

String Quartet

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the  
degree of

Master of Music

University of Washington

2012

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Program Authorized to Offer Degree:

Music

University of Washington

## **Abstract**

String Quartet

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Music

The motivating idea behind this string quartet was to examine the extent to which a given contour—in this quartet, a curve abstracted from a short melodic line—could structure a piece of music at every level of its organization. This contour appears as a melodic line in the cello at the conclusion of the quartet, but is also amplified and projected across the duration of the piece as a “structural” curve that controls the degree to which the intervals and rhythmic values of the local material (itself consisting of variants of this melodic contour) are either amplified or condensed. In moments defined by the highest point of the larger curve, this treatment produces melodic lines that move at a glacially slow pace and within a narrow range, and hence their melodic nature is minimized; at the lowest point of the larger curve the rhythmic values contract and the interval content expands, exaggerating the original curve. The task of the piece then becomes one of negotiating the shifting, often fragmented musical terrain produced by the structure, and working against (or in some cases with) this larger curve to arrive at a point of stability, at which the melodic source can finally be presented fully in its original form.

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# String Quartet

Jeffrey Bowen

♩ = 33

Violin I: *clb*  $15^{ma}$  *f* L.H. mutes strings (3) (simile) *clb*  $15^{ma}$  (3) *clb*  $15^{ma}$  (3) *pp*

Violin II: *clb*  $15^{ma}$  *f* L.H. mutes strings (3) (simile) *clb*  $15^{ma}$  (3) *clb*  $15^{ma}$  (3) *pp*

Viola: I *f* l.v. II *f* *f*

Violoncello: *mp* *mf* *mf* (poco)

5

Vln. I: *clb*  $15^{ma}$  (3) *clb*  $15^{ma}$  (3) II *p* *f* *p*

Vln. II: *clb*  $15^{ma}$  (3) *jeté* *f* *arco* *p* *clb*  $15^{ma}$  (3) *f* *clb*  $15^{ma}$  (3) I *p*

Vla.: I *f* pizz. II *f* III *f* *pp* *mp* III *f* *pp* *mp*

Vc.: *mf* *mf* *f* *arco + s.p.* *mf* *f* *p*

8

♩ = 53

Vln. I: *mp* *p* *pp*

Vln. II: II *p* *f* *mp* *p*

Vla.: *f* *mp* *p* *pp* *p*

Vc.: *mf* *mp* *mf* *f* *arco + s.p.* *p* *f* *f* *s.p.* *brutal, aggressive* *norm.* *f*

Vc. <sup>12</sup>

*f* *mf* *f* *ff* *f* *ff*

5 7 5

<sup>♩ = 33</sup>

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

*f* *f* *pp* *p* *pp* *f* *arco +s.p.* *mf* *mp > pp* *mf* *p*

clb. <sup>15<sup>ma</sup></sup> s.t. 3

arco +s.p. 3

arco norm. → +s.p.

<sup>♩ = 98</sup>

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

*p* *pp < mp* *pp* *pp < p* *mp* *pp* *p*

jeté → arco s.t. *mp* *p* *mf* *pp* *mp* *f* *p < mp* *p*

*f* *f* *f*

arco norm. → +s.p. s.t. 3 arco norm. → +s.p. +s.p. → brutal norm. (detaché)

3 3 5

23

Vla. *detaché* *f* *f*

Vc. *mf*

28

Vla. *mp* *f* *mf* *f* *mf* *f* *mp* *f*

Vc. *f* *mf* *sub.f*

32

Vln. II *f* *f*

Vla. *f* *mf* *f* *f* *mf* *f*

Vc. *f*

♩ = 33

35

Vln. I *mp*

Vln. II *f* *f* *ff*

Vla. *f* *ff*

Vc. *f* *mf* *f* *ff* *norm.* *norm.* *mp* *f*

*norm. → +s.p.*

38

Vln. I  
Vln. II  
Vla.  
Vc.

*p* *mp* *mp* *f* *p*

3 s.t. 3 3 3 3 3

Detailed description: This system covers measures 38 to 40. The first violin (Vln. I) starts with a rest in measure 38, then plays a melodic line in measures 39 and 40 with dynamics *p* and *mp*. The second violin (Vln. II) plays a sustained chord in measure 38, then a melodic line in measures 39 and 40 with dynamics *mp*, *p*, and *p*. The viola (Vla.) plays a sustained chord in measure 38, then a melodic line in measures 39 and 40 with dynamics *mp* and *mf*. The cello (Vc.) plays a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with triplets and accents, with dynamics *p*, *mf*, *p*, *f*, and *p*. The key signature has one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 3/4.

41

Vln. I  
Vln. II  
Vla.  
Vc.

(legato) +s.t. 3 5

*pp* *p* *pp*

(legato) +s.t. 3

*pp* *p*

(legato) +s.t. 3

*pp* *p*

(legato) +s.t. 6

*pp* *p*

Detailed description: This system covers measures 41 to 43. The first violin (Vln. I) starts with a rest in measure 41, then plays a melodic line in measures 42 and 43 with dynamics *pp*, *p*, and *pp*. The second violin (Vln. II) plays a sustained chord in measure 41, then a melodic line in measures 42 and 43 with dynamics *pp* and *p*. The viola (Vla.) plays a sustained chord in measure 41, then a melodic line in measures 42 and 43 with dynamics *pp* and *p*. The cello (Vc.) plays a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with triplets and sextuplets, with dynamics *mp*, *pp*, and *p*. The key signature has one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 3/4.

accel. . . . . ♩ = 38 rall. . . . . ♩ = 33

45

Vln. I  
Vln. II  
Vla.  
Vc.

*mp* *p*

*pp* *mp* *p*

*pp* *mp* *p*

5 +s.t. norm. +s.t.

*pp* *mf* *mp*

Detailed description: This system covers measures 45 to 47. The first violin (Vln. I) plays a melodic line in measures 45 and 46 with dynamics *mp* and *p*. The second violin (Vln. II) plays a melodic line in measures 45 and 46 with dynamics *pp*, *mp*, and *p*. The viola (Vla.) plays a melodic line in measures 45 and 46 with dynamics *pp*, *mp*, and *p*. The cello (Vc.) plays a melodic line in measures 45 and 46 with dynamics *pp*, *mf*, and *mp*. The key signature has one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 3/4.

49 +s.t. 3 3 3

Vln. I *p* *pp* *p* *pp* *p*

Vln. II +s.t. 5 5 5 5 5 *p* *pp* *p* *pp* *p* 5

Vla. +s.t. 5 5 5 5 5 *p* *pp* *p* *pp* *p* 6 5 5

Vc. +s.t. 5 3 3 +s.t. → norm. *p* *pp* *p* *mp*

53 accel. = 53 rall.

Vln. I +s.t. 5 5 3 7 3 3 s.p. 3 3 *p* *mf* *p*

Vln. II +s.t. 5 7 7 +s.t. s.p. 3 5 5 s.t. *mf* *p*

Vla. +s.t. 3 3 3 s.p. 5 5 s.t. *mf* *p*

Vc. +s.t. 5 7 3 5 3 s.p. s.t. *p* *mp* *f* *p*

56 s.t. 3 3 3 +s.t. 3 3

Vln. I *pppp* *p* *pp*

Vln. II +s.t. 3 *p* *pp*

Vla. +s.t. *p* *pp*

Vc. +s.t. 5 +s.t. *mp* *p*

accel. . . . .

60

Vln. I *p* *mp* *p*

Vln. II *p* *mp* *p* *mf*

Vla. *p* *mp* *p*

Vc. *p* *mf* *p* *mf* *p* *mf*

+s.t. → norm. dist. → norm. dist.

3 5 5 3 3 5

6

5 5 5 6

3 7 3 5

63

Vln. I *mf* *f*

Vln. II *mp* *mf* *f*

Vla. *mf* *mp* *mf* *f*

Vc. *f* *mf* *f* *f*

♩ = 38

s.p. s.p.

7 9 9 9 5 5 7 9 7 10 7 5

65

accel. . . . .

Vln. I *mp* *ff* *f* *mp* *mp* *p*

Vln. II *mp* *f* *mf* *mp*

Vla. *mp* *ff* *f* *f* *f*

Vc. *ff* *ff* *f* *mf*

♩ = 114    ♩ = 80    ♩ = 66

3 3 5 6 3 3

II    III    III

pizz. o.p. → s.p.

69  $\text{♩} = 44$   $\text{♩} = 33$

Vln. I *p* *pp* *p*

Vln. II *mp* *p* *p* *pp < p*

Vla. II pizz. *mp* *mp* *s.t.* *3* *+s.p.* (norm.) *pp* *mp > pp*

Vc. norm. *3* *s.p.* *3* *+s.p.* *norm.* *5* *p* *mp* *p* *p*

*mp* *mf* *pp* *mp*

72

Vln. I *pp* *p* *pp* *pp*

Vln. II *pp* *p* *pp* *pp*

Vla. *s.t.* *3* *+s.p.* *s.t.* *5* *pp* *5* *5* *5*

Vc. *3* *poco vib.* *mp* *p* *5* *5* *5*

75

Vln. I *p*

Vln. II *p*

Vla. *p*

Vc. *mp*

accel. . . . . ♩ = 38

accel. . . . .

77

Vln. I *mp* *mf* *f*

Vln. II *mp* *mf* *f*

Vla. *mp* *mf* *f*

Vc. *mf* *f* *ff*

3 3 3 3 3 3

s.p. o.p.

79

Vln. I *f* *mf* *mf* *mp* *mp* *norm.*

Vln. II *ff* *ff* *f* *mf* *mf* *p* *mp* *p* *mf* *p*

Vla. *ff* *ff* *f* *f* *f* *mf* *mf* *mp*

Vc. *ff* *ff* *f* *f* *mf* *mp* *mf* *p* *mp*

♩ = 76    ♩ = 50    ♩ = 46    ♩ = 36

3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3

o.p. → +s.p.    o.p.    norm. → +s.p.    s.p. → +s.p.

I.v. (sim.) III pizz. III pizz. II pizz.

jeté

→ norm.

83

Vln. I *p* *p*

Vln. II *p* *p*

Vla. *mp* *pp* *mf*

Vc. *pp* *mp* *p* *mf* *pp* *p* *mf*

jeté → arco s.t.

II pizz. s.t. → s.p.

s.p. → +s.p. norm. poco vib. poco vib.

3 3 3 3

86

Vln. I *mp* *p* *mp*

Vln. II *p* *pp* *mp* *s.p.*

Vla. *s.t.* *pp* *mp* *s.t.*

Vc. *mp* *p* *mp* *p* *poco vib.*

89

Vln. I *mp* *p*

Vln. II *jeté* *arco s.t.* *jeté* *arco s.t.* *mp* *p*

Vla. *s.t. dist.* *p* *pp* *norm.* *+s.p.* *pp* *p*

Vc. *p* *mp* *pp* *poco vib.* *5*

92

Vln. I *p* *p*

Vln. II *mp* *p* *p* *s.t.*

Vla. *norm.* *+s.p.* *s.p.* *+s.p.* *p* *p*

Vc. *espressivo* *p* *pp* *p* *mp* *p* *p*

95

Violin I: *p*, *pp*, *pp*, *pp*, *p*, *mp*. Includes a second ending bracket labeled "II" and a "flaut." marking.

Violin II: *pp*, *ppp*, *mp*, *p*. Includes a "flaut." marking and a 9-measure rest.

Viola: *pp*, *pp*, *mp*, *p*. Includes a "flaut." marking and a 9-measure rest.

Violoncello: *mp*, *p*, *pp*, *mp*, *mf*.

99

Violin I: *p*, *p*, *p*, *p*. Includes a 3-measure rest.

Violin II: *pp*, *p*, *pp*. Includes a 3-measure rest.

Viola: *p*, *p*, *p*, *pp*. Includes "s.t." and "s.p. → +s.p." markings.

Violoncello: *> mp*, *mf*, *mp*, *mp*, *p*. Includes a "flaut." marking.

103

Violin I: *p*, *pp*. Includes a 3-measure rest.

Violin II: *p*. Includes a 3-measure rest and a "III" marking.

Viola: *pp*, *p*. Includes a "s.t." marking and a "II" marking.

Violoncello: *p*, *mf*, *mp*, *p*, *mp*.

## Appendix A: Notation Legend

**Accidentals:**

Throughout the score, accidentals should affect only the notes they immediately precede.

♭ -1/4 tone flat

♯ -1/4 tone sharp

## -3/4 tone sharp

♭♯ -1/8 tone *higher* than the flat/natural/sharp given

♭♯ -1/8 tone *lower* than the flat/natural/sharp given

**Dynamics:**

( ) -dynamics in parentheses indicate relative dynamic levels within the range of possible dynamics for a given technique

s.t. -sul tasto

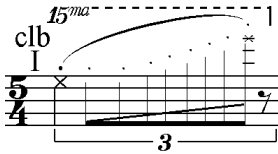
+s.t. -molto sul tasto

s.p. -sul ponticello

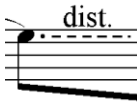
+s.p. -a *sul ponticello* stroke performed very near (almost touching) the bridge



-Arrows indicate gradual transitions between bow position/timbre.



-*col legno battuto*. Feathered beams indicate an acceleration of the *col legno* attacks over the duration indicated—an acceleration provided by the natural motion of the bow bouncing against the string and a slight pressure from the bowing arm. X note heads mark the *approximate* range of the pitches sounding from the wood of the bow hitting the string (the left hand should mute the strings at the neck so that these are the only pitches that emerge).



-a distortion in the given pitch produced by a bow speed that is too slow



-normal over-pressure—a consistent, harsh, grating sound is to be produced from adding pressure to the bow stroke



-extreme over-pressure—bow is to be pressed into the string with more force than normal over-pressure, with a slow bow speed, so that an inconsistent string of short bursts of noise emerges from the bow stroke, rather than a consistent grating sound.



-black, diamond note heads call for a “half harmonic stop,” where a faint, veiled coloring of the string sound should emerge (and not a harmonic) from a stopped note which is only lightly touched.