Samuel Vriezen

The Weather Riots

for any 2 or more high instruments

The Weather Riots

(Toccata IV)

For at least two of any instruments that can play between c' and g'''

Samuel Vriezen, February 2002

DESCRIPTION

The Weather Riots is a 'time-bracket' piece that follows certain notational conventions used by John Cage in his late works, most of all in the series known as the 'Number Pieces'. In 'The Weather Riots', each player has different versions of the same part. All time-brackets are flexible, except the end of the last time-bracket which is fixed at 11'00".

PREPARING A PART

There are four sections: I, II, III and IV. Each section has three versions, A, B and C. For every section, choose (or randomly decide on) one of the three versions to be performed.

Every version of every section consists of three brackets, except section IV which has four brackets. In all brackets, a number of bars is given containing either melodic motives or rests. For each bracket, choose (or randomly decide on) between one and six of the bars that have motives. These, together with the bars that have rests, may be used during the performance. (You may want to cross out the bars that are not used.)

PERFORMANCE NOTES

If possible, the performers should be spread out over the entire concert space.

In a bracket you may play the bars that you chose for that bracket in any order and any number of times, playing the motive of each bar just once or repeating it as often as you like. During the bracket, at least one bar that has notes in it should be played at least once.

Play each bar at a tempo of your choice. You may change tempo between motives. However, eighth-note phrases should never be played slower than two notes per second, and half-note phrases should never be faster than one note per two seconds. Tempo in phrases with eighth notes and quarter-rests is entirely free.

Within each motive, keep to one tempo. (no acc. or rit.)

Dynamics: each bracket has a general dynamic indication. 'Soft' means between pp and mf; 'Loud' means between mp and ff; 'Soft or Loud' means any dynamic; 'Very Soft' means pp; 'Very Loud' means ff. Within the ranges indicated, you may change dynamic whenever and as often as you want.

Articulation is free, except that the half-note phrases should always be played legato.

THE PARTS ARE NOTATED IN C * ACCIDENTALS APPLY ONLY TO ONE NOTE

The Weather Riots: considerations for interpretation

This document is meant as a guide for performers. It is based on my experience with different groups of performers, some of which I was part of.

BACKGROUND

The Weather Riots was written for a concert I organised as part of the "Concerten Tot en Met" series in Amsterdam. This concert, "Number Night", was an exploration of the compositional possibilities of the notation for flexible time brackets for stopwatch coordination that John Cage used in certain late works, particularly the "Number Pieces". In these pieces, the material to be played is prescribed, but great flexibility is allowed in how performers time the material. A flexible time bracket consists of some musical material and a pair of starting times and a pair of ending times. The material written is played starting at any point between the two starting times given, and ends at any point between the two ending times given. The last possible starting time may be after the first possible ending time, which means that you often have the choice to make your material last either very long (early start, late stop) or very short (late start, early stop).

INTENT AND STRUCTURE OF THE WEATHER RIOTS

One of the important concerns in many of my pieces is to fill up some musical space in some way with motion. Often I like to have different versions of the same motivic material superimposed, so that you get a kind of heterophonic mosaic of personalities. If two instruments play the same sort of motivic material at the same time, but each "colours" it as befits the character of their instrument; or, if they each articulate the same material in a slightly different manner, or do it at slightly different speeds, these differences set up a musical space within which the instruments find their own niche. This space is coherent: this same basic motivic material that the performers interpret relates the different levels of articulation, timbre, tempo, etcetera of their playing. The similarities in the motivic material guarantee harmonic and gestural coherence and help make the complex resultant textures transparent for a listener.

In The Weather Riots, everybody is playing a personal version of the same part. Statistically speaking, a great degree of overlap between the motives that one player will choose to play and that another will play is almost certain. All motives use either five, three, or two pitches. The full five-pitch motives always articulate one of eleven melodic contours, and one of eleven harmonic fields (set of five pitch classes). The two- and three-pitch motives are always derived from some five-part motive. Within a given bracket, between one and three such melodic contours may be present, and between one and three such harmonic fields. Furthermore, each bracket is slanted towards one general method of playing ("fast lines" notated in eighths notes, "slow lines" notated in half notes, or "pointillist" notated with rests), and tends towards one of four levels of dynamics (very soft, soft, loud, very loud).

You might see the motivic material as a kind of 'prism' for musical personalities; through this prism, different musical personalities might come to stand in relation to one another.

IMPROVISATION AND DIALOGUE

The Weather Riots comes very close to being an improvised piece. A lot of important detail is left up to the performer. However, the piece is not quite improvised, since you can't at any moment decide to go outside the box - particularly where the melodic material is concerned, the piece is very rigorous. But it's good while learning the piece to cultivate a certain flexibility of timing and decision-making, which can be used during the performance.

It's good during a performance to be flexible and to react to what you hear. However, every musician should remain his own centre, and should avoid quasi-theatrical musical dialogues. Any musical interaction you have should be between you and the totality of the musical space rather than between you and another musician in call/response type games.

SPACE

In preparing for The Weather Riots, all performers first determine for each bracket what material to use. Then they should, for every bracket, explore the possibilities of that material and find what you can make it do - what sort of musical space you can make it fill.

Parameters to be conscious of:

- *articulations and timbres:* the same motives might be articulated in many different ways, depending on your instrument (shades of staccato, timbral changes, etc)
- *tempo*: going from motive to motive you can change tempo. You may wish to explore tempo shades: a motive can be a trill or tremolando or fast figuration, or a melody.
- *dynamics*: there may be different levels of dynamics within the written dynamic range, possibly including the effect of crescendo or diminuendo
- *phrase complexity:* more complex phrases can be made by stringing together two or more motives. Such complex phrases might themselves be repeated or varied.
- *voice leadings:* two motives that have similar contour but different harmony may produce new voice leadings when the two motives are juxtaposed. For example, the high note of motive A may relate to a similarly-positioned high note in motive B.
- motive lengths: you may stick to some material, say: one motive, repeating it without change, for a long time and thereby articulating a great length, or you may make lots of changes within a short time-span.
- use of rests: the rests that are written in the part can be used as another resource in your phrasings.

- bracket lengths: since the time frames of a bracket are set up so that the bracket can be long or short, you may want to explore making the statement of that bracket a long one or a short one. Playing a single motive once is a perfectly acceptable interpretation of a bracket. Try varying the lengths of the brackets.
- similarly, try varying the *pauses* between the brackets. The possible bracket times overlap, so just as it's possible to make brackets long or very short, it's possible to make the pauses between the brackets long, or very short you could even play consecutive brackets in one "legato", without a break between them.

Within all these possibilities, look for the character you want to present within each bracket.

TIME

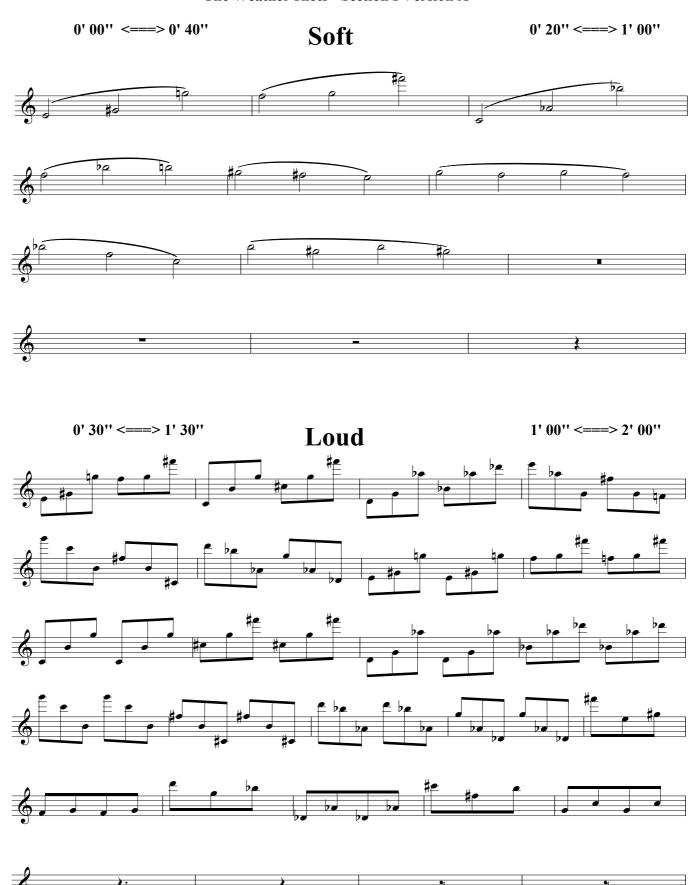
There are two types of rest in the piece. There are the silences between brackets, and the pauses within brackets.

Try to make every bracket as much as possible one internally coherent gesture or gestural world. Pauses within a bracket are part of the musical activity and are to be consciously counted out. They should not have the effect of dissipating the musical energy of that bracket.

The silences between the brackets are different: here, really nothing is happening. These silences frame the periods of activity that are the brackets themselves. Within a performance, it is good sometimes to be silent sometimes for a long time.

In the last bracket, it is suggested by Dante Boon, who has played the piece many times, that you time the speed of the motives in the final bracket strictly by the seconds of your stopwatch to allow for a sharply timed end to the piece.

Samuel Vriezen Amsterdam, november 4, 2006

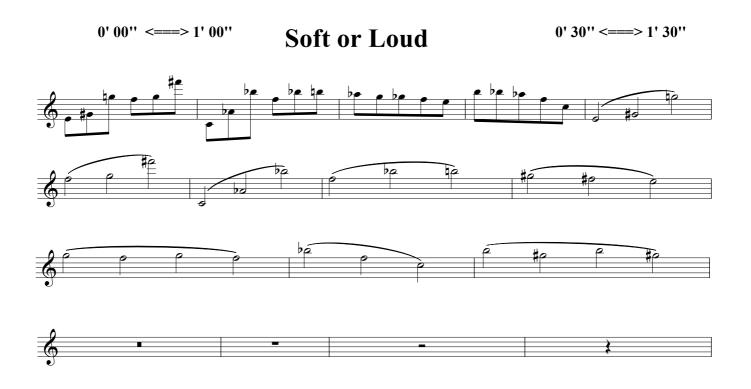


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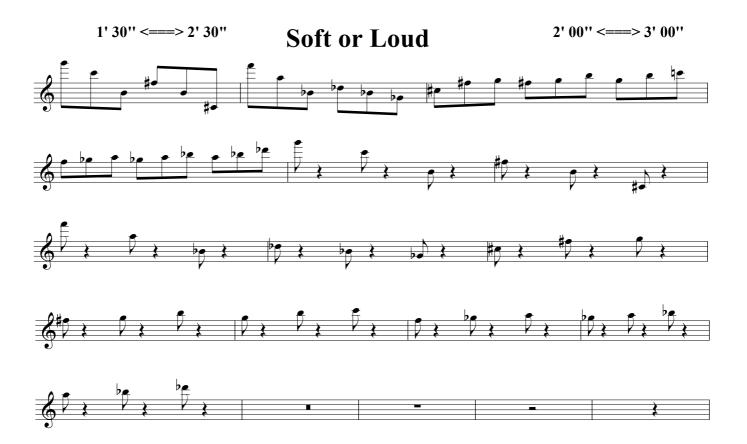
Soft or Loud

1' 40 <==> 3' 00"





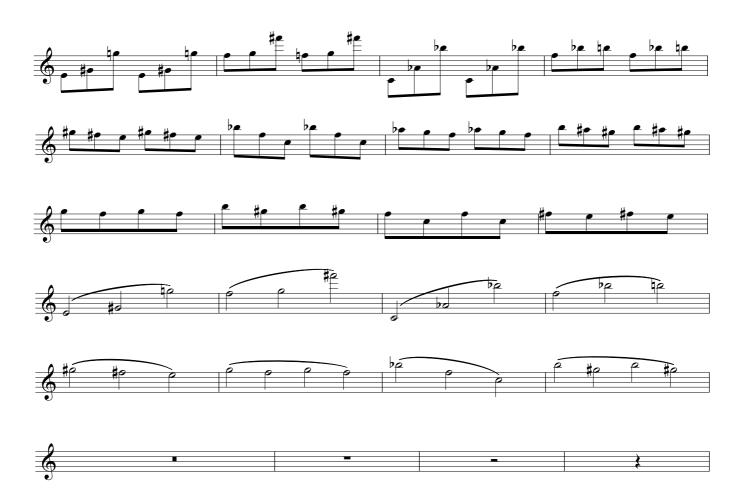




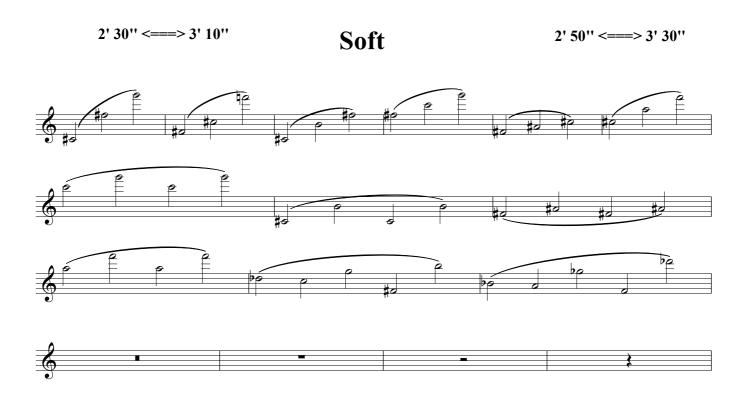
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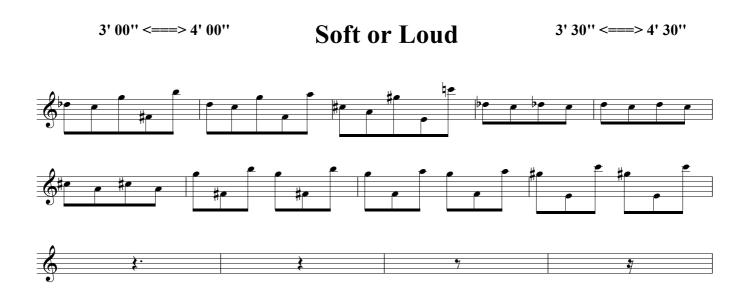
Soft

0' 40'' <===> 2' 00''

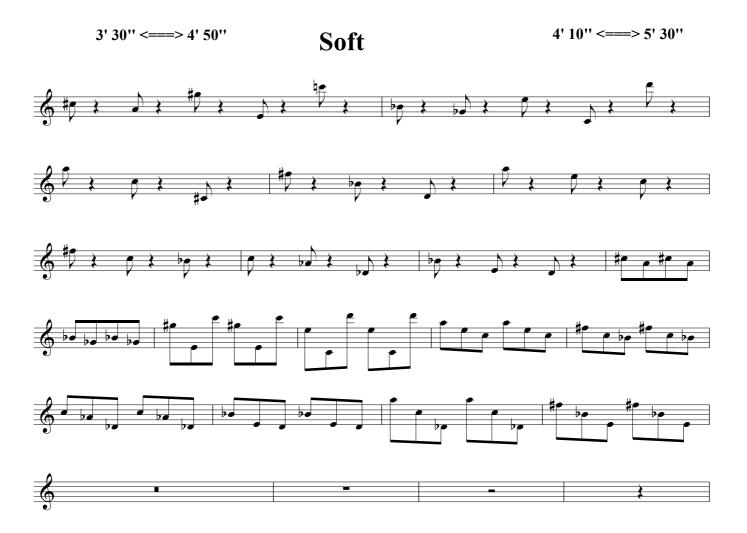


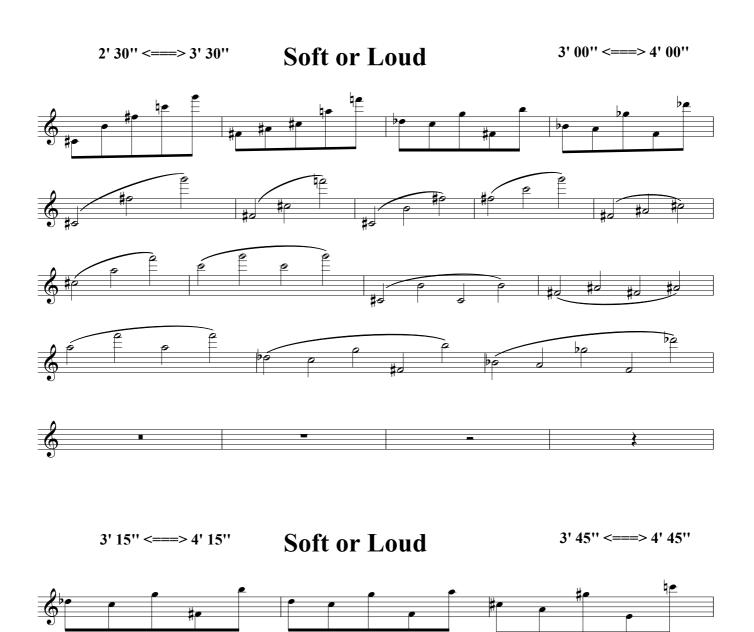


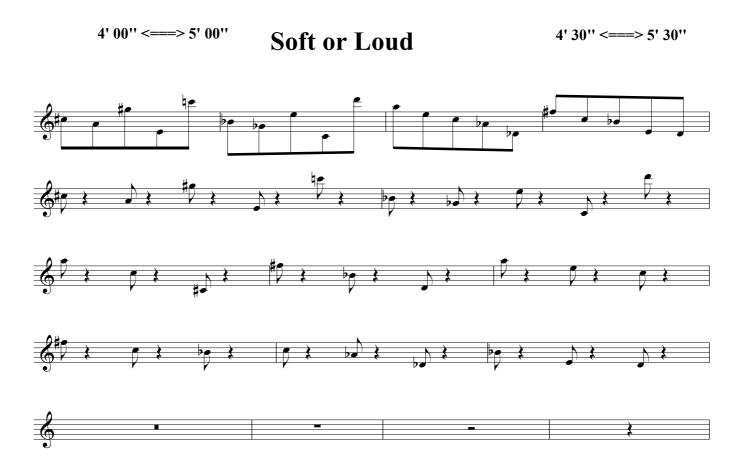




The Weather Riots - Section II Version A



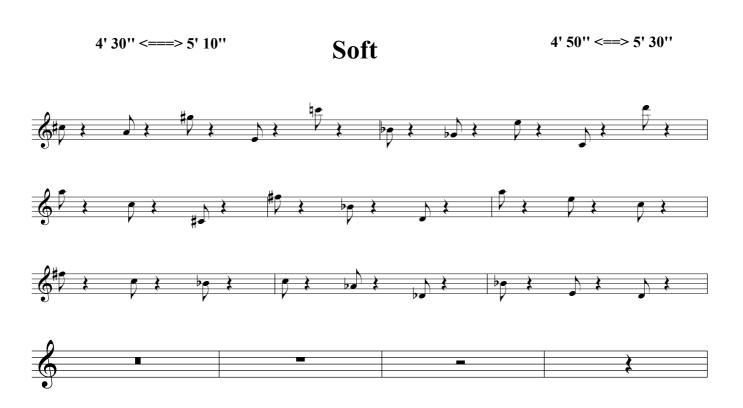


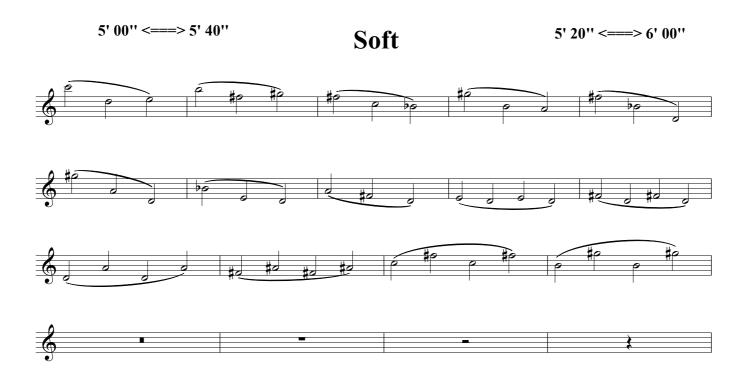


2' 30" <===> 3' 50" Soft 3' 10" <===> 4' 30"









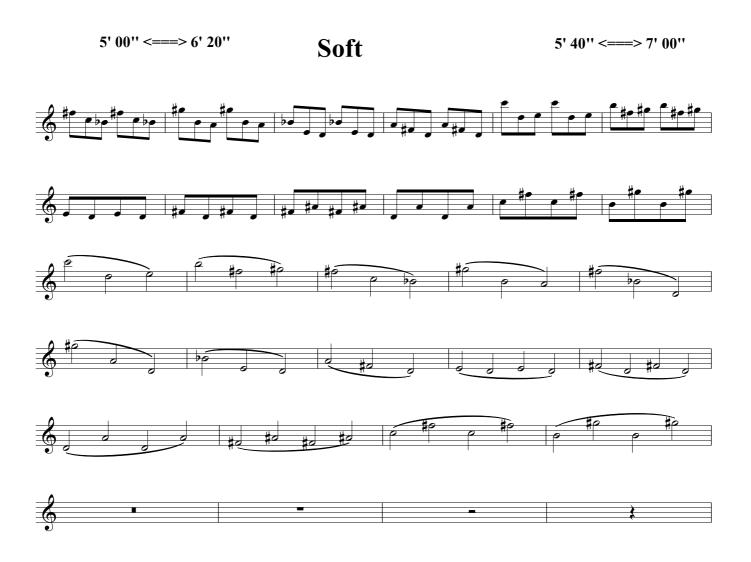






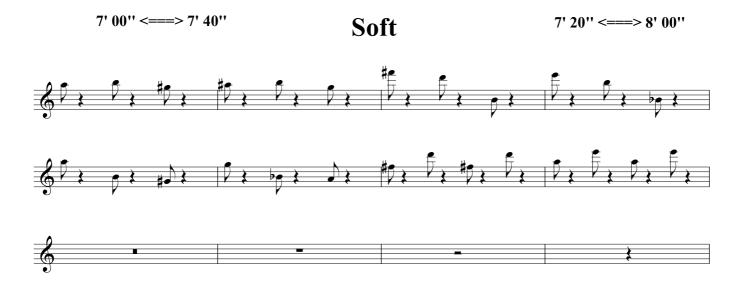
The Weather Riots - Section III Version B



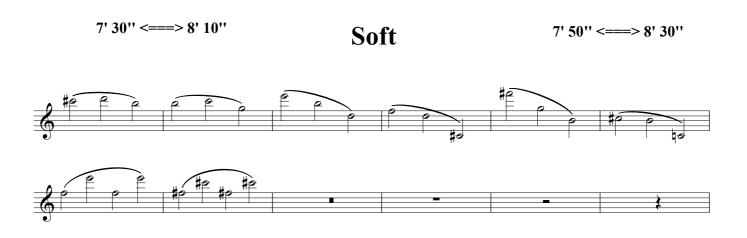


The Weather Riots - Section III Version C





The Weather Riots - Section IV Version A









The Weather Riots - Section IV Version B



8' 15" <==> 9' 15" Soft or Loud 8' 45" <==> 9' 45"

The Weather Riots - Section IV Version B

9' 00" <===> 10' 00"

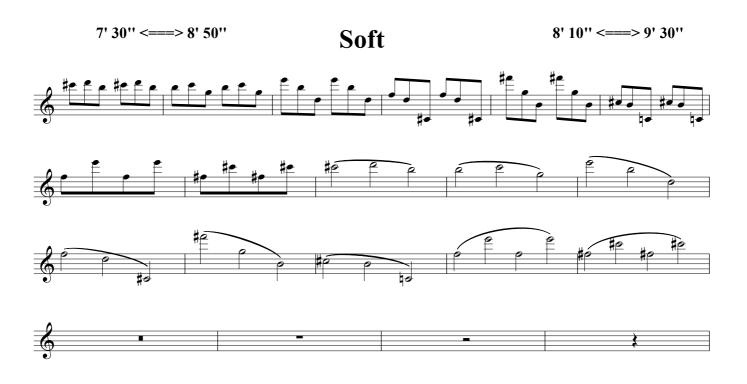
Loud

9' 30'' <===> 10' 30''





The Weather Riots - Section IV Version C





The Weather Riots - Section IV Version C



