

Dave Soldier

String Quartet #1 opus 3 with percussion

original version for amplified string quartet and trap drums
or alternate version for acoustic quartet and hand percussion

“The Impossible”

1. Open Hydrant
2. Walking on the Third Rail
3. Ron visits the Polymer Lounge
4. For His Bad Self
5. She put my head under the water

composed in 1987, premiered 1988
this transcription April 16, 2011 version

about 25 minutes

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Performance notes for “The Impossible Quartet”

This can be performed either by an amplified quartet with an American style “trap” drum set – i.e., rock or rhythm & blues style drums; or by a normal acoustic string quartet with quieter hand percussion.

The piece is highly influenced by rhythm and blues, and directly quotes James Brown’s *Papa’s Got a Brand New Bag* in the 4th movement, as well as hip hop, the sounds of the New York City subways, and children’s street games.

The guitarist, cellist, and drummer *must* know the James Brown original – the cellist can deviate from it at will, but must know the overall structure of the melody, and can quote from it or not. There is an untimed “cadenza” for the cello on the last phrase.

Each player has *improvised solos*, and these are marked by “hatches”. The improvisations must relate to the surrounding material, but you have otherwise freedom to play what you would like. In some cases I place some advice on the approach to the solo. One overall piece of advice is to leave breaths, i.e. silences between phrases, or it will be hard to build in more tensions. Consider that leaving breath is natural for wind instruments that developed the rhythm and blues solo traditions – for inspiration you may like to listen to saxophone players like Maceo Parker and Hank Crawford. In some cases I write chord changes above the improvised sections.

For open repeat solos, just know who cues and make sure they don’t go on too long. Depending on context, the other players can make impromptu variations on their repeated parts, particularly if the soloist is going on a little too long.

The 1st and 5th movement can both use a recording of kids playing street games in the background. This is a good excuse for someone in the quartet to go outside and record them.

String techniques

There are numerous unusual techniques in this piece, and here are some guidelines. When in doubt, use my 1992 recording by the Soldier String Quartet on *Sojourner Truth* as a guide – but don’t feel trapped by that recording if you have ideas on how to improve on it or add your own personality.

Lines without noteheads are used to indicated microtonal glisses between the pitches that are shown. Don’t worry much about making these exact, they can be expressive sounding glisses that sound satisfying to you.

Speech pitch is indicated by square boxes on the noteheads. Speech pitch imitates spoken inflections, and hence is made of microtonal glissandos. It is played by stopping the string with the left hand over rather than under the instrument, to

enforce intonation that is only approximate. Pinch the string between your thumb and index finger and slide it around the notes indicated to help you to sound like someone speaking or rapping. It helps to think of spoken phrases and to emulate the intonation of them.

The cello has notes in pizzicato sections marked with an "x" notehead. These are percussive and made by *slaps* by the left hand on the neck. They should imitate a snare drum backbeat or a handclap. In pizzicato areas, consider where a "*slap bass*" approach should be used, a classic jazz technique where the strings are plucked hard enough to bounce a bit on the neck.

The second violin and viola also use *slaps* on the neck as marked by an x notehead, which are meant to emulate handclaps. These can be pretty loud and should be, especially for amplified instruments.

Wavy lines over a note means to make a large wobble in the pitch.

The violas's siren imitates a police or ambulance, and use whatever approach you would like including electronics.

"Squealy noise" means imitate the squeak sounds of bad subway brakes.

The end of the first movement and first section of the second imitate a subway. They should be differentiated sounds, with the end of the first out of phase with each other and very ponticello, choosing different notes. The top of the second is everyone together in time, and the amplified strings can use distortion if a "fuzz box" is available.

The guitar chord

The fourth movement has the second violinist playing a single chord (an E9) on the guitar for the James Brown number. For amplified quartet it should be an electric guitar, for the acoustic quartet, an acoustic guitar is fine. Of course this can be played by the percussionist instead, or by the other violinist if the second takes the first's part. It could even be played by a guest who plays the guitar, who in this case sits on stage of the entire piece to play about 3 measures of music of one chord.

Drums and percussion

The drum kit uses the snare on the middle line, bass drum on lowest line, cymbals on space above upper line and toms in lower line. The cowbell near the end is indicated. My experience is that drummers prefer this kind of notation more than writing out every note. Essentially any kind of drum kit with any drums can work so long as the drummer has worked on the parts.

For the acoustic quartet, quieter hand percussion is used. At this time and place, the best preference for a basic drum is probably the flamenco style cajon, which has developed as an instrument over the past twenty years and can hold all of

the patterns of the drum kit. This is based on the Cuban cajon used in rumba, but they have added a snare to the inside of the box. Nevertheless, the instrument is not known universally and it is impossible to predict if it will continue to be well established, and if so, where. Thus percussionists can choose their own instruments, but simply must be aware of the different patterns required, and for that listening to the original recording is a good guide.

In addition to the cajon, a hand percussionist requires cymbals and a cowbell for the last movement. A hi-hat may be useful, and a boxing ring bell is nice. Bongos are useful as long as they can be played quietly to not obscure the strings.

-Dave Soldier NYC April 18, 2011

String Quartet #1 "The Impossible"

2

27

Vln. 1 *mf* still pizz.

Vln. 2

Vla. *mf* still pizz.

Vcl. *f*

D. S.

29

Vln. 1 *f* arco

Vln. 2 *f*

Vla. *f*

Vcl. *p* still pizz.

D. S. *f* funk / rock *mf*

32

sounds of kids playing outside

Vln. 1 *mf*

Vln. 2 *mf*

Vla. *mf*

Vcl. *mf*

D. S.

pp

kids out

36

Vln. 1 *p* *f* *p* *ff*

Vln. 2 *p* *f* *p* *ff*

Vla. *mf* *cantabile* *arco*

Vlc. *p* *f* *p* *ff*

D. S. *mf*

40 **vln 2 solo**

Vln. 1 *f* *solo in the gaps* C7 C7

Vln. 2 *f*

Vla. *pp*

Vlc. *f*

D. S. *f* **funk / rock**

44

Vln. 1 C7 *mp* *ff*

Vln. 2 *mp* *ff*

Vla. *mp* *ff*

Vlc. *mp* *ff*

D. S. *mp* *ff*

String Quartet #1 "The Impossible"

4

48

speech pitch

Vln. 1

G7

f

C7

Vln. 2

Vla.

speech pitch

Vlc.

f

48

melody repeats

D. S.

52

Vln. 1

C7

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

52

D. S.

56

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

56

D. S.

String Quartet #1 "The Impossible"

59

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vcl.

D. S.

mp *ff* *mp*

mp *pizz.* *f*

mp

63

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vcl.

D. S.

tacit

66 vln 2 solo

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vcl.

D. S.

mp *f* *mp* *f*

mp *f* *mp* *f*

pp

pp *mp* *pp* *mp*

String Quartet #1 "The Impossible"

60

Vln. 1 *mp* *f* *mp* *f*

Vln. 2 *f* *f*

Vla. *ff*

Vlc. *ff*

D. S. *pp* *mp* *pp* *mp*

70

74

Vln. 1 *pp* *mp* *pp* *mp* *pp* *mp*

Vln. 2 *pp* *mp* *pp* *mp* *pp* *mp*

Vla. *mf* *cantabile*

Vlc. *pp* *ppp*

D. S. *pp*

78

Vln. 1 *ff*

Vln. 2 *ff* left hand taps on neck

Vla. left hand taps on neck

Vlc. *ff* left hand taps on neck

D. S. *mf* rims only on snare, improv on toms

78

open repeats for 1st vln solo

call & response with yourself *these are the answer phrases*

like this with time, open up structure

82

Vln. 1
griz-zi ly bear griz-zi-ly bear

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

D. S.
add hihat offbeats, continue in same vein

at cue

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.
pizz.

Vlc.
arco

D. S.
funk / rock

86

mf

vln 2 solo

Vln. 1
p

Vln. 2
p

Vla.
arco

Vlc.

D. S.

90

leave space between phrases

String Quartet #1 "The Impossible"

94

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

D. S.

add snare improv patterns

98

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

D. S.

ff

5

102

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

D. S.

squealy noise: subway brakes

squealy noise: subway brakes

squealy noise: subway brakes

squealy noise: subway brakes

noisy snare rolls

funk / rock

f

mf

f

mf

f

mf

106

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

D. S.

110

G7

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

D. S.

114

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

D. S.

choose notes from chord & very strident rhythms are out of phase

#2 Walking on the Third Rail

♩=120

molto ponticello, overtones

ff

molto ponticello, overtones

ff

molto ponticello, overtones

ff

molto ponticello, overtones

ff

molto ponticello, overtones

ff

subway: offbeats on bass drum, snare improv, 16th hi hats

fade out

tacit

ff

String Quartet #1 "The Impossible"

10
118

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

D. S.

119

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

D. S.

120

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

D. S.

p *pp*

p *pp*

ff *pp* *ff*

pp

121

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

D. S.

pp *ff*

122

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

D. S.

pp *ff*

3

123

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

D. S.

ff

String Quartet #1 "The Impossible"

12

124

Vln. 1 *pp*

Vln. 2 *pp*

Vla. *pp*

Vlc. *ff*

D. S. *pp*

125

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc. *ff*

D. S.

126

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc. *pp* *ff*

D. S.

127

Vln. 1 *ff*

Vln. 2 *ff*

Vla. *ff*

Vlc.

127 snare drum solos over same basic pattern

D. S. *ff*

128

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

128

D. S.

129

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

129

D. S.

String Quartet #1 "The Impossible"

14
130

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

D. S.

131

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

D. S.

132

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

D. S.

mf

subway continues

mf

133

Vln. 1 *f* *mf*

Vln. 2 *f* *mf*

Vla. *f* *mf*

Vlc.

D. S.

135

rit.
squealy noise: subway brakes

Vln. 1 *mp* *ff* squealy noise: subway brakes

Vln. 2 *mp* *ff* squealy noise: subway brakes

Vla. *mp* *ff*

Vlc.

D. S. subway breaks

137

G.P. ♩=96

Vln. 1 *f*

Vln. 2 *ff* these phrases with snare drum

Vla. *f*

Vlc.

D. S. *tacit* these phrases with 2nd violin *f*

String Quartet #1 "The Impossible"

16
140

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

D. S.

mf

pizz.

inprov on toms between phrases

142

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

D. S.

add hi hat (foot) on beats, continue toms

144

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

D. S.

String Quartet #1 "The Impossible"

145

145

146

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

D. S.

6

6

6

6

6

6

5

5

5

5

15

6

6

6

6

6

6

Detailed description: This system contains measures 145 and 146. The music is in 6/4 time, which changes to 7/4 in measure 146. The first violin (Vln. 1) plays a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes. The second violin (Vln. 2) plays a rhythmic accompaniment of sixteenth notes, with sixteenth rests in measure 146. The viola (Vla.) plays a steady eighth-note accompaniment. The cello (Vlc.) plays a bass line with long intervals, marked with '5' and '15'. The double bass (D. S.) plays a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes, marked with '6'.

147

147

148

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

D. S.

6

6

5

5

5

5

6

6

6

6

6

6

Detailed description: This system contains measures 147 and 148. The time signature is 7/4. The first violin (Vln. 1) continues its melodic line. The second violin (Vln. 2) has a sixteenth rest in measure 147 and then plays sixteenth notes in measure 148. The viola (Vla.) continues its eighth-note accompaniment. The cello (Vlc.) continues its bass line with long intervals, marked with '5'. The double bass (D. S.) continues its rhythmic pattern, marked with '6'.

148

148

149

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

D. S.

6

6

5

5

5

6

6

6

6

6

6

Detailed description: This system contains measures 148 and 149. The time signature is 10/4. The first violin (Vln. 1) continues its melodic line. The second violin (Vln. 2) has a sixteenth rest in measure 148 and then plays sixteenth notes in measure 149. The viola (Vla.) continues its eighth-note accompaniment. The cello (Vlc.) continues its bass line with long intervals, marked with '5'. The double bass (D. S.) continues its rhythmic pattern, marked with '6'.

String Quartet #1 "The Impossible"

18
149

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

D. S.

151

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

D. S.

152

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

D. S.

String Quartet #1 "The Impossible"

155

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

155

D. S.

157

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

157

D. S.

159

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

159

D. S.

String Quartet #1 "The Impossible"

20

161

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

D. S.

6 6 6 6 6 6

5 5 5 15 15

light fills on cymbals

subito **p**

163

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

D. S.

3 3

5 5 5 15 15

165

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

D. S.

arco

f

3 3 3 3 3 3

♩=100

168

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla. microtonal gliss bluesy, including blues 3rds

Vcl. *f* microtonal gliss

D. S. 168 *tacit* improv on snare rolls and crash cymbals

174

Vln. 1 *mf* microtonal gliss *ff*

Vln. 2 *mf* microtonal gliss *ff*

Vla. *mf*

Vcl. *mf*

D. S. 174

180

Vln. 1 *mf* *ff*

Vln. 2 *mf* *ff*

Vla. *mf*

Vcl. *mf*

D. S. 180 add other drums but remain unstable, leave spaces

String Quartet #1 "The Impossible"

22

186

Vln. 1 *mf*

Vln. 2 *mf*

Vla. *mf*

Vlc. *mf*

D. S.

192

Vln. 1 *ff*

Vln. 2 *ff*

Vla. *ff*

Vlc. *ff*

D. S.

198

Vln. 1 *mp*

Vln. 2 *mp*

Vla. *mp*

Vlc. *mp*

D. S. subway continues *mf*

203

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

D. S.

mp

ff

206

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

D. S.

#3 Ron visits the Polymer Lounge

♩ = 96

209

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

D. S.

mp

f

mp

String Quartet #1 "The Impossible"

24
274

♩ = 96

1st viola solo

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

mf

mf

214

sticks (claves) & rattles

can add bass drum

D. S.

218

♩ = 96

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

improv with lots of glissandos, don't stand out

218

tacit

sticks (claves) & rattles

D. S.

223

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

223

D. S.

String Quartet #1 "The Impossible"

242

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

D. S.

tacit

3rd viola solo
♩ = 96

248

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

D. S.

can add bass drum

252

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

D. S.

256 $\text{♩} = 96$

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

D. S.

vln 2 solo

261 *p*
ad lib gentle melismas

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

D. S.

266

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

266 improvise using both phrases

D. S.

String Quartet #1 "The Impossible"

28

271

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vcl.

D. S.

273

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vcl.

D. S.

to drum kit

punk rock, tile end of movement,
get faster & louder

276

accel. until drum solo

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vcl.

D. S.

viola noise solo

280

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

D. S.

speech pitch solo

an aggressive out-of-tune hard core singer

284

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

D. S.

288

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

D. S.

big percussion solo, up to 90 seconds

#4 For His Bad Self $\text{♩} = 112$

continue noise solo, eventually drop out to drum solo

f

f

String Quartet #1 "The Impossible"

30
293

Vln. 1 *f*

Vln. 2 *f*

Vla.

Vlc.

D. S. *hi-hat in triplets*

Detailed description: This system covers measures 293 to 300. Vln. 1 and 2 both start with a forte (*f*) dynamic. Vln. 1 has a melodic line with eighth-note patterns and accents. Vln. 2 has a similar melodic line but with some rests. Vla. and Vlc. play eighth-note accompaniment. The D.S. part features a triplet of eighth notes on the hi-hat.

296

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

D. S.

Detailed description: This system covers measures 296 to 303. Vln. 1 has a triplet of eighth notes in measure 296. Vln. 2 has a melodic line with some rests. Vla. and Vlc. have accompaniment with triplets. The D.S. part has a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes.

299

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

D. S.

Detailed description: This system covers measures 299 to 306. Vln. 1 has a melodic line with accents. Vln. 2 has a melodic line. Vla. has a melodic line starting in measure 303. Vlc. has accompaniment with triplets. The D.S. part has a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes.

String Quartet #1 "The Impossible"

302 $\text{♩} = 96$

Vln. 1 *mf*

Vln. 2 *mf*

Vla.

Vlc.

D. S. *to funk*

305

Vln. 1 *1st cello solo*

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc. *solo*

D. S. *Papa's got a brand new bag*

309

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

D. S.

2nd cello solo

313

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

D. S.

guitar

E7

tacit

Papa's got a brand new bag

318

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

D. S.

A7

E7

3rd cello solo

324

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

D. S.

guitar

B7

E7

tacit

Papa's got a brand new bag

329

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vcl.

D. S.

A7

E7

335

open cello cadenza *a tempo*

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vcl.

D. S.

B7

guitar

tacit

341

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vcl.

D. S.

ff

f

Papa's got a brand new bag

String Quartet #1 "The Impossible"

open repeats for 1st vln solo

34
344

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

D. S.

f violin

f

f

348

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

D. S.

351

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

D. S.

355

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

ff improvise on snare

D. S.

359

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

mp

D. S.

mp

362

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

p

pp

improv with lots of glissandos, don't stand out

D. S.

String Quartet #1 "The Impossible"

36

365

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

D. S.

p

p

ppp

f

speech pitch solo

p pizz.

3

369

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

D. S.

pp

373

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

D. S.

pp

pp

pp

ppp

3

x

#5 She put my head under the water

379 $\text{♩} = 96$

Vln. 1 *f* 6

Vln. 2 *f* speech pitch

Vla. *f*

Vlc.

D. S. 379 cowbell only *f* funk / rock maintain cowbell

384

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla. arco

Vlc.

D. S. 384 turn around

390

Vln. 1 *mp*

Vln. 2

Vla. *mp*

Vlc.

D. S. 390 *pp* cowbell out *pp* *mp*

String Quartet #1 "The Impossible"

38
395

Vln. 1
p

Vln. 2
p cantabile

Vla.
mf
arco

Vlc.
p

D. S.
395
sounds of kids playing outside

Vln. 1
399
pp
G7 *f* C7 G7 C7

Vln. 2

Vla.
pp

Vlc.
f

D. S.
399
funk / rock maintain cowbell

Vln. 1
403
G7 C7 G7

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

D. S.
403

The image shows a page of a musical score for a string quartet. It is divided into three systems. The first system (measures 38-395) features Violin 1, Violin 2, Viola, and Violoncello. Violin 1 starts with a piano (p) dynamic, then crescendos to forte (f) and decrescendos to piano (p) and fortissimo (ff). Violin 2 starts with a piano (p) dynamic and is marked 'cantabile'. Viola and Violoncello both start with a mezzo-forte (mf) dynamic. A double bass (D.S.) part is present from measure 395, marked 'sounds of kids playing outside'. The second system (measures 399-403) features Violin 1, Violin 2, Viola, Violoncello, and Double Bass. Violin 1 starts with a pianissimo (pp) dynamic and has a forte (f) dynamic marking. It includes harmonic markings for G7 and C7. Viola and Violoncello start with a pianissimo (pp) dynamic, while Violin 1 has a forte (f) dynamic. The Double Bass part is marked 'funk / rock maintain cowbell'. The third system (measures 403-403) features Violin 1, Violin 2, Viola, Violoncello, and Double Bass. Violin 1 starts with a mezzo-forte (mf) dynamic and has harmonic markings for G7 and C7. The Double Bass part is marked '403'.

kids out

dual violins improvisation

407

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

D. S.

left hand taps on neck

left hand taps on neck

pizz.

full measure turn around

rims only on snare, improv on toms

add hihat offbeats, continue in same vein

411

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

D. S.

like this

like this

on grizzly bear theme: alternate 2 measures, 1 m, 2 beat, 1 beat, & finally simultaneous

noise

noise

intensify as the duo does

can add bongos & boxing bells

415

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

D. S.

counting cue

after count out & solo

one two a one two three-four

p

p

pp

funk / rock maintain cowbell

cowbell only

pp

String Quartet #1 "The Impossible"

40
421

speech pitch solo

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

D. S.

pp

f

426

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

D. S.

pp

pp

ppp

tacit