

Significant Others

A Courtship for Viola and Bass (1994)

Jon Jeffrey Grier

Program and Performance Notes

I. *Come Here Often?* Two people meet, one a jazz player, the other not. They size each other up warily, and are alternately attracted and repelled. Gradually, they each open up and try to speak in tones the other will appreciate. They make a sort of truce, but their last gestures reassert their differences and independence.

All quarter/eighth triplet rhythms are to be played with the relaxed inflection of a typical jazz swing. When beginning a tremolo from an ordinary sustained tone, make the onset of the tremolo as unaccented as possible. Grace notes at the ends of glissandi are target pitches, to show how far the glissando should travel; these pitches are not to be held or accented in any way. All *sul ponticello* is to be played with as many overtones as possible. The overall effect should be humorous and eccentric; in performance, some appropriate facial expressions and body language, as suggested by the story line, would enhance the effect. This is true, to varying degrees, of the other movements as well.

II. *Marche Hormonale*. Self-explanatory. The apparent dignity of the march is an illusion, as the relationship moves inexorably forward in a cloud of pheromones.

This should be played with a very steady pulse (until the end), at a not-too-slow tempo, and in a good-humored manner, tongue firmly in cheek.

III. *Potatoes and Potahtoes*. Like the couple in the Broadway song, they lock horns over their differences and consider calling the whole thing off. Important themes presented by each individual in the 1st movement are brought back for further discussion. By the end, the themes merge into a sort of compromise of harmony and rhythm.

This movement alternates between brief sections of equality between the players and sections in which one plays a support role for the other's heartfelt monologue. The pulse should be steady and the rhythms executed with a sense of urgency; there should be some sense of relief at the end.

IV. *Bliss*. After a brief reminiscence on their condition when they first met, the lovers relax in the comfort of their hard-won mutual acceptance and affection. The motivic unison first achieved at the end of the 3rd movement is renewed in consonant intervals and serves as the basis of their completed relationship. Their individual motives make occasional reappearances, as well as some fresh ideas that arise from the new texture.

In general, this movement should be reflective (though passionate at times), gentle, and flexible in tempo, with much time taken up in the *ritardandi* and pauses between phrases. Phrasing should be in unison, and the two parts, with very occasional and brief exceptions, are equal. Total time to perform all 4 movements: 14-15 minutes.

*with love and admiration for
Lydia and Ian,
7 May 1994*