

String Quartet No. 3

...the mood of an autumn afternoon when the weather is clear
but the shadows are longer than in summer.

My third quartet was begun in 1985 at the request of Brian Lloyd who wanted a work that would include African-American tunes. Several drafts were laid aside. Then, in 1992, the material finally coalesced into an integral three-movement cycle uniting diverse harmonic and rhythmic procedures.

The first movement is based on a traditional African-American Lament used at funerals and solemn occasions:

“I stood outside the gate
They would not let me in,
I prayed to my good Lord
To cleanse me of all sin.”

Varied tonal settings of the tune, in C major, are conflicted with non-tonal episodes. An “expanding” phrase in F major initiates a coda that includes, as a peroration, another setting of the *Lament*.

The second movement, *Games*, dramatizes the evolution of a scale of nine and then of eight chromatic tones derived from non-tonal material of the first movement. Playful and energetic scale games lead to a triumphant setting of the tune “I Believe I’ll Go Back Home” (theme of The Prodigal Son), ultimately contradicted with a mechanically generated disintegration- *se détacher du jeu*.

The last movement, *Hymn*, begins with settings of “In Bright Mansions Above.” Leave-taking involves a gradual transformation and then an irrevocable dissolution of the hymn.

I. Lament.....p. 3 10+ minutes

II. Games.....p. 16 8 minutes

III. Hymn.....p. 46 7'41"

Performance time: 26-27 minutes

for Brian Lloyd
STRING QUARTET No. 3

I. Lament

Thomas L. Read
1992

Adagio ♩ = 69, circa

Cello

sotto voce, espressivo

5

Vln. II

sotto voce, espressivo

Vc.

9

Vln. II

sotto voce, espressivo

Vla.

Vc.

13

Vln. I

pp *p* *p*

Vln. II

p

Vla.

p

Vc.

p

16

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

20

Poco rallent. A tempo

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

p

pp

espressivo

24

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

p

espressivo