Four Essays

String Quartet

Hannes Taljaard

2001 — 2005
Four Essays for String Quartet

The four movements should be performed in sequence when the whole work is performed. Any three movements can be performed together, and movements can be performed in pairs or separately. If three or less movements are performed, the performers can decide on the order of the movements.

First Movement: Serioso

TEMPO: The very fast tempo is an ideal.
       The tempo changes are abrupt, unless indicated otherwise.
TRILLS: All trills involve semitones, usually the semitone above the notated tone.
        Sometimes the second tone of the trill is notated as an accidental (in parenthesis).
BOWING: Only some bowing marks are indicated. This should provide sufficient information to the performers for further decisions.

- Measure 10 — 12: a glissando is executed from the first note into the slurred second note. The slurred second note is not sounded independently.
- Measure 16 — 18: the shorter note values are played as ornamentation, not as separate tones.
- Measure 51 — 58 & 13 — 137, 159, 161: punta d’arco battute. The strings are hit softly with the hair close to the tip of the bow, as part of an up bow or a down bow. This should not give a percussive sound.
- Measure 140-152: the texture consists of one melody with a drone. The shorter notes values should be played as ornamentation.

Second Movement: Intermezzo

TEMPO: The tempo should not be thought of as fast.
       The semiquaver is not the beat: one beat mostly equals a measure.
       The short note values in the violins are to be played as one movement, one idea or one gesture. If these notes are simply too fast, the tempo may be reduced somewhat.

punta d’arco battute (p.d’a batt.): See notes to the first movement.
mezza voce: the bow is drawn over the strings quicker than usual, but with less pressure on the strings. This should produce a sound somewhat like a whisper.
• Measure 41, 43, 51 — 58: the glissandi are very fast and over a small interval — about a quarter tone in the direction indicated by the small line attached to the note head.
• Measure 69 & 71: the small notes are played as part of the ornamentation starting with the trill.

**Third Movement: Scherzo**

**TEMPO:** The fast tempo is an ideal. It may be reduced somewhat, and the tempo of the meno mosso sections accordingly. Meno mosso should, however, not become too slow.

• Measure 77-94: the texture consists of one melody with a drone. The shorter note values should be played as ornamentation. When printed smaller, these notes should be played somewhat softer than the melody tones, as if they occur inside the melody tones.

**Fourth Movement: Lyrico**

Notes that are printed smaller should be played as ornaments. They should still be clearly audible, except when marked *pp*.

*mezza voce:* see notes to the second movement.

• Short note values (32\textsuperscript{nd} notes) should form one idea and should be played very smoothly.
• Measure 38 — 47: the slurred movement in semiquavers in the violins should form a single idea every time they occur.
• Measure 79 — 90: notes joined with a dotted phrase mark should be played as one gesture, but may be played with bow changes.

The pauses between the movements are essential to the work, and may be rather long. The total duration of the work will be about 26 minutes.

The work was written for the RUBIO String Quartet from Belgium who gave the first performance on 22 September 2004 in Potchefstroom and another performance — which was recorded — on 26 September 2004 in Pretoria. The fourth essay (Lyrico) was subsequently rewritten. RUBIO consisted of Dirk van de Velde (Violin I), Dirk van den Hauwe (Violin II), Esther van Strahlen (Viola) and Peter Devos (Cello). Their tour was supported by the Government of Flanders.
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String Quartet

1. Serioso

(c) Hannes Taljaard 2005
2. Intermezzo

Con moto (3 = c. 200)

(c) Hannes Taljaard 2005
3. Scherzo

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Mezza voce: like a whisper.
Use lots of bow with little pressure.
Groups of smaller notes should be played as one gesture, one idea.
4. Lyrico

(c) Harmes Taljaard 2005