

sic. I knew that the piano was out, because on it I could never come close to the skill needed for even the simplest chamber music parts, providing real musical pleasure to others. On the other hand, if I took up a string instrument, it seemed obvious that I could soon be doing a not-bad job of playing some of the easier chamber music, depending on Phyllis and other better players to do the harder stuff on the other parts.

But which string instrument? I here offer as evidence for the rightness of my choice a meticulous, unprecedented calculation of the Ratio of the Disparity of Instrumental Difficulties, or RDID. Take as an example the finale of Haydn's Opus 64, No. 5, D Major. The violin plays, according to my quick, indeed impatient count, 857 notes, most of them sixteenths, most of them entailing a change not just of bowing but of fingering from the preceding note. The viola plays 368 notes, many of them sixteenths, and most of them requiring finger changes. Meanwhile the cello is asked to play only 122 notes, with only 72 rapid sixteenths, and with 32 of those sixteenths resting comfortably either on the tonic or dominant. Many of them are followed by a lovely rest period providing time to seek out the next note. Now there we have a clear measure of why it was wiser for me to take up the cello than the violin or even the viola: an RDID of viola to cello of precisely 3 to 1 and of violin to cello of about 7 to 1.

The fact is that there are many wonderful moments with RDIDs even better than that, when the only challenge to the cellist is to produce a single tolerable note sustained for measure after measure. At one point in the Haydn I am offered a comfortable low A while the first violin plays 63 notes! Timeless moments like that rightly tempted me—the chance to dwell lovingly on a single note while feeling as if I were playing all the parts.

Of course I am not saying that anything even remotely like that RDID holds for all chamber music. I'm glad it doesn't. But if I were to count piano and cello notes for an early piano trio by Beethoven, say, the RDID would be even more striking. In more modern works a greater democratic balance is sought and sometimes achieved, but the cello still has far more occasions to rest easy while one or more of the others capers.

Even without counting the RDID I already had a strong enough hunch to guide my choice. Though I loved listening to some of the “display” cello concertos that at many points actually reverse the RDID fraction, I fortunately knew that a lot of chamber literature issued me a simple invitation: not “come and play me, as a star, as a leader” but “come and play me as a deeply feeling accompanist for the stars.”

I hope it's clear that I'm not mocking the choice of other string instruments; if you're already good at one of them, get better. Both my playing

Main Text

Book Trim

6" x 9"

Margins

TOP: 5/8" top trim to base of running head
INSIDE: 3/4"

Main text

10 /13 Janson x
26 picas justified.
40 lines per standard text page.
OK one line short ONLY for good page make-up, if necessary. Oldstyle figures throughout; 1p paragraph indent

Number of

characters per pica is based on point size. For 10pt Janson, there are approximately 2.8 characters per pica

Number of picas per line

Number of lines per page

Fig. A.6. Typeset page, based on the type specifications indicated at right and generated from the book manuscript shown in figure A.5. The designer used the numbers from the castoff (see fig. A.4) along with information about the desired length of the book to determine how best to fit the type on the page.