



grip

for string quartet



Ryan Carter

(2006)

grip was commissioned by the Calder Quartet, with generous support from the Carlsbad Music Festival, the La Jolla Music Society, the Harry and Alice Eiler Foundation, and a Creative Connections Award from Meet the Composer.

grip has been honored with the 2007 Lee Ettelson Award.

grip is dedicated to the Calder Quartet.

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Program notes

For some time, my work has been concerned with rhythmic interactions between layers of sound. Recently, I have decided to focus on rhythmic states of individual sound layers. I classify all sounds in four broad categories: continuous, periodic, gestural, and random. A single sustained pitch – though it may vary in timbre or dynamics – is considered “continuous”. A rhythm with a regular pulse or subdivision is defined as “periodic”. A layer of sound that avoids any regular pulse but expresses a deliberate intent (it may speed up or slow down, for example) is called “gestural”. Finally, a rhythm that sounds completely chaotic is classified as “random”. Gray areas exist between these categories and provide material to explore in *grip*. Of course, other parameters of composition are tied to rhythm, but I suspect such connections extend beyond the scope of these program notes or the patience of its readers.

In more abstract terms, *grip* is about degrees of control and group dynamics. While the first two rhythmic states (continuous and periodic) tend to produce music that is fairly straightforward in terms of rhythm and ensemble, the last two states (gestural and random) open up many more possibilities. Performers are left to fend for themselves, balancing an autonomy that may border on self-indulgence with a broader responsibility to the whole ensemble. In *grip*, processes become windows into our perceptions and tendencies.

Performance notes

- SV = senza vibrato
- s.t. = sul tasto
- s.p. = sul ponticello
- m.s.p. = molto sul ponticello
- ord. → s.p. = gradually move from ordinario to sul ponticello
- 1/2 c.l.t. = half col legno tratto (bow with equal portions hair and wood)
- c.l.t. = col legno tratto (bow with the wood)
- c.l.b. = col legno battuto
- arco → c.l.t. → c.l.b. = gradually move from arco to col legno tratto to col legno battuto (turning the bow and eventually tapping rather than dragging)



= three quarter-tones sharp



= one quarter-tone sharp



= one quarter-tone flat



= three quarter-tones flat



= slightly lower than one semitone flat

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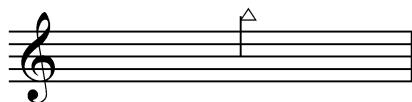
grip is dedicated to the Calder Quartet.



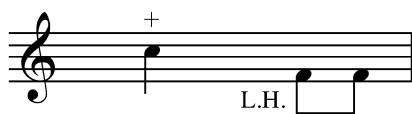
= natural harmonics are indicated by the sounding pitch



= artificial harmonics are indicated by the fingered pitch



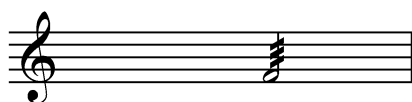
= highest note possible



= left hand pizzicato (may be notated either way)



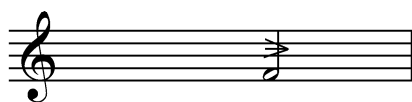
= allow a very brief silence and change of bow between two notes



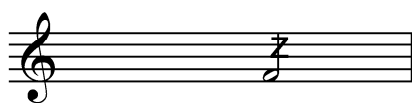
= unmeasured tremolo (should be fast and regular)



= accelerating tremolo (this may elide with a notated acceleration)



= decelerating tremolo (this may elide with a notated deceleration)



= random tremolo (change bow speed randomly - the result should sound like a random rhythm on one note)



= conventional glissandi are notated with a slur and line (normally, the word *gliss.* does not appear)



= noteheads are excluded from glissandi that continue through tied durations



= smooth glissando while rearticulating (indicated by the absence of a slur and the presence of articulation markings in every case except for the pizzicato glissandi beginning in m. 246)



= tied rhythms during a rearticulated glissando include a tie, but do not include a second articulation marking (this glissando involves three distinct articulations)



= during a long glissando, it may be necessary to change bow (do so as subtly as possible)



= a glissando may also begin with a tied rhythm (the glissando begins immediately and continues smoothly - linearly, not exponentially - through the final articulation)



= the word *gliss.* appears occasionally as a point of clarification



= a dashed slur indicates no bow change



= diminuendo al niente

dimin.-----

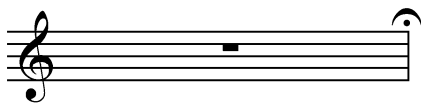
= whereas changes in bow technique are indicated by solid arrows, changes in tempo or dynamics are indicated by dashed lines

coordinated rit.-----

= all parts remain aligned during a "coordinated" tempo change



= a dashed barline indicates a dislocation of vertical alignments (parts will no longer align as written in the score - players do not need to pay **any** attention to ensemble)

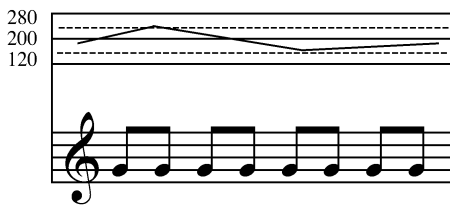


= a fermata over a barline indicates a brief pause before continuing

- all rhythms should be interpreted strictly unless otherwise indicated (e.g. m. 245)

- metronome markings are normally given in quarter note or dotted quarter note values, as well as eighth note values (this is to clarify tempo changes from compound to simple meters, or vice versa)

- during any meter change, the lowest subdivision (normally an eighth note) remains the same



= beginning in m. 134, the tempo of each part is graphed on a second staff (the graph represents a tempo in eighth notes - these graphs may be interpreted somewhat flexibly, but as a result parts will not align as written)

- the top line of the graph represents ♪ = 280

- the upper dashed line represents ♪ = 240

- the middle line represents ♪ = 200

- the lower dashed line represents ♪ = 160

- the lowest line represents ♪ = 120

grip

Ryan Carter (ASCAP)

Lurching ♩ = 75 (♩ = 150) change bow as needed, but always as imperceptibly as possible
legato bowing through m. 24

Violin I (c. 6")
Violin II (c. 6")
Viola (c. 6")
Cello (c. 6")

5
Violin I (c. 4")
Violin II
Viola
Cello

repeat 4x - 8x (or more, if necessary)

To achieve this rate of beating, the A_b must be slightly flat. (beating at 5 cps)

use this repeat to stabilize rate of beating

10
Violin I (c. 7")
Violin II
Viola
Cello

wait for beating to stabilize before adding Vln. I, which is rhythmically coordinated to Vc. beating

arco → 1/2 c.l.t. → c.l.b.

14

arco (c. 3rd)

arco → 1/2 c.l.t. → c.l.b.

mp

< mf > ppp

mp

III

< f > pp

ff

ord.

sim.

m.s.p.

p

18

arco

< p

mp

ff

< p

III

p

< ff > p

ord.

sim.

ff

21

arco → 1/2 c.l.t. → c.l.b.

arco

mp

ff

p

(highest note possible on D string)

f

m.s.p.

ord. arco

23 *poco accel.* arco *mp* *f* *ff* *f* *ff*

1/2 c.l.t. → c.l.b. 1/2 c.l.t. → c.l.b. arco s.p. → ord. s.p. → ord. s.t. → ord.

$\text{♩} = 60 - 68 (\text{♩} = 180 - 204)$

26 m.s.p. ord. ord. → m.s.p. s.p. → ord. s.p. → ord. s.p. → ord. s.p. → ord. ord. → m.s.p. m.s.p. 1/2 c.l.t. → ord. arco ord. m.s.p. → ord.

29 ord. m.s.p. → ord. ord. s.p. → ord. s.p. → ord. s.p. → ord. ord. → m.s.p. → ord.