

Max Mitchell

Exhibition I

based on works by abstract expressionist artists

(2017)

Full Score

Exhibition I

I - Vir Heroicus Sublimis	[4'25]	<i>Pages 1-2</i>
II - Autumn Rhythm	[2'05]	<i>Pages 3-11</i>
III - PH-129	[2'15]	<i>Pages 12-14</i>
IV - Landscape at Stanton Street	[2'25]	<i>Pages 15-17</i>

Approximate duration: 11'10

Program Note:

Exhibition I is the first in a collection of suites in which I take art from a particular artistic movement and use them as the inspiration for the pieces in the suite. While researching artists I was particularly struck by the work of Barnett Newman and other abstract expressionist works so that's the artistic movement I decided to base the first suite on.

Developed in New York in the 1940s, Abstract expressionism is one of the big post-World War II art movements. The movement achieved international influence and put New York City at the centre of the western art world. After the war, these young artists wanted to express their feelings about the world through their artwork; wanting to communicate emotions like sorrow, outrage, and joy.

The first piece in the suite is based on the colour field painting 'Vir Heroicus Sublimis' by Barnett Newman. The title of the painting, which translates to 'Man, heroic and sublime' refers to an essay by Newman where he asks the question "if we are living in a time without a legend that can be called sublime, how can we be creating sublime art?" Newman's painting sought to take one colour (in this case, red) and remove it from its context, therefore encouraging viewers to react to the colour according to their instincts. This piece is my reaction upon seeing the work.

Vir Heroicus Sublimis is a large, expansive work measuring at approximately 2.4 x 5.4 metres so, in order to portray the painting's grand scale and immersive nature, I decided to make this piece much longer than the others in the suite. The length of the "red" sections in the composition is roughly dictated by the physical size of the corresponding red sections in the painting.

The painting also has narrow, vertical bands of colour called "zips". The function of these zips, according to Newman, was to provide contrast to the massive colour field. In the composition, each "musical zip" consists of static dynamics and/or timbral shifts. In order to provide additional contrast in the piece, the permutation of the 'red chord' (C, F#, C#, G) changes after each zip, returning to the original permutation for the final red to give the piece a sense of closure. It is worth noting that I avoided using G as the bass note in the permutations as I didn't want the chord to appear to have a dominant function.

Based on the painting 'Autumn Rhythm' by Jackson Pollock, the piece features the musical equivalents of the spontaneous dribs and splashes found in action painting, with glissandi mimicking the movement of paint and intertwining melodic fragments representing the dense web of lines in the painting. I recreated the disorienting nature of the painting through syncopation, unexpected changes in meter and additive rhythms.

'PH-129' is a bright, oil on canvas painting completed in 1949 by the artist Clyfford Still. The painting has a luminous, shimmery quality which is reflected in my composition through the use of; sul ponticello, which brings out some of the higher partials; the tremolos alternating between natural harmonics and the resonant open strings and; the predominantly high tessitura. The occasional dissonances represent the small, scar-like, blood red area which somewhat taints the painting's luminous nature.

The final piece is based on the lithograph 'Landscape at Stanton Street' by Willem de Kooning. The work is monochrome, completely drained of colour and consists of ink spatters of varying size and density combined with free, gestural brush strokes forming free disordered lines. To me the work, while sombre, does have a sense of calm to it which is reflected in my piece by the slow harmonic rhythm. The sombreness is conveyed using a low tessitura. The pizzicato, halfway through the piece, represents the small ink spatters in the middle of the lithograph.

I

Vir Heroicus Sublimis

1950-51

Max Mitchell

BARNETT NEWMAN

Red I
Lento (♩ = c.60)

Zip I

gliss. gliss.

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Violoncello

ppp < f > p < fff > p < fff > p < mf >

ppp < f > p < fff > p < fff > pp < mf >

ppp < f > p < fff > p < fff > pp < mf >

ppp < f > p < fff > p < fff > pp < mf >

play 6 times

Red II

Zip II

Red III

arco ord.

5

play 9 times

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

p < fff > p < fff > mf directly on bridge (no pitch) ppp < fff > arco ord.

p < fff > p < fff > mf directly on bridge (no pitch) ppp < fff > arco ord.

p < fff > p < fff > mf directly on bridge (no pitch) ppp < fff > arco ord.

p < fff > p < fff > mf directly on bridge (no pitch) ppp < fff > arco ord.

10 play 12 times

Zip III Red IV

Vln. I *p* *fff* *p* *fff* *ppp* *ff*

Vln. II *p* *fff* *p* *fff* *ppp* *ff*

Vla. *p* *fff* *p* *fff* *ppp* *ff*

Vc. *p* *fff* *p* *fff* *ppp* *ff*

14 play 6 times

Zip IV

gliss. *gliss.* *gliss.* *gliss.* *gliss.* *gliss.*

Vln. I *p* *fff* *p* *fff* *p* *mf* *p* *mf*

Vln. II *p* *fff* *p* *fff* *pp* *mf* *pp* *mf*

Vla. *p* *fff* *p* *fff* *pp* *mf* *pp* *mf*

Vc. *p* *fff* *p* *fff* *pp* *mf* *pp* *mf*

Red V

18 play 3 times

Zip V rit. Red VI

Vln. I *p* *fff* *pp* niente

Vln. II *p* *fff* *pp* niente

Vla. *p* *fff* *pp* niente

Vc. *p* *fff* *pp* niente

II

Autumn Rhythm

1950

Allegretto (♩ = c.116) JACKSON POLLOCK

21 pizz.

Vln. I *mf*

Vln. II

Vla. *mf* pizz.

Vc. *mf* sul tasto

23

Vln. I *mf* *p*

Vln. II *mf*

Vla. *mf* arco gliss.

Vc. *p* gliss.

25

Vln. I *ff*

Vln. II *ff* pizz.

Vla. *f* *ff*

Vc. *f* arco ord. pizz.

28

Vln. I *f*

Vln. II *f*

Vla. *f* pizz.

Vc. *f* arco, sul tasto *p*

31

Vln. I *mf*

Vln. II *mf*

Vla. *mf* arco *p*

Vc. *p*

33

Vln. I *f*

Vln. II *f*

Vla. *meno p* arco ord. *mf*

Vc. *meno p* *mf*

35

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

arco

gliss.

p

mp

p

mp

3

3

Detailed description: This system contains measures 35 and 36. Violin I and Violin II parts feature a glissando (gliss.) starting at measure 35, marked with a piano (*p*) dynamic and transitioning to mezzo-piano (*mp*) by measure 36. The Viola and Violoncello parts play a triplet of eighth notes in measure 35, also marked with a piano (*p*) dynamic, and continue this pattern in measure 36.

37

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

pizz.

arco

p

mf

p

meno p

mf

pizz.

meno p

arco

meno p

Detailed description: This system contains measures 37 and 38. In measure 37, Violin I and Violoncello play pizzicato (*pizz.*) marked with a piano (*p*) dynamic. Violin II and Viola play a continuous eighth-note pattern marked with a piano (*p*) dynamic. In measure 38, Violin I and Violoncello switch to arco, marked with a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic. Violin II and Viola continue their eighth-note pattern, marked with a mezzo-piano (*meno p*) dynamic.

39

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

f

f

3

3

Detailed description: This system contains measures 39 and 40. Violin I and Violin II parts play sustained notes (half notes) in measure 39 and continue in measure 40. Viola and Violoncello parts play eighth-note patterns in measure 39, marked with a forte (*f*) dynamic, and continue this pattern in measure 40, marked with a mezzo-piano (*meno p*) dynamic. Fingering numbers (3, 2, 0, 1) are indicated for the Viola part in measure 39.

41

Vln. I *cresc.* *gliss.*

Vln. II *cresc.* *gliss.*

Vla. *cresc.*

Vc. *cresc.*

43

Vln. I *(cresc.)* *gliss.* *f*

Vln. II *(cresc.)* *gliss.* *f*

Vla. *(cresc.)*

Vc. *(cresc.)*

45

Vln. I *pizz.* *p*

Vln. II *pizz.* *p*

Vla. *(cresc.)* *ff*

Vc. *(cresc.)* *ff*

48

Vln. I

f

Vln. II

f

Vla.

Vc.

meno f

meno f

pizz.

mf

pizz.

mf

51

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

57

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

ff

ff

3

Measures 57-59. Vln. I and II have a forte (*ff*) dynamic. Vla. has a triplet in measure 57. Vc. has a triplet in measure 57. The key signature has one flat and the time signature is 4/4.

60

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

f

f

Measures 60-61. Vln. I and II have a forte (*f*) dynamic. Vla. and Vc. have a forte (*f*) dynamic. The key signature has one flat and the time signature is 4/4.

62

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

3

3

Measures 62-64. Vln. I and II have a forte (*f*) dynamic. Vla. and Vc. have a forte (*f*) dynamic. The key signature has one flat and the time signature is 4/4.

65

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

mp

f

3

2/4

9/16

4/4

70

Vln. I

p arco

subito f

Vln. II

mf

subito f arco

Vla.

p

subito f arco

Vc.

p

subito f

75

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

pizz.

mp

p

mf

p

Measures 75-77. Vln. I and II are in 7/16 and 6/16 time signatures. Vla. and Vc. are in 12/16 and 16/16 time signatures. Vln. I has a pizz. marking. Dynamics include mp, p, and mf.

78

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

ff

ff

f

pizz.

f

Measures 78-79. Vln. I and II are in 4/4 time signature. Vla. and Vc. are in 12/4 and 4/4 time signatures. Vln. I and II have ff markings. Vla. has an f marking. Vc. has a pizz. and f marking.

80

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Measures 80-81. Vln. I and II are in 4/4 time signature. Vla. and Vc. are in 12/4 and 4/4 time signatures.

82

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

3

85

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

3

III

PH-129

1949

CLYFFORD STILL

88 **Andante** (♩ = c.80)

Vln. I arco

Vln. II *p cantabile* arco

Vla. arco, sul pont. *pp*

Vc. arco, sul pont. *pp*

94

100

cresc.

cresc.

6

104

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

arco ord.

f legato

3 3

3 6

arco ord. 6 6

mf

106

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

flautando

mp

f *mf* *mp*

112

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

p *p* *pp* *pp*

118

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

p

mf
arco ord.

p

mf
arco ord.

mf

124

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

mp

p

p

p

p

128

rit.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

ppp

ppp

ppp

ppp

IV

Landscape at Stanton Street

1971

WILLEM DE KOONING

Lento (♩ = c.60)

132

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

136

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

140

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

144

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

f

mf

sf p

pizz arco

sf p

pizz arco

f

gliss.

pizz arco

sf p sub.

sf

p sub.

148

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

p

nail pizz.

arco

3/4

153

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

mf

f

mf sub.

mf

f

mf sub.

mf

f

mf sub.

mf

f

mf sub.

5/4

158

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

The musical score is written for four instruments: Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Violoncello. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat), and the time signature is 3/4. The score consists of five measures. In measures 158 and 159, the Violin I and II parts play a descending half-note scale (G4, F4, E4, D4) with a crescendo hairpin, while the Viola and Violoncello parts play a descending half-note scale (C4, B3, A3, G3) with a decrescendo hairpin. In measure 160, the Violin I and II parts play a half-note chord (G4, F4) with a decrescendo hairpin, while the Viola and Violoncello parts play a half-note chord (C4, B3). In measure 161, the Violin I and II parts play a half-note chord (G4, F4) with a decrescendo hairpin, while the Viola and Violoncello parts play a half-note chord (C4, B3). In measure 162, the Violin I and II parts play a half-note chord (G4, F4) with a decrescendo hairpin, while the Viola and Violoncello parts play a half-note chord (C4, B3). The dynamics are marked as *mp* (mezzo-piano) in measure 158, *p* (piano) in measure 159, and *pp* (pianissimo) in measure 160.

mp *p* *pp*

mp *p* *pp*

mp *p* *pp*

mp *p* *pp*