



a solemn stillness holds

for string quartet

Justin Lapierre

ca. 6' 00"
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Waterloo, Ontario

Composer's Note

In the poem 'Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard' by the 18th century English poet Thomas Gray, the poet illustrates his lament by comparing it to a dim horizon at sunset:

Now fades the glimmering landscape on the sight,

And all the air a solemn stillness holds,

Save where the beetle wheels his droning flight,

And drowsy tinklings lull the distant folds.

This piece illustrates the fading nature of this stanza by manipulating a quote from the incipit of the Rondeau from J.S. Bach's Keyboard Partita No. 2 in C minor, BWV 826 (shown below). Bach's toying with first inversion tonic harmony in this timeless two-voice keyboard piece creates an illusion of oases of false major tonality floating in a sea of minor tonality; I find this fosters a kind of nostalgic *affekt*, hence it stands here to represent a memory which is slowly distorted and modified gradually throughout the whole of the piece until it has faded completely near the end, dissolving into *flautando* open strings.



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Slow and delicate ($\text{♩} = 56$)

Justin Lapierre (b. 1998)

Violin I: pizz., *mp*, *p*, *pp*, arco (**)

Violin II: *) *pp* senza vibr. e sul tasto

Viola: pizz., *mp*, *p*, arco (**)

Violoncello: *) *pp* senza vibr., sul tasto

⑧

vln I: pizz., *mp*, *p*, *pp*

vln II: **)

vla: pizz., *mp*, *p*, *pp*

vcl: **) sul tasto

*) The composer acknowledges the issues in intonation which are prone to arise from playing without vibrato, especially in unison with other players. The *senza vibr.* markings search to create a ghostly heterophonic sound akin to that of Arabic rebabs or a consort of viols. Therefore, small discrepancies in tuning are not unwelcome in this context.

**) The headless stems within the feathered beams only represent the overall gesture of speeding up and slowing down. They do not represent the exact number of repetitions, which is *ad libitum*.

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14 arco ord., senza vibr. (sul E only) **A**

vln I *pp* stems up: sul E stems down: sul A *mp* senza vibr. e sul tasto sempre

vln II *pp* ord., senza vibr. *mp* senza vibr. e sul tasto sempre

vla arco sul pont. *p* poco espress. *mp* senza vibr. e sul tasto sempre

vcl *mp* senza vibr. e sul tasto sempre

23

vln I *mp* *mf* *pp* *mp*

vln II *mp*

vla *mp*

vcl *mp*

30

vln I *pp* *mf* *pp* sul pont. 3 3

vln II *pp* *mf* *pp* sul pont. 3

vla 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 *p* e détaché sempre

vcl *p* détaché sempre, vibrato normale

poco a poco sul pont. - - - - - sul pont.

37

vln I stems up: sul E
stems down: sul A
ord. e vibr. norm. *mf* *p* *mf* *p* *mf* gliss. gliss.

vln II stems up: sul E
stems down: sul A
ord. e vibr. norm. *mf* *p* gliss.

vla 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 *p* *pp* alla écho *p* sub.

vcl 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 *p* *pp* alla écho *p* sub.

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44

vln I *p* sempre *gliss.* *mf*

vln II *mf* *p* sempre *mf*

vla 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3

vcl 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3

51

vln I *p* *pp* alla écho *pp* sul pont. *3* *3*

vln II *p* *pp* alla écho *pp* sul pont. *3* *3*

vla 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3

vcl 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3

B

rit. - - - - a tempo

poco a poco sul pont. - - - - sul pont.

57

poco a poco ord. ----- ord.

vln I

vln II

vla

vcl

mf

p

pp

sul pont. sub.

sul pont.

sul pont.

sul pont.

61

poco a poco ord. ----- ord.

vln I

vln II

vla

vcl

pp sempre

f

pp sempre

f

pp sempre

f

pp sempre

f

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67 **C** (sul E only)

vln I

vln II

vla

vcl

f

73

vln I

vln II

vla

vcl

sf

f

79

Violin I: *p*

Violin II: *p* to *pp*

Viola: *p* to *pp*

Violoncello: *p* to *pp*

84

D

Violin I: *pp*, short, *pp* sul tasto, *pp* sul tasto, *pp* détaché sempre

Violin II: *pp*, short, *pp* sul tasto, *pp* sul tasto

Viola: *pp*, short, stems up: sul G, stems down: sul C, *pp* sul tasto, *pp*, *pp*

Violoncello: *pp* sul tasto, *pp* sul tasto, *pp*

95

Violin I: triplets

Violin II: *pp* détaché sempre, triplets

Viola: *pp*, triplets, *pp* détaché sempre

Violoncello: *pp*, triplets

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103

vln I

vln II

vla

vcl

mp

mp

111

rit. - - - - - a tempo rit. poco

vla

poco a poco più flautando - - - - - flautando (sul tasto sempre)

119

a poco sin' al fine

vla

più e più flautando - - - - - molto flautando, little to no bow pressure

127

vla

vcl

ppp senza flautando (sul tasto sempre)

pp

long

long

(sul G & C as before)