

Beginning with Time

String Quartet no. 3

2008 / 2014 / 2020

Lawrence Kramer

Beginning with Time: String Quartet no. 3

This quartet takes its title from a seemingly casual phrase in "To a Reason," one of the prose poems in Arthur Rimbaud's *Illuminations*:

A tap of your finger on the drum precipitates all the sounds and begins
the new harmony.

One step of yours is the rise of a human race and its onward march.

Your face turns away: the new love! Your face turns back: the new love!

"Change our fate, sift out the plagues, beginning with time," the children
sing to you. "Raise no matter where the substance of our fortunes and
our wishes," they beg of you.

Arrival from always, you who will go everywhere.

(Translation by the composer)

Like the poem, the music imagines a search for arrival on the understanding that to arrive at one's destination is always to reach the point of a new departure. But this is no abstract formula; the reason for the search is a desire for a future worth hoping for--something that seems all too timely as I write this note in 2020. The hope defies cynicism, which is why Rimbaud places its expression in the song of the children, all of us being such children when we ask our for fate to be changed, "beginning with time."

The quartet presents its search as a process of starting over, of revisiting what has been in order to carry it forward in changed form. Beginning with time is beginning again. A great deal of music operates on just this principle, so the quartet also constitutes a reflection in which music ponders its own basis in endless arrival and departure. That is doubly so with this music, which was written and rewritten over a period of twelve years.

The quartet is accordingly in two movements, an Adagio and an Allegretto, which do not occur in sequence but instead *recur* in alternation to make five segments. The first instance of each movement is fragmentary. The second instance of the Adagio is almost complete but it cannot find a way to end. Only after the second instance of the Allegretto finds its full form can the final instance of the Adagio do likewise. The Adagio is essentially the same each time it recurs, but it is also not the same because each recurrence changes which instrument plays what part, thus transforming the sonority and texture and sometimes the melody or harmony. This movement is in a constant state of flux, poised between lyrical contemplation and swirls of energy. The Allegretto is more concerned with finding its melodic identity. Its first instance breaks off too soon; the second reclaims it (with some shifting of parts) as a point of departure.

The process evoked by the quartet is in principle endless, but its music cannot be, and so runs its course in some 20 or 21 minutes.

Beginning with Time

I.

Lawrence Kramer

$\text{♩} = 56$

Violin 1
Violin 2
Viola
Cello

p

p

p

p

Detailed description: This system contains the first four staves of the score. Violin 1 (Vln. 1) starts with a half rest, then plays a series of notes including a triplet of eighth notes. Violin 2 (Vln. 2) has a whole rest for the first two measures, then enters with a half note and a quarter note. Viola (Vla.) has a whole rest for the first two measures, then enters with a quarter note. Cello (Vlc.) plays a rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes throughout. Dynamics are marked *p* (piano) for all instruments.

Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vlc.

cresc.
mp

cresc.
mp

cresc.
mp

cresc.
mp

Detailed description: This system contains the next four staves of the score. Violin 1 (Vln. 1) features a triplet of eighth notes and a half note, with a dynamic of *mp* (mezzo-piano). Violin 2 (Vln. 2) has a half note and a quarter note, with a dynamic of *mp*. Viola (Vla.) has a half note and a quarter note, with a dynamic of *mp*. Cello (Vlc.) has a half note and a quarter note, with a dynamic of *mp*. Crescendo markings (*cresc.*) are present for all instruments in the second and third measures of this system.

4
9

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

p

cresc.

13

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

f

16

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

mp

p

f

mf

20

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

p

p

p

p

sf

24

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

fp

p

sf

sf

p

sf

sf

28

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

mp

cresc.

f

mp

cresc.

f

mp

cresc.

f

mp

cresc.

f

6
3/4

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

cresc.

ff

p

35

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

mp

fp

39

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

cresc.

f

fp

cresc.

f

43

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

cresc.

f

46

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

rit.

cresc.

cresc.

cresc.

II.

$\text{♩} = 80$

48

Vln. 1 *p*

Vln. 2 *p*

Vla. *p*

Vlc. *mp* *p*³

54

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc. pizz.

61

Vln. 1 *fp* *fp*

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc. arco pizz. arco

68

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

p

sul G

Detailed description: This system contains measures 68 through 72. Vln. 1 starts with a dynamic marking of *p* and a *sul G* instruction. It features a melodic line with a slur over measures 68-70 and a rhythmic pattern in measure 72. Vln. 2 plays a simple harmonic accompaniment. Vla. and Vlc. provide a bass line with various note values and rests.

73

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

sul G

Detailed description: This system contains measures 73 through 76. Vln. 1 has a *sul G* instruction and plays a melodic line with a slur over measures 73-74. Vln. 2, Vla., and Vlc. continue their accompaniment with various note values and rests.

77 $\text{♩} = 56$

Vln. 1 *p*

Vln. 2 *p*

Vla. *p*

Vlc. *p*

82

Vln. 1 *mp*

Vln. 2 *mp*

Vla. *mp*

Vlc. *mp*

86

Vln. 1 *p*

Vln. 2 *p*

Vla. *p*

Vlc. *p*

f

90

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

mp *p*

93

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

mf *f*

mp *f*

97

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

p *sf*

mp *p*

mp *sf*

101

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

sf *sf* *sf* *mp*

sf *p* *mp*

fp *mp*

sf

105

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

f *f* *f*

sul pont. ordin.

f

108

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

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

112

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

mp

sf

sf

116

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

p

119

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

f

f

f

f

123

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

p

pizz.

127

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

arco

cresc.

pizz.

cresc.

cresc.

130

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

f

f

f

f

132

Vln. 1

ff *f* *mf* *p*

Vln. 2

ff *f* *mf* *p*

Vla.

ff *f* *mf* *p*

arco

Vlc.

ff *mf* *p*

135

Vln. 1

p *mp*

Vln. 2

Vla.

mp *p*

Vlc.

137

Vln. 1

p

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

139

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

mf

fp

mf

p

mf

p

mf

p

143

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

p

p

p

p

rit.

a tempo

sul C

148 $\text{♩} = 80$

Violin 1 *p*

Violin 2 *p*

Viola *p*

Cello *p*

154

Vln. 1 *p*

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc. pizz.

161

Vln. 1 *fp*

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc. arco *mp*

168 *rit.* *a tempo*

Vln. 1 *p* *pp*

Vln. 2 *pp*

Vla. *pp*

Vlc. *pizz.* *arco* *pp*

3

176

Vln. 1

Vln. 2 *p*

Vla. *mf* *pp* *p*

Vlc. *p*

184

Vln. 1 *p* *cresc.* *f*

Vln. 2 *cresc.* *f*

Vla. *cresc.* *f*

Vlc. *cresc.* *f*

3 3

190

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

p

mp

p

197

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

sf

pp

p

pizz.

203

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

p

arco

p

211

Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vlc.

cresc.
f
cresc.
f
cresc.
f

Detailed description: This system contains measures 211 through 216. It features four staves: Violin 1 (Vln. 1), Violin 2 (Vln. 2), Viola (Vla.), and Violoncello (Vlc.). Measure 211 starts with a treble clef and a 3-measure rest for Vln. 1. Vln. 2 and Vlc. play quarter notes. Vln. 1 enters in measure 212 with a triplet of eighth notes. Vln. 2 and Vlc. continue with quarter notes. Vln. 1 has a fermata in measure 213. Vln. 2 and Vlc. play quarter notes. Vln. 1 has a fermata in measure 214. Vln. 2 and Vlc. play quarter notes. Vln. 1 has a fermata in measure 215. Vln. 2 and Vlc. play quarter notes. Measure 216 is the final measure of this system, with Vln. 1 having a fermata and Vln. 2 and Vlc. playing quarter notes. Dynamics include *cresc.* and *f*.

217

Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vlc.

ff
p
p
pizz.
p

Detailed description: This system contains measures 217 through 221. It features four staves: Violin 1 (Vln. 1), Violin 2 (Vln. 2), Viola (Vla.), and Violoncello (Vlc.). Measure 217 starts with a treble clef and a *ff* dynamic for Vln. 1. Vln. 2, Vla., and Vlc. play quarter notes. Vln. 1 has a fermata in measure 218. Vln. 2, Vla., and Vlc. play quarter notes. Measure 219 is the first measure of a new section in 3/4 time. Vln. 1 plays eighth notes with a *p* dynamic. Vln. 2, Vla., and Vlc. play eighth notes with a *p* dynamic. Measure 220 continues the eighth-note pattern. Vln. 1 has a *pizz.* marking. Vln. 2, Vla., and Vlc. play eighth notes. Measure 221 is the final measure of this system, with Vln. 1 playing eighth notes and Vln. 2, Vla., and Vlc. playing eighth notes. Dynamics include *ff*, *p*, and *pizz.*.

222

Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vlc.

Detailed description: This system contains measures 222 through 226. It features four staves: Violin 1 (Vln. 1), Violin 2 (Vln. 2), Viola (Vla.), and Violoncello (Vlc.). Measure 222 starts with a treble clef. Vln. 1 plays eighth notes. Vln. 2, Vla., and Vlc. play eighth notes. Measure 223 continues the eighth-note pattern. Vln. 1 has a fermata. Vln. 2, Vla., and Vlc. play eighth notes. Measure 224 continues the eighth-note pattern. Vln. 1 has a fermata. Vln. 2, Vla., and Vlc. play eighth notes. Measure 225 continues the eighth-note pattern. Vln. 1 has a fermata. Vln. 2, Vla., and Vlc. play eighth notes. Measure 226 is the final measure of this system, with Vln. 1 having a fermata and Vln. 2, Vla., and Vlc. playing eighth notes.

228

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

arco

pp

pp

pp

pp

I.

♩ = 56

234

Violin 1 (Vln. 1) and Violin 2 (Vln. 2) parts feature a melody with triplets and a dynamic marking of *p*. The Viola (Vla.) and Violoncello (Vlc.) parts provide harmonic support with a dynamic marking of *p*. The Vln. 1 part includes a triplet of eighth notes in measures 234, 235, and 236.

239

Violin 1 (Vln. 1) and Violin 2 (Vln. 2) parts feature a melody with triplets and a dynamic marking of *mp*. The Viola (Vla.) and Violoncello (Vlc.) parts provide harmonic support with a dynamic marking of *mp*. The Vln. 1 part includes a triplet of eighth notes in measures 239, 240, and 241.

243

Violin 1 (Vln. 1) and Violin 2 (Vln. 2) parts feature a melody with triplets and a dynamic marking of *p*. The Viola (Vla.) and Violoncello (Vlc.) parts provide harmonic support with a dynamic marking of *p*. The Vln. 1 part includes a triplet of eighth notes in measures 243, 244, and 245. The dynamic marking changes to *f* in measure 246.

247

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

Detailed description: This system contains measures 247-250. Vln. 1 has a melodic line with triplets and dynamics *mp* and *p*. Vln. 2 has a rhythmic accompaniment with dynamics *mp* and *p*. Vla. has a melodic line with dynamics *mp* and *p*. Vlc. has a bass line with dynamics *mp* and *p*. There are crescendo and decrescendo hairpins throughout.

250

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

Detailed description: This system contains measures 250-253. Vln. 1 starts with *mp* and crescendos to *f*. Vln. 2 has dynamics *f* and *f*. Vla. has dynamics *f* and *f*. Vlc. starts with *mf* and crescendos to *f*. There are hairpins for dynamics and a triplet in Vln. 1 at the end.

254

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

Detailed description: This system contains measures 254-257. Vln. 1 has dynamics *mp* and *sf* with triplets. Vln. 2 has dynamics *p* and *p*. Vla. has dynamics *p* and *sf*. Vlc. has dynamics *mp* and *p* with triplets. There are hairpins for dynamics and triplets throughout.

259

Vln. 1 *sf* *mp* *cresc.*

Vln. 2 *fp* *mp* *cresc.*

Vla. *sf* *sf* *mp* *cresc.*

Vlc. *sf* *p* *mp* *cresc.*

Detailed description: This system covers measures 259 to 262. The first violin part starts with a forte (*sf*) dynamic and features several triplet patterns. The second violin part begins with a fortissimo piano (*fp*) dynamic. The viola part maintains a forte (*sf*) dynamic throughout. The violoncello part starts with a forte (*sf*) dynamic, then softens to piano (*p*) before moving to mezzo-piano (*mp*) and finally crescendoing. A trill is indicated in the second violin part at measure 260.

263

Vln. 1 *f*

Vln. 2 *f*

Vla. *f*

Vlc. *f*

Detailed description: This system covers measures 263 to 265. All four string parts are marked with a forte (*f*) dynamic. The first violin part continues with triplet patterns. The second violin part features a dense texture of sixteenth notes. The viola part has a melodic line with accents. The violoncello part provides a steady accompaniment.

266

Vln. 1 *ff* *p* *mp*

Vln. 2 *ff* *p*

Vla. *ff* *p*

Vlc. *ff* *p*

Detailed description: This system covers measures 266 to 270. The first violin part starts with fortissimo (*ff*) and includes triplet patterns, then softens to piano (*p*) and mezzo-piano (*mp*). The second violin part also starts with fortissimo (*ff*) and softens to piano (*p*). The viola and violoncello parts follow a similar dynamic contour, starting with fortissimo (*ff*) and moving to piano (*p*). The first violin part features a crescendo hairpin in measure 269.

271

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

p

cresc.

275

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

f

279

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

p

pizz.

283

Vln. 1 *cresc.*

Vln. 2 *cresc.*

Vla. *cresc.*

Vlc. *cresc.*

arco

pizz.

285

Vln. 1 *f*

Vln. 2 *f*

Vla. *f*

Vlc. *f*

arco

ff

ff

f

287

Vln. 1 *mf*

Vln. 2 *mf*

Vla. *mf*

Vlc. *mf*

pp

p

pp

mp

p

p

290

Vln. 1 *mf* *f*

Vln. 2 *p* *mp* *f*

Vla. *mp* *f*

Vlc. *mp* *f*

293

Vln. 1 *mf* *f* *mf*

Vln. 2 *mf* *f* *mf*

Vla. *mf* *f* *mf*

Vlc. *mf* *f* *mf*

297

Vln. 1 *f* *fp*

Vln. 2 *f* *fp* con sord.

Vla. *f* *p* con sord.

Vlc. *f* *fp* con sord.

301

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

3

3

3

305

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

sul G

3

3

3

3

3

3

3