

ALEX TEMPLE

VI  LA J  KE

for two vaudevillian violists
& electronic studio audience

composed in 2013–2014
for Doyle Armbrust
& Chris Fisher-Lochhead

NOTES

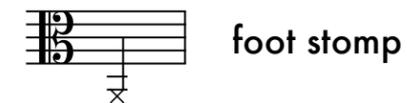
VIOLA JOKE is a comedy routine that takes place in a nightmare world. The exact nature of this world is revealed gradually over the course of the piece: there's an enormous hole in the center of town, a vast wasteland between two formerly adjacent parts of the city, and a gigantic mountain that blocks out the sun. At the same time, people are disappearing, and losing their identities in a mysterious Fog.

The two performers attempt to find some humor in this dire situation, and their audience – played by a series of samples triggered by a foot pedal – responds well at first. But when the comedians start pretending that they've succumbed to the madness of the Fog, the audience turns against them, responding with stony silence (represented by a sample of crickets chirping).

In order to sell this bizarre scenario to the piece's real-life audience, its real-life performers should be sure to put aside all concerns of good taste.

NOTATION

VIOLA PART



VOICE PART



♩ = 80

♩ = 100

c.l. tratto

arco
sul pont.

pizz.

arco
ord.

suddenly wild and burlesque-y

D

ff with a serious attitude, as if you were beginning an arcane, cerebral piece

C

c.l. batt.

pizz.

arco
sul tasto

c.l. batt.
ord.

arco

suddenly wild and burlesque-y

(foot stomps)

ff with a serious attitude, as if you were beginning an arcane, cerebral piece

9

D

9

C

16

D

p

f

ff

16

C

p

f

ff

(foot stomps)

35

D

But aren't you wor-ried?

sul pont.

35

C

pizz.

arco

Wor-ried? That pitch black, bot-tom-less pit is - n't real - ly the size of

39

D

ord.

(laughter)

39

C

ten ci - ty blocks!

It's just in the fore-ground!

43

D

And what a- bout the gro - tesque - ly o - ver - sized chair?

43

5

3

3

6/16

7/16

2/4

sul pont.

ord.

5

3

3

C

43

pizz.

Well at least it is - n't as big as the hor - ri - fy - ing - ly wide gap!

43

5

3

6/16

7/16

2/4

3

3

3

49

D

49

(laughter)

49

stage whisper

It's big - ger!

49

3

3/4

3/4

3/4

♩ = 72

52 tentative

O-K. I've got one. That's— that's not a night - mar-ish - ly huge Gap. It's just an out - let store.

gaining confidence smug

D

52 pizz. arco

mp p mp p mp mf (laughter)

C

52 sul tasto c.l. batt. ord. pizz. arco

mp p mf

The musical score consists of three staves. The top staff (D) is a vocal line with lyrics: "O-K. I've got one. That's— that's not a night - mar-ish - ly huge Gap. It's just an out - let store." The middle staff (C) is a piano accompaniment with performance instructions: "pizz." (pizzicato), "arco" (arco), and dynamic markings: "mp", "p", "mf". The bottom staff (C) is another piano accompaniment with performance instructions: "sul tasto" (sul tasto), "c.l. batt. ord." (crescendo), "pizz." (pizzicato), and "arco" (arco), and dynamic markings: "mp", "p", "mf". The score includes various musical notations such as triplets, quintuplets, and slurs. The tempo is marked as quarter note = 72. The page number is 5.

58

D

58

f

mp *sfz*

pizz.

Ev' - ry-one's tel - ling it in the o - ther half of the ci - ty!

58

C

58

f

pizz.

arco

sul pont.

ord.

Where'd you hear that? You walked through that

62

D

62

arco

pizz.

arco

with a raised eyebrow

What can I say? I'm a size queen. (don't wait for sample to end this time!)

(applause)

62

C

62

pizz.

arco

blank, fea - ture - less waste - land? But it's ter - ri - fy - ing - ly huge!

(don't wait for sample to end this time!)

B ♩ = 100

68

D

C

p *f* *ff*

77

D

C

like a smarmy radio advertiser

And we're talking about the unfathomably vast, empty plain that separates the two halves of our fair city!

like a smarmy radio advertiser

Yes, that's right, we're talking about the impossibly deep, pitch-black hole that recently appeared at the center of town!

And we're talking about the incomprehensibly large chair at the end of that long, long hallway!

p *f* *p* *mf* *p* *mp* *pp*



81 *robotic monotone; give each syllable equal emphasis*

D Space, time and lo - gic make less and less sense now that so ma - ny si - ni - ster e - vents have un - furled.

f *mf*

81 *bold and brassy*

C We know that space, time and lo - gic make less and less sense now that so ma - ny si - ni - ster e - vents have un - furled.

f pizz.

86

D More and more things are gro - tesque and im - mense now, as we draw clo - ser to the end of the world.

p

86 *lyrical and mysterious*

C More and more things are gro - tesque and im - mense now, as we draw clo - ser to the end of the world. and it's cer - tain - ly not our in - ten - tion to pro - voke!

p arco *p*

♩ = 92

Rit.

93 *pizz.* *arco* *pizz.*

mp *mp* *pizz.*

puckish and Mozartean

93 *lyrical*

But here in this ca - ba - ret we call Con - stel - la - tion, we can en - ter - tain the dwind - ling pop - u - la - tion.

93 *mp* *pizz.*

♩ = 112

like an old-timey circus barker

98 *arco* *ff*

bold and brassy

98 *arco* *ff* *saucy*

It's not a se - date show. We pro - mise it's great, though. It's the mi - cro - the - a - tri - cal late show called Vi - o - la Joke!

It's not a se - date show. We pro - mise it's great, though. It's the mi - cro - the - a - tri - cal late show called Vi - o - la Joke!

10

♩ = 112

103

D

improvise à la Stéphane Grappelli

C

103

D9 G9 D9 F9 eø7 dm11

ff

ff

D

♩ = 82

(speech rhythm is approximate)

111

D

How many people who have peered through the door at the end of the shocking-long hall-way does it take to change a light-bulb?

111

pizz.

mf

C

111

I don't know. How many?

mf

D

116

They'd rather sit in the dark.

116

c.l. tratto

pp

imitate laughter

(laughter)

C

116

c.l. tratto

pp

imitate laughter

♩ = 78

120

D

arco poco sul tasto

mf

120

C

(speech rhythm is approximate)

pizz.

mf

What's the diff-rence be - tween the ap - pal - ling - ly large chair and the nau - se - a - ting - ly deep hole?

I don't know. What?

126

D

c.l. tratto ord.

pp

imitate applause

(applause)

126

C

c.l. tratto

pp

imitate applause

You can re-mem-ber the chair.

♩ = 74

taking on a darker tone

130

D

arco sul tasto

mp

What do you get when you cross the un-set-tling-ly vast, dark, fea-ture-less ex-panse that se-par-ates the two halves of the ci-ty?

C

arco sul tasto

mp

135

D

pizz.

c.l. tratto ord.

pp

A-bout twenty years ol-der.

imitate "aww"

135

C

taking on a darker tone

I don't know. What?

c.l. tratto ord.

pp

imitate "aww"

♩ = 70

quieter, as if you're beginning to scare yourself

140

D

arco
molto sul tasto
slide between harmonics when possible

140

I don't know. Why?

140

C

quieter, as if you're beginning to scare yourself

Why did the man who had looked up at the dis - qui-et-ing-ly tall moun-tain try to kill him-self?

140

arco
molto sul tasto

147

D

c.l. tratto
ord.

pp

imitate thunder

(thunder)

147

C

c.l. tratto
ord.

pp

Because he couldn't shake the feeling that his face had been replaced by a blank, featureless expanse of skin.

imitate thunder

E ♩ = 66

as if confused and preoccupied

155

Knock knock.

E - ri - ka.

Erika disappeared a week ago and I'm really starting to worry.

arco ord. IV

as if confused and preoccupied

155

Who's there?

E - ri - ka who?

move bow perpendicularly on C string to create an unpitched "whoosh"

159

imitate birds

(birds)

pp

159

imitate birds

pp

molto sul pont.

ord. III IV (b.o.)

169 *slow, ghostly whisper*

D Oh yeah? Well, your mom's so dumb that she thinks the deliriously tall mountain that casts its shadow over the city and permits us only a few scant minutes of daylight has always been there.

If you have something to say, say it to my face.

c.l. tratto

pp p pp pp p pp

169 *slow, ghostly whisper*

C Hey. Your mom's so dumb, she doesn't understand why she can't recognize her own reflection.

c.l. tratto

pp p pp pp p pp

to audience

Can you believe this guy?

179 *like an echo*

D What face? What face? What face?

p pp ppp

179 *like an echo*

C What face? What face? What face?

p pp ppp p

F ♩ = 112

mocking and abrasive

186

Ha! I bet you thought we had lost our - selves in the fog! Right? Well, don't wor-ry. We're fine. But

arco sul tasto

pizz.

ff *mf*

sul pont.

c.l. batt. ord. → *c.l. tratto*

mf *ff* *arco sul pont.*

♩ = 90

191

you should-'ve seen the looks on your fa-ces!

imitate crickets

(crickets)

ord. → *sul pont.*

imitate crickets

mf

Accel

203 *robotic monotone*

D
 We see the fros - ty re-cep-tion— well, more like ant-arc - tic— that you, our dear au - di - ence has gi - ven our schtick.

p *mf*

C
 O-K. *resigned* We see the *ingratiating* fros - ty re-cep-tion— well, more like ant-arc - tic— that you, our dear au - di - ence has gi - ven - our schtick.

ord. *pizz.*
mp *mf*

♩ = 104

208

D
 Some - times black co - me - dy can be ca - thar - tic and that's why we played such a hair - rai - sing trick.

pizz. *f*

C
 Some - times black co - me - dy can be ca - thar - tic, and that's why we played such a hair - rai - sing trick. And we

arco *schmatzy*
somber and stately

arco
imitate a viol: sul tasto & non vib.

212 *p* *mp*

212 *tr*

212 *pizz.* *mp* *arco* *pp* *mp*

rea-lize our me-thods may seem a bit ba - ro - - que- But when the laws of phys - ics are col - lap-sing like a flat tire,

lyrical

218 **Rit.** $\text{♩} = 112$ *shouty*

218 *pizz.* *arco* *ff*

218 *pizz.* *arco* *ff*

So no more in-vec - tive! At least we're se-elec - tive 'bout the

how can you res-pond, ex - cept with ghas-t-ly sa-tire? So no more in-vec - tive! At least we're se-lec - tive 'bout the

bold and brassy

223

D

a - li - en - a - tion ef - fect of this Vi - o - la Joke!

Rit.

A tempo

223

223

223

C

a - li - en - a - tion ef - fect of this Vi - o - la Joke!

223

mp

saucy wide vibrato

ff

pizz.

mp *ff*