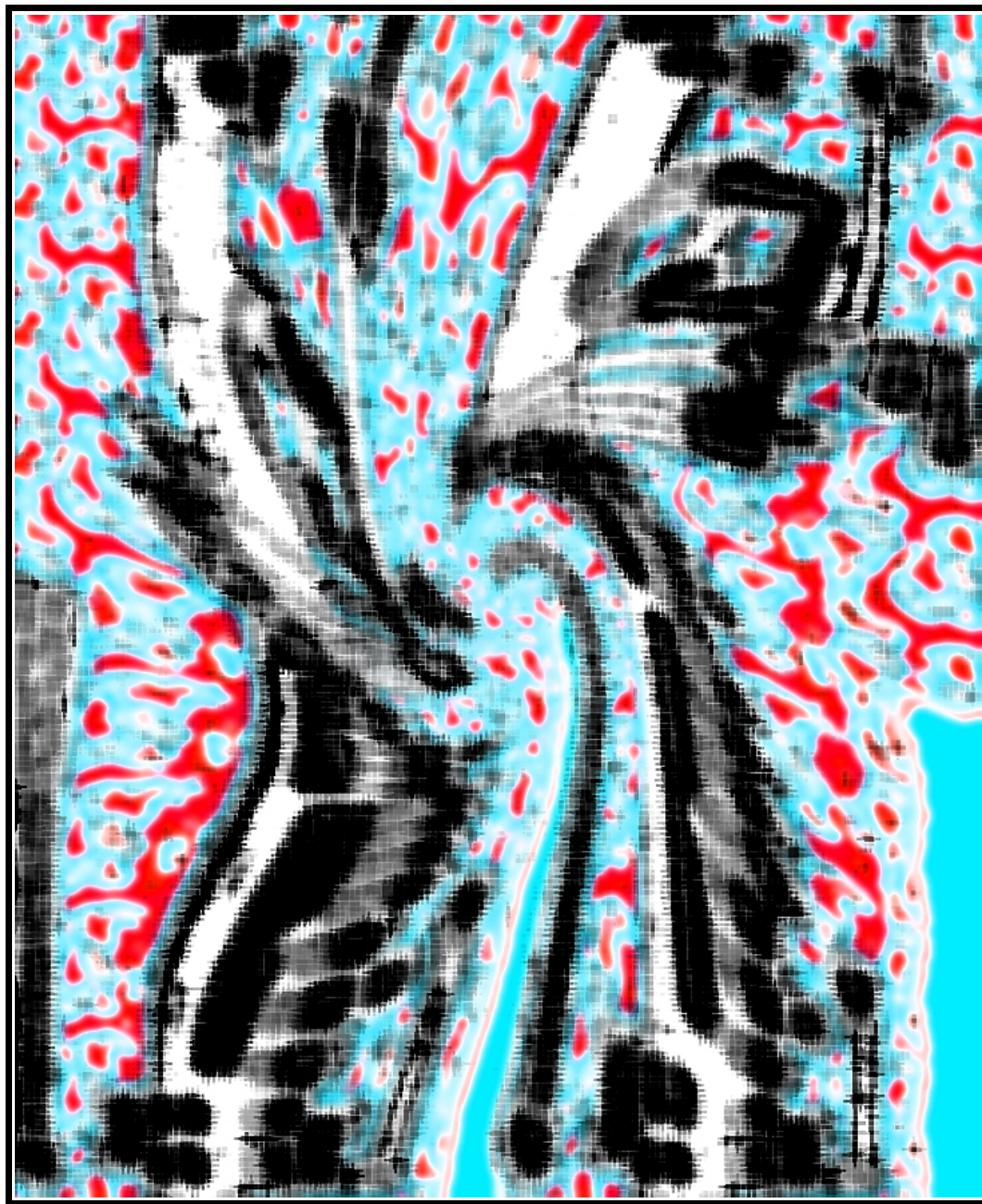


MEDITATION STUDIES (2011-2012)

for solo amplified violin



ANDREW A. WATTS

COUNTERPOINT
PRINTWORKS

CP-017

Program Note

Meditation Studies was written between November of 2011 and November of 2012, in both the Boston/Providence area and at the University of Oxford. Around this time the idea of restricted compositional perimeters began to fascinate me. In various works by Schoenberg, Messiaen, and Ligeti these composers would impose incredible limitations on material, procedure, technique, etc. Often in order to make a work which still has a strong sense of drama and is highly engaging, these composers would come up with ingenious, unorthodox, and creative ways to deal with the restrictions. Likewise, while working on *Meditation Studies* I felt taking compositional limitations to extremes did not “put me in shackles”. On the contrary, taking those considerations off the table actually allowed for much greater focus to explore what was left. After the work was completed I decided on the title *Meditation Studies* based on both the state of calm while working on it, as well as, the metabolism the piece itself has.

My self imposed restriction for the first movement became that of range; only pitches at or beyond the 24th position for each string were used, in addition to standard open string pitches. This creates a contrast of extremes with the violinist playing beyond the end of the fingerboard then back to the open strings. Through this limitation I was able to focus more heavily on rhythmic and timbral varieties in order to move the piece forward, exploring many of the different sonorities and sounds possible of the instrument.

For the second movement after having pushed so hard in both directions of the violin's pitch extremes I felt that returning to anything within the normal range of the instrument would be a let down. Therefore, traditional note production is avoided entirely. A possible conception of this would be if the violin as we know it today had never been invented or developed, but rather just fell out of the sky fully completed. How would the first person to happen upon the new instrument play it? I doubt he or she would innately use the instrument like Mozart or any composer for that matter in the Western classical canon. Rather, I suspect the violin would be used in a more holistic, percussive way. Not giving particular preference to striking the strings over knocking on the body of the instrument.

The last movement utilizes a rhythmic freedom not seen in the rigorously notated previous movements. Long, often microtonal lines are the dominant gesture, slowly unfolding and evolving. The restriction here is that of pitch again. However, this time it is down to the lowest string on the violin whereby there are no leaps. Aggressive glissandi provide a stark contrast to the static single note passages, referencing the opening of *Meditation Studies*.

The cover page image was designed by Andrew A. Watts.

Performance Notes

Meditation Studies may be performed with each movement treated as a stand-alone piece, or the complete work as a set. If performed as a set please maintain the numbered order of the movements as concert order.

Duration (approx.):

I. 3'15"

II. 3'00"

III. 3'00"


Total: c. 9'15"

Accidentals apply only in the measure and register in which they appear.


Scratch tone (abbrev. “*scr.*” and notated with “x” note-head)- a gritty/grinding bow timbre that is roughly half standard pitch and half 'crunch' sound.

Ricochet bowing (abbrev. “*ric.*”)- percussive slapping when bow is dropped and pulled across the string(s). If there is a desired number of bounces, it will be indicated with dots (ex.: “. . . .”) next to the note value.

Snap or Bartok pizzicato (notated with “” over note-head)

Fingernail pizzicato (notated “” through note stem)- a brittle, nasally sound is desired. It may be necessary to try different angles and motions plucking with the fingernail in order to properly achieve this.

Bow behind the bridge (notated with “” on stem)

Scratch tone behind the bridge (notated with “x” note-head and “” on stem)

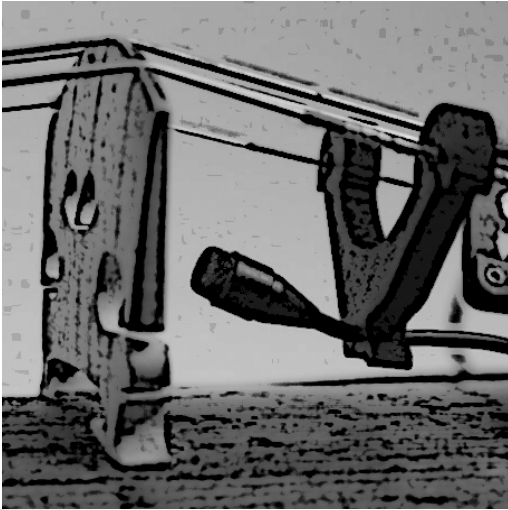
MICROPHONE PLACEMENT: The violinist should place the microphone on the bridge or as close to the bridge as possible. However, the microphone placement should not in any way hinder the bowing techniques (bowing behind the bridge, scratch tone behind the bridge, etc). Below are examples for possible equipment setup. Please note, there are many other configurations that also meet the playability criteria.

AMPLIFIER SETUP: The microphone cable should be plugged into an amplifier or PA system. Stereo capabilities are not necessary for this piece. The *tone* should remain as original to the sound source as possible. Mixing and equalizing should be, if done at all, with the intention to retain the original tone of the violin, highlighting the subtle noises made from various extended techniques of attacking the strings and striking the body the instrument.

The amplifier or PA system *volume* should be matched to about the levels of the acoustic instrument. Therefore, when the violin is playing the output should sound about the same a clone violin. The audience would hear this as the total loudness (or softness) of two violins.

The speaker should be placed behind the violinist and facing in the same direction as he or she is playing; i.e. directed toward the audience.

Performance Notes (2)



- Possible microphone placement



- Photo taken from another angle



- With amplifier behind performer

Performance Notes (3)

I.

The written pitches used in this movement are exclusively open string pitches via standard tuning and pitches at or beyond the 24th position. Please use the appropriate fingerings to achieve these notes indicated beyond the fingerboard and not fingerings for enharmonic equivalencies on other strings.

In measure 35 the performer is to start at *sul pont.*, then bow closer and closer to the bridge, eventually bowing directly on top of the bridge. At this point a wavering and uneven tone is desirable.


II.

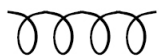
There are no traditionally produced pitches in this movement. When the string(s) is bowed, plucked, or struck in any manner always use the left hand to mute the vibrations on the fingerboard.

When indicated to *knock on body of the instrument with knuckles*, a hard and tight sound is desired; such as firmly knocking on a door. Additionally, which hand to use is also notated above the rhythms slashes: R for right/L for left.

 Col legno *battuto* while muting strings with L.H.

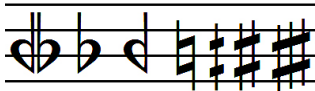
 Col legno *tratto* while muting strings with L.H.


 *Slow circular bowing*

 *Fast/aggressive circular bowing*

III.

Microtonal accidentals (in diagram from left to right):

 $\frac{3}{4}$ tone flat, semi tone flat, $\frac{1}{4}$ tone flat, natural, $\frac{1}{4}$ tone sharp, semi tone sharp, $\frac{3}{4}$ tone sharp.

 *Play note(s) or passage as fast as possible.*

The pitches indicated after the scratch tone section in measure 11 through measure 13 should be taken as suggested approximate pitches, as the pitches which make up the ends of a fast repeating glissandi over a wide interval range are often not perceivable as exact. Slight deviation from this section's pitches is therefore acceptable if the integrity of the gesture is maintained.

For *boxed notation* repeat phrase in box as fast as possible for the duration indicated before moving on.

for solo amplified violin
MEDITATION STUDIES

I.

Andrew A. Watts (2011-2012)

Moderate ♩ = 120
 sul E, sul pont.

quick

Slightly slower ♩ = 116
 sul G, sul pont.

arco normale, sul pont.

arco normale, sul pont.

*Play past the end of the fingerboard and approximate position by height of triangle notehead.

2

24 sul G, ric. ric. ric. sul D ric. sul G ric. ric.

p *sfz* *sfz*

Detailed description: This system contains measures 24 through 27. The music is written in treble clef with a 4/8 time signature. It features a series of triplets and sixteenth-note patterns. Dynamic markings include *p* (piano) and *sfz* (sforzando). Performance instructions include *ric.* (ricochet) and *sul D* (sul ponticello on the D string).

27 ric. ric. ric. ric. ric. ric.

p *sfz* *sfz* *p* *sfz* *sfz*

Detailed description: This system contains measures 27 and 28. The music continues with similar rhythmic patterns. Dynamic markings include *p* and *sfz*. Performance instructions include *ric.*

28 ric. ric. ric. *8va* *8va* *8va* ric.

poco f *p* *ff*

Detailed description: This system contains measures 28, 29, and 30. The music features an octave shift (*8va*) and a *scratch tone*. Dynamic markings include *poco f*, *p*, and *ff*. Performance instructions include *ric.*

30 *poco vib.* *gliss.* scratch tone *8va* *8va* *8va* *8va* *8va*

f *fff*

Detailed description: This system contains measures 30, 31, and 32. It includes a *gliss.* (glissando) and a *scratch tone*. The music features an octave shift (*8va*) and a 5:4 ratio. Dynamic markings include *f* and *fff*. Performance instructions include *poco vib.*

Vigorously

32 *8va* *8va* *8va* *8va* *8va* *molto vib.* *gliss.*

sub p *fff*

Detailed description: This system contains measures 32 and 33. The music is written in a 3/8 + 4/4 time signature. It features an octave shift (*8va*) and a *gliss.*. Dynamic markings include *sub p* and *fff*. Performance instructions include *molto vib.*

33

ord. *8va* *molto vib.*

34

ord. *8va*

(3 + 2 + 2)

sul pont. —————> on top of bridge

35

[2 sec] pizz., *alla chitarra*

36

8va *8va* *8va*

sffffz poco f *sffz poco f* *sffz poco f*

poco rit.

ord., off the string

molto vib.

$\text{♩} = 100$

37

8va *gliss.* *gliss.* [3 sec]

mp *ff espress.* *p*

4

Come prima $\text{♩} = 120$

sul E, sul pont.

8^{va}-----|

39 *gliss.* *pizz.* arco, sul pont. *pizz.* sul A sul D *pizz.*

ppp *mp* *p* *ppp* *mp*

45 arco, ord. *pizz.* sul G, arco behind bridge *pizz.*

ppp *mp* *fpp* *(mp)* *fpp* *mf*

49 arco, behind bridge scratch *pizz.*

ff *poco f* *sfz* *mp* *sfz*

51 arco tremolo: slow -----> quick *gliss.* [1 sec]

p *ff*

Deliberately

reserved -----> as fast as possible

ord. -----> molto sul pont.

56 8^{va} 8^{va} *pizz.*

II.

Throbbing ♩. = 84

col legno *tratto* while muting strings with L.H. (rearticulate freely)

sul E sul G sul E

knock on body of violin with knuckles R

Violin

fpp *fp* *fp* *fp* *pp* *sfz*

13

(3 + 2) (3 + 2 + 3) (2 + 3) (3 + 2)

L L L L L L L L L L

sfz mp *sfz mp* *sfz mp*

19

(3 + 2)

L L L L L L L L L L

p *sfz mp*

Aggressively

← ♩ = ♩ →

* Δ Δ □ □ Δ Δ Δ Δ

, scr., bow directly on bridge

24

L

4:3

sfz *f* *fff*

← ♩ = ♩ →

(bow directly on bridge)

**H

31

Δ □ □ Δ Δ □ Δ Δ

H

fpp *sfz* *fpp* *fpp* *mf* *sfz* *mf*

*Messiaen rhythm symbols are included here to facilitate speed/accuracy

**Hammer-on using just left hand, like a guitarist

39

scr. H 4:3 scr. H 5:4

ff *mf* *f* *mf* *sfz*

ff

Meno mosso

col legno *tratto* while muting strings w/ L.H.

44

3 sec H 5:4

fff *mf* *fppp* *fp* *pp*

sul G (rearticulate freely) sul D

gliss.

poco accel.

Come prima ♩. = 84

52

gliss. sul A

f *sub p* *f* *sub p* *ff*

Sul E, ric. H ric. H

59

ric. H ric. (on bridge) ric. H ric. H s.t. (3+2) (3+2+3)

sfz mp *sfz mp*

65

(2+2+3) (3+2+2) (2+3) (3+2)

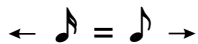
sfz mp *p* *sfz mp* *sfz*

71

(2+3) (3+2+2) (2+2+3) (3+2+2)

p *f mp* *sfz*

Aggressively



△ △ □ □ △ △ △ △ △ □ □ △ △ □ □ △ △ □ □ △ △
scr., bow directly on bridge

76

fff

85

fpp *mf* *sfz* *fpp*

90

fpp *sfz* *mf*

Freely, senza misura

6 sec

col legno *tratto* while muting strings with L.H.

95

p *poco f* *p*

5 sec

(col legno *battuto* while muting strings with L.H.)

molto sul tasto

molto sul pont.

pizz.

96

sfz *ppp* *p*

III.

Senza misura

Violin

con sord., senza vib.

5 sec 4 sec

sfz pp mp pp sfz

2

3 sec 5 sec 5 sec

vib: slow, narrow fast, wide

p f

3

4 sec 4 sec 3 sec

(bow, rearticulate freely) vib: slow, narrow sul pont. wide vib.

p pp f

4

4 sec 2 sec 4 sec 1 sec

at tip at frog sul tasto, senza vib.

p sfz pppp pp

5

3 sec 1 sec 5 sec 2 sec

narrow, fast vib. at frog, scr. ord.

ppp mp ppp ff mp

Detailed description of the musical score: The score is for a violin and is divided into five parts, numbered 1 to 5. Part 1 is marked 'Senza misura' and 'con sord., senza vib.'. It consists of two segments: a 5-second segment starting with a dynamic of *sfz pp* and a 4-second segment starting with *mp* and ending with *pp sfz*. Part 2 is marked 'vib: slow, narrow' for the first 3 seconds and 'fast, wide' for the next 10 seconds. It starts with *p* and reaches *f*. Part 3 is marked '(bow, rearticulate freely) vib: slow, narrow' for the first 4 seconds and 'sul pont. wide vib.' for the next 6 seconds. Dynamics range from *p* to *pp* to *f*. Part 4 is marked 'at tip' for the first 4 seconds, 'at frog' for the next 2 seconds, and 'sul tasto, senza vib.' for the next 4 seconds, ending with a 1-second segment. Dynamics range from *p* to *sfz* to *pppp* to *pp*. Part 5 is marked 'narrow, fast vib.' for the first 3 seconds, 'at frog, scr.' for the next second, 'ord.' for the next 5 seconds, and a final 2-second segment. Dynamics range from *ppp* to *mp* to *ppp* to *ff* to *mp*.

Meditation Studies (2011-2012) - III.

6 *5 sec* *6 sec* *4 sec* 9

scr. → ord. (bow, rearticulate freely) *espress.*

fff *mp* *sub* *ppp* *f*

7 *3 sec* *3 sec* *1 sec* *3 sec* *2 sec* *2 sec* *1 sec* *3 sec*

tr *tr* *tr* *tr* *tr* *tr* *tr* *tr tr tr tr tr*

p *sfz* *p* *sfz* *p* *poco f* *ppp* *fff*

s.p.

p *sfz* *p* *sfz* *p* *poco f* *ppp* *fff*

8 *4 sec* *3 sec* *3 sec* *1 sec*

wide, fast vib. (sul pont.) → scr. → sul pont. , → scr.

f *fff*

9 *2 sec* *2 sec*

sul pont. → scr.

gliss. *gliss.* *gliss.* *gliss.* *gliss.* *gliss.* *gliss.* *gliss.*

fff

fff

10 *4 sec* *2 sec* *2 sec* *2 sec*

norm., senza vib. pizz. arco, sul G

o , scr.

sub pp *p* *sfz* *ffff*

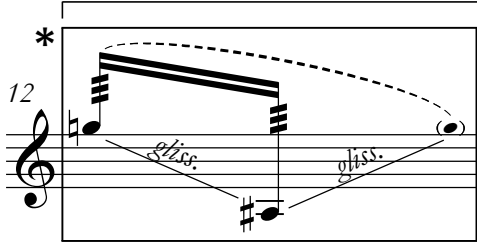
sub pp *p* *sfz* *ffff*

11 *1 sec* *1 sec* *3 sec*

ord.

fff *fff*

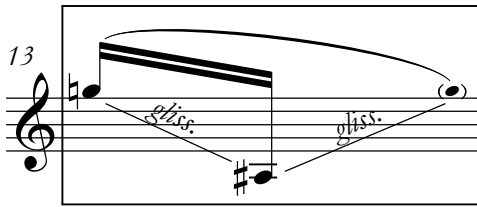
6 sec

* 

(ffff)

4 sec

lift bow and continue figure with L.H. movements only
(maintain speed and L.H. finger pressure)

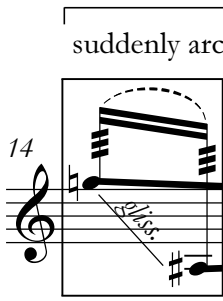


L.H. *ff*

6 sec

4 sec

suddenly arco again



[also, continue figure while gradually shortening glissandi range]

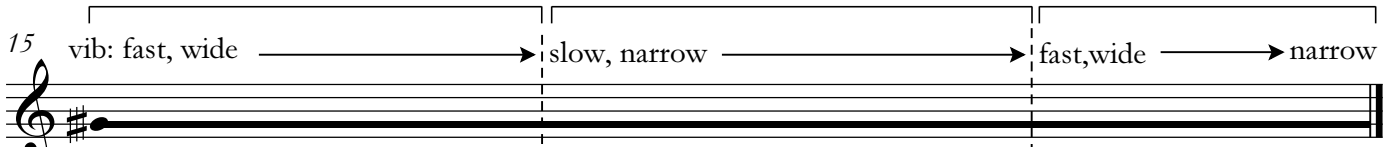
ffff *f* (sustained)

4 sec

3 sec

4 sec

vib: fast, wide → slow, narrow → fast, wide → narrow



p *mf* *n*

November 18, 2012
Oxford, England

*Repeat phrase in box as fast as possible for the duration indicated before moving on.