

Ad Infinitum

for solo violin

(September 2000)

Richard Whalley

8.10.2000 11.20.00 10.20.00 10.20.00
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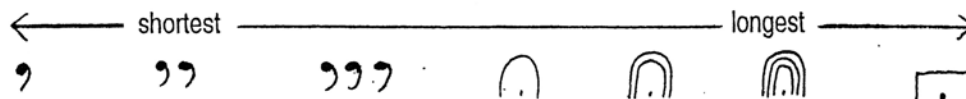
Ad Infinitum

for solo violin

duration: c. 8 mins

Performance notes:

- 1) Timing: in general the piece should be played with a *lot* of flexibility, as if being improvised. Almost all of the tempo markings are intended to allow plenty of leeway, the only exception being in the few places marked "rhythmic", where it is essential that the music be played strictly in tempo. At all times the performer should strive for the ideal balance: maximum time should be allowed for silences to resonate, for inner structures of sounds to emerge, etc. but the effect of this is lost if the music loses its structural coherence, its internal relationships and its sense of always "going somewhere".
- 2) Lengths of fermatas are all relative:



- 3) Accidentals: an arrow affixed to an accidental indicates that the pitch should be bent by *approximately* a quarter-tone in the direction of the arrow. The performer is free to use his/her ear to judge the exact pitch of these microtones.

Thus:

$\sharp \uparrow \approx \frac{1}{4}$ tone sharp
 $\sharp \uparrow \uparrow \approx \frac{3}{4}$ tone sharp
 $\flat \uparrow \approx \frac{1}{4}$ tone flat

$\flat \downarrow \approx \frac{1}{4}$ tone flat
 $\sharp \downarrow \approx \frac{1}{4}$ tone sharp
 $\flat \downarrow \downarrow \approx \frac{3}{4}$ tone flat

- 4) Metrical hierarchy: complete bar-lines should feel like bar-lines, preceded by an up-beat, and indicating where the down-beats should occur. Dotted bar-lines simply divide time, but should not be "felt" in this way. Where "extended bars" occur, i.e. where there is an absence of complete bar-lines (bar 18, bar 39, etc.), there should be a sense of timelessness, and a sense of continuity between the different parts of the bar, even when separated by rests.
- 5) The performer is encouraged to experiment as much as possible with different colours / nuances of gesture, etc. in order to bring out the many moods of this music, and it is hoped that the descriptive adjectives found within the score are helpful.

A confession on behalf of the composer:

Many of the playing techniques found within this piece are quite unconventional and I did struggle to try and find the best way of notating some sections. As an amateur viola player myself I know that everything should be possible, as I can just about play everything myself, only not *necessarily* in tune, and certainly not *necessarily* making the pleasantest of sounds in the process. Not that pleasantness is always my first priority... In any case I hope the following guidelines make the score easier to decipher and more enjoyable to play:

Bar 1: the bowing indicated is my ideal, starting the initial down-bow not too far from the tip. This should be helpful in deciding on the speed of this gesture, and the degree of *precipitando* whenever it comes up. I have no objection to the bowing in bar 2 being split (discreetly) if this is really necessary, so long as the tempo doesn't slow down as a result.

Bars 5/6: the raised G on the D string should be just sharp enough to cause audible beating with the open G string, and the timbre of the slow bow should bring this out. As a result it should not be necessary to change bow during bar 6.

Bar 12: it should be possible to get a subtle buzzing sound from the vibrating open A string (from the L.H. pizz.) touching the L.H. finger that is fingering the lowered G on the D string. This is done by moving the finger on the D string slightly towards the A string, and holding it in such a way that the plucked A string vibrates against the finger, but not so much as to damp the A string's vibration.

Bar 13: *molto sul tasto*: on the node of III indicates a particular sound quality (rather like a flute) that is achieved when the bow is *exactly* half-way between the bridge and the L.H. finger (so the exact position of the node will vary according to where the string is stopped by the L.H.)

Bar 18: for reference, up until the first dotted bar-line is bar 18a, followed by 18b, etc. through to 18f. See point 4 of the introduction for the reasoning behind this.

Bar 18c (middle of bottom system of p.1): I struggled with how to notate this! A counterpoint of timbre should result from relationship between R.H. and L.H. pizzicato. What makes this timbre interesting is the fact that when the L.H. is plucking the string it momentarily stops the string, thus changing the pitch if the R.H. happens to pluck the string at the same time. Opportunities for this to happen should be made the most of and enjoyed! Therefore the L.H. should pluck the position of the string where a C natural (the small note in brackets) would sound when this coincidence occurs.

Bar 18e: (i) a continuation of this counterpoint between L.H. pizz. and what the right hand is doing, and due to the incorporation of bow here, the pitch C resulting from the plucking of the A string with the L.H. should become increasingly part of the texture. A *slaccatissimo* spiccato at the extreme tip of the bow is recommended in order that this texture and its inherent cross-rhythms unfold with maximum possible clarity.

(ii) half way through the top line of page 2 the C natural that had resulted from the L.H. pizz. is formally incorporated into the harmony by losing the attack from the L.H. pizz. in such a way that the L.H. finger motion simply evolves into a tremolo between the open A and the C (as

indicated). This change should be felt as completely organic and natural, and should not feel like a new texture.

(iii) hitting the strings with the tip of the bow: the result of this should be a subtle accent at the beginning of each gesture, so the strings should not be hit from a distance of more than a few millimeters by the bow.

Bar 19: Phew! What a relief that's over!

Bar 30: The slide should begin almost immediately, and preferably should not be broken over two strings. The composer realises that a sweeter sound is possible if the F# is played on the A string (rather than the D string), so the performer may switch to the A string somewhere within this slide if this can be done very subtly. A change of strings is unavoidable in **bar 33**.

Bar 35: *senza vib.* throughout this passage, or atleast until **bar 38**, where a slight vibrato is permissible. This passage should be played relatively legato, whilst striving to bring out the "swing" of the extremely slow 9/4 metre.

Bar 39: (i) the pizzicati tremoli should be played as fast and as lightly as possible, without any sense of regular internal metre. It should be easier to attain this arhythmic sense of speed if atleast two fingers, possibly three, are used in fast alternation throughout the passage (the only exception being the loud L.H. pizzicati which at two points penetrate the predominantly R.H. pizzicato texture).

(ii) the timing of this bar is should be guided by the proportional notation of this bar, and it is important that the whole bar does not last longer than 20 – 30 secs.

Bars 40-54: this is the most exhilarating part of the piece, so it is important that none of the gestures last too long. The two-string glissandi bars (41, 43, 46, 48) especially should not be too slow; the length of these bars 41 and 43 should be dictated by how long a single bow stroke can sustain the dynamic level indicated, and the lengths of bars 46 and 48 should be in the indicated proportional relationships to these bars.

Bars 69-72: this whole passage is made up of false harmonics on the D string in first position, with the first finger firmly rooted to the note E.

Bars 77-81: exactly the same as above, except an octave higher, so now the fundamental is the open E, and the whole passage should be played on the E string. Consequently this passage can be played either in first position, or right at the top of the string, but the harmonics (especially the higher harmonics) tend to come out clearer at the top of the string so this approach is recommended.

Bar 92: as the harmonics disappear into the stratosphere their pitch will become increasing difficult to perceive, until it is impossible to hear any pitch. It is important not to be too pedantic over the rhythm in the second half of the bar, which is to be played in one single bow stroke thus allowing the music to gently exhale.

(R.H. 4 = F = L.H. 3 = D)

(18e) L.H. pizz. mp \rightarrow 3 \rightarrow 3 \rightarrow c. 3 secs \rightarrow gradually becoming less spiccato c. 5 secs \rightarrow c. 1 sec. c. 1.5 secs \rightarrow extreme tip, still less spiccato (senza pizzicato) \rightarrow hit strings with extreme tip of bow (as before) \rightarrow hit \rightarrow hit sul pont

R.H. bow p (A.B. metric relationship) (dynamics for bow and left hand pizz.) PP \rightarrow PP \rightarrow PP \rightarrow PP

18f As before nat. (10) (4) (V) (10 beats) as if for the first time

f \rightarrow f

22 (6 beats) (in tempo) (13)

f \rightarrow mf

26 (13) (13 beats) Sub. nat. \rightarrow poco sul pont. (interruption!) mf

p no dim. mf \rightarrow p mf \rightarrow mf

occel. - - - - - poco rit.

sul tasto : on node of III