

Maurice Ravel

Passacaille  
from the Piano Trio in A Minor,  
arranged for  
6-part Cello Orchestra

### Performance Notes

Ravel's only Piano Trio was completed in 1914. The third movement is a haunting passacaglia in which an 8 bar melodic/harmonic element, derived from the Pantoum theme of the preceding movement, recurs 11 times in different guises. It first appears pianissimo and unaccompanied and is then developed and enhanced to reach a climax (in pitch, dynamics and dissonance) between bars 49 and 53 (just short of the "Golden Ratio" point which is bar 54). The music then subsides to end ppp in bar 88.

The present arrangement of the passacaille for cello ensemble has been faithful to the original in its melodies and harmony but has been transposed from F sharp minor to A minor to better suit the range and sonorities of a cello ensemble. Like the original, this arrangement starts low with a single melodic line (although the basso profundo of the left hand of the piano at the onset cannot be fully reproduced) and builds to the "fully orchestrated" climax at bars 49-53 where the dissonances should be brought out and fully enjoyed.

Sixteen bars later (bars 65 to 72), to create a complete contrast, it is suggested that the two-part harmonies are played pianissimo by the whole ensemble without vibrato and using open strings, to emphasise the bare fourths and fifths in the melodic and harmonic structure. (In the original piano trio the piano is tacet for these 8 bars and violin and cello play a duet).

At bar 73 the mood should change again, with an expressive melody in the solo cello and full vibrato in the rest of the ensemble. This is intended to reproduce, as far as possible, the exquisite effect at this point in the original piano trio where the melody returns in the tenor/baritone range of the cello, the violin is tacet, and the piano accompaniment is subtly supportive of the cello sound.

#### ALTERNATIVES:

1. "Ossia" parts (taking the lower octave) are offered in the Cellos 1 and 2 at bars 20 and 47. Depending on the forces available, ensembles may opt for the higher or lower alternative, or may prefer divisi octaves at both pitches.
2. Bars 1-16 COULD be played by two solo cellists (e.g by a solo cello 5 playing bars 1-8 with a Solo Cello 4 joining for bars 9-16, then Tutti from bar 17). However, this has the twin disadvantages that :
  - (a) the texture/tone of two soloists is likely to be too rich at the beginning of the piece (as compared with the simplicity of tutti cellos playing together as quietly as possible).
  - (b) the non-soloists in Cellos 3 to 6 would never get to play the main theme/motif which would be a shame!

The present arrangement was made for the Giant Cello Ensemble, directed by James Halsey which comes together each July in the North-East of Scotland as the Aboyne Cello Festival.

Gwyn Seymour,  
Stonehaven, Scotland August 2013.

# Passacaille from Piano Trio, arranged for 6-part Cello orchestra

Tres Large

Maurice Ravel (1875-1937),  
Cello arrangement by Gwyn Seymour

♩=40

Musical score for Cello 1 through Cello 6. The score is in 3/4 time and begins with a *pp* dynamic. Cello 5 and Cello 6 are marked *Soli* and play a melodic line with a *pp* dynamic. The other cellos (1-4) are currently silent, indicated by rests.



**A**

Musical score for Violoncello 1 through Violoncello 6. The score begins at measure 7. Cello 3 and Cello 4 are marked *Soli* and play a melodic line with a *pp* dynamic. Cello 5 and Cello 6 play a rhythmic accompaniment. The other cellos (1-2) are currently silent, indicated by rests.

**B**

Vc1 *p espressif*

Vc2 *p espressif*

Vc3 *p*

Vc4 *p* *div.*

Vc5 *p*

Vc6 *p*



**C**

Vc1 *pp*

*ossia*

Vc2 *pp*

*ossia*

Vc3 *pp*

Vc4 *Soli* *mf*

Vc5 *pp*

Vc6 *pp*

Vc1

Vc2

Vc3

Vc4

Vc5

Vc6

*Soli*

*mp*

*pp*

*pp*

*p*



32

**D**

Vc1

Vc2

Vc3

Vc4

Vc5

Vc6

*p*

*p*

*p*

*p*

*p*

*p*

37 **E**

*f* *sempre f* *pp subito*

*f* *sempre f* *pp subito*

*f* *sempre f* *pp subito*

*f* *sempre f* *ff* *pp subito*

*f* *sempre f* *pp subito*

*f* *sempre f* *pp subito*

42 **div.**

*mp* *mf*

*mp* *mf*

*mp* *mf*

*mp* *mf*

*mp* *f* **Sul D**

*mp* *f* **Sul D**

47 **F** 6

Vc1  
ossia *f* *fff* *ff*

Vc2  
ossia *f* *fff* *ff*

Vc3  
*f* *fff* *ff*

Vc4  
*f* *fff* *ff*  
div. unis

Vc5  
*f* *fff* *ff*  
div. unis.

Vc6  
*f* *fff* *ff*

52

Vc1  
*f* *mp*

Vc2  
*f* *mp*

Vc3  
div. *f* *mp*  
con sordino

Vc4  
unis *f* *mp*  
con sordino

Vc5  
*f* *mp*

Vc6  
*f* *mp*  
con sordino

7

57 **G** *pp*

**con sordino**

Vc1 *pp-*

Vc2 *pp-*

Vc3 **Soli** *mp*

Vc4 **div.** *pp* **unis**

Vc5 *pp-* **con sordino**

Vc6 *pp*

61

Vc1 *pp* **con sordino**

Vc2

Vc3

Vc4 **div.**

Vc5 **div.**

Vc6 **Soli**

V



**H**

no vibrato for eight bars

8

65

Vc1  
*ppp*  
no vibrato

Vc2  
*ppp*  
no vibrato

Vc3  
*ppp*  
no vibrato

Vc4  
*ppp*  
no vibrato

Vc5  
*ppp*  
no vibrato

Vc6  
*ppp*



69

Vc1  
*pp*

Vc2  
*pp*

Vc3  
*pp*

Vc4  
*pp*

Vc5  
*pp*

Vc6  
*pp*

73

9

**Solo**

Vc1 *mf* *expressif*  
**with vibrato**

Vc2 *mp*

Vc3

Vc4 *p* **with vibrato**

Vc5 *p*

Vc6

77

Vc1

Vc2 **Solo**

Vc3

Vc4 (solo)

Vc5

Vc6

I

81 **Tutti**

Vc1 *pp* **Tutti**

Vc2 *pp* **Tutti**

Vc3 **with vibrato** *pp*

Vc4 *ppp* **ppp**

Vc5 *ppp* **ppp**

Vc6 **with vibrato** *ppp* **ppp**



85

Vc1 *ppp*

Vc2 *ppp*

Vc3 *ppp*

Vc4

Vc5

Vc6