Birches
for viola and electronic sounds

for violist John Graham
Notes:

This piece is performed at three stage locations in order as below:

Times to move between locations are indicated in the score. Both occasions occur during "tape interludes" which give the player ample time to move gracefully from one "station to the next. Movements should be slow and patient, filling the time with one smooth motion.

At the end of the first "tape interlude" the player is directed to begin improvising a "density crescendo". Here the bottom system shows continuing time left to right while all other notations on this page (p.2) are materials to be chosen from.

Care should be taken in the final "quasi-coda" to make harmonics ring-out as even "voices" to the lower "drone" open strings. This may require dramatic shifting between "sul tasto", "normale", and "sul ponte". This should be done expressively at the player's discretion.

For this entire work the viola is to be tuned scordatura as follows:

Natural harmonics necessary in this piece:

Actually slightly "flat" of B⁴

Absolute synchronicity with the tape or with strict metred time is rare in this music and even the most precisely notated moments can be treated as gestural and musically flexible.
VIOLA.

Fingered, lightly muted

TAPED

Fingered, lightly muted

* "Bouncing ball" effect: with the viola string parallel to the floor, strike the string with the bow allowing it to ricochet naturally. As the bouncing is reduced, begin to draw the bow over the string naturally moving toward a "pursed" sound (∫).
Palette: play any segment of any length as fast as possible.

Viola

\( j = (a.60) \)

-move to section 2-

Tape Interlude A

Choose materials from the above "palette" or from within boxes (and/or improvised) to create a "density crescendo".
[continue... growing more dense, sporadic]...

"Pitchless string noise" (bow lightly sul tasto)

Silence! \[ppp\] "noise drone" sempre
(adjust volume for ppp)

Sul c

Col legno tratto (echo)

\* "\*\* should be "pulled off" like a left hand pizz., but while bowing normally."
(*) The notes of this harmonic chord appear in the same location on both strings and can optionally be performed using one finger (i.e., a tremolo of both open strings followed by both harmonics).
A little slower (with a sigh)

Exit slowly

End