

Shapeshifter

Perusal score
Not for performance

AJ Harbison

Muse Room Press

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Shapeshifter
(2023)

for solo cello

AJ Harbison

Program Notes

A shapeshifter is a creature (human or otherwise) that can change its appearance at will.

A theme and variations is a musical piece in which a melody goes through a successive series of transformations.

My piece *Shapeshifter* is a theme and variations of sorts; there is a primary melody that goes through transformations. But within the variations and the theme itself there are quick changes of appearance – octave jumps, sudden dynamic changes, sudden changes from one playing technique to another. The four variations following the theme are marked “underwater,” “nervously,” “alluringly,” and “punk rock.”

Shapeshifter draws inspiration from sources as varied as Koji Kondo’s score for the 1990 Super Nintendo game “Super Mario World,” my own composition *TheSpaceBetween*, Sergei Prokofiev’s Second Piano Concerto, and the maximalist pop-jazz fusion band The Dirty Loops.

Shapeshifter was composed for Sascha Groschang, who premiered the piece on April 29 and 30, 2023 at All Souls Unitarian Universalist Church in Kansas City, MO.

Performance Notes

The performer should feel free to use open strings whenever practical.

Tenuto marks indicate both a slight emphasis and a slight lengthening of the note.

Unaccented grace notes should be played before the beat, with the normal note receiving more emphasis. Accented grace notes should be played on the beat, with the first grace note receiving more emphasis.

ord. = ordinario

s.p. = sul ponticello

s.t. = sul tasto

m.s.t. = molto sul tasto (over the fingerboard)

Duration

ca. 9 minutes 30 seconds

Composed for Sascha Groschang

composed for Sascha Groschang

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Cello $\text{♩} = 72$

fp *mf* *p*

Theme $\text{♩} = 72$

2

mf sub. *mp* *mf* *pizz.* *arco* *pizz.* *arco*

4

mf *mp*

5

mf *mp* *mf* *mp* *mf* *f* *mf*

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6

f *mp* *pizz.*

7

p *arco* *II* *mf* *mp* *mf* *pizz.*

9

mp *arco* *p* *ord.* *s.t.* *ord.* *n.*

♩ = ♩

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gradually slow until final eighth notes equal eighth notes in bar 12

10

fp *mf* *p*

12 Var. I, "underwater" ♩ = 52

mp *mf* *mp*

17

p

4:3 2:3 4:3

22

mf *pp sub.* *mp* *mf* *pp sub.*

arco s.t. ord. s.t.

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27

mp *mf* *f* *p sub.* l.v. l.v.

ord. pizz. arco pizz. arco

33

mf sub. *p*

4:3

37

mf *p sub.* *mp* *mf*

pizz. arco s.p. pizz. arco (ord.)

2:3

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41 ^{5/6}

p *mf* *mp* *p* *mp*

45

p *pp*

48

mp *mf* *mp sub.*

♩ = 80 *ord.* *II IV III I III* *accel.* *♩* = 100 *rall.* *I IV III II III*

50

f

♩ = 80 *accel.* *I II II III I II III* *♩* = 120 *full bow for each note* *I I II II III*

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52

p *n.* *fp*

ord. *-> s.t.* *ord.* *>*

54

f sub. *mp*

55

mf *mp* *mf* *mp*

Var. II, nervously *♩* = 160
off the string

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57 I

59

62 II

65

68

71

74

76

79

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Musical notation for measures 73-78 in bass clef. Measure 73 starts with a half note G2. Measures 74-78 feature a melodic line with slurs and accents. Dynamics include *mf* and *f*.

Musical notation for measures 79-80 in bass clef. Measure 79 begins with a half note G2 marked *pizz.*. Measure 80 has a melodic line marked *arco* and *p*.

Musical notation for measures 81-83 in bass clef. Measures 81-82 feature a melodic line. Measure 83 has a triplet of eighth notes marked *f* and *arco*.

Musical notation for measures 84-87 in bass clef. Measure 84 has a half note G2 marked *p sub.*. Measure 85 has a half note G2 marked *pp*. Measure 86 has a half note G2 marked *n.*. Measure 87 has a melodic line marked *ord.* and *fp*. A tempo marking $\text{♩} = 72$ is present.

Musical notation for measures 88-91 in treble clef. Measure 88 has a half note G4 marked *ord.*. Measure 89 has a half note G4 marked *s.t.*. Measure 90 has a half note G4 marked *ord.*. Measure 91 has a half note G4 marked *s.p.*. A large watermark "PERUSAL SCORE ONLY" is overlaid on the staff.

molto rall.

Var. III, alluringly $\text{♩} = 76$

Musical notation for measures 92-94 in treble clef. Measure 92 has a half note G4 marked *ord.*. Measure 93 has a half note G4 marked *mf*. Measure 94 has a half note G4 marked *mp*.

Musical notation for measures 95-96 in treble clef. Measure 95 has a half note G4 marked *pizz.*. Measure 96 has a half note G4 marked *arco* and *p*.

Musical notation for measures 97-100 in bass clef. Measure 97 has a half note G2 marked *pizz.*. Measure 98 has a half note G2 marked *arco* and *s.p.*. Measure 99 has a triplet of eighth notes marked *3*. Measure 100 has a half note G2 marked *ord.* and *ord.* with a slur over a quintuplet of eighth notes marked *5*.

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99 *s.p.* *arco (ord.)*

mf *p sub.* *mf*

102

p sub. *mp*

105

mf *mp* *mf* *p* *mf* *p*

106 *sul D*

mf *p* *pp*

108 *s.p.* *ord.* *pizz. arco*

mf *p*

110 *arco s.p.*

mp *mf sub.* *mp* *mf sub.* *mp* *p*

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♩ = 80 **accel.** ♩ = 100

arco (ord.)

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112 *pp* *pizz.* *arco (ord.)*

114 **rall.** ♩ = 80 **accel.** ♩ = 100

117 ♩ = 120 ♩ = 72

Var. IV — punk rock ♩ = 152 (or as fast as possible)

120 ♩ = 72

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122 *ff* *pizz.* *arco* *pizz.* *arco*

124 *p sub.* *pizz.* *arco s.p.* *ord.* *f sub.*

126 *p sub.*

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129

mp *f*

132

>mf *mp* *p*

136 lightly

p

137

138

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mf

140

f *p* *pizz.*

142

p *arco* *mf* *p sub.*

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143

ff *mp sub.* arco

145

p pizz.

accel. (as fast as possible).....

150

ff sub. arco ord. s.p.

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A tempo (152ish)

151

fp *f* slight overpressure ord. scordatura gliss. s.p. III/IV I/II II/III III/IV

154

ff *p* *pizz.* *p* *♩ = 72* arco *n.*