

*another time, variations for string quartet*: program note

Although the title doesn't make this clear, *another time* is my sixth string quartet. After my third quartet (called *String Quartet 3*), I discontinued numbers as titles and opted for descriptive words or phrases. The fourth quartet is called *Arrivi* and the fifth is called *Camino Azul*.

*another time* is an allusion to the structure of this work. The quartet is, as the rest of the title states, a set of variations. However I have not used the traditional method of generating variations, that is, a group of movements or sections of music all related to an initial theme. Instead, the equivalent of an opening theme is the seventh movement, called "source". Sitting right in the middle of the piece, this "source" is in fact the source material for all of the other 13 variations, beginning with the very first movement. Except for the 14<sup>th</sup> and last movement, "release", every variation is related to the source movement in that it is 'carved out' of the source. Michelangelo is believed to have said, "Every block of stone has a statue inside it, and it is the task of the sculptor to discover it." This is what I have done with these variations: the 'source' is the block of musical stone and each variation is a unique carving out of that material in that I literally removed material from the source movement to create each musical 'statue'. In contrast, the 14<sup>th</sup> movement is not based on the whole 'musical stone' but rather from only a small fragment of it. The last movement is literally 'released' from the stone itself and thus the piece can find its conclusion.

This variation technique is, as far as I can tell, something new. But without knowing all variation sets ever written, of course I can't be sure about this assertion. However, I have become fascinated with the idea and since writing *another time*, I've composed a set of variations for solo piano called *Amethyst Variations* using the same technique. I'm expecting that there's much more to be mined from this quarry.

Joel Hoffman (February 2013)