



CHAMBER MUSIC

Introducing a New Collaborative Work

by Nancy Oliveros Shows

Mvt. 1 *Dreams of Joy* Excerpt

Adagio, with happiness ♩ = 60

The musical score is arranged in two systems. The first system contains the parts for A. Vln. I, A. Vln. II, A. Vla., and A. Vcl. The second system contains the parts for Cl. Vln. I, Oc. Vln. I, Cl. Vln. II, Oc. Vln. II, Cl. Vla., Oc. Vla., Cl. Vcl., and Oc. Vcl. The tempo is Adagio with a metronome marking of ♩ = 60. The mood is 'with happiness'. Dynamics include *f* (forte) and *mf* (mezzo-forte). A box labeled 'E' is placed above the first violin part in the second system.

On February 5, 2022, students of the Artaria Chamber Music School (ACMS <https://www.artaria-cms.org/>), a weekly chamber music coaching program led by the Artaria String Quartet in St. Paul, and the Kamoinge String Ensemble, led by Earl Ross, artist teacher and director at the Walker West Music Academy (<https://walkerwest.org/>), also in St. Paul, made history by joining together to give the premiere performance of a new chamber work, *The Joy Diptych*, by composer and social activist, Anthony R. Green (b. 1984).

Commissioned by the Artaria String Quartet (ASQ) to honor Black History Month, “joy” was in the air from the start of the first of two ninety-minute rehearsals at St. John’s Episcopal Church on the Hill, home to the ASQ and ACMS, to the final notes in the warm ambience of Sundin Music Hall at Hamline University.

The Joy Diptych is a ten-minute work written for the Artaria String Quartet (A parts) and string orchestra comprising intermediate (Cloud) and beginner (Ocean) parts. It can be performed with or without conductor.

Ray Shows, first violinist of the ASQ, served as leader at the premiere, with all twenty-two violins and violas choosing to stand (four cellos were seated) onstage in a semi-circle. A quartet of advanced high school chamber musicians from ACMS volunteered and were assigned the Cloud parts. Members of Walker West’s talented middle and high school-age Kamoinge String Ensemble were assigned the Ocean parts and were prepared by Earl Ross in advance of the first large ensemble rehearsal.

Anthony R. Green’s vast musical and visual creations have been presented in over 25 countries on six continents and include educational outreach. His most important social justice work has been with Castle of our Skins, a concert and education series organization dedicated to celebrating Black artistry through music.

Green provided a comprehensive introduction to his piece to explain the title, the

inspiration and some performance notes:

Regarding *The Joy Diptych*:

Preface

In the visual arts, a diptych is usually conceived of as two separate pieces cohesively belonging to the same work of art. Diptychs can be presented in diverse manners—the two works hanging side by side, one work on a front side and another on the reverse side, two panels that can fold closed, etc. The main aspect in the visual arts is that both pieces belonging to the diptych are created by the same artist.

For *The Joy Diptych*, I used the idea of the diptych to create a 2-movement work with both movements composed by myself, however each movement is inspired by a painting, and those paintings are by two different visual artists.

Movement one is based on Tar Beach Woodcut (1993) by Faith Ringgold. In this work, two children are flying in a starry night sky over a bridge in an implied city. This dream-like painting is full of a subtle, quiet joy which I used as the musical atmosphere for the first movement.

Movement two is based on Jitterbugs III (1941) by William H. Johnson. In this cubist-like painting, two people are dancing enthusiastically in a barren room. Yet there are bright smiles on their faces, their position implies a complexity to their dancing, their clothes and shoes are colorful, and the joy from these two dancers is infectious! Therefore, I composed a fast dance-like movement in a complex ~ 2 time signature, and I imagined these two dancers moving and twirling to this new music as I composed it.

Performance Notes

The first movement of this diptych is rather straight-forward. The sound world should be lush, dream-like, and joyous. The journey should be full and fragrant, and dynamics can be exacerbated when applicable.

The second movement has quite a bit of percussive sounds. Note: if any of the sounds are difficult or impossible to execute as written, they can be substituted for percussive vocalizations (like “pp” or “tr”), hitting or playing external instruments (like a

Mvt. 2 Celebrating Joy Excerpt
Allegro, joyful ♩ = 304 (♩ = 152)

The score is for a 2-movement work. Movement 2 is in 3/4 time, marked *Allegro, joyful* with a tempo of 304 (♩ = 152). The score includes parts for A. Vln. I & II, A. Vla., A. Vcl., Cl. Vln. I & II, Oc. Vln. I & II, Cl. Vla., Oc. Vla., Cl. Vcl., and Oc. Vcl. The percussion part includes 'PAT THIGH' and 'STOMP' sounds. Dynamics range from *cresc.* to *ff*. The score is numbered 44 at the beginning of the excerpt and ends with a page number - 32 -.

small drum or block), or whatever is percussive and convenient that you can substitute.

Below is an explanation of the sounds:

Pat thigh: slap palm of hand against thigh

Snap/Flick: snap fingers (thumb and middle) or flick index or middle finger against a hard surface to make a percussive sound (alternate fingers

if necessary)

Tap Stand: with a pencil or other stick-like object, tap music stand

Knock: knock on instrument, ideally on a part that creates a resonant sound

Stomp: with your foot, step roughly against the ground to make a nice bass sound

As always, have big fun! ~ Anthony R. Green, 14 Dec. 2021

Visually stunning images of Faith Ringgold's *Tar Beach* Woodcut (1993) <https://emuseum.cornell.edu/objects/37525/tar-beach> and William H. Johnson's *Jitterbugs III* (1941) <https://americanart.si.edu/artwork/jitterbugs-iii-11785>, and Ringgold's YouTube reading of her story *Tar Beach* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h9RKJleFdBu> are online and I recommend inviting students to view the art in relation to the music. Also, notice the theme of joy captured in a quote from the last movement of Beethoven's 9th, in the second movement. It quotes the march section, and transfers everything to $\frac{7}{8}$.

Instead of having *primo/secondo* or *first/second* parts, Green uses *cloud (as in upper)*

and *ocean (as in lower)*. The cloud parts are for the more advanced players and the ocean parts are for those with less experience on the instruments. Although some ocean students who want a challenge may be able to play the cloud parts in the first movement, which is, in general, not too difficult. Given the ensemble challenges of playing in $\frac{7}{8}$, the bar is always divided into 3+2+2, making things much easier to feel. If conducted, a 3 pattern is suggested, with a little bit more emphasis/time on the downbeat.

The first performance of *The Joy Diptych* was a great success owing to a masterful composition and neighboring schools

coming together to forge unified bowings and fingerings, precise tuning and entrances, and above all, expressing our joy through the music. I am grateful to the generous expertise of my colleagues in the Artaria String Quartet, the camaraderie of the ACMS and Walker West students, and to our admired musical colleague and friend, Earl Ross.

Nancy Oliveros is a founding violinist of the Artaria String Quartet and is Director of Admissions at the Artaria Chamber Music School <https://www.artaria-cms.org/> and Stringwood Summer Chamber Music Camp. For info about score and parts, contact Anthony R. Green <https://www.anthonyrgreen.com/contact>. ✉