

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 relive 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
p

Violin 2
p

Viola
p

Cello
p

Vln. 1
5
M
cresc. *mp*

Vln. 2
cresc. *mp*

Vla.
cresc. *mp*

Vlc.
M
cresc. *mp*

4

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

M

p

cresc.

13

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

f

M

f

f

f

M

16

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

mp

p

f

mp

p

f

mp

p

mf

f

mp

p

f

20

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

p

M

p

p

p

sf

24

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

accel.

$\text{♩} = 66$

fp

M

p

sf

sf

sf

28

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

mp

cresc.

f

mp cresc.

f

mp

cresc.

f

mp

cresc.

f

6/8 M $\text{♩} = 58$

Vln. 1 *cresc.* *ff* *rit.* *p*

Vln. 2 *cresc.* *ff* *p*

Vla. *cresc.* *ff* *p*

Vlc. *cresc.* *ff* *p*

35

Vln. 1 *espress.* *mp*

Vln. 2 *mp*

Vla. *fp*

Vlc. *fp*

39 M

Vln. 1 *cresc.* *f*

Vln. 2 *cresc.* *f*

Vla. *mp* *cresc.* *f*

Vlc. *fp* *cresc.* *f*

43

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

cresc.

f

M

f

cresc.

f

cresc.

f

cresc.

f

46

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

Erratic; breaking down

cresc.

f

rit.

p

fp

cresc.

f

p

fp

cresc.

f

sf

p

fp

cresc.

p

II.

$\text{♩} = 80$

50

Vln. 1 *p*

Vln. 2 *p*

Vla. *p*

Vcl. *mp* *p*³

56

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla. *legato*

Vcl. *pizz.*

63

Vln. 1 *fp* *fp*

Vln. 2

Vla.

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

70

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

p

M

sul G

75

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

sul G

p

82 $\text{♩} = 58$

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

Vln. 2 *p*

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

Vlc. *p*

87

Vln. 1 *mp* **M**

Vln. 2 *mp* **M**

Vla. *mp*

Vlc. *mp*

91

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

Vln. 2 *p* *f*

Vla. *p* *f*

Vlc. *p* *f*

95

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

mp *p*

mp *p*

mp *p*

mp *p*

98

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

mf *f*

mf *f*

mp *f*

mp *f*

rit. *a tempo*

102

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

M *p* *sf*

mp *p*

p

M *mp* *sf*

accel.

106 $\text{♩} = 66$

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

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

Vla. *fp* *mp*

Vlc. *sf* M

110

Vln. 1 *f*

Vln. 2 *f*

Vla. sul pont. ordin. *f* M

Vlc. *f* M

113 $\text{♩} = 58$

Vln. 1 *ff* *p*

Vln. 2 *ff* *p*

Vla. *ff* *p*

Vlc. *ff* *p*

dolce *rit.*

117 *accel.*

Vln. 1 *sf sf*

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vcl. *mp*

121 *rit.*

$\text{♩} = 66$

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vcl. *p*

124 *f*

$\text{♩} = 58$

M

Vln. 1 *f*

Vln. 2 *f*

Vla. *f*

Vcl. *f*

♩ = 58

137

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

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

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

Vlc. *ff* *mf* *p*

140

Vln. 1 *p* *mp*

Vln. 2

Vla. *mp* *p*

Vlc.

Violins in dialogue

142

Vln. 1 *M*

Vln. 2 *M*

Vla.

Vlc.

accel.

♩ = 66

144

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

mf *fp* *mf* *p* *mf* *p* *mf* *p*

M //

3 3 3 3

rit.

♩ = 58

148

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

p *p* *p* *p*

M //

sul C

3 3

153 $\text{♩} = 80$

Violin 1 *p*

Violin 2 *p*

Viola *p*

Cello *p*

159

Vln. 1 *p*

Vln. 2 *M*

Vla. *legato*

Vlc. *pizz.*

166

Vln. 1 *fp*

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc. *arco* *M* *mp*

173 *rit.* *a tempo*

Vln. 1 *p* *pp*

Vln. 2 *pp*

Vla. *pp*

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

3

181

Vln. 1 *p*

Vln. 2 *p*

Vla. *mf* *pp* *p*

Vlc. *p*

189

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

Vln. 2 *cresc.* *f*

Vla. *cresc.* *f*

Vlc. *cresc.* *f*

3 3

Misterioso

195

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

p

mp

p

202

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

pp

p

M

sf

sf

sf

sf

pizz.

208

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

poco riten.

a tempo

p

p

p

arco

p

p

216

Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vlc.

cresc.
f

cresc.
f

cresc.
f

cresc.
f

Detailed description: This system contains measures 216 through 221. It features four staves: Violin 1 (Vln. 1), Violin 2 (Vln. 2), Viola (Vla.), and Violoncello (Vlc.). Measure 216 starts with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). Vln. 1 has a triplet of eighth notes. Vln. 2 has a half note. Vla. has a half note. Vlc. has a half note. Measures 217-221 show a gradual increase in dynamics, marked with 'cresc.' and 'f'. Vln. 1 has a fermata over the final measure. Vln. 2 has a fermata over the final measure. Vla. has a fermata over the final measure. Vlc. has a fermata over the final measure.

222

Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vlc.

ff
p

p

p

M
pizz.
p

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 and a key signature of one sharp (F#). Vln. 1 has a fermata over the first measure, then a dynamic marking of 'ff'. Vln. 2 has a half note. Vla. has a half note. Vlc. has a half note. Measures 223-226 show a change in dynamics and articulation. Vln. 1 has a dynamic marking of 'p'. Vln. 2 has a dynamic marking of 'p'. Vla. has a dynamic marking of 'p'. Vlc. has a dynamic marking of 'p' and 'pizz.' (pizzicato). Vln. 1 has a dynamic marking of 'p' and 'M' (marcato). Vln. 2 has a dynamic marking of 'p'. Vla. has a dynamic marking of 'p'. Vlc. has a dynamic marking of 'p' and 'pizz.'.

227

Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vlc.

Detailed description: This system contains measures 227 through 231. It features four staves: Violin 1 (Vln. 1), Violin 2 (Vln. 2), Viola (Vla.), and Violoncello (Vlc.). Measure 227 starts with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). Vln. 1 has a half note. Vln. 2 has a half note. Vla. has a half note. Vlc. has a half note. Measures 228-231 show a change in dynamics and articulation. Vln. 1 has a dynamic marking of 'ff'. Vln. 2 has a dynamic marking of 'p'. Vla. has a dynamic marking of 'p'. Vlc. has a dynamic marking of 'p'.

233

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

pp

pp

pp

arco

pp

pp

I.

M In dialogue with viola

239 $\text{♩} = 58$

Vln. 1 *p*

Vln. 2 *p*

Vla. *p*

Vlc. *p*

M In dialogue with violin

244

Vln. 1 *mp*

Vln. 2 *mp*

Vla. *mp*

Vlc. *mp*

248

Vln. 1 *p* *f*

Vln. 2 *p* *f*

Vla. *p* *f* M

Vlc. *p* *f*

252

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

mp *p*

mp *p*

mp *p*

mp *p*

255

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

mp *f*

f

mf *f*

rit. *a tempo*

M

259

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

mp *p* *sf*

p *sf* *sf*

M *mp* *p* *sf* *sf*

accel.

264 $\text{♩} = 66$

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

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

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

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

268 *dolce*

Vln. 1 *f* *M*

Vln. 2 *f* *M*

Vla. *f*

Vlc. *f*

271 *rit.* $\text{♩} = 58$

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

Vln. 2 *ff* *p*

Vla. *ff* *p*

Vlc. *ff* *p*

276 *accel.* ♩ = 66

Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vlc.

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

280 *rit.* ♩ = 58

Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vlc.

f *f* *M* *f*

284 ♩ = 66 *pizz.*

Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vlc.

p *p* *M pizz.* *p*

288

Vln. 1 *cresc.* *f* arco

Vln. 2 *cresc.* *f* arco

Vla. *poco cresc.* *f* arco

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

291 arco

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

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

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

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

294 ♩ = 58

Vln. 1

Vln. 2 *mp* *p*

Vla. *p* *mp*

Vlc.

riten. *a tempo* ♩ = 66

307

Vln. 1

Vln. 2 *con sord.*

Vla. *p*

Vlc.

rit. *a tempo*

312

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

♩ = 58

315 *sul G*

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

niente