the devil you know (vs. the devil you don't)

for contrabass and computer

Brad Decker

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2016

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program note:
This piece became a symbol of the struggle we all face between the known and the unknown, the things we can control and things we cannot. It arose out of a political dispute between the agenda of the Illinois state government and the people who work for it. As I watch the dismantling of our higher education system, many government programs, and the loss of good jobs, I am shocked at how vulnerable we all can become. The deals we are forced to make made me realize there are many things we take for granted, and there is so much at stake.

This struggle is universal, and in a personal, musical context, is manifest in my current experience in composition and improvisation. Some say they are essentially the same, while others maintain they are completely different. I've found both to be equally satisfying, and I've found myself dealing with different types of vulnerability in either case. While my work as an improviser has informed this piece, I've decided to embrace the devil I know.

technical note:
This work is for live contrabass performer and computer processing. All sounds and audio processing is done live. The output is stereo.

The computer processing utilizes a Max 7 patch, that was programmed on a MacBook Pro laptop. The original performance was on a Samuel Shen SB200 Willow contrabass using a Realist pickup under the bridge foot.

The bass was connected to a audio interface via 1/4" instrument cable. The audio interface (M-Audio Firewire 410) also was connected to a Behringer FCB1010 MIDI foot controller via MIDI out cable.

The numerical instructions on the score ⑥ refer to the footpads number on the Behringer FCB1010 as originally programmed. These footpads are to control presets in the Max patch application.

Additionally, one must trigger the buffer~ object in the Max program via footpad. The instruction "buffers play" "buffers stop" and "buffers rec" refer to these controls. In my original setup, footpads 4 and 5 controlled the "buffers rec" function (struck simultaneously with one foot, as there are two buffers in the patch), and footpad 9 just above them toggled between "buffers play" and "buffers stop", thereby playing or not playing the audio trapped in each buffer.

Note also the scordatura, to lower the G string to an E.

For more information or technical support, please contact me at
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E A D E

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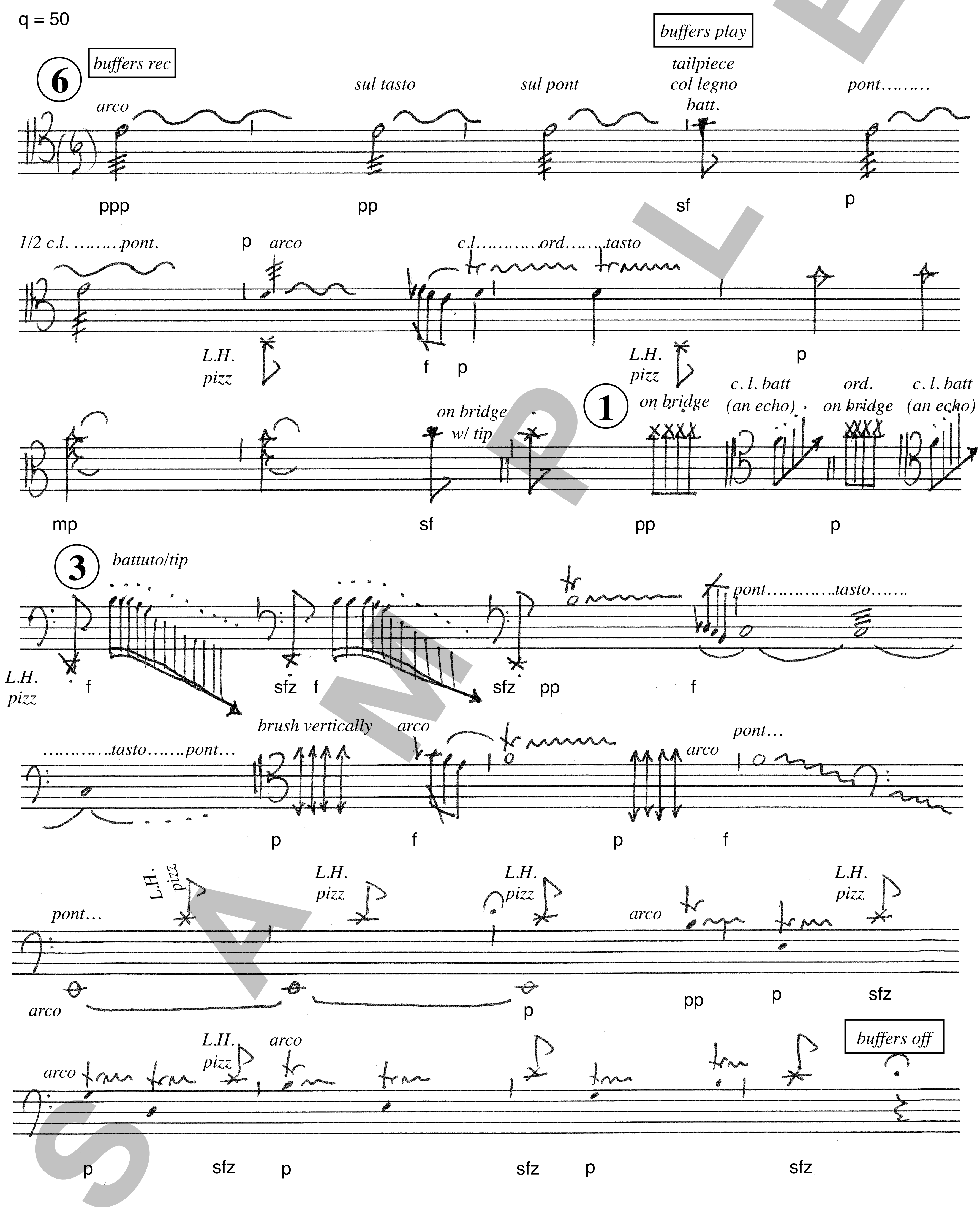


8 *pizz.*
pinch harmonics
both hands

knock on bass

pp ff

3 *pizz.*I II I II *etc….*

8 *knock*

3 *pizz.*
I II I II *etc….*

8 *knock*

3 *buffers play*
pizz.

pp f ff pp f ff p

f pp ff p f pp ff ff f

8 *knock*

pizz.

f p ff f p f p

3 I II I II *etc….*

1 *arco harmonics, freely*

p f p f ff pp

pont. *ord.* *freely* *pont.*

pp mf f p f

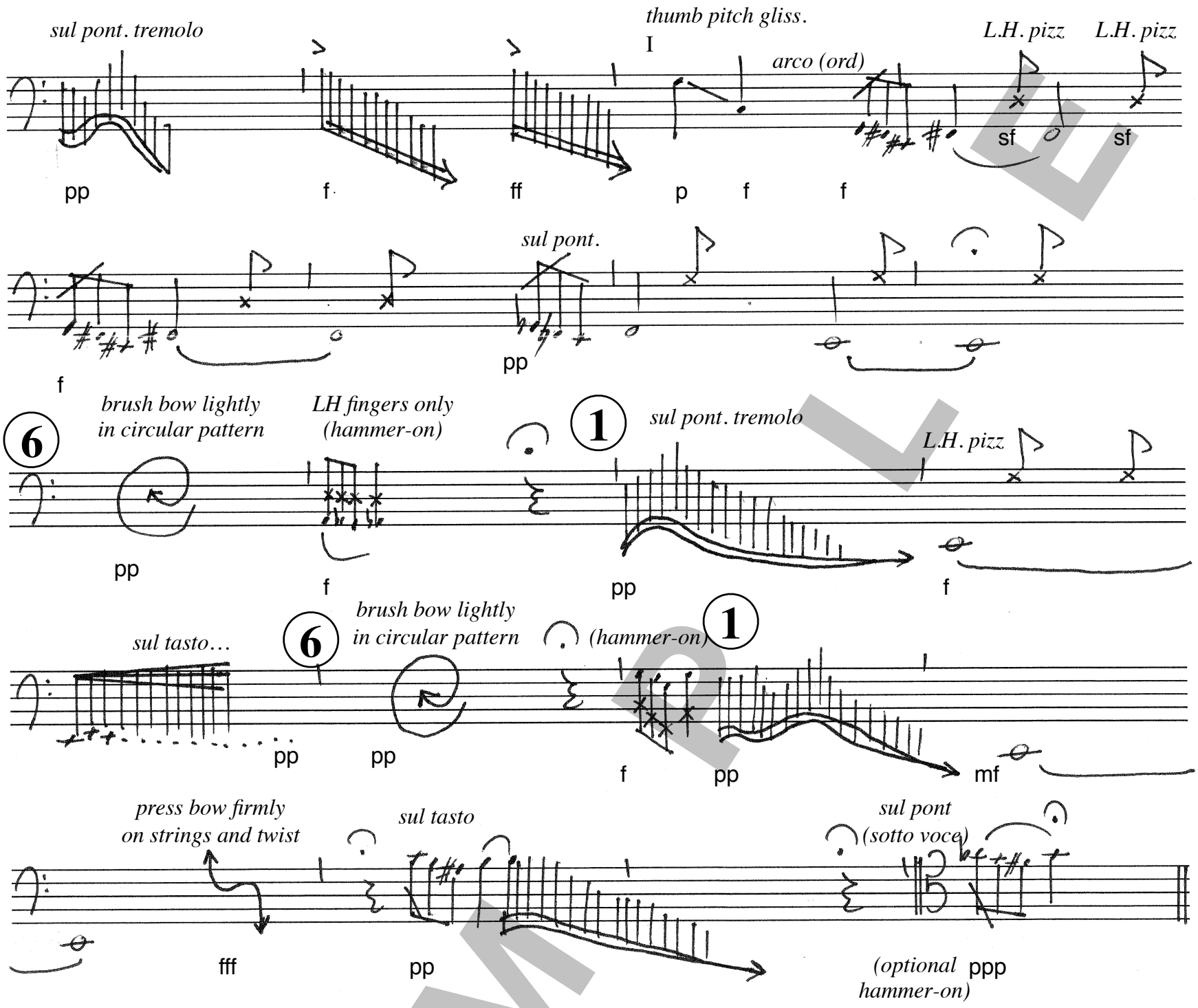
7 *tasto…* *pont…* *ord…* *tasto…* *pont…* *ord…*

p f p

thumb pitch gliss. *pont.* *thumb pitch gliss.*

I I II

p f ff p f p f


sul pont. tremolo
pp
f
ff
thumb pitch gliss.
I
p
arco (ord)
f
L.H. pizz
sf
L.H. pizz
sf
f
sul pont.
pp
6
brush bow lightly
in circular pattern
pp
LH fingers only
(hammer-on)
f
1
sul pont. tremolo
pp
L.H. pizz
f
sul tasto…
pp
6
brush bow lightly
in circular pattern
pp
(hammer-on)
1
f
pp
mf
press bow firmly
on strings and twist
fff
sul tasto
pp
sul pont
(sotto voce)
(optional
hammer-on)
ppp