Violations for Viol Consort

November 23, 2011--February 19, 2012

My uncle, David Vanderkooi, plays all the different kinds of viols. He told me about the Leo M. Traynor Competition, sponsored by the Viola da Gamba Society of America, for works not longer than five minutes for viol consort. This sounded like an interesting challenge; viol music can be quite enchanting and enjoyable, and having just finished a work for harpsichord, I was used to the idea of antique instruments. Besides, I have never come close to winning a composition prize, where the judges are almost always new music specialists interested in the avant-garde, which is far from my taste. This is unlikely to be a problem with viols.

It is difficult for me to write anything of just five minutes, so I settled for four movements of that length with the intention of submitting one movement. According to the metronome, two of the movements are exactly five minutes long, although it just sort of happened that way.

However, I was unable to submit any of the movements for the contest as I had posted the score on my website, which they considered to be publication. Picky picky picky.

As viol consorts are somewhat rare, I have arranged this piece for string quintet (string quartet plus extra cello), as well as string orchestra.

Accidentals hold through the measure and not beyond, and do not refer to other octaves. Sometimes I include courtesy accidentals to avoid confusion. My uncle edited the bowings, which was quite a help as I am accustomed to modern strings.

Dedicated to David Vanderkooi

Cover mugshots, from top, left to right: Igor Stravinsky, Frank Sinatra,
Martin Luther King, Ezra Pound, Joseph Stalin, Timothy Leary, Lenny Bruce, Al Capone,
George Carlin, Leon Trotsky, Aleister Crowley, Janis Joplin, Franz Liszt,
Robert Oppenheimer, Willie Nelson, humble self, Glen Campbell, Mother Theresa
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Bill Robinson

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