

Steven Snowden

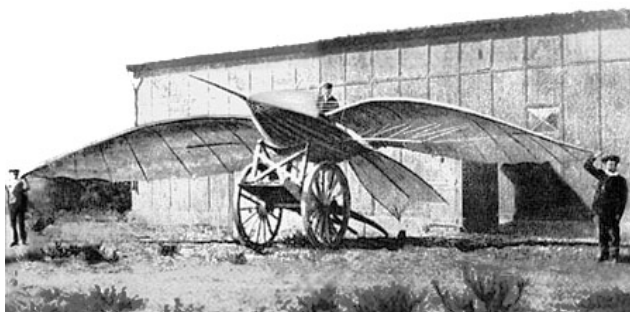
Under the Radar

Viola Quartet
2009

Under the Radar
Viola Quartet

While the history of manned flight provides countless tales of tenacious inventors and spectacular failures, one in particular caught my attention while I was writing this piece. Jean Marie Le Bris, a retired French sea captain, designed and built a manned gliding machine based on the physiological proportions of the albatross. He dubbed his glider *L'Albatros artificial* (the Artificial Albatross) and it was to become his life's obsession.

In December of 1856, Le Bris mounted his glider on a horse-drawn cart and ordered his driver to speed down a country road into to the wind. Seated atop the Artificial Albatross, Le Bris unhooked the restraining rope and broke free of the cart. However, the unfortunate driver became entangled in the rope and dangled perilously below the glider as it soared 300 feet above the ground. After sailing about 600 feet, Le Bris's machine crash-landed in a nearby field. Both Le Bris and the driver escaped without injury and the glider suffered only minor damage. His next attempt however, resulted in severe damage to the Artificial Albatross and a broken leg for Le Bris. Despite this failure and the many that followed, Le Bris never gave up and is now recognized as an important (though eccentric) figure in the development of modern manned flight.



From one perspective, *Under the Radar* is a programmatic portrayal of Le Bris's relentless tenacity. Musical textures and ideas build to a feverish intensity over and over, but each one, destined for failure, falls short of reaching a culminating climax. From another perspective though, this piece is about giving violas a chance to play in a style far removed from much of their traditional literature. With *Under the Radar* I wanted to write something that was the direct opposite of typical viola music. Rather than a slow and somber dirge, I chose cast the violas into the role of athletic and melodramatic rockstars.

Approximate duration – 6 min.

Under the Radar

for Viola Quartet

Steven Snowden

very intense ♩ ~ 54 but with no discernible pulse

Viola 1
sul C no vibrato

Viola 2
sul C no vibrato

Viola 3
sul C no vibrato

Viola 4
sul C no vibrato

let ring

sul tasto → sul pont. → ord.

ppp *ff* *ff* *pp* *p* *pp* *mp* *pp* *mf* *p*

ppp *ff* *ppp* *f* *ff* *pp* *p* *pp* *mp* *pp*

ppp *ff* *ff* *pp* *p* *pp*

fff *ppp* *ff* *fff* *pp* *p*

Vla. 1
sul pont. → ord.

Vla. 2
sul pont. → ord.

Vla. 3
sul pont. → ord.

Vla. 4
ord.

end sul C

end sul C

end sul C

end sul C

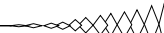
attacca

f *mp* *mf* *p* *f* *p* *f* *p* *ff* *f* *fff*

mf *p* *f* *mp* *mf* *p* *f* *p* *f* *p* *ff* *f* *fff*

mp *pp* *mf* *p* *f* *p* *f* *p* *f* *p* *ff* *f* *fff*

pp *mp* *pp* *mf* *p* *f* *p* *f* *p* *ff* *n* *fff*

*  This symbol signifies intensity of vibrato. (both rate and depth)

Under the Radar for Viola Quartet

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Slowly Building Steam

accel. from $\sim \text{♩} = 40$ in meas. 1 to $\sim \text{♩} = 90$ by meas. 7

Viola 1

Viola 2

Viola 3

Viola 4

pp *f*

pizz. *p* *f*

pizz. *p* *f*

* continue accel. in measure 7, repeating until tempo reaches $\text{♩} = 120$
Viola 1 cues measure 8 with a Bartok pizz.

8

Incessant $\text{♩} = 120$

pizz.

Vla. 1

Vla. 2

Vla. 3

Vla. 4

f *pp*

f *pp*

f *pp*

f *pp*

15

Vla. 1

Vla. 2

Vla. 3

Vla. 4

21

Vla. 1

Vla. 2

Vla. 3

Vla. 4

pp \rightrightarrows *mp* \rightrightarrows *pp* *pp* \rightrightarrows *mp* \rightrightarrows *pp*

27

28

Violin 1 (Vla. 1) starts with a quarter note G4, followed by a quarter rest, then a quarter note A4. In measure 28, it has a quarter note Bb4, a quarter note A4, and a quarter note G4. In measure 29, it has a quarter note A4, a quarter note Bb4, a quarter note A4, and a quarter note G4. In measure 30, it has a quarter note A4, a quarter note Bb4, a quarter note A4, and a quarter note G4. In measure 31, it has a quarter note A4, a quarter note Bb4, a quarter note A4, and a quarter note G4. There are slurs and fingering numbers (2, 4) over the notes.

Violin 2 (Vla. 2) has a whole rest in measure 27. In measure 28, it has a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, and a quarter note Bb4. In measure 29, it has a quarter note A4, a quarter note Bb4, and a quarter note A4. In measure 30, it has a quarter note A4, a quarter note Bb4, and a quarter note A4. In measure 31, it has a quarter note A4, a quarter note Bb4, and a quarter note A4. Dynamics include *pp*, *mp*, and *pp* with hairpins.

Violin 3 (Vla. 3) has a whole rest in measure 27. In measure 28, it has a whole rest. In measure 29, it has a quarter note Bb4, a quarter note A4, and a quarter note G4. In measure 30, it has a quarter note A4, a quarter note Bb4, and a quarter note A4. In measure 31, it has a quarter note A4, a quarter note Bb4, and a quarter note A4.

Violin 4 (Vla. 4) has a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note Bb4, and a quarter note A4 in measure 27. In measure 28, it has a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note Bb4, and a quarter note A4. In measure 29, it has a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note Bb4, and a quarter note A4. In measure 30, it has a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note Bb4, and a quarter note A4. In measure 31, it has a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note Bb4, and a quarter note A4.

32

Violin 1 (Vla. 1) has a quarter note A4, a quarter note Bb4, a quarter note A4, and a quarter note G4 in measure 32. In measure 33, it has a quarter note A4, a quarter note Bb4, a quarter note A4, and a quarter note G4. In measure 34, it has a quarter note A4, a quarter note Bb4, a quarter note A4, and a quarter note G4. In measure 35, it has a whole rest. Dynamics include *f*.

Violin 2 (Vla. 2) has a quarter note Bb4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note G4, and a quarter note F4 in measure 32. In measure 33, it has a quarter note Bb4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note G4, and a quarter note F4. In measure 34, it has a quarter note Bb4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note G4, and a quarter note F4. In measure 35, it has a whole rest, then a *arco* section with *sul C* and *ricochet* markings, and a quarter note G4. Dynamics include *f*.

Violin 3 (Vla. 3) has a quarter note Bb4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note G4, and a quarter note F4 in measure 32. In measure 33, it has a quarter note Bb4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note G4, and a quarter note F4. In measure 34, it has a quarter note Bb4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note G4, and a quarter note F4. In measure 35, it has a whole rest. Dynamics include *f*.

Violin 4 (Vla. 4) has a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note Bb4, and a quarter note A4 in measure 32. In measure 33, it has a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note Bb4, and a quarter note A4. In measure 34, it has a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note Bb4, and a quarter note A4. In measure 35, it has a whole rest. Dynamics include *f*.

Under the Radar

36

sul C arco
repeat gesture, gradually sliding down the fingerboard.

pizz.

Musical score for measures 36-40, featuring four violas (Vla. 1-4). The score is in 3/4 time with a key signature of one flat. Measure 36 includes a box number '36' and performance instructions: 'sul C arco' and 'repeat gesture, gradually sliding down the fingerboard.' for Vla. 1 and Vla. 2. Vla. 1 starts with a forte (*f*) dynamic and a 'like a passing siren' instruction, followed by a *ppp* dynamic and a 'pizz.' instruction. Vla. 2 also has a 'like a passing siren' instruction and a *ppp* dynamic, ending with a *p* dynamic and 'sul pont.' instruction. Vla. 3 plays sustained chords with dynamics *ppp*, *mp*, and *ppp*, with 'arco sul pont.' instructions. Vla. 4 plays a rhythmic pattern with dynamics *f* and *p*.

41

arco sul pont.

Musical score for measures 41-45. Vla. 1 has a '2' (second) fingering instruction and a *f* dynamic. Vla. 2 has a *f* dynamic. Vla. 3 has a 'pizz.' instruction and a *f* dynamic. Vla. 4 has a *f* dynamic. The score continues with various dynamics and articulations across the four staves.

46

Musical score for measures 46-50, featuring four Violin parts (Vla. 1-4). The music is in 3/4 time and C major.
 - **Vla. 1:** Rests in measures 46-47, then plays a half note G4 with a *pizz.* marking and *pp* dynamic.
 - **Vla. 2:** Plays a half note G4 with a *pizz.* marking and *pp* dynamic throughout.
 - **Vla. 3:** Rests in measures 46-49, then plays a half note G4 with a *pizz.* marking, *mp* dynamic, and the instruction "sinister and a little off kilter".
 - **Vla. 4:** Plays a steady eighth-note accompaniment (C4, E4, G4) with a *pp* dynamic.
 - A hairpin crescendo line spans measures 46-50.

51

Musical score for measures 51-55, featuring four Violin parts (Vla. 1-4). The music is in 3/4 time and C major.
 - **Vla. 1:** Rests in measures 51-52, then plays a half note G4 with a *pizz.* marking and *pp* dynamic.
 - **Vla. 2:** Plays a half note G4 with a *pizz.* marking and *pp* dynamic throughout.
 - **Vla. 3:** Plays a half note G4 with a *pizz.* marking and *pp* dynamic throughout.
 - **Vla. 4:** Plays a steady eighth-note accompaniment (C4, E4, G4) with a *pp* dynamic.
 - A hairpin crescendo line spans measures 51-55.

57

Vla. 1

Vla. 2

Vla. 3

Vla. 4

arco sul C

pp

sinister and a little off kilter

arco sul C

pp

61

Vla. 1

Vla. 2

Vla. 3

Vla. 4

sul C

arco

pp

65

Vla. 1

Vla. 2

Vla. 3

Vla. 4

arco

mp *f* *ff*

4

behind the bridge

diabolical

70

Vla. 1

Vla. 2

Vla. 3

Vla. 4

arco

ff *sfz*

pizz.

arco

f

74

Vla. 1

Vla. 2

Vla. 3

Vla. 4

This system contains measures 74 through 77. It features four staves for violas. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The first staff (Vla. 1) has a treble clef and contains a melodic line with slurs and accents. The second staff (Vla. 2) has a bass clef and contains a rhythmic accompaniment with a *ff* dynamic marking. The third staff (Vla. 3) has a bass clef and contains a rhythmic accompaniment with slurs and accents. The fourth staff (Vla. 4) has a bass clef and contains a bass line with slurs and accents.

78

Vla. 1

Vla. 2

Vla. 3

Vla. 4

This system contains measures 78 through 81. It features four staves for violas. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The first staff (Vla. 1) has a treble clef and contains a melodic line with slurs and accents. The second staff (Vla. 2) has a bass clef and contains a rhythmic accompaniment with a *f* dynamic marking. The third staff (Vla. 3) has a bass clef and contains a rhythmic accompaniment with slurs and accents. The fourth staff (Vla. 4) has a bass clef and contains a bass line with slurs and accents.

becoming volatile

82

Vla. 1

Vla. 2

Vla. 3

Vla. 4

p

p

p

arco

p

86

Vla. 1

Vla. 2

Vla. 3

Vla. 4

f

p

ff

f

p

ff

f

p

ff

f

p

ff

89

Vla. 1

Vla. 2

Vla. 3

Vla. 4

fff

fff

fff

fff

ricochet

ricochet

ricochet

sul C, G
ricochet

sul C, G
ricochet

sul C, G
ricochet

91

92

Soaring

no vib.

Vla. 1

Vla. 2

Vla. 3

Vla. 4

p

f

p

f

p

p

mf

p

no vib.

96

Vla. 1

Vla. 2

Vla. 3

Vla. 4

mf

pp

mf

pp

solo gritty

mp

f

mf

100

Vla. 1

Vla. 2

Vla. 3

Vla. 4

mf

mf

mf

f

mf

p

105

Musical score for measures 105-109, featuring four violin parts (Vla. 1-4). The score is written in 3/4 time with a key signature of one flat. Measures 105-108 contain sustained chords in the first and second violins, marked *pp*. The third violin plays a rhythmic eighth-note pattern with accents, and the fourth violin plays a steady eighth-note accompaniment. In measure 109, the first and second violins play a melodic phrase marked *p*, while the third and fourth violins continue their patterns.

110

Musical score for measures 110-113, featuring four violin parts (Vla. 1-4). The score continues in 3/4 time with a key signature of one flat. In measure 110, the first violin plays a melodic phrase marked *p*. In measure 111, the second violin enters with a melodic line marked *mp*. The third violin continues with eighth-note patterns, and the fourth violin maintains the accompaniment. In measure 112, the first violin has a rest, and the second violin continues its line. In measure 113, the first violin plays a melodic phrase marked *mp*, and the second violin has a rest.

115

Vla. 1

Vla. 2

Vla. 3

Vla. 4

ff

119 *aggressive and maniacal*

Vla. 1

Vla. 2

Vla. 3

Vla. 4

pp

ff deliriously dramatic
rock star solo

ff

ff

123

Vla. 1

Musical staff for Violin 1, measures 123-126. The staff is in bass clef with a key signature of one flat. It begins with a whole rest in measure 123. In measure 124, it plays a sixteenth-note scale starting on G2, marked with a forte (*f*) dynamic. In measure 125, it continues with a sixteenth-note scale starting on A2, marked with a fortissimo (*ff*) dynamic. In measure 126, it plays a half note G2 with a fermata, marked with a decrescendo hairpin.

Vla. 2

Musical staff for Violin 2, measures 123-126. The staff is in bass clef with a key signature of one flat. It plays a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes in measure 123. In measure 124, it plays a half note G2 with a fermata. In measure 125, it plays a half note G2 with a fermata. In measure 126, it has a whole rest.

Vla. 3

Musical staff for Violin 3, measures 123-126. The staff is in bass clef with a key signature of one flat. It plays a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes in measure 123. In measure 124, it plays a half note G2 with a fermata. In measure 125, it plays a half note G2 with a fermata. In measure 126, it has a whole rest.

Vla. 4

Musical staff for Violin 4, measures 123-126. The staff is in bass clef with a key signature of one flat. It plays a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes in measure 123. In measure 124, it plays a half note G2 with a fermata. In measure 125, it plays a half note G2 with a fermata. In measure 126, it plays a half note G2 with a fermata.

127

Vla. 1

Musical staff for Violin 1, measures 127-130. The staff is in bass clef with a key signature of one flat. It begins with a whole rest in measure 127. In measure 128, it plays a half note G2 with a fermata, marked with a fortissimo (*ff*) dynamic. In measure 129, it plays a sixteenth-note scale starting on G2. In measure 130, it plays a half note G2 with a fermata.

Vla. 2

Musical staff for Violin 2, measures 127-130. The staff is in bass clef with a key signature of one flat. It plays a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes in measure 127. In measure 128, it plays a half note G2 with a fermata. In measure 129, it plays a half note G2 with a fermata. In measure 130, it has a whole rest.

Vla. 3

Musical staff for Violin 3, measures 127-130. The staff is in bass clef with a key signature of one flat. It plays a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes in measure 127. In measure 128, it plays a half note G2 with a fermata. In measure 129, it plays a half note G2 with a fermata. In measure 130, it has a whole rest.

Vla. 4

Musical staff for Violin 4, measures 127-130. The staff is in bass clef with a key signature of one flat. It plays a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes in measure 127. In measure 128, it plays a half note G2 with a fermata. In measure 129, it plays a half note G2 with a fermata. In measure 130, it plays a half note G2 with a fermata.

133 *Freely, like swarms of melodramatic weeping*

Musical score for Violins 1-4, measures 131-133. The score is written in bass clef with a key signature of one flat. Measure 131 starts with a dynamic of *p*. Measure 132 has a dynamic of *mf*. Measure 133 has a dynamic of *mf* and includes the instruction *sul D* for the first violin. The first violin part features melodic lines with accents and slurs, while the other parts provide harmonic support with chords and moving lines.

Musical score for Violins 1-4, measures 135-138. The score is written in bass clef with a key signature of one flat. Measure 135 starts with a dynamic of *mf*. Measure 136 has a dynamic of *fff*. Measure 137 has a dynamic of *fff*. Measure 138 has a dynamic of *fff* and includes the instruction *Extremely intense vib.* for all parts. The first violin part features melodic lines with accents and slurs, while the other parts provide harmonic support with chords and moving lines. The instruction *Freely, like swarms of melodramatic weeping* is repeated for the second, third, and fourth violins.

139 quasi cadenza (ham it up)

Vla. 1

Vla. 2

Vla. 3

Vla. 4

143

8^{va} milk it for all it's worth

pizz. coy. raise one eyebrow

arco

Vla. 1

Vla. 2

Vla. 3

Vla. 4

$\text{♩} = 60$

with deranged anticipation

accel. poco a poco -----

150

Vla. 1

ff *pp*

Vla. 2

Vla. 3

arco
ff arco *pp*

Vla. 4

ff *pp*

153

Vla. 1

Vla. 2

ricochet
f

behind the bridge

ord.

Vla. 3

Vla. 4

156

Vla. 1

Vla. 2

Vla. 3

Vla. 4

mf

mf

mf

This system contains measures 156, 157, and 158. It features four staves for Violins 1 through 4. Violin 1 has a melodic line with slurs and accents, marked *mf*. Violin 2 has a rhythmic accompaniment with slurs and accents. Violin 3 has a melodic line with slurs and accents, marked *mf*. Violin 4 has a rhythmic accompaniment with slurs and accents, marked *mf*. The key signature has one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/4.

159

Vla. 1

Vla. 2

Vla. 3

Vla. 4

ff

ff

ff

ff

This system contains measures 159, 160, and 161. It features four staves for Violins 1 through 4. Violin 1 has a melodic line with slurs and accents, marked *ff*. Violin 2 has a rhythmic accompaniment with slurs and accents, marked *ff*. Violin 3 has a melodic line with slurs and accents, marked *ff*. Violin 4 has a rhythmic accompaniment with slurs and accents, marked *ff*. The key signature has one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/4.

frenzied ♩. = 120

162

Musical score for measures 162-164. The score is for four Violin parts (Vla. 1-4). The tempo is marked 'frenzied' with a quarter note equal to 120 beats per minute. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The dynamics are *pp* (pianissimo) for measures 162 and 163, and *f* (forte) for measure 164. The parts feature various rhythmic patterns, including eighth and sixteenth notes, and some parts have tremolos or rapid sixteenth-note runs.

165

Musical score for measures 165-168. The score is for four Violin parts (Vla. 1-4). The tempo is 'frenzied'. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The dynamics are *f* (forte) for measures 165 and 166, and *fff* (fortississimo) for measures 167 and 168. Performance instructions include: '(Pitch is secondary to dynamic and effect)' and 'use bow pressure to produce harsh scratching sound'. The parts feature various rhythmic patterns, including eighth and sixteenth notes, and some parts have tremolos or rapid sixteenth-note runs. Measure 168 ends with a *sffz* (sforzando) and *pp* (pianissimo) dynamic.