

Full Score

Katharina S. G. Mueller (2024)

Songs of Flight

for string quartet or small string ensemble

River Kingfisher - 3'

Great Albatross - 3'

Written for the Upper Valley Music Center, and dedicated to my former violin teacher, Alicia Casey.

Instrumentation

Violin 1
Violin 2
Violin 3/Viola
Violoncello

These pieces are generally intended for a mid-size ensemble of string players, with anywhere from two to four players on each part.

Alternatively, the piece can be performed as a quartet: three violins and one cello

River Kingfisher

River kingfishers, a subfamily of kingfisher birds, are defined by their hunting technique. No larger than a sparrow, river kingfishers have long, pointed bills to pierce through the surface of the water, and beautiful, iridescent colorations of blue, white and orange to camouflage with changing patterns of water-filtered light. They perch or hover high above the water, scanning the surface, and when they've locked onto a target, they gauge the distance precisely and plunge directly to their prey. In this piece, the simultaneous and rapidly shifting key areas and the constant exchanges of melody are reflections of the kingfisher's multi-colored iridescent plumage, and their constant transitions between sky, water, and land: from hovering or perching in the open air to diving and scooping under the water surface, to their nests which they build burrowed into the ground. The perpetual nature of the music is inspired by the endless movement of these small calculating hunters, and the elegance and energy of their patterns of flight.

Somewhat after Bartok, the piece gives a fun and manageable introduction to polytonality, especially exploring simultaneous minor keys separated by a major second – the piece begins, for example, with simultaneous B minor over A minor. In the composition process, I was exploring how to make music that wasn't strictly diatonic, but still made of diatonic elements that feel familiar to play, in the diatonic keys most comfortable to string players.



Notes with *Tentuto* are a slight accented with a greater dynamic and bow speed emphasis, to create a unified sense of a 3+3+2 pattern between some or all parts.

Syncopated sixteenth-note patterns should be lifted and short without being clipped.



Staccato downbeats should be emphatic and semi-percussive



This piece has no key signature. Accidentals reset every measure, but courtesy naturals (♮) are given in parentheses for clarity.

A # or a ♭ carries through its entire measure unless it is cancelled by a ♮ natural, i.e. a C# at the beginning of the bar means all following written Cs are C# unless otherwise indicated.

Viola part: The violin 3 part is almost completely on the G, D and A string without shifting, with the exception of mm. 35-36. Should there be a violist in the ensemble, they are invited to double the cello part for those measures. A viola part in alto clef is available.

Solos: There are three solo passages in Violin 1, and two solo passages in Violin 2. These can be played by just two respective players, or can be split up among as many as five players.

During solo sections in Violin 1 and Violin 2 respectively, all other Violin 1 and Violin 2 players should rest: they do not have a background accompaniment part.

Great Albatross

The great albatross is among the largest flying birds on the planet, with a wingspan of 9-11 feet (3+ meters) and infamously can glide over the ocean for miles at a time, coasting on the air with barely any movement in their wings. The soaring melody of this piece, based in E major and the E dorian mode, sails above a continuous rocking pattern of waves in C minor. The wave motif ebbs and flows in asynchronous shapes through the entire piece. The albatross melody eventually appears in several octaves as the piece swells to its peak, and one can imagine a whole flock of these great sea birds moving smoothly through the sky.

Notes with Tentuto are a slight accented with a greater dynamic and bow speed emphasis to shape the phrase.





This piece has no key signature. Pitches are written in a diatonic context as much as possible, though sometimes that means enharmonic equivalents alternating between \sharp and \flat .



A \sharp or a \flat carries through its entire measure unless it is cancelled by a \natural sign, i.e. an $E \flat$ at the beginning of the bar means all following written Es are $E \flat$ unless otherwise indicated.

Grace notes fall before the beat

The violin 3 part works as a viola part, with an additional viola solo on the open drone C at mm. 40-48. A viola part in alto clef is available. If no violist is in the group, a cello player should take the drone solo on the low open C.

Please contact composer Katharina S. G. Mueller at katya.mueller.24@gmail.com with any questions

The River Kingfisher

for string chamber group

Katharina S. G. Mueller (2024)

♩ = 70 **Flowing Forward, Flashes of Color**

Violin 1 **SOLO** *mf*

Violin 2 **SOLO** *mf*

Violin 3

Violoncello

5 Full of Energy!

Vln. 1 **All** *f*

Vln. 2 *f*

Vln. 3 *f*

Vc. *f*

Vln. 1 **All** *subp* *mf* *p*

Vln. 2 *mf* *p*

Vln. 3 *subp* *mf* *p*

Vc. *mf* *p*

11 Diving Down

10

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

Vln. 2 *mf* *ff* *mf*

Vln. 3 *mf* *p* *ff*

Vc. *mf* *p* *ff*

13 Stasis, with Quick Flitting Movements

molto rit. 16 Rounded, Smooth A Tempo

Vln. 1 *mp* *p*

Vln. 2 *subpp* *p*

Vln. 3 *subpp* *p*

Vc. *subpp* *pp* *p*

17

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vln. 3

Vc.

21 Delicate

1 3 2 1

(h)

pp

Vln. 1

pp

Vln. 2

pp

Vln. 3

pp

Vc.

pp

25

SOLO

p

Vln. 1

p

SOLO

p

Vln. 2

(h)

pp

Vln. 3

pp

Vc.

pp

30 Rising Again

28

(h)

mp

Vln. 1

mp

mp

Vln. 2

mp

mp

Vln. 3

mp

Vc.

mp

All

All

31 7

Vln. 1 *mf* *subp* *mp*

Vln. 2 *mp*

Vln. 3 *mf* *p* *mp*

Vc. *subp* *mf* *p*

36 Soaring!

34 2 4

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

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

Vln. 3 *mf* *p* *mf* *ff*

Vc. *mf* *p* *mf* *ff*

38 Swaths of Color

37

Vln. 1 *f*

Vln. 2 *f*

Vln. 3 *f*

Vc. *f*

8

40

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vln. 3

Vc.

mf

44

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vln. 3

Vc.

47

rit.

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vln. 3

Vc.

mp

pp

51 A Slow River, Flowing Onward
A Tempo

Div.

Musical score for measures 51-54, featuring four staves: Vln. 1, Vln. 2, Vln. 3, and Vc. The key signature has one flat (B-flat) and the time signature is 4/4. The music is marked *p* (piano). Vln. 1 has a fermata over the final measure. Vln. 2 and Vln. 3 have a *Div.* (divisi) marking over the final measure. Vc. has a fermata over the final measure.

Fade Away

Musical score for measures 55-57, featuring four staves: Vln. 1, Vln. 2, Vln. 3, and Vc. The key signature changes to two sharps (D major) and the time signature is 4/4. The music is marked *pp* (pianissimo) and *p* (piano). Vln. 1, Vln. 2, and Vc. have a fermata over the final measure. Vln. 3 has a *Div.* (divisi) marking over the final measure.

Full Score

Katharina S. G. Mueller (2024)

The Great Albatross

for small string ensemble

Duration ca. 3''

Written for the Upper Valley Music Center, and dedicated to my former violin teacher, Alicia Casey.

About the Piece

The great albatross is among the largest flying birds on the planet, with a wingspan of 9-11 feet (3+ meters) and infamously can glide over the ocean for miles at a time, coasting on the air with barely any movement in their wings. The soaring melody of this piece, based in E major and the E dorian mode, sails above a continuous rocking pattern of waves in C minor. The wave motif ebbs and flows in asynchronous shapes through the entire piece. The albatross melody eventually appears in several octaves as the piece swells to its peak, and one can imagine a whole flock of these great sea birds moving smoothly through the sky.

Instrumentation

Violin 1
Violin 2
Violin 3/Viola
Violoncello

The violin 3 part works as a viola part, with an additional viola solo on the open drone C at mm. 40-48. A viola part in alto clef is available. If no violist is in the group, a cello player should take the drone solo on the low open C.

Additional Notes

Notes with *Tentuto* are a slight accented with a greater dynamic and bow speed emphasis to shape the phrase.



This piece has no key signature. Pitches are written in a diatonic context as much as possible, though sometimes that means enharmonic equivalents alternating between # and ♭.



A # or a ♭ carries through its entire measure unless it is cancelled by a ♮ natural, i.e. an E ♮ at the beginning of the bar means all following written Es are E ♭ unless otherwise indicated.

Grace notes fall before the beat

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The Great Albatross

for string chamber group

Katharina S. G. Mueller (2024)

$\text{♩} = 60$ As Waves

6 Gliding Above

Musical score for measures 1-6. The score is for a string chamber group consisting of Violin 1, Violin 2, Violin 3, and Violoncello. The tempo is marked $\text{♩} = 60$ As Waves. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The time signature changes from 4/4 to 3/4 and back to 4/4. Dynamics include *p* (piano), *mp* (mezzo-piano), and *mf* (mezzo-forte). The Violin 1 part starts with a rest in the first measure and then enters in the fifth measure with a half note G4, followed by a quarter note A4, and a half note B4 in the sixth measure. The Violin 2 and Violin 3 parts play a rhythmic pattern of quarter notes. The Violoncello part provides a bass line with quarter notes and half notes.

Musical score for measures 7-15. The score continues for Violin 1, Violin 2, Violin 3, and Violoncello. The tempo is $\text{♩} = 60$. The key signature has one flat. The time signature changes from 4/4 to 3/4 and back to 4/4. Dynamics include *pp* (pianissimo), *p* (piano), and *mf* (mezzo-forte). The Violin 1 part has a melodic line with a crescendo leading to a *mf* dynamic. The Violin 2 and Violin 3 parts continue with their rhythmic patterns. The Violoncello part provides a steady bass line.

Musical score for measures 16-20. The score continues for Violin 1, Violin 2, Violin 3, and Violoncello. The tempo is marked $\text{♩} = 72$ Moving More. The key signature has one flat. The time signature changes from 4/4 to 3/4, then to 5/4, and back to 4/4. Dynamics include *mp* (mezzo-piano) and *p* (piano). The Violin 1 part has a melodic line with a crescendo leading to a *p* dynamic. The Violin 2 and Violin 3 parts continue with their rhythmic patterns. The Violoncello part provides a steady bass line.

23 Ascending

19

Vln. 1 *mf*

Vln. 2 *mf*

Vln. 3 *mp*

Vc. *mp*

accel.

30 ♩=80 Soaring, with Delight

25

Vln. 1 *mp* *f*

Vln. 2 *mp* *mf* *f*

Vln. 3 *mp* *mf* *f*

Vc. *mf* *mp* *f*

36 Turning Homeward

32

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vln. 3

Vc.

38

Vln. 1
mf *p*

Vln. 2
mf *mp* *pp*

Vln. 3
mf *mp* *pp*

Viola
mp

Vc.
mf *mf* *pp* *p*

SOLO

change bows as needed

44

48 change bows as needed

Vln. 1
pp

Vln. 2
mp

Vln. 3
p *pp*

Vla.
Viola Rejoins Vln. 3

Vc.
pp

51

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vln. 3

Vc.

pp

57

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vln. 3

Vc.

Div.