

Steven Snowden

Appalachian Polaroids

String Quartet

Appalachian Polaroids

Program Notes:

Appalachian Polaroids was initially inspired by the controversial portrait photography of Shelby Lee Adams (b. 1950). Though sometimes criticized for perpetuating the hillbilly stereotype of rural Appalachia, I feel that his photographs often illuminate the quiet resilience of these remote mountain communities. As a native of the Ozark Mountain countryside, I have always felt a strong connection with my neighbors to the East. In *Appalachian Polaroids*, I chose to create my own *musical* portrait of the unique mix of hardship and joy that comes with living an isolated rural life.

This piece begins with a 1976 field recording of Sheila Kay Adams (no relation to Shelby Lee) singing the popular folk song *Black is the Color* in Asheville, North Carolina. The quartet quietly enters as an integrated component of the recording, playing with the wood of their bows to create a slightly noisy effect, similar to the tape hiss present in the old equipment used to record Sheila's stunning voice. Their sound gradually becomes more brilliant until the group finally emerges with crowing figures reminiscent of Appalachian fiddle playing. However, they also carry with them remnants of Sheila's own unique singing style. These attributes, (which include sliding/scooping to and from certain pitches and a subtle yodeling effect at the ends of phrases) expand as the piece progresses and eventually exert their influence on large-scale aspects of melody, rhythm and even form.

Performance Notes:

In performance, the recording does *not* need to be played on a full-sized audio system. In fact, I have found that even playing it back on the built-in speakers of an iPhone or iPod can be sufficient in many situations. If the quartet is playing in a large hall, they may need small battery powered speakers for additional amplification.

Whatever the performance situation, care should be taken to balance the ensemble with the recording for the first 16 measures so that the players are perceived to be accompanying the recording. From measures 17-25 the recording becomes more like a fifth member of the quartet, with the ensemble's dynamic level only occasionally overwhelming it.

All Glissandi should be executed roughly over the entire duration of the first note to which they are attached. However, the ensemble is free to adjust that according to their own interpretation.



"Doit" markings indicate an effect that mimics the subtle yodel that often ends Sheila's phrases in the recording. This can be achieved by firmly fingering approximately a minor third above the current pitch as the bow is lifted off the string. Immediately following that, quickly slide up a fifth or more. All of this occurs after the bow has been lifted off of the string, so it is a fairly quiet and subtle effect.

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Distant, Nostalgic ♩ = 74

col legno tratto
mute on

Violin 1

Violin 2

Viola

Cello

Recording

Black__ is the col-or of my true love's hair His face is like some__ ro - sy fair.

5

Hazy, very free

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

Voice

With the pret-ti-est face__ and the neat-est hands__

9

II

Vln. 1

pp

p

tr sul. D

Vln. 2

Vla.

p

mp

Vc.

p

ppp

Voice

knows. I love the ground where on he

13 (tr)

Vln. 1 *mp* *pp* *mp* 5

Vln. 2 *p* *pp* *p* *mp*

Vla. *ppp*

Vc. *mp* *ppp* *col legno tratto*

Voice goes if you no more on earth I

15 1/2 col legno tratto ord. L.V. 3/4 4/4

Vln. 1 *pp* *ppp* *p* *ppp* *p* *f*

Vln. 2 *pp* *p* *ppp* *f* ord. L.V. 3/4 4/4

Vla. *ppp* *pp* *f* ord. L.V. 3/4 4/4

Vc. *p* *ppp* *mute on* *ord.* *L.V.* *p* *< f* 3/4 4/4

Voice see. I can't serve you as you have me.

18 Coming into focus

Score for measures 18-20, titled "Coming into focus". The score includes staves for Violin 1 (Vln. 1), Violin 2 (Vln. 2), Viola (Vla.), Violoncello (Vc.), and Voice.

Violin 1 (Vln. 1): Starts with a rest, then enters at measure 18 with a *p* dynamic, playing a melodic line marked *sul tasto*. It features a 5-measure phrase and a 7-measure phrase.

Violin 2 (Vln. 2): Starts with a rest, then enters at measure 18 with a *p* dynamic, playing a melodic line marked *sul tasto*. It features a 5-measure phrase and a 7-measure phrase.

Viola (Vla.): Plays a melodic line marked *mp* and *sul tasto* from measure 18 to 20. It includes a *briefly gleaming* marking at measure 20.

Violoncello (Vc.): Starts with a rest, then enters at measure 18 with a *pp* dynamic, playing a melodic line marked *sul tasto*. It features a 5-measure phrase and a 7-measure phrase.

Voice: Sings the lyrics: "The Win-ter's passed and the leaves are green. The time has".

Score for measures 20-22, continuing the "Coming into focus" section. The score includes staves for Violin 1 (Vln. 1), Violin 2 (Vln. 2), Viola (Vla.), Violoncello (Vc.), and Voice.

Violin 1 (Vln. 1): Starts at measure 20 with a *briefly gleaming* marking, then continues with a melodic line marked *mf*, *p*, and *mp*. It features a *pp* dynamic at measure 21 and a *mp* dynamic at measure 22.

Violin 2 (Vln. 2): Starts at measure 20 with a *f* dynamic, then continues with a melodic line marked *p*. It features a *pp* dynamic at measure 21 and a *mp* dynamic at measure 22.

Viola (Vla.): Starts at measure 20 with a *mp* dynamic, then continues with a melodic line marked *pp*.

Violoncello (Vc.): Starts at measure 20 with a *mf* dynamic, then continues with a melodic line marked *pp*.

Voice: Sings the lyrics: "passed that we have seen But still I".

22

Vln. 1 pizz. *mf* mute off

Vln. 2 pizz. *mf* mute off

Vla. pizz. *mf* mute off

Vc. pizz. *mf* mute off

1/2 col legno tratto

ord.

ppp *p*

Voice

hope the day will come when you and I shall be as one.

26 Crowing

Vln. 1 arco ord. *f* *pp* *mf* jeté

Vln. 2 arco ord. *f* *pp* *mf* jeté

Vla. arco ord. *mf* *pp* *f*

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

29

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

f

pizz.

f

p $\rightarrow$ *f*

mf

pp

mf

pp

mf

pp

mf

mp

33

34

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

f

pp

f

pp

f

mf

f

mp

f

40

Vln. 1

mf

pizz.

arco

p

pp

Vln. 2

pizz.

arco

Vla.

pizz.

arco

Vc.

43 Gliding

42

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

mf

pizz.

arco

44

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

46

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

48

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

like an undulating breeze

p *f*

like an undulating breeze

p *f*

50

like an undulating breeze

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

p *f* *p* *pp*

arco gradually increasing vibrato...

52

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

f *cantabile* *p* *f*

54

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

This musical system covers measures 54 and 55. It features four staves: Violin 1 (Vln. 1), Violin 2 (Vln. 2), Viola (Vla.), and Violoncello (Vc.). Measures 54 and 55 are in 4/4 time. At measure 56, the time signature changes to 3/4. The Violin parts play a rhythmic melody with eighth and sixteenth notes, marked with accents and dynamic changes from *p* to *f*. The Viola and Violoncello parts play a slower, more melodic line, with triplets indicated in measure 55. The Viola part has a sharp sign on the first note of measure 56.

56

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

This musical system covers measures 56 and 57. It features the same four staves as the previous system. Measures 56 and 57 are in 3/4 time. The Violin parts continue their rhythmic melody, marked with accents and dynamic changes from *p* to *f*. The Viola and Violoncello parts continue their melodic line, with the Viola part having a sharp sign on the first note of measure 56. The Violoncello part has a sharp sign on the first note of measure 56.

58

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

p

f

sul pont.

60

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

p

f

62

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

p

f

3

64

ord.

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

p

f

p

f

p

mf

mf

66

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

68

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

ord.

70

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

First system of music (measures 70-71). The score is for four instruments: Violin 1, Violin 2, Viola, and Violoncello. Measures 70 and 71 are in 4/4 time. Measure 71 changes to 3/4 time. Dynamics include *p*, *mf*, and *mp*. The Viola and Violoncello parts have a crescendo from *mp* to *f* across the two measures.

72

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

Second system of music (measures 72-73). The score continues for the same four instruments. Measures 72 and 73 are in 4/4 time. Measure 73 changes to 3/4 time. Dynamics include *f*, *ff*, and *mp*. The Viola and Violoncello parts feature a triplet of eighth notes in measure 73.

74

74

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

mp *f*

p *mf* *pp*

p *mf*

p *f*

3

3

3

76

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

pp *mf*

ff

ff

3

3

3

78

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

p *f*

3

80

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

mp *mf* *ff*

82 *15^{ma}*

Vln. 1 *mp* *f* *ppp*

Vln. 2 *ff*

Vla. *ff*

Vc. *mp* *f* *ppp*

84 Aggressive, Vigorous

Vln. 1 *ff*

Vln. 2 *ff*

Vla. *ff*

Vc. *ff*

86

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

This musical system covers measures 86 and 87. The key signature has one sharp (F#). Measure 86 is in 4/4 time, and measure 87 is in 2/4 time. The score is for four staves: Violin 1, Violin 2, Viola, and Violoncello. All instruments play a complex, rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes with frequent beamed sixteenth-note passages. Accents are placed over many of the notes. The system concludes with a 4/4 time signature.

88

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

This musical system covers measures 88 and 89. The key signature has one sharp (F#). Measure 88 is in 4/4 time, and measure 89 is in 2/4 time. The score is for four staves: Violin 1, Violin 2, Viola, and Violoncello. The instrumentation and complex rhythmic patterns continue from the previous system. Measure 89 features a change in the Violin 1 part, moving to a lower register. The system concludes with a 4/4 time signature.

90

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

92

93

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

Bellowing

p *ff*

94

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

95

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

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23

96

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

ff

This musical system covers measures 96 and 97. The first three staves (Vln. 1, Vln. 2, and Vla.) are in 4/4 time, while the Vc. staff is in 3/4 time. Measures 96 and 97 are marked with a double bar line and a 3/4 time signature at the end of each staff. The Vln. 1 staff begins with a measure rest in 4/4, followed by eighth notes in measure 97. The Vln. 2 staff has eighth notes in measure 96 and a measure rest in measure 97. The Vla. staff has eighth notes in measure 96 and a measure rest in measure 97. The Vc. staff has a half note in measure 96 and a quarter note in measure 97, both marked with *ff* and an accent.

97

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

This musical system covers measures 97 and 98. The first three staves (Vln. 1, Vln. 2, and Vla.) are in 3/4 time, while the Vc. staff is in 4/4 time. Measures 97 and 98 are marked with a double bar line and a 4/4 time signature at the end of each staff. The Vln. 1 staff has eighth notes in measure 97 and a measure rest in measure 98. The Vln. 2 staff has eighth notes in measure 97 and a measure rest in measure 98. The Vla. staff has eighth notes in measure 97 and a measure rest in measure 98. The Vc. staff has a half note in measure 97 and a measure rest in measure 98.

98

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

strident

ff

98 99 100 101

99

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

99 100 101 102

100

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

Measures 100-103. Vln. 1 and 2 play a rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes with accents. Vla. plays a descending line with a triplet. Vc. plays a low, sustained line with a triplet.

101

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

f

earnest, lyrical

gradually becoming less aggressive

3

Measures 101-104. Vln. 1 and 2 play a rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes with accents. Vla. plays a descending line with a triplet. Vc. plays a low, sustained line with a triplet.

102

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

f

104

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

mf

f

3

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27

106 becoming a delicate accompaniment

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

mp

mp

mf

mf

109

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

p

3

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III

Vln. 1 *p*

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

III 3

Vln. 1 L.V.

Vln. 2 *pp* *mp* L.V.

Vla. *pp* *mp* *solo* *pizz. arco* 3

Vc. L.V. *mp*