

Beginning with Time

String Quartet no. 3

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Beginning with Time: String Quartet no. 3

The title of this quartet comes from "To a Reason," a prose poem from Arthur Rimbaud's *Illuminations* (1886):

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

One step of yours is the enlistment of a new humanity and its onward march.

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

"Change our fate, sift out the scourges, beginning with time," to you these children sing. "Raise no matter where the substance of our fortunes and desires," they entreat you.

Arrival of always, who will go everywhere.

(Translation by the composer)

The poem intimates that we are all children who plead in song for a change of fate. Moved by music--a tap on the drum that releases a world of sound--we ask for the change to begin with a sifting out, the separation of the scourges of time from its potential to incubate "the new harmony" and "the new love."

My quartet aims to give musical form to this sifting out. It answers to what may be the primary feature of our relationship to time: the wish to have *enough* time, time enough for our feelings and hopes and desires and plans to be fulfilled, to come out right. The quartet reorders its musical time to accommodate that wish. Its two movements occur in a five-part alternation rather than a two-part sequence. Both have a slow basic tempo but they pace themselves in contrasting, complementary ways. The first movement is volatile and tends to quicken its note motion. The second movement is tranquil and tends to linger. The recurrences of these movements relieve them, reshape them, and expand the time allotted to them. Within this large pulsation, each movement eventually finds the time it wants and needs, both in itself and as the complement of the other.

The first movement aims to reconcile longing and urgency, soaring and swirling, in summoning up the "arrival of always": transfigured time. The second movement aims to reconcile an affinity for tender melody with a pensive flow of counterpoint offset by chordal passages. The first movement is essentially the same each time we hear it, but it is also new because its recurrences change which instrument plays what part, thus transforming the texture and sonority and sometimes the melody and harmony. The second movement changes differently. Upon returning it recalls its first occurrence but only to leave it behind. As time passes, it becomes clear that neither movement can arrive anywhere, let alone go everywhere, without the help of the other. Only when the returning second movement comes to rest can the first movement, which has already returned once, return again and do the same. Only together can the two movements plead fully for a time, a someday, in which the wishes of the children might be granted.

The pains and possibilities of time also shaped the composition of this quartet, which extended over a period of twelve years.

Duration: 20-21 minutes.

Performance note: where the marking is needed, the main voice is indicated by a boldface capital **M**, canceled where necessary by a double slash //. At times the main voice moves rapidly from one instrument to another.

Beginning with Time

I.

Lawrence Kramer

$\text{♩} = 58$

Violin 1

Violin 2

Viola

Cello

p

p

p

p

M

5

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

cresc.

mp

cresc.

mp

cresc.

mp

cresc.

mp

M

cresc.

mp

4/9

Vln. 1

M

p

cresc.

Vln. 2

3

p

cresc.

Vla.

M

p

cresc.

Vlc.

p

cresc.

13

Vln. 1

f

M

Vln. 2

f

3

3

Vla.

f

M

Vlc.

f

Violins 1 and 2, Viola, and Violoncello score, measures 16-19. The score is in 3/4 time and features a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The tempo is marked *rit.* (ritardando) for measures 16-18 and *a tempo* for measure 19. The dynamics are marked *mp* (mezzo-piano), *p* (piano), *f* (forte), and *mf* (mezzo-forte). The Viola part includes a triplet in measure 16 and a rapid sixteenth-note passage in measure 17. The Violoncello part features a triplet in measure 16 and a rapid sixteenth-note passage in measure 17. The Violins 1 and 2 parts feature a triplet in measure 16 and a rapid sixteenth-note passage in measure 17.

20

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

p

M

p

p

p

sf

24

accel.

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

fp

M

p

sf

sf

sf

♩ = 63

28

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

mp

cresc.

f

mp cresc.

f

mp

cresc.

f

mp

cresc.

f

6/8 M

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

31

3

3

3

cresc.

ff

rit.

58

p

p

p

p

Violins 1 and 2, Viola, and Violoncello, measures 35-38. The score is in 4/4 time. Violin 1 starts with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (B-flat). It features a melodic line with triplets and a dynamic marking of *espress.* (espressivo). Violin 2 also has a treble clef and one flat, playing a more rhythmic accompaniment with triplets and a dynamic marking of *mp* (mezzo-piano). The Viola part is in the alto register with a treble clef and one flat, featuring a melodic line with a dynamic marking of *mp*. The Violoncello part is in the bass register with a bass clef and one flat, playing a rhythmic accompaniment with a dynamic marking of *fp* (forzando). The score includes various musical notations such as triplets, slurs, and dynamic markings.

Violins 1 and 2, Viola, and Violoncello, measures 43-45. The score is in 3/4 time. Measure 43 starts with a key signature change to one flat (B-flat major/D minor). Violin 1 has a triplet of eighth notes (G4, A4, B4) followed by a quarter note (C5), then a triplet of eighth notes (B4, A4, G4) followed by a quarter note (F#4). Violin 2 has a quarter note (G3), a quarter rest, a quarter note (B2), and a quarter note (C3). Viola has a quarter note (G2), a quarter rest, and a quarter note (B2). Violoncello has a quarter note (G2), a quarter note (B2), and a quarter note (C3). Measure 44 features a crescendo (cresc.) and a double bar line. Violin 1 has a triplet of eighth notes (G4, A4, B4) followed by a quarter note (C5), then a triplet of eighth notes (B4, A4, G4) followed by a quarter note (F#4). Violin 2 has a quarter note (G3), a quarter rest, a quarter note (B2), and a quarter note (C3). Viola has a quarter note (G2), a quarter rest, and a quarter note (B2). Violoncello has a quarter note (G2), a quarter note (B2), and a quarter note (C3). Measure 45 features a forte (f) dynamic and a mezzo-forte (M) marking. Violin 1 has a quarter note (G4), a quarter note (A4), a quarter note (B4), and a quarter note (C5). Violin 2 has a quarter note (G3), a quarter note (B2), a quarter note (C3), and a quarter note (D3). Viola has a quarter note (G2), a quarter note (B2), a quarter note (C3), and a quarter note (D3). Violoncello has a quarter note (G2), a quarter note (B2), a quarter note (C3), and a quarter note (D3).

46 rit. Erratic; breaking down

Vln. 1 *cresc.*

Vln. 2 *cresc.*

Vla. *cresc.*

Vlc. *cresc.*

II.

 $\text{♩} = 80$

48

Vln. 1 *p*

Vln. 2 *p*

Vla. *p*

Vlc. *mp* *p* ³

54

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla. *legato*

Vlc. *pizz.*

61

Vln. 1 *fp* *fp*

Vln. 2

Vla.

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

68

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

p

M

sul G

73

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

sul G

p

77 $\text{♩} = 58$

Vln. 1 *p* **M** In dialogue with cello

Vln. 2 *p*

Vla. *p* **M** In dialogue with violin

Vlc. *p*

82

Vln. 1 *mp*

Vln. 2 *mp* **M**

Vla. *mp*

Vlc. *mp*

86

Vln. 1 *p* **M** *f*

Vln. 2 *p* *f*

Vla. *p* *f*

Vlc. *p* *f*

90

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

mp

p

mp

p

mp

p

mp

p

93

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

mf

rit.

a tempo

f

f

f

mp

f

97

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

M

p

mp

p

p

mp

p

sf

acc.

sf

mp

sf

101 $\text{♩} = 63$

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

Vln. 2 *sf* *p* *mp*

Vla. *fp* *M* *mp*

Vlc. *sf* 3 3 3 3 3 3

105

Vln. 1 *f*

Vln. 2 *f*

Vla. *sul pont.* *ordin.* *M*

Vlc. *f* *M* //

108 *dolce* *rit.* $\text{♩} = 58$

Vln. 1 *ff* *p*

Vln. 2 *ff* *p*

Vla. *dolce* *ff* *p*

Vlc. *ff* *dolce* *p*

112 *accel.*

Vln. 1 *sf* *sf*

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc. *mp*

116 $\text{♩} = 63$ *rit.* HERE

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc. *p*

119 $\text{♩} = 58$

Vln. 1 *f*

Vln. 2 *f*

Vla. *f*

Vlc. *M* *f*

accel.

123

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

p

pizz.

127 $\text{♩} = 63$

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

arco Playfully

cresc.

M

pizz.

M

cresc.

130

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

f

f

f

rit.

♩ = 58

132

Vln. 1 *ff* *f* *mf* *p*

Vln. 2 *ff* *f* *mf* *p*

Vla. *ff* *f* *mf* *p*

Vlc. *ff* *mf* *p*

arco

135

Vln. 1 *p* *mp*

Vln. 2 *p*

Vla. *mp* *p*

Vlc. *p*

M

Violins in dialogue

137

Vln. 1 *M*

Vln. 2 *M*

Vla. *M*

Vlc. *M*

Violins 1 and 2, Viola, and Violoncello score. The score is divided into two systems. The first system covers measures 1-2, and the second system covers measures 3-4. Dynamics include *mf*, *fp*, *p*, and *M*. The Viola part has a double bar line in measure 3. The Violoncello part has triplets in measures 1 and 2.

Violins 1 and 2, Viola, and Violoncello score. The Violins 1 and 2 parts are in treble clef, and the Viola and Violoncello parts are in bass clef. The score includes dynamics such as *p* (piano), *rit.* (ritardando), and *M* (marcato). The Viola part includes the instruction *sul C* (sul ponticello). The Violoncello part includes the instruction *3* (triple). The score is marked with a double bar line in the second measure of the Violins 1 and 2 parts.

Violin 1

148 $\text{♩} = 80$

p

Violin 2

p

Viola

p

Cello

p

Vln. 1

154

p

M

Vln. 2

legato

3

Vla.

pizz.

Vlc.

Vln. 1

161

fp

Vln. 2

arco

M

Vla.

mp

Vlc.

168 *rit.* *a tempo*

Vln. 1 *p* *pp*

Vln. 2 *pp*

Vla. *pp*

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

3

176

Vln. 1 *p*

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

Misterioso

190

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

p

mp

p

197

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

sf

M

pizz.

pp

p

203

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

poco riten.

a tempo

p

arco

p

211

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

cresc.

f

cresc.

f

cresc.

f

cresc.

f

217

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

ff

p

p

p

pizz.

p

M

p

222

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

228

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

arco

pp

pp

pp

pp

M In dialogue with viola

Violins 1 and 2, Viola, and Violoncello, measures 243-246. The score shows a dynamic shift from *p* to *f* across the measures. The Viola part includes a marking 'M' above a measure in measure 245.

247

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

mp *p*

mp *p*

mp *p*

mp *p*

250

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

mp *f*

f

f

mf *f*

rit. *a tempo*

M

254

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

mp *p* *sf*

p *sf*

M *mp* *p* *sf*

acc.

259 $\text{♩} = 63$

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

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

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

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

263 *dolce*

Vln. 1 *f* *M*

Vln. 2 *f*

Vla. *f*

Vlc. *f*

266 *rit.* $\text{♩} = 58$

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

Vln. 2 *ff* *p*

Vla. *ff* *p*

Vlc. *ff* *p*

271 *accel.* $\text{♩} = 63$

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

p *cresc.* *cresc.* *cresc.*

sf *mp* *cresc.*

M

Violins 1 and 2, Viola, and Violoncello score, measures 275-280. The score is in 3/4 time with a tempo of 58 bpm. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The score includes dynamics such as *rit.*, *f*, and *M*. The Viola part has a double bar line at measure 275. The Violoncello part has a double bar line at measure 275. The score is written for four staves: Violin 1, Violin 2, Viola, and Violoncello.

[illegible]

283 *accel.*

Vln. 1 *cresc.* *arco* *f*

Vln. 2 *cresc.* *f*

Vla. *poco cresc.* *f*

Vlc. *poco cresc.* *pizz.* *f*

$\text{♩} = 63$

286 *arco* *rit.*

Vln. 1 *ff* *mf* *pp*

Vln. 2 *ff* *f* *mf* *mp* *pp*

Vla. *ff* *f* *mf* *p*

Vlc. *ff* *f* *mf* *p*

289 $\text{♩} = 58$

Vln. 1 *p*

Vln. 2 *M* *mp* *p*

Vla. *p* *M* *mp*

Vlc. *p*

[illegible]

294

Vln. 1

f 3 3 3 3

Vln. 2

f

Vla.

f

Vlc.

f

M

mf

mf

mf

297

Vln. 1

f *ff* *f* *fp*

Vln. 2

f *ff* *f* *fp*

Vla.

f *ff* *f* *fp*

Vlc.

f *ff* *f* *fp*

legato

*riten.**a tempo*

302

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

con sord.

p

306

rit.

307

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

310

 $\text{♩} = 48$

sul G

310

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

niente

313