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Atacameños

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Author

Simon, Greg

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GREG SIMON (2016)

for Sophia Han

Atacameños

(Voices of the Atacama)

for violin solo

I. Mano del Desierto

II. Desierto Florido

III. Culpeo

IV. ALMA (alma)

Atacameños for solo violin

In the northern end of Chile, about 800 miles from Santiago, sits the Atacama Desert. This desert — the driest on the planet — isn't well-known outside South America, and most who recognize its name might conjure a mental image of desolation, a lifeless expanse supporting little in the way of life. They wouldn't be wrong: the Atacama is inhabited by very few animals, even fewer humans. For a few decades in the 20th century, the desert saw a boom of nitrate mining towns, but as technology moved past the need for nitrate those have largely been abandoned. The Atacama is a tapestry of ghost towns, dead zones, and the occasional lone creature seeking survival.

In my creative work, I often dance around the concept of loneliness. I remain ever fascinated by the natural and historic offerings of Chile, where my mother was born. The Atacama is a touchstone for both — treasured by Chileans even in its bleakness, and the setting for a thousand meditations on loneliness through landform, creature, and the desert itself. For some of the Atacama's few denizens, loneliness is a curse: it means a work of art without a viewer, a ghost town without a guardian from vandals, a lone man without a community. But many others experience not a curse but a blessing: not loneliness, but solitude. Intrinsic in the solitary nature of desert life is freedom, independence, and uniqueness. Only in the Atacama can you find a phenomenon like the *desierto florido*, or a creature like the *culpeo*. It is this solitude that shapes the paradoxical life of the desert, at once lonely and free, desolate and colorful.

I have wanted to write about the Atacama for years, but never found the right project — until my dear friend Sophia Han asked me for a violin solo. A soloist is lonely, yet strong and intimate in her solitude. The violin demands an unparalleled focus and vulnerability from its performer, as if the two are in private dialogue with one another. Any violin solo is a study in loneliness — what a fitting medium to give voice to figures of an arid desert, themselves lessons in isolation.

Atacameños is a quartet of portraits from the Atacama desert. The work is dedicated to Sophia Han.

I. Mano del Desierto

The Mano del Desierto (“Hand of the Desert”) is a statue designed by sculptor Mario Irarrázabal, built of iron and concrete. The 36-foot-tall sculpture is of a hand rising from the desert, buried in the sand to its heel, with all five fingers reaching skyward. The Mano stands on the Western edge of the desert, open and unguarded, about a quarter mile from the highway. Its exposure makes it a popular destination for travelers through the Desert. The same exposure makes the Mano a target for vandals, and it is not uncommon to see the sculpture marked with graffiti and personal engravings.

II. Desierto Florido

In the rare years when rainfall in the Atacama is higher than normal, the desert will undergo a phenomenon called *desierto florido* (“flowering desert”). The normally barren desert plays host to a variety of seeds and bulbs, which lay quietly buried during normal years, lacking the water to sprout. Higher rainfall will cause these seeds to germinate, and by September the desert will become a carpet of colorful flowers, accompanied by a surge in wildlife around the desert. The display usually lasts about two months, before the blossoms disappear and their seeds once again lay dormant.

III. Culpeo

Culpeo is another name for the Andean fox. Resembling a cross between a fox and a coyote, the culpeo grows to about 30 pounds and is one of the Atacama's only predator mammals. Outside of mating, the culpeo is a solitary creature, driven in the desert by a constant search for food. Culpeos are extremely fast, cunning, and ravenous — they are opportunistic predators, feeding on anything from rodents and berries to domestic livestock and wild guanacos nearly five times their size.

IV. ALMA (alma)

ALMA stands for the Atacama Large Millimeter Array, a collection of 66 high-distance radio telescopes built on the high-altitude Chajnantor plateau. ALMA takes advantage of the Atacama's dry climate and typically clear skies to observe celestial bodies, producing images at a resolution 5 times better than the Hubble telescope. ALMA represents an international collaborative effort between Chile, the European Union, and five additional countries; scientists hope it can help provide us with more information about the birth of stars and the early days of the universe. “Alma” is also the Spanish word for “soul”.

for Sophia Han

Atacameños

I. Mano del Desierto

Greg Simon

Barren and Expansive

p *solemn*

4 *mf* *p*

6 *poco string.* *p* *mf*

8 *riten.* *p* *mf* *p*

10 *mf* *f*

12 *mf* *f* *sighing* *p*

14 *f* *f* *f* *p*

The musical score consists of seven staves of music in treble clef. The first staff begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic and a *solemn* marking. The second staff starts at measure 4 with a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic and ends with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The third staff starts at measure 6 with a piano (*p*) dynamic and a *poco string.* marking, ending with a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic. The fourth staff starts at measure 8 with a piano (*p*) dynamic and a *riten.* marking, ending with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The fifth staff starts at measure 10 with a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic and ends with a forte (*f*) dynamic. The sixth staff starts at measure 12 with a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic and ends with a piano (*p*) dynamic, including a *sighing* marking. The seventh staff starts at measure 14 with a forte (*f*) dynamic and ends with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, ties, and dynamic hairpins.

Atacameños I. Mano del Desierto

16 *breve* *port.* *meno mosso (come prima)* *ten.*

f *sub. p floating*

18 *p* *f* *piu mosso*

p **f** *piu mosso*

19 *sul pont.* *ord.* *fz* *f*

sul pont. *ord.* **fz** **f**

20 *f* *fp* *sul pont.*

f **fp** *sul pont.*

22 *ord.* *accel.* *f* *sub. p*

ord. *accel.* **f** *sub. p*

24 *Broadly* *ff*

Broadly **ff**

26 *piu mosso - rhythmic* *f*

piu mosso - rhythmic **f**

28 *as before* *piu mosso - rhythmic*

ff *f*

32 *as before* *accel. poco a poco*

ff *mp* *ff*

34

37 *accel.* *accent sim.*

39 *to sul pont.* *to sul pont.* *Slower, Reverent*

fff *shouting* *pp* *n* *p shimmering*

42 *to ord.* *ord.* *to sul pont.*

f *p*

44

to ord. ----- non trem. ord. *molto ten.*

ff
a burst of light *pp*

48

IV-----

pp brooding *p*

51 (IV)-----

mp

54

f *p* *mp*

57

mp *rall.* *pp*

Atacameños

II. Desierto Florido

Greg Simon

$\text{♩} = 160$ **Gliding**
flautando

pp ghostly *cresc. poco a poco*

6 *gradually to ord.* *p* swaying gently

10 *cresc.*

16 *ord.* *piu p*

21 *mp*

26

30 *mf* *piu espress.*

35

41 *f* flowing

46 *riten.*

50 *mp*

accel. → *a tempo sul pont.*

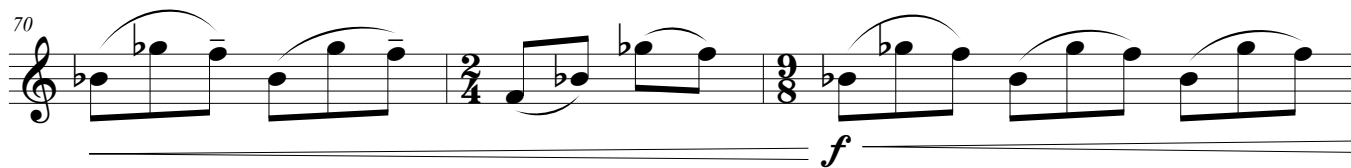
53 *p* *meno p* papery

56 *gradually to ord.*

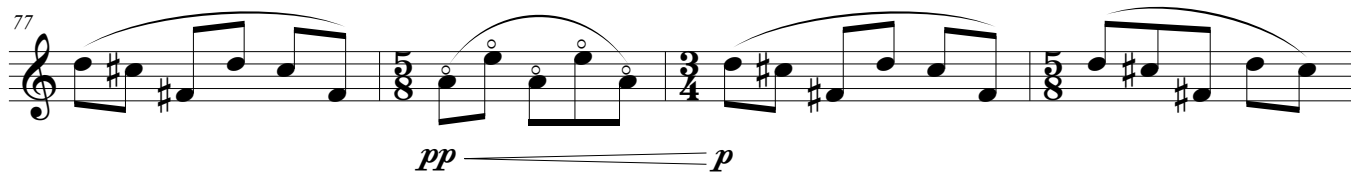
60 *cresc.*

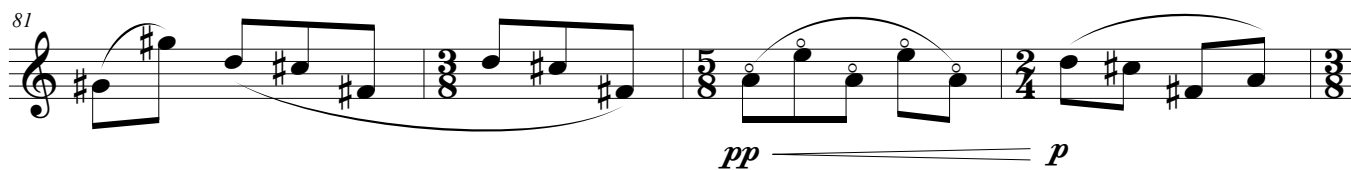
63 *mp*

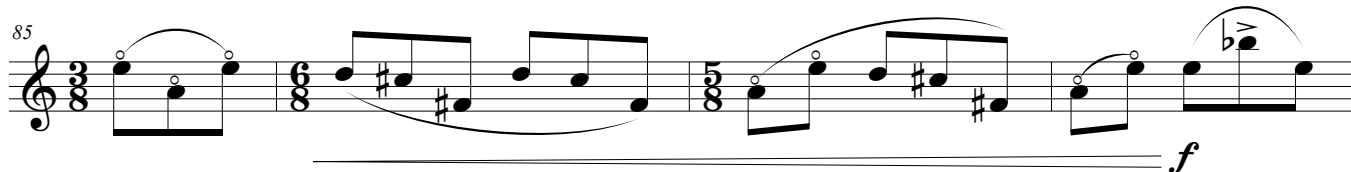
66 *mf* more colorful

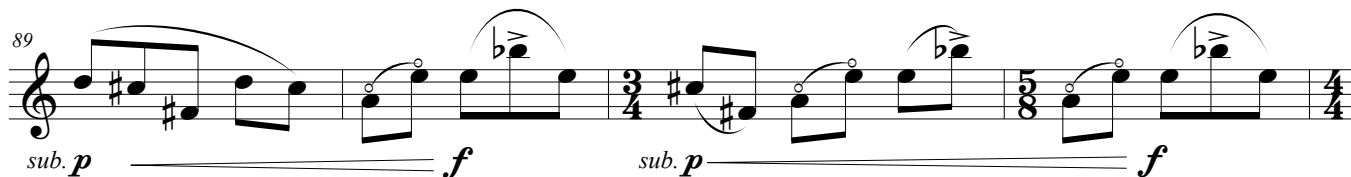
70 

73 

77 

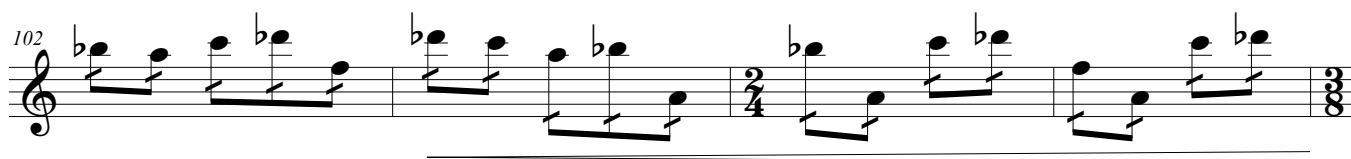
81 

85 

89 

93 

97 

102 

106 Musical notation for measures 106-109. Treble clef, 3/4 time signature. Notes: G4, A4, Bb4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4. Dynamics: *f*, *mf*.

110 Musical notation for measures 110-114. Treble clef, 2/4 time signature. Notes: D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, Bb4, A4, G4. Dynamics: *f* spirited. Roman numerals I and II are present above the staff.

115 Musical notation for measures 115-119. Treble clef, 2/4 time signature. Notes: G4, A4, Bb4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4. Dynamics: *f*.

120 Musical notation for measures 120-122. Treble clef, 2/4 time signature. Notes: D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, Bb4, A4, G4. Dynamics: *f*.

123 Musical notation for measures 123-124. Treble clef, 4/4 time signature. Notes: D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, Bb4, A4, G4. Dynamics: *ff* flowering.

125 Musical notation for measures 125-126. Treble clef, 2/4 time signature. Notes: D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, Bb4, A4, G4. Dynamics: *ff*.

127 Musical notation for measures 127-128. Treble clef, 2/4 time signature. Notes: D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, Bb4, A4, G4. Dynamics: *ff*.

129 Musical notation for measures 129-131. Treble clef, 2/4 time signature. Notes: D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, Bb4, A4, G4. Dynamics: *ff*.

132 Musical notation for measures 132-135. Treble clef, 2/4 time signature. Notes: D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, Bb4, A4, G4. Dynamics: *ff*.

135

2/4 4/4

137

5/4 3/4 *mf*

139

4/4 4/4

142

a due corde

4/4 3/4 *mp*

144

3/4 2/4 6/8 *p*

147

rall. *breve* *a tempo*

sul tasto

4/4 3/4 7/8 *pp*

150

7/8 3/8 4/4

ord.

153

mp cantabile

158

sul tasto

pp

162

ord.

p

166

mf *p*

170

mf

174

mf

178

f warmly *decresc.*

181

mf *decresc.*

185

mp decresc.

189

p

193

ppp *poco meno mosso*
p angelic

197

200

a tempo
pizz.
pp

Atacameños

III. Culpeo

Greg Simon

♩.=180 Wild, with abandon

ff molto aggressivo

f *ffp*

III - - - - -

(III) - - - - -

sub. p

< f as before

sfz *sfz*

32 *ff*

35 *ff*

38 *ff*

41 *sub. p cresc.*

45 *mf*

49 *ff spinning wildly*

53 *fff*

57 *ff racing forward*

62 *fff*

66

sffp agile and darting

69

p ————— *f*

73

sub. p

76

pp suspended for a moment *p*

80

p

84

ff *sub. p*

87

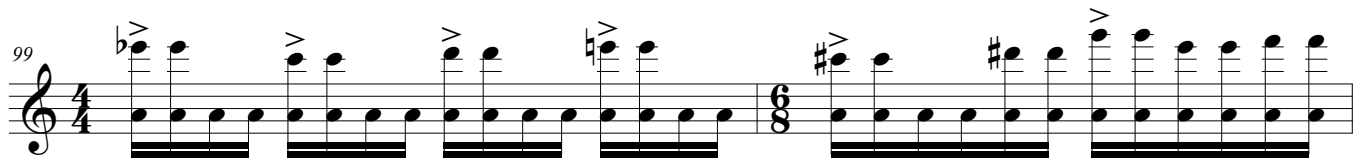
cresc. poco a poco

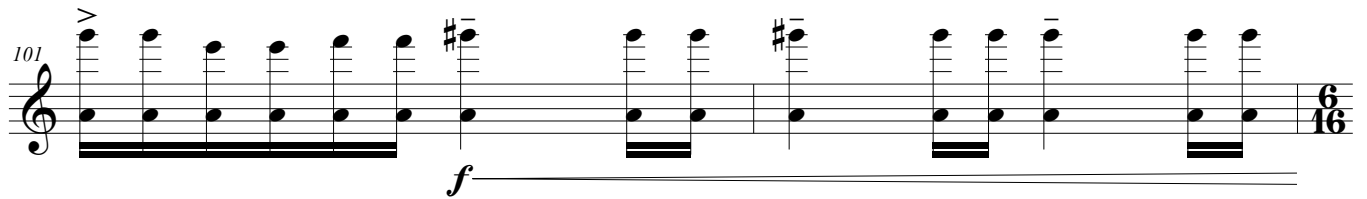
90

93

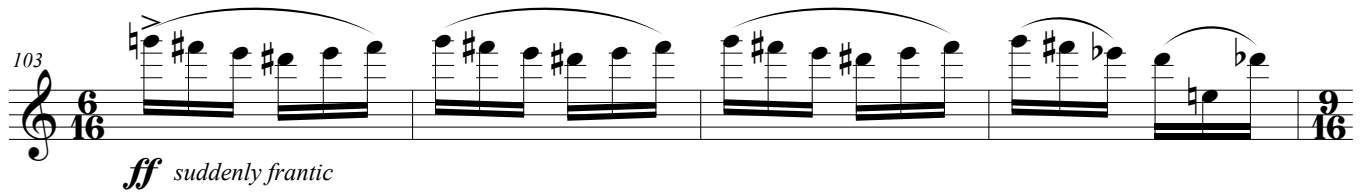
sfz *mf* *cresc.*

96 

99 

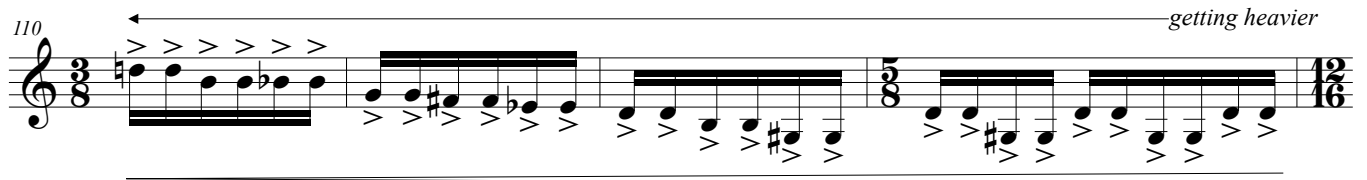
101 

f

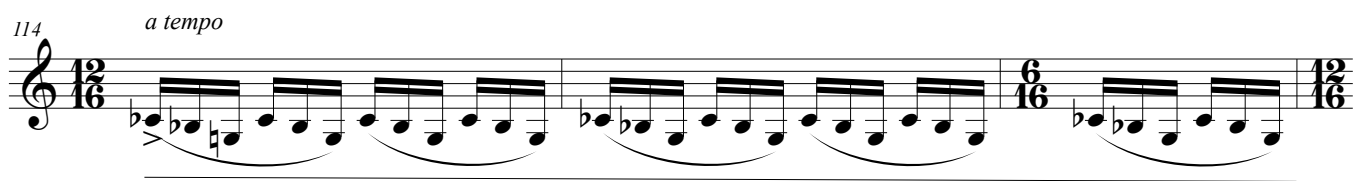
103 

ff suddenly frantic

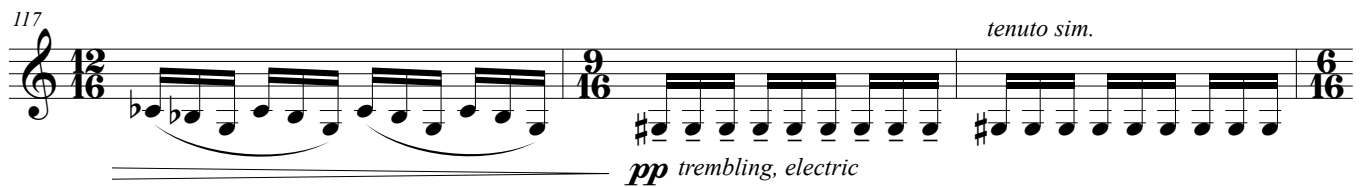
107 

110 

← getting heavier

114 

a tempo

117 

pp trembling, electric

tenuto sim.

120 

123

f *sfp*

127

f

131

mf *bolder*

135

p *f* *p* *f*

138

p *f* *p*

141

f

144

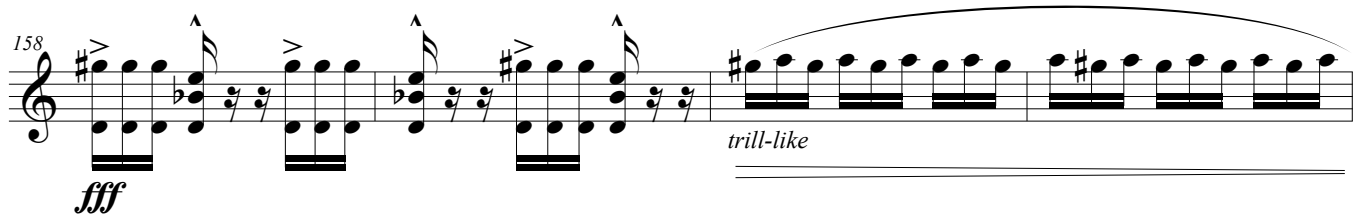
ff *with crazed glee*

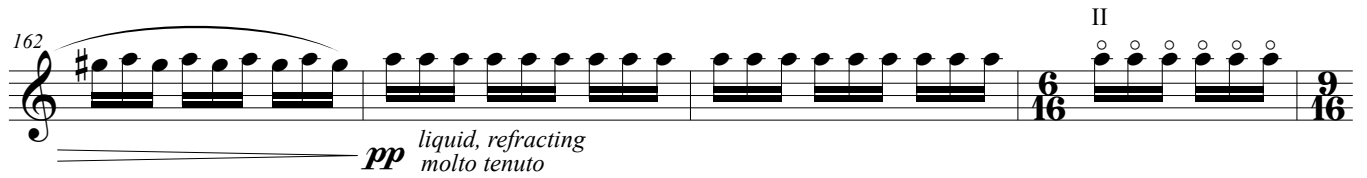
148

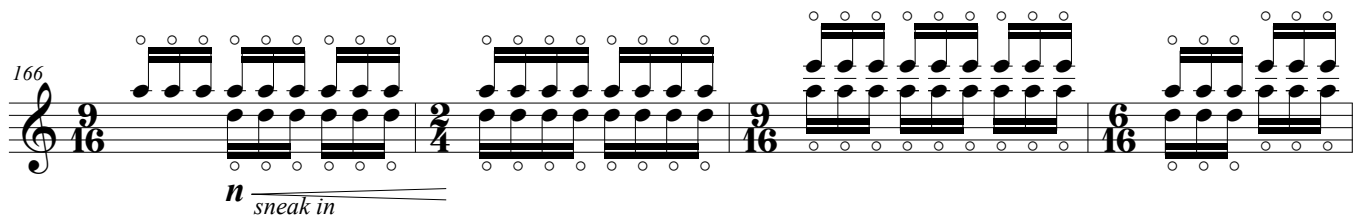
f

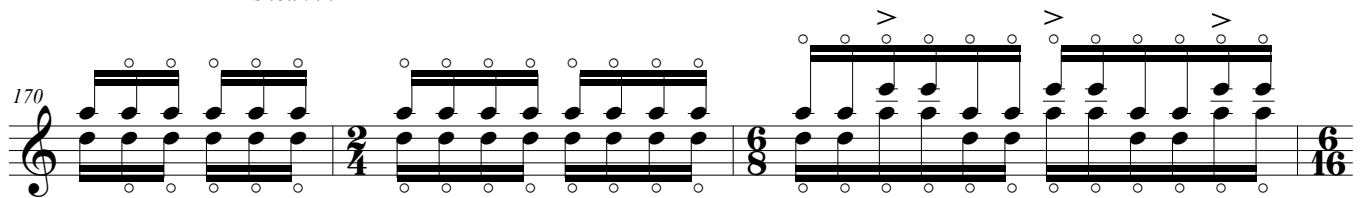
151 

154 


158 
fff *trill-like*

162 
pp *liquid, refracting*
molto tenuto

166 
n *sneak in*

170 

173 
II
III (no harmonic)

176 
ff *fiery*

180

Musical staff 180-182: Treble clef, key signature of one flat. Measures 180-182. Time signatures: 6/16, 9/16. Notes: eighth notes with accents.

183

Musical staff 183-185: Treble clef, key signature of one flat. Measures 183-185. Time signatures: 2/4, 9/16. Notes: eighth notes with accents, some beamed sixteenth notes.

186

Musical staff 186-188: Treble clef, key signature of one flat. Measures 186-188. Time signatures: 6/16, 9/16. Notes: eighth notes with accents. A dashed line labeled 'III' spans the end of the staff.

(III) 190

Musical staff 190-193: Treble clef, key signature of one flat. Measures 190-193. Time signature: 12/16. Notes: eighth notes with accents, some beamed sixteenth notes. A dashed line labeled '(III)' spans the beginning of the staff.

194

Musical staff 194-195: Treble clef, key signature of one flat. Measures 194-195. Time signature: 12/16. Notes: eighth notes with accents. Dynamic marking: *piu ff*.

196

Musical staff 196-197: Treble clef, key signature of one flat. Measures 196-197. Time signatures: 12/16, 9/16. Notes: eighth notes with accents, some beamed sixteenth notes.

198

Musical staff 198-200: Treble clef, key signature of one flat. Measures 198-200. Time signatures: 9/16, 2/4, 9/16, 4/4. Notes: eighth notes with accents, some beamed sixteenth notes.

201 *accel. al fine*

4 9/16 12/16

204 *indeterminate double stops (I/II)*

12/16 9/16 *fff no mercy!*

206

6/16

209 *(II/III)* *(III/IV)*

4 9/16

211

9/16 6/16

214

9/16 9/16 *f_{poss.}*

Atacameños

IV. ALMA (alma)

Greg Simon

Pale and Ghostly ♩ = 60-64

pp distant, alien *phrase sim.*

p slowly coming into focus

cresc. poco a poco

mf *piu p* *mp* *mf*

mp *mf*

p *meno vib.* *still like a harmonic* *pp* *p* sweet and dark

31

mp *p* *pp as before*

Detailed description: Musical staff 31-35. Starts with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The time signature changes from 3/4 to 4/4 and back to 3/4. Dynamics include *mp*, *p*, and *pp as before*. The music features a mix of eighth and quarter notes with some slurs.

36

p *mf* *ten.*

Detailed description: Musical staff 36-39. Continues with the same key signature. Time signature changes to 4/4 and then 3/4. Dynamics include *p*, *mf*, and *ten.* (tension). Features a triplet of eighth notes and a slur over a phrase.

40

f *p*

poco accel.

Detailed description: Musical staff 40-43. Time signature changes to 4/4, 2/4, and 3/4. Dynamics include *f* and *p*. Includes a triplet of eighth notes, a 5-measure rest, and a 7-measure rest. An arrow above the staff indicates *poco accel.*

44

ff *passionate*

piu mosso

Detailed description: Musical staff 44-48. Time signature changes to 3/4, 2/4, and 3/4. Dynamics include *ff* and *passionate*. An arrow above the staff indicates *piu mosso*. Features a triplet of eighth notes and a slur.

49

f

Detailed description: Musical staff 49-52. Time signature changes to 2/4, 3/4, and 2/4. Dynamics include *f*. Features a triplet of eighth notes and a slur.

53

riten. *meno mosso - romantic and with some rubato* *poco piu mosso molto cant.*

piu ff *f earthy* *becoming gentle*

Detailed description: Musical staff 53-57. Time signature changes to 2/4, 3/4, and 2/4. Dynamics include *piu ff*, *f earthy*, and *becoming gentle*. An arrow above the staff indicates *riten.* (ritardando). Includes a 3-measure rest and a slur.

58

p *somber*

poco rit.

Detailed description: Musical staff 58-61. Time signature changes to 2/4, 3/4, 2/4, and 3/4. Dynamics include *p* and *somber*. An arrow above the staff indicates *poco rit.* (ritardando).

64

p *f* *p* *p* *f*

69

rall. *poco meno mosso*

p *mf* *f*

retake bow ad lib.

73

p

a tempo
sul tasto

pp *p* *celestial*

78

p *plaintive* *mf*

82

pp *mf* *pp* *p* *cresc.*
growing exuberant

85

mf

89 *allarg.*
f *ff*

Musical staff 89: Treble clef, 3/4 time signature. Measures 89-91 show a melodic line with slurs and accents. Measure 92 shows a 5/4 time signature change with a triplet of eighth notes. Measure 93 returns to 3/4 time with a triplet of eighth notes. Dynamics range from *f* to *ff*. An *allarg.* marking is at the end.

Subito Tempo I
92 *sub. p suspended*

Musical staff 92: Treble clef, 3/4 time signature. Measures 92-95 show a melodic line with slurs and accents. Measure 96 shows a 4/4 time signature change. Dynamics include *sub. p suspended*.

96 *decresc. poco a poco*

Musical staff 96: Treble clef, 4/4 time signature. Measures 96-98 show a melodic line with slurs and accents. Dynamics include *decresc. poco a poco*.

99

Musical staff 99: Treble clef, 4/4 time signature. Measures 99-101 show a melodic line with slurs and accents. Dynamics include *pp*, *mp*, and *pp*.

102 *pp mp pp*

Musical staff 102: Treble clef, 3/4 time signature. Measures 102-104 show a melodic line with slurs and accents. Dynamics include *pp*, *mp*, and *pp*.

October 2016
Lincoln, NE