



# PIANO QUARTET NO.1- GERALD BARRY

Leaving Certificate Notes

# INTRODUCTION

This piano quartet was commissioned by the Institute of Contemporary Arts and first performed in London in 1992.

This is an example of a 20<sup>th</sup> Century Contemporary quartet for 4 instruments. Piano, Violin, Viola and Cello. This String quartet was a popular form of Chamber music in the Baroque and Classical eras. This quartet takes its inspirations from Irish Traditional Melodies and centres around four well known melodies; “Sí Bheag Sí Mhór”, “’Tis the last Rose of Summer”, “ Beidh Aonach Amárach” and “Lord Mayo’s Delight”. These melodies are used in many different ways to create Barry’s own style and his own interpretation of the music. Most of the time to the point of these tunes becoming unrecognisable. Many different aspects of the music pushes the boundaries of composition such as no tonal centre (not major or minor), No recognised form (sonata, Rondo etc.), the need for performance directions, and also the use of new instrumental and compositional techniques.

# THE MAIN FUNCTION OF THE PIANO:

- Creates contrasting textures with string
- Doubles string parts – very often
- Plays one, or more, voices in canon
- Introduces dissonance
- Plays note cluster
- Solo section – “Homage Á horowitz”

# INSTRUMENTS TECHNIQUES:

- Open strings
- Hand clusters on piano
- Harmonics – delicate wispy sound
- Détaché – detached – separate bow for each note
- Flautando – bow over the fingerboard

# FORM:

- Quartet begins and ends with music that is heard only once. Section C is central dominant material, occurs 9 times, yet never exact repetition
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- Quartet – one movement – 18 sections
- Eight different themes – (4 appear only once)
- A      B1      C1      C2      B2      C3      D1      D2+B3      E1    C4      C5      E2+D3  
C6      C7      F+C8      C9      G      H
- Unusual form – does not fit any standard form
- No recapitulation
- Ends with 3 new sections – F G and H – very unusual
- Unusual rondo form – because of constant recurrence of C

# TONALITY:

- Mainly atonal
- Section A (based on Sí bheag sí mhór) is pentatonic – no 7th notes, uses only 4th in final bars
- B and B1 refer to key of C with a recurring C sharp
- C1 in A flat
- E2 + D3 – only section with noted key signature – b flat minor



# RHYTHMIC FEATURES:

- Over 330 time signature changes
- Unusual time signatures – 1/8, 5/8
- Complex rhythmic patterns
- Irregular rhythms and irregular patterns
- Polymetry – combining different metres simultaneously
- Metronome marks for tempo changes.

# COMPOSITIONAL FEATURES:

Canon - many times, from 2 part to 5 part, - eg 4 part canon on inversion of “Sí bheag sí mhór”

Retrograde - melody played backwards - eg. Melody in E1 is retrograde of melody D2

Augmentation - notes values are lengthened, usually doubled - eg. C8

Diminution - notes value are shortened - eg. B1 notes are halved in B3

Wedging - making intervals bigger - eg C2 and C3

Splicing - making intervals smaller - eg C2 and C3

Inversion - melody turned upside down - Eg, “Sí Bheag Si Mhór” in section A

Counterpoint - combining 2 themes – polyphonic - Eg D2 and B3

Telescoping - Fragments of previous sections in a short section - Eg Section G



# SECTION A:

## layout

- Based on inversion of "Sí Bheag Sí Mhór"
- Four part canon at distance of a crotchet, yet all begin at same time
- Feeling of C major
- Mainly  $\frac{3}{4}$ , but time signature changes

## Contemporary features

- Harmonics
- Open strings
- Canon at distance of a crotchet
- Time signature changes

## Non-contemporary features

- Instruments
- Use of canons
- Repetition
- Range
- Staccato
- 2 bass clefs



# SECTION A1

- Starts to develop
- Loud dynamics
- Very high register and wide range
- Piano entirely in bass clef
- Five part canon
- Harmonics – open strings
- Very polyphonic
- Two part piano
- Page repeated, louder 2nd time

# SECTION B: B1

- Key of C major with a persistent C sharp.
- Atonal
- Homophonic
- Rhythmic melody on violin, starts with an upbeat in  $\frac{3}{4}$  time
- Drone like staccato two note pattern on viola – like hurdy-gurdy
- Slower speed
- Sudden change of time signature to  $\frac{5}{8}$  – instability and imbalance
- Cello part is inversion of viola two note pattern.
- Repeated from **bar 72** with cello added
- From **bar 90**, melody is repeated on all 3 string instruments, playing an octave apart.
- Melody repeated without accompaniment
- Piano plays hand clusters, span of 2 octaves
- Dynamics very loud

# SECTION B:B2

- B section melody played 5 times in canon creating polyphonic texture, varied, slightly different each time
- **Bar 170:**
- Three part canon at distance of crotchet
- Very loud
- Viola, violin and cello
- **Bar 188 on and bar 205:**
- Three part canon on strings
- Piano doubles string parts at the octave in bass clef
- **Bar 222**
- Three part canon in 5ths at octave on strings and piano
- Violin and viola doubles, cello and piano R.H doubled with LH piano in 5ths
- Double stopping on violin
- Soft dynamics and light articulation
- **Bar 239:**
- Repeat of canon from previous part
- Drone effect using adjacent open strings
- Pedal note D in cello
- Double stopping on strings
- Very loud

## SECTION D2+B3:

- Both sections heard simultaneously
- D2 on violin and piano RH, B3 on viola and cello, both in unison
- B melody is in diminution (note values halved)
- Piano LH plays hurdy-gurdy in thirds
- B3 becomes rhythmically distorted – adds tension
- Music repeated at bar 344 with different time signatures, some notes left out
- Polyphonic

# SECTION C1:

- Strings only
- Polyphonic
- 2 melodies – violin and viola
- Feeling of A flat
- Flow of melodies interrupted by abrupt time signature changes
- Harmonics on cello
- From **Bar 124:**
- repeated an octave lower•
- piano introduced
- Takes music from “Tis the last rose of summer”
- Louder and faster
- Piano doubles string parts



## SECTION C2:

- Based on C1
- Atonal
- Violin and viola melodies
- Polyphonic
- Slower
- Softer dynamics
- Wedging and splicing
- No piano

# SECTION C3:

- Based on **four** different versions
- Gets louder and faster each time
- Polyphonic
- **Bar 256:**
- Viola and cello repeat C2 with descant melody on violin
- Violin doubles cello part at intervals of 2nd and 7th – dissonance
- Slow
- Quieter
- No piano
- **Bar 272:**
- Single fragmented piano line, doubles some strings parts at interval of 2nd
- Faster and louder than previous
- Double stopping
- **Bar 288:**
- Higher pitch – cello in treble clef
- Both melodies doubles at dissonant intervals on piano in bass clef
- Faster and louder
- **Bar 303:**
- Violin higher
- Piano LH doubles RH at interval of 2nd



# SECTION C4- HOMMAGE Á HOROWITZ

- •Hommage á Horowitz
- •Piano solo – only instrument with solo section
- •Very very loud
- •Derived from C melodies
- •Both hands play in octaves
- •Homophonic
- •Flamboyant
- •Dedicated to Horowitz a Russian pianist

# SECTION C5:

- Shortened version of C3
- Slower
- 3 part canon distance of a crotchet
- Soft dynamics
- Changing time signatures
- No piano
- Canon repeated at bar 415 with some notes left out

# SECTION C6:

- 3 part canon at distance of a quaver
- C6 is C5 up a semi-tone and shortened
- Instruments technique *flautando* used - Played on finger board giving a wispy sound
- Polyphonic
- Soft dynamics

# SECTION C7:

- Based on C material but sounds like a new section – contrasts, different speed and dynamics
- Cello based on one of original C melodies
- Canon in violin and viola based on inversion of C6
- Piano doubles string parts
- Notes added at distance of 2nds 4ths and 5ths – adds dissonance
- Polyphonic
- **Bar 483:**
- Faster
- Double stopping adds to intensity
- Higher pitch, accelerates then stops suddenly

## SECTION C8 + F:

- One bar rest, then new material, F, on violin
- Triplets I melody, jig rhythm, Irish dance music
- Piano part is retrograde of F melody
- C material heard in augmentation (longer notes) on viola and cello
- Polyphonic
- Different time signatures used simultaneously – polymetry



## SECTION C9:

- One bar rest then 3 part canon two octaves distance of crotchet on strings
- Shortest and slowest version of C
- Polyphonic
- Wide distance between parts, high pitch in violin, low pitch in cello

# SECTION D1:

- Based on Beidh Aonach Amárach
- Shortest section of D
- A minor
- Shortest time sig in piece used – 1/8
- Loud
- Homophonic
- Hurdy gurdy effect in cello (similar to B1)
- Very unstable due to time signature changes
- 3/16 time signature – contemporary – not usual
- Repeated notes in melody on viola



**SECTION D2+B3:**

**See slide 13**



# SECTION D3 + E2:

- Only section with a noted key signature – B flat minor
- E and D combined and up a semitone to B flat minor
- Polyphonic
- Very loud, with accented notes
- E2 is a retrograde of D and heard on violin and viola in unison
- D3 heard on cello and piano RH in unison
- Music repeated at **bar 442** with violin an octave higher and piano LH octave lower

# SECTION E1:

- 4 part canon at distance of quaver at the octave, violin, viola, cello, LH piano
- D2 played in reverse (retrograde)
- Repeat sign
- Changing time signatures - obscure
- Polyphonic
- Loud with accented notes



**SECTION E2+ D3:**

**See slide 25**



**SECTION F + C8:**

**See Slide 21**



## SECTION G:

- New music but derived from rest of quartet
- Telescoping – complete work in nine bars by taking notes from beginning and end of each section
- Homophonic
- Very fast
- Very loud with accented notes
- Constantly changing time signatures

# SECTION H:

- Based on Irish tune, “Lord Mayo’s Delight”
- Polyphonic
- 2 part canon, unison, distance of crotchet on viola cello
- Flautando used again
- **Bar 542:**
- 3 part canon, unison, distance of crotchet, viola, cello and Piano LH, base on second part of tune
- **Bar 558**
- Final section return to first part of tune
- 3 part canon, unison, distance of crotchet, violin, viola, cello
- Soft dynamics
- Some notes omitted in violin part as outside range of instrument and are filled by viola
- Piano plays final note D in bass creating unfinished open effect at end.