

String Quartet 1

by

Karen Amrhein

String Quartet I

Despite its relative brevity, this quartet has had a rather long and sporadic genesis.

First conceived as a single-movement concert prelude, I began writing the *Overture* for my friend, violinist Nicholas Currie. The *Overture* — an exercise in rapidly shifting dynamics and textures — consists of a theme (or more precisely, a motive) and variations. The motive — an arpeggio built of a minor third, major second, major third, and minor third — appears first in variation in the opening bars, played by the first violin. After the introduction, the motive is served straight-up and subsequently re-worked until the *Overture* climaxes at the coda, fusing a two-voice fugue with elements from the introduction.

The introspective *Rêverie* is primarily homophonic in its outer sections, with the opening Largo returning at the conclusion of the movement. This Largo dissolves within a plaintive melody stated first in stretto between the first violin and the viola, and then in a brief fugal passage.

The work concludes with *Rejouissance*, a Presto scherzo. It begins, pizzicato, with a line played in unison by all four strings. The line splits into counterpoint, then reunites. In the next section a rising and falling figure leads a contrapuntal game of bowing and plucking, followed by a bowed recapitulation (of sorts) of the opening. Next comes a third theme derived from the second, accentuated by percussive rolls in the cello and periodic pizzicato exclamations, before the opening returns, but with counterpoint. A short fugue succeeds, developed from the rising and falling figure of the second section, driving into an altered return to the third theme. The work climaxes with restatement and variation of the opening section, a nod to section two, and ends with a final pluck.

Each of these three movements has been revised, tightened, and expanded several times. Perhaps I'll continue to return to this quartet, for it seems to have gained a life of its own and will continue to evolve as long as I indulge it.

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(I later returned to the quartet, revising and expanding the *Overture*, and especially the *Rejouissance*, yet again (as that latter movement's paragraph reflects).

Total Timing: 11 to 12 Minutes

String Quartet I

Karen Amrhein (ASCAP)

Overture: 4 Minutes

Ouverture

Allegro non troppo $\text{♩} = 224$

Violin 1: pizz., arco, pizz., arco, pizz., arco jete

Violin 2: pizz., arco, pizz., arco, pizz., arco jete

Viola: f, mp

Cello: f, mp

Measures 6-10. Includes dynamics (f, mf, p, mp, sub. f), articulation (pizz., arco), and performance instructions (marcato).

Measures 11-17. Includes dynamics (mp, p, mf), articulation (pizz., arco), and performance instructions (molto).

Measures 18-23. Includes dynamics (mf, sfz, mp, f), articulation (pizz., arco), and performance instructions (molto).

25 arco

mf mp p mf nat. f

arco col legno

mp molto arco col legno

mf f nat.

mf f

33

ff mf f p

col legno

ff mf f nat. p

ff mp f nat. p

42 pizz.

mp mf mp mf p

pizz. arco

51 arco

p f mp pp p espress. pp espress. p

arco

f mp p lightly pp p

59

mp *p* *p* *p*

68 *poco rall.*

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

77 *a tempo*

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

pizz. *arco* *pizz.* *arco*

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

84

mf *f* *mf* *mp* *mp* *mf*

pizz. *pizz.* *arco* *pizz.* *arco* *arco col legno*

mf *f* *mf* *f* *mp* *mf*

pizz. *pizz.* *arco* *pizz.* *arco* *arco col legno*

mf *f* *mf* *f* *mp* *mf* *molto* *molto* *molto*

pizz. *arco* *arco* *arco* *arco* *arco col legno*

f *mf* *f* *mp* *mf* *col legno*

91

p *mf* *f* *f* *mp* *pp*

mf *f* *p* *p espress.*

nat. *f* *f* *mp* *p* *p espress.*

nat. *f* *f* *mp* *p* *lightly* *pp*

100

pp *espress.* *p* *espress.* *mp* *p*

mp *p*

108

p *p* *p* *pp*

116

p *p* *mp* *p*

col legno *mp*

p

123

col legno

mp col legno

mf

f

mp

p *mp*

col legno

pizz.

arco col legno

p *mp* *mf*

131

pizz.

pizz.

arco nat.

ff

arco nat.

ff

nat.

sfz mp

nat.

ff

138

sfz

gliss.

pizz.

arco

pizz.

arco

pizz.

sfz

gliss.

pizz.

arco

f

arco

pizz.

arco

pizz.

sfz

gliss.

pizz.

arco

mf

arco

pizz.

arco

pizz.

sfz

f

145

arco

pizz.

arco

f

ff

ff

arco

pizz.

arco

f

ff

ff

Rêverie

Largo ♩ = 40 to 44

The first system of the score consists of four staves. The top two staves are in treble clef with a 3/4 time signature. The bottom two staves are in bass clef with a 3/4 time signature. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The dynamics are marked as follows: *p*, *sub. p*, *molto*, *mp*, *p*, *mp*, *mf*, and *sfz ff*. The music features a melodic line in the upper staves and a supporting bass line in the lower staves.

The second system begins at measure 12. The tempo is marked *Andante* with a quarter note equal to 88 (♩ = 88). The dynamics include *p*, *molto*, *sub. p*, *f*, and *sfz*. The music continues with a melodic line in the upper staves and a supporting bass line in the lower staves.

The third system begins at measure 24. The dynamics include *mf*, *p*, and *f*. The music features a melodic line in the upper staves and a supporting bass line in the lower staves. There are triplets in the upper staves.

The fourth system begins at measure 37. The dynamics include *mp*, *p*, and *f*. The music features a melodic line in the upper staves and a supporting bass line in the lower staves. There are triplets in the upper staves.

46

ff *mf*

ff *mf*

ff *mf*

ff *mf*



55 *rit.* **Tempo I**

p *sub. p* *molto* *mp* *p* *mp*

p *sub. p* *molto* *mp* *p* *mp*

p *sub. p* *molto* *mp* *p* *mf*

p *sub. p* *molto* *mp* *p* *mp*



67

sfz, ff *mp* *ff*

sfz, ff *mp* *ff*

sfz, ff *mp* *ff*

sfz, ff *mp* *ff*

Rejouissance: 3½ Minutes

Rejouissance

Presto ♩ = 144

The first system of the musical score consists of four staves. The top two staves are for the Violin I and Violin II parts, both marked with a mezzo-piano (*mp*) dynamic and a pizzicato (*pizz.*) instruction. The bottom two staves are for the Cello and Double Bass parts, also marked with *mp* and *pizz.*. The music is in 3/8 time and features a complex, rhythmic melody with frequent changes in meter, including 3/8, 2/4, 3/4, and 4/4.

The second system of the musical score continues the piece with four staves. The notation remains consistent with the first system, featuring the same instruments and dynamics. The rhythmic complexity continues with various time signatures and melodic patterns.

The third system of the musical score continues the piece with four staves. The notation remains consistent with the previous systems, featuring the same instruments and dynamics. The rhythmic complexity continues with various time signatures and melodic patterns.

The fourth system of the musical score continues the piece with four staves. This system introduces a variety of articulation and dynamics. The Violin I part starts with an *arco* (bowed) section marked *mf* (mezzo-forte), followed by a *pizz.* section. The Violin II part has a *pizz.* section followed by an *arco* section. The Cello and Double Bass parts have an *arco* section followed by a *pizz.* section. The system concludes with a final *pizz.* section for all parts, marked *mf*.

34

arco
mp
arco
mp
mp

41

f
f
f

49

pizz.
pizz.
f
pizz.
pizz.

58

arco
mf
mp
mf
mp
arco
pizz.
arco
mf
mp
arco
pizz.
arco
mf
mp

67

Violin I: *pizz.*, *arco*, *mp*

Violin II: *pizz.*, *arco*, *mp*, *mf*

Viola: *pizz.*, *arco*, *mf*, *mp*, *mf*

Cello/Double Bass: *mf*, *pizz.*, *arco*, *mp*, *mf*

76

Violin I: *mf*, *p*, *mp*, *mf*, *p*

Violin II: *mp*, *mf*, *p*, *mp*, *pizz.*

Viola: *p*, *mf*, *pizz.*, *arco*, *p*, *pizz.*

Cello/Double Bass: *mf*, *p*, *mf*, *p*, *pizz.*

84

Violin I: *mp*, *pizz.*

Violin II: *mp*, *pizz.*

Viola: *mp*, *pizz.*

Cello/Double Bass: *mp*, *pizz.*

92

Violin I: *mp*, *pizz.*

Violin II: *mp*, *pizz.*

Viola: *mp*, *pizz.*

Cello/Double Bass: *mp*, *pizz.*

101

arco

arco

arco

arco

mf

mp

mf

Double bar line

Detailed description: This system contains measures 101 through 106. It features four staves: Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Cello/Double Bass. The key signature has one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/4. The Violin I part starts with a melodic line marked 'arco' and 'mf', ending with a 'mp' dynamic. The Violin II part also starts with 'arco' and 'mf'. The Viola part begins in measure 103 with 'arco' and 'mf'. The Cello/Double Bass part has a steady accompaniment marked 'arco' and 'mf'.

107

mf

mf

mf

mp

mf

pizz.

pizz.

mf

Double bar line

Detailed description: This system contains measures 107 through 112. The Violin I part continues with 'mf' dynamics. The Violin II part has 'mf' dynamics. The Viola part has 'mp' dynamics. The Cello/Double Bass part has 'mf' dynamics. There are 'pizz.' (pizzicato) markings in the Violin I and II parts in measures 111 and 112.

113

pizz.

arco

arco

arco

arco

mf

mp

mf

mp

Double bar line

Detailed description: This system contains measures 113 through 117. The Violin I part starts with 'pizz.' in measure 113, then switches to 'arco' in measure 114. The Violin II part starts with 'arco' in measure 113, then switches to 'pizz.' in measure 114. The Viola part has 'arco' and 'mf' dynamics. The Cello/Double Bass part has 'arco' and 'mf' dynamics.

118

pizz.

arco

pizz.

arco

pizz.

arco

mf

mp

mf

mp

mf

Double bar line

Detailed description: This system contains measures 118 through 122. The Violin I part starts with 'pizz.' in measure 118, then switches to 'arco' in measure 119. The Violin II part starts with 'pizz.' in measure 118, then switches to 'arco' in measure 119. The Viola part has 'pizz.' and 'mf' dynamics. The Cello/Double Bass part has 'pizz.' and 'mf' dynamics.

126

pizz. arco mp mf

mf mp mf

mf mp mf

mf mp mf

135

p mp mf mp

mp mf mp

pizz. arco p pizz. arco mp

p mp p mp

143

f f

f

f

151

pizz. f pizz. pizz. pizz.

f

f

f

159

Musical score for measures 159-167. The score consists of four staves. The time signatures are 3/8, 2/4, 3/8, 2/4, 3/8, 2/4, 3/8, 2/4. Dynamic markings include *mp* and *mf*. There are also hairpins indicating volume changes.

168

Musical score for measures 168-175. The score consists of four staves. The time signatures are 2/4, 3/8, 2/4, 3/8, 2/4, 3/8, 2/4, 3/8, 2/4. Dynamic markings include *f* and *mp*.

176

Musical score for measures 176-183. The score consists of four staves. The time signatures are 2/4, 3/8, 2/4, 3/8, 2/4, 3/8, 2/4, 3/8, 2/4. Dynamic markings include *f* and *mp*. The word *arco* is used above the top staff in measure 183.

184

Musical score for measures 184-191. The score consists of four staves. The time signatures are 3/8, 2/4, 3/8, 2/4, 3/8, 2/4, 3/8, 2/4. Dynamic markings include *p*, *mp*, and *mf*. Performance instructions include *pizz.* and *arco*.

