

flesh claws tripping over feather-drunk Thing
for string quartet

Jay Rauch

A thesis

submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Master of Music in Composition

University of Washington

2021

Committee:

Joël-François Durand

Huck Hodge

Program Authorized to Offer Degree:

School of Music

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Jay Rauch

University of Washington

Abstract

flesh claws tripping over feather-drunk Thing

Jay Rauch

Chair of Supervisory Committee:

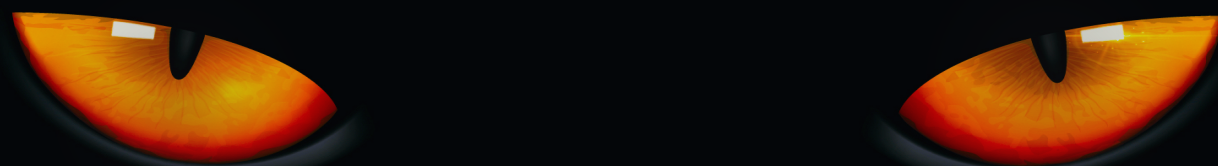
Joël-François Durand

Composition

In classical music, mechanical adherence to the score is rarely a criterion of good performance. Indeed, critics deem many performances expressive because they contain some discrepancy from the printed page. Through timbre, notation, and performance practice, *flesh claws tripping over feather-drunk Thing* amplifies this expressive confrontation between order and irregularity, control and freedom. By introducing harsh timbres to musical performance spaces, this work helps noise defy its own definition as music's Other. Noise becomes music that is simultaneously not music, highlighting a rupture between signifier and signified, between musical form and sound itself. The materiality of sound is further highlighted by the notation, an action tablature that prescribes physical behaviors rather than describing resultant sounds. This tablature desublimates the score by foregrounding gritty, unpredictable physical processes. Additionally, the unfamiliar notation and information density of the score engage the performer in a continuous process of translation and decoding. The very act of reading music becomes improvisation. Though the score's detail demands deep engagement, this is at odds with American musical culture's appetite for efficiently reproduceable content. This cultural confrontation ensures the impossibility of a technically perfect performance, thus placing the identity of the piece far beyond any organized meanings we might glean from the score.

JAY RAUCH PRESENTS...

**FLESH CLAWS TRIPPING OVER FEATHER-DRUNK
THING**



FOR STRING QUARTET

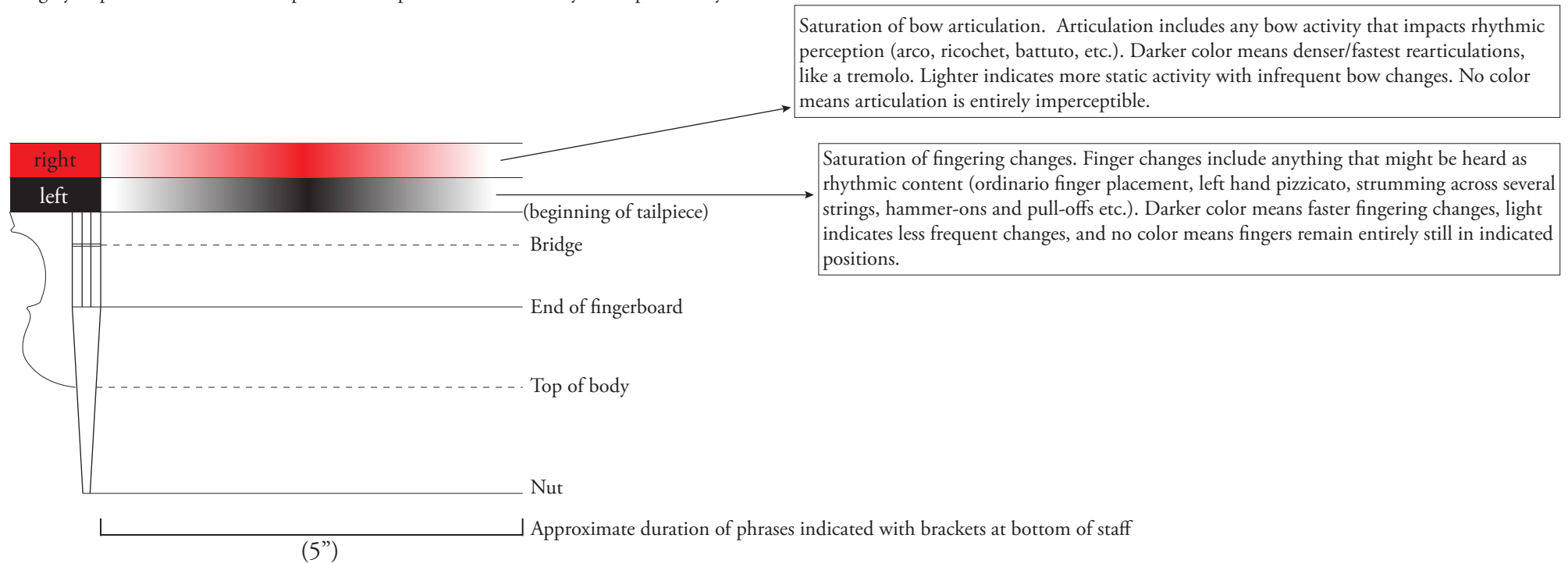
[2021]

Violins/Viola Notes

Playing this piece may feel like whistling with a mouthful of saltines—it's not impossible, but some unintended sound-crumbs will likely spray out along the way.

1. Tablature

This piece is notated using tablature that prescribes physical actions from which sounds will arise incidentally. While many actions are carefully defined, the sonic result will be always be highly unpredictable, and several performance parameters are left to your improvisatory discretion.



Listen to the other players. When the overall sound of the ensemble is denser make your finger and bow attacks more regular/periodic, and as the density of sound decreases become more irregular. A solo should be most lopsided and irregular. When you are playing with greater periodicity, don't try to match the periodicity of other players—let your speed be determined by saturation of red and black on the top two lines of the staff.

Repeats/Reflection Process

A number in a diamond at the end of a phrase's time bracket indicates the number of times to repeat that phrase (not the total number of times the phrase will be heard):

◇1 ◇2 ◇∞ (For ∞ repeat until voice track cues next section)

The repeat should not be a precise repetition. Before repeating, take up to 3 seconds of silence to reflect on which parameters you gave the least attention. Focus on those parameters during your subsequent playing. Repeat this reflection process for every repeat. No diamond indicates that the phrase is not repeated.

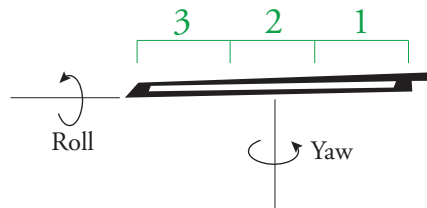
2. Right Hand

a) Bow Clef

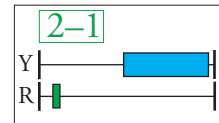
The bow clef appears at the beginning of phrases and persists until a new one appears.

The clef shows two angles of the bow, roll and yaw. Roll is a full range of motion between col legno with wrist rolled away from the body to col legno rolled toward the body. Yaw has a range of motion determined by flexing your wrist side to side (without using your elbow)—the same range of motion used in windshield wiper bowing.

Example 1: Bow's pitch and yaw, as well as the division of the bow into 3 regions. The region(s) of the bow to use in a phrase is indicated over the bow clef.

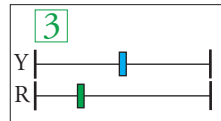


Example 2: Clef as it appears in score.



Use bow regions 2 and 1 (middle to frog). The bridge, as a point of reference, is the leftmost side of the image. Yaw (in blue) can range freely from bow perpendicular to the strings, to the tip angled far away from the bridge, toward the nut. Roll (in green) is most of the way toward the bridge.

Example 3: how ordinary roll and yaw might look.



Use bow region 3 (tip).
Bow is perpendicular to the strings and rolled about 45 degrees toward your body.

Each time a new bow clef appears:

- Keep left hand in same position from end of previous phrase
- Take up to 7 seconds to practice the new clef, playing legato bow strokes with ordinary bow pressure
- Any sounds that occur while you do this are okay
- When comfortable, move on with the phrase
- If a phrase is repeated, don't include this "practice time" in the repeat

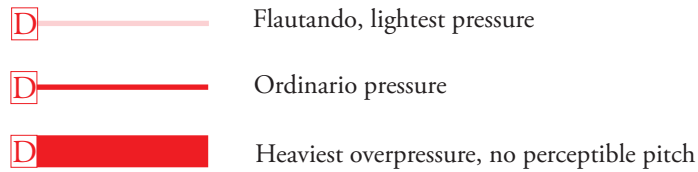
If the body of the instrument interferes with the prescribed bow positions, particularly higher up the neck, adjust the yaw of the bow as needed so you maintain contact with the strings.

b) Bow Pressure and Position

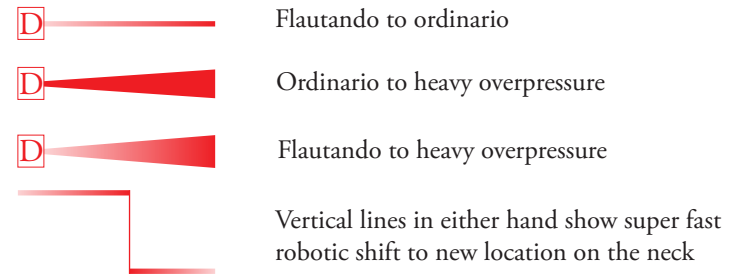
Bow position on the strings is shown in a red box. No need to play all indicated strings at once—you can move around between them freely:



Bow pressure is notated with a red gradient:



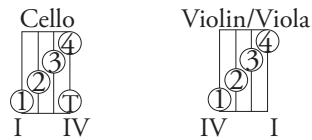
Gradations show movement between pressures:



3. Left Hand

The left hand is primarily notated in black.

4 vertical lines represent the strings. Numbers in circles represent fingers (T stands for thumb):



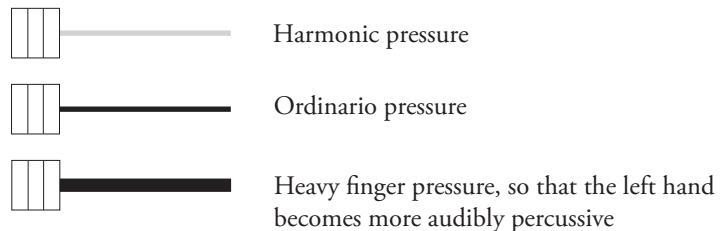
Fingers in white circles remain in place until otherwise indicated. Horizontal bars show that a finger covers more than one string:



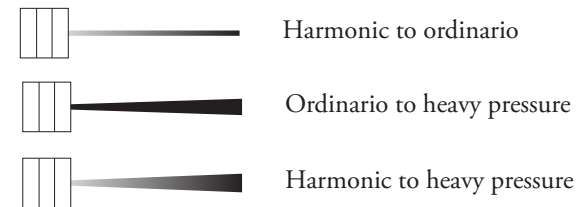
Fingers in a yellow circle may be lifted/rearticulated in any combination, so long as they reflect the saturation of fingering changes (as indicated by black gradient in tablature):



Finger pressure/force of finger attacks is shown with color and thickness of line.



Gradations show movement between pressures:



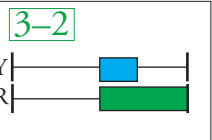
4. Time/Voice Track

You will be coordinated with a voice track that you should hear through headphones. This track will cue the two rehearsal letters in the piece, as well as the ending. At letter A, for instance, you will hear “Three, two, one, A.” Begin playing precisely with the word “A.” If the next section is cued and you haven’t finished the current section, jump ahead to the cued section.

Violin 1

Do not take time to practice this first bow clef. Start phrase immediately.

(A)



1

right

left

E

E A

E

E A

4

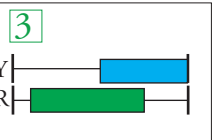
3 2 1

4

4

3 2 1

(11")



2

right

left

A D

A

D

D G

4

3 2 1

4

3 2 1

4

3 2 1

(16")

(11")





3-2-1

Y | [blue bar] |
R | [green bar] |

right
left

(29")

At the cue of B, do not practice the bow clef.
Coordinate the phrase immediately with cue.

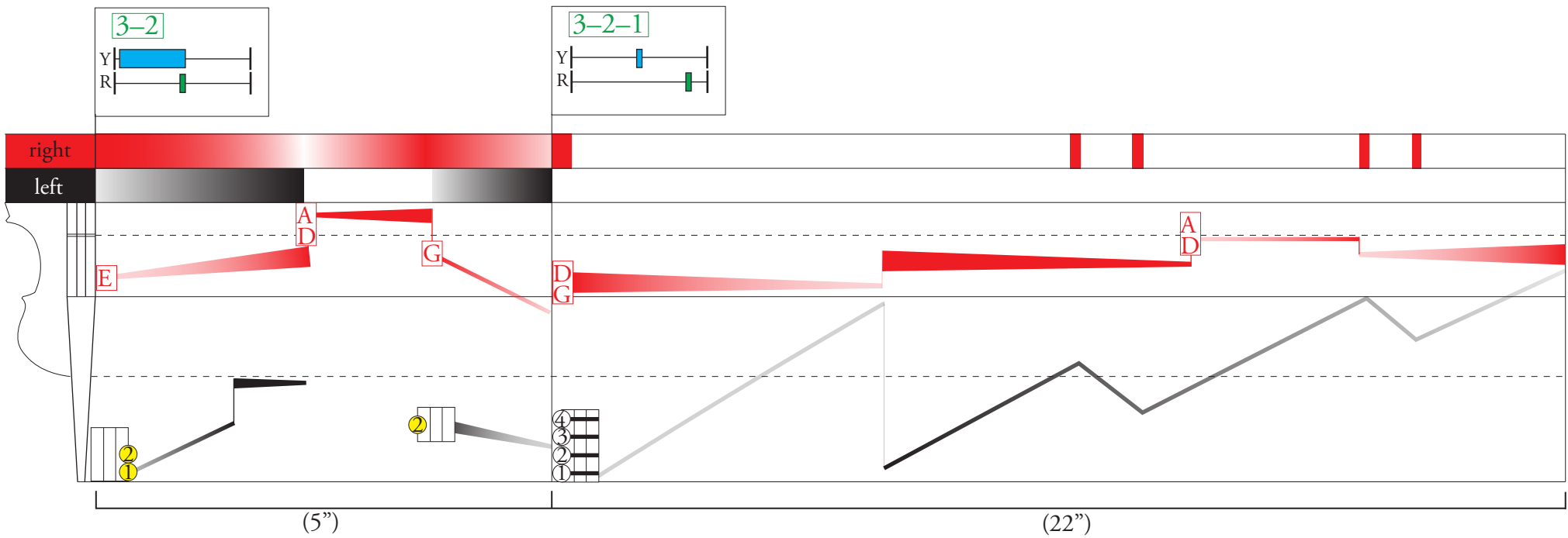
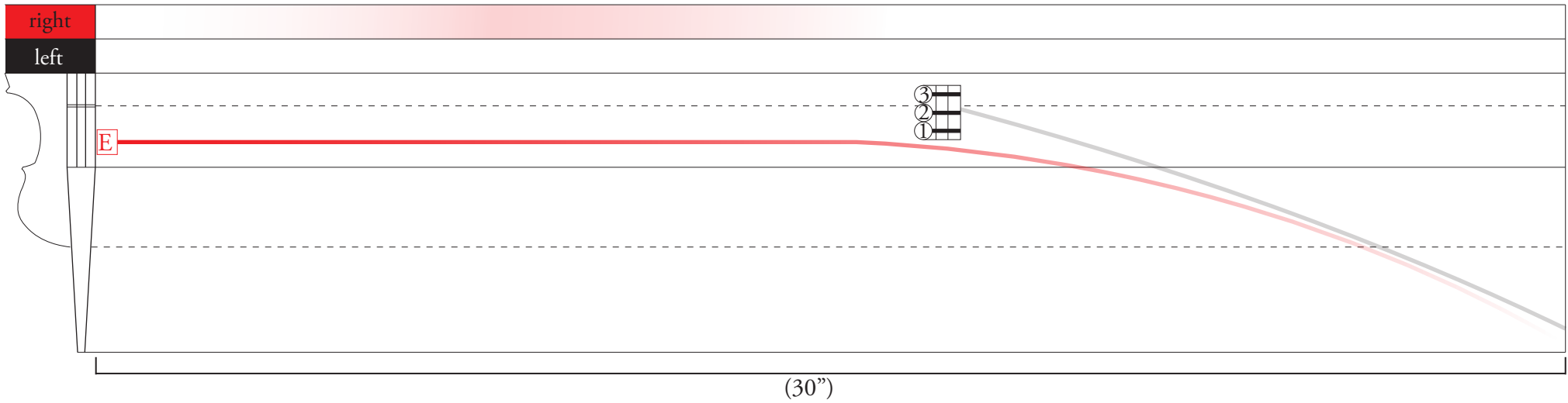
3-2-1

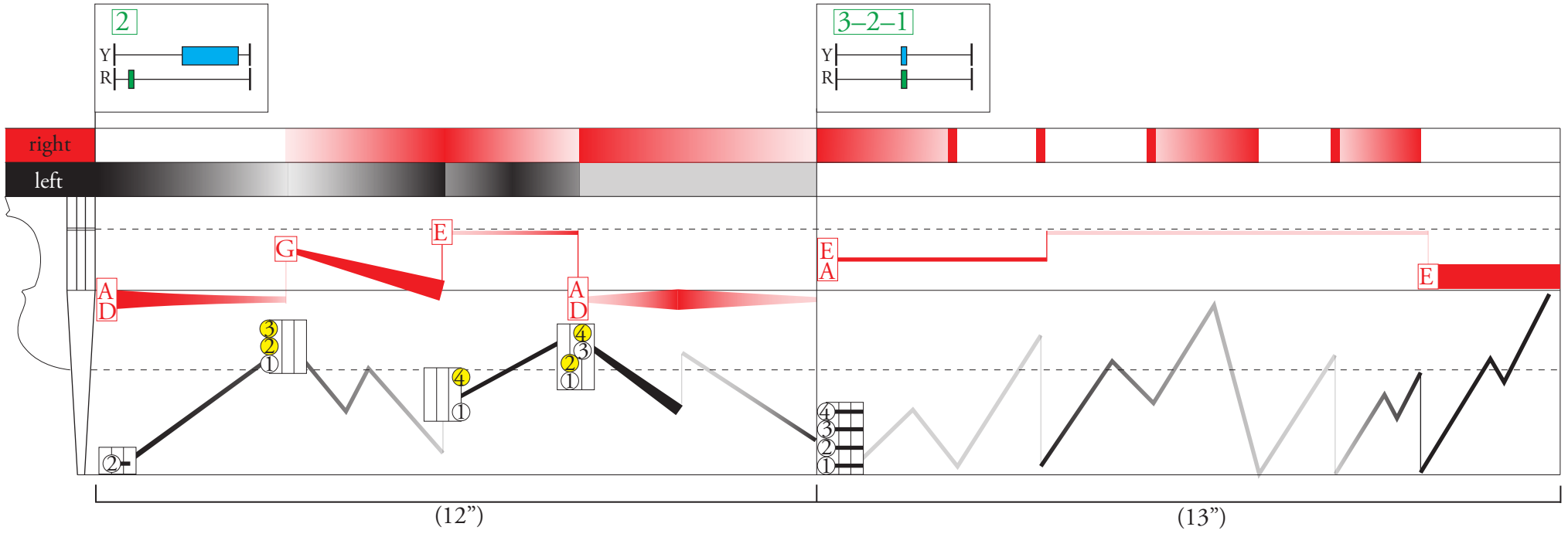
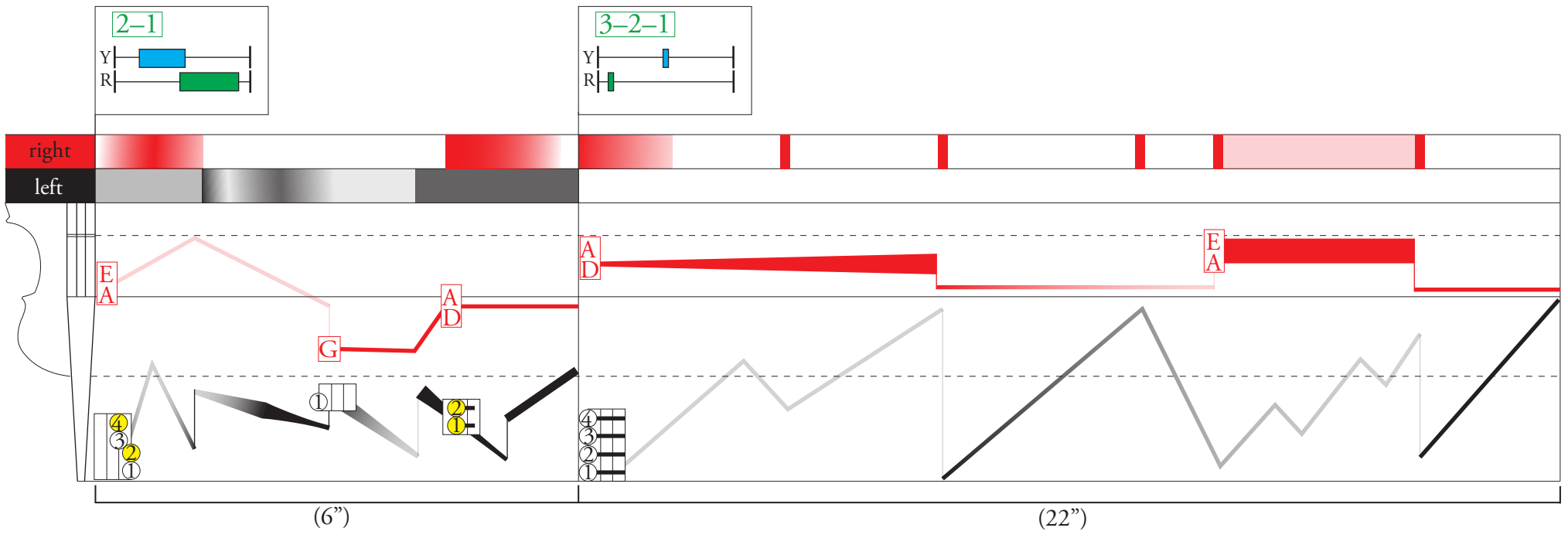
Y | [blue bar] |
R | [green bar] |

(B)

right
left

(23")





Each repeat, play the phrase a little faster.
Cut off abruptly with last cue in the voice track.
Quickly mute any resonating strings.



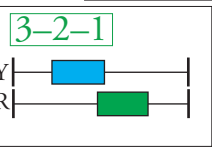
A musical score for guitar. At the top left, a box contains a green '3-2-1' rhythm indicator. Below it, a diagram shows a blue bar for the 'Y' (pick) and a green bar for the 'R' (rest). The main score features a fretboard diagram with a red line for the melody and a black line for the bass line. The melody starts on the open E string and rises to a G on the 2nd fret of the D string, then to an A on the 2nd fret of the E string. The bass line starts on the 1st fret of the E string, moves to the 4th fret of the D string, then to the 1st fret of the E string, and finally to the 4th fret of the E string. A red bar highlights the G-D-A sequence. A diamond with an infinity symbol is in the top right. The score is labeled 'right' and 'left' on the left side.

(17th)

Violin 2

Do not take time to practice this first bow clef. Start phrase immediately.

A



right

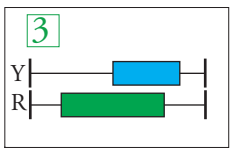
left

E

G

DG

(29")



right

left

3

DG

A

DG

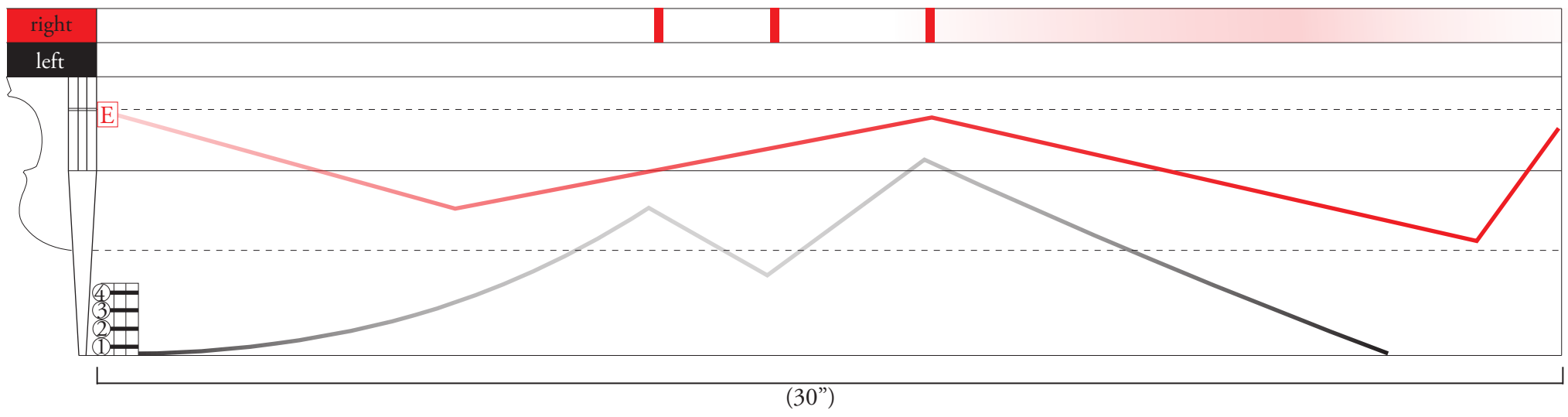
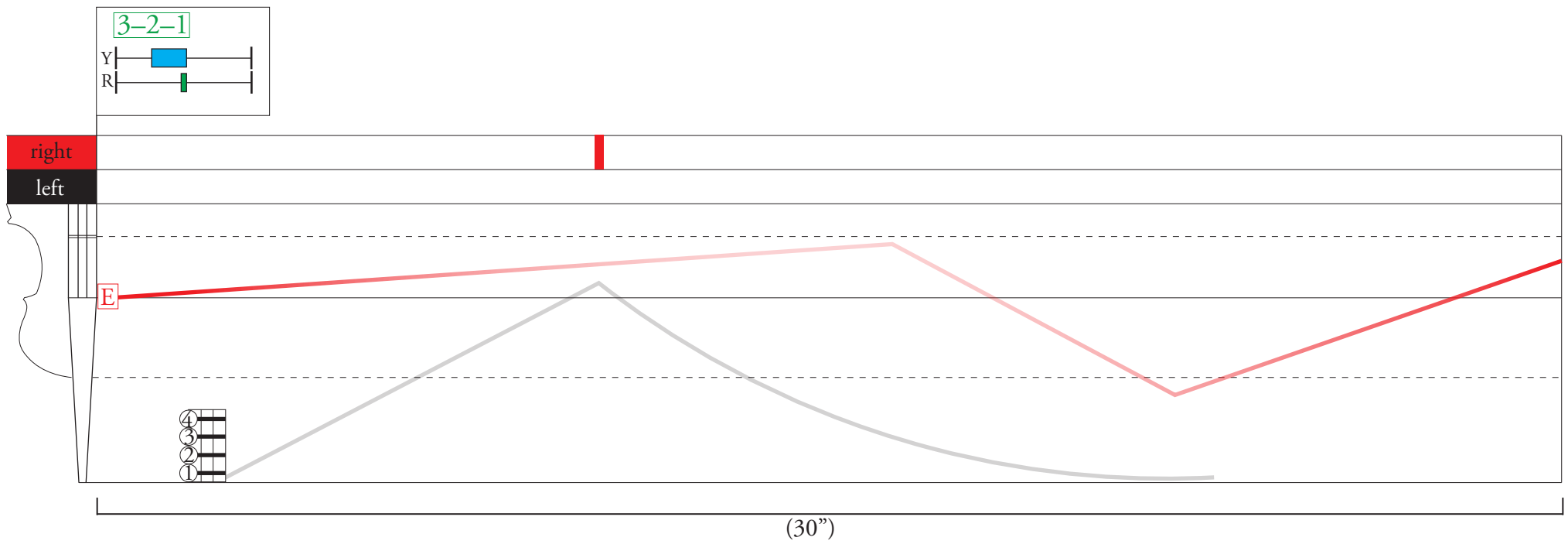
A

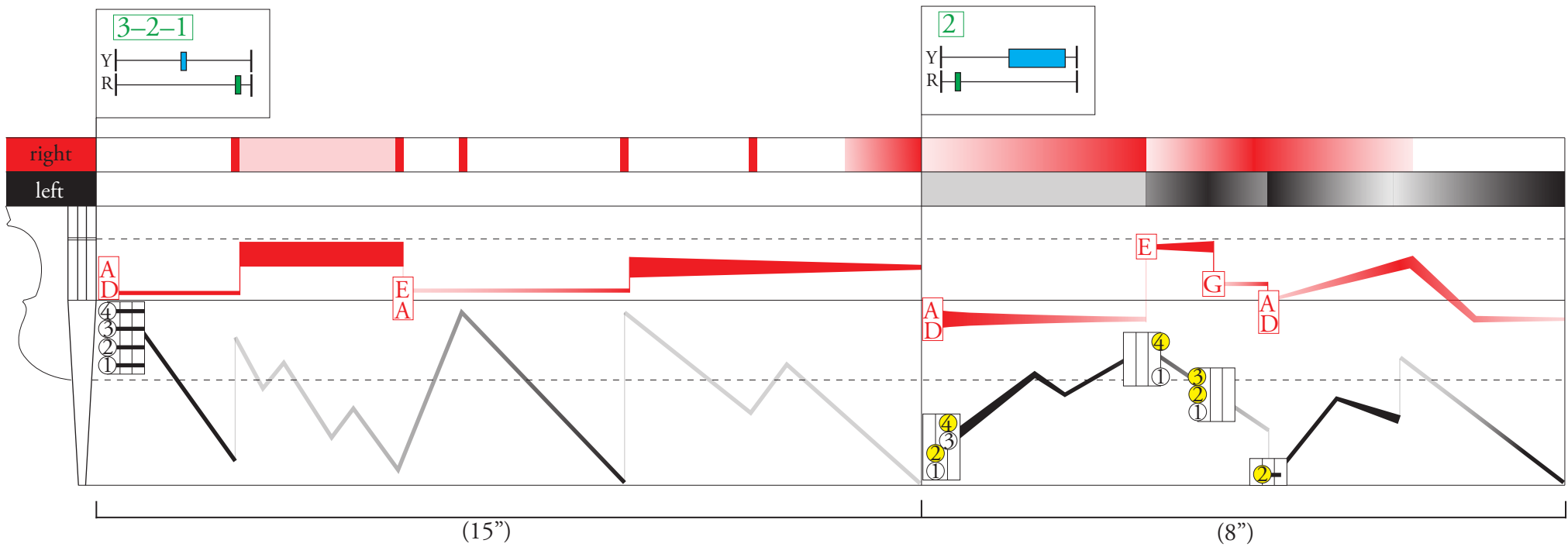
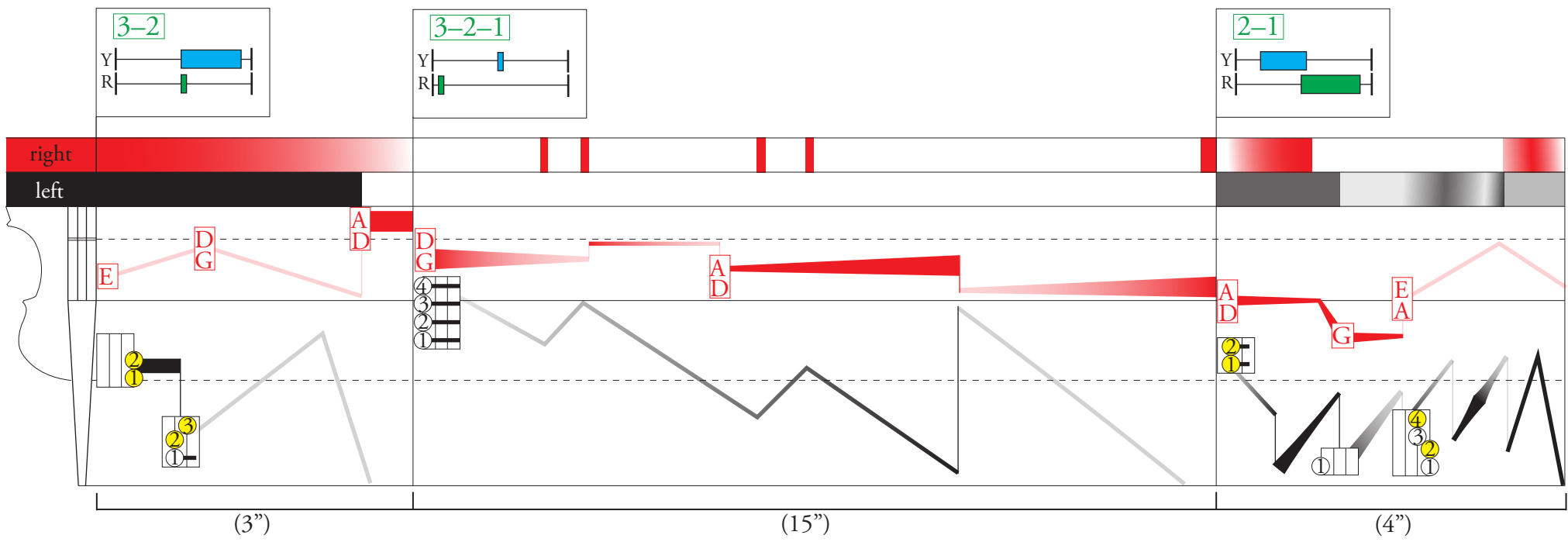
AD

(11")

(16")

2





Each repeat, play the phrase a little faster.
Cut off abruptly with last cue in the voice track.
Quickly mute any resonating strings.



The diagram illustrates a musical exercise for guitar and voice. It is divided into two sections: a 9-measure phrase and an 11-measure phrase.

3-2-1 Fretting Diagrams:

- Left Diagram:** Shows a 3-2-1 sequence on the Y and R strings. The Y string has a blue bar on fret 3, and the R string has a green bar on fret 2.
- Right Diagram:** Shows a 3-2-1 sequence on the Y and R strings. The Y string has a blue bar on fret 3, and the R string has a green bar on fret 1.

Channel and Stereo Indicators:

- right:** Indicated by a red bar at the top.
- left:** Indicated by a black bar at the top.

Voice Track:

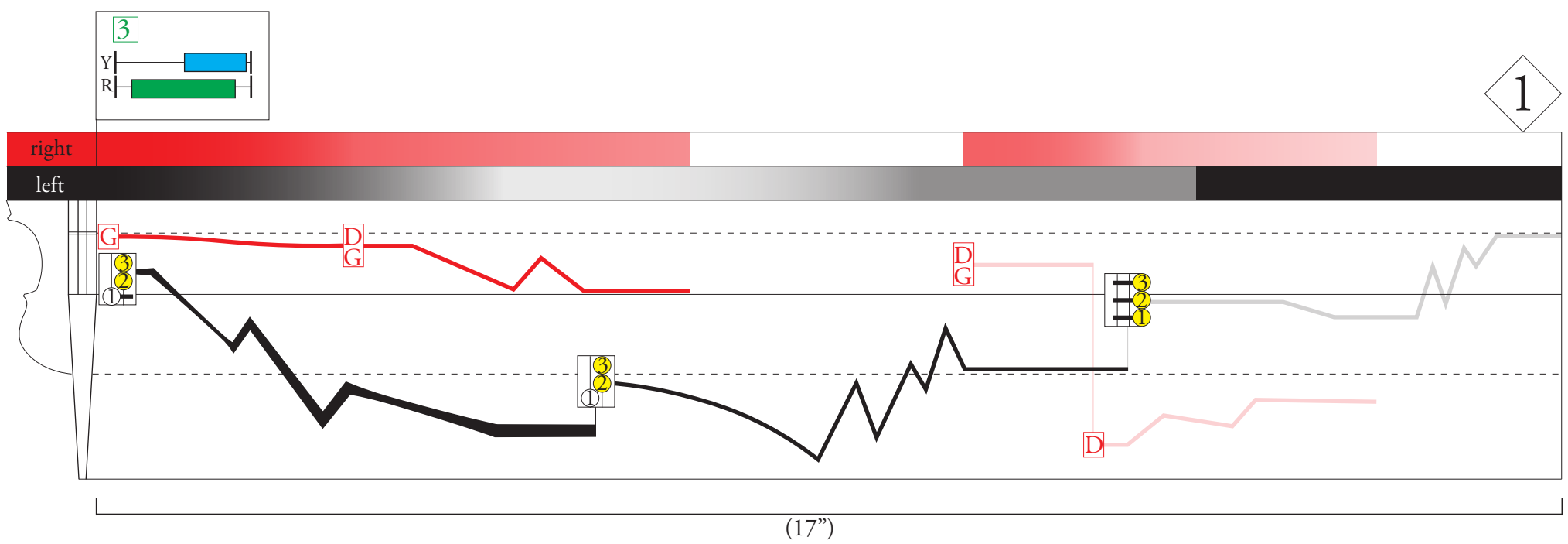
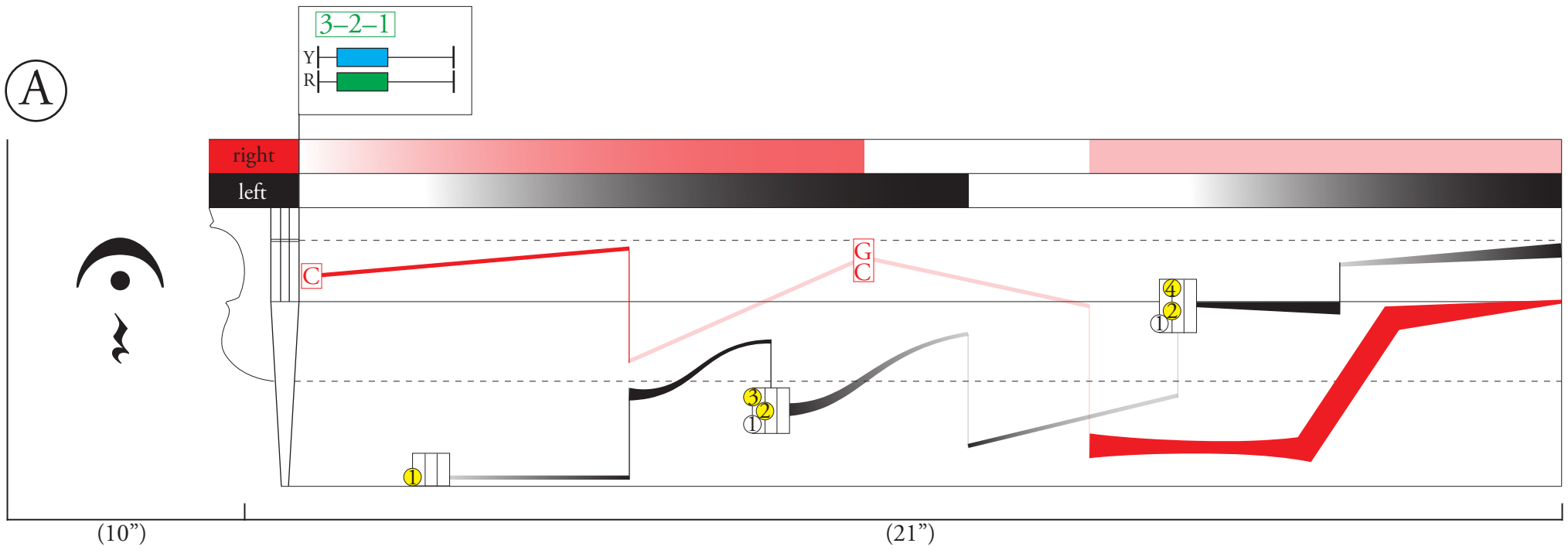
- Notes are shown in red boxes: E and A.
- A red line indicates the pitch contour, starting at E and A, and ending with a final E note that descends.

Guitar Fretboard Diagram:

- Shows fingerings for the 9-measure and 11-measure phrases.
- Numbers 1, 2, 3, and 4 are placed on the strings to indicate fingerings.
- Yellow circles highlight specific fret positions.

Measure Durations:

- 9'' (9 measures)
- 11'' (11 measures)



2-1



right

left

(18")

At the cue of B, do not practice the bow clef.
Coordinate the phrase immediately with cue.

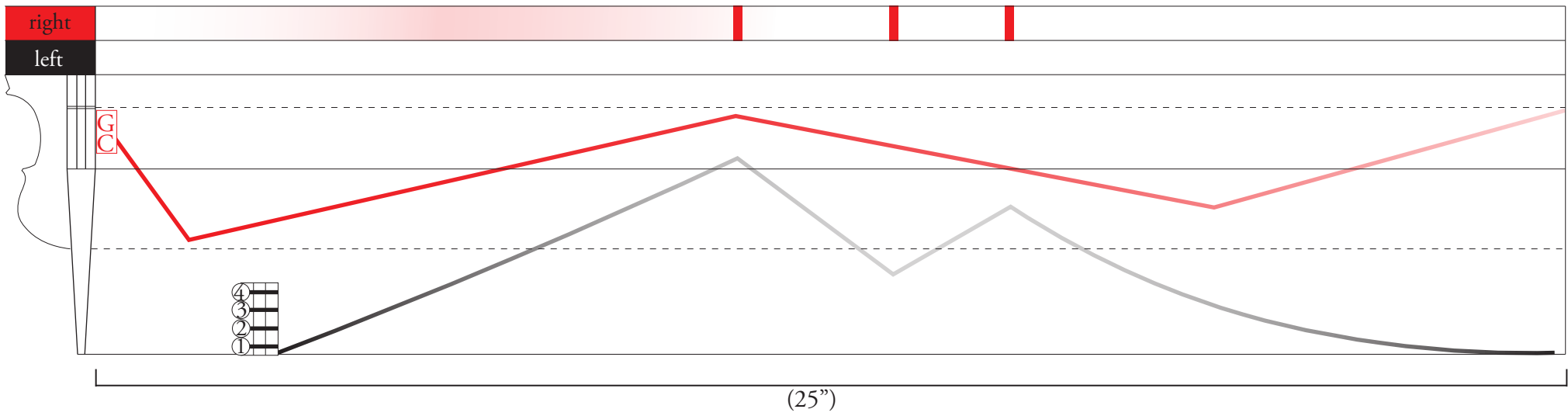
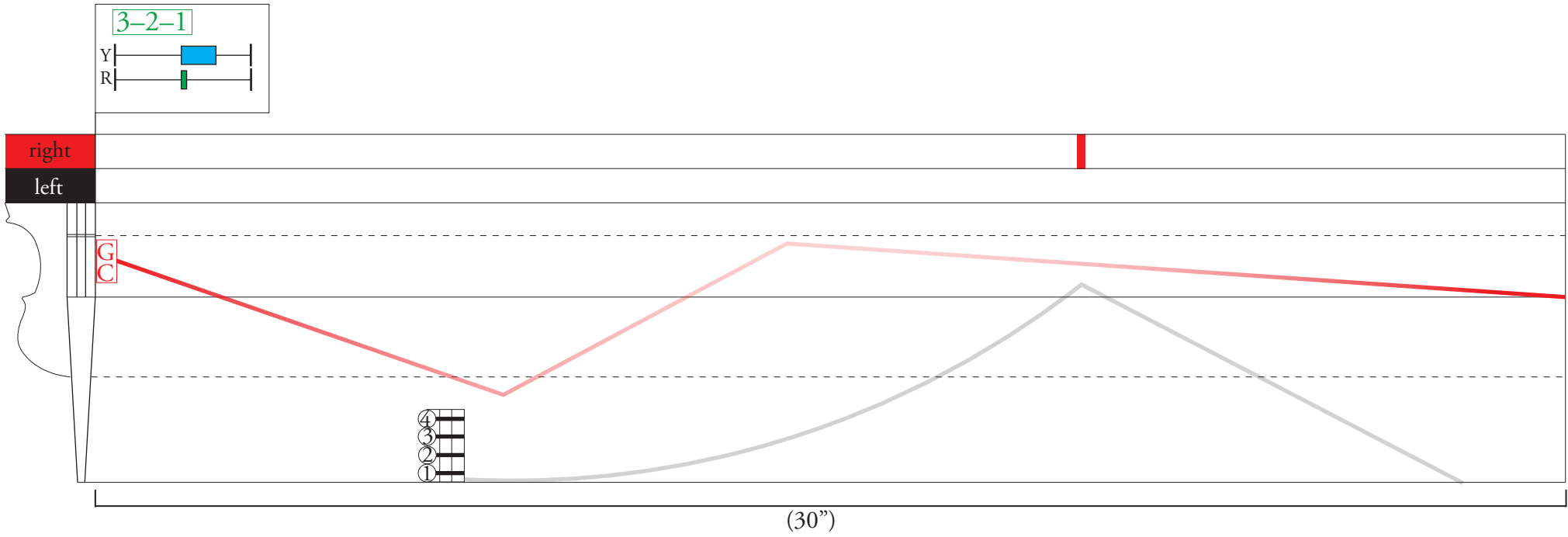
3-2-1

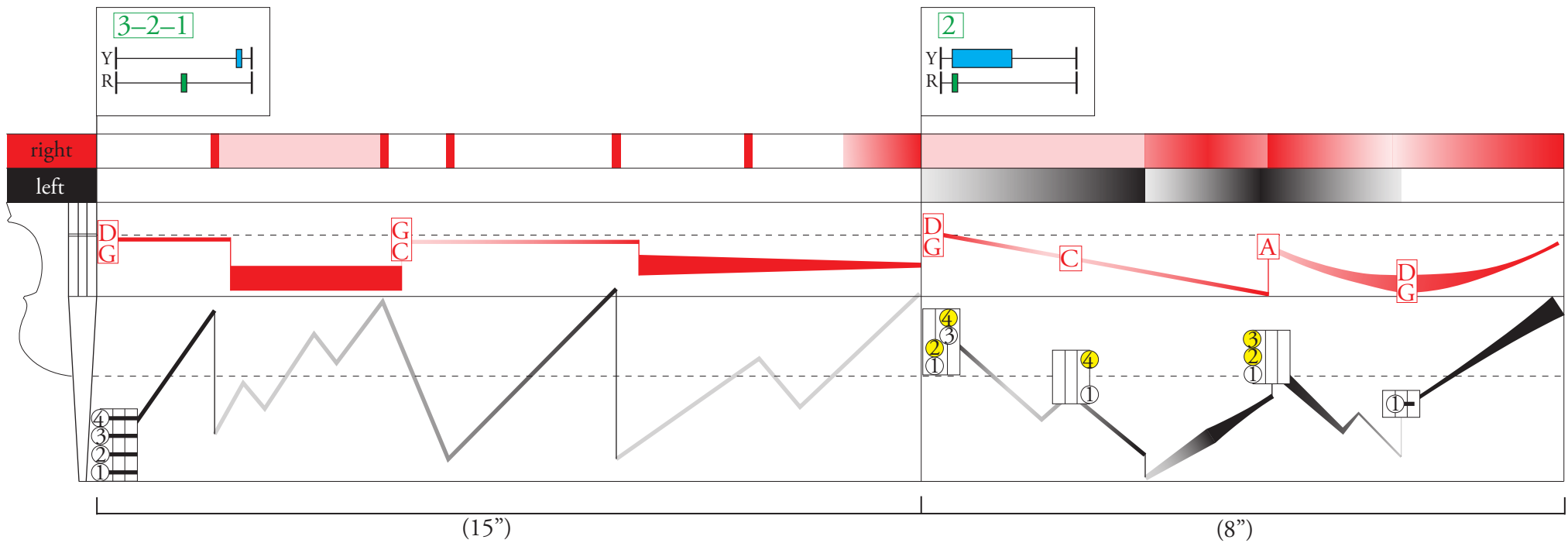
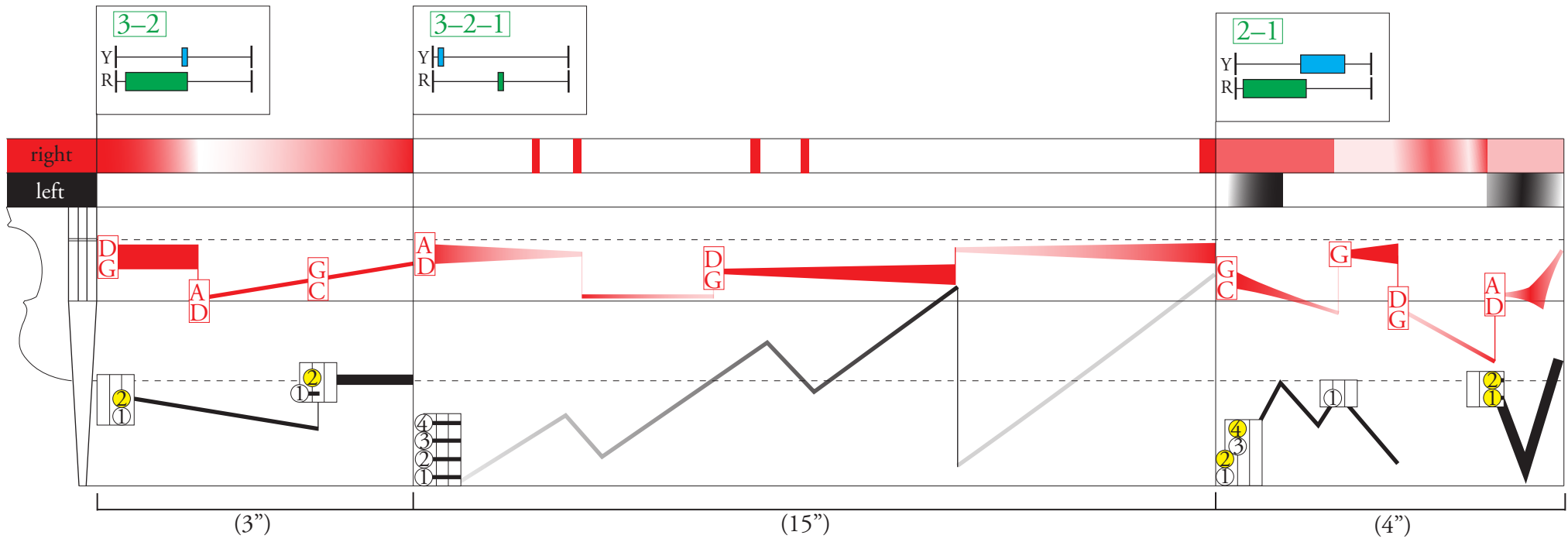
(B)

right

left

(30")





Each repeat, play the phrase a little faster.
Cut off abruptly with last cue in the voice track.
Quickly mute any resonating strings.

The diagram shows a guitar fretboard with two measures. The first measure is 9 frets long, and the second is 11 frets long. A red waveform is overlaid on the fretboard, and a black waveform is also present. A diamond symbol with an infinity sign is in the top right corner. Two diagrams labeled '3-2-1' are shown at the top, one for fretting and one for picking.

Measure 1 (9 frets):

- Fretting diagram: Y (blue bar), R (green bar).
- Picking diagram: Y (blue bar), R (green bar).
- Waveforms: Red waveform starts at fret 9, peaks at fret 10, and ends at fret 9. Black waveform starts at fret 9, peaks at fret 10, and ends at fret 9.
- Labels: C (red box) at fret 9, C (red box) at fret 10.

Measure 2 (11 frets):

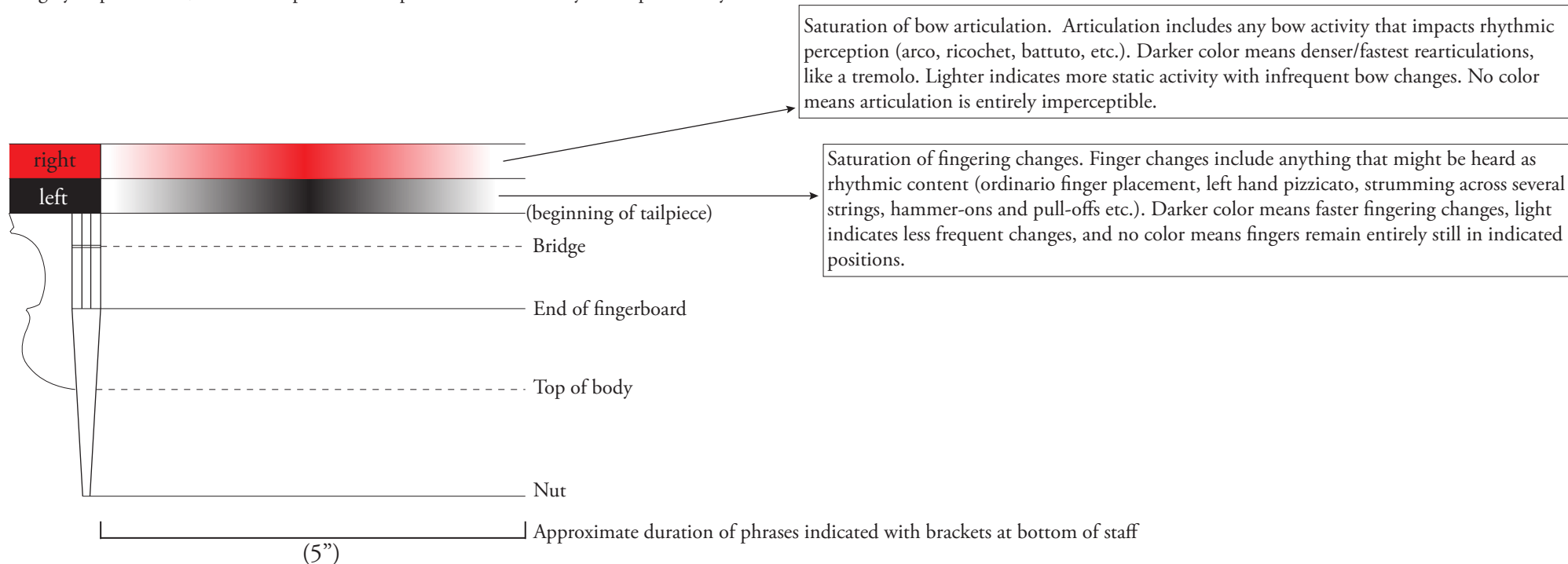
- Fretting diagram: Y (blue bar), R (green bar).
- Picking diagram: Y (blue bar), R (green bar).
- Waveforms: Red waveform starts at fret 11, peaks at fret 12, and ends at fret 11. Black waveform starts at fret 11, peaks at fret 12, and ends at fret 11.
- Labels: A (red box) at fret 11, D (red box) at fret 12, D (red box) at fret 13, G (red box) at fret 14, C (red box) at fret 15.

Cello Notes

Playing this piece may feel like whistling with a mouthful of saltines—it's not impossible, but some unintended sound-crumbs will likely spray out along the way.

1. Tablature

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Repeats/Reflection Process

A number in a diamond at the end of a phrase's time bracket indicates the number of times to repeat that phrase (not the total number of times the phrase will be heard):

① ② ∞ (For ∞ repeat until voice track cues next section)

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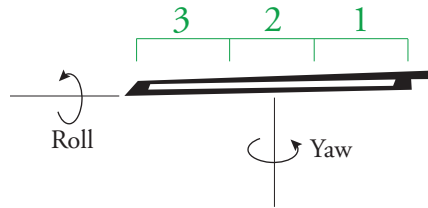
2. Bow

a) Bow Clef

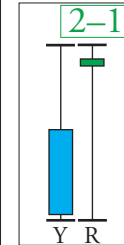
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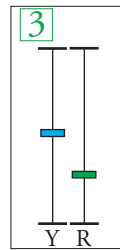


Example 2: Clef as it appears in score.



Use bow regions 2 and 1 (middle to frog). The bridge, as a point of reference, is the top of the image. Yaw (in blue) can range from bow perpendicular to the strings, to the tip angled up far away from the bridge. Roll (in green) is most of the way toward the bridge.

Example 3: How ordinario roll and yaw might look.



Use bow region 3 (tip). Bow is perpendicular to the strings and rolled about 45 degrees toward your body.

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- Keep left hand in same position from end of previous phrase
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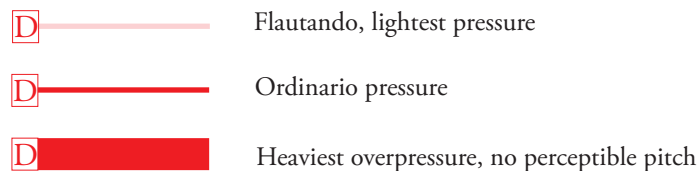
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b) Bow Pressure and Position

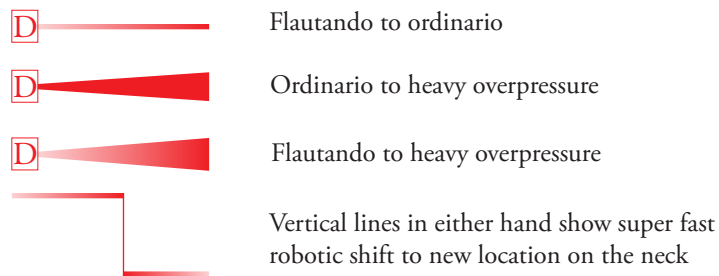
Bow position on the strings is shown in a red box. No need to play all indicated strings at once—you can move around between them freely:



Bow pressure is notated with a red gradient:



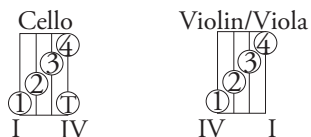
Gradations show movement between pressures:



3. Left Hand

The left hand is primarily notated in black.

4 vertical lines represent the strings. Numbers in circles represent fingers (T stands for thumb):



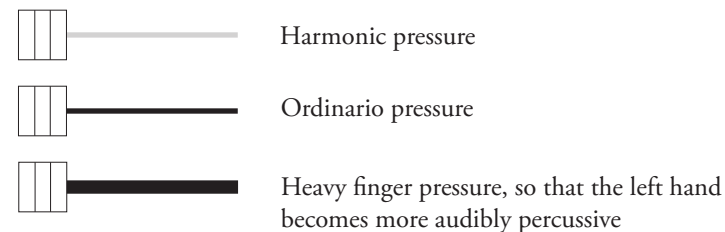
Fingers in white circles remain in place until otherwise indicated. Horizontal bars show that a finger covers more than one string:



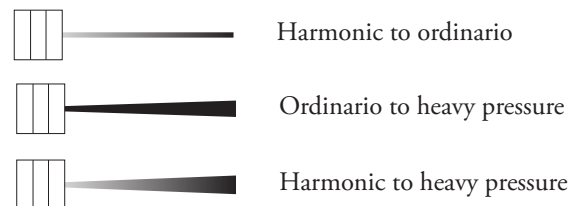
Fingers in a yellow circle may be lifted/rearticulated in any combination, so long as they reflect the saturation of fingering changes (as indicated by black gradient in tablature):



Finger pressure/force of finger attacks is shown with color and thickness of line.



Gradations show movement between pressures:



4. Time/Voice Track

You will be coordinated with a voice track that you should hear through headphones. This track will cue the two rehearsal letters in the piece, as well as the ending.

At letter A, for instance, you will hear “Three, two, one, A.” Begin playing precisely with the word “A.” If the next section is cued and you haven’t finished the current section, jump ahead to the cued section.

Cello

2-1

Do not take time to practice this first bow clef. Start phrase immediately.

A

2

right
left

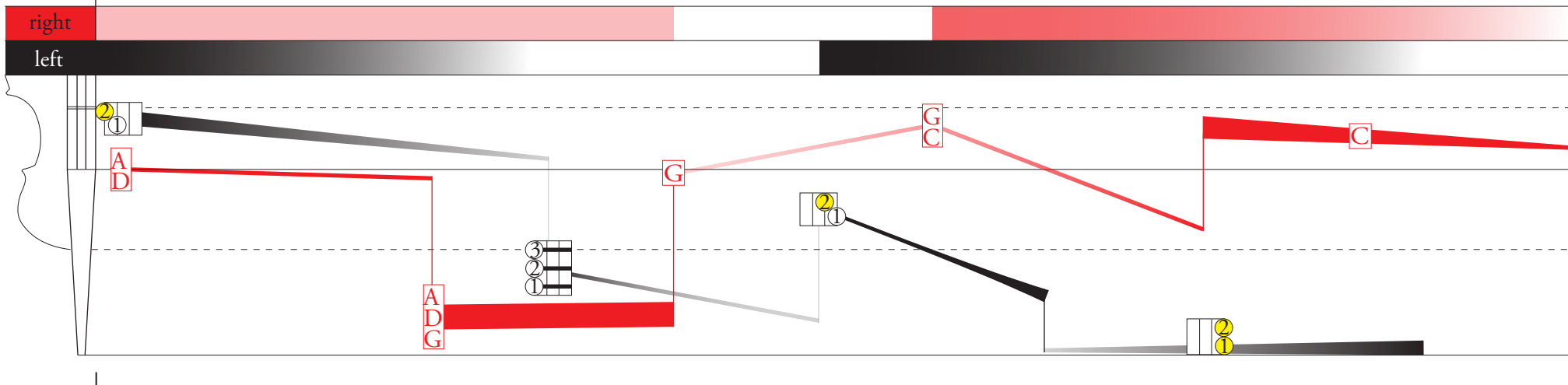
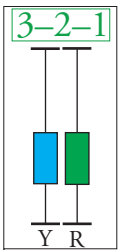
(18'')

3

1

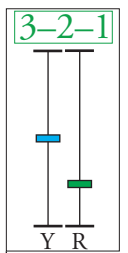
right
left

(17'')



(21")

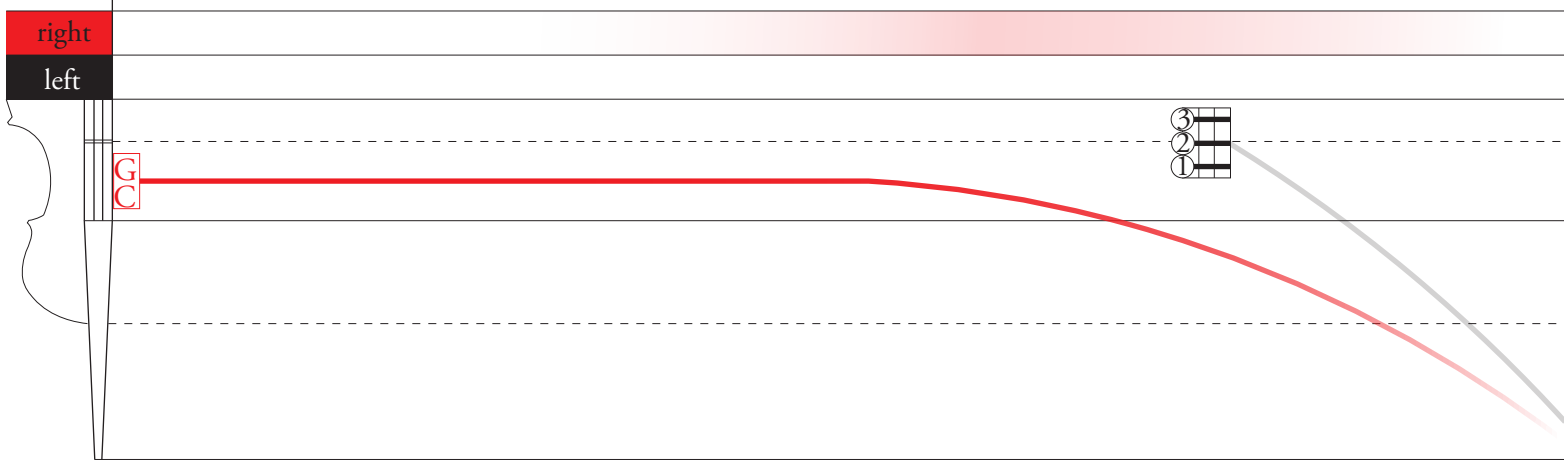
At the cue of B, do not practice the bow clef. Coordinate the phrase immediately with cue.



(B)

Adjust yaw of the bow as needed as it gets higher up the neck

Until next letter cue



(28")

2

3-2-1

right

left

D G A C D G G C C

(15'')

(16'')

3-2-1

right

left

C D A D

(7'')

∞

Each repeat, play the phrase a little faster
 Cut off abruptly with last cue in the voice track.
 Quickly mute any resonating strings.