

ADAGIO FOR STRINGS

Samuel Barber

arrangement for Cello Orchestra or for Five Solo Cellists

prepared by David Johnstone

SCORE

Note:

Barber's Adagio for Strings began as the second movement of his String Quartet, Op. 11, composed in 1936 while he was spending a summer in Europe with his partner Gian Carlo Menotti, an Italian composer who was a fellow student at the Curtis Institute of Music. The inspiration came from Virgil's Georgics. In January 1938 Barber sent an orchestrated version of the Adagio for Strings to Arturo Toscanini. The conductor returned the score without comment, which annoyed Barber. Toscanini then sent word through Menotti that he was planning to perform the piece and had returned it simply because he had already memorized it. On November 5, 1938, a selected audience was invited to Studio 8H in Rockefeller Center to watch Toscanini conduct the first performance, a radio broadcast which was recorded for posterity. Toscanini took Adagio for Strings on tour to South America and Europe, the first performances of the work on both continents. Over April 16–19, 1942, the piece had public performances by the Philadelphia Orchestra conducted by Eugene Ormandy at Carnegie Hall. Like the original 1938 performance, these were broadcast on radio and recorded.

Adagio for Strings begins softly with a B-flat played by the first violins. The lower strings come in two beats after the violins, which, as Johanna Keller from The New York Times put it, creates "an uneasy, shifting suspension as the melody begins a stepwise motion, like the hesitant climbing of stairs." The Adagio is an example of arch form and builds on a melody that first ascends, then descends in stepwise fashion. Barber subtly manipulates the basic pulse throughout the work by constantly changing time signatures including 4/2, 5/2, 6/4, and 3/2. After four climactic chords and a long pause, the piece presents the opening theme again, and fades away on an unresolved dominant chord. The Adagio has captured the emotions of millions of listeners since Barber first wrote it.

I have made this new Cello Ensemble/Orchestra version to provide a very playable version for intermediate and advanced cellists. Unfortunately, in the other handful of arrangements I have managed to uncover none have convinced me in the vital issue of the playing cello registers. I have therefore transposed the work to a *tessitura* that will suit intermediate cellists and upwards, with the high positions not supposing insurmountable intonation issues, yet the notes in the lower parts sufficiently high as to be able to sing out as a beautiful lament. I hope you enjoy it!!

ADAGIO (for Strings)BARBER

arrangement for Cello Orchestra or 5 Solo Cellists - prepared by DAVID JOHNSTONE

Molto adagio

The score is for five cellos, labeled Vc. 1 through Vc. 5. Each part begins with a treble clef, a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat), and a 4/2 time signature. The music is written in a single system with five staves. Vc. 1 and Vc. 2 play a sustained note in the first measure, then move to a melodic line in the second measure. Vc. 3 plays a melodic line throughout, marked *p espr. cantabile*. Vc. 4 and Vc. 5 play sustained notes in the first measure, then move to a melodic line in the second measure. Dynamics include *pp* (pianissimo), *p* (piano), and *mp* (mezzo-piano). Performance markings include *be* (breathes), *v* (vibrato), and *espr. cantabile* (expressive cantabile). The score is divided into four measures by vertical bar lines. The first measure is marked *pp*. The second measure is marked *p*. The third measure is marked *mp*. The fourth measure is marked *p*. The score ends with a double bar line and a repeat sign.

1

10.

Vc. 1

Vc. 2

Vc. 3

Vc. 4

Vc. 5

2

19.

Vc. 1
mp
mf

Vc. 2
mp

Vc. 3
mp sempre cant.

Vc. 4
p
mf

Vc. 5
p
cresc.
pp
mf

7.

23.

Vc. 1 *v* *mp* *v* *mf*

Vc. 2 *mf* *mf* *mp*

Vc. 3 *mp* *mp* *mp*

Vc. 4 *mp* *p* *p*

Vc. 5 *mp* *p* *p*

8.

3

27.

Vc. 1
4/2
p

Vc. 2
4/2
mp

Vc. 3
4/2
mf

Vc. 4
4/2
mp
mp espr. cantando

Vc. 5
4/2
mp

pp

pp

pp

pp

pp

9.

31.

V V □

Vc. 1
Vc. 2
Vc. 3
Vc. 4
Vc. 5

4

36.

Vc. 1

Vc. 2

Vc. 3

Vc. 4

Vc. 5

V

mf espr.

#

mf

cresc.

mf

cresc.

cresc.

mf

mf

40.

Vc. 1
Vc. 2
Vc. 3
Vc. 4
Vc. 5

12.

44.

Vc. 1
Vc. 2
Vc. 3
Vc. 4
Vc. 5

48.

Handwritten musical score for five violas (Vc. 1-5). The score is written on five staves, each with a treble clef and a key signature of two flats (Bb and Eb). The notation includes various musical symbols and dynamics:

- Vc. 1:** Features a series of eighth notes with a slur, followed by a rest. A dynamic marking of *ff* is present. A bracket above the staff spans the first two measures.
- Vc. 2:** Features a series of eighth notes with a slur, followed by a rest. A dynamic marking of *ff* is present.
- Vc. 3:** Features a series of eighth notes with a slur, followed by a rest. A dynamic marking of *ff* is present.
- Vc. 4:** Features a series of eighth notes with a slur, followed by a rest. A dynamic marking of *ff* is present.
- Vc. 5:** Features a series of eighth notes with a slur, followed by a rest. A dynamic marking of *ff* is present.

Additional markings include *ff* (fortissimo) and *ff* (fortissimo) in various positions, and a bracket above the first two staves. The notation is handwritten and includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

57.

Handwritten musical score for five violas (Vc. 1-5) in 4/2 time. The score includes dynamics such as *mf espr.*, *mf*, *mp*, and *f*, along with various musical notations like slurs, accents, and fermatas.

Vc. 1: *mf espr.* (first measure), *mf* (second measure), *f* (third measure), *mf* (fourth measure). Includes a *v* marking above the first measure.

Vc. 2: *mp.* (first measure), *f* (second measure), *f* (third measure), *f* (fourth measure).

Vc. 3: *mf espr.* (first measure), *mf* (second measure), *mf* (third measure), *mf* (fourth measure). Includes a *v* marking above the first measure.

Vc. 4: *mp* (first measure), *mp* (second measure), *mp* (third measure), *mp* (fourth measure).

Vc. 5: *mp* (first measure), *mp* (second measure), *mp* (third measure), *mp* (fourth measure).

61.

Handwritten musical score for five violas (Vc. 1-5) in 4/2 time. The score is divided into five systems, each with a staff and a dynamic marking. The first system (Vc. 1) has a dynamic of *mp* and a *b/ol* marking. The second system (Vc. 2) has a dynamic of *mp*. The third system (Vc. 3) has a dynamic of *mp*. The fourth system (Vc. 4) has a dynamic of *mp*. The fifth system (Vc. 5) has a dynamic of *b/ol*. The notation includes various notes, rests, and articulations such as accents and slurs. The piece concludes with a *P* dynamic marking.

65.

Handwritten musical score for five violas (Vc. 1-5). The score is written on five staves, each with a treble clef and a key signature of two flats (Bb, Eb). The music consists of a series of notes, primarily half notes and quarter notes, with various dynamics and performance markings.

Vc. 1: Starts with a half note G2, followed by a half note F2, and a half note E2. Dynamics include *pp* and *pp*. A *morendo* marking is present over the final notes. A *v* marking is above the first note.

Vc. 2: Starts with a half note G2, followed by a half note F2, and a half note E2. Dynamics include *pp*. A *morendo* marking is present over the final notes. A *v* marking is above the first note.

Vc. 3: Starts with a half note G2, followed by a half note F2, and a half note E2. Dynamics include *mp*, *pp*, *pp*, *pp*, and *pp*. A *espr.* marking is present. A *morendo* marking is present over the final notes. A *v* marking is above the first note.

Vc. 4: Starts with a half note G2, followed by a half note F2, and a half note E2. Dynamics include *pp*. A *morendo* marking is present over the final notes. A *v* marking is above the first note.

Vc. 5: Starts with a half note G2, followed by a half note F2, and a half note E2. Dynamics include *pp*. A *morendo* marking is present over the final notes. A *v* marking is above the first note.

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