

Diatonic Phrygian Tetrachord

for Violin and Chamber Orchestra



Bill Robinson

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July 20—August 6, orchestrated Oct. 2-10, 2014

Duration: about 7 minutes 50 seconds

for Jim Waddelow and the Meredith Sinfonietta

On July 6, 2014, WNYC broadcast “The World’s Most-Used Musical Sequence”, which was an hour-long compilation of musical excerpts demonstrating the use of the Diatonic Phrygian Tetrachord. NPR followed up with five minutes on *Weekend Edition* on July 20. Despite the forbidding academic name, this series of four notes, with many modifications, has been used for centuries by musicians all over the world.

The basic sequence is four descending notes with the pattern whole step, whole step, half step. On a piano keyboard, one example would be the four white notes going down starting from E. Retrograde, it would be B C D E; inverted it would be E F# G# A. Another type of

modification is increasing the intervals, such as to major third, major third, minor third. When harmonized in the manner frequently found in flamenco music, it is known as the Andalusian Cadence. Other kind of modifications are altering the order (such as the opening notes of Beethoven’s Fifth), or interposing notes while the sequence remains relatively stressed.

This composition uses the Diatonic Phrygian Tetrachord both unmodified and highly modified in pretty much every way I could think of, frequently with several modifications simultaneously, in a reasonably contemporary idiom. I will leave it to musicologists yet unborn to deal with the analytical details, as I have some pride in not having opened a music theory book since 1975, and I don’t want to have to look things up.

The composition started as the middle movement of *Three Pieces for Violin and Piano*, written for Eric Pritchard. This orchestration for solo violin and chamber orchestra fits the instrumentation of the Meredith Sinfonietta, a student ensemble at Meredith College conducted by Jim Waddelow.

Accidentals hold through the measure and not beyond, and do not refer to other octaves.

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Adagio andalusia (♩=74)

1 Flute

2 (dbl. Picc.)

1 Oboe

2 Oboe

1 Horn in F

2 Horn in F

Adagio andalusia (♩ = 74)

Solo Violin

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Violoncello

Double Bass

[illegible]

25

1

Fl.

2

Fl. 2

mp

mp

Ob.

1

2

mp

mp

Hn.

1

2

mp

29

Solo

mp

25

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

mp

Vc.

25

D.B.

mp

DPT

The musical score is written for a symphony orchestra. It consists of 12 staves. The first staff is for Flute 1 (Fl. 1), the second for Flute 2 (Fl. 2), the third for Oboe 1 (Ob. 1), the fourth for Oboe 2 (Ob. 2), the fifth for Horn 1 (Hn. 1), the sixth for Horn 2 (Hn. 2), the seventh for Solo, the eighth for Violin I (Vln. I), the ninth for Violin II (Vln. II), the tenth for Viola (Vla.), the eleventh for Violoncello (Vc.), and the twelfth for Double Bass (D.B.). The score is in 4/4 time. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The dynamics are marked as mezzo-piano (mp). The Solo part has a 29-measure rest. The DPT (Dolby Digital Processing Technology) label is present above the Solo part.

4

37

This musical score page contains measures 37 through 44. The instrumentation includes Flute 1 and 2, Oboe 1 and 2, Horn 1 and 2, Solo, Violin I and II, Viola, Violoncello, and Double Bass. The key signature has one flat (B-flat major or D minor), and the time signature changes from 3/4 to 4/4 to 2/4 and back to 4/4. The score features various musical notations such as rests, notes, beams, slurs, and dynamic markings like *mp* (mezzo-piano) and *mf* (mezzo-forte). A 'solo' marking is present for the Oboe 1 part in measure 37. The Solo part has a complex melodic line with many sixteenth and thirty-second notes. The string parts provide harmonic support with sustained notes and moving lines. The woodwinds have more melodic and harmonic roles, with Flute 2 and Horn 2 having specific markings in later measures.

6

57

60

DPT

66

solo

Fl. 1

Fl. 2

Ob. 1

Ob. 2

Hn. 1

Hn. 2

Solo

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

D.B.

57

60

66

pp

ff

mp

p

mf

69 74

1
Fl.

2

1
Ob.

2

1
Hn.

2

Solo

74

69
Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

69
D.B.

mp *mf*

p *mp*

p cresc. *(mp)* *mf*

mp *mf*

mp *mf*

mp *mf*

p cresc. *(mp)* *mf*

p *mp* *mf*

8

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

12

120

1

Fl.

2

1

Ob.

2

1

Hn.

2

Solo

120

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

120

D.B.