



... dedicated to the  
promotion, composition,  
performance, understanding  
and dissemination of  
new and contemporary  
music ...

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## Quartetto dell'Arte: A New String Quartet

By Matthew de Lacey Davidson

This effort is an attempt to discuss, as non-subjectively as possible, a new work I have written for string quartet. *Quartetto dell'Arte* was conceived as an attempt to do something new with this tried-and-true genre. It is a five-movement, twenty-five minute, polytonal string quartet with a secret existential program. It is influenced by the quartets of Beethoven, Bergmüller, Schumann, Neils Gade, and Mendelssohn, amongst others. The works of New Zealand composer Jack Body, and his technique of using exact transcriptions of non-western melodies, was also an influence. In addition, Frederic Rzewski's technique of creating pan-tonal variations on North and South American melodies is clearly an influence. Finally, although I was not consciously aware of such during the process of composition, I realized afterwards that each movement strongly reflected the work of one to two other composers (i.e., the first movement displays a strong structural influence of Beethoven, despite the quotes from Bach; the third movement shows the influence of Prokofiev and Berg; the fourth of the Adagio movements in the symphonies of Bruckner; and the fifth is a polytonal pastiche of Rachmaninoff in 5/18 time).

*Quartetto dell'Arte* uses direct transcriptions of melodies from the following compact disc recordings:

- *Musique et Musiciens du Monde—Biélorussie* (UNESCO); Kazakh Music Today (Topic Records Inc.) (Movement One)
- *Belgique Ballades*, etc. (OCORA-Radio France); *Lituanie—Le pays des chansons* (OCORA-Radio France) (Movement Three)

The five movements of the quartet are named as follows:

- I. Preludio (Scherzo I)
- II. Fuga Frammentaria
- III. Gavotta Assurda (Scherzo II)
- IV. Adagietto Amoroso
- V. Finale: Tarantella Tumultuosa (Scherzo III)

Each movement is subtitled by a character found in *Commedia dell'Arte* as follows (although, akin to Debussy's

*(Continued on Page 4)*



## About the Newsletter

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**Articles:** The Newsletter welcomes submissions of articles to run in future issues. Articles, if accepted, may be edited for length and content. Please include a photo with all submissions if possible (photo may be of author).

**Member News + Photos:** Please send all member news and activities with a photo. Submitted items may be edited.

**Ideas/Suggestions:** The Editors welcome any other ideas or suggestions.

Submit to the newsletter via email at: [newsletter@societyofcomposers.org](mailto:newsletter@societyofcomposers.org)



## Upcoming SCI Events

### 2013 Region I Conference August 15–17, 2013

Portsmouth, NH  
Hosted by PARMA Recordings as part of the PARMA Music Festival

### 2013 Region IV Conference October 17–19, 2013

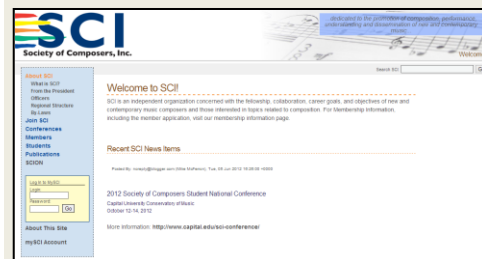
Eastern Kentucky University  
Richmond, KY  
Host: Thomas Couvillon  
[Thomas.Couvillon@eku.edu](mailto:Thomas.Couvillon@eku.edu)

### 2014 Region VIII Conference March 7–8, 2014

University of Puget Sound, Tacoma, WA

### 2014 Region V Conference March 27–29, 2014

Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo  
Hosts: Christopher Biggs and Lisa Coons



## Internet & Email

[www.societyofcomposers.org](http://www.societyofcomposers.org)

- Conference dates and submission guidelines
- Contact information and links to member web-pages
- Student chapters and opportunities
- CDs and journals produced by SCI
- Details on SCI such as membership, contacts for officers, regional structure, by-laws, newsletter archives and more...

## SCION

SCION is a listing of opportunities on our website exclusively for members. It is updated on a continual basis so that it may be checked at any time for the most current notices. In addition, members are emailed on the first Monday of each month to remind them to visit the site for new or recent postings. The large number of listings is easily managed by a table of contents with links to the individual notices. In-depth coverage; contest listings in full; all items listed until expiration; this is a valuable resource that you may print in its entirety or in part at any time.

John Bilotta, SCION Editor  
[scion@societyofcomposers.org](mailto:scion@societyofcomposers.org)

## scimembers

**scimembers** is a member-driven e-mail mailing list that is intended to facilitate communication between members of the Society on topics of concern to composers of contemporary concert music. It conveys whatever notices or messages are sent by its members, including announcements of performances and professional opportunities, as well as discussions on a wide variety of topics. For more information, including how to join and participate in the listserv:

<http://www.societyofcomposers.org/publications/listserv.html>

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## Membership Information

For complete details, please visit  
<http://www.societyofcomposers.org/join/membership.html>.

**Full Membership** (\$55/year): Eligible to submit scores to the National Conferences, regional conferences, SCI Recording Series, SCI Journal of Music Scores. Access to the SCI Newsletter in electronic form. Optional subscription to [scimembers], the SCI listserv and all other SCI publications. Eligible to vote on Society Matters and in elections for the National Council.

**Joint Membership** (\$75/year): Same benefits as full members

**Senior Membership** (\$27.50/year): Open to those 65 years of age or older, or retired. Same benefits as full members.

**Associate Membership** (\$27.50/year): Open to performers and other interested professionals. Receives the SCI Newsletter in electronic form and can participate in national and regional conferences.

**Student Membership** (\$27.50/year): Eligible to submit to national and regional conferences and to vote in society matters. Access to all SCI publications.

**Student Chapter Membership** (\$17.50/year): Same benefits as student members, but only available on campuses having Student Chapters.

**Institutional Membership** (\$25/year): Organizations receive hard copy of the SCI Newsletter and other mailings.

**Lifetime Membership** (\$1100 or \$120/year for 10 years): Benefits the same as full members, for life.

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## Quartetto dell'Arte: A New String Quartet

(Continued from Page 1)

*Preludes*, the title appears at the end of the movement, as if it were an afterthought):

- I. Sandrone
- II. Il Dotore
- III. Arlecchino
- IV. Gli Innamorati
- V. Pantalone

Every instrument plays in a different key almost throughout. The key structure for the whole work is as follows:

- I. Violin I: C major—A minor; Violin II: A major—F# minor; Viola: G-flat major—E-flat minor; Cello: E-flat major—C minor
- II. Violin I: F major; Violin II: C major; Viola A-flat major; Cello: E major
- III. Violin I: E minor—G major; Violin II: C-sharp minor—E major; Viola: B-flat minor—D-flat major; Cello: G minor—B-flat major
- IV. Violin I: B-flat major; Violin II: G major; Viola: E-flat major; Cello: B major
- V. Violin I : A minor—C major; Violin II: F-sharp minor—A major; Viola: E-flat minor—G-flat major; Cello: C minor—E-flat major

It might be noted that for the most part, the foundation key in the cello in each movement goes up by thirds in alternating minor and major keys.

The first movement starts with a polytonal transcription of the E-flat Prelude from the WTC I by J.S. Bach, which acts as a sort of “opening adagio”. It is followed by the first transcribed melody (from Byelorussia) which, in turn, acts as an “allegro—first group.” The melody is then moved back and forth between the other members of the quartet. It is followed by a “second group” which is highlighted by a melody from Kazakhstan mostly in 4/2 time. A “development” section then follows which mostly expands upon the last five notes of the Kazakh theme; however, it is often accompanied by a heavily

disguised accompaniment derived from the notes of the Byelorussian theme. Eventually, it moves into an “Ivesian” section which combines quotes from Beethoven, Chopin, Schubert, Mendelssohn, Scott Joplin, amongst others. In fact, the Beethoven theme is from the “Moonlight” sonata, because it was one of my first musical experiences. When I brought that score to my first piano teacher—bless her soul—after I had been learning piano only a few months, she asked me, “Do you know what key it’s in?” I responded that I didn’t know. She said, “Well, it’s got four sharps so it’s in E major!” (Of course, it is in C-sharp minor). So the quote (in both keys) is in honor of my first piano teacher(!). There follows a “reverse recapitulation” where the Kazakh theme is first presented in diminution played pizzicato, and the first theme from Byelorussia is presented augmented, and then followed by a transcription of the ending of the same Bach E-flat Prelude.

The second movement is a pointillistic double retrograde fugue using melodies by Verdi and Puccini. This was a particularly fun movement to write, because initially I wrote a “conventional” fugue, but then kept removing more and more notes until the melodies became merely “hinted at”—at least in the first few bars of the movement. This movement shows the influence of Rzewski, as he describes in one of the variations of his score of *36 Variations on The People United Will Never Be Defeated*, like “fragments of a lost melody.” I would like to point out that while there is a Shostakovich piano quintet which casts similarly the first two movements as a prelude and fugue, I did not know of its existence until some months after *Quartetto dell'Arte* was finished.

The third movement, also a scherzo, uses a gavotte melody as the main theme (partially in homage to Prokofiev; despite writing many gavottes, he never wrote one for string quartet). This melody is juxtaposed by two others, one from Belgium, the other from Lithuania. The constant use of glissandi not only recalls the *Presto delirando* (5th) movement of Berg’s *Lyric Suite*, it also pays homage to non-western music where the pitch value of A=440hz is not always observed. Those who know the *Lyric Suite* well will be able to see microscopic similarities, though not audibly detectible. This

movement ends with an “ostinato machine” analogous to those found in Stravinsky’s *Sacre de Printemps*.

The fourth movement juxtaposes melodies by Guillaume de Machaut and Stephen Foster. Almost all of the melodic material is related to these two melodies. As the transformed Machault melody is manipulated at the beginning, it gradually turns into slowly changing motives, which one eventually realizes has become an accompaniment to a melody, *a la Mo-*

zart. In addition, this use of polytonality gives rise to an effect similarly found in some Renaissance, i.e. that of “modal mixture.”

The fourth movement also uses the effect of constant rhythmic canons, which helps develop interest and propels the work forward. This is a technique which I had used to great effect in *The Singing Lesson*, the chamber opera which I wrote immediately prior to *Quartetto dell’Arte*.

## QUARTETTO DELL'ARTE

### IV. Adagietto Amoroso

Matthew de Lacey Davidson

Adagietto  $\text{♩} = 50$   
*Con Sord. al fine dell'adagietto*

Vln. I  
*pp* <>

Vln. II  
*pp* <>

Vla.  
*pp* <> *p* > *mp* > *mf* > *mp* > *p* >

Vc.  
*pp* <>

*Con Sord. al fine dell'adagietto*

Vln. I  
*p* > *mp* > *mp* >

Vln. II  
*p* > *mp* > *mf* > *mp* >

Vla.  
*p* > *mp* > *mf* > *mp* >

Vc.  
*p* > *mp* > *mf* >

Vln. I  
*ppp* > *mf* > *p* > *mf* >

Vln. II  
*Al Tuton*

Vla.  
*Al Tuton*

Vc.  
*Al Tuton*

The fifth movement is a rondo, mostly based on previous material. At measures 26–33 of the fifth movement, a melody occurs once only and is not developed nor repeated. At the end of the score the same melody appears but it is obviously written for a voice, with words in Italian set to it. The occurrence of the melody within the actual quartet itself is the same “song” only with the words “suppressed.” This has been done historically by both Berg and Mahler.

To the best of my knowledge, *Quartetto dell’Arte* is the first string quartet to:

1. have the first, third, and fifth movements set as *scherzi*;
2. follow the traditional Viennese models using structured and progressive polytonality in combination with transcriptions of non-western melodies;
3. have each voice mimic a similar key structure (only polytonally). For example, in the recapitulation of the first movement, each voice uses its own respective flat-II or Neapolitan key;
4. have each movement cyclically related, while simultaneously have the number of bars of each movement ordered according to patterns found in the Fibonacci series (with the exception of the last movement);
5. use tonality in an unusual manner, but in the format of polytonality, which produces an almost “modal mixture” effect similar to that of some Renaissance music;
6. combine both contemporary influences (such as Jack Body’s work, *Three Transcriptions* for string quartet, and Frederic Rzewski’s *Four North American Ballads*) with the formal structures available to us in the traditional Viennese canon, and obscure works in the Romantic repertoire.

For these reasons, I believe *Quartetto dell’Arte* deserves to be heard, despite the fact that the technical challenges in terms of both ensemble and solo work are probably indicative of string quartet ensembles which are at the top of their field.

The image displays a musical score for a string quartet, *Quartetto dell'Arte* by Matthew de Lacey Davidson. The score is arranged in four systems, each containing staves for Violin I (Vln. I), Violin II (Vln. II), Viola (Vla.), and Cello (Vc.). The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, dynamics (e.g., *mp*, *f*, *ff*, *pp*), articulation (e.g., *pizz.*, *arco*), and performance instructions. The score is written in a key signature of two sharps (D major) and a time signature of 4/4. The first system shows measures 27-33, the second system shows measures 34-40, the third system shows measures 41-47, and the fourth system shows measures 48-54. The score concludes with a final measure marked *mf*.

Matthew de Lacey Davidson

## SCItings

### *Member News and Activities*

Performances, Awards, Commissions, Honors, Publications and other Member Activities.

#### **David Ward-Steinman**

On January 23, 2012 a song by David Ward-Steinman, "Jewels", was premiered by Daniella Carvalho, Brazilian soprano, making her debut in Carnegie Hall/Weill Hall in a benefit concert called "Jewels of the Heart". The song was commissioned by her husband, the conductor Jeff Eckstein.

#### **Luke Schwartz**

Lucy Moses School faculty premiered *10-29-11*, a quintet for flute and strings, on January 25, 2012 in New York City's Merkin Concert Hall.

#### **Robert J. Bradshaw**

Members of the Salem State University music faculty—Gary Wood, baritone; Lynn Shane, soprano; and Beverly Soll, piano—were joined by Boston area freelance musicians Monica Duncan, clarinet; Nathan Cohen, violin; and Kristjan Asgeirsson, marimba, premiered Bradshaw's comic chamber operetta *QWERTY: An Opera With A [TEXT] Message* on January 30, 2012. This concert program was presented by Cape Ann Opera and funded by the Music Drives Us Foundation.

This composition and project are intended to help open a conversation about responsible and safe use of technology. In this case, focusing primarily

on texting by college students but also addressing issues pertaining to email, blogging and chat rooms.

#### **Ryan Olivier**

On February 9, 2012 *Magis: Songs* on poems by Gerard Manley Hopkins received its premiere by Temple University Faculty Members in Rock Hall.

#### **Brett L. Wery**

Pianist/Singer Judith Avitabile premiered Wery's *Piano Sonata* on February 16, 2012 in the Carl B. Taylor Auditorium on the Campus of Schenectady County Community College, School of Music.

#### **Eric Knechtges**

Knechtges' piece for euphonium and band, *Aporia*, was premiered by euphonium soloist Adam Frey and the Miami University Wind Ensemble on February 22, 2012 in Hall Auditorium on the campus of Miami University in Oxford, Ohio. It uses a quotation of the trumpet melody from Ives' *The Unanswered Question* and is both an exploration of the theme of the human search for universal truth and its consequences, and an homage to Charles Ives.

#### **Chan Ji Kim**

At the International Composers and Interactive Artists concert at the Symphony Space in New York City, Chan Ji Kim's trio, *In Memoriam*, written for teacher, mentor and friend, Dr. Dinu Ghezzo, was premiered on February 24, 2012.

#### **Jason Bahr**

Bahr's *Eagle Fanfare* was premiered by the Boston Brass on February 25, 2012 in the U. Tobe Recital Hall on the Florida Gulf Coast University Campus.