

IDIOMS

for piano and string quartet

Taylor Brook

2018

Idioms, for piano and string quartet, was written in 2018 for the Graham Sommer Competition for Young Composers. This piece is dedicated to my former teacher, Belgian composer Luc Brewaeys, who passed away in 2015 at the age of 56.

The title *Idioms* comes from Luc's penchant for idiomatic phrases, puns, jokes, and expressions in a multitude of languages. I've translated this idea of idiomatic language into musical idioms (and perhaps accents as style) to create a piece that teems with references, quotations, and allusions. The references to Luc's music are to his 8th symphony as well as an early piano piece, *Pyramids in Siberia*. His 8th symphony was left unfinished, as Luc was unable to complete the work, exhausted from battling cancer. *Pyramids in Siberia* was chosen because it suggests an alternate reality and alternate history, which I invoke to conceptualize the consolidation of many disparate musical elements in this piece and others.

Idioms begins with a reworking of the opening phrase of Luc's 8th Symphony and then moves back in time, forming historical links. First there is a Debussy prelude, for which Luc made a well-known orchestration. Debussy gives way to Wagner, Wagner to Beethoven, Beethoven to Haydn, and Haydn transforms into some type of imaginary Croatian folk music. The pitch materials are then stripped down to noise, a reference to Luc's first symphony. The piece ends by lingering on the final harmonies of Luc's unfinished 8th, concluding on a long F#, which pushes to the right onto an otherwise blank page of the score, suggesting the possibilities of the unfinished work.

microtonal notation

The following accidental nomenclature is used:

♭ - ♯ approximately 1/4 tone flat or sharp (50 cents)

↓ - ↑ approximately 1/6 tone flat or sharp (33 cents)

♭ - ♭ - ♯ - ♯ - ♯ - ♯ approximately 1/12 tone flat or sharp (17 cents)

The quarter-tone and sixth-tone alterations constitute significant changes in pitch, while the 12th-tone alterations provide something closer to a shift in intonation. In any case, the more the performer understands the harmonic role of their part and they are able to use their ear to tune, the more accurate the tuning becomes. The microtones are used almost exclusively to achieve acoustically consonant harmonies in just intonation.

performance techniques

bow placement indications:

ord. - ordinario - (Use an ordinary bow position.)

s.t. - sul tasto - (Bow close to the end of the fingerboard.)

a.s.t. - alto sul tasto - (Bow over the fingerboard.)

p.s.t. - poco sul tasto - (Bow slightly towards the fingerboard from ordinario position.)

s.p. - sul ponticello - (Bow close to the bridge.)

m.s.p. - molto sul ponticello - (Bow very close to the bridge, thereby producing a harsh sound.

This technique will often silence or obscure the fundamental pitch of the string. When a number is attached to the m.s.p. indication, the player should try as much to bring out that particular overtone.)

p.s.p. - poco sul ponticello - (Bow slightly closer to the bridge than ordinario position.)

bowing technique indications:

norm. - normale - (Use a normal bow technique.)

flautando - (Fast bow speed and low bow pressure in a alto sul tasto position to obtain a flute-like tone.)

c.l.t. - col legno tratto - (Play with the wood of the bow rubbing the string.)

1/2 c.l.t. - half col legno tratto - (Rotate the bow so that it rubs the string with both the wood and hair.)

mute with left hand - (Mute the strings with multiple fingers or palm of left hand, producing white noise when bowed.)

Idioms

à Luc Brewaeys

Taylor Brook

♩ = 52

Violin I: *p*, *s.p.*, *p*, *s.p.*

Violin II: *p*, *s.p.*, *p*, *s.p.*

Viola: *p*, *s.p.*, *p*, *s.p.* slowly gliss trill note

Cello: *p*, *s.p.*, *p*, *s.p.*

Piano: *mf*, *pp*, *mf*, *pp*

ped. →

Vln. I: *p*, *s.p.*, *pp*, *mf > p*, *6-8"*

Vln. II: *f*, *mp*, *s.t.*, *6-8"* slow wide vib.

Vla.: *pp*, *mf*, *pp*, *pp*, *mf > pp*, *6-8"*

Vc.: *mf > p*, *f*, *mp*, *s.t.*, *6-8"*

Pno.: *p*, *6-8"*

ped. —

(♩ = ♩) ♩ = 76

10

Vln. I *pp* gliss trill note *ord.* *ff* *fff*

Vln. II *pp* s.p. *ord.* gliss trill note *ff* *fff*

Vla. *pp* gliss trill note *ord.* *ff* *fff*

Vc. *pp* s.p. gliss trill note *ord.* *ff* *fff*

Pno. *f*

ped.

♩ = 52

13

Vln. I *sub p* *pizz.* *arco s.p.* *solo* *pp* *mp* *pp* *p*

Vln. II *sub p* *pizz.* *arco s.p.* *pp* *mp* *pp*

Vla. *sub p* *pizz.* *arco alto sul tasto* *1/2 col legno tratto* *mp* *ppp* *p* *ppp*

Vc. *sub p* gliss harmonics *pizz.* *arco* *pp* *mp* *pp*

Pno. *fff* *p* *mp* *p*

ped.

18

ord. \rightarrow s.p. \rightarrow II III ord.

Vln. I *mp* *mp* *mp* *mf* *p* *f* *p* *mf* *p*

Vln. II s.p. *mp*

Vla. norm. s.p. *mp*

Vc. s.p. *mp*

Pno. *pp*

ped. _____

22

gliss trill note (sim. for remainder of section)

Vln. I *fp* *mf* *p* *fp*

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Pno.

26

Vln. I *f* *p* *ff* *f* *ff* *mp* *mf* *p*

Vln. II ord. *p* *f* *p*

Vla. ord. *p* *f* *p*

Vc. ord. *p* *f* *p*

Pno. *f*

poco accel. *a tempo*

very even, non vib.

30

Vln. I *mp* *ff* *sub p* *mp* *p* *ord.* *s.p.*

Vln. II *p* *mp* *p* *gliss trill note* *ord.* *s.p.*

Vla. *p* *mp* *p* *ord.* *s.p.*

Vc. *p* *ord.* *s.p.*

Pno. *p* *mp* *p* *mf* *f*

ped.

35

ord. I II III

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Pno.

ped.

39

I II III⁵ II I

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Pno.

ped.

♩ = 76

(Repeat as fast as possible for 20-30 seconds. Should be of a relentless and sustained intensity.)

20-30"

Vln. I *f* *ff*

Vln. II *mp* > *pp* *pp* < *p* < *pp* < *p*

Vla. *pp* < *p* < *pp* < *p*

Vc. *pp* < *p* < *pp* < *p*

Pno. *p* (Brouillards)

ped. _____

♩ = 52

Vln. I *p* *n*

Vln. II *pp* *n* *p* *poco* *n*

Vla. *pp* < *p* < *pp* *s.t.* *p* *n*

Vc. *p* *s.t.* *p* *n*

Pno. *pp* *p*

ped. _____

49

alto sul tasto
1/2 col legno tratto

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla. (s.t.)

Vc. ord.

Pno. mp

ped.

53

norm. ord. II III 6 I II III 6 IV

norm. ord. (s) III³

a.s.t. ord.

s.t.

Pno. 8^{va} - - - 9

ped.

(with a light and loose feel) port.

55

Vln. I *mf* *p* *mp* *p*

Vln. II *mp* *pp*

Vla. *mp* *p* *mf*

Vc. *mp* *pp* *mp* *pp*

Pno. *mp* *p*

ped.

6

3

(d)

IV

III

IV

(liebestod)

(with a light and loose feel) port.

5

5

3

gliss harmonics ord.

II

3

7

(always begin rolls on beat)

58

Vln. I *mf* *pp* *mp* *pp* *p* *mp* *pp* *mp*

Vln. II *pp* *mp* *pp* *pp* *mp* *pp*

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

Vc. *p* *mp* *pp*

Pno. *mp* *p* *mp* *p* *pp*

ped.

s.p.

7

ord.

s.p. slow and wide vib.

5

5

3

3

3

10

alto sul tasto 1/2 col legno tratto

7

7

60 (slow and wide vib.)

Vln. I *p* *mp* *pp*

Vln. II *pp* *mp* *p* *mp* *p* *mp*

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

Vc. *mp*

Pno. *p* *pp* *p* *pp* *p* *pp* *p*

ped.

alto sul tasto
1/2 col legno tratto

ord.
vib. espress. (Beethoven Op. 132)

norm.
ord.

63

Vln. I *pp* *mp* *pp* *mp*

Vln. II *p* *mf* *pp*

Vla. *pp* *mp* *pp* *pp* *mp* *pp* *mp* *pp* *mp* *pp*

Vc. *pp* *mp* *pp* *m.s.p.* *pp* *pp* *mp* *pp* *mp* *pp*

Pno. *pp* *p* *pp* *p* *pp*

ped.

65

Vln. I *pp* < *mp* > *pp* *p* p.s.t.

Vln. II *pp* < *mp* > *pp* < *mp* > *pp* *p* p.s.t.

Vla. *pp* *p* p.s.t.

Vc. *p* p.s.t.

Pno. *mp* *mf*³ *p* *f* *pp* *mp* *p*³ *mf*

ped.

68

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Pno. *mp* *mp* > *p* *mp* > *p* *mp* *p* *mf* *p* *f* *p* *11*

ped.

solo, tempo rubato, espres.

Musical score for measures 71-73, featuring Vln. I, Vln. II, Vla., Vc., and Pno. The score includes dynamic markings such as *pp*, *mp*, *p*, and *pp*, along with performance instructions like *ord.*, *espres.*, and *1 →*. Measure numbers 71, 72, and 73 are indicated at the start of their respective staves. The Vln. I and Vln. II parts feature complex rhythmic patterns with triplets and quintuplets. The Vla. part has a dense texture of sixteenth notes. The Vc. part has a steady eighth-note accompaniment. The Pno. part features a melodic line in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand, with a pedal point.

(♩ = ♩) = 104

Musical score for measures 74-76, featuring Vln. I, Vln. II, Vla., Vc., and Pno. The score includes dynamic markings such as *mp* and *p*, along with performance instructions like *solo, with flexible tempo* and *1 →*. Measure numbers 74, 75, and 76 are indicated at the start of their respective staves. The Vln. I and Vln. II parts play sustained chords. The Vla. part plays sustained chords. The Vc. part has a melodic line with a triplet. The Pno. part has a melodic line in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand, with a pedal point.

77

Vln. I *mp* *IV* → gliss harmonics

Vln. II *mf* unusual technique!*

Vla. solo ends

Vc. solo ends

Pno. *mp* *p*

* play passage wildly and as much as possible with a single finger on the left hand, sliding between notes. The passage should have mechanical vibrato and generally be out of tune. The idea is an abstraction of early recordings of Croatian folk song.

80

Vln. I *p* < *mf* > *p* *mp* gliss harmonics

Vln. II (unusual technique!*) *p* < *mf* > *p* *p* < *mp* *III* → gliss harmonics

Vla. *p* *mp* *p* *f* *IV* →

Vc. *mp* < *mf* > *p*

Pno. *pp* *p* ped. →

83

IV →

gliss harmonics

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Pno.

ped. →

p *mp* *p* *mp* *p*

mp *p* *mp*

mp *p* *mp*

mp *p*

pp *mp* *mp* *p*

86

IV →

m.vib. → s.vib.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Pno.

ped. →

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

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

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

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

p *mf* *f* *ff*

s.p. m.vib. → s.vib. ord.

s.p. ord.

14

89

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Pno.

ped.

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

f *mp* *ff* *mp* *ff* *sub pp* *mp* *pp*

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

f *ff* *mp* *ff* *f* *pizz.*

f *pp* *ff* *p*

gliss harmonics

unusual technique! (see page 11)

92

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Pno.

(Haydn, Sunrise Quartet)

(Haydn, Sunrise Quartet)

(Haydn, Sunrise Quartet)

(Haydn, Sunrise Quartet)

arco s.p.

ord.

fp *ff* *p* *ff* *mp* *mp* *f* *mp*

unusual technique!*

95 solo

Vln. I *mp*

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Pno.

gradually begin circ. bowing → circular bowing

gradually begin circ. bowing → circular bowing

gradually begin circ. bowing → circular bowing

solo ends

p

f

f

mf

mp

mp

IV

3

1

100 IV →

Vln. I

Vln. II *mp*

Vla. *mp*

Vc. I →

Pno.

gliss harmonics

unusual technique! (as before)

unusual technique! (as before)

3

3

3

3

3

7

p < *mp* > *pp*

ped.

poco rit. ♩ = 82

Musical score for measures 103-106. The score is for Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Violoncello. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 2/4. Measure 103 starts with a treble clef and a 3-measure rest. Measures 104-105 are marked *norm.* and feature a 3-measure rest. Measure 106 is marked *p* and features a 3-measure rest. The score includes dynamic markings and articulation symbols.

Musical score for measures 107-114. The score is for Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Violoncello. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 2/4. Measure 107 starts with a treble clef and a 3-measure rest. Measures 108-114 feature a 3-measure rest. The score includes dynamic markings (*mf*, *mp*) and articulation symbols.

113

Score for measures 113-118. The score is for five instruments: Violin I, Violin II, Viola, Violoncello, and Piano. The time signature changes from 2/4 to 3/4 and back to 2/4. The key signature has one sharp (F#). Dynamics include *mf*, *mp*, and *mf*. The Piano part has rests in measures 113-118 and a *mf* dynamic in measure 118.

119

Score for measures 119-124. The score is for five instruments: Violin I, Violin II, Viola, Violoncello, and Piano. The time signature is 2/4. The key signature has one sharp (F#). Dynamics include *mf*, *p*, *mp*, *pp*, *mf*, and *sub p*. Fingerings and techniques are indicated with numbers (1-5), Roman numerals (I-IV), and "p.s.t.". The Piano part has rests in measures 119-122 and a *mp* dynamic in measure 123. A pedal instruction "8va ped. ->" is present at the bottom right.

122

Vln. I *p* *mf* *mp* *mp* *mp* *mp* *mp*

Vln. II *p* *mf sub p* *pp* *mp* *p* *mp* *p*

Vla. *p* *mf sub p* *mp* *mp* *mp* *mp*

Vc. *p* *mf sub p* *mp* *p* *mp* *p* *mp*

Pno. *p* *pp* *p* *pp*

(8^{va})
ped. →

poco rit. $\text{♩} = 72$ *dolce*

125

Vln. I *p* *gliss trill note* *mp* *p* *s.p.* *s.t.*

Vln. II *mp* *p* *mp* *p* *s.p.* *s.t.*

Vla. *mp* *mp* *p* *s.p.* *s.t.*

Vc. *pp* *mp* *pp* *mp* *s.t.* *s.p.* *s.t.*

Pno. *p* *pp* *p* *pp*

(8^{va})
ped. →

128

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Pno.

ped.

n

ppp

mf

s.p. → ord. → m.s.p. → ord. → s.p. → s.t. → m.s.p. → s.t.

m.s.p. → s.t.

s.p.

p

pp

135

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Pno.

ped. →

left hand mute (no pitch)

"mp"

left hand mute (no pitch)

"mp"

left hand mute (no pitch)

"mp"

favor low D, harmonicas extra colour

III ord. → s.p. → ord.

I II

pp

ff

fff

p

142

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Pno.

trem. speed slow fast slow

3 3 3

left hand mute (no pitch)

" pp " mp "

148

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Pno.

norm. s.t.

p

norm. s.t.

p

norm. s.t.

p

norm. s.t.

p

norm. s.t.

p

3 *mp* *p*

3 *mp* *p*

3 *mp* *p*

3 *mp* *p*

3 *mp* *p*

3 *mp* *p*

3 *mp*

ped.

sempre s.t.

sempre s.t.

sempre s.t.

sempre s.t.

sempre s.t.

sempre s.t.

I II

mp *p*

mp *p*

mp *p*

mp *p*

mp *p*

mp *p*

153

Vln. I s.p. n p ord. pp mp pp p.s.t. (3) (3) mp mp

Vln. II s.p. n p ord. p.p. mp pp p.s.t. (3) (3) mp mp

Vla. (s.t.) n p

Vc. p

Pno. p

ped. ^

158

Vln. I s.t. 3 a.s.t. mp mp mp

Vln. II s.t. 3 a.s.t. mp mp

Vla. gradually begin circ. bowing circular bowing

Vc. gradually begin circ. bowing circular bowing

Pno. mp p

ped. → hold until inaudibly quiet