

Drew Sperry

On Solace
for String Quartet

- Full Score -

Perusal Score

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Commissioned by J Hatcher

Program Note

It isn't necessarily unusual for a composer, writer, or artist to use their art to reflect on the process of grief and the many forms that it can take. While these pieces are often very moving and powerful statements, something that I find that is too often overlooked is the role that the people surrounding an individual can play in helping to navigate their own healing process. From my experience dealing with grief, it is very easy to feel out of control, overwhelmed, and even helpless, but it was always the people around me—friends, family, and colleagues—that helped to provide the clarity and support needed to overcome these feelings. To truly acknowledge the powerful role that these people can have in the process of grief, I knew I wanted to find a way to musically describe healing as a reaction to the consolation that loved ones can provide in times of distress.

The piece begins with a dense texture that is gradually constructed as each member of the quartet starts playing. The timing and rhythm of much of the music in this section is completely improvised, resulting in a mesh of sound that has no clear organization to the audience. However, as the piece progresses and its main melodic material is presented, the music becomes increasingly structured, gradually gaining a sense of clarity. This juxtaposition between organized and disorganized sound is my reflection on the effect that solace can have on the complex process of healing. Although the music at this point is now more organized than it was at the start, negative emotions are continually explored alongside more positive ones, building to a painfully climactic moment where the music's tension reaches its peak. Gradually, this tension is released and the piece ends with nearly all members of the quartet playing together except for the violist who returns to the improvisatory figures of the opening—the lack of clarity at the start of the piece now only a distant memory.

Notation and Performance Guide



- Box notation indicates that material within boxes should be continually repeated across the duration of the attached black line. For example, if the line extends through the length of one measure—or a numerical duration is indicated—the material within the box should be repeated through the duration of that measure. Transitions between different boxes should be as seamless as possible.

- Where possible, pitches in each box should be between two separate strings. Thus, alternating between the two pitches will be done with the bow rather than with the left hand. For example, in m. 4 of the viola part, the player is instructed to alternate between the pitches F3 and A3. Instead of performing both pitches on the C-string, the player should play the F3 on the C-string and the A3 on the G-string.
- Arrows (————→) indicate that the performer should gradually change from one playing technique (ord., sul pont., sul tasto, etc.) to another.
- The marking “tremolo” indicates that each pitch in a boxed figure will be performed as an unmetred tremolo and not as a tremolo in which both pitches are rapidly alternated between.

In other words, “tremolo” indicates that boxed figures will be performed as:

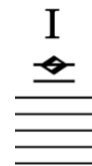


And not as:



- While passages marked “tremolo” will involve an abrupt change in timbre, make every effort to not accent the start of the tremolo. Make the start of the tremolo as discreet as possible.
- The indication “ord.” will only be used to cancel playing techniques such as sul pont. and sul tasto. In this piece, “ord.” will never be used to signal a change between traditional and aleatoric notation, or to indicate a change between free, improvisatory playing and playing notated material in time.
- The indication “in time” signals a change between free, improvisatory playing and playing notated material in time as normal.
- In this piece, harmonics are notated in three distinct ways depending on how the harmonic should be performed:

Harmonics with diamond-shaped noteheads indicate to perform a natural harmonic in a specific location on a specific string on the instrument (roman numerals are used to indicate what string the harmonic should be played on). In the example to the right taken from the cello part (in bass-clef), the cellist will perform a natural harmonic on the A-string where they would normally perform the pitch E4.



Harmonics with a regular notehead and a diamond-shaped notehead stacked on top of each other indicate that an artificial harmonic should be performed on the partial specified by the diamond-shaped notehead.



Harmonics with a regular notehead and open circle on top indicate that a natural harmonic will be performed at the sounding pitch of the regular notehead.



Duration ca. 8 minutes

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unmetered, approx. 30" - 45"

The score consists of four staves: Violin 1, Violin 2, Viola, and Violoncello. Each staff begins with a box containing two notes (Bb and C) and the instruction "sul tasto gentle, free undulations*".

- Violin 1:** Starts with a box containing Bb and C notes. Dynamic markings: *p*, *mp*, *p*.
- Violin 2:** Starts with a box containing Bb and C notes. Dynamic markings: *p*, *mp*, *p*. Includes instructions: "ord.", "tremolo".
- Viola:** Starts with a box containing Bb and C notes. Dynamic markings: *p*, *mp*, *p*, *mp*, *p*. Includes instructions: "sul pont.", "ord.", "sul tasto gentle, free undulations*".
- Violoncello:** Starts with a box containing Bb and C notes. Dynamic markings: *p*, *mp*, *p*. Includes instruction: "ord.", "sul tasto gentle, free undulations*".

The bottom section of the score shows the continuation of the piece, ending with a double bar line and a 5/4 time signature. Dynamic markings include *mf*, *p*, and *n*. Instructions include "sul pont. (sempre tremolo)", "ord. non tremolo", and "sul pont."

*: Gently alternate between the pitches specified in each box, improvising the rhythm. Players should remain as rhythmically unsynchronized from the other members of the quartet as possible and should perform rhythms of slow-to-moderate speed.

On Solace

Slowly, spaciousy $\text{♩} = 60$
 metered, in time

Vln. 1
 ord. *pp* \leftarrow *mf* \rightarrow *p* mournful

Vln. 2
 freely within the meter of each measure**
f \rightarrow *pp*

Vla.
 freely within the meter of each measure**
f \rightarrow *pp* sul pont. \leftarrow *mf* \rightarrow *pp*

Vc.
 freely within the meter of each measure**
f \rightarrow *pp* ord.

Vln. 1
 (*p*) \leftarrow *mf* \rightarrow *p* *mf* *p* *mf*

Vln. 2
 sul pont. \leftarrow *mf* \rightarrow

Vla.
 ord.

Vc.
 tremolo non tremolo \leftarrow *mf* \rightarrow *pp*

Vln. 1
 (*mf*) *p* *mp* *pp*

Vln. 2
 ord. *pp* \leftarrow *mp* \rightarrow *pp*

Vla.
 sul pont. ord. *n*

Vc.
 \leftarrow *mp* \rightarrow *pp*

** : Improvisatory alternations between the specified pitches should continue, but with measure durations now aligning with the meter of the Violin 1 part.

20

Vln. 1 *p* *mf* *p* *mf*

Vln. 2 *n* *p* *mf* in time

Vla. in time *p* *mf* *p*

Vc. *sul pont.* *ord.* *n*

25

Vln. 1 *p* *mp* *p* *mf* *pp* poco rit.

Vln. 2 *p* *mf* *p* *mp* *pp*

Vla. *mf* *p* *mp* *pp* *mf*

Vc. in time *mp* *p* *mp* *pp*

30 a tempo

Vln. 1 *mp* *pp*

Vln. 2 *sul D* *mp* *pp*

Vla. *pp* *timidly* *p* *mf*

Vc. *I* *mp* *n*

35

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

p < *mf* > *p* < *mf* > *p* < *f* > *p* < *mf* >

mf < *pp*

p *pp*

mf < *pp*

mf < *p*

40

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

mp

p < *mf* > *mp*

mf > *mp*

pp *pp sub.*

pp *pp sub.*

pp *pp sub.*

pp *pp sub.*

sul tasto

sul tasto

sul tasto

ord.

poco rit. _____ a tempo

46

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

ord. (*pp*) *mf* *p*

mp > *pp*

ord. < *mp* > *pp* 3 *mf*

ord. < *mp* > *pp* < *mf* > *p*

On Solace

rit. _____ a tempo

51

Vln. 1 *f* *p sub.* *ff with full force*

Vln. 2 *mf* *p* *f* *p sub.* *f*

Vla. *p* *f* *p sub.* *f*

Vc. *f* *p sub.* *f*

55

Vln. 1 *f passionately, weeping*

Vln. 2 *ff with full force* *sul pont.* (sempre sul pont.) *f* (sempre sul pont.) *p* (sempre sul pont.)

Vla. *ff with full force* *sul pont.* (sempre sul pont.) *f* (sempre sul pont.) *p* (sempre sul pont.)

Vc. *ff with full force* *sul pont.* (sempre sul pont.) *f* (sempre sul pont.) *p* *mf*

60

Vln. 1 *pp* *mf* *p*

Vln. 2 *pp* *mf* *p* ord.

Vla. *mf* *p* *pp* *mf* *p* ord.

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

On Solace

64 rit. *Meno mosso* ♩ = 52

Vln. 1: *f* *p* < *f* *n* *p* *f*

Vln. 2: *f* *p*

Vla.: *f* *p*

Vc.: *f* *p* *pizz.* *mf* *arco* *p*

70 *molto rit.* *a tempo*

Vln. 1: *p* *mp* *f* *p* *f* *p sub.* (*p*)

Vln. 2: (*p*) < *mf* *p* *f* *p*

Vla.: (*p*) < *mf* *p* *f* *p*

Vc.: (*p*) < *mf* *p* *f* *p sub.* (*p*)

77

Vln. 1: (*p*) *n*

Vln. 2: (*p*) *n*

Vla.: *mp* *n*

Vc.: (*p*) *n*