

Athanasia Kontou
2021

CANCELLED



for string quartet

NOTE ON THE MUSIC

A bit over a year ago, on 12th March 2020, I had the pleasure of listening to the Ligeti Quartet live. That was in a gig at the SoundsLikeTHIS festival in Leeds, where a premiere of a vocal work of mine was in a set which was headlining the quartet's performance. It was just a few days before the first national lockdown, when everything in the UK was seemingly still "normal", but some events had been cancelled as the pandemic's shadow was growing. With this threat hovering in the air (quite literally!), before the ensemble's amazing performance, Patrick, (or maybe it was Richard, I am not sure) jokingly said "Welcome to the last concert ever!"

This joke made an impression on me, and soon proved to be surprisingly prophetic, as the very next day I fell ill with COVID-19. Whilst I was in isolation, we went into lockdown and the rest is history. So, this concert in Leeds was indeed the last concert I went to in the pre-pandemic world, and for this reason I remember it very fondly. What has followed, none of us artists, I think, is fond of; cancellation upon cancellation, postponements until further notice, empty diaries, financial uncertainty...

This personal anecdote in combination with the frustrating situation gave me the idea for this piece, written especially for the Ligeti Quartet's WORKOUT! scheme. CANCELLED is a set of five miniatures about cancellation, and how it can be translated into music.

In each one of the miniatures, the concept of cancellation is dealt with in different ways. In the first introductory movement, cancellation presents itself in the sound, but also in the notation, with the sweeping gestures across the full range of the ensemble forming X shapes in the score. Throughout the second movement, the viola player moves their bow diagonally from left to right and vice versa, while playing soft, non-pitch material. This results into crosses being formed visually this time. The third movement is an Aria gone wrong, cancelled out by its own accompaniment. The pointilistic fourth movement slowly loses its energy and dies away. In the last movement, an insistent machine-like repetition gets succeeded by a detuned jazz tune.

CANCELLED was composed between January-March 2021, in Kozani, Greece.

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PERFORMANCE NOTES

Abbreviations

vib = vibrato

sp = sul ponticello

st = sul tasto

ord = ordinary bow position

All other instructions can be found in the score.

If you have any questions, please contact me at athanasiakontou95@gmail.com.

DURATION

ca. 6'

CANCELLED

for the Ligeti Quartet

Athanasia Kontou

Agitated, frustrated, $\text{♩} = 100$

The musical score is divided into three systems, each with four staves: Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Violoncello. The first system (measures 1-5) is in 4/4 time. The second system (measures 6-9) features a complex time signature change from 5/4 to 7/8 to 5/4. The third system (measures 10-13) is in 4/4 time. The score includes various dynamics such as *ff*, *pp*, and *sfp*, and performance instructions like *molto vib*, *non vib*, *ord*, and *brittle*. It also contains articulation marks like accents and slurs, and rhythmic patterns such as triplets and sixteenth-note runs.

75

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

G.P.

non vib ord

A

non vb molto sp

pp

ff

ff → molto vib

non vib ord

pp

20

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

non vib

molto vib

non vib

non vib

molto sp

molto vib

non vib

3

3

23

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

molto vib

3

pp

ff

ff

3

(molto sp)

(non vib)

pp

pp

Musical score for measures 27-36. The score is for four staves: Violin I (Vln. I), Violin II (Vln. II), Viola (Vla.), and Violoncello (Vc.).
Measures 27-30: Vln. I has a melodic line with dynamics *ppp* and *pp*. Vln. II, Vla., and Vc. are silent.
Measures 31-36: Vln. I continues with dynamics *mf* and *pp*, featuring a triplet of eighth notes. Vln. II, Vla., and Vc. play sustained chords with dynamics *pp* and *molto sp*. Vc. has triplet markings over measures 34-35.

Musical score for measures 37-43. The score is for four staves: Violin I (Vln. I), Violin II (Vln. II), Viola (Vla.), and Violoncello (Vc.).
Measures 37-43: Vln. I has a melodic line with triplet markings. Vln. II, Vla., and Vc. play sustained chords. Vc. has triplet markings over measures 38-39 and 41-42.

$\text{♩} = 132$
molto vib
ord

Musical score for measures 34-43. The score is for four staves: Violin I (Vln. I), Violin II (Vln. II), Viola (Vla.), and Violoncello (Vc.).
Measures 34-43: Vln. I, Vln. II, Vla., and Vc. all play melodic lines with dynamics *ff*. Vln. I has a fermata over measure 35. Vln. II, Vla., and Vc. have triplet markings over measures 35-36. The score ends with a 5/8 time signature change.

38

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

ff

ff

ff

ff

ff

ff

distorted - overpressure

distorted - overpressure

distorted - overpressure

distorted - overpressure

II

7

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

$\text{♩} = 112$

light bow

light bow

pp

pp

pp

p

pp

p

sim

sim

air sound
slowly drag bow diagonally
from bridge to tasto (→)
and reversely (←)

p

5

Violin I (Vln. I) and Violin II (Vln. II) parts feature intricate triplet patterns. The Viola (Vla.) part has a sustained note with bow direction markings (→ and ←). The Violoncello (Vc.) part is silent until measure 8, where it plays a descending chromatic scale from G2 to C3, marked with dynamics *f* and *p*. The text "col legno let bounce" is written above the Vc. staff in measure 8.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

col legno
let bounce

f *p*

9

Measures 9-11 continue the complex textures. The Vln. I and Vln. II parts have dynamic markings of *p* and *pp*. The Vc. part remains silent. The Viola part continues with sustained notes and bow direction markings.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

p *pp*

12

Measures 12-14 show further development of the musical themes. The Vln. I and Vln. II parts include dynamic markings of *f* and *p*. The Vc. part plays a chromatic scale from G2 to C3, marked with dynamics *f* and *p*. The Viola part continues with sustained notes and bow direction markings.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

f *p* *f* *p*

15

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

18

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

21

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

23

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

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

Vla. *p*

Vc. *p* *f* *p*

26

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla. *p* To pitch ord

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

29

Vln. I *ff*

Vln. II *ff*

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

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

To air sound

8 37

Vln. I *pp*

Vln. II *pp*

Perc. To pitch (molto st) To air sound *fff*

Vc. *p* 3 *pp* *fff*

34

Vln. I *p*

Vln. II *p*

Perc. *p*

Vc. *f* *p* *pp*

37

Vln. I *ff*

Vln. II *ff*

Perc. *p* *ff*

Vc. *p* *ff*

40

Vln. I *ff*

Vln. II *ff*

Vla. *sp* → *st* ← *ord* *ff*

Vc. *sp* → *st* ← *ord* *ff*

43

Vln. I *pp*

Vln. II *pp*

Vla. *pp*

Vc. *pp*

III

7 **Lyrical, melancholic, ♩=72**

arco

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

Vln. II *p* *sul IV*

Vla. *p* *sul IV*

Vc. *p*

5 *p* *vibr* *molto vib*

5 *p* *vibr* *molto vib*

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

p *p* *p* *p*

3 3 3 3

4/4 3/4 4/4 2/4

Detailed description: This system contains measures 5 through 8. It features four staves: Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Violoncello. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The time signature changes from 4/4 to 3/4 and back to 4/4. The first violin part starts with a dynamic of *p* and includes a trill marked 'vibr' and a triplet of eighth notes. The other instruments provide harmonic support with various rhythmic patterns and triplets. The tempo/mood marking 'molto vib' is present at the end of the system.

9 *molto vib* *legato sempre* *molto vib sempre*

9 *molto vib* *legato sempre* *molto vib sempre*

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

pp *p* *p* *p*

III sul IV sul IV

3 3 3

2/4 4/4 2/4 2/4

Detailed description: This system contains measures 9 through 12. The key signature changes to two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The time signature changes from 4/4 to 2/4 and back to 4/4. The first violin part begins with a trill and a dynamic of *pp*, followed by a phrase marked 'legato sempre' and 'molto vib sempre'. The second violin part has a dynamic of *p* and includes a triplet. The Viola and Violoncello parts also feature triplets and a dynamic of *p*. The instruction 'sul IV' is written above the second violin and viola staves.

13 *p* *f* *f*

13 *p* *f* *f*

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

p *cresc.* *f* *f*

3 3 3 3

4/4 4/4 4/4 4/4

Detailed description: This system contains measures 13 through 16. The key signature remains two flats. The time signature is 4/4. The first violin part starts with a dynamic of *p* and a triplet, then moves to a dynamic of *f*. The second violin part begins with *p* and includes a crescendo leading to *f*. The Viola and Violoncello parts also feature triplets and a dynamic of *f*. The instruction 'cresc.' is written below the second violin and viola staves.

17 *8va* $\#^b$

Vln. I
Vln. II *ff* 3
Vla. *ff* 3
Vc. *ff* 3

20 *8va*

Vln. I *p* — *pp*
Vln. II *ff* 3
Vla. *ff* 3
Vc. *ff* 3

23 *8va* $\#^b$

Vln. I
Vln. II 5 3 5 6
Vla. 5 3 5 6
Vc. 5 3 5 6

IV

7 **Sempre pizzicato, ♩=112** vib

Musical score for measures 7-10. The score is for four instruments: Violin I (Vln. I), Violin II (Vln. II), Viola (Vla.), and Violoncello (Vc.). The tempo is marked as **Sempre pizzicato, ♩=112**. The key signature has one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/8. The first measure (measure 7) starts with a **f** dynamic. The second measure (measure 8) has a **p** dynamic. The third measure (measure 9) has a **f** dynamic. The fourth measure (measure 10) has a **p** dynamic. A **vib** marking is present above the first measure. The notes are as follows: Vln. I: G4 (accented), A4, B4, C5; Vln. II: G4, A4, B4, C5; Vla.: G3, A3, B3, C4; Vc.: G2, A2, B2, C3.

6

Musical score for measures 6-9. The score is for four instruments: Violin I (Vln. I), Violin II (Vln. II), Viola (Vla.), and Violoncello (Vc.). The tempo is **Sempre pizzicato, ♩=112**. The key signature has one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/8. The first measure (measure 6) has a **f** dynamic. The second measure (measure 7) has a **p** dynamic. The third measure (measure 8) has a **f** dynamic. The fourth measure (measure 9) has a **p** dynamic. **vib** markings are present above the first and third measures. The notes are as follows: Vln. I: G4, A4, B4, C5; Vln. II: G4, A4, B4, C5; Vla.: G3, A3, B3, C4; Vc.: G2, A2, B2, C3.

10

Musical score for measures 10-13. The score is for four instruments: Violin I (Vln. I), Violin II (Vln. II), Viola (Vla.), and Violoncello (Vc.). The tempo is **Sempre pizzicato, ♩=112**. The key signature has one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/8. The first measure (measure 10) has a **f** dynamic. The second measure (measure 11) has a **p** dynamic. The third measure (measure 12) has a **f** dynamic. The fourth measure (measure 13) has a **p** dynamic. The notes are as follows: Vln. I: G4, A4, B4, C5; Vln. II: G4, A4, B4, C5; Vla.: G3, A3, B3, C4; Vc.: G2, A2, B2, C3.

75

Vln. I vib (non vib) IV III

Vln. II vib vib vib

Vla. vib (non vib) II III

Vc. pp f poss

20

Vln. I f non vib p vib non vib IV III

Vln. II p non vib vib non vib

Vla. f p p

Vc. p non vib

25

Vln. I p p < f vib p

Vln. II f f

Vla. p p < f p

Vc. f vib f

43 *molto vib* *non vib*

Vln. I *f* *p* *f*

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

Vla. *f* *p* *f*

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

molto vib *non vib*

Detailed description: This system covers measures 43 to 47. It features four staves: Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Violoncello. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The tempo/mood is marked 'molto vib' for measures 43-45 and 'non vib' for measures 46-47. Dynamics range from piano (p) to fortissimo (f). The Violin I part has a fermata in measure 45. The Violin II part has a fermata in measure 47. The Viola and Violoncello parts have fermatas in measure 47.

48

Vln. I *p* *p* *f*

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

Vla. *p* *p* *f*

Vc. *p* *p* *f*

Detailed description: This system covers measures 48 to 52. It features four staves: Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Violoncello. The key signature has one sharp (F#). Dynamics range from piano (p) to fortissimo (f). The Violin I part has a triplet in measure 48. The Violin II part has a triplet in measure 50. The Viola and Violoncello parts have triplets in measures 48 and 50. The Violoncello part has a fermata in measure 52.

53 *bisbigl*

Vln. I *p* *f* *p*

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

Vla. *p* *f* *p*

Vc. *p* *f* *p*

bisbigl *bisbigl* *bisbigl*

Detailed description: This system covers measures 53 to 57. It features four staves: Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Violoncello. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The tempo/mood is marked 'bisbigl' (pizzicato) for measures 53-55 and 'non vib' for measures 56-57. Dynamics range from piano (p) to fortissimo (f). The Violin I part has a triplet in measure 56. The Violin II part has a triplet in measure 56. The Viola and Violoncello parts have triplets in measures 56 and 57. The Violoncello part has a fermata in measure 57.

57

Violin I: *p* → *f* → *f* molto vib *gliss.*

Violin II: *p* → *f* → *f* molto vib *gliss.*

Viola: *p* → *f* → *f* molto vib *gliss.*

Violoncello: *p* → *f* → *f* molto vib *gliss.*

Measures 57-64. Dynamics range from *p* to *f*. Includes *gliss.* and *molto vib* markings. A double bar line is present at the end of measure 64.

67

Violin I: *f* *gliss.*

Violin II: *f* *gliss.*

Viola: *f* *gliss.*

Violoncello: *f* *gliss.*

Measures 65-72. Dynamics are *f*. Includes *gliss.* markings. A double bar line is present at the end of measure 72.

65

Violin I: *f* *gliss.*

Violin II: *f* *gliss.*

Viola: *f* *gliss.*

Violoncello: *f* *gliss.*

Measures 73-80. Dynamics are *f*. Includes *gliss.* markings. A double bar line is present at the end of measure 80.



Mechanic, with energy

7

12"

Vln. I $\text{♩}=120$ arco
p ————— *f* ————— *p*

Vln. II $\text{♩}=72$ arco
3 6 3
f > *p* *f* > *p* *f* > *p*

Vla. $\text{♩}=80$ arco
p ————— *f* ————— *p*

Vc. $\text{♩}=60$ arco
p ————— *f* ————— *p*

2

7"

Vln. I accel.
pp ————— *mp* ————— *pp*

Vln. II accel.
3 6 3
mp > *pp* *mp* > *pp* *mp* > *pp*

Vla. accel.
pp ————— *mp* ————— *pp*

Vc. accel.
pp ————— *mp*

3 a tempo

Vln. I *p* *f*

Vln. II a tempo
f *p* *f* *p* *f* *p*
 3 6 3

Vla. a tempo
p *f* *p*

Vc. a tempo
p *f* *p*

4 rall.

Vln. I *pp* *mp*

Vln. II rall.
mp *pp* *mp* *pp* *mp* *pp*
 3 6 3

Vla. rall.
pp *mp* *pp*

Vc. rall.
pp *mp* *pp*

5'' 3'' 19

5
Vln. I accel molto p f $(\text{♩}=120)$ accel molto

Vln. II accel molto mp pp mp pp mp pp $(\text{♩}=72)$ accel molto

Vla. accel molto pp mp pp $(\text{♩}=80)$ accel molto

Vc. accel molto pp mp pp $(\text{♩}=60)$ accel molto

Nostalgic, $\text{♩}=60$

7
Vln. I f mf mp

Vln. II f mf mp

Vla. pizz p

Vc. f

accel. $\text{♩}=80$

10
Vln. I p pp

Vln. II p pp

Vla. f molto vib and glis

Vc. f