

Départs
program note

Départs is a work in four completely symmetrical and equal parts. Each of the four parts contains 32 bars except the fourth and final part, which has one extra bar. Essentially, all four parts contain exactly the same music but with certain differences among them.

To begin with, parts one and three are one octave higher than parts two and four. The other main difference is that only part four has all the notes. In parts one, two and three, some of the notes have been erased—and there are different erasures in each part. In parts one, two and three the notes are replaced by rests and the erased music (the silences) creates a new set of musical patterns and phrases that are not present in the one part (four) where all the notes are there. (In order to understand this relationship, it is only necessary to compare each of the four parts to the others and the plan of the piece will be very clear.) For this reason, it is important to realize that the rests in parts one, two and three are not pauses but in fact are silent replacements for sounding notes. As such, they have to be ‘played’ as much as the notes have to be played. This means that the violist must not only count out the rests exactly, he/she must remain alert and attentive to the sound in the hall as the silences are ‘played’ and consider these silences as equal in value to the notes in terms of the production of musical meaning. The musical meaning of the silences can be interpreted in many ways, just as notes can be interpreted in many ways. One could, for example, remain perfectly still and motionless during the silences to convey to the listener/viewer that the silences contain temporal tension just as notes do. Or one could move silently in such a way as to convey the perceived phrase structure. Furthermore, in parts one, two and three, the notes themselves should be played in such a way as to frame and contextualize the silences, and the silences should be played in such a way as to frame and contextualize the notes. The composer is open to any sort of interpretation of the silences (as well as the notes) on one condition – that they are conceived as music and not ‘dead’ time. The title (“departures” in English) could therefore be interpreted as a study in how the present is contextualized by both its future and its past.

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