CHAPTER THREE

THE PIANO QUINTET BY EDWARD ELGAR (1857-1934)

The very essence of Edwardian England is consummately represented in both the life and music of her greatest native composer since Purcell, Edward Elgar. The second son of Anne and William Henry Elgar (and one of seven children), Edward was born in Broadheath on June 2, 1857. His father William was a man-of-all-musical-trades, having worked as a tuner and then as proprietor of a music shop while concurrently serving as organist at St. George's Catholic Chapel. As a child, Edward was taught by his musical family to play the piano, the organ, and the violin, and instructed himself in the intricacies of harmony and counterpoint. He very quickly committed to memory the scores of symphonies and operas, and was an enthusiastic listener at the Worcester Music Festival, where much good music was played in impressive performances.

Following a rather familiar pattern, Edward’s father wished for him to become a lawyer; at age fifteen the boy left school to become clerk to a local solicitor. This activity and the career it was to have launched ceased abruptly a few months later, and from 1873 there was no doubt that Edward was going to become a professional musician. He had no formal education in music beyond the family in-

struction already mentioned, but had acquired sufficient facility at the organ to succeed his father as organist at St. George's in 1885. Three years had been spent studying law in London, during part of which time Elgar took five violin lessons with Adolphe Pollitzer, deciding that a career as violin virtuoso was not for him. A few compositions of little significance were produced from time to time, but nothing that revealed the scope of his mature talent.

Elgar was married to Alice Roberts in May 1889; they settled in London, where Edward was able to take advantage of opportunities to hear Wagnerian opera, which he dearly loved, and to present his manuscripts to publishers and others of influence. Progress was painfully slow, however, in Elgar's chosen work as professional composer. Alice, during this long period of waiting, was the driving force which kept him from abandoning his efforts. Not until the performance of the Enigma Variations in 1899 and "The Dream of Gerontius" in 1900 did Elgar really make a lasting impression on the British public. Stanford and Parry were the leading lights of the time—but it was Stanford, a Professor of Music at Cambridge, who saw to it that the University confer upon Elgar the honorary Doctor of Music degree in 1900,² and who became one of his great admirers. The famous Pomp and Circumstance March in D Major followed in 1901 and became immediately successful—so much so that King Edward, in 1904, knighted the composer.

Up until this time, the Elgards had been living very frugally,

but after 1904 financial prospects brightened. Both were intensely interested in maintaining the appearance of middle-class respectability, as their homesites in Malvern and Hereford attested; but this illusion of prosperity was difficult to sustain on Edward's pre-1904 income. Matters were further aided when, in the same year, Elgar was offered and accepted an endowed Chair of Music at Birmingham University.

In the period between the accession of George V in 1911 and the start of World War I, Elgar was at the height of his fame and powers. The symphonic study *Falstaff*, the Second Symphony, and the important violin concerto date from these years. On July 17, 1911 Elgar received the Order of Merit. The war years found Elgar in the Special Constabulary, offering what assistance a man of his years could. There is no doubt, as Young states, that the outbreak of war brought to an end Elgar's reputation of greatness in Germany (which reputation had been increasing rapidly since the turn of the century).³

The war had a debilitating effect on Elgar's spirits. His health, intermittently weak throughout his life, also took a turn for the worse in 1918, and he underwent surgery for a diseased tonsil which had apparently been the cause of much of his lifelong throat ailments.⁴ Soon after, he and his wife retired to a country cottage known as Brinkwells, near Fittleworth, where his last notable works—the String Quartet in E Minor, the Piano Quintet in A Minor, and the Violin Sonata in E Minor—were completed in 1918–19. This was an idyllic period for Elgar, being near the woods he loved and away from the bustle of activity in London. His three last great chamber

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works contain none of the heroics characteristic of some of his earlier music, but are instead shot through with sadness, regret and a moving melancholy.  

A severe blow, one from which he never fully recovered, was the sudden death of his wife Alice in 1920. Such was Elgar's shock that he was unable, up to the end of his days on February 23, 1934, to compose anything of a size or merit comparable to his previous masterpieces. His time was devoted largely to the many clubs to which he belonged, to walks in the woods, and to solitary meditation. The title of Master of the King's Musick was conferred on him in 1924, and he was made a baron in 1931. "In assessing Elgar's place in music it must never be forgotten that his great achievement was to express, perhaps as no English composer either before or since, the mood of the nation. One may, of course, deplore the mood; one may criticize the style of its expression; but one may not deny the fact." 

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6 Young, op. cit., p. 112.
Background and Perspectives

As an individual man, Elgar was the sum of many disparate elements. Cardus describes him in these words: "Man of action and private poet and Empire laureate, he is tangible and elusive; he is country squire and major-general and the devotee at prayer. He is austere and vulgar and prosaic and romantic; he is the Catholic whose oratorios are acceptable to the venerable adherents of the Anglican Church; in short he is English."\(^7\)

Like his predecessor William Byrd, Elgar remained a devout Catholic in the midst of an Anglican milieu. Yet he was able, through the sheer power of his music, to retain the favor of the ruling monarch as well as the approbation of the common people. The image of a retired country gentleman he deliberately cultivated\(^8\) and staunchly maintained during his later years. Kindly and sincere beneath a sometimes crusty exterior, Elgar was totally lacking in cynicism. The honesty and dignity of his music, its stateliness and high idealism, reveal the noble cast of mind of its creator.

Elgar, despite his prolific output, was never a nimble composer. He worked best with a large apparatus—symphony, symphonic poem, and those favorite English forms, oratorio and cantata. He applied to these structures Wagnerian methods (especially the leitmotif) but developed his themes symphonically (like Brahms) rather than dramatically (like Wagner). Elgar's orchestral textures are always interesting,

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colors being expertly chosen for musical ideas in the manner of Richard Strauss but without actually sounding like Strauss. There are techniques resembling those of Franck and his school—such as the cyclic principle—used in an entirely individual way.

The defects of Elgar's music have often been noted. Young, quoting the Pall Mall Gazette, observes that "it is as difficult for Elgar to leave a sequence as it is for a bicycle to leave the tram lines." Clichés in harmony and square, unimaginative rhythms sometimes detract. Foss observes how often the composer writes "music of the same particular kind, deployed in various guises." G. B. Shaw, on the other hand, was a dedicated admirer. His article in the first issue of Music and Letters understandably gave Elgar great pleasure. Shaw, having heard the piano quintet in March of 1920, told Lady Elgar that there had been nothing like its opening since Coriolan.

Elgar straddled the period of transition in music between the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries. He chose to assimilate thoroughly the techniques of the past rather than to strike out on new pathways. He nevertheless has had an undeniable influence on many succeeding English composers, among them William Walton and Arthur Bliss. Elgar "pointed no new directions. If he had never composed a note, there would be today no link missing from the main evolution of the vocabulary and syntax of music. Yet in spite of all temptations..."

9 Ibid., p. 10.
10 Young, op. cit., p. 379.
11 Foss, op. cit., p. 11.
13 Young, op. cit., p. 197.
tions to belong to other nations, he remained an Englishman. "15

The largest segment of Elgar's music is orchestral. Important works, besides the famous Enigma Variations and the Pomp and Circumstance Military Marches, are the two symphonies, the symphonic study Falstaff, the concert overtures Cockaigne and Froissart, and the concertos for cello and for violin. Ballets and incidental music, much vocal music (both sacred and secular), and numerous songs are also included in his catalog. There is a mere handful of short pieces for piano solo. Among the chamber music, one finds several early pieces for violin and piano, a few short incidental works for various combinations, numerous uncompleted sketches for string quartet and piano trio, and finally, the ultimate realization of these earlier strivings, the three great chamber works of his maturity.

It appears odd that, after the tremendous success of his orchestral and choral works of the two decades from 1898 to 1918, Elgar should turn to a medium seemingly so antithetical to his musical nature as chamber music. The long years of his obscurity, however, had been spent playing in and making arrangements for an assortment of chamber ensembles. This interest merely lay dormant while Elgar established himself with the kinds of music which would achieve his objective. 16 There is evidence that the late chamber works represent some of their composer's loftiest ideas. Certainly they are tighter, less sprawling, and not given to the pompous pageantry characteristic of some of the orchestral pieces. In their treatment of the strings, they are extremely graceful and imaginative; but for the piano, at

15 Cardus, op. cit., p. 211.
16 Young, op. cit., p. 346.
least in the violin sonata, Elgar supplies a part resembling the
stock-in-trade of the textbooks—viz., one which is competently
set forth but which lacks significant originality. The interplay
of the instruments in all three works is admirable.

Many writers have alluded to the strange, mystical quality of
the opening of the piano quintet. In general, it is thought to
have been inspired by a wooded grove in Flexham Park, near Brinkwells
cottage, where the work was composed. A legend had grown up concern-
ing this spot. It had to do with the presence there in olden times
of a fraternity of Spanish monks, who, while engaged in impious
ritual, were struck dead and transformed into trees. These trees,
with their sad, dispossessed quality, are thought to be symbolized
in the initial measures.

The quintet was written out first for violin and piano, and was
played over in that form by Elgar and his good friend, William Reed,
who took the violin part. Later on, in January and February of
1919, Reed brought with him to Brinkwells a quartet to try out sec-
tions of both the quartet and the quintet. At the first public per-
formance of the latter, on May 21, 1919, at Wigmore Hall in London,
Elgar, as so often happened, was unable, from sheer nervousness, to
stay in the room. The evening resulted, however, in a brilliant
reading and an ovation for the composer.

The quintet is a greater conception, planned on a grander scale
than its two companion pieces. "The outer movements recall Brahms

17 Ibid., p. 349.
18 William Reed, Elgar As I Knew Him (London: Victor Gollancz,
19 Young, op. cit., p. 198.
as far as the strings are concerned, but the piano part is written in a style quite new to chamber music, not in the concerto style usually adopted by composers for piano and strings, but as one part in five; a highly artistic, if not a pianistic conception." This is, indeed, one of the most striking features of the work.

Theoretical Analysis

The Elgar Piano Quintet in A Minor, Opus 84, is a work in three movements, each using traditional sonata-allegro formal outlines modified with both non-traditional key relationships and cyclic recurrences. A Franck-like transformation of themes and Brahmsian utilization of motivic cells are also present.

The key relationships of the quintet, while not in the traditional pattern, reveal nonetheless a symmetry of design. Referring to Figure 3 on page 96, one may observe these relationships in microcosm. The first movement, for example, whose tonic key is A minor, has a subordinate theme in E major instead of the expected C major. This theme reappears in the recapitulation in B major. In like manner, the subordinate theme of the second movement is also in an unusual relationship—A major, compared with the tonic key of E major; on its recurrence, this theme is in D major, an even more surprising phenomenon. And finally, in the last movement, one finds an A major tonic with subordinate theme in D major and E major in its respective appearances.

Key relationships by intervals of fourths and fifths predominate. In the first movement, the statements of the subordinate theme lie first a perfect fifth higher than the tonic, then another perfect fifth above that. In the slow movement, these relations are two perfect fourths (respectively) higher than the tonic. In the finale, the key of the subordinate theme is first a fourth higher, then a fifth. It is apparent that Elgar wished to maintain at least a fairly close relation among keys while avoiding, in all three move-
ments, the traditional return of the subordinate theme in the tonic key.

Five separate motivic cells are used throughout the piece. Their function is to unify the various movements of the composition and to generate large thematic material. Three of these cells are presented within the two sections of the introduction to the first movement. Each has its own particular shape and character which contrasts with the others.

Ex. 95. Elgar, I, p. 1, mm. 1–8; p. 1, mm. 1–3; p. 2, mm. 5–10.

Motive d, appearing initially in the codetta of the slow movement, is characterized by two minor thirds embracing an octave between them.

Ex. 96. Elgar, II, p. 32, mm. 1–5.
Motive a, first heard in the finale, is a falling figure made up of two fifths and a minor second.

Ex. 97. Elgar, III, p. 52, mm. 4-5.

The transformations undergone by these five motives are worthy of investigation. Motive a, with its neighboring-tone pattern and falling sixth, is closely akin to the subordinate theme of the first movement, as shown by Example 98.

Ex. 98. Elgar, I, p. 6, mm. 18-21.

More important is its transformation, in section two of the development, into a new theme, first heard at that point and of significant importance later in the piece. This theme will hereafter be referred to as the "development theme."

Ex. 99. Elgar, I, p. 10, mm. 4-12.
A close connection may also be found between Motive a and a four-note figure used in the working-out section of the subordinate theme of the finale.

Ex. 100. Elgar, I, p. 1, mm. 1-2 and III, p. 51, mm. 1-5.

Motive b, often used together with a, lends its rhythmic shape to the melodic contour of a to form the transition theme of the first movement.

Ex. 101. Elgar, I, p. 5, mm. 2-5.
The series of parallel thirds, first major then minor, which comprise this theme, together with a harmonization utilizing the tonic chord in alternation with the seventh chord on the lowered seventh degree, impart a Spanish flavor which calls to mind the legend described on page 93.

Motive a, found in section two of the introduction, is closely related to the first theme of the subordinate group in the second movement.

Ex. 102. Elgar, II, p. 29, m. 23 and p. 30, mm. 1-2.

The cello answer to the query posed by the upper strings in this theme has antecedents in Motive a; it is later extracted to form the codetta of the slow movement, shown in Example 96 on page 97.

Deferred until the closing section of the exposition of the finale, Motive a (seen in Example 103, page 101) bears resemblance to the second theme of the subordinate group in the slow movement, both in its contour and in its strongly emphasized falling minor second.
Cyclic recurrences play a major role in the Elgar quintet.

Motive a returns, transposed, in the introduction to the finale.

The development theme of the opening movement recurs, in augmentation, during the development section of the finale; Motive a, likewise in augmentation and accompanied by a staccato version of itself mixed with elements of Motive b, is found immediately before the development theme.

Ex. 104. Elgar, III, p. 55, mm. 5-18.
And the subordinate theme of the first movement reappears in the last in alternation with Motive e.

Not technically cyclic, but interesting nonetheless, are the many recurrences of material at unexpected places within the initial movement. A four-measure fragment of Motive c is inserted between the main theme and the transition theme which follows; the same motive is recalled in the coda of the first movement. The combination of Motives a and b, which opens the piece, recurs at the beginning of the development section and also at the end of the coda. Motive b, alone, is found in sequence in a long extension of the principal theme in the recapitulation.

Ex. 106. Elgar, I, p. 19, mm. 3–7.
The development theme is restated at the beginning of the coda.

The remaining thematic material shows evidence of common intervallic genesis. Intervals of the fourth and second figure prominently in the important themes of the second and third movements. Thus, the opening of the principal theme of the finale resembles in its interval structure the subordinate theme of the same movement.

Ex. 107. Elgar, III, p. 44, mm. 1-5 and p. 48, mm. 13-16.

likewise, the main theme of the slow movement is comparable to the second figure of its subordinate theme.

Ex. 108. Elgar, II, p. 28, mm. 1-8 and p. 30, m. 1.
A dotted figure of three notes descending stepwise is used throughout the second movement—in the main theme, the second theme of the subordinate group, and the second section of the development.

Ex. 109. Elgar, II, p. 28, mm. 1–5; p. 30, mm. 8–9; p. 34, m. 1.

The melodic outline of a major triad with added sixth is common to the beginning of the main theme of the finale and the opening piano figure in the subordinate theme of the slow movement.

Ex. 110. Elgar, III, p. 44, mm. 1–3 and II, p. 29, m. 23.
Thus, the quintet appears highly unified from the thematic standpoint. There is symmetry in the key relationships, a straightforward logic in the developmental process, and an extraordinary cohesiveness as the result of cyclicism and thematic transformation. The three codas serve as second developments of their respective movements, often beginning in a similar way and using the same material.

One notices a large number of square phrase structures of four or eight measures, even in developments; but the musical flow seems uninhibited by its deployment in such easily predictable units. Elgar's use of sequence, as seen in Example 111, is convincing and not carried to excess (despite the critical comment from the reviewer of the Pall Mall Gazette, cited on page 91).

Ex. 111. Elgar, II, p. 28, mm. 17-20 and p. 29, mm. 1-2.

[Music notation image]

In its constituent movements, the quintet is weightiest in the first (where most of the motivic material is introduced and the sad, mysterious mood is set), least complex in the songlike slow movement, and dignified, nostalgic and finally triumphant in the large finale.

Harmonies throughout are triadic and almost completely functional. Example 112, page 107 reveals the composer's fondness for strong root
progressions and for the half-diminished-seventh sonority.

Ex. 112. Elgar, III, p. 44, mm. 1-8.

A: I III vi77 vii7 vi7 VII vi77 I II V

It should be noticed that the leading-tone-seventh chord (in major) is often substituted for the dominant triad. Example 113 illustrates Elgar's use of this sonority in a four-measure connecting passage.

Ex. 113. Elgar, III, p. 49, mm. 14-17.
One of the few non-functional progressions in the quintet involves three successive half-diminished-seventh sonorities employed primarily for their vertical effect.

Ex. 114. Elgar, III; p. 54, mm. 17–18 and p. 45, mm. 1–10 (strings omitted).
The diminished-seventh chord is another favorite of Elgar. Most often it appears functionally, sometimes with regular resolution, Ex. 115. Elgar, III, p. 48, mm. 17-19 (strings omitted).

![Chord Example](image1)

Sometimes with normal chord sequence but with irregular voice-leading.

Ex. 116. Elgar, III, p. 67, mm. 2-6 (strings omitted).

![Chord Example](image2)

In Example 116, one finds a harmonization of a descending chromatic scale with alternating leading-tone-seventh and tonic chords of rapidly changing minor keys; due to the systematic omission of the root of each triad (save the first) and of the third of each seventh chord, an ambiguous chord progression results. This sensation is further heightened by the tritones in the bass line.

Ninth chords, both major and minor, are frequently used, and are in general treated regularly as to approach and resolution. The major ninth chord is a distinctive feature of the subordinate theme of the first movement, as seen in Example 117, page 110. Example 118 shows the codetta of the slow movement, which is built of arpeggiation of a minor ninth chord.
A somewhat irregular treatment is shown in Example 119, page 111; a major ninth chord with delayed resolution is followed by another having its ninth transferred from instrument to instrument until final resolution is achieved in a lower register in the piano.
Ex. 119. Elgar, III, p. 48, mm. 7-13.

An important harmonic aspect underlying the entire work is the frequent recurrence of the Neapolitan chord. It first occurs, in root position, in measure two, where it contributes to the ambiguous key feeling which is partly responsible for the mysterious quality previously cited.

Ex. 120. Elgar, I, p. 1, mm. 1-5 (reduced).

The tonic chord is delayed until measure seventeen. Motive also
has an unmistakable Neapolitan flavor.

Ex. 121. Elgar, I, p. 2, mm. 5-8 (piano tacet).

as does the transition theme of the first movement.

Ex. 122. Elgar, I, p. 5, mm. 1-7.

Even the development theme uses a Neapolitan chord.

Ex. 123. Elgar, I, p. 10, mm. 4-8 (strings omitted).
Curiously, the chord is most often found in root position and with an embellishing, rather than a functional, character.

Example 123 above also shows evidence of the modal aspect of portions of the quintet. Even the main theme of the slow movement, seemingly tonally oriented, has traces of modal character in the middle of its first period, as seen in Example 124.

Ex. 124. Elgar, II, p. 28, mm. 1-8 (piano tacet).

These elements go far toward assuring a decidedly English, rather than a possible German, sound to the work.

An example of Elgar's well-known chromatic harmony is given here to show that, unlike much of Wagner’s, his shifting harmony centers about dominant-to-tonic connections in a rapid succession of keys, rather than moving chromatically from one chord-member to the next in an ambiguous, non-functional sense.

Ex. 125. Elgar, III, p. 67, mm. 7-9 (strings omitted).
Modulation is particularly smooth and convincing in this quintet. A change from E-flat minor to A minor, near the end of the development of the first movement, shows a felicitous use of (implied) enharmonic change, chromatic melodic movement and secondary dominant function, yet with completely functional chord progression.

Ex. 126. Elgar, I, p. 15, mm. 8-12.

\[ e^b: \text{IV}_7^{d7} \]

\[ a: \text{IV} \]

Modulation by reinterpretation of a diminished-seventh chord is common.

Ex. 127. Elgar, II, p. 29, m. 23 and p. 30, mm. 1-3.

\[ A: \text{I} \]

\[ B: \text{IV}_6^{d7} \text{ VII}^{d7} \text{ V I} \]
A device often used by Schubert is evident in the slow movement: the employment of a dominant-seventh sonority in one key as the German augmented-sixth in a second key.

Ex. 128. Elgar, II, p. 32, mm. 13-14.

A Bach-like modulation with descending-fifth root movement occurs in the finale.

Ex. 129. Elgar, III, p. 44, mm. 13-16.
A common chord with enharmonic respelling furnishes the pivot in an apparently distant modulation from the first movement.

Ex. 130. Elgar, I, p. 23, mm. 4-7.

\[ J^\# : V, \quad i \quad e_b \quad \text{etc.} \quad V_7 \quad i \quad v_i \]

The device of pedal-point is utilized at crucial places in the form—in transitions, retransitions and codas. Counterpoint is found only in a few instances where imitative entries break the predominantly homophonic texture (usually in development sections). Rhythmic peculiarities are non-existent; only the constant syncopation of the subordinate theme of the finale is in any way noteworthy. Meter changes occur only in the first movement, where the main theme, in its successive recurrences, requires a change to \( \frac{6}{8} \) from the prevailing \( \frac{2}{4} \). An overlapping of these two meters produces,
at one point, a rather conventional two-against-three pattern.

Ex. 131. Elgar, I, p. 18, mm. 6-8.
Idiomatic Treatment

The piano, often conceived in the quintet idiom as a solo instrument accompanied by string quartet, is treated, in Elgar's piece, as an additional string instrument—a partner among equals. The writing is rarely thick; there is a laudable use of rests as well as variations of texture within the same phrase to provide constant renewal of interest.

An instance of Elgar's skill in the varying of sonority may be seen in Example 132. At the beginning, Violin I and cello are in octaves, doubled by the piano, while the two middle strings play a third beneath in octaves. In the continuation, shown on page 119, these doublings are changed so that the two violins are in octaves against cello and viola, which are doubled at the lower tenth; thus the spacing is opened up and a new color provided.

Ex. 132. Elgar, I, p. 6, mm. 17-21 and p. 7, mm. 1-6.
The setting of the closing theme in the last movement includes a fascinating interchange of motivic material from part to part, as well as some unexpected, brief doublings.

Ex. 133. Elgar, III, p. 52, mm. 4-14.
Ex. 133 (cont.)
Rather frequently, the strings play a melody in octaves accompanied by intermittent piano chords.

Ex. 132. Elgar, III, p. 44, mm. 1-8.

At other times, the piano in octaves sustains a legato melody while the strings, likewise doubled at the octave, interject staccato figures.

Ex. 135. Elgar, I, p. 1, mm. 1-6.
Elsewhere, a passage for all four strings in octaves is varied in color by freeing, at two- and three-measure intervals, each of the lower three strings from its doubling role and giving it independent material.

Ex. 136. Elgar, II, p. 37, mm. 7-11 and p. 38, mm. 1-4.
A block-chord setting for strings is occasionally utilized. Example 137, page 124 shows how Elgar, while systematically keeping the melody uppermost, manages to vary the color. The melody is passed from Violin I to Violin II in successive phrases, while the piano doubles this melody and provides an interesting accompaniment pattern made up of arpeggiated sonorities in contrary motion, in conflicting rhythm, and with wide skips in the left-hand part.
Ex. 137. Elgar, I, p. 10, mm. 4-16.
This arrangement is inverted in a subsequent statement—here the triplets are in the right hand of the piano while the left counters with sixteenth-note rhythm.


Antiphonal writing between piano and strings is often encountered, but, as in Example 139, without direct imitation.

Ex. 139. Elgar, I, p. 17, mm. 8-14.
The pairing of strings (Violin I and viola against Violin II and cello) is a frequently used device throughout the piece. Sometimes one finds a duet of strings over a widely-spaced piano accompaniment, as in Example 140. The meticulous editing of string parts here is noteworthy; it is characteristic of Elgar in the entire composition. There can be no doubt in the players' minds as to the exact effect intended. The piano, in a lower register, stays entirely out of the way of the string duet above.

Ex. 140. Elgar, I, p. 5, mm. 1-7.

In the repetition of this material, the lower strings enter with multiple-stop pizzicatos, the piano in alternate measures thinning its texture by omitting the chord third. Example 141, page 127, illustrates this change.
Ex. 141. Elgar, I, p. 5, mm. 19-32.

A Schubertian use of a solo string line over reiterated piano chords may be seen in the slow movement.

Ex. 142. Elgar, II, p. 30, mm. 7-11.

Also in the second movement, there is some clever writing for piano which succeeds in exploring wider registers of the instrument without becoming thick and cumbersome. Noteworthy in the last two measures
of Example 143 are the various colors brought about by imaginative use of doublings.

Ex. 143. Elgar, II, p. 32, mm. 14-16 and p. 33, mm. 10-11.
The last movement contains several instances of brilliant piano writing. These, however, are not in the least either difficult or ostentatious.

Ex. 144. III, p. 47, mm. 1-4 and p. 49, mm. 14-17.
Massive chords occur only in periods of climax.

Ex. 145. Elgar, III, mm. 9-12 and I, p. 15, mm. 12-16 (strings tacet).
The piano states a modest share of the total thematic material, but by no means overshadows the strings in this regard. An interesting use of grace notes in one particular thematic fragment deserves attention because of its contribution to the harmonic background without causing an overly thick texture.

Ex. 146. Elgar, I, p. 23, mm. 8-13.

One recurring passage reveals Elgar's keen ear for special pedal effects unique to the piano. Pedaling here is carefully indicated. A sound reminiscent of Schumann's "dreaming with the pedal down" results. Example 147, page 132 illustrates this effect.
The idiomatic handling of the strings shows inventiveness with but little reliance on unusual color devices or sheer virtuosity. *Con sordino* is found only in the retrospective development of the finale; its use enhances the nostalgic quality inherent in such a cyclic return. *Pizzicato*, seen generally in chords for several instruments (as shown in Example 141, page 127) or, with multiple stops, in those for one instrument, is used sparingly. An occasional cello bass line is also marked *pizzicato*.

A feeling of agitation is sometimes obtained by the use of rapid repeated notes for strings.

Ex. 149. Elgar, I, p. 16, mm. 1-7.

Unmeasured tremolo occurs only at the retransition of the last movement, for viola alone, and, in the recapitulation of the same movement, for the lower three strings.

Ex. 150. Elgar, III, p. 57, mm. 9-16 and p. 64, mm. 4-7.
Ex. 150 (cont.).

A very wide range of dynamics is used—from \textit{ppp} to \textit{fff}. Sometimes, as in Example 151 on page 135, there is but a brief lapse of time between highly contrasting levels of dynamics. It is apparent in both Examples 151 and 152 that Elgar is quite clear in showing differences in dynamics among the various instruments.
Ex. 151. Elgar, III, p. 58, mm. 9-20.

Ex. 152. Elgar, III, p. 56, mm. 10-18.
The treatment of registers appears rather less extreme. Although both strings and piano have considerable material in the lower range, the upper region is explored only at climactic moments, and usually for only a few notes at a time.

Ex. 153. Elgar, I, p. 14, mm. 2–6 and III, p. 51, mm. 12–16.
The low notes of the piano are encountered in general as octave doublings of the bass line, or in low, muted statements of the opening motive.

Ex. 154. Elgar, I, p. 27, mm. 17-25.

Generally, the parts for strings and piano are effective and varied, containing sufficient technical material to interest each player. There are few solos, however, and little opportunity is provided for virtuosic display. In short, the piece is artistically conceived, idiomatically grateful without undue technical brilliance, and varied enough in its textures to escape any sense of monotony.
CHAPTER FOUR

THE SECOND PIANO QUINTET BY BOHUSLAV MARTINŮ (1890–1959)

The little Bohemian town of Polička, in what is now Czechoslovakia, was the birthplace, on December 8, 1890, of one of that country's most creative musical talents, Bohuslav Martinů. A highly prolific composer, Martinů entertained a lifelong rebellion against the strictures of musical discipline, a characteristic which is often cited to explain the extreme disparity in quality found between one of his compositions and another, or sometimes even within the same piece. Like Elgar, he was largely self-taught. Throughout his life he maintained a strong interest in the flavor of Czech folklore and dance.

Martinů, one of four children, was born in a church tower, where his family lived for many years. His father was employed as a shoemaker and also as keeper of the bells. Young Bohuslav thrived on this solitary existence, becoming an avid reader and, curiously enough, a lover of the theatre from his earliest days.¹ He began violin study at six and made rapid progress—but he loved most of all to compose music. A string quartet was produced at the age of ten.

He entered the Prague Conservatory at 16, to begin living the life of a poor student. Violin studies under Professor Suchy were

begun in the expectation that he would excel sufficiently on that instrument to make for himself a playing career. But the rigors of academic discipline did not suit Martinů's temperament. He continued to read voluminously (his favorite authors were Dostoyevsky and Turgenev) and to attend the theatre and musical performances, to the virtually complete neglect of his studies. Many compositions, all closely linked to literature, came from his pen at this time; but, strangely enough, he had no special facility for writing for the voice, neither then nor later. Martinů's extracurricular activities were largely responsible for his being twice expelled from the conservatory. He returned briefly in 1922 to study composition with Josef Suk, but otherwise this was the extent of his formal musical training for some time.

A practical musician's viewpoint was gained from his years (1913–1923) in the Prague Philharmonic Orchestra, where he played third stand in the second violins. This activity was interrupted during the war years, when he returned to his native village of Polička to teach school music, thus avoiding the draft. His sympathies were entirely with the Western allies. While in the Prague orchestra, Martinů came into contact with many compositions then current, especially those from the Paris milieu—by composers such as Debussy, Stravinsky and Roussel. It was under this influence that he decided, in 1923, to move permanently to Paris to pursue composition. He was to remain in that city until the fall of France in 1940.

The Paris of the 1920's, with its ferment of creative ideas in

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2 Ibid., p. 8.
3 Ibid., p. 14.
all the arts, proved enormously stimulating to Martinů's imagination. Many of the more avant-garde ideas he found disturbing, but he was intrigued with the music of Stravinsky, and admired Roussel to the extent that he studied with him for awhile. The Schönberg influence was completely lost on him—the variation technique was not at all to his liking, and he had a strong distaste for what he called "exasperated romanticism."  

Martinů at this time leaned strongly toward a concentration on color for its own sake.

Following a two-year silence devoted to intensive study and thought, Martinů produced a pivotal work entitled Half-Time for orchestra, totally different from anything he had previously done and containing the embryo of his later style. The piece, lasting six to seven minutes, was inspired by the game of soccer, of which its composer was always a rabid fan. It is full of irregular rhythms, percussive piano effects, and motor rhythms in a brutal, atonal idiom. It is interesting to note similarities in style between this work and Honegger's Pacifc 231, first performed in 1924 but not previously heard by Martinů.

The large orchestra utilized in such works as Half-Time, La Bagarre, and Rhapsody was now abandoned for some sixteen years in favor of a concentration on chamber music and music for chamber orchestra. A string quintet, written in 1927, combines tumultuous impetuosity with lyrical melodies of a Czech character. It became very popular in the United States. The years 1930 to 1931 witnessed

5 Ibid., p. 24.
the production of the First Violin Sonata (which explored the jazz idiom), the Third String Quartet (having a decidedly Czech character), and the Second Violin Sonata, with its clear, simple style. The important Piano Trio of 1930 is notable for its use of a new, direct polyphony which substitutes tiny motivic cells in place of the usual main themes and their development. The piece became very successful. It foreshadowed the technique of the early 1940's, a period which includes the Second Piano Quintet of 1944. (An earlier piano quintet, which dates from 1934, abounds in technical and rhythmic difficulties.) The String Sextet was awarded the Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge Prize in 1932. Olin Downes, in reviewing a performance of this work in the New York Times of April 25, 1933 said: "It is a real string sextet, not a quartet with two extra instruments. The American audience received Martinu's work with a rare enthusiasm for its strength, freshness, and swing, uncommon vitality, musical interest, rare distinction, and real creative power."  

Martinu had married, in 1931, a young Frenchwoman named Charlotte Quennevich, a couturiere, who had known much hardship in her own life, and who was to suffer with Martinu sometime later the ills of the political refugee.

One of the curious facets of Martinu's compositional personality was his fascination with the concerto grosso principle of the Baroque. This was evident as early as 1931 in his String Quartet with Orchestra; it reached a climax in 1938 with the very successful Concerto Grosso,
for the same medium, the first movement of which, in true Baroque fashion, utilizes a single theme with continuous development. Also important was the Double Concerto, one of his most forceful works, written in 1938 just before the Nazis overran Czechoslovakia—a stirring piece, full of defiance, courage and passion.

The Martinůs, for the better part of the fall and winter of 1940–1941, were homeless refugees on their way to safety in the United States, during which time they endured severe hardships. Arriving in this country finally on March 31, 1941, they lived for the next five years in various places throughout New England, Martinů producing a huge quantity of work. He was for five years visiting professor of music at Princeton, and also taught composition at Tanglewood. Serge Koussevitzky, then conductor of the Boston Symphony, did much to champion his cause, offering him several commissions and first performances. Indeed, 1943 was the "Martinů year"—more new works of Martinů were premiered in the United States than of any other composer.  

Martinů returned in 1946 to his native land, where he taught at the Prague Conservatory for a short time. One year (1957) was spent in the American Academy in Rome. He died on August 28, 1959 in Liestal, Switzerland.

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Background and Perspectives

"Martinů ranks among the world-known Czech composers. His creative work is extensive, and, similarly to Dvořák, embraces all fields of music. The French school clarified his sense for tone quality, which, with sovereign skill, he blended with expressive Czech musical expression." 9 The five years spent in America provided him the opportunity to compose in relative security and to exult in the freedom he so ardently sought throughout his life—but of specific American influences in his work there are few. His is a truly cosmopolitan style, one which includes elements of all that surrounded him at any given time, yet which remains individualistic.

A neo-classicist in his belief in restraint and his striving for true beauty through clarity and directness of expression, Martinů excelled in a kind of fluid and transparent polyphony. Often the complete theme of a composition is not presented immediately but is gradually evolved from motivic cells and then subjected to variation and imitation. The influence of Czech folk music permeates many of his best works.

Since Martinů was so prolific, it is hardly surprising that his work is of uneven quality, that much of it has not been published, and that some of it is lost. Clapham gives us an insight into this aspect of the composer with his remark that Martinů "was apt to rely too much on spontaneity of inspiration without sufficient conscious evaluation of all the components with which he worked." 10

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other weak points cited by Clapham are literal repetitions of long sections, frequent static harmonies, and superfluous passagework. Some critics dismiss Martinů as lacking either genuine style or memorable ideas. On the other hand, Martinů's long experience as an orchestra violinist gave him the basis for his efficient treatment of instruments, whereby, with a minimum of rehearsal time, an orchestra or a chamber ensemble can produce dazzling effects.

A group of chamber works of no small merit was produced in the years surrounding Martinů's arrival in this country. The First Sonata for Violoncello and Piano of 1940, written just before the exodus from Paris, is one of his best chamber pieces—passionate, singing and intensely dramatic. The Second Sonata for Violoncello and Piano was his first work written in the United States, late in 1941. In the spring of 1942 came his First Piano Quartet, in a polyphonic, linear vein. An interesting piece—one which reflects the composer's abiding interest in Baroque forms—is the Madrigal Sonata for flute, violin and piano, written in 1942. "...Larger than a madrigal, though written in madrigal form," its three movements express the touching simplicity of the pastorale.

The Second Piano Quintet was composed in 1944 and dedicated to Miss Fanny P. Mason of Boston, who requested that it be written. It is a deeply meditative work, in vivid contrast to the earlier quintet of 1934, with its sharp, pointed rhythms. Safránek considers it an excellent example of the then current trend in Martinů's tech-

unique toward broad phrasing and sustained lyricism. Halbreich has unreserved praise for the work; he feels that since Fauré scarcely any composer has written in this form with comparable mastery, and that, as to size and importance, it is without doubt the summit of Martinů's American chamber music.

The first performance, a private hearing, was presented by Paul Degreau and members of the Boston Symphony Orchestra on December 31, 1944 in Boston. A year later, on December 4, 1945 the work was given its first public performance in New York by Elly Bontempo and the Guilet String Quartet.

Martinů the composer was engaged in a lifelong struggle to adapt his music to a human language, stripped of all that excessive individualism and complexity so rampant in the post-World War I period. He despised all hostility to life and freedom and deplored sentimentality. Perhaps his philosophy is best stated in his own words, written in the program notes for the premiere of his First Symphony: "What I maintain as my deepest conviction is the essential nobility of thoughts and things which are quite simple. . . ."
Theoretical Analysis

Neo-classical in its formal structures and sonorities, tonal despite its use of polychords and non-functional progressions, and strongly rhythmic through its syncopations and cross accents, the Martinů quintet calls to mind the Stravinsky style of the 1920's which Martinů so admired. It is a work in the classical four movements—the first and third quite traditional in design, the second and last adaptations of a conventional ternary pattern. There are, however, important deviations from the norm, as shown in Figure 4 on page 147. In the opening movement (a sonata-allegro design) Martinů repeats literally the material of the exposition upon its recurrence in the recapitulation; the original keys of both themes are retained and no variation of any factor is made until ten measures before the coda. The slow movement is a large three-part structure which, in its recapitulation, repeats a portion of the middle section as conclusion to a greatly foreshortened main theme. And in the finale one finds a ternary design incorporating yet another exact restatement of a first section, this time with a two-measure extension; the coda begins with a sixteen-measure piano cadenza. The third movement, a scherzo and trio, is conventional in form but demonstrates unusually great contrast between the two sections.

According to Clapham, Martinů normally has a clearly-defined key center for each movement but does not necessarily use the same one for first and last movements.16 This statement is applicable only in

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16 Clapham, op. cit., p. 163.
part to the quintet. The key of D minor is the chief tonal center—
the last three movements begin unequivocally in that key. But the
initial movement hovers between F major and D minor at the beginning
before ending solidly in F; the scherzo cadences firmly in A major at
its conclusion; and the slow movement closes with a half-cadence in
D minor. Secondary thematic material is often set in B-flat major
(a favorite key of Martinu\(^\text{17}\)). The latter key, it will be seen, is
related by a fourth to the tonic key of the first movement, and by a
third to that of the other movements; thus, the key relationships
within each movement are not out of the ordinary for the period in
which the quintet was written. Between sections with well-established
key center, however, one often encounters others where the tonality
is either unstable or indefinite.

Martinů, after 1930, began employing motivic cells in place of
themes and their development. The chief melodic material of the quin-
tet, shown in Example 155 on page 149, conforms to this preference.
The prevalence of thirds, in stepwise groupings or as melodic inter-
vals, should be observed—the interval is characteristic of many of
the composer’s melodic ideas.\(^\text{18}\) Thematic transformation as such is
not found, but similarities of contour among the several themes, shown
by brackets of the same color, are unmistakable. It is interesting
to note that, whereas the proportions of the various movements are
extraordinarily symmetrical, phrases of irregular length outnumber
those of the four-measure variety.

The strongest and most compelling aspect of the piece is its

\(^{17}\) Ibid., p. 165.
\(^{18}\) Ibid., p. 161.
Ex. 155. Martinu, I, p. 4, mm. 6-11; p. 5, mm. 7-9; II, p. 25, mm. 3-6; p. 31, mm. 6-10; III, p. 36, mm. 1-4; p. 39, mm. 6-9; p. 44, mm. 3-5; p. 44, mm. 19-21; IV, p. 48, mm. 1-5; p. 49, mm. 1-5; p. 53, mm. 9-11.
Ex. 155 (cont.).

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... treatment of rhythm. Here the influence of Stravinsky is most apparent. At the very outset, three-note patterns are set in groups of four to the beat, imparting rhythmic stress to each note in turn, as seen in Example 156, page 151. Later, a pattern of five eighth notes is found similarly in a measure of $\frac{6}{8}$, as in Example 157. Hemiola is also frequently found (see Example 158).
Ex. 156. Martinů, I, p. 2, mm. 1–2 (strings omitted).

Ex. 157. Martinů, I, p. 5, mm. 1–4 (strings omitted).

Ex. 158. Martinů, III, p. 36, mm. 6–8 and I, p. 10, mm. 10–11 and p. 11, m. 1 (strings omitted in second part).
Syncopation, encountered on virtually every page, is especially prominent in thematic ideas, as seen in the main themes of the first and third movements (Example 155, page 149).

A technique similar to the metrical modulation of Elliott Carter occurs in the first movement. An almost imperceptible slowing of tempo is achieved at the beginning of the development by setting an identical pattern of twelve sixteenth notes first as three groups of four notes each in \( \frac{3}{4} \), then as two groups of six notes each in \( \frac{6}{8} \), the sixteenth note remaining at a constant speed.

Ex. 159. Martinů, I, p. 8, mm. 8-10 and p. 9, mm. 1-3 (strings omitted).

A further change, this time to a quicker pulse, is suggested by the left-hand notes in the piano found in the last two measures of Example 159—four counts to the measure in \( \frac{12}{16} \) are implied. Stability is finally achieved by the entrance of viola and cello (not shown) which re-establishes the metrical pulse of two beats per measure.

Meter changes within movements are quite common. All four movements manifest this phenomenon. The finale has a straightforward change from compound to simple meter (\( \frac{12}{8} \) to \( \frac{4}{4} \)), but the slow movement moves subtly from \( \frac{3}{4} \) to \( \frac{2}{4} \) (which becomes \( \frac{4}{8} \)), then to \( \frac{3}{8} \), and later back
to \( \frac{3}{4} \) and \( \frac{3}{8} \). The scherzo, enigmatically set in \( \frac{2}{6} \) (the latter is the actual meter), subsequently goes to \( \frac{3}{8} \). Its trio begins in \( \frac{2}{4} \) and concludes in \( \frac{3}{4} \).

Martinů's harmony, basically triadic, is generally non-functional and non-chromatic (although minor exceptions to both the latter designations may be found). Occasional quartal sounds, triadic structures with false relations, and harmonic parallelism are encountered, along with a great quantity of polychords and triads with added notes (in particular the added sixth and added second).

The favored polychord, a sonority superimposing A major over E-flat major, is introduced at the outset


and recurs many times throughout the piece, in each movement save the third.

Ex. 161. Martinů, II, p. 30, mm. 4-8 (strings omitted).
Ex. 161 (cont.). Martini, IV, p. 54, mm. 7-8.

Other polyphonic chords appear at the end of the scherzo (see Example 162, page 155).
Ex. 162. Martinů, III, p. 43, mm. 16-21.

and in the development of the initial movement, as in Example 163. Here the left hand of the piano part moves up chromatically with major (and three minor) triads, while the right hand outlines intervals of major thirds (two of them are minor) clashing with the triads below. Several of these structures involve false relations. Beginning with the third measure, a rapidly moving series of major triads in the right hand is set against major chords on other roots which are arpeggiated for a full measure each in the left hand.

Ex. 163. Martinů, I, p. 13, mm. 5-8 (strings omitted).
The penultimate chord of the work combines three distinct sonorities—an major-major seventh chord on d (piano, viola and first violin), a C major chord (cello and second violin), and an E-flat minor chord (piano, left hand).

Ex. 164. Martinú, IV, p. 60, mm. 9–10.

The ending of the first movement displays a pattern of two consecutive chords, basically tonic and sub-dominant of F major, each of which includes added notes—specifically, a second and a sixth above the root.

Ex. 165. Martinú, I, p. 24, mm. 4–5 (strings omitted).
Similar added notes may be observed in Example 166.

Ex. 166. Martinů, III, p. 46, mm. 3-6 (strings omitted).

An added ninth is utilized in the trio of the scherzo movement.


Occasional melodic outlines of fourths and fifths are encountered.

Ex. 168. Martinů, III, p. 47, mm. 9-12 (piano omitted).
Parallel deployment of triadic sounds is rather common. Besides those in the subordinate theme of the first movement (see Example 155 on page 149), one may observe further instances in Example 169.

Ex. 169. Martinů, IV, p. 48, mm. 7-8 (piano tacet) and III, p. 44, mm. 15-19.

Melodic chromaticism is limited; there are, however, a few passages where the piano has chromatic scales in parallel fifths.

Ex. 170. Martinů, I, p. 24, mm. 8-11 (strings omitted).
At one place in the scherzo, a series of major thirds implying many false relations is played by the violins. This device temporarily obliterates the sense of tonality.

Ex. 171. Martinů, III, p. 47, mm. 1–6 (piano omitted).

Definite key centers, encountered at important locations in the structure, are established by several means. On rare occasions, this end is accomplished functionally.

Ex. 172. Martinů, II, p. 28, m. 9 and p. 29, mm. 1–2 and III, p. 46, mm. 1–2 (strings omitted).
More often, pedal-points serve the purpose—Example 173 shows a highly ornamented pedal which sets up E minor despite the contradictory tones in the lower strings.

Ex. 173. Martinů, I, p. 8, mm. 3–10.

In the introductory material of the first movement, a persistent pedal on a is transferred from instrument to instrument throughout, helping to give an impression of D minor (even though the ultimate tonality is to be F major). Occasionally, scale passages are employed to suggest a key.

Ex. 174 (cont.).

The emotional appeal of the quintet lies in the juxtaposition of vigorous, dancelike sections with others of simple, lyric quality. Only in the trio of the scherzo movement is there a hint of anything strange or mysterious. While neither grandeur nor profound feelings are expressed, the piece contains considerable verve and charm as the result of an almost inexhaustible store of imaginative sonorous and rhythmic effects.
Idiomatic Treatment

The Martinů quintet is, in general, a lyrical work, but one in which rhythmic vitality, idiomatic understanding, and a transparent clarity of texture are constantly in evidence. In every aspect of its composition may be detected the composer's sense of proportion and moderation. The work has the virtue of sounding brilliant without making exorbitant demands on the technical resources of the players; its string writing reflects the intimate knowledge and expertise which only a professional orchestral violinist could command.

There is an admirable juxtaposition of varying textures and colors throughout the work. Rests are employed for short intervals of a measure or two on a few occasions, as for example in one of the several antiphonal passages between strings and piano.

Ex. 175. Martinů, II, p. 25, mm. 1-8.
Ex. 175 (cont.).

A similar instance in the trio of the third movement has slightly longer rests (shown in Example 176, page 164). More obvious are the many sections which set piano and strings apart for an extended time in order to provide maximum contrast of color. There is a long passage in the slow movement for strings alone, quoted in part in Example 177.
Ex. 176. Martinů, III, p. 45, mm. 1-16.

Ex. 177. Martinů, II, p. 33, mm. 5-14.
Example 178 shows a similar occurrence in the first section of the finale (quoted in part).

Ex. 178. Martinů, IV, p. 48, mm. 1–3 (piano tacet).

The last movement also includes a cadenza for piano alone (quoted in part).

Ex. 179. Martinů, IV, p. 58, mm. 1–6 (strings tacet).

A further variety of color, as well as clarity of texture, is obtained through more subtle means. The legato theme of the middle section in the slow movement is scored as a solo for first violin, accompanied by pizzicato interjections in the cello and brief slurred
figures alternating between Violin II and viola. The piano contributes material similar to the latter. Martinu's characteristic care in the indication of dynamics which vary among the several parts is also obvious.

Ex. 180. Martinů, II, p. 31, mm. 6-8.

Other instances of attention to individual dynamic levels are shown in Example 181 and 182. Example 181 (the main theme of the first movement) illustrates also one of the few solo string passages in the piece—note-worthy are the cello's high register and the thin accompaniment.

Ex. 181. Martinů, I, p. 4, mm. 6-11.
Ex. 181 (cont.).

Ex. 182. Martinů, I, p. 12, mm. 6-7.

Dynamic levels range from ff to pp, but the extremes are rare. Markings of forte, piano and mezzo-forte predominate, testifying to Martinů's moderation in this regard. Sudden, dramatic changes from one level to another are completely absent.

Oddly enough, there is but sparse use of string doublings. Conventional octave doubling of all four strings is avoided save
in one place where they play, not a melody, but an accompanying figure. Example 183 illustrates this doubling in passagework which alternates continuously between consecutive strings in each instrument (one string stopped, the other open) and whose progressively diminishing intervals arrive, in the third measure, at unisons.

Ex. 183. Martinu, IV, p. 53, mm. 9-13 (piano omitted).

Doubling of the three lower string instruments occurs in a passage from the finale—here the left-hand part of the piano participates in the doubling, adding staccato off-beat eighths while the right-hand part and Violin I share tremolos. Of interest is the manner in which Martinu scores the latter effect. The violin rapidly reiterates its double-stopped octave while the piano alternates the two notes of its octave—in each case the composer utilizes a technique specifically suited to the individual instrument.

Ex. 184. Martinu, IV, p. 55, mm. 15-17.
A series of disjunct motives is cleverly joined in such a way as to give the aural impression of continuity, with alternate pairs of instruments doubled.

Ex. 185. Martinů, IV, p. 59, mm. 1–2 (piano omitted).

The writing for strings is characterized by a generally high register, much use of tremolos and trills, and frequent crossing of parts. The viola part, for instance, is found in treble clef a great deal of the time—even the cello has an unusually large number of measures in that clef.

Ex. 186. Martinů, I, p. 3, mm. 3–6 (piano omitted).
An instance in which all four string instruments are set low in their registers is given in Example 187 as a rare exception.
Ex. 187. Martinů, II, p. 27, mm. 1–3 (piano omitted).

The result of this use of high registers is an airiness and brilliance not obtainable by other means.

A particularly widespread string passage from the slow movement includes great leaps in the first violin, from a stopped to an open string.
Ex. 188. Martinů, II, p. 30, mm. 1–3 (piano omitted).

The opening of the finale contains contrapuntal writing which has each of the upper three strings playing successively the same figure at identical pitch level—a phenomenon which imparts a marvelous change of color, as seen in Example 189, page 171.
Ex. 189. Martinů, IV, p. 48, mm. 4–6 (piano omitted).

One will observe in Example 190 (as well as in the preceding example) Martinů's frequent crossing of parts. The uppermost line is by no means always in the first violin part.

Ex. 190. Martinů, II, p. 33, mm. 5–14 (piano tacet).

A clever overlapping between the two violins is achieved in Example 191, page 172. Trills occur quite commonly: in octaves, as seen in Example 192, in succession (Example 193), and in combination with tremolos (Example 194). The latter, almost always of the measured type, may be found in numerous places throughout the work. A restless, urgent quality results.
Ex. 191. Martinu, I, p. 11, mm. 1–4 (piano omitted).

Ex. 192. Martinu, I, p. 14, mm. 1–3 (piano omitted).


Ex. 194. Martinu, I, p. 7, mm. 1–3 (piano omitted).
Multiple stops are infrequent. The viola has three-note pizzicato chords in the scherzo.

Ex. 195. Martinu, III, p. 39, mm. 6-8 (piano omitted).

Later in the same movement, all the strings in pairs play multiple stops on beats one and two, while the piano echos them on beat three.

Ex. 196. Martinu, III, p. 41, mm. 1-8.
At the very end of the piece, all strings have multiple stops simultaneously.

Ex. 197. Martinů, IV, p. 60, mm. 7-10.

With the exception of a single natural harmonic for viola in the trio of the scherzo, the piece avoids exotic string colors.

Ex. 198. Martinů, III, p. 46, mm. 1-6 (piano omitted).

Pizzicato, omitted entirely from the initial movement, may be found often thereafter.

Although piano treatment in the quintet tends to favor accompanimental patterns, relatively high registers, and numerous repetitions of three- or four-note rhythmic groupings, the style is neither difficult to master nor ungrateful to play. In view of generally detached articulations and the presence of few long slurs, one sus-
pects that only very limited use of the damper pedal is intended.

An extremely common piano figuration in the work is that shown in Example 199, where a four-note pattern is slightly modified in its interval contour during the course of many repetitions.

Ex. 199. Martinů, IV, p. 49, mm. 1-4 (strings omitted).

The composer wisely alters this pattern in subtle ways during the next few measures, adding thirds to certain prominent notes and varying the left-hand rhythm.

Ex. 200. Martinů, IV, p. 49, mm. 5-6 (strings omitted).

Martinů occasionally employs a technique reminiscent of Liszt—alternation of hands in which a scalewise figure is placed in the upper and lower note of each hand respectively, as in Example 201, page 176.
Ex. 201. Martinů, I, p. 21, mm. 3-4 (strings omitted).

Trill figures of a like description are also found.


Spacing the hands wide apart in order to play arpeggios in contrary motion to each other is a technique which produces a good, full sound with minimum effort. Such a device may be seen in Example 203.

Ex. 203. Martinů, II, p. 30, mm. 1-3 (strings omitted).

A similar result derives from a passage in which octaves in the right hand alternate with single notes in the left on the lower pitch (passages of this kind occur in the Third Piano Concerto of Beethoven and elsewhere—the device is scarcely original with Martinů); such a passage is shown in Example 204, page 177.
Ex. 204. Martinů, I, p. 21, mm. 6-8 (strings omitted).

Rapid chord outlines divided between the hands give a massive swirl of sound with little expenditure of effort (as seen in Example 161, page 154).

One of the rare cases of thick piano texture is shown in Example 205 from the scherzo—but even here, the shortness of the left-hand notes prevents the buildup of great sonority.

Ex. 205. Martinů, III, p. 39, mm. 1-5 (strings omitted).

A further instance shows a deliberately muddy sound in the lower register (it should be emphasized that this is indeed a rare occurrence in this piece; equally uncommon is the setting of the string quartet in block-chord fashion). Example 206, page 178 illustrates both techniques.
Ex. 206. Martinů, I, p. 22, mm. 7-10.

Use of the high register of the piano without lower support occurs in many places; Example 207 involves an ornamental pedal-point which helps to establish the key of E (major, then minor).

Ex. 207. Martinů, I, p. 8, mm. 4-7 (strings omitted).

Block chords for the piano in high register against figural accompaniment in the strings occur in the development of the first movement, as seen in Example 208, page 179.
Martinů was adept at finding subtle ways to vary the sonority while keeping rhythmic momentum alive. Such a case is Example 209, from the development section of the first movement. Two parallel, scalewise lines at the interval of a sixth become three-note arpeggiated figures outlining chords first in similar then in contrary motion.

Ex. 209. Martinů, I, p. 11, mm. 8-10 (strings omitted).

But no matter how thick the sonority, and regardless how difficult a passage sounds, Martinů is careful to place it easily under the hand of the player—as in Example 210, where neither hand exceeds the stretch of an octave until measure three, where the left hand has a tenth. The example is found on page 180.

The idiomatic treatment of the Martinů quintet, then, reveals a composer keenly aware of the ways in which maximum effect may be obtained with minimum effort. The strings are deployed with uncommon insight into their capabilities; and the piano writing, while hardly virtuosic, is effective and never obscures the strings. Balance and variety are both maintained with sure skill.