

# String Quartet No. 2

*Etudes*

Karim Al-Zand

(2002)



## PROGRAM NOTE:

The piece has the subtitle 'Etudes' since each movement forms a study of a single string technique. The movements' descriptive titles have double meanings: they refer to both the technique being used and to an instrument which the ensemble as a whole evokes.

*Sourdine* is an 18th century Italian 'pocket' violin. The body of the instrument was smaller than the regular violin and it had a relatively soft sound—the word *sordo* literally means 'mute' in Italian. *Sordino*, as a musical indication, refers to a device which dampens the sound of an instrument, a mute. In the first movement the quartet uses mutes throughout, both the common orchestral type and a softer 'practice' variety.

*Arpeggione* is the name of an early 19th century instrument which was a hybrid of guitar and cello: it had six strings and frets but was played with a bow. The instrument was short-lived, perhaps because it was quite difficult to play and had a relatively small dynamic range. The only well-known piece written for this instrument is a Sonata by Schubert—the so-called 'Arpeggione' Sonata—which is now usually performed on cello. One strength of the arpeggione, and the source of its name, was its facility with chord-like passages played in a 'broken' fashion, rapidly articulated. The second movement focuses on this string-crossing arpeggio technique.

*Armonica* was the name given by Benjamin Franklin to one of his musical inventions: a mechanized version of the glass harmonica. The glass harmonica is an instrumental form of the wine-glass trick. A thin, delicate pitch can be produced by rubbing the rims of graduated glass bowls in a circular motion. The third movement uses the distinctive sound of string harmonics to create a soft, glassy texture.

Of the four instruments, *Guitarra* is the only one still in common use. This last movement uses plucked strings (*pizzicato*) to evoke the sound of the guitar.

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Premiere performance: *String Quartet No.2* 'Etudes' was written for the Flux Quartet (Tom Chiu and Jesse Mills, violins, Max Mandel, viola, and Darrett Adkins, cello) and premiered at the Rothko Chapel, Houston, TX on April 28 2002.

## DURATION:

- |   |        |
|---|--------|
| 1. Slowly; rustling [ <i>Sordina</i> ]          | 2' 30" |
| 2. Moderately; shimmering [ <i>Arpeggione</i> ] | 2' 15" |
| 3. Slowly; delicate [ <i>Armonica</i> ]         | 3' 15" |
| 4. Quickly; humorous [ <i>Guitarra</i> ]        | 3'     |

TOTAL ca. 11'



# String Quartet No. 2

## *Etudes*

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# 1.

Slowly; rustling, breathy ♩ = 76

suddenly swiftly (♩ = 92)

practice mute sul tasto *almost imperceptible* *pppp* *wispy*

practice mute sul tasto *almost imperceptible* *pppp* *wispy*

mute (normal) *ppp* <> <> *sim.* *punta d'arco*

mute (normal) *pizz.* *ppp* *punta d'arco*

Detailed description: This system contains the first four staves of the musical score. The first two staves are for the Violin I and Violin II parts, both in treble clef. The third staff is for the Viola part in alto clef. The fourth staff is for the Cello and Double Bass parts in bass clef. The music begins with a slow, breathy section marked 'Slowly; rustling, breathy' and '♩ = 76'. The Violin parts use 'practice mute sul tasto' and play 'almost imperceptible' notes. The Viola and Cello/Double Bass parts play a simple accompaniment. The section then transitions to a 'suddenly swiftly' section marked '♩ = 92'. The Violin parts play a rapid, 'wispy' sixteenth-note passage. The Viola and Cello/Double Bass parts continue their accompaniment, with the Cello/Double Bass part using 'punta d'arco' and 'pizz.'.

a tempo

as before

*pppp* *wispy*

*pppp* *wispy*

*sim.* *punta d'arco*

*pizz.* *punta d'arco*

Detailed description: This system contains the second four staves of the musical score, starting at measure 6. The instrumentation and dynamics are consistent with the first system. The 'a tempo' section continues with the same 'Slowly; rustling, breathy' character. The 'suddenly swiftly' section continues with the same rapid, 'wispy' sixteenth-note passage in the Violin parts. The Viola and Cello/Double Bass parts continue their accompaniment, with the Cello/Double Bass part using 'punta d'arco' and 'pizz.'.

Slightly Slower (♩ = 60)

11 *tr<sup>b</sup>* *n* *ord. (trem.) whispering ppp*

*tr<sup>a</sup>* *n* *ord. (trem.) whispering ppp*

*IV pp* *in the background*

*mute off p* *singing; with rubato mp* *p*

15 *smoothly tr<sup>b</sup>* *no cresc.*

*smoothly tr<sup>b</sup>* *no cresc.*

*no cresc.*

*pp* *p* *mp* *p* *cresc.*

19 *tr<sup>b</sup>* *sempre ppp*

*tr<sup>b</sup>* *sempre ppp*

*sempre pp*

*mf sub.pp* *p*

24

*intensifying*  
*cresc. poco a poco*  
*mf*

*intensifying*  
*cresc. poco a poco*  
*mf*

*tr*  
*cresc. poco a poco*  
*mf*

*sempre p*

Tempo I

as before

28

*sul tasto*  
*tr*  
*sub. pppp*

*sul tasto*  
*tr*  
*sub. pppp*

*ppp <> sim.*

*mute pizz.*  
*ppp*

*punta d'arco*

33

*fading away*  
*p*  
*molto*  
*pppp*  
*ppp*  
*n*

*fading away*  
*p*  
*molto*  
*pppp*  
*ppp*  
*n*

*pp*  
*n*

*pp*  
*n*

[sordina]

## 2.

Moderately; shimmering, lush ♩ = 92

First system of musical notation (measures 1-4). The score is in 4/4 time and consists of four staves: two treble clefs, a bass clef, and a double bass clef. The music features a shimmering, lush texture with triplets and slurs. Dynamics include *ppp* and *pp*. Performance instructions include "(normal) mute" and "(v)".

Second system of musical notation (measures 5-8). The score continues with four staves. Dynamics include *pp*, *p*, and *mp*. Performance instructions include "mute off".

Third system of musical notation (measures 9-12). The score continues with four staves. Dynamics include *mf* and *mp*. Performance instructions include "emphasize top notes".

as a single gesture

10

Musical score for measures 10-13, featuring four staves (treble, alto, tenor, and bass clefs). The music consists of eighth-note triplets. Measure 10 starts with a dynamic of *poco f*. Measure 11 has *f*. Measure 12 has *mf*. Measure 13 has *mf*. Performance instructions include "emphasize top notes" in measures 10, 11, and 13. A large slur covers measures 10 through 13.

13

Musical score for measures 13-16, featuring four staves. Measure 13 has *f*. Measure 14 has *mf*. Measure 15 has *f*. Measure 16 has *f* and *decesc.*. Performance instructions include "emphasize top notes" in measures 13 and 14. A large slur covers measures 13 through 16.

gradually subsiding

16

Musical score for measures 16-19, featuring four staves. Measure 16 has *mp*. Measure 17 has *p*. Measure 18 has *mf* and *decesc.*. Measure 19 has *p*. Performance instructions include "gradually subsiding" above the first staff. A large slur covers measures 16 through 19.

19

*mp* *poco cresc.* *mf* III II

*mp* *poco cresc.* *mf*

*mp* *poco cresc.* *mf*

*mp* *poco cresc.* *mf*

22

*p* *f* *p* *p* *f* *p* *mf* *f*

*sempre p*

*p* *f* *p* *mf* *f*

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

25

*ff* *violently* III II 0 I

*f* *sub p* *f* *sub p*

*ff* *violently* *f* *sub p*

*ff* *violently* *f* *sub p*

28

*mp* *sempre p* *mp*

31

*mf* *mf* *mf* *mp*

34

*mp* *pp* *p* *ppp*

*quicksilver* *sul pont.* *p* *quicksilver* *sul pont.* *p*

37

ord. *mp* *mf*

ord. *mp* *mf*

*mp* *mf*

*mp* *mf*

40

*f* *ff* *sub p*

*f* *ff* *sub p* *cresc. poco a poco*

*f* *ff* *sub p*

*f* *ff* *sub p* *cresc. poco a poco*

IV III II III

*violently* *violently*

43

*cresc. poco a poco*

*cresc. poco a poco*

46

*ff sub.pp* *molto cresc.*

*ff sub.pp* *molto cresc.*

*ff sub.pp* *molto cresc.*

*ff sub.pp* *molto cresc.*

48

*fff* *sparkling* *p = f*

*fff* *sparkling* *p = f*

*fff* *f* (harm. gliss.) (III) *let ring*

*fff* *p* *[arpeggione]*

## 3.

Slowly; delicate, ethereal  $\text{♩} = 66$ 

Violin I: *fp*, *still*

Violin II: *fp*, *still*

Cello/Double Bass: *fp*, *still*, *sempre p*

Lower staff: *fp*, *still*, *sempre p*

Violin I: *sempre p*

Violin II: *singing*, *mp*

Cello/Double Bass: *sim.*, *singing*, *mp*

Lower staff: *singing*, *mp*

Violin I: *flashing*, *f*, *p*, *pulsating*

Violin II: *flashing*, *f*, *p*, *pulsating*

Cello/Double Bass: *flashing*, *f*, *p*, *pulsating*

Lower staff: *flashing*, *f*, *p*, *pulsating*

Annotations: *as one motion*, *Slower; softly rocking*,  $\text{♩} = 48$ , *dovetail with VLN. II*

13

musical score for measures 13-16. It features four staves: two treble clefs and two bass clefs. The top staff has a circled measure number '13'. The second staff includes the instruction 'dovetail with VLN. I' and a dynamic marking 'mf'. The music consists of various note values, rests, and slurs across the measures.

17

musical score for measures 17-20. It features four staves: two treble clefs and two bass clefs. The top staff has a circled measure number '17'. The music continues with complex rhythmic patterns and slurs.

21

musical score for measures 21-24. It features four staves: two treble clefs and two bass clefs. The top staff has a circled measure number '21'. Dynamic markings 'f' and 'mf' are present in the first two staves. The bottom two staves include dynamic markings 'mf' and 'p'. The music concludes with various note values and rests.

Tempo I (♩ = 66)

(25)

*f*

*cresc.*

*f*

*cresc.*

*f*

*cresc.*

*f*

(29)

*p*

*mp*

*sim.*

*mp*

Slower (♩ = 48)

(32)

as before

(harmonic gliss.)

*f*

*mf*

*f*

*mf*

*p*

*f*

*mf*

*p*

*mf*

36

*f* *mf* *f* *tr* *ppp* *f* *ppp* *f* *ppp*

IV III

3 3 3 3

40

poco rit. - - - -

*p* *n* *n* *n* *pizz.* *p*

8<sup>va</sup> 8<sup>va</sup> 8<sup>va</sup>

3 3 3 3

[armonica]

## 4.

Quickly; humorous, lively ♩. = 96 (♩ = 288)

Violin I: [bow down] pizz. *pp*, *p*, *cresc.*, *mp*

Violin II: [bow down] pizz. *pp*, *p*, *cresc.*, *mp*

Viola: [bow down] *p*, *cresc.*, *mp*

Cello/Double Bass: [bow down] *p*, *cresc.*, *mp*

Violin I: *mf*, *cresc.*, *f*

Violin II: *mf*, *cresc.*, *f*

Viola: *mf*, *cresc.*, *f*

Cello/Double Bass: *mf*, *cresc.*, *f*

Violin I: *playfully, prominent*, *mp*, *cresc.*

Violin II: *playfully*, *p*, *cresc.*

Viola: *playfully*, *p*, *cresc.*

Cello/Double Bass: *playfully*, *p*, *cresc.*

17

mf mp mf f mp mf p f mp mf f mp

22

poco f mf scampering sub p f scampering sub p scampering sub p scampering f sub p

28

confidently mp mf mp mf cresc. p mf poco f mp confidently mf poco f mp confidently mp mf cresc.

34

musical score for measures 34-38, featuring four staves with dynamic markings *f*, *pp*, *p*, *cresc.*, and *mp*, and the instruction *bouncing*.

39

musical score for measures 39-43, featuring four staves with dynamic markings *mp*, *mf*, *f*, and *ff*, and the instruction *forcefully*.

44

musical score for measures 44-48, featuring four staves with the instruction *bring out top note* and fingering numbers *I* and *III*.

49

*furtive* *as before*  
*pp*

*furtive* *prominent*  
*pp* *ppoco* *p*

*furtive* *as before*  
*pp*

*furtive* *as before*  
*pp*

55

*mf* *pp*

*mf* *pp* *p*

*mf* *pp*

60

*sharply*  
*mp*

*mp* *p* *mp*

*mp* *pp* *mp*

*mp*

65 **Tranquil**  
(same tempo)

*mf* *f* *mf* *f* *as an echo* *p* *as an echo* *p* *as an echo* *p*

71 *ord.* *p* *suddenly insistent* *poco f* *p*

*mf* *p*

76 *poco f* *p* *mf* *p* *mf*

81

musical score for measures 81-85, featuring four staves (treble, alto, tenor, and bass clefs). The music includes dynamic markings: *poco f*, *p*, and *poco f* in the tenor staff, and *p* and *mf* in the bass staff.

86

musical score for measures 86-90, featuring four staves. The music includes dynamic markings: *cresc.*, *mp*, *mf*, *f*, and *sub mf* in the treble staff; *intensify*, *mp*, *cresc.*, *f*, and *sub mf* in the alto staff; *intensify*, *mp*, *cresc.*, *mf*, *f*, and *sub mf* in the tenor staff; and *intensify*, *mp*, *cresc.*, *f*, and *sub mf* in the bass staff. A Roman numeral *IV* is present in the bass staff.

91

musical score for measures 91-95, featuring four staves. The music includes dynamic markings: *cresc.* and *f* in the treble staff; *cresc.* and *f* in the alto staff; *cresc.* and *f* in the tenor staff; and *cresc.* and *f* in the bass staff. The phrase *with abandon* is written above the treble and alto staves.

96

*energetically*  
*ff* *mf* *mp*  
*ff* *mp* *mf* *prominent*  
*with abandon* *ff* *p* *mp* *energetically* (alternate ↑↓)  
*with abandon* *ff* *sub pp* *mp* *energetically*

101

(alternate ↑↓) *mp*  
(alternate ↑↓) *mp* *mf*  
(sim.) *mf* *mp*  
*f* *mp*

105

(sim.) *mp* *mf*  
(sim.) *mp* *mp*  
*mf* *mp*  
*f* *mp*

109

Musical score for measures 109-113. The score is written for four staves: Treble 1, Treble 2, Bass 1, and Bass 2. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The time signature changes from 7/8 to 6/8. Dynamics include *sub p*, *mf*, *f*, *sub p*, and *mp*. A *(sim.)* marking is present above the Treble 2 staff in measure 113.

114

Musical score for measures 114-117. The score is written for four staves: Treble 1, Treble 2, Bass 1, and Bass 2. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The time signature is 6/8. Dynamics include *mp*, *f*, and *mf*. A *(sim.)* marking is present above the Bass 1 staff in measure 114.

118

Musical score for measures 118-122. The score is written for four staves: Treble 1, Treble 2, Bass 1, and Bass 2. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The time signature changes from 7/8 to 6/8. Dynamics include *ff*, *f*, and *ff*. Performance instructions include *ossia*, *rattling (pull off)*, *(alternate ↑↓)*, and *vigorously*. A *ff* dynamic is also present at the end of the piece.

122

wild  
ff  
wild  
ff  
wild  
wild

127

con tutta forza  
mf  
ff  
slow arp. coyly  
pp  
con tutta forza  
mf  
ff  
slow arp. coyly  
pp  
sub p molto cresc.  
p  
gliss.  
ossia  
sub p molto cresc.  
ff  
p  
gliss.

[guitarra]











