



Weiss

'Elle'  
A String Quartet

MMXIII

A Note from the Composer:

'Elle', a string quartet, is a piece meant to explore the gender inequality of music and music theory. The idea that certain aspects of music theory are either masculine or feminine has been a topic of several scholarly articles and has been in books for quite some time. Perhaps the most famous insights into this theory come from Susan McClary, a musicologist associated with the "New Musicology". In McClary's book, she examines (among other topics) gendered aspects of traditional music theory and gendered sexuality in musical narrative.

Personally, the most intriguing theory that McClary examines is the sexual identity of the sonata form, a well-established (and perhaps the most recognizable and widely used) form of musical composition. What McClary's examination of sonata form boils down to is that sonata form can be interpreted as sexist, or misogynistic and imperialistic. Once interpreted as such, it is easy to see the evidence behind the theory. The primary key of a sonata form can be interpreted as the masculine key area, and the secondary key area as feminine. Over the course of the form, the primary key is supposed to usurp the secondary key. We typically see the secondary theme played in the primary key area. Therefore, the feminine key area is seen as something to be explored and conquered, taken over completely by the masculine key area.

While certainly controversial among musicologists, the theory is also very interesting. The implications that it holds for traditional music theory cannot be understated. What would a piece that sought to subvert the traditional form and established gender roles sound like? What would such a piece's tonal structure look like? Could the sonata form hold under such practices, or would a new form result?

From a compositional standpoint, these implications are far too interesting to simply ignore. Why stick to the established form of music when such a promising horizon is in sight?

From a personal standpoint, why would a conscious person allow for such inequality in gender roles to exist in any medium?

From an intellectual standpoint, how could one pass up the opportunity to probe the theory behind such a well-established practice?

It is from these three standpoints that I wrote 'Elle'. Personally, intellectually, and compositionally, I could not have not written this piece of music. The many insights that such a piece would provide in all these areas are too many to list. Even if the piece is a complete failure, the discussion as to why it was such a failure would be well worth the composition by itself.

So before the first notes were on the page, I decided upon the form of the piece. Sonata form would be the obvious blueprint, but many liberties would have to be taken. Here, the primary key area and secondary key area would remain in their perceived gender roles. The exposition of the piece would remain largely intact, with the primary key area presenting the primary theme, and the secondary key area presenting the secondary theme, and then modulating back into the primary key for the repeat of the exposition.

The development, for my intents and purposes, would explore the tonal possibilities of both themes in the typical manner of sonata form. The major change would come near the end of the development, where the primary theme would be played in the secondary key area very strongly. This would have to be a convincing effect, enough to make an audience think that they were actually in a 'home' key. Then the secondary theme would play again in the secondary key area, even though the secondary key area now clearly sounds like 'home'. This restatement would immediately be followed by a 'cadential' figure in which the main theme is again stated, in the secondary key area, to end the piece.

This form sought to usurp the traditional gender roles. Instead of the masculine key area overcoming and taking over the feminine key area, the feminine key area influences and changes the masculine key area to come into alignment with the feminine key. Hopefully, this practice produces well-perceived aural results, as well as a clear separation and contrast to traditional musical form and perceived gender roles in music.

- Raymond Weiss

# 'Elle'

Score

A String Quartet

Raymond Weiss

Allegro ♩ = 126

Musical score for Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Cello. The score is in 4/4 time, key of B-flat major. It features dynamic markings of *ff* and *p*, and includes first endings marked with a '1' over a bracket. The strings play a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes.

Musical score for Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Cello. The score continues from the previous system. It features dynamic markings of *ff* and *p*, and includes first endings marked with a '1' over a bracket. The strings play a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes.

Musical score for Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Cello, marked with a section 'A'. The score is in 6/8 time, key of B-flat major. It features dynamic markings of *mf*, *p*, and *ff*. The Violin I part has a melodic line with slurs, while the other strings provide a rhythmic accompaniment.

B

20

Vln. I *mf* *ff* *mp*

Vln. II *p* *ff* *mp*

Vla. *p* *ff* *mf*

Vc. *mp* *ff* *mf* *f*

25

Vln. I *mf* *ff* *mf*

Vln. II *mf* *ff* *mf*

Vla. *f* *mf* *ff* *mf*

Vc. *mp* *f* *mf* *ff*

C

30

Vln. I *ff* *f*

Vln. II *ff* *mf* *mf*

Vla. *ff* *mf*

Vc. *f*

36

Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Violoncello parts for measures 36-42. The score is in a key with three flats and a common time signature. Dynamics include *ff* and *f*. There are accents and hairpins throughout. A fermata is present over the first measure of measure 42.

43

Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Violoncello parts for measures 43-47. The key signature changes to two flats, and the time signature changes to 4/4. Dynamics include *ff*, *mp*, and *mf*. There are accents and hairpins. Measure 43 has a *D* chord marking above it. Measure 47 has a fermata.

48

Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Violoncello parts for measures 48-53. The time signature changes to 6/8. Dynamics include *f*. There are accents and hairpins. Measure 48 has a fermata.

E

55

Vln. I  
Vln. II  
Vla.  
Vc.

Detailed description: This system contains measures 55 through 59. It features four staves: Violin I (Vln. I), Violin II (Vln. II), Viola (Vla.), and Violoncello (Vc.). The key signature is three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat) and the time signature is 4/4. A double bar line with a repeat sign is placed at the beginning of measure 55. The Vln. I part has a dynamic marking of *mf* and a hairpin crescendo leading to a *f* dynamic in measure 59. The Vln. II part has a dynamic marking of *mf* and a hairpin crescendo leading to a *f* dynamic in measure 59. The Vla. part has a dynamic marking of *mf* and a hairpin crescendo leading to a *f* dynamic in measure 59. The Vc. part has a dynamic marking of *mf* and a hairpin crescendo leading to a *f* dynamic in measure 59.

60

Vln. I  
Vln. II  
Vla.  
Vc.

Detailed description: This system contains measures 60 through 64. It features four staves: Violin I (Vln. I), Violin II (Vln. II), Viola (Vla.), and Violoncello (Vc.). The key signature is three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat) and the time signature is 4/4. The Vln. I part has a dynamic marking of *mf* and a hairpin crescendo leading to a *f* dynamic in measure 64. The Vln. II part has a dynamic marking of *mf* and a hairpin crescendo leading to a *f* dynamic in measure 64. The Vla. part has a dynamic marking of *mf* and a hairpin crescendo leading to a *f* dynamic in measure 64. The Vc. part has a dynamic marking of *mf* and a hairpin crescendo leading to a *f* dynamic in measure 64.

F

65

Vln. I  
Vln. II  
Vla.  
Vc.

Detailed description: This system contains measures 65 through 69. It features four staves: Violin I (Vln. I), Violin II (Vln. II), Viola (Vla.), and Violoncello (Vc.). The key signature is three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat) and the time signature is 4/4. A double bar line with a repeat sign is placed at the beginning of measure 65. The Vln. I part has a dynamic marking of *mf* and a hairpin crescendo leading to a *f* dynamic in measure 69. The Vln. II part has a dynamic marking of *mf* and a hairpin crescendo leading to a *f* dynamic in measure 69. The Vla. part has a dynamic marking of *mf* and a hairpin crescendo leading to a *f* dynamic in measure 69. The Vc. part has a dynamic marking of *mf* and a hairpin crescendo leading to a *f* dynamic in measure 69.

70

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

76

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

*mp*

*f*

*f*

*mp*

*sf*

*sf*

*sf*

*sf*

G

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

*ff*

*ff*

*ff*

*ff*

H

1

1

1

1

89

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

*mf* *f*

*mp*

*mp*

*mf* *f*

97

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

*ff*

*p*

*p*

*p*

*ff*

*p*

I

107

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

*fp*

*fp*

*fp*

*fp*

J



116

Vln. I *sfmf*

Vln. II *mf* *ff*

Vla. *mf* *ff*

Vc. *sfmf*

Detailed description: This system covers measures 116 to 120. The Vln. I part features a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with accents, marked *sfmf*. The Vln. II part has a melodic line starting in measure 118, marked *mf* and *ff*. The Vla. part mirrors the Vln. II line. The Vc. part continues the eighth-note pattern from Vln. I, also marked *sfmf*.

121

Vln. I *f* *mf*

Vln. II *ff* *f*

Vla. *ff* *ff* *ff* *mf*

Vc. *ff* *mf*

Detailed description: This system covers measures 121 to 125. The Vln. I part has a melodic line marked *f* and *mf*. The Vln. II part has a melodic line marked *ff* and *f*. The Vla. part has a melodic line marked *ff* and *mf*. The Vc. part continues the eighth-note pattern, marked *ff* and *mf*.

126

*rit.* **K** *a tempo*

Vln. I *fp* *ff* *ff*

Vln. II *fp* *ff* *ff*

Vla. *fp* *ff* *fp* *ff*

Vc. *fp* *ff* *fp* *ff*

Detailed description: This system covers measures 126 to 130. Measures 126-127 are marked *rit.* and feature a melodic line in all parts marked *fp*. At measure 128, there is a key signature change to C major (indicated by a 'K' in a box) and the tempo returns to *a tempo*. The melodic lines in all parts are marked *ff*. The Vln. I and Vln. II parts have a first ending bracket labeled '1' at the end of the system.

133

Vln. I *ff*

Vln. II *ff*

Vla. *ff*

Vc. *ff*

1

139

Vln. I *p* *mf*

Vln. II *mp*

Vla. *mp*

Vc. *mf*

L

145

Vln. I *ff* *mf* *ff* *f*

Vln. II *ff* *mp* *ff* *mf*

Vla. *ff* *mp* *ff* *mf*

Vc. *ff* *mf* *ff* *f*

M

151

Vln. I  
Vln. II  
Vla.  
Vc.

158

Vln. I  
Vln. II  
Vla.  
Vc.

164

Vln. I  
Vln. II  
Vla.  
Vc.

