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## CONVALESCENCE

A Thesis

Submitted to the Mary Pappert School of Music

Duquesne University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for

the degree of Master of Music

By

Adam Rook

August 2010

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Adam Rook

## CONVALESCENCE

By

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## ABSTRACT

## CONVALESCENCE

By

Adam Rook August 2010

Dissertation supervised by David Stock, M.F.A.

This composition is intended to unfold more or less linearly, as a progression of temperament or attitude. Its most prominent compositional characteristic is recurring motive for cohesion and unification, both within and across movements, as opposed to much direct repetition. Each movement is tonally based and establishes at least one principle key area, but each also employs the common use of mode mixture, sometimes frequent modulation, and some extent of chromatic passages.

## DEDICATION

This work is a gift given back to God, Who first blessed me with its undertaking and completion.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Many thanks to Professor Stock for his instruction and guidance, and for all else who helped further form my character during my time at Duquesne.

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## Convalescence

In respect to music's tendencies toward traditionalism or classicism, vs. the progressive or avant-garde, this quartet is firmly characterized by the more traditional approach, with certain progressive elements found in limited use of extended technique or dissonant harmonies. It seeks to be beautiful in an organic way, through relatively simple rhythms and melodies, yet which balance independence and group integration. It is likely most forward-thinking in form, working cohesively by motivic elements rather than sectional or thematic repetition.

#### Waking Moment

The first movement of this string quartet is organized primarily by motivic material rather than theme. The psychological result of listening is more akin to following a stream of consciousness rather than easily perceivable form areas; and while one section develops into the next without much retrospection, they seldom remain without one of the unifying motives for very long.

It opens with a 16 bar introduction, split into 4 bar phrases over a stepwise descending cello pedal playing perfect fifths. The central motive for the whole work (found in all 3 movements, but especially the first and third) comes in right away, between the cello and viola. It consists of the interval combination of a root, major third, and tritone, with varying melodic order but typically starting with the root. The tritone is found diatonically as or more often as it is chromatically, using the Lydian mode; in this opening case F Lydian, for the dual function of its sharing the diatonic scale of A minor (the principle key of the first movement) and to open with an emphasis on the tonic A on the second downbeat.

The second four-bar phrase steps down to implied E min. 7, but is more important rhythmically than harmonically, beginning the syncopated figure of eighth-quarter-dotted quarter, seeming to change the meter from 3 to 2, which continues through mm. 16, at the end of the introductory material. Meanwhile the motive comes back in the next phrase in D major, this time ascending, F# stepping to augmented fourth G# in the first violin.

In mm. 13-16 begins independent activity in each instrument that is characteristic of most of the piece. One goal in writing was for the individual parts to be self-sufficient to a degree; something substantial even if unaccompanied, or at least a complete thought. The result oftentimes is harmonic vicissitude and/or pandiatonicism; even if one player is maintaining a consistent harmony, the melodic tendencies of the other parts may create sudden changes in their harmonic relationship. For example, in mm. 13-14, the cello plays a C pedal. The first beat of mm. 13 appears to be a root position major triad with F# motivic upper neighbor figure, while the second and third beats spells an F major 4/3. Mm. 14 similarly goes from A minor 6/3 to D minor 4/2. There are many other tones which can be labeled as neighbor, non-chord, or extended/added harmony, but in most cases such as this the working principles were good voice leading and rhythmically independent counterpoint rather than a planned harmonic sequence.

There are exceptions, of course, where the harmonies are more intentional and important in a way, either for expressive effect, or in order to direct the musical flow to a cadence, modulation, and/or new section. The most striking example of the former is attributed to the last note of bar 18, the G# in the second violin which creates an A minormajor seventh chord for a very brief and tense moment. It quickly resolves to different implied harmonies diatonic within A minor: D minor, F major 7, a somewhat-cadential A

minor 6/4 to C major 7 in bar 20 that briefly recalls the rhythm of the introduction. Most of these chords lack the complete triad and all of them have added diatonic or neighbor tones.

Bars 21-24 comprise the antecedent phrase of a period, which taken as a whole could be considered the "primary material", because it, along with the introduction, is the only part that is exactly repeated in two different places (here and at the "recap"). What follows it in this first instance is developmental and less prominent in the form, and as the material that follows in the second instance is transitional, neither completes the "thematic" tendencies of the period, namely the semi-sequential falling sixth and rhythmic figure of the latter half or dramatic tension and release of the former. Yet to say primary material is to indicate hierarchy, and as has been mentioned this movement is based on motive rather than theme. So although this material is distinguished by its repetition and locations in the piece, it should not necessarily be viewed as more central in form than sections which contain "secondary" or subsequent material; later ones in fact are more central, both literally and in the way the motives and expressive direction of the piece climax in them.

This opening section, though, continues through mm. 46, the latter half serving to more firmly establish the tonic key and re-present the opening motivic material before moving on. To do so, a cadence on A minor is reached in mm. 32 and repeated in 35; both are anticipated by a pseudo-augmented sixth chord which substitutes non-chord tones for the usual harmonic components. Afterwards the opening melody comes back in the first violin in mm. 42-43, this time with a faster rhythmic texture.

Mm. 46 introduces a recurring gesture which also functions as a dividing point between sections, the tremolo dotted quarter to staccato eighth note. It has the effect of shifting musical gears, as it were; and marks a change in either rhythmic texture, key, motivic focus, or some combination thereof. In this instance the move is to relative C major (or perhaps C Lydian, with the motivic raised fourth), and the introduction of a new melodic motive, two leaps of first a seventh then a third, first appearing in the second violin in mm. 51.

The light major mood quickly proceeds in modulatory fashion, briefly tonicizing G minor in mm. 62, then to Eb Lydian in 65 following the quick violin solo. The main motive returns here in a few different instances, most noticeably in the viola melody in mm. 65-67, less noticeably in the cello's pizzicato line beginning in 67 (making use of diatonic whole tones and natural rhythmic accents), and all but undetectably between the viola and cello in the following few bars: the cello plays an Eb or A eighth note, and the viola correspondingly descends from A to G or D# to C# in sixteenths.

The height of the motivic integration comes in the next passage, mm. 72-84. The second violin plays back-to-back the tritone-third motive and the seventh-third leap motive pizzicato, in the original key of F Lydian, while the cello moves its whole tone pattern up a step to correspond. The first violin and viola accompany with a soft melody and tremolo harmonic glissando, the latter more for sonic effect than to fill in harmony. To transition to the 4/4 meter change and back to the Bb/G minor key area, the first violin quietly descends to Bb using the tritone/third motive, before suddenly jumping across the register with two consecutive seventh/third leaps. The upward movement settles for a moment in mm. 81 before continuing in mm. 82, incorporating also a rhythmic figure that

is often used in conjunction with the seventh/third leap, that is a sixteenth, eighth, and dotted eighth, as seen when the second violin introduces the motive in mm. 51 and again in 72. The passage and indeed the piece reaches a climax with the *fortissimo* chord in 84, a Cmin9 in the highest register of the entire work, obtained by a last seventh leap.

Next comes the second iteration of the tremolo-dotted quarter figure, using the same Cmin9 voicing an octave lower. The change of pace comes this time in slower rhythmic texture, without any sixteenth notes; the lower register, and also a gradual "flattening" of key areas, eventually settling on a pandiatonic Gb major chord in mm. 92 and especially 93, the latter only excluding one note of the scale (Cb) and ending the section with the tremolo dotted figure.

Transitioning to the recap is a brief dissonant passage with a quick pizzicato reference to Gb major in mm. 95 and cello scale run in 97 (with augmented fourth C natural). The sense of tonal center is disrupted, however, first by the tremolo glissandos in the violins, and then overlapping Lydian motive use in different keys by the bottom three instruments: the cello and viola in A and the second violin in G, all imitating the pizzicato whole-tone and rhythmic figure from earlier.

From mm. 103-126 is an exact repetition of the beginning, with the exception of the first violin using the dotted quarter figure for effect in the first few measures. As said earlier, the material that follows is transitional to the ending, and is characterized mostly by the steadily rising quarter note segments which crescendo in the violins. In mm. 135 begins a quick return of the opening/motivic melody, with a faster harmonic rhythm of a new chord per bar, leading to the movement's end with a few quick runs and the final word of the tremolo dotted quarter motive, preparing a tonic empty fifth cadence.

#### Latent

The second movement makes use of motive, but it is also thematic and more formally structured, unlike the first movement. It is essentially ternary, with the A and A' sections in B major, the B section in B minor. Aside from the difference in mode, the B section is distinctive in rhythmic texture, having more sixteenth notes, while the A sections tend more to eighths as the fastest rhythmic unit. In spite of this more rigid structure, the movement shares with the first a comparable underlying impulse, a progression or exploration of mood rather than necessarily tonal function.

The opening melody played by the solo cello is a primary theme, and contained within it is also the intervallic content of the principle motive: a downward leap of a major third, upward leap of a minor third, and half step down (in this case A#, F#, A natural, G#). The first violin melody beginning in mm. 3 is also thematic and returns later in the movement along with the opening theme. In mm. 7, the first full use of the motive appears in the second violin, and is emphasized by the sixteenth note on the A natural, which turns out to appear typically in conjunction with the chromatic neighbor tone. The first cadence is reached on the third beat of mm. 8, a momentary root position tonic triad with added 4<sup>th</sup> in the viola, before it returns to less settled-feeling 9<sup>th</sup> chord on the fourth beat, which remains when the opening themes in the cello and first violin return in the following measure.

For the next few bars, the most interesting developments that occur are increased density of counterpoint among the four voices, and modal mixture between the A# and A natural, which is the typical chromatic alteration used for the motive. The violin theme is altered and imitated in subtle ways, such as being augmented in mm. 11-12 in the first

violin while the viola plays small parts of it at a time. Eventually the second violin reaches for a bit higher register, employing the motive up a fourth with lowered D natural in mm.13, and two bars later combines with the first violin hint at the motive and upcoming modulation, when the first violin picks up the melody in 16 with the same D natural and sixteenth – dotted eighth figure.

Mm. 17-18 transition to the B section, which begins with its own theme or subtheme, contained in mm. 19. This section is characterized by a return to the subtheme every third bar, with the two bars in between developing an increasing anxiety of mood or sense of brooding. The tension mounts through mm. 28, with the fourth iteration of the subtheme going up in register and dynamic level, until the following three measures revert to a slower rhythmic pace and more grief-like characteristic as opposed to anxiety, maintaining the tonic B minor harmony with added tones throughout.

The brooding doesn't last long, as a last "stanza" with similar contrapuntal features as those separating the subtheme suddenly livens the rhythmic activity and mood, bringing back the original key by way of subdominant E major, and cadencing halfway between the two with an E 6/4 chord in mm. 34. To finish the transition to the A' section is a cello solo which recalls the opening both in texture and similarity to the opening theme, as well as a small allusion to the subtheme, in the melodic pattern of the first four notes being leap-step-step. In mm. 36-37 the motive for this movement is employed with the chromatic descents from G# to F# and D# to C#.

The cello settles now on the subdominant in root position as the opening material returns in full, main theme in the second violin and first violin taking its original melody up an octave. It repeats this way with the original melodies and harmonies until the end

of mm. 43, which begins a small transition to a nine-bar coda. This last section, though rooted in B major, tends toward mode mixture of both more and less sharps, with the A natural in the cello in mm. 44 hinting towards the subdominant and A Lydian, with brief use of the main motive. The same measure marks the appearance of E#, which in the upcoming measures alternates with E natural, particularly in the viola, and is a function of D# minor tendencies, as seen in the last chord, D# min9, of mm. 45.

The end of the coda retains modal ambiguity until the very end, the first violin harmonizing lightly with its high A# and D#, which could just as well be a dominant/tonic relationship as leading tone and third of B major. The bass line and melody for the last few bars, starting from mm. 51, seem to prepare either a subdominant or relative minor ending, with the penultimate bar nearly confirming the latter before atypical vi-I descent in the final measure.

#### Will

Coming in *attaca* from the second movement, the third rounds out the work both motivically and thematically, heavily incorporating the root-third-tritone main motive and also adding a couple more motives, which either have an emphasis on rhythmic content or intervallic content, but typically include both. It is likely the most diverse in character, having the same modulatory tendencies as the first, but with a greater contrast of dissonance and consonance, as well as including tempo changes throughout the piece.

It begins in no particular key: the cello holds a C pedal as the melody begins seemingly in E major, while the second violin and viola play unrelated whole tone sequences in parallel major 9ths. The first violin introduces a new motive, principally the rhythmic values of the first four notes: eighth, quarter, sixteenth, and dotted eighth. The

descending perfect fourth of the first two notes is typically used in conjunction with the rhythm, but not always. The root/third/tritone motive returns in mm. 5 and 6 with the descent from D to G#, and again in mm.7-9 in the cello ("root" notes being D, G, and B, respectively), as well as mm. 8 in the second violin (root A#), displaying the varying order of the motive melodically and exemplifying how it is used inconspicuously as it occurs throughout the piece.

The chromatic tendencies continue to defy pinpointing a tonal center until an abrupt shift in mm. 15 indicates G minor, with a few chromatic neighbor tones such as the Db in the viola to incorporate more of the whole tone effect. Mm. 16 runs up to the the first triad based measure in the piece in 17, Gb minor over C. The oscillating thirds in the first violin is the first instance of what becomes a motive later in the piece, often with a tuplet-based rhythm. The melody in the cello in 16 anticipates the Persian-sounding melody in the first violin in mm. 18, which is imitated by the second violin two measures later in parallel fifths. They accelerando and crescendo together in movement towards the first tempo increase in mm. 22, the viola joining in octaves with the second violin while the cello runs up a whole tone scale.

Thus ends the introduction, and the main body of the piece begins with the return of the opening rhythmic motive, modified slightly for a faster and more driving rhythm. Tonal volatility too, comes back in force, with a sudden proliferation of sharps and crossrelation courtesy accidentals, such as the A# in the first violin in mm. 23 followed a sixteenth note later by A natural in the cello, alongside several other similar such instances. The chromatic dissonance just as quickly is turned on its head with the emergence of the main them beginning on the last beat of mm. 25 in the second violin,

and transition back to flats in the tonicization of Ab major, finally cadencing in mm.28-29. This main theme and melody is the real "tune" of the work, returning several times in different keys, registers, and tempo, just as it is immediately repeated an octave lower in the first violin.

Afterwards comes a transition/modulation to the next section, which begins in mm. 39. From 32-38 is a combination of the main theme, main motive, and brief return to dissonance. The viola is the lead instrument in this passage, its melody at times demonstrating how the intervals of the motive will appear over a more prolonged stretch of notes, in this case the Cb and Db grace notes of mm. 34 not reaching the chromatic G natural until the end of the measure. Elsewhere, the harmonies will briefly include the motivic formula, even just momentarily, as seen by the Ab-F-G in the first beat of mm. 37, only for the duration of a sixteenth note.

The modulation to C major in mm. 39, also comes by way of motivic chromatic alteration, the Bb and Ab of the viola melody in the previous bar suddenly resolving to E natural. The key is more resolutely established in mm. 44, with more diatonic tones and tonic pedal, for in the meanwhile are lingering remnants of chromatic dissonance, both melodically as in the second violin, or harmonically as a result, with passing non-diatonic tritones or minor 9ths as in the first beat of mm. 41. The music rests with more stability with the cello again playing the low C pedal in 44, along with the first revisiting of the oscillating thirds in the second violin, with two of the instruments playing tremolo for a mixed texture. Mm. 44-46 comprise the most harmonically simple passage so far, a tonic major seventh chord with a few neighbor tones and motivic raised fourth. 47-49 then is very much an imitation in median-related E major, with the G# in the still oscillating

second violin adding an abrupt yet bright element to the harmony. The first violin sequences downward to allow the rising tremolo second violin to take the melody, while the cello mimics its melody from mm. 40, down a half step. This all leads to the next repetition of the main theme beginning in mm. 50, this time retaining the new key of E major. Formally it serves to "cap off" the section, providing the repetition to further distinguish itself and accommodate one's sense of familiarity before moving on.

Next is a one measure transition for the purpose of thinning out the texture in preparation for more soloist-oriented material. The first violin, which begins it, incorporates the oscillating motive, but this time between a variety of intervals such as fifths and sixths rather than just thirds. It ends with a brief whole-tone run, recalling the introduction and main motive. The cello picks up in turn, completing the root C with the two violins harmonizing the E and F# above it. The following beat, though, it raises the C to form the same motive built on G. Two more instances of the motive occur in mm. 57, with the cello diatonically using F-A-B, and the viola starting on D against the F#-G# violin harmonies. The viola is also repeating the rhythmic motive used at the first tempo change, while on the last beat of mm. 58 the cello begins a melody from the first movement, it too based on the motive.

With mm. 61 begins a new section, beginning with a suddenly much slower rhythmic speed and increasing every two measures to include eighth notes, triplets, and then sixteenths. The first four bars of it are heavily syncopated and harmonically secundal-based, the violins contributing some prominent minor-second harmonies in a rhythmic gesture similar to the tremolo-dotted quarter figure of the first movement, while the viola and cello begin with parallel seconds before moving to other parallel intervals

like thirds and sevenths. The tone centers in this passage spanning mm. 61-77 are transient and modally mixed; 61-62 resemble D, 63-64 G minor, 65-66 G major, 67-68 F# minor, 69-75 G Lydian, a pandiatonic "F Lydian" chord in 76-77, and ending with a Dmin 11 in 78.

The section beginning at the second tempo change in mm. 79 is meant to highlight the main motive and unify the whole work through this obvious connection to the first movement. The cello and viola together are meant to imitate a piano pedal, with the four notes including the motivic figure all "ringing over together", the second violin adding clarity by attacking each note in the upper octave. The first violin comes in clearly imitating the opening melody of the first movement.

The next passage, mm. 85-90, too provides a sense of cohesiveness, recalling the same disquieted mood found in most of the second movement, and selected parts of the first, particularly its "Gb major moment" begun in mm. 85, or the angsty minor-major seventh chord of mm. 18. The third movement shares these qualities through diatonic dissonances added to the raised fourth, especially the secundal harmonies of the violins from the last two beats of 86 to the first two beats of 87. 88-90 shifts to F major/D minor/Bb Lydian without much change in emotional disposition, anticipating the last return of the main theme in mm. 91 in F, partially to keep it in the same register as was heard before (Ab and E).

From mm. 96-108 is transitional and again tonally unstable. The C pedal and F# return, but the oscillating thirds in the viola and melody in the second violin indicate B minor. Then F natural and Bb return, preceding a last glimpse of dissonance and (typically motivic) chromaticism. The cello solo uses the motive almost exclusively, in

various melodic orders, and oftentimes beginning the first note of a motivic interval combination from the last note of the previous one (such as the last A of mm. 101, completing the D#/G and leading to C#/D#). Mm. 103 recalls the parallel sevenths and agitated ascending harmonies from earlier, before the four instruments dissonantly collapse back to C in mm. 105, the harmonies of the bar before built on the descending motivic sequence of the cello, implying C# minor. The final lead up to the last tempo change retains the same C/C# modal mixture, using the motive in both the main tonic and dominant keys.

The last section of the piece is characterized by use of all the motives, and sequencing. The cello begins it on the second beat of mm. 109 with the main motive in G, followed by the second violin beginning a melody rhythmically resembling the opening motive, which waits to be fully iterated by the first violin in mm. 113. The home stretch begins in mm. 116 with all the instruments following an ascending melodic sequence in the first violin, the sixth leaps upwards mirroring in a small way the descending sixths sequence in the first movement. C major returns with the low cello pedal and oscillating thirds, and continues to alternate with G Lydian until the final two measures.

#### Conclusion

This piece is intended to be story-like, an exploration of mood or disposition. It is characteristic of previous works that it does so through contrasting types of hopefulness, melancholy, satiety, restlessness, and the like. Likewise, it shares the aspect of all having stemmed from one small, simple idea, the descending B to A over F. Though this motive became in many ways the foundation of the piece and unifying element between sections

or movements, it is strange how it isn't necessarily in the foreground of the listening experience of this music. That is, though the motive is often used prominently in a variety of ways, the intention is not to present its specific intervallic relationships, so much as expressive function it tends toward. In a piece like Beethoven's fifth symphony, the motive is recognizable as such; here it may only be reminiscent of a type of musical character. So it is, at least more typically, a means than an end.

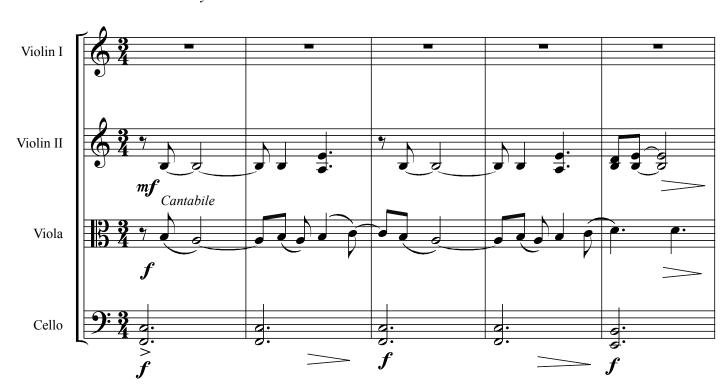
With the foundation in place, the compositional objective from there on was always to be cohesive, to create a kind of symmetry of form that is easily graspable in spite of limited repetition. To do so, the main tools were melodies that could bridge the gap of sections with different tone centers (usually by means of common tones), and the frequent use of smaller motives, which are capable of producing familiarity or a sense of recognition even in sections where the material is mostly new. The aimed for effect in the end was a natural progression of thought, much like phrase structuring stretched across the entire piece. Even the less predictable moments, such as the sudden disruption of the third movement's main theme in mm. 36, should hopefully in retrospect be seen as a logical outgrowth of what has come before and a fitting transition for what follows.

The modal ambiguity that is present throughout much of the piece often results in emotional complexity, or multiple, simultaneous, and in some ways conflicting emotional directions. At other times, adjacent sections will each have a clear but radically different sense of purpose to them, such as the dissonant, frantic bars leading up to the first presentation of the more traditionally melodic and happy main theme in the third movement, or the climactic crescendo and rising register preceding the Gb major slower section in the first movement. The spirit of the piece is intended to be, in the end,

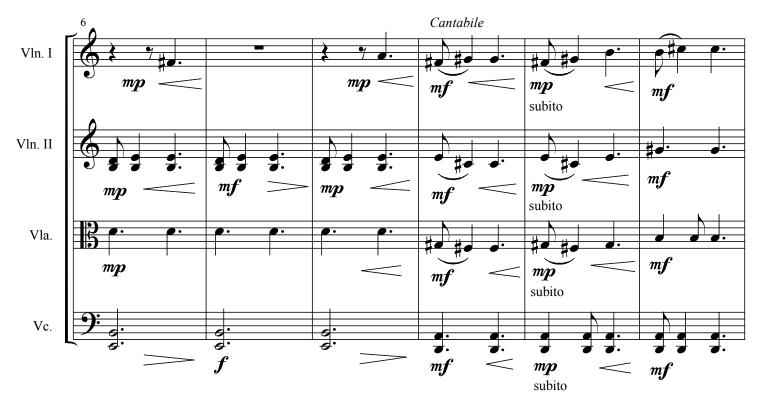
optimistic, just as the motive is essentially Lydian, and Lydian the traditional mode of healing, it offers hope for something wounded. Thus the first movement ends with an empty fifth chord, though in minor; the second movement averts the G# minor ending in favor of a tonic ninth; and the third's rocky relationship with dissonance finally comes home to the tonic C major. It again is an inherent quality of the motive, the contrast between the tension of the tritone and resolution of the major third.

## Convalescence I. Waking Moment

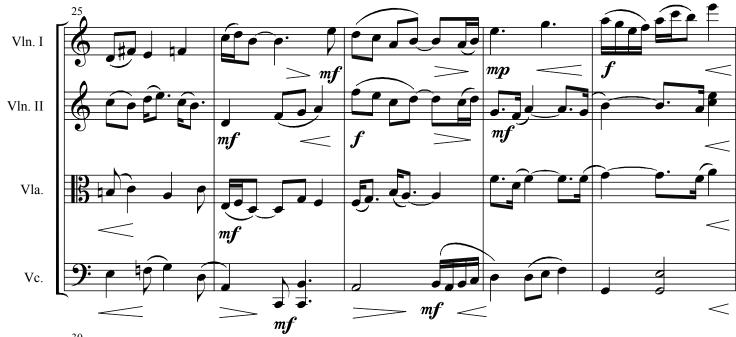
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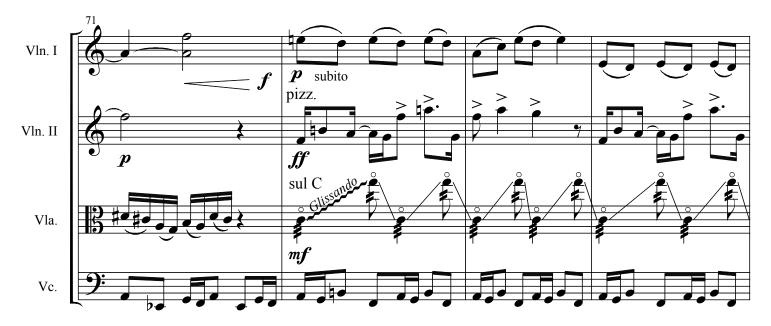






















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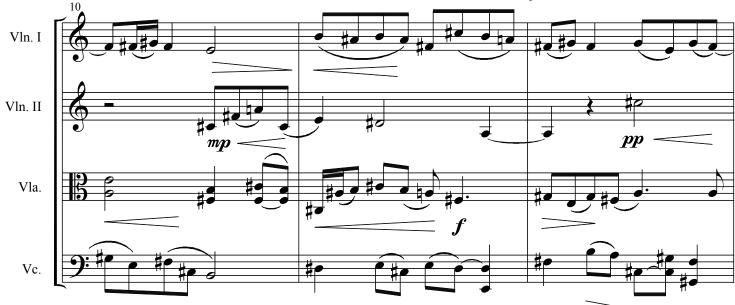




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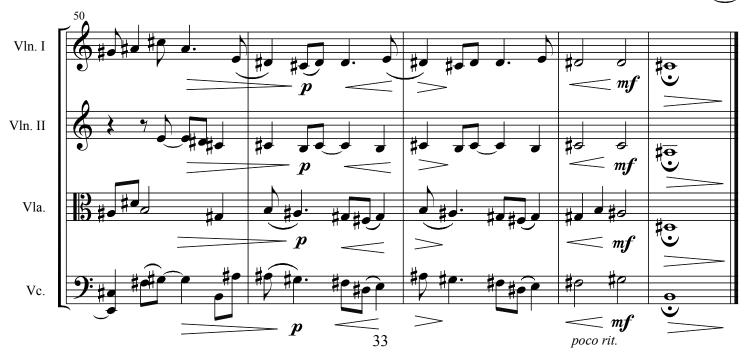






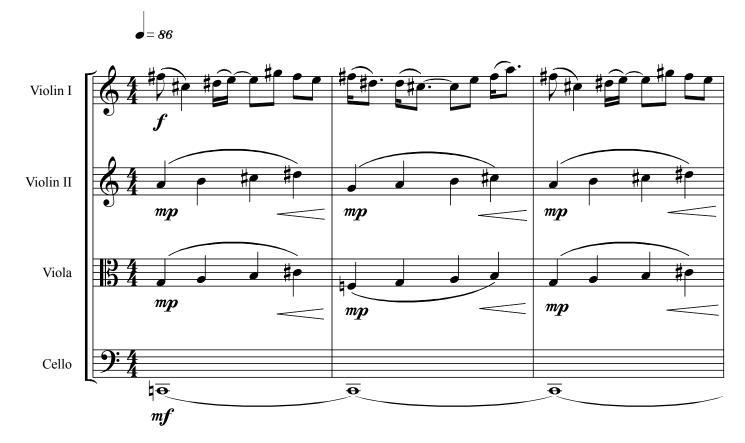


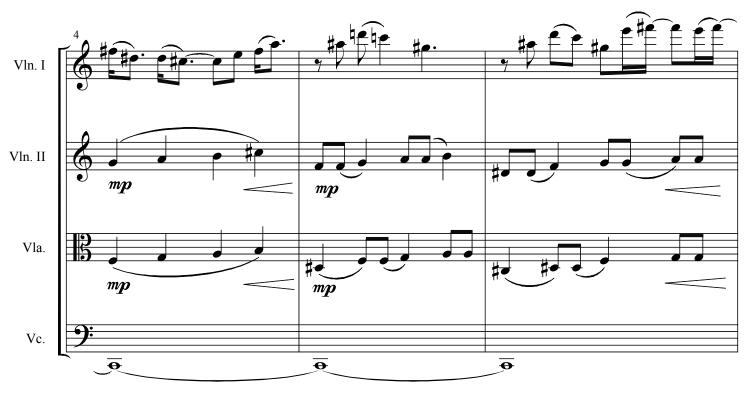




## III. Will

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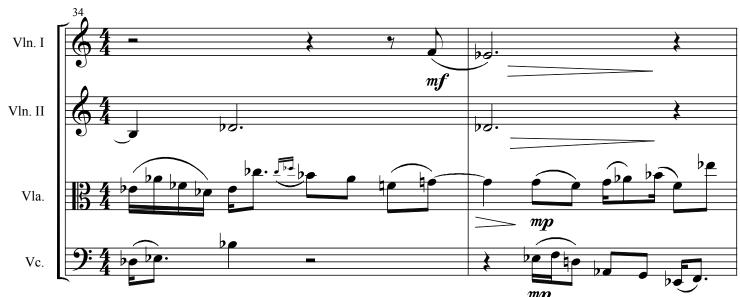


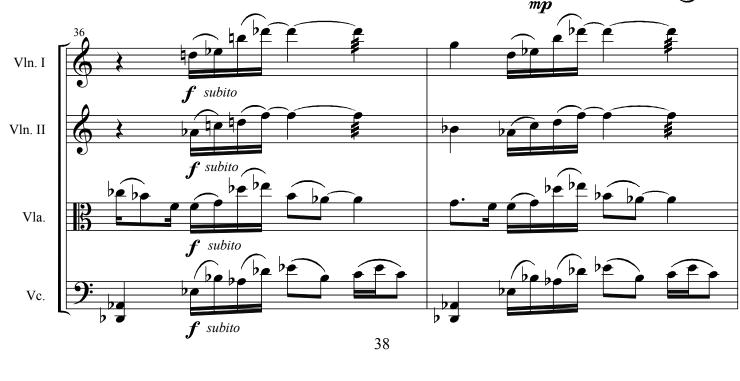
































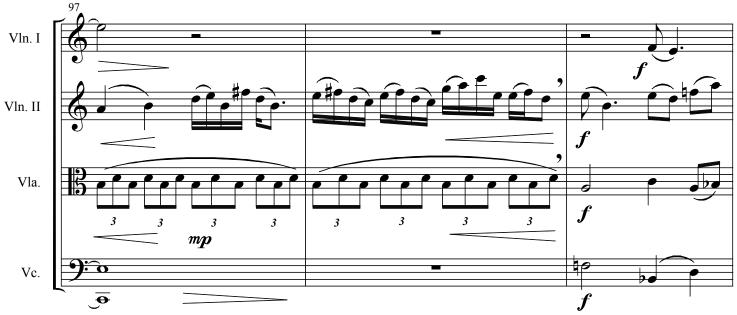




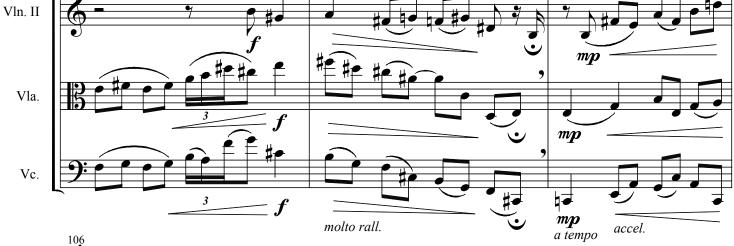












molto rall.

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