

Score

Katharina S. G. Mueller (2024)

Three Portraits

for three violas

I. Schumann-ish Tune (4')

II. Nico Muhly Musings (5')

III. Shostakovich Shuffle (4')

To my dear friends Kimbo, Jóia, and Izzi.

Notes on the Piece:

Three Portraits is a collection of three short movements written in the musical language of Robert Schumann, Nico Muhly, and Dmitri Shostakovich respectively. As none of these composers wrote for a three-violas ensemble, the heart of each movement is the translation of its composer's distinctive musical elements onto the viola. Schumann's vignette travels between a wistful dream and rising trepidation, Muhly's the invigorated rhythmic textures of his viola solo, followed at last by a celebration of the undaunted octatonicism of Shostakovich.

I. Schumann-ish Tune (4')

Inspired by the chromatic harmonies and wistful melodies of Schumann, this movement seeks to capture the dreamy wandering of some of Schumann's piano and string chamber music. A hint of Schubertian rhythmic impetus is present in the triplet figures as well.

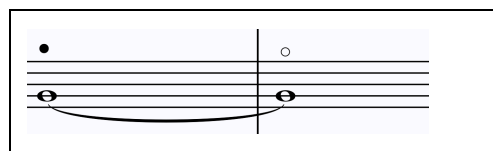
The sung melodies in Viola I are performed on a simple open [a] vowel, and need not be anything more than beautiful and clear above the viola trio texture. As with the established performance practice of Schumann's music, the performers are invited to push and pull the tempo as the expressive harmony and the shaping of phrases necessitate:

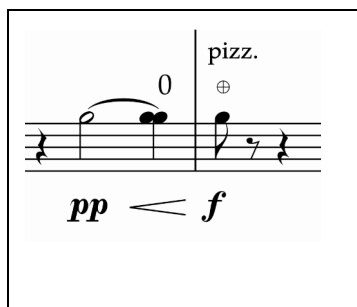
The music should build in intensity, including dynamic and increased tempo, up to m. 27, and then relax back into tempo at Reh. C. Intensity should be utmost at Reh. E, driving forward into m. 52, which should then be dramatically stretched in time. Reh. A, Reh. C and Reh. G should all be equivalent tempi, a comfortable fundamental tempo for the movement.

II. Nico Muhly Musings (5')

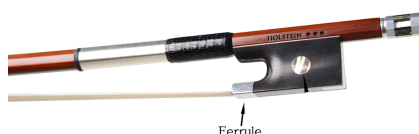
This movement is built in the style of the Nico Muhly viola concerto, with one solo viola line carrying through every texture, and bridging one texture to the next. The two other voices should remain in an accompanying role, but with equally ecstatic and shimmering sound.

Harmonic Pressure vs. Ordinary Pressure involves one note on the string, and is only a difference in finger pressure, often resulting in a different pitch for the harmonic.





Pizz. with ferrule: alternative to a finger pizzicato, the string is plucked by picking it with the bow ferrule at the end of an up bow.

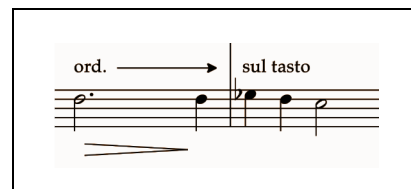


Alternatively, the player may choose to pizz. with their fingernail. Articulation should nonetheless be dry and clipped.

III. Shostakovich Shuffle (4')

To be played with all the grit and grunge of a late Shostakovich quartet. Inspiration for this movement comes especially from the second movement of the String Octet, Opus 11. From the beginning to D, and then from G to the end, the rhythms are very square. Dramatic contrasts in dynamics (especially on accents) should be heavily emphasized. Reh. G should feel unbearable slow at first, so much so that the music has to speed back up. The original tempo is reached finally at Reh. K, which should be as much sound and energy as possible.

Sul tasto (s.t.) to Ord. A gradual shift from playing over the fingerboard to playing at a normal distance from the bridge, or vice versa, indicated with an arrow.



The middle section from D to G can be interpreted with more wistful, reluctant rubato rhythms. Each line is horizontally motivic and should be performed with expressive shape. The dissonance starting around m.53 should be thoroughly enjoyed, and the fermata at m. 60 (one before Reh. G) should be long, up to twice the whole note length, and the following cesura before G should also be long, not letting the audience know what's coming next.

To reach out to the composer, contact katya.mueller.24@gmail.com

Schumann-ish Tune

Katharina S. G. Mueller (2024)

♩=54 Gentle + Warm

Voice Sung on [a]

Viola I

Viola II

Viola III

pp *mp* *pp* *pp* *mf*

p *mp* *pp* *mp*

p *mp* *pp* *mp*

8

I

II

III

p *pp* *mf* *mp*

p *p*

p *p*

A

♩=84 Churning

5

Viola

pizz.

14

pizz.

I

II

III

mp

p

mp

p

p

mp

mf

pp

mp

mp

Solo

Gaining Momentum

B

accel.

25

I *f*

II *mf*

III *mf*

Faster (♩=92)

non stacc.

27

I *f* non stacc.

II *f*

III *f*

♩ = ♩

rit.



Sliding (♩ = 84 as "Churning")

30

I *p*

II *p*

III *p*

33

I

II

III

36

I

II

III

D

39

I

II

III

43

I *mf*

II

III

E Push Forward

Stretch, Take Time

49

I *f* *ff* *ff*

II *mf* *f* *ff*

III *mf* *f* *ff*

F Wind Down

flourid, leg.

53

I *p* *p* *p*

II *p* *pp* *p*

III *p* *pp* *p*

flourid, leg.

flourid, leg.

59

Staff I: *pp*, *f*, *pp*

Staff II: *p*, *pp*, *p*

Staff III: *p*, *pp*, *p*

64

Staff I: *f*, *p*, *mp*

Staff II: *p*, *p*

Staff III: *p*, *p*

69

Staff I: *p*, *mf*, *p*

Staff II: *mp*

Staff III: *mp*

H Gentle + Warm

Voice

Sung on [a]

74

I

II

III

p *mp* *pp* *p* *mp* *mp*

rit.

80

I

II

III

p *p* *p*

♩ = 92 Shimmering,
Quietly Ecstatic

pizz.
⊕

Solo

with continued horizontal bow motion; ⊕ pluck string with bow ferrule

from harmonic pressure ○
to ordinary pressure ●

The first system of the musical score for 'The Swan' from 'The Nutcracker' consists of three staves. The top staff (I) is in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 2/4 time signature. It begins with a piano (pizz.) instruction and a forte (f) dynamic. The middle staff (II) is in bass clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 2/4 time signature. It begins with a forte (f) dynamic and includes arco and pizz. instructions. The bottom staff (III) is in bass clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 2/4 time signature. It begins with an arco II instruction and includes I and II fingerings. The system concludes with a forte (f) dynamic and a piano (p) dynamic.

A

12

I *f* *fp* *f* *fp* *f* *mf*

II *p* *f* *mp* *f* *mp*

III *f* *mp* *ff* *p* *f* *pp* *f*

arco pizz. I arco II pizz. arco pizz.

3 3 3 3 3 3

18

I *p* *f* *p* *f*

II *f* *mf* *p* *mf* *p* *f*

III *mf* *pp* *f* *mp* *f* *p* *f*

arco pizz. arco pizz. arco pizz. arco

3 3 3 3 3 3

B ♩ = 120 More Spirited

24

I *p* *mp* *p* *mp* *p*

II *ff* *p* *ff* *p*

III *ppp* *p* *ff* *p*

arco pizz. pizz. Solo

3 3 3 3 3 3

30

I *f* *p*

II *mf* *p* *f* *p*

III *mp* *p* *mp*

C Quietly Driving

36

I *f* *ff* *mf* *p* *arco*

II *f* *ff* *mf* *p* *arco*

III *mf* *f* *mf* *p*

42

I *f* *p* *f* *p* *f* *ff* *pizz.* *arco*

II *f* *p* *f* *p* *f* *ff* *pizz.* *arco*

III *f* *f* *f* *f* *f* *f* *pizz.*

47

arco
brushy

I

II

III

p *f* *p* *f* *p* *f* *p*

p *f* *p* *f* *p* *f* *p*

ff *mp* *mf* *f* *mp*

52

I

II

III

f *p* *ff*

f *p* *ff*

f *ff* *mf* *ff* *f*

57

I

II

III

mf *f* *mf*

mf *mf*

f *mf* *p*

Solo

E ♩ = 80 Flowing

15

62

I

II

III

f

mp

p arco

66

I

II

III

f

p

f

3

69

I

II

III

mp

p

f

p

3

72

I

II

III

f

F $\text{♩} = 65$ Stately

75

I

II

III

ff

Solo

ff

ff

80

I

II

III

ff

Solo

ff

ff

85

I *mf* *ff* *f* *fp*

II *mf*

III *mp* *f* *mp* *f* *mp* *f* *mp*

90

I *ff* *mf* *ff* *mf*

II *f*

III *mp* *f* *mp* *ff*

94

I *ff* *mf*

II *f*

III *mp* *ff* *f*

Solo

H Freely Tumbling Down

98

I *ff* *mf* *f* *p*

II *ff* *pp*

III *ff* *pp*

I

106

I *f* *p* *mf* *mp* *p* *mp*

114

I *mf* *p*

J ♩ = 68 Soupy

122

I *pp* *p* *pizz.* *arco* *p* *mf* *mp*

II *p* *Solo* *con sord.* *arco*

III *p*

128

I *p* *arco* 3 *mp* *f* *pizz.* *mp* *p* *arco*

II

III

133

I *pizz.* *mf* *III* *arco* 3 *p* *mf* *pizz.* *p* *mf* *arco* 3

II

III

138

I *pizz.* *p* *arco* *mp* *III* *p* *II* *ppp*

II

III *pizz.* *pp*

from ordinary pressure • to harmonic ○

III. Schostakovich Shuffle

$\text{♩} = 120$ Militant

like a strange trumpet

1

I *sfz* *p* *pp* *f*

II *sfz* *p* *f* *p* *f* *p* *f*

III *sfz* *p* *f* *p* *f* *p* *f*

6

I *p* *f* *p*

II *p* *f* *p*

III *p* *f* *p*

A With Quiet Force

10

I *f* *p* *f*

II *f* *p* *f*

III *f* *Solo*

13

I *p*

II *p* *f*

III *f* *mp*

B Seething

16

I *mp* *mf* *ff*

II *poco a poco cresc.*

III *mf* *f* *poco a poco cresc.*

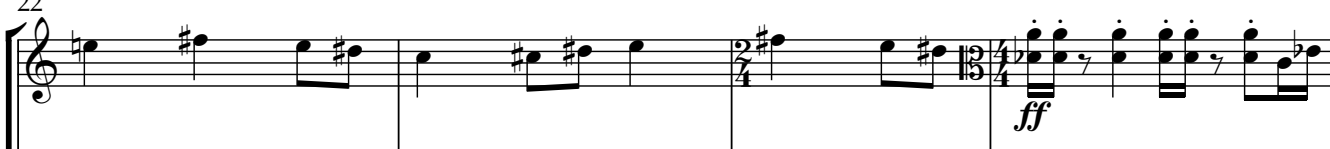
19

I

II *ff*

III *ff*

22

I 

II 

III 

26

I 

II 

III 

poco rit.

D

 ♩ = 90 Whistful, Hollow

30

I 

II 

III 

35 con sord.

I

II

III

col leg.

p

(s.t.)

41 sul tasto arco **E**

I

II

III

pizz.

mp *p*

ord. → sul tasto

47 (s.t.) → ord. → s.t. **F**

I

II

III

col leg.

ord.

ord. (non s.t.)

pp *pp*

ord.

ord. (non s.t.)

p *mp*

poco a

53

I *p* poco a poco cresc.

II poco a poco cresc.

III poco cresc.

G ♩ = 60 With Increasing Pace

58

I *mf* // senza sord. *ff* *p* *ff*

II *mf* // senza sord. *ff* *p* *ff*

III *mf* // senza sord. *ff* *p* *ff*

poco accel. (♩ = 72)

63

I *p* *ff* *f*

II *p* *ff* *p* *ff* *ff* *mp* *f*

III *p* *ff* *p* *ff* *ff* *mp* *f*

poco accel.

H ♩ = 84

25

67

I

II

III

p *f* *p* *f* *p* *ff* *mp* *f* *mp*

p *f* *p* *f* *p* *ff* *mp* *f* *mp*

71

I

II

III

I ♩ = 96 Suddenly Faster

75

I

II

III

p *mp* *mp* *mp*

77

I

II

III

p

mp

f

77 78

79

I

II

III

mp

mp

79 80

81

I

II

III

mf

mf

mf

81 82

83 **J**

I *mf* *f*

II *f* *mf*

III

poco accel.

86

I *ff*

II *ff*

III *ff*

K ♩ = 120 Frenzied

88

I *fff*

II *fff*

III *fff*

91

I

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

II

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

III

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

94

I

ff *ff* *f* *ff*

II

ff *ff* *f* *ff*

III

ff *ff* *f* *ff*