nox praevelat

violin, cello, piano
2013-14

justin murphy-mancini

Performance notes for *nox praevelat*.

general

-Eighth = 72 throughout. It is important that the overall tempo remains constant, though temporary changes are indicated.

-Dynamics are given relative to each other, where *pppp* indicates the threshold of audibility for the audience. Gradations should be relatively subtle rather than extreme. Depending on the additional technical demands at any given moment, dynamics may be more or less easy to produce, and in such cases, clarity may be sacrificed in order to maintain the proper quiet. Dynamics to and from "silence" (*niente*) should be particularly rigorously observed.

-Accidentals last for the duration of the measure in the octave in which they are notated unless explicitly canceled. Accidentals attached to auxiliary-sized notes do not count for regular-sized notes.

-A dotted line between two directions (such as *sul tasto* and *sul ponticello*) indicates a gradual change. Otherwise, changes such as these should be made as quickly as possible.

-A triangle-shaped fermata indicates a brief lengthening of the note.

-The piece begins with a solo for the violin as given in the separate part at the beginning of the score. When the violinist begins playing, either the cellist or the pianist starts a stopwatch, and after 4 minutes they begin playing their material entirely independent of the violin. At the end of measure 19, the cellist cues the violinist to cut off together. There is a grand pause in measure 20 that should be only as long as it takes the violinist to set up to play together with the cello and piano. After this point, all of the parts are coordinated for the rest of the piece.

-From measure 95 to measure 104, there is an optional part for an independent singer. If a singer is not available, then the piece should be performed omitting only the vocal part; the passage in effect becomes a piano solo.

-All performers (except the singer) should take full advantage of the ornament table below (see *les petits agréments*)

-All "double stops" should be interpreted as artificial harmonics, even if it is difficult or impossible to produce a conventional harmonic sound.

-Regular noteheads indicate full finger pressure.

-Diamond noteheads indicate harmonic pressure.

Not all notes with diamond noteheads will generate conventional harmonics.

-Slurs for the string instruments indicate notes that are to be played in one bow. It is important to follow this prescription carefully.

-Indications about bow use should be taken very literally.

violin

-The material on pages 1 and 2 of the part (and score) are to be played at the beginning of the piece. This music is uncoordinated with the cello and piano as explained above. The violinist should play the material as written until the cellist gives the cue to cut off. At that point, the violinist should begin playing the music on page 3, which is coordinated with the rest of the ensemble. The first measure on the violin's page 3 is labeled "20" to match with the other parts. There is far more music written in the first section than can be performed before the violin joins the cello and piano.

-The text underlay provides the rhythmic information for the middle section of the violin solo. The notes above the syllables should be played in a way that emulates the rhythm of the words when spoken aloud. The violinist should become familiar with speaking the text and then match the music to be played with the rhythms that are discovered. The only "incorrect" way to play the text-rhythm is to make every syllable the same length. When a line extends from a notehead, that note should be held for the duration of the text-rhythm below it. Text without notes should be counted as rests.

cello

-Throughout the piece, the cello should maintain a slow *tremolando*, an oscillation between the notes indicated by the large noteheads and the small auxiliary noteheads.

The tremolando need not be even or consistent, but it should be continuous when not otherwise noted. For notes that are tied, the auxiliary note is attached to the first note of the tied group, and it should be maintained for the total duration indicated. If a note with an auxiliary is connected by a slur to a note without an auxiliary, then the note without an auxiliary is played without tremolando.

piano

-The following notes need to be prepared in the indicated fashion (c' = middle c):

> g# - a long bolt placed between strings 1 and 2 approximately 3 inches from the damper

> g#''', a''', a#''', b''', c'''' - muting rubber between strings 1 and 2; a short bolt placed between strings 2 and 3; paper woven between all strings

-When a number is present above a note, the pianist must touch the string at the distance indicated below while striking the key. The pianist should insure that all strings are covered when the key is struck.

> 0 = do not touch the string

> 1 = less than one inch from the damper

> 2 = approximately 2-3 inches from the damper

> 3 = approximately 6 inches from the damper

> 4 = at the "midpoint" of the string's sounding length, so that the second partial (one octave higher) sounds as clearly as possible

A note without a number should be played ordinarily. The "zero" indication is used only for clarification in ambiguous passages.

voice

-The voice part is optional, and may be performed by any voice type at any pitch level. The part is notated with a C clef on the fourth line, recalling the use of C clefs in Gregorian chant. These clefs do not provide a pitch-frequency equivalence in the way that we expect today; instead, the clef simply shows the intervallic relationship between notes. The singer should not treat the clef as if it provides information about the frequency of the notes, but is permitted to begin on any comfortable pitch. The singer then should read the intervals given relative to the starting pitch.

-The text is given in IPA. A pronunciation guide for the symbols is given below with both the technical names and exemplification in English when possible.

-If possible, the singer should stand for the duration of the work and make no obvious movements or indications when beginning to sing.

[f] = voiceless interdental fricative (as the "f" in "fern")

[m] = bilabial nasal (as the "m" in "mother")

[n] = alveolar nasal (as the "n" in "north")

[r] = alveolar trill (a rolled "r" as in the Italian "Roma")

[t] = voiceless alveolar stop (as the "t" in "time" but without aspiration)

[ʒ] = voiced palato-alveolar fricative (as the "s" in "measure")

[e] = close-mid front unrounded vowel (as the "ay" in "lay" but without the diphthong)

[ɛ] = open-mid front unrounded vowel (as the "e" in "fen")

[ə] = mid-central vowel (as the first "a" in "away")

[o] = close-mid back rounded vowel (as the "o" in "row" but without the diphthong)

[õ] = close-mid back rounded nasalized vowel (as [o] but nasalized; the "o" in the French "on"

Les petits agréments

trépider - indicated by (*trp*)
a harried quivering of the pitch

frissoner - indicated by (*friss*)
similar to *trépider*, but using the bow

trémolo - indicated by (〰〰〰)
cause the bow to shake along/parallel to the string

triller - indicated by (*t*)
as a trill, but always to a note ⅛ of a tone higher

relâcher - indicated by (*r*)
begin with the pressure indicated, but gradually and gently release

retenu - indicated by (*ret*)
the second full bar after the end of a retenu must be coordinated
how the recoordination is achieved is left up to the performer

échapper - indicated by (↲)
a way to connect two notes, but not quite ever a true glissando

Ornamentation might be thought of as an additional musical layer applied to the features already partially determined by the score. An ornament as conceived by musicians of the 14th-18th centuries often fell outside the ability of notation to capture very precise rhythmic and timbral subtleties, and many people thought the composer ought not make such graces determinate. Ornamentation is a special kind of necessary addition to the music that is not required to be composed ahead of time; it is spontaneous and in deliberate communication with the score/composer/tradition/etc.

Certain ornaments can be found in this score already. These are essentially mandatory (though even skilled musicians of the past might have ignored "mandatory" ornaments), and they should offer a hint about how some ornaments might be used "idiomatically." Many traditions of ornamentation are oriented toward a saturation of the musical texture, and this aesthetic approach might be fruitfully considered by a contemporary performer.

Every performance should be somewhat different. Spontaneity and improvisation are important components of a robust ornamental practice.

In all things, musicians of the past have espoused flexibility. Extemporaneous and composed ornamentation demands temporal flexibility and a willingness to permit variability.

I admit that I am leaving the performer in the lurch, so to speak, by not providing a ready-made, living tradition of taste to help guide the application of these indeterminate features. I wish to encourage the freest possible treatment of these performer-driven interventions within certain general bounds. Renaissance and Baroque musicians are nearly unanimous about the "gracefulness" of performances containing ornamentation, and while they disagree in writing about the amount of ornamentation that is considered appropriate, they emphasize the freedom of the performer to "feel" their way toward successful practices. I offer this quotation from Rameau as a kind of summation, echoed often across Europe between 1500 and 1800.

"Let ornamentation be as well rendered as possible, it will lack a certain indescribably something which constitutes its whole merit if it is not guided by feeling: too much or too little, too early or too late, too long or not enough in suspensions, in the repercussions of trills; finally, when it lacks precisely what expression and context require, any ornament becomes insipid … ; taste flows from feeling, it adopts what is good, rejects what is bad … All the master can do is provide the means of executing the ornaments well and demonstrate them if he can do so … it will be … never by the rules that he can show a man of taste how to use his fine talents as a performer …"

Oratio pauperis.

2 February 2014, Oberlin, Ohio.

nox praevelat

justin murphy-mancini
october 2013 - january 2014

qui - a de - fe - ce - runt si - cut fu - mus di - es me - i si - cut gre - mi - um a - ru - e - runt. per - cus - sum est ut fae - num et a - ru - it cor me - um qui - a ob - li - tus sum co - me - de - re pa - nem me-
(pp)

52

um. a vo-ce ge-mi-tus me-i ad-he-sit os me-um car-ni me-ae.   si-mi-lis fac-tus sum pe-li-ca-no so-li-tu-di-nis fac - tus sum si-cut nyc - ti - co-rax in do-mi-ci - li - o.   vi-

53

gi - la - vi et fac-tus sum si-cut pas-ser so-li - ta - ri - us in tec-to. to - ta di - e   ex-pro-bra-bant mi-hi i-ni-mi-ci me-i   et qui lau-da-bant me ad-ver-sus me iu - ra-bant. qui-a

54

ci - ne-rem tam-quam pa-nem man-du-ca - vi et po-cu-lum me-um cum fle - tu mi-sce-bam. a fa-ci - e i - rae et in-di-gna-ti - o - nis tu - ae qui - a e - le-vans ad - li - si - sti me. di-es

55

attaca

me - i si - cut um - bra de - cli - na - ve - runt ut e - go si - cut fae - num a - ru - i et ce - te - ra et

♪ = 72 *sempre molto sul tasto*

6/8   5/8   7/8

p *

p

poco accel. _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ **A tempo**

64

7/8   3/8   4/8   5/8   3/8   7/8   6/8   5/8   3/8

p *sub.*   pp   pp

73

3/8   4/8   5/8   3/8   4/8   9/8   4/8   3/8

* Continue playing the following material until the cello and piano cue the cutoff at score m. 20.

When the piece begins, start the stopwatch. At t=4'00'', begin playing. From measure 1-20, only the cello and piano are coordinated.

♪ = 72 (T = 4'00'')

very slow tremolando (see notes) *sul tasto*

Violoncello

Pianoforte

sul ponticello

ret. . . . .

9

Vc.

Pf.

relâ.

*Begin at the indicated position, but gradually move toward the next position indicated.
At the next note, the new position should have been reached on the previous note.

From this point until the end of the piece, play in coordination.

* The passage mm.30-49 is played ordinario.

(possible page turn suggested here)

10

*The dynamic is a relative and not absolute designation. The tick marks indicate places to breathe if necessary;
if the passage can be sung in one breath, that is preferable. See performance notes.