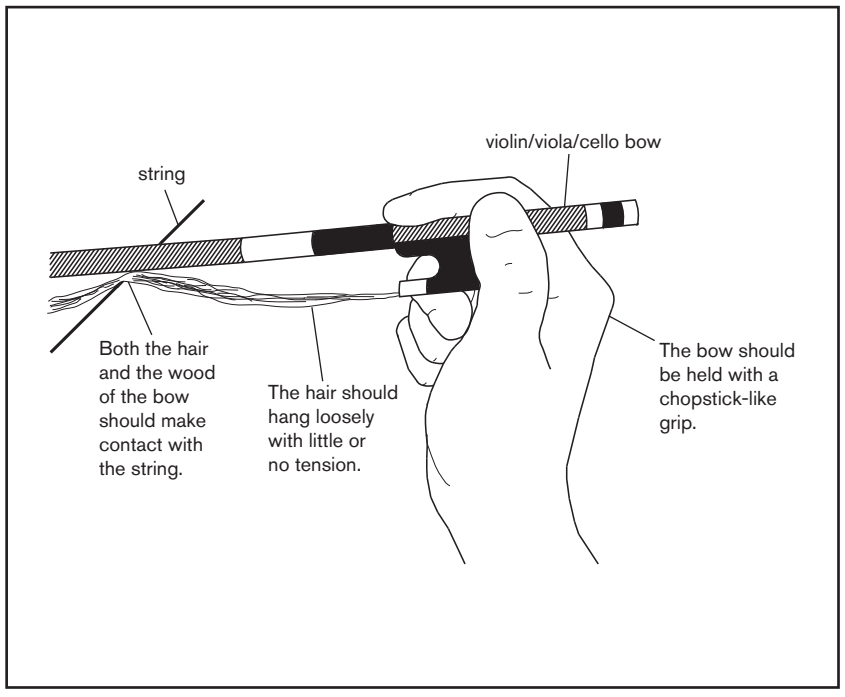


Mallet Tremolo
(4:15 for Performers 1–13, 5:30 for Performers 10–12).

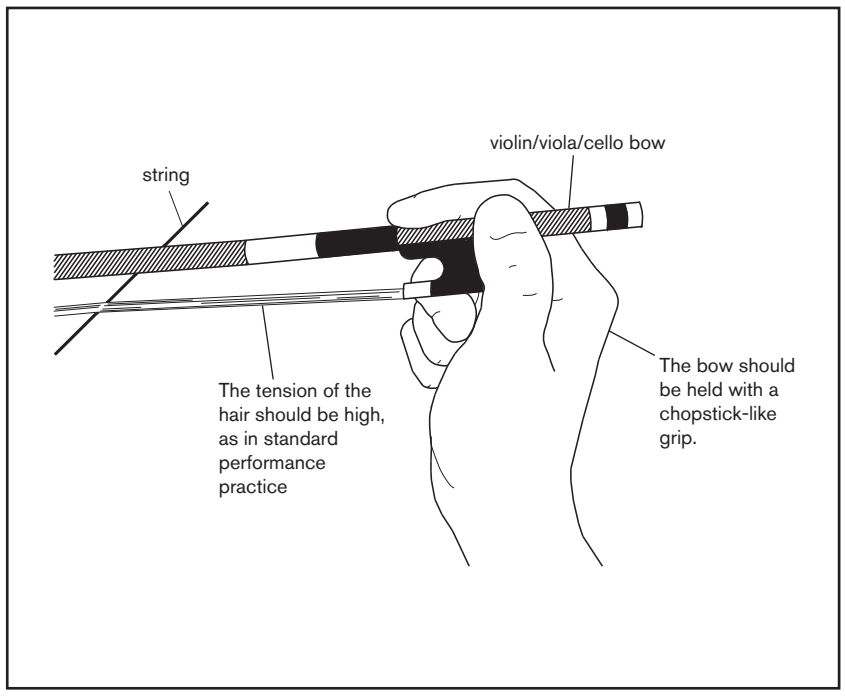
Performers 4–9 (Acoustic Guitar, Acoustic Bass Guitar)



Loose Bow, Tight Grip
(1:30 for Performers 4–6, 2:15 for Performers 7–9).



Loose Bow, Loose Grip
(5:00 for Performers 4–6, 5:15 for Performers 7–9).



Tight Bow
(6:30 for Performers 4–9).

All other performance techniques are explained within the score itself.

MARSHES

Paul McGuire

A **B**

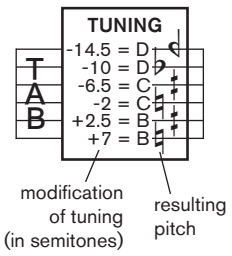
TIME IN MIN:SEC **0:00** 0:15 0:30 0:45

PERFORMERS 1–3 (ELECTRIC GUITAR)

ELECTRIC GUITAR 1:
Capo fret 11

ELECTRIC GUITAR 2:
Capo fret 10

ELECTRIC GUITAR 3:
Capo fret 9

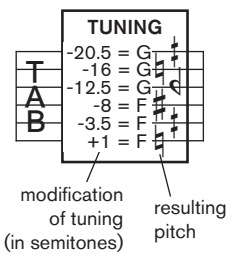


PERFORMERS 4–6 (ACOUSTIC GUITAR)

ACOUSTIC GUITAR 1:
Capo fret 5

ACOUSTIC GUITAR 2:
Capo fret 4

ACOUSTIC GUITAR 3:
Capo fret 3

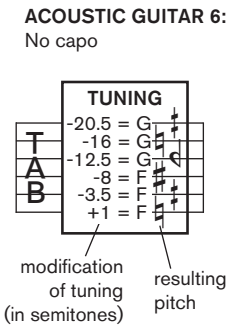


PERFORMERS 7–9 (ACOUSTIC GUITAR)

ACOUSTIC GUITAR 4:
Capo fret 2

ACOUSTIC GUITAR 5:
Capo fret 1

ACOUSTIC GUITAR 6:
No capo

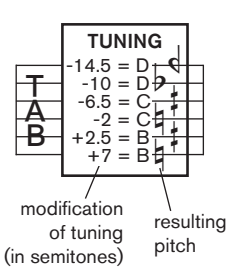


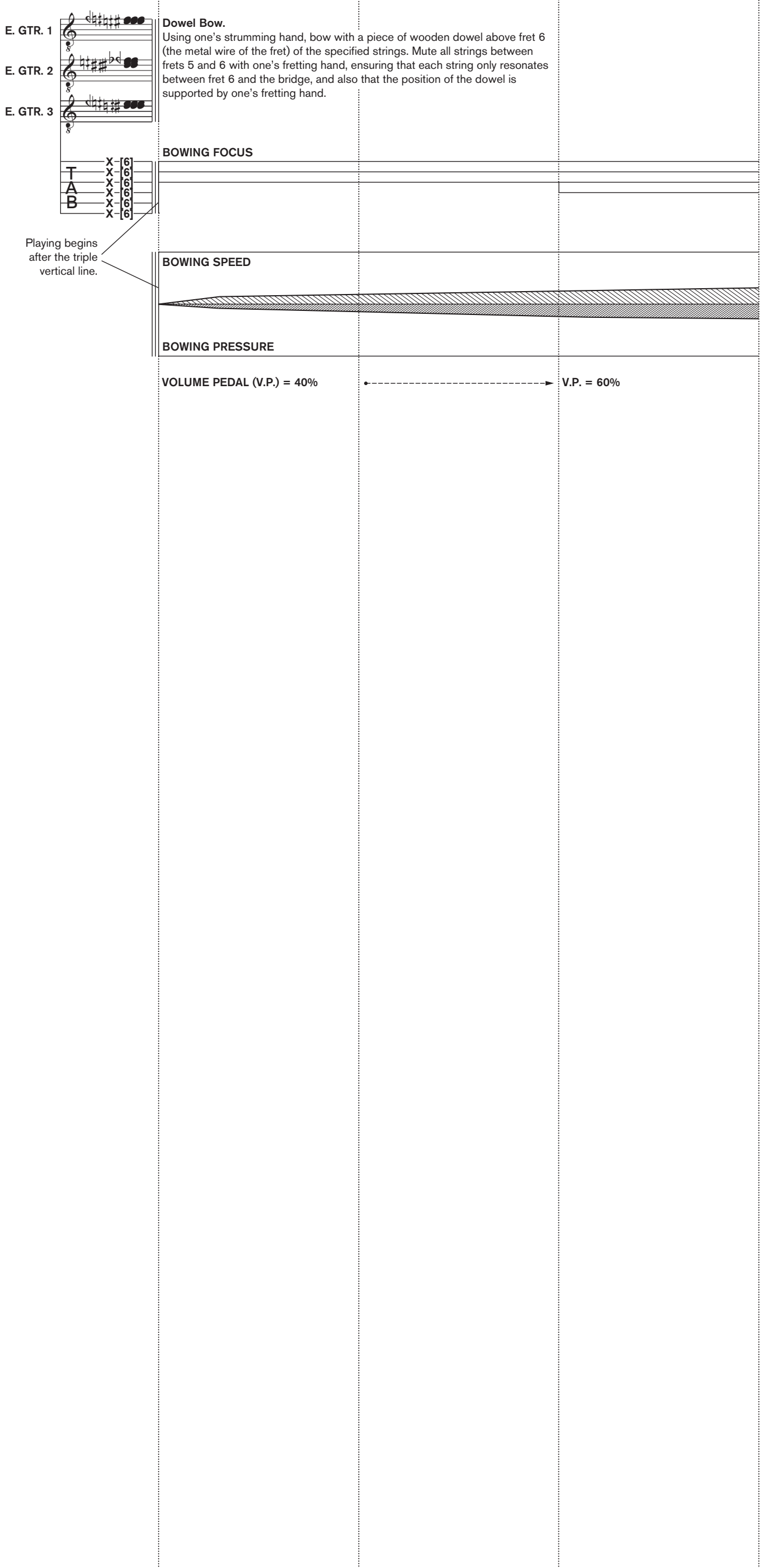
PERFORMERS 10–12 (ELECTRIC GUITAR)

ELECTRIC GUITAR 4:
Capo fret 8

ELECTRIC GUITAR 5:
Capo fret 7

ELECTRIC GUITAR 6:
Capo fret 6





C

D

1:00

1:15

1:30

1:45

PERF. 1–3 (E. GTR.)

BOWING FOCUS

T
A
B

BOWING SPEED

BOWING PRESSURE

(V.P. = 60%) ----------► V.P. = 80%

•---------► V.P. = 100%

PERF. 4–6 (AC. GTR.)

AC. GTR. 1

AC. GTR. 2

AC. GTR. 3

Loose Bow, Tight Grip.
Bow with a violin/viola/cello bow that has has its hair loosened to the point where it hangs with little or no tension. The bow should be held with a chopstick-like grip. Temporarily increase the tension of the bow by pressing against the hair with the middle finger of one's bowing hand, as if to simulate playing with a tightened bow.

Default bowing position (ca. 12 cm from the bridge)

BOWING FOCUS

12
12
12
12
12
12

T
A
B

natural harmonic

Playing begins after the triple vertical line.

BOWING SPEED

BOWING PRESSURE

PERF. 7–9 (AC. GTR.)

PERF. 10–12 (E. GTR.)

E. GTR. 4

E. GTR. 5

E. GTR. 6

Dowel Bow.
Using one's strumming hand, bow with a piece of wooden dowel above fret 6 (the metal wire of the fret) of the specified strings. Mute all strings between frets 5 and 6 with one's fretting hand, ensuring that each string only resonates between fret 6 and the bridge, and also that the position of the dowel is supported by one's fretting hand.

BOWING FOCUS

X [6]
X [6]
X [6]
X [6]
X [6]
X [6]

T
A
B

Playing begins after the triple vertical line.

BOWING SPEED

BOWING PRESSURE

VOLUME PEDAL (V.P.) = 40% •---------► V.P. = 60%

E

2:00 2:15 2:30 2:45

PERF. 1–3 (E. GTR.)

BOWING FOCUS

T
A
B

BOWING SPEED

BOWING PRESSURE

(V.P. = 100%) ----------► V.P. = 80% ----------►

PERF. 4–6 (AC. GTR.)

BOWING FOCUS

T
A
B

BOWING SPEED

BOWING PRESSURE

PERF. 7–9 (AC. GTR.)

AC. GTR. 4

AC. GTR. 5

AC. GTR. 6

Loose Bow, Tight Grip.
Bow with a violin/viola/cello bow that has has its hair loosened to the point where it hangs with little or no tension. The bow should be held with a chopstick-like grip. Temporarily increase the tension of the bow by pressing against the hair with the middle finger of one's bowing hand, as if to simulate playing with a tightened bow.

Default bowing position (ca. 12 cm from the bridge)

BOWING FOCUS

T
A
B

12 12 12 12 12 12

natural harmonic

Playing begins after the triple vertical line.

BOWING SPEED

BOWING PRESSURE

PERF. 10–12 (E. GTR.)

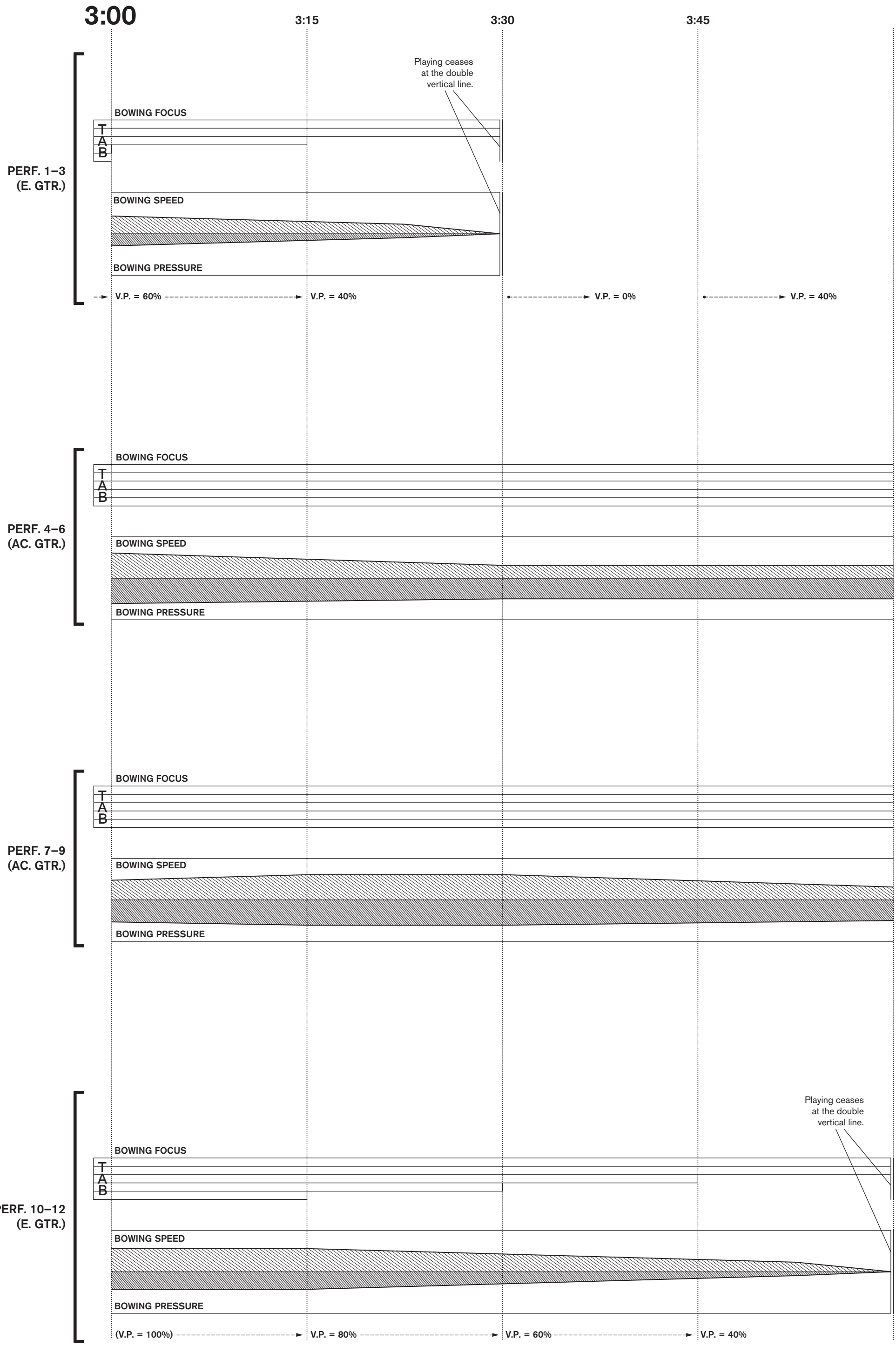
BOWING FOCUS

T
A
B

BOWING SPEED

BOWING PRESSURE

(V.P. = 60%) ----------► V.P. = 80% ----------► V.P. = 100%


3:00
3:15
3:30
3:45
PERF. 1–3
(E. GTR.)
Playing ceases
at the double
vertical line.
BOWING FOCUS
T
A
B
BOWING SPEED
BOWING PRESSURE
V.P. = 60%
V.P. = 40%
V.P. = 0%
V.P. = 40%
PERF. 4–6
(AC. GTR.)
BOWING FOCUS
T
A
B
BOWING SPEED
BOWING PRESSURE
PERF. 7–9
(AC. GTR.)
BOWING FOCUS
T
A
B
BOWING SPEED
BOWING PRESSURE
PERF. 10–12
(E. GTR.)
Playing ceases
at the double
vertical line.
BOWING FOCUS
T
A
B
BOWING SPEED
BOWING PRESSURE
(V.P. = 100%)
V.P. = 80%
V.P. = 60%
V.P. = 40%

F

G

4:00

4:15

4:30

4:45

PERF. 1–3
(E. GTR.)

E. GTR. 1

E. GTR. 2

E. GTR. 3

Mallet Tremolo.
Rapidly beat on the back of the guitar with a soft or extra-soft headed marimba mallet with one's fretting hand. Hold the guitar away from one's body with one's strumming hand, ensuring that the strings remain open and unmuted. Aim for a resonant and sustained sound rather than a busy and percussive one.

T
A
B

0
0
0
0
0
0

TREMOLO SPEED

TREMOLO VELOCITY

(V.P. = 40%)

V.P. = 60%

PERF. 4–6
(AC. GTR.)

Gradually release the harmonics so that the open strings are bowed.

AC. GTR. 1

AC. GTR. 2

AC. GTR. 3

BOWING FOCUS

T
A
B

12
12
12
12
12
12

BOWING SPEED

BOWING PRESSURE

PERF. 7–9
(AC. GTR.)

BOWING FOCUS

T
A
B

BOWING SPEED

BOWING PRESSURE

PERF. 10–12
(E. GTR.)

(V.P. = 40%) V.P. = 0%

H **I**

5:00 **5:15** **5:30** **5:45**

PERF. 1–3 (E. GTR.)

TREMOLO SPEED

TREMOLO VELOCITY

V.P. = 80% **V.P. = 100%**

PERF. 4–6 (AC. GTR.)

AC. GTR. 1

AC. GTR. 2

AC. GTR. 3

Loose Bow, Loose Grip.
While continuing to bow, release one's middle finger from pressing against the hair of the bow so that it hangs loosely with little or no tension. Both the hair and the wood of the bow should make contact with the strings.

Gradually move bowing position from the default position (ca. 12 cm from the bridge) to one approx. 0.5 cm from the bridge, so that the sound "fizzes out."

Bow 0.5 cm from bridge.

Playing ceases at the double vertical line.

BOWING FOCUS

T A B — 0 0 0 0 0 0

BOWING SPEED

BOWING PRESSURE

PERFORMER 4:
Switch from Acoustic Guitar 1 to Acoustic Bass Guitar 1. Tighten the bow to its standard tension for playing.

PERFORMER 5:
Switch from Acoustic Guitar 2 to Acoustic Bass Guitar 2. Tighten the bow to its standard tension for playing.

PERFORMER 6:
Tighten the bow to its standard tension for playing. Read from the 3rd system until the end of the piece.

PERF. 7–9 (AC. GTR.)

Gradually release the harmonics so that the open strings are bowed.

AC. GTR. 4

AC. GTR. 5

AC. GTR. 6

Loose Bow, Loose Grip.
While continuing to bow, release one's middle finger from pressing against the hair of the bow so that it hangs loosely with little or no tension. Both the hair and the wood of the bow should make contact with the strings.

Gradually move bowing position from the default position (ca. 12 cm from the bridge) to one approx. 0.5 cm from the bridge, so that the sound "fizzes out."

Bow 0.5 cm from bridge.

Playing ceases at the double vertical line.

BOWING FOCUS

T A B — 12 → 0 (×6)

BOWING SPEED

BOWING PRESSURE

PERF. 10–12 (E. GTR.)

E. GTR. 4

E. GTR. 5

E. GTR. 6

Mallet Tremolo.
Rapidly beat on the back of the guitar with a soft or extra-soft headed marimba mallet with one's fretting hand. Hold the guitar away from one's body with one's strumming hand, ensuring that the strings remain open and unmuted. Aim for a resonant and sustained sound rather than a busy and percussive one.

T A B — 0 0 0 0 0 0

TREMOLO SPEED

TREMOLO VELOCITY

(V.P. = 0%) V.P. = 40% **(V.P. = 40%)**

J

6:00 6:15 6:30 6:45

PERF. 1–3 (E. GTR.)

TREMOLO SPEED

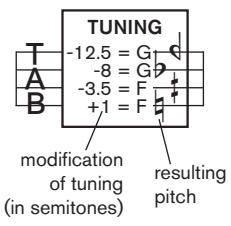
TREMOLO VELOCITY

(V.P. = 100%) ---------- V.P. = 80% ---------- V.P. = 60%

PERF. 4–5 (ACOUSTIC BASS GUITAR)

ACOUSTIC BASS GUITAR 1:
Capo fret 5

ACOUSTIC BASS GUITAR 2:
Capo fret 4



AC. B. GTR. 1

AC. B. GTR. 2

Tight Bow.
The tension of the bow's hair should be high, as in standard performance practice.

Gradually move bowing position from the default position (ca. 12 cm from the bridge) to one approx. 0.5 cm from the bridge, so that the sound "fizzes out." ----------

BOWING FOCUS

BOWING SPEED

BOWING PRESSURE

PERF. 6–9 (AC. GTR.)

PERFORMERS 7–9:
Tighten the bow to its standard tension for playing.

AC. GTR. 3

AC. GTR. 4

AC. GTR. 5

AC. GTR. 6

Tight Bow.
The tension of the bow's hair should be high, as in standard performance practice.

Gradually move bowing position from the default position (ca. 12 cm from the bridge) to one approx. 0.5 cm from the bridge, so that the sound "fizzes out." ----------

BOWING FOCUS

BOWING SPEED

BOWING PRESSURE

PERF. 10–12 (E. GTR.)

TREMOLO SPEED

TREMOLO VELOCITY

---------- V.P. = 60% ---------- V.P. = 80% ---------- V.P. = 100%

7:00 7:15 7:30 7:45

PERF. 1–3 (E. GTR.)

TREMOLO SPEED

TREMOLO VELOCITY

Let ring.

(V.P. = 60%) ----------► V.P. = 40% ----------► V.P. = 0%

PERF. 4–5 (AC. B. GTR.)

Bow 0.5 cm from bridge.

BOWING FOCUS

T
A
B

BOWING SPEED

BOWING PRESSURE

PERF. 6–9 (AC. GTR.)

Bow 0.5 cm from bridge.

BOWING FOCUS

T
A
B

BOWING SPEED

BOWING PRESSURE

PERF. 10–12 (E. GTR.)

TREMOLO SPEED

TREMOLO VELOCITY

(V.P. = 100%) ----------► V.P. = 80% ----------► V.P. = 60% ----------►

8:00 8:15 8:30 8:45 9:00

PERF. 1–3 (E. GTR.)

PERF. 4–5 (AC. B. GTR.)

BOWING FOCUS

T
A
B

BOWING SPEED

BOWING PRESSURE

PERF. 6–9 (AC. GTR.)

BOWING FOCUS

T
A
B

BOWING SPEED

BOWING PRESSURE

PERF. 10–12 (E. GTR.)

TREMOLO SPEED

TREMOLO VELOCITY

Let ring.

V.P. = 40%

V.P. = 0%