

# Three Pieces for Violin and Piano

early June—August 23, 2014

Duration: about 22 minutes

for Eric Pritchard

Over the last decade I have preferred to write pieces from about 15 to 25 minutes long; this is most suited to the kind of music that I write. In our fast-paced era of minute attention spans, what people want is music of much shorter duration. Almost all composition contests are for very short pieces. With extremely rare exceptions, my music is not being played on other people's concerts, where space is very tight; and longer works require more work to prepare, which is unrealistic for an unknown composer like me to ask of performers. Those who visit my website or YouTube channel usually stay for two or three minutes. Knowing this, I have frequently urged performers to consider playing single movements, but this happens infrequently. As a result I decided to write some short pieces for violin and piano that could be played together for the same effect as a single piece, but which would each stand alone.

All three pieces have orchestral versions.

The first piece in this collection was the last to be written. I like waltzes and have written several over the years.

The second piece was inspired by the radio. On July 6, 2014, WNYC broadcast "The World's Most-Used Musical Sequence", which was an hour-long compilation of musical excerpts demonstrating the use of the Diatonic Phrygian Tetrachord. NPR followed up with five minutes on *Weekend Edition* on July 20. Despite the forbidding academic name, this series of four notes, with many modifications, has been used for centuries by musicians all over the world.

The basic sequence is four descending notes with the pattern whole step, whole step, half step. On a piano keyboard, one example would be the four white notes going down starting from E. This composition uses the Diatonic Phrygian Tetrachord both unmodified and highly modified in pretty much every way I could think of, frequently with several modifications simultaneously, in a reasonably contemporary idiom. I will leave it to musicologists yet unborn to deal with the analytical details, as I have some pride in not having opened a music theory book since 1975, and I don't want to have to look things up.

The finale (the first to be written) is a modern take on the most dissonant music written by Mozart; the final half of the final movement of his 40<sup>th</sup> Symphony. This section starts with what is very nearly a twelve-tone row. What I have done here, as I have done several times in the past, is to see what I would do with the key ideas of this piece written in my own style and form. This is by no means an arrangement of the original, but instead is an entirely new work. (Never fear—as I have never written in the twelve-tone style, which I find obnoxious in the extreme, I have not done so here either.)

These three pieces were first performed at Duke University on January 11, 2015, by Eric Pritchard, violin, and Greg McCallum, piano.

Accidentals hold through the measure and not beyond, and do not refer to other octaves. Eric Pritchard edited the violin parts.

## Bill Robinson

Publisher Parrish Press Raleigh NC First Edition January 2015

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# Diatonic Phrygian Tetrachord

[7:50]

Adagio andalusia (♩ = 74)

Bill Robinson

Violin

Piano

*p*

*p*

*cresc.*

*f*

*f*

*cresc.*

*f*

*p*

*p*

*f*

*f*

*mp*

*mp*

*p*

*p*

*p*

*p*

*p*

Musical score for measures 22-26. The system includes a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The piano part has two staves. Dynamics include *pp* and *dolce*. There are markings for *ped.* and an asterisk *\** at the end of the system.

Musical score for measures 27-30. The system includes a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The piano part has two staves. Dynamics include *p* and *mp*.

Musical score for measures 31-34. The system includes a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The piano part has two staves. Dynamics include *mp*.

Musical score for measures 35-39. The system includes a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The piano part has two staves. Dynamics include *p* and *pp*. There are time signature changes from 3/4 to 4/4.

Musical score for measures 40-44. The system includes a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The piano part has two staves. Dynamics include *pp*. There are time signature changes from 3/4 to 4/4. There are markings for *ped.* and an asterisk *\** at the end of the system.

43 *mf* *mp* *p* *pp*

48 *p*

53 *8va*

58 *pp* *ff*

61 *mf* *mp* *p* *ff*

66

*p*

*p*

70

*p*

74

*p cresc.*

*(mp)*

*p cresc.*

*legato*

*(mp)*

*p*

76

*mf*

*mf*

78

*f*

*f*

81 *ff*

85 *dolce p* *f*

*dolce p* *cresc.* *f*

90 *ff* *mf* *pp*

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

96 *p*

*p*

102

102

106 *f*

111 *p*

116

121 *pp*

126