

Score

Viola Sonata

for viola and piano

Jake Berran

(2022, rev. 2023)



Program Notes

The second movement was written in 2022, and in it I sought to step away from my then-typical strategy of scaffolding my music with webs of musical and extramusical concepts. Rather, I wanted to focus on the sound, narrative, and lyricism in a more abstract manner. I also used quarter-tone harmonic ideas proposed by my teacher Jesse Jones in his doctoral thesis, *Microtonalis: A Systematic Approach to Microtonal Composition*. In particular, minor thirds and perfect fourths, which contain odd numbers of semitones, are "cut" exactly in half, often producing a pitch in the harmonic series of the root note.

A year later, the first and third movements were born out of my desire to better establish the quarter tones beforehand and take a more dramatic turn afterward. In the first movement, three versions of B-flat are constantly reiterated: the equal-tempered one, the slightly flatter one from the C harmonic series, and the even lower B-three-quarters-flat. In the third movement, previous material is spun into a struggle between two alternating themes, one of which sucks the energy out of the other.

Viola Sonata was written for Jóia Findeis, a friend and violist at the Oberlin Conservatory. I want to thank them for their input throughout and for collaborating in the brainstorming stage. (Fun fact: Jóia has synesthesia, and C minor is a "murky violet" to them. So we started with that!)

Duration: 13 minutes (2 + 6 + 5)

Performance Notes

Viola

- The following quarter-tone accidentals alter a pitch by the specified number of semitones:

$$\flat = -3/2$$

$$\flat = -1/2$$

$$\sharp = +1/2$$

$$\sharp = +3/2$$

- Dashed arrows indicate a gradual transition from one technique to another.
- Solid arrows indicate a continuation of a technique until the end of the line.
- After the "vib." instruction in the second gesture, use of vibrato is up to the performer.
- *port.* means to slide to the next note near the end of the first note's duration, and *gliss.* means to slide to the next note over the entire duration of the first.

Piano

- In mvt. II, mm. 4-5, the articulation \smile and \frown indicate pressing a key while it's still somewhat depressed, producing a quiet "echo."
- Unconnected ties after notes are equivalent to "let ring."
- u.c. = una corda; t.c. = tre corde. Sustain pedal lines are meant to be a rough guide.
- Boxed material is to be repeated continuously until the extension line terminates.

19

$\text{♩} = 60$

f

ff

p

p

mp

mf

ff (trem. not synced)

gliss.

5

24 sul G sul pont. molto sul tasto

p *n* *pp* *ppp* *ord.* *pizz.* *mf*

U.C. t.C.

28 ♩ = 90 (♩ = 180)

ff *f* *mf* *mp*

arco *rit.*

f *mf* *mp*

6

32 *pizz.* *p*

8va

p *ff* *p*

p *ff* *p*

3

II

♩ = c. 45 - freely

Viola

arco
sul tasto

non vib.

ppp *p*

n

pp *mf* *p*

ord.

vib.

Vla

sul tasto
sul G

sul C

ord.

mp

gliss.

Pno

ppp

(l.v.)

u.c.

pp *mf* *mp* *p*

(u.c.)

mp *p* *pp*

Sounding pitches

♩ = 45

sul G

ppp

*see
program note

(u.c.)

5

port.

sul G

$\text{♩} = 60$

p

(u.c.)

t.c. ped ad lib.

Detailed description: This system contains measures 5 and 6. Measure 5 features a vocal line with a half note G4 and a half note F#4, and a piano accompaniment with eighth-note triplets in both hands. Measure 6 continues the vocal line with a half note E4 and a half note D4, while the piano accompaniment consists of sustained chords. Performance markings include 'port.' (portamento) for the vocal line, 'sul G' (sul ponticello) for the piano, and 'ped ad lib.' (pedal ad libitum) for the piano accompaniment. The tempo is marked as 60 beats per minute.

7

pp *p* *pp* *p*

pp *p*

pp *p*

Detailed description: This system contains measures 7 and 8. Measure 7 has a vocal line with a half note D4 and a half note C4, and a piano accompaniment with sustained chords. Measure 8 continues the vocal line with a half note B3 and a half note A3, and the piano accompaniment features eighth-note triplets in both hands. Performance markings include 'pp' (pianissimo) and 'p' (piano) for both parts, and 'port.' (portamento) for the vocal line.

9

$\text{♩} = 72$

mf *f* *mf*

mf

3 3 5 11 5 5 5

Detailed description: This system contains measures 9 and 10. Measure 9 features a vocal line with a half note G4 and a half note F#4, and a piano accompaniment with eighth-note triplets in both hands. Measure 10 continues the vocal line with a half note E4 and a half note D4, and the piano accompaniment features eighth-note quintuplets in both hands. Performance markings include 'mf' (mezzo-forte), 'f' (forte), and 'mf' for the vocal line, and 'mf' for the piano. The tempo is marked as 72 beats per minute.

11

port. sul D sul G

p f mf mp p

pp 6

♩ = 60

13 *melting*

gliss.

gliss.

ped ad lib.

17 *accel.* ♩ = 100

pp p n p n p

gliss.

20 $\text{♩} = 72$ *as if out of breath*

mf mf p mp

mp

pp like a blanket; rapid but not pulsating
sim.

22 *p* *mf*

12 *10* *9*

25 *p* *ppp*

3 *3* *5* *3*

10 *10* *10*

poco accel. *molto rit.*

26

mf

10 10 7 9 9

 $\text{♩} = 68$ - heavier

27

f

mf

bring out R.H.

3 3 6 6 6 6

29

mf

gliss.

3 6 6 6 5 6 6

♩ = 80 - agitated

31

p *n* *p* *mp* *p*

pp

5

33

p *mp* *p* *spicc.* *mf*

5

35

p *mf* *p* *f*

5

37 *spicc.* *f*

5 5 6 3

mf 6 6 6 6

39 *heavy* *ff*

6 5 3

f *w/top note of arp.*

41 *f sempre*

6 3 6 6 6

44 *ff* *sempre* *dense and noisy* *gliss.*

46 *gliss.* *sul D* *rit* *p* *L.H.* *mp* *mf* *p*

$\text{♩} = 54$ *sul G*

12 ♩ = 60 *accel.*

52

bring out

mf *p*

♩ = 72

molto rit.

54

mf *p*

♩ = 48 *accel.* ♩ = 54

rit.

56

p

rit.

57 $\text{♩} = 54$ $\text{♩} = 60$ *ppp* *p* *ppp*

n

pp *3* *3*

5 *5* *5* *5* *5*

60 *pp* *p* *gliss.*

ppp *pp*

u.c.

64 *mp* *mp* *mf* *pp* *fit inside decay of previous chord*

p *mp* *mf* *pp*

t.c.

*slide comfortably,
like a breath*

The musical score is written for a vocal line and piano accompaniment in 4/4 time. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The score begins at measure 68.

Vocal Line: The vocal line starts with a whole note chord (B-flat, D, F, A) in measure 68, marked *p*. It then features a long, smooth slide (glissando) across measures 69 and 70, indicated by the instruction *slide comfortably, like a breath*. The slide ends on a whole note chord (B-flat, D, F, A) in measure 71, marked *n*. The vocal line concludes with a final whole note chord (B-flat, D, F, A) in measure 72.

Piano Accompaniment: The piano accompaniment consists of three staves (treble, middle, and bass). The right hand (treble staff) plays a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes, including triplets and octaves (8va). The left hand (bass staff) plays a harmonic line with octaves (8va) and chords. The piano accompaniment begins in measure 68 with a whole note chord (B-flat, D, F, A) marked *p*, and continues through measure 72.

Measure 68: The vocal line has a whole note chord (B-flat, D, F, A) marked *p*. The piano accompaniment has a whole note chord (B-flat, D, F, A) marked *p*.

Measure 69: The vocal line has a long slide. The piano accompaniment continues with a melodic line in the right hand and a harmonic line in the left hand.

Measure 70: The vocal line has a long slide. The piano accompaniment continues with a melodic line in the right hand and a harmonic line in the left hand.

Measure 71: The vocal line has a whole note chord (B-flat, D, F, A) marked *n*. The piano accompaniment continues with a melodic line in the right hand and a harmonic line in the left hand.

Measure 72: The vocal line has a final whole note chord (B-flat, D, F, A). The piano accompaniment concludes with a final whole note chord (B-flat, D, F, A).

III

♩ = 80

Viola

arco 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6

ff *p*

Piano

ff *mf*

5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5

shallow pedal maybe, or no pedal?

3

6 6 6 6

sfz *p* *sfz*

8^{va}

sfz *mf* *sfz*

5 5 5 5

5

6 6 6 6

p *fp*

8^{va}

mf *sfz* *mf*

5 5 5 5

7

6 6 6 6 6 6

sfz *p*

8^{va}

5 5 5 5 5 5

5

9

6 6

rit......

p *pp*

8^{va}

5 5

p

11

♩ = 60

pp *port.*

13 pizz. $\text{♩} = 80$ arco, legato sul pont.

mf *ff* *p* *ff* *p*

16 ord. 3

mf *mp* *mf* *mf* *mp* *mf*

18 pizz.

mp *mf* *p* *mp* *p* *p*

18

arco

20

sul pont.

ord.

Violin part (top staff): *mf* *p* *mf* 3

Piano accompaniment (middle and bottom staves): *mf* *p*

22

Violin part (top staff): *p* *mf* *mf*

Piano accompaniment (middle and bottom staves): *p* *mf* *mf*

24 ♩ = 60

♩ = 80

Violin part (top staff): *p* *mf* *ff*

Piano accompaniment (middle and bottom staves): *p* *mf* *ff*

29 arco

pp *p*

8vb clef

31

p *sf* *f*

33

p

34

Measures 34-35 of a musical score. The score is written for a piano with a treble and bass staff. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The time signature is 3/4. The right hand (treble staff) features a melodic line with eighth notes and quarter notes, often beamed in pairs. The left hand (bass staff) features a rhythmic accompaniment of eighth notes. Measure 34 includes a 3:2 ratio marking. Measure 35 includes a 3:2 ratio marking and a forte (f) dynamic marking.

35

Measures 36-37 of a musical score. The score is written for a piano with a treble and bass staff. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The time signature is 3/4. The right hand (treble staff) features a melodic line with eighth notes and quarter notes, often beamed in pairs. The left hand (bass staff) features a rhythmic accompaniment of eighth notes. Measure 36 includes a 3:2 ratio marking. Measure 37 includes a 3:2 ratio marking and a forte (f) dynamic marking.

36

Measures 38-39 of a musical score. The score is written for a piano with a treble and bass staff. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The time signature is 3/4. The right hand (treble staff) features a melodic line with eighth notes and quarter notes, often beamed in pairs. The left hand (bass staff) features a rhythmic accompaniment of eighth notes. Measure 38 includes a 3:2 ratio marking and a forte (f) dynamic marking. Measure 39 includes a 3:2 ratio marking and a forte (f) dynamic marking.

38

Measures 40-41 of a musical score. The score is written for a piano with a treble and bass staff. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The time signature is 3/4. The right hand (treble staff) features a melodic line with eighth notes and quarter notes, often beamed in pairs. The left hand (bass staff) features a rhythmic accompaniment of eighth notes. Measure 40 includes a 3:2 ratio marking and a forte (f) dynamic marking. Measure 41 includes a 3:2 ratio marking and a forte (f) dynamic marking.

39 $\text{♩} = 60$

p *mf* *p*

p *mf* *mp* *p*

bass clef

41

p *mf* *p*

p *mf* *mp* *p*

22 ♩ = 60

43 pizz. *mf* *ff* (as if lost) arco sul D *p* < *mp* > *p* < *mp* > *p* gliss.

47 *p* < *mf* > *pp* pizz. *p*

49 arco sul pont. gliss. ord. *pp* < *p* > *pp* < *mf* > *p* *pp* *ff*

(♩ = 60)

accel......♩ = 90 *rit.*.....

23

53

p *f* *p*

p *f* *p*

♩ = 60 *accel.*.....♩ = 90 *rit.*.....

56

p *f*

p *f*

.....♩ = 60

58

Freely

pizz.

p *ff* *p* *ff* *p* *ff* *p*

p

ped. down

[illegible]

69 *port.*

7

5 3

3 6

[illegible]

74

74

75

76

77

f

26

75

ord. —————> sul pont. ord. —————> sul pont. ord. —————> sul pont.

f

5 3 3 5

8ba

77

ord. —————> sul pont. ord. —————> sul pont. ord. —————> sul pont.

ff

3 3 5 7

(8)

79

ord. vigorous pizz.

f *fff* *ppizz.*

ffp *fff*

trem. not synced

(8)

85

arco
sul G

Musical score for measures 85-93. The score is written for a single melodic line and a piano accompaniment. The melodic line starts with a whole rest in measure 85, followed by a series of eighth and sixteenth notes in measures 86-93. The piano accompaniment consists of a continuous eighth-note pattern in the right hand and a series of chords and single notes in the left hand. The dynamic marking *ppp* is present in measures 85 and 86. The tempo marking *arco sul G* is above the melodic line in measure 85. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The time signature changes from 3/4 to 5/4, then 3/4, 2/4, 4/4, 3/4, 2/4, 3/4, and finally 3/8 in measure 93. The melodic line ends with a fermata in measure 93. The piano accompaniment ends with a fermata in measure 93. The score is marked with *ppp* in measures 85 and 86. The tempo marking *arco sul G* is above the melodic line in measure 85. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The time signature changes from 3/4 to 5/4, then 3/4, 2/4, 4/4, 3/4, 2/4, 3/4, and finally 3/8 in measure 93. The melodic line ends with a fermata in measure 93. The piano accompaniment ends with a fermata in measure 93.

94

Musical score for measures 94-102. The score is written for a single melodic line and a piano accompaniment. The melodic line starts with a whole rest in measure 94, followed by a series of eighth and sixteenth notes in measures 95-102. The piano accompaniment consists of a continuous eighth-note pattern in the right hand and a series of chords and single notes in the left hand. The dynamic marking *ppp* is present in measures 94 and 95. The tempo marking *arco sul G* is above the melodic line in measure 94. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The time signature changes from 3/4 to 5/4, then 3/4, 2/4, 4/4, 3/4, 2/4, 3/4, and finally 3/8 in measure 102. The melodic line ends with a fermata in measure 102. The piano accompaniment ends with a fermata in measure 102. The score is marked with *ppp* in measures 94 and 95. The tempo marking *arco sul G* is above the melodic line in measure 94. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The time signature changes from 3/4 to 5/4, then 3/4, 2/4, 4/4, 3/4, 2/4, 3/4, and finally 3/8 in measure 102. The melodic line ends with a fermata in measure 102. The piano accompaniment ends with a fermata in measure 102.