

The Wilderness
for String Quartet

A Thesis Presented for the
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Dedication

To my wife, Sara, for your unconditional love and support.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my deepest thanks to my committee members, Kenneth Jacobs, Leslie Gay, and Brendan McConville, for their assistance, insight, and patience.

Abstract

The Wilderness is a single-movement work for string quartet with a performance time of approximately 14 minutes. This piece was completed in the spring of 2014.

The purpose of this paper is to place the composition within the context of concert music by analyzing its form, melody, harmony, rhythm, and meter and comparing those elements with those in similar examples by 20th and 21st century composers, in particular the post-Romantic string quartet literature.

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The Wilderness – Full musical score.....score.pdf

Chapter 1 — Introduction

Completed in the spring of 2014, *The Wilderness* is a single-movement for string quartet with a performance time of approximately 14 minutes. This paper offers a broad analysis of the work, highlighting some of the most distinguishing and noteworthy aspects of its form, melody, harmony, rhythm, and meter. This discussion will also explore commonalities among works by composers such as Béla Bartók, Leoš Janáček, Igor Stravinsky, Sergei Prokofiev, Francis Poulenc and György Ligeti. Before looking closer at the topics that will be addressed in this paper, however, some note should be made regarding the title of the work.

The Wilderness, as a title, is both evocative and vague, and a brief explanation of its origin will promote an efficient analysis of the piece. The concept of “the wilderness” is two-fold in that it may represent sources of both fear and confidence. In some instances, the wilderness is that which is primeval and unknown. Because the wilderness embodies nature in its purest sense, the laws and mores of civilized society have no influence. The wilderness rails against humankind's attempts to contain and impose boundaries upon the nature. Yet, for those very same reasons, the wilderness can also instill confidence. By instilling sensations of fear and helplessness, the wilderness presents opportunities for adventure, revelation, and triumph. For those who dare seek to venture into it, the rugged and unforgiving wilderness presents significant physical and mental challenges. By overcoming fear and rising to the challenges of the random and merciless, the adventurer may discover new and valuable insights into his own self and into the constructs of humanity. Thus, the interplay of fear and confidence conjured by competing perspectives on the wilderness serves to foster strength, wisdom, curiosity, and restraint in the observer/participant. It is from all of these attributes that I drew inspiration for *The Wilderness*.

Turning to the compositional structure of the work, as will be discussed at length in Chapter 2, *The Wilderness* was written as a single continuous form and consists of nine unique Episodes. We can observe three large subdivisions in the work, Sections I-III, each containing three related Episodes. Section I (Episodes 1-3) explores texture and pulse through its use of pedal figures, repeated-note patterns, and simple melodic fragments. Section II (Episodes 4-6) is rhythmically complex and often mechanical in feeling, with much of the rhythmic interest deriving from the use of shifting time signatures and unequal rhythms; Section III (Episodes 7-9), the shortest of the three Sections, traces a short melodic motive through various rhythmic and melodic treatments and contrapuntal juxtapositions. It is my intention that the three sections combine, in succession, to form a complete musical experience.

Generally speaking, as will be explored in depth in Chapters 3 and 4, the melodic and harmonic language of *The Wilderness* is tonal and consonant. The interval of the fifth—an ancient and primal interval—plays a significant role throughout the work. It is present both as a melodic and harmonic interval, but also as an integral part of the melodic framework in some instances. Further, as will be shown, subtle manipulations of melodic contour serve to play against the listener's expectations of the familiar melodic fifth. Additionally, the piece is characterized by melody-driven harmonic progressions and stark common-tone modulations. These aspects create both forward momentum and unpredictability in the music. As a result, the music often exhibits a raw and unvarnished quality. In this sense, we can see the melodic and harmonic content as representative of the inspiration behind *The Wilderness*.

Furthermore, as addressed in Chapter 6, the various rhythms and metrical frameworks employed throughout the piece are also representative of that inspiration. Section I begins with a wandering and rhythmically uncertain melodic statement, gives way to simple and pulsing

rhythms in simple time, proceeds through a series of “interruptions” that upset the music's attempts to remain in a consistent meter, and then finally achieves an elevated degree of rhythmic variety, agility and interest in the final measures. This process of rhythmic development continues into Section II, in which the initial, syncopated, dance-like rhythm prepares the listener for a driving and mechanical whirlwind that follows. The music charges its way forward through shifting time signatures, conflicting metrical subdivisions, and unequal rhythmic phrases, before bullying its way to the climax in an unwavering duple pulse. Lastly, we will see that the the use of rhythm in Section III is subtle and refined when compared to the preceding Section. The music employs contrapuntal techniques and slight variations in duration to achieve rhythmic interest across the many statements of its main theme. Although it is restrained in its variety, the rhythmic activity in Section III, like that of the rest of piece, is dynamic and unyielding. As illustrated further in the analysis that will commence momentarily, it is those characteristics that reconcile the rhythmic content of *The Wilderness* with the evocations of the work's title.

In the broadest of terms, my intentions in composing this piece were to explore the agility, power, and introspection of the string quartet. In my experience, this particular combination of instruments is well suited to the expression of a wide spectrum of musical ideas. The expansive ranges and complex rhythms are meant to challenge its performers. *The Wilderness* contains no expressive performance directions, with the intention being that performers interpret the music based solely upon dynamics, articulations, tempo changes, and imagination. Much like weary adventurers trekking through the wilderness, the performers of *The Wilderness* must forge their way through the written music and make instinctive decisions at every turn.

Chapter 2 — Form

As mentioned, *The Wilderness* is a single movement containing three identifiable Sections, each breaking down further into three unique Episodes. This Chapter will analyze the structure of the piece by first looking at the form on a macroscopic level and then exploring the qualities of the music that serve to create the implicit subdivisions. By way of this process, it should become clear that the work contains some degree of internal logic, even if that logic is subtle.

To begin, the compositional structure of *The Wilderness* does not fit neatly within any single traditional form. Although the piece makes use of the repetition of musical ideas, each identifiable subsection of the piece is unique. In that sense, the form may be described as “through-composed.” The Oxford Companion to Music instructs that “through-composed” refers to “[a]ny composition that does not rely on repeating sections for its formal design,” although “the term is most usually applied to a song in which the music for each stanza is different.” (Oxford 2014). By way of reference, examples of non-song, through-composed works include Bartók's *Miraculous Mandarin*, Maurice Ravel's *Daphnis et Chloé*, and Igor Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring*. This form is common in ballet music and also in film music because the structure of such works generally defers to the form of the dramatic action.

In the case of *The Wilderness*, a work that is neither song nor ballet, reference to traditional form or works in the literature is not particularly helpful for understanding its structure. Likely more enlightening for the reader, Table 1 below reveals the basic outline of the piece.

Table 1. Formal structure of *The Wilderness*

Section			Section			Section		
I			II			III		
Episode 1	Episode 2	Episode 3	Episode 4	Episode 5	Episode 6	Episode 7	Episode 8	Episode 9
mm. 1-77	mm. 78-180	mm. 181-233	mm. 234-267	mm. 268-370	mm. 371-444	mm. 445-458	mm. 459-499	mm. 500-549

The structure of *The Wilderness* is amorphous, but its development is linear. As shown in Table 1, the work is structured as a single movement with three discrete Sections, each containing three identifiable Episodes. The three Sections contain Episodes of relatively similar musical content, with the Sections focusing on particular musical elements (texture, rhythm, and melody) as mentioned in the previous Chapter. Thus, the piece is sectional, both on large and small scales. It should be emphasized, however, that neither the Sections nor the Episodes are labeled explicitly in the piece. Furthermore, each of the nine Episodes is unique and does not repeat previous material. As will be discussed in Chapter 6, the sectional nature of the piece is consistent with other single-movement works for string quartet. We now proceed to examine the characteristics of each Section in turn.

Section I mainly emphasizes texture and repetition. It does so through the use of simple rhythms, pedal tones and triadic harmony. Here, the focus is on creating a mood and atmosphere by which to prepare the listener for the Sections to come. Accordingly, Section 1 contains little melodic development. Episode 1 begins with a bass pedal sustained under a rising, indeterminate melody. A rapid descending figure in the second violin rounds out the texture as the melody above rises in pitch and intensity. This is followed by a slow, pulsing, homophonic chord progression that steadily increases in tension and quantity of voices. The thickness of the chords is undermined, however, by the use of quartal and quintal chords that impart a hollow quality to the harmonies. Next, Episode 2 begins with a quick, repeated-note pulsation that slowly introduces melodic fragments. This eventually gives way to a second repeated-note pattern based upon a simple, triadic melodic figure, which is traced through various textures and combinations of instruments. The music then proceeds to feature a running-note pattern in the violins, interrupted multiple times by a short, descending melodic figure. Lastly, Episode 3 is

distinguished by its relatively complex rhythmic and melodic material. These rhythms are sporadic, however, and the melodies are wandering and disjointed, harkening back to the beginning of Episode 1. The introduction of compound meter (6/8) lends the music a noticeably different feel before Episode 3 reaches its climax. Despite the heightened level of activity, however, the listener finds little sense of direction or resolution in Episode 3. This is in keeping with the nature of Section 1 in its entirety, which uses subtlety and restraint in order to prepare the listener for the more explicit and gratifying rhythmic and melodic material present later in the work.

As mentioned previously, Section II focuses upon the exploration of rhythm and meter. On the whole, the music in Section II is dynamic and energetic. It drives its way tirelessly through shifting meters and compound rhythms. The few melodic elements that do appear in the music serve largely to accentuate the rhythm. The sensation produced by this rhythmic activity is one of constant alternation between balance and imbalance, certainty and precariousness. The heightened rhythmic energy is apparent from the beginning of Episode 4. Here, the music features a syncopated, dance-like rhythm in the cello, overlain with melodic punctuations that help to carry the music forward. Episode 5 introduces a driving motor rhythm that continues for the bulk of Section II. Featuring extended ostinati, rapidly changing time signatures, unbalanced rhythmic figures, and conflicting foreground and background rhythmic subdivisions, the music in Episode 5 excites the listener and precludes rhythmic certainty. Episode 6, by contrast, continues with driving energy but does so with a simple, alternating pulse in the low register. The churning rhythm in Episode 6 is predictable when compared to Episodes 4 and 5, and here the musical tension is increased mainly by rising and thickening melodic material. In this way, Episode 6 functions as a transition from the rhythm-based preceding material to the

next Section and its focus on melody. With the conclusion of Section II and its often brutal rhythmic energy, the listener's ear is well-conditioned to observe the melodic subtleties of Section III.

A four-note motive with a distinctive rhythm forms the nucleus of Section III, making various appearances and subjecting itself to development through slight manipulations in melodic and rhythmic contour. Section III distinguishes itself by being the shortest of the three Sections and containing music that is somewhat Baroque or Classical in feeling. Melody drives the music, and harmonies are the result of the combination of single melodic lines. Episode 7 begins by presenting the main melodic motive multiple times in isolation. Here, the accompaniment is sparse and the overall musical tension is low. In this way, the listener is introduced slowly to the sound and quality of the motive, making it easier to follow through its development in the following Episodes. Next, Episode 8 features quick, successive presentations of the motive at various pitch levels with rhythmic and melodic alterations. The tension level of Episode 8, although low, is noticeably higher than that of Episode 7. A brief, solo interlude by the viola concludes Episode 8, providing a brief diversion before the return of the motive. Episode 9, the final segment of the piece, begins with three bold, punctuated statements of the main theme. The motive is then subjected to fugal treatment in all four voices, and the music rises steadily in tension and pitch. After the climax of the fugal passage, an energetic, running-note melody carries the music forward, increasing in energy and tension along the way. Finally, rounding out Episode, the work concludes with a second fugal passage, at a higher pitch level, highlighting the intricacies of intertwining statements of the main theme. The piece ends abruptly after the last statement of the motive, leaving the listener both satisfied and expectant.

In sum, *The Wilderness* consists of nine implicit, consecutive Episodes, each distinct from the rest. Although not labeled as such, these Episodes fall into three broader Sections, each focusing on particular musical elements: texture, rhythm, and melody. As discussed, the Episodes are unique but also related by these concerns. Together, the nine Episodes combine, in succession, to form a complete musical experience. As we proceed to take a closer look at the melodies, harmonies, and rhythms that make up the work, the distinctions and interactions between the Episodes will become even more meaningful.

Chapter 3 — Melody

Speaking generally, the melodic material present throughout *The Wilderness* is free in quality and does not always adhere to established rules of resolution and scale-degree function. The melodic vocabulary of *The Wilderness* does, however, consist of conventional major and minor-scale interval patterns. Thus, the melodic content is similar to the form of the piece in that it is unrestrained by, but not completely devoid of, traditional elements. This Chapter will highlight two characteristics of the melodies found in the piece. To be examined first are the multiple, diverse appearances of the interval of the fifth. That will be followed by a discussion regarding the manipulations of melodic contour, specifically of the main theme in Section III. Because the topic of melody presents a potentially limitless source of discussion, the following analysis is not intended to function as an exhaustive study of the melodic content of *The Wilderness*, but rather as an overview of two particularly noteworthy aspects.

The melodic interval of the fifth pervades the piece.¹ From the very beginning of the piece, its use is widespread. For example, in Figure 3-1 below, the first four notes of the opening melodic statement of Section I span a perfect fifth. There, the melody stands out starkly against the pedal tone, and its interval relationships are highlighted as a result. As the melody continues to climb higher, the perfect fifth acts as a benchmark along the way. Figure 3-2 shows this framework present in the melodic ascent from beginning in measure 20. This use of the fifth lends some degree of structure and logic to the otherwise indeterminate melody.

We can observe a comparable use of the fifth as a melodic framework in the music of Bartók. For example, as shown in Figure 3-3, in the opening measures of the third movement of his *Concerto for Orchestra*, Bartók uses the fifth as the structure for the introductory phrase

¹ For the purposes of this paper, references to the interval of a “fifth” include perfect, augmented, and diminished forms of the fifth, as well as inversions of those intervals (fourths).

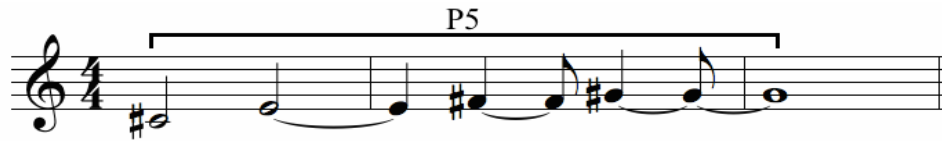


Figure 3-1. *The Wilderness*, Section I: Opening Melodic Statement (mm. 1-3)



Figure 3-2. *The Wilderness*, Section I: Ascending Melody Within Fifth Intervals (mm. 20-28)

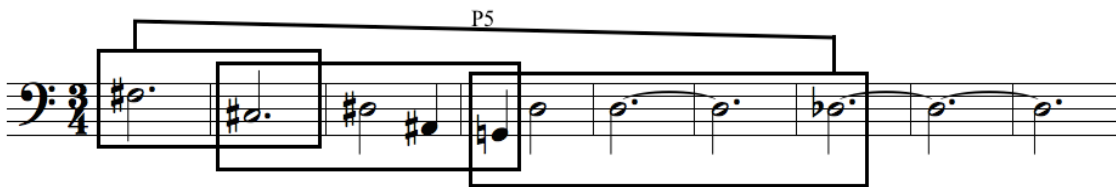


Figure 3-3. Bartók: *Concerto for Orchestra*, III (mm. 1-9) (bass only)

beginning with F-sharp and ending with D-flat. Much like the example in Figure 3-2, Bartók also links together the notes of this phrase with intervals of a fifth. Similarly, as illustrated in Figure 3-4, in the first movement of the same work, Bartók frames both an ascending and descending melodic line within a network of fifth intervals. Contributing to the ubiquity of the sound of the fifth, we can observe a number of fifth intervals nested within the interval relationships that are labeled. Just as with the use of the fifth in *The Wilderness*, Bartók's melodic constructions lend a hollow and often severe quality to the music.

Returning to *The Wilderness*, we observe additional use of the fifth in Section II, where the opening dance-like pattern uses the interval exclusively, as shown in Figure 3-5. This is significant because, as mentioned previously, Section II focuses mainly upon rhythmic energy. Here, the sparse melody that floats above this cello figure accentuates the starkness of the fifth and reinforces the rhythmic function of the line. Throughout this section, the fifth acts in a similar percussive nature. Generally, it is present in the lowest register within groups of short, punctuated notes.

Lastly, as shown in Figure 3-6, we see the fifth making the first of many appearances in the primary motive at the outset of Section III. It is worth noting, however, that although the main theme of Section III appears multiple times after its initial statement, the motive does not always feature the same melodic contour. Also, in some cases, the interval of the fifth is not even present. As shown in Figure 3-7, the motive takes on many different guises. Even with these changes in contour, however, the theme maintains its identity through its distinctive rhythmic character.



Figure 3-4. Bartók: *Concerto for Orchestra*, I (mm. 117-134) (bass only)



Figure 3-5. *The Wilderness*, Section II: Opening Rhythmic Figure (mm. 234-241)



Figure 3-6. *The Wilderness*, Section III: Opening Statement of Main Melodic Theme (mm. 445-456)



Figure 3-7. *The Wilderness*, Section III: Main Melodic Theme in Various Contours (pitch class set and d-seg designations provided for reference)

Additionally, in analyzing the melodic contours of the main theme throughout Section III, we also find a connection to the opening melodic material of Section I. For example, if we turn our attention again to the opening melodic statement of Section I (Fig. 3-1), we see that the first four notes are rhythmically congruent to the main theme. That is, if we designate numerically the notes in terms of duration, with 0 being the shortest, the duration segment (“d-seg”) is 1-2-0-3.² Similar rhythmic patterns are present in most appearances of the main theme throughout Section III. (See Fig. 3-7; Fig. 5-11). Thus, although the connection is subtle, we can find some degree of large scale thematic cohesion in the piece through the rhythmic contour of the melodies.

In this chapter, we have seen how the interval of the fifth plays a significant role in the melodic content of *The Wilderness*. Specifically, the fifth functions prevalent melodic interval, as well as structural framework for melodic phrases. Such use of the fifth is consistent with works from the 20th century literature such as Bartók's *Concerto for Orchestra*. Additionally, we have seen that the rhythmic contour of the various appearances of the main theme of Section III of *The Wilderness* generally is consistent, and that this particular rhythmic contour functions to connect melodic material from the beginning of the piece with that at the end. We now proceed to look at the harmonic nature of *The Wilderness*, where, among other topics of discussion, we will again see a significant use of the interval of the fifth.

2 For more information on duration rows and rhythmic analysis, see Elizabeth West Marvin, “The Perception of Rhythm in Non-Tonal Music: Rhythmic Contours in the Music of Edgard Varese,” *Music Theory Spectrum*, Vol. 13, No. 1 (Spring 1991) 61-78; Andrew Mead, “About *About Time*’s Time: A Survey of Milton Babbitt’s Recent Rhythmic Practice,” *Perspectives of New Music*, Vol. 25, No. ½ (Winter-Summer 1987) 182-235.

Chapter 4 — Harmony

In keeping with many works for string quartet of the 20th and 21st centuries, the overall harmonic character of *The Wilderness* is tonal. Much like the formal and melodic aspects of the piece previously discussed, however, the harmonic language of the work is not bound by traditional conventions or relationships. As this chapter will explore, although the music contains instances of simple, traditional harmonic motion, more often, the harmonies found in the piece are melody-driven. In some cases, the harmonies consist of no more than a doubling of a melody at the interval of a fifth. Throughout the work, quintal, quartal, and extended harmonies are employed at various times. Lastly, we will see that the abrupt common-tone modulations found in the piece resonate with compositional practices of composers like Poulenc and Prokofiev.

To begin, Section I contains perhaps the most elementary and traditional harmonic language in the piece. In particular, the homophonic passage from measures 34-77, and the repeated-note Dorian mode passage from measures 97-137, employ many II – V – I and IV – V – I harmonic progressions. This simplistic harmonic motion reflects the primitive and textural character of Section I.

Conversely, many of the harmonies found in the piece may be described primarily as melody driven. Generally, these harmonies are the result of line doubling, counterpoint, or both. The resultant harmonies are often triadic but generally non-functional. For example, as excerpted in Figure 4-1, the harmonic progression from Section II in measures 291-295 does not follow a traditional course, but rather is a product of the ascending melody doubled at the interval of a third and combined with the running eighth-note pattern in the lowest register. Furthermore, due to its largely contrapuntal nature, Section III also contains many instances of non-traditional



Figure 4-1. *The Wilderness*, Section II: Harmonic Progression (mm. 291-295)

harmonic progressions. For example, as shown in Figure 4-2, the thick fugal texture found in measures 507-516 tends to limit the usefulness of harmonic analysis, as is the case throughout the bulk of Sections 2 and 3.

Much like the melodic aspects of *The Wilderness*, the interval of the fifth plays a role within many of the harmonic constructions of the piece. For instance, as shown in Figure 4-3, the exposed use of the harmonic interval of the fifth in measures 85-87 highlights its consonance, but also its hollowness. Furthermore, most of the chords contained in the homophonic passage of Section I mentioned above are constructed from some combination of fifths and fourths. Figure 4-4 shows some of these chords in isolation.

Apart from the homophonic subsection of Section I, Section II contains some of the fullest harmonies in the piece. For example, as shown in Figure 4-5, measures 310-338 feature a sequence of seventh-chords. This use of seventh-chord harmony, together with the imbalanced meter and uneven melodic phrasing, produces a stimulating texture unlike music elsewhere in the work.

Lastly, as discussed with regard to form, *The Wilderness* is highly sectional. As shown in Table 2, the music moves through numerous tonal centers, sometimes covering five or six different key areas in a single subsection. The speed with which this takes place is such that modulations in *The Wilderness* are generally abrupt and prepared only with common tone threads. Such a modulatory technique was often used by composers such as Leoš Janáček and Francis Poulenc. For example, as shown in Figure 4-6, early in the first movement of Poulenc's *Sextet* we find an abrupt shift from the tonal center of D to that of B using the common tones of D and F-sharp. As is often the case in *The Wilderness*, especially in Section II, the suddenness of Poulenc's modulation in Figure 4-6 is camouflaged by the change in texture, rhythm, and



Figure 4-2. *The Wilderness*, Section II: Fugal Treatment of Main Theme (mm. 507-516)

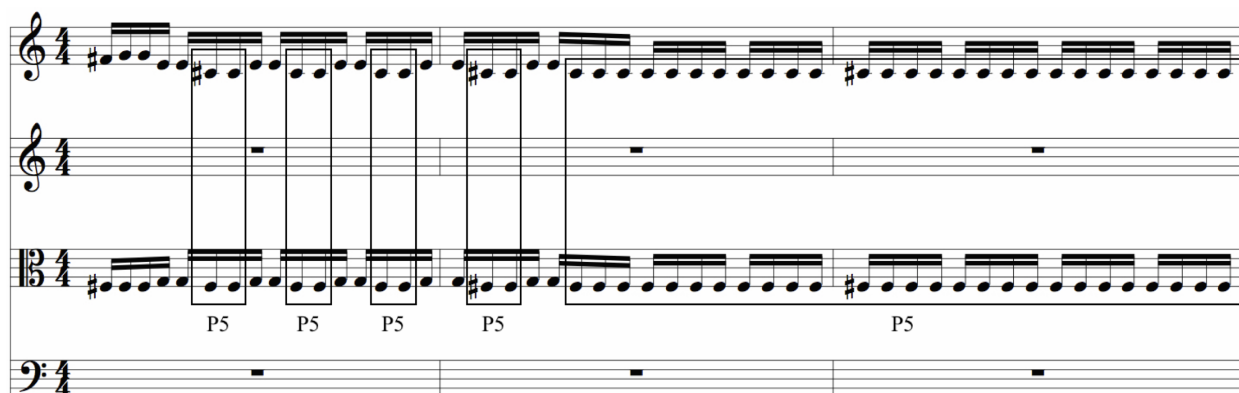


Figure 4-3. *The Wilderness*, Section I: Use of Perfect Fifth Harmonic Interval (mm. 85-87)



Figure 4-4. *The Wilderness*, Section I: Quartal and Quintal Chords

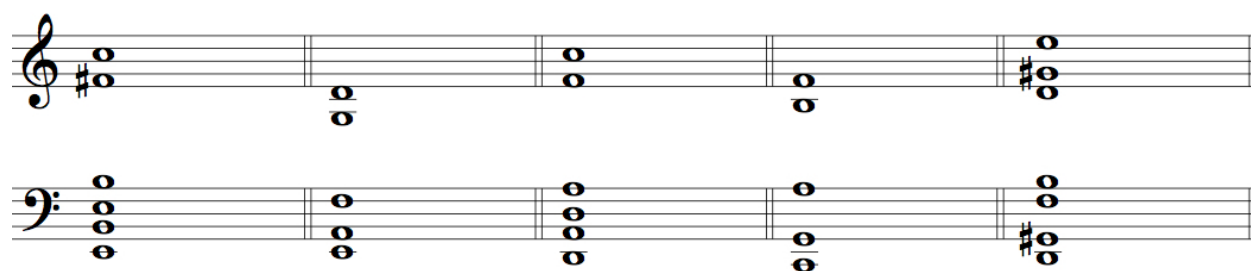


Figure 4-5. *The Wilderness*, Section II: Seventh Chord Constructions

Table 2. Harmonic Outline of *The Wilderness*

Section			Section			Section		
I			II			III		
Episode 1	Episode 2	Episode 3	Episode 4	Episode 5	Episode 6	Episode 7	Episode 8	Episode 9
mm. 1-77	mm. 78-180	mm. 181-233	mm. 234-267	mm. 268-370	mm. 371-444	mm. 445-458	mm. 459-499	mm. 500-549
E → A	C# → G Dorian	B → F# → C#	Db → F	D → F → Gb → F → E → D	E → B	D → F	Db → A → G# → G	B → E → C → Db

The musical score for Poulenc's *Sextet, I* (mm. 70-72) is presented in two systems. The first system (mm. 70-71) is in 3/4 time, and the second system (mm. 72) is in 4/4 time. The score is written for six staves, organized into three systems of two staves each. The first system (mm. 70-71) features a variety of musical notations, including notes, rests, and dynamic markings. The second system (mm. 72) is marked with a circled number 7 above the first staff, indicating a specific measure or section. The dynamic markings include 'mf' (mezzo-forte) and 'sf' (sforzando). The tempo marking 'très sec' (very dry) is present above the first staff of the second system.

Figure 4-6. Poulenc: *Sextet, I* (mm. 70-72)

intensity. In a similar fashion, Janáček employed abrupt modulations in his *String Quartet No. 2*, as shown in Figure 4-7. In that excerpt, from the second movement of the piece, Janáček moves quickly from a tonal center of D-flat to that of F-sharp using the common tone of D-flat.

The impulsive nature of the modulations in *The Wilderness* is reflected within its generally free use of harmony. In this chapter we have seen that, with a few exceptions, both the functional and non-functional harmonic progressions present in the work are the product of melodic combination or embellishment. As discussed, the harmony is often relatively bare, sometimes consisting of only a perfect fifth. This has the effect of allowing moments of particularly rich harmony, such as fifth-based chords and extended seventh-chord constructions, to stand out. On the whole, the non-traditional harmonic language found in *The Wilderness* complements and coincides with its free and organic construction as well as the inspiration behind its creation. We now proceed from the realm of pitch content to that of rhythm and meter.

Più mosso ♩ = 126

sul ponticello

f

acceler. 50

f naturale

mf

mf sul ponticello

f

Figure 4-7. Janacek: *String Quartet No. 2*, II (mm. 45-50)

Chapter 5 — Rhythm and Meter

As mentioned previously, the rhythmic elements of *The Wilderness* provide for the most fruitful discussion of the work, due largely to their breadth, complexity, and relation to the music of other composers. This chapter will look at the interplay of simple and compound meters found in the piece, as well an extensive discussion of the motor rhythm used in Section II. There, as we will see, conflicting subdivisions, extended ostinati, and shifting time signatures contribute to the frenetic and unrefined character of the music. Finally, we will explore the use and effect of rest placement among the various appearances of the main theme in Section III. This chapter will demonstrate the depth and complexity of rhythmic considerations within *The Wilderness* and will find similarities with works of composers like Bartók, Prokofiev, and Stravinsky.

As noted in Chapter 2, in the discussion regarding the formal structure of *The Wilderness*, Section I contains mostly simple rhythms in simple meter. One exception, excerpted in Figure 5-1, is the passage from measures 142-180 that contains instances of “melodic interruptions,” wherein the descending figure heard in measures 138-141 returns to interrupt the running violin pattern with successively lengthened appearances at various pitch levels. Despite these interruptions, however, the pattern carried by the first violin attempts to continue its running-note pattern. The resulting effect is similar to call and response.

As shown in Figure 5-2, consistent compound meter is employed in Section I in measures 200-224. This change in meter, together with the triple-note repetition figures, distinctly changes the feel of the music from that of anything heard prior. Notably, the only other triple-note rhythmic pattern found in Section I is played by the second violin in the opening 32 measures of the work. Although the primary effect of the violin passage is textural, there are distinct three-note subdivisions within the descending pedal group, as illustrated in Figure 5-3. (Note: The



Figure 5-1. *The Wilderness*, Section I: “Melodic Interruption” (mm. 159-163)



Figure 5-2. *The Wilderness*, Section I: Passage in 6/8 (mm. 205-212)

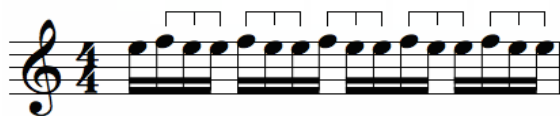


Figure 5-3. *The Wilderness*, Section I: Violin II, Triple-Note Rhythmic Pattern

highest notes sounding throughout the descending pattern are accented to the ear.) Thus, the sense of compound meter, both explicit and implicit, rounds out Section I. Through this subtle connection, the concluding 6/8 passage reveals an element of internal cohesion within the first subsection and also signals an imminent large-scale formal shift.

Although each of the three sections contain noteworthy examples of rhythmic interest, Section II, with its overarching focus on rhythm and meter, provides the most topics for consideration. As discussed in Chapter 3, this Section begins in simple meter with a dance-like figure in the cello. (See Fig. 3-5). After a concluding statement of the dance pattern in double time at measures 264-267, however, the rhythmic feel of Section II changes dramatically. From here, the music takes on a repetitious, mechanical quality. This motor rhythm continues to increase in energy until the end of the section. By way of historical reference, the use of motor rhythm has been used by composers for centuries.³ In the 20th century, composers like Sergei Prokofiev often employed motor rhythm for entire movements of works. For example, as shown in Figure 5-4, Prokofiev used the technique throughout the second movement of his *Scythian Suite*. Additionally, we can observe Prokofiev's extensive use of motor rhythm in the second movement of his *Symphony No. 5*, as excerpted in Figure 5-5.

Returning to *The Wilderness*, as shown in Figure 5-6, the initial eighth-note pattern in 4/4 is nearly identical to the pattern that follows it in 9/8, thus facilitating seamlessly the transition into compound meter. Following a second presentation of the 4/4 figure, the music yet again refuses to align with the constraints of simple meter. First, quarter-note and eighth-note triplet figures complicate the rhythm, as shown in Figure 5-7. Next, as observed in Chapter 4, a rising melody enters in 5/4, but the cello accents every fourth quarter-note. (Fig. 4-1). The effect

3 The Oxford Companion to Music defines “motor rhythm” as “[i]nsistently regular rhythmic repetition” and observes that it “has been a feature of many musical styles, from the Baroque toccata onwards,” although “the metaphor of motoric, mechanistic reiteration is specifically a 20th-century one.” (Oxford 2014).



Figure 5-6. *The Wilderness*, Section II: Transition from 4/4 to Compound Meter (mm. 274-278)



Figure 5-7. *The Wilderness*, Section II: Quarter-note and Eighth-note Triplet Figures (mm. 287-290)

achieved in both examples is a confusion of the background metrical structure by the conflicting surface note values. These passages are followed by a driving rhythmic pattern from measures 296-299, imbalanced ever so slightly by the $8/8 \rightarrow 9/8 \rightarrow 8/8 \rightarrow 7/8$ metrical progression. At measure 304 begins a statement of the 19-note ostinato that underlies the next 29 measures. As shown in Figure 5-8, although divided among three measures, each group of 19-notes sounds as a single period. This periodicity lends the music a sense of predictability and balance, despite the shifting time signatures in which it is notated. Eventually, however, the imbalance returns in measure 334 with a four-measure pattern alternating between also written $8/8$ and $9/8$. Here, the quarter-note triplet figures again serve to undermine the metrical certainty, as shown in Figure 5-9. Similarly, from measures 338-347, the sequence of changing time signatures ($7/8 \rightarrow 9/8 \rightarrow 7/8 \rightarrow 8/8 \rightarrow 7/8 \rightarrow 9/8 \rightarrow 7/8 \rightarrow 6/8$) has the effect of keeping the melodic phrases off balance even though each two-measure unit forms a period.

We can observe Stravinsky's use of a similar technique throughout *The Rite of Spring*, particularly within the “Sacrificial Dance” movement, as excerpted in Figure 5-10. In this single excerpt of 8 measures, Stravinsky changes time signatures 5 times ($3/16 \rightarrow 5/16 \rightarrow 2/8 \rightarrow 3/16 \rightarrow 2/8 \rightarrow 5/16$). As opposed to those in *The Wilderness*, Stravinsky's time signature shifts in this example involve a non-periodic foreground rhythm. Without a periodic grounding, such rapid time signature changes lend a sense of intensity and anxiety to the music, as opposed to stability.



Figure 5-8. *The Wilderness*, Section II: 19-note Ostinato (mm. 304-309)



Figure 5-9. *The Wilderness*, Section II: Quarter-note Triplet Figures (mm. 334-337)

144 145

V-ni I non div. *sempre* div. non div. div. *ff subito*

V-ni II non div. *sempre* div. non div. *ff subito*

V-la non div. *sempre* div. non div. *ff subito*

V-c. non div. *sempre* div. non div. *ff subito*

C-b. *ff subito*

Figure 5-10. Stravinsky: *Rite of Spring*, Sacrificial Dance (mm. 10-17)

Again returning to *The Wilderness*, at measure 347 a new 17-note ostinato statement appears in the cello, as shown in figure 5-11. Similarly notated in multiple measures as the previous ostinato, all 17 notes sound as a single period. As with the 19-note ostinato, the demarcated statements of the figure lend a sense of temporal stability to the music. The demarcation is further emphasized by the octave leap in the first violin at the beginning of each period.

Finally, at measure 371, simple rhythm returns until the conclusion of the section. The meter remains 4/4 throughout, and the cello maintains a basic two-note rhythmic pattern. As opposed to the bulk of the preceding measures, where the musical tension resulted largely from unexpected rhythmic activity, in this concluding part the tension varies and builds as a result of melody. In that sense, it reflects the more lyrical and dance-like initial passage of Section II.

On the whole, much of both the rhythmic and metric activity in Section II is reminiscent of the music of Bartók. The use of the 17-note and 19-note figures was inspired by Bartók's repeating 7-note rhythm and compound time signatures found in the Bulgarian dances of *Mikrokosmos*, as shown in Figure 5-12. Additionally, like in the comparison to the *Rite of Spring* above, a similar, significant use of shifting time signatures is also found in Bartók's *Music for Strings Percussion and Celesta*, as represented in Figure 5-13.



Figure 5-11. *The Wilderness*, Section II: 17-note Ostinato (mm. 347-348)



Figure 5-12. Bartók: *Mikrokosmos*, Book VI, No. 149 (mm. 1-4)

8

75

Figure 5-13. Bartók: *Music for Strings Percussion and Celesta*, I (mm. 74-76)

Finally, as discussed previously with regard to the melodic and harmonic aspects of the work, Section III employs fugal treatment of the main theme. (Fig. 4-2). There, unsurprisingly, the rhythmic activity becomes increasingly complex by virtue of the staggered entrances of the theme. Some additional consideration is due, however, to the variation in rhythmic treatment of the main theme itself throughout Section III. While the main theme repeats multiple times, the separate entrances are distinguished by subtle variation in note duration and placement. For example, as shown in Figure 5-14, the second and third entrances of the theme contain an eighth rest at the beginning, while the first and fourth entrances begin on the downbeat. These slight variations in attack lend the motives a noticeably different feel. Ultimately, although Section III emphasizes melodic material and maintains a 4/4 time signature throughout, the music maintains rhythmic interest by way of contrapuntal textures and small variations in the rhythmic constructions of the theme.

mm. 445-446 pc <0146> d-seg <1203> mm. 459-460 pc <0125> d-seg <1203>

mm. 500-501 pc <0125> d-seg <1203> m. 507 pc <0237> d-seg <1301>

Figure 5-14. *The Wilderness*, Section III: Rhythmic Variation in Main Theme

We have seen in this chapter the significant role played by rhythmic constructions throughout *The Wilderness*. The interactions, and often struggles, between simple and compound meters, and triple and duple note patterns, create a back and forth effect that adds cohesion and interest to the music. The extensive use of motor rhythm in Section II, replete with unequal rhythms, changing time signatures, periodic ostinati, and conflicting rhythmic subdivisions, results in an exciting and forceful experience for the listener. We have also seen how the strategic placement of rests at the beginning of some appearances of the main motive in Section III contributes to a sense of variation among the motivic entrances. On a broad level, the unexpected nature of many of the rhythmic and metrical shifts throughout the work creates suspense and can sometimes disorient the listener. Thus, we can see that the complex rhythmic considerations found in *The Wilderness* reflect the inspiration of “the primeval” that underlies the work. We now turn to the final topic of discussion, genre, wherein we will explore how *The Wilderness* compares to other single-movement works for string quartet.

Chapter 6 — Genre

As observed in the previous chapters, *The Wilderness* is non-traditional in most aspects. It is not, however, entirely alien to the string quartet literature of the 20th and 21st centuries. In the most general of terms, *The Wilderness* is post-Romantic and tonal. As discussed above, much of its melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic content draws directly from the styles and techniques of composers like Bartók, Prokofiev, and Stravinsky. This chapter will demonstrate that the single-movement form of the work, although rare, is not unprecedented.

With respect to its single-movement form, *The Wilderness* finds a number of equivalents amongst major works for string quartet of the 20th and 21st centuries. It should be noted that most compositions for string quartet consist of three, four, or five movements. Some exceptions exist, however, including Arnold Schoenberg's *String Quartet No. 1*, György Ligeti's *String Quartet No. 1*, Dmitry Shostakovich's *String Quartet No. 13*, and Kenneth Jacobs' *Canopy of Dreams*. As shown in Table 3, a closer look at the construction of these single-movement works reveals notable differences and similarities to *The Wilderness*.

Although both the Schoenberg and Shostakovich quartets were composed as single movements, they function as multi-movement works in disguise. Essentially, Schoenberg's *String Quartet No. 1* consists of traditional sonata form. On the other hand, Shostakovich's *String Quartet No. 13* has a symmetrical, slow-fast-slow structure. Interestingly, this form is inversely similar to his *String Quartet No. 7*, completed 10 years prior, which was written in three movements: 1) Allegretto, *attaca*; 2) Lento, *attaca*; 3) Allego – Allegretto. As prescribed by the *attaca* instruction, and possibly in anticipation of the single-movement structure of *String Quartet No. 13*, the three demarcated movements of *String Quartet No. 7* are to be linked in performance. Ultimately, however, despite the single movement classification of both the

Table 3. Structural Comparison: Single-Movement Works for String Quartet

Composer	Schoenberg	Ligeti	Shostakovich	Jacobs	Lewis
Work	<i>String Quartet No. 1</i>	<i>String Quartet No. 1</i>	<i>String Quartet No. 13</i>	<i>Canopy of Dreams</i>	<i>The Wilderness</i>
Year	1905	1954	1970	1991	2014
Time (approx.)	45' 00"	21' 00"	20' 00"	14' 10"	14' 00"
Sections	1. Nicht zu rasch 2. Kräftig 3. Mäßig 4. Mäßig - heiter	1. Allegro grazioso 2. Vivace, capriccioso 3. A tempo 4. Adagio, mesto 5. Presto - Prestissimo 6. molto sostenuto – Andante tranquillo 7. Più mosso 8. Tempo di Valse, moderato, con eleganza, un poco capriccioso 9. Subito prestissimo 10. Subito: molto sostenuto 11. Allegretto, un poco gioviale 12. Allarg. Poco più mosso 13. Subito allegro con moto, string. poco a poco sin al prestissimo 14. Prestissimo 15. Allegro comodo, gioviale 16. Sostenuto, accelerando - Ad libitum, senza misura 17. Lento	1. Adagio 2. Doppio movimento 3. Tempo primo	None	None

Shostakovich and Schoenberg quartets, the major sections of those works are clearly delineated in character. In the end, the most significant common denominator between those works and *The Wilderness* is the broad sectional divisions.

Turning to Ligeti's *String Quartet No. 1*, we find a very different structure. The piece contains 17 contrasting sections, each with a unique tempo and character. Seemingly novel musical ideas enter with every section, much akin to the progression of subsections in *The Wilderness*. Nevertheless, it is the multitude of unique subdivisions that distinguishes the two works. Although *The Wilderness* contains at least nine different subsections, each of those corresponds to the overall character, tempo, and intensity of the broader Sections 1, 2, and 3, respectively. The Ligeti quartet, on the other hand, is constructed of a continuous flow of divergent sections. That distinction notwithstanding, the sectional construction of *The Wilderness* is vastly more similar to Ligeti's *String Quartet No. 1* than to the Schoenberg or Shostakovich quartets discussed above.

With respect to the Jacobs quartet, the distinction with *The Wilderness* lies at the opposite end of the spectrum. Although *Canopy of Dreams* is marked with various tempi and performance directions such as “Intensely,” “Playfully,” and “Tearfully,” the work maintains a relatively consistent character throughout. Indeed, of all the single-movement works discussed here, the Jacobs quartet is perhaps truest to its form. In that respect, it differs materially from *The Wilderness* and its three broad sectional divisions.

Thus, as we have seen, *The Wilderness* is not alone among single-movement works for string quartet. Although such works are few and far between when compared to the majority of the string quartet literature of the 20th and 21st centuries, major composers like Schoenberg, Shostakovich and Ligeti have composed in single-movement form. *The Wilderness* differs from

those works, however, in its lack of explicit inner movements or subsections. As we have seen however, *The Wilderness* is sectional, even though those sections are implicit. Finally, it is the sectional disparate nature of the material heard in the *The Wilderness* that distinguishes it from the more recent Jacobs string quartet, which remains relatively consistent in character throughout its single movement. In sum, the classification of a single-movement string quartet is a broad one. As we have seen, works of various styles and constructions fall under that category, and *The Wilderness* is merely another recent addition to the bricolage.

Chapter 7 — Conclusion

Perhaps the broadest and most useful observation to be gleaned from the preceding analysis of *The Wilderness* is that the work does not adhere to traditional models of form, melody, harmony or rhythm. The single-movement, through-composed structure sets the piece apart from most of its predecessors in the modern string quartet literature. Generally, the melodic material is free and relies heavily upon the interval of the fifth. We saw that similar rhythmic contours of statements of the main melodic theme of Section III serve to bind that Section together, as well as to connect it with the earliest portions of the piece. Harmonic constructions in the work also employ the fifth interval, and are often simply the result of melodic doubling and contrapuntal writing. Quartal, quintal, and extended seventh-chord harmonies are highlighted in various moments, standing out starkly against some of the more barren and hollow harmonic constructions. The harmonic motion of the music is, at times, highly active, and modulations heard throughout *The Wilderness* are often abrupt and turn only upon a single common tone. Rhythmically, the work is dynamic and has the ability to challenge both listeners and performers. Simple and compound meters are pitted against one another in many instances, lending the music a restless and unrestrained quality. As we observed, Section II is rhythmically complex, as a driving motor rhythm persists and forces its way through various changes in meter and conflicting rhythmic subdivisions. Finally, the use of delayed entrances of the main theme in Section III adds variety and interest to the multitude of appearances.

Despite its novelty, however, we have seen that *The Wilderness* finds many connections with other concert music of the 20th and 21st centuries. The compositional practices of composers such as Béla Bartók, Leoš Janáček, Igor Stravinsky, Sergei Prokofiev, Francis Poulenc and György Ligeti are reflected in various elements throughout the piece. As a tonal, post-Romantic

work for string quartet, *The Wilderness* builds upon the works of such composers and does so with a similar spirit of innovation and challenge to convention.

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Appendix

The Wilderness
for String Quartet

Full musical score

(see attached file)

Vita

Samuel Lewis was born in Chattanooga, Tennessee, to the parents of Henry and Lynn Lewis. In 2007, Samuel received a Bachelor of Music degree from the Berklee College of Music in Boston, Massachusetts. In 2014, he received a Juris Doctorate degree from the University of Tennessee College of Law. From 2009 to 2014, Samuel studied composition at the University of Tennessee with Dr. Kenneth A. Jacobs.

Samuel has composed music for a wide variety of instruments and ensembles, including symphony orchestra, and has also written a number of musical scores for film projects. While attending the Berklee College of Music, Samuel was awarded the Esterhazy String Quartet Excellence in Composition Award for his short work entitled “A Misgiving for String Quartet.”

Samuel resides currently in Chattanooga, Tennessee, and is pursuing a career in law.