

String Quartet No. 1 - Op. 14

"Kittens in an Apple Tree"

2021-2025

René Damen



Photo © 1956 Courtesy Ernie Damen

* PLAYFUL *

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"Kittens in an Apple Tree"

Version 2025



(My sister Maretti with kitten in 1955)

René Damen

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For My Siblings

KITTENS IN AN APPLE TREE

The 4 movement titles (EN, FR, NL, PT)

English:

Kittens in an Apple Tree

I Life in the apple tree is not complicated

II Help, heaven leaks!

III May the future begin!

IV The kittens have no fear at all

French:

Chatons dans un pommier

I La vie dans le pommier n'est pas compliquée

II Au secours, le ciel fuit!

III Que l'avenir commence!

IV Les chatons n'ont pas peur du tout

Dutch:

Katjes in een appelboom

I Het leven in de appelboom is niet ingewikkeld

II Help, de hemel lekt!

III Moge de toekomst beginnen!

IV De katjes hebben helemaal geen angst

Portuguese:

Gatinhos em uma macieira

I A vida na macieira não é complicada

II Socorro, o céu vaza!

III Que o futuro comece!

IV Gatinhos não têm medo de nada

PROGRAM NOTES:

Images from my childhood / A children's drawing

For all 7-year olds in the world, big and little.

In 2021 my brother Ernie unearthed the 1955 "Kittens in an Apple Tree" photo from the family archives (see cover). The picture evokes a strong childhood memory, reminding me of the drawing I made at the time of those kittens in that tree.

I was 7 years old when I moved into a big new house with a sprawling backyard and even our own piece of forest land. I remember that *pathetic*, dead apple tree behind the house very well. Picturing it, I still feel the thrill of having started a new life in my own paradise as a young boy. Capturing this image in music is a challenge but nevertheless I tried.

The first movement with its simple theme (introduced in bar 7, 8) is reminiscent of a nursery song expressing the ignorance of these furry softballs, oblivious of any peril. I titled it ironically, "Life in the apple tree is not complicated". The second movement depicts nature's challenges, the lack of shelter for the rain. The next short part (III) is a kind of interlude, reflective of my personal sentiment of moving into the new big house with a huge backyard, starting a new life. The fourth movement, "The kittens have no fear at all", reflects, besides on the kittens, onto myself as well: me, that easily excited youngster at that age, not unlike all youngsters at that time, I suppose.

René Damen

String Quartet No.1

“Kittens in an Apple Tree”

2020-2024

René Damen, Op.14.

I. La vie dans le pommier n’est pas compliquée

Leisurely pace $\text{♩} = 102$

“Kit - tens in an app - le tree!”

12

20

spicc.

24 26

Musical score for measures 24-31. The score is in 4/4 time and features four staves (Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Cello/Double Bass). Dynamics include *mf*, *mp*, *f*, and *arco*. Performance markings include *pizz.* and *tr*.

32 37

Musical score for measures 32-38. The score is in 4/4 time and features four staves. Dynamics include *mf*, *mp*, *p*, *fff*, *harsh*, and *ppp*. Performance markings include *tr* and *ppp*.

39

Musical score for measures 39-44. The score is in 4/4 time and features four staves. Dynamics include *mf*, *mp*, and *mp <*. Performance markings include *spicc.* and *mf*.

45

Musical score for measures 45-50. The score is in 4/4 time and features four staves. Dynamics include *mf* and *mp*.

51 53 spicc. *mf*

56 spicc. *p* *mp*

("The yawning...")
A bit faster (♩ = c. 110)

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

70 rit. Tempo I *p* *mp* *ppp* *f* *mf* *p* *mp*

78 85

p mp mf mp mf f mp

mf mf mp mf p mp f

f mf mp mf p mp f

spicc. spicc. spicc. pizz.

86

mf mp mf mf mp mf mp

mp mf mp mf mp

mf mp

dim. poco a poco

arco

94 99

mf mp mp p p

mp mp p mf

mp p

spicc. tr ord.

101

mf p

mp

tr

rit.....

Tempo I

106

p *mf* *mp* *spicc.* *spicc.*

111 (spicc.)

mf *p* *pppp* *pppp* *pppp* *pppp*

II. Au secours, le ciel fuit!

"Gouttes de pluie" / "Rain drops" (♩ = c. 72)

pizz.

p *pizz.* *p* *pizz.* *p* *pizz.* *pp* *p*

20 acc. (72-102).....

15 (pizz.) *mp* *p* *mp* *p* *mp* *p* *mp*

(pizz.) *mp* *p* *mp*

(pizz.) *mp* *p* *mp*

(pizz.) *mp* *p* *mp*

25 (pizz.) $\text{♩} = 102$

(pizz.) *p sub.* *mf* *mp*

(pizz.) *p sub.* *mf* *p*

(pizz.) *mf* *p*

(pizz.) *p sub.* *mf* *p*

36 **37** arco **42**

mf *p* *f* *arco* *mp* *p*

p *f* *arco* *f* *p*

p *f* *arco* *f* *p*

p *f* *arco* *f* *p*

44 **47**

f *mp* *f* *f* *mp* *p*

f *pizz.* *arco* *f* *f* *pizz.* *mp*

arco *f* *pizz.* *arco* *f* *arco* *f* *mp*

f *pizz.* *arco* *f* *arco* *f* *mp*

52

mp *p* *tr*

mp *arco* *pizz.* *p*

mp *pizz.* *p*

mp *pizz.* *p*

56

mp arco *f sub.* *p*
mp arco *f sub.* *mp*
mp
mp arco *mp*

59

61

mp arco *pizz.* *pizz.* *tr* *mp*
p arco *mp*
p arco *pizz.* *mp*
p arco *pizz.* *mp*

63

67

f sub. *p* *mf* *f sub.* *ppp* arco
arco *pizz.* *f sub.* *ppp* arco
arco *f sub.* *ppp*
arco *f sub.* *ppp*

68

mp *ppp* *mp* *pp* *ff sub.* *p* *tr*
ppp
arco *ppp* *mp* *p* *f sub.* *mp*
ppp *pp* *f sub.*

75 *ff* *sub.* *pizz.* *mp* *p* *f* *mp* **80** $\text{♩} = 102$

81 *mp* *mp* *mp* *p* *8va* *spicc.*

83 $\text{♩} = 85$ *f* *ppp* *p* *mp*

87 *pp* *pp* *pp* *mp* *ppppp* *ppppp* *ppppp* *ppppp*

rit.....

III. Que l'avenir commence!

Andante ♩ = 78

Musical score for measures 1-7. The score is in 6/4 time and consists of four staves. The first two staves are for the Violin I and Violin II parts, and the last two are for the Viola and Cello parts. The music begins with a series of rests in the upper parts, while the lower parts play a rhythmic pattern. Dynamic markings include *mp*, *f*, *p*, *mf*, and *ppp*.

Musical score for measures 8-17. The score continues with four staves. Measure 13 is marked with a box containing the number 13. The music features more complex rhythmic patterns and dynamic markings such as *ppp*, *p*, *mf*, and *mp*.

Musical score for measures 18-23. Measure 18 is marked with a box containing the number 18. This section includes changes in time signature from 4/4 to 3/4 and back to 4/4. Dynamic markings include *mf*, *pp*, *pp sub.*, *p*, and *mp*.

Musical score for measures 24-29. Measure 27 is marked with a box containing the number 27. The music continues with four staves, featuring dynamic markings like *ff*, *p sub.*, *mf*, and *mp*.

Musical score for String Quartet No. 1, measures 29-33. The score is in 3/4 time and consists of four staves (Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Cello). The dynamics range from *mf* to *ppp*. Measure 33 ends with the instruction "attacca".

IV. Les chatons n'ont pas de peur du tout

Musical score for "IV. Les chatons n'ont pas de peur du tout". The piece is in 4/4 time with a tempo marking of *Moderato* (♩ = 110). It features a variety of dynamics and articulations. Key markings include "flautando", "sul tasto", "ord.", "pizz.", "arco", and "sub.". Measure numbers 13, 22, and 23 are indicated. The score is arranged in four staves.

31

mp *ppp* *f* *p* *mf* *mp* *mf* *mf* *mp* *mf*

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

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

ppp *mp* *mp* *mf* *f* *p* *mp* *mf*

40

43

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

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

mf *mp* *mf* *pizz.* *mf* *mp* *f* *mp*

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

47

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

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

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

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

55

59 Var.1

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

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

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

f *arco* *pizz.* *arco* *pizz.* *mp* *mf* *mp* *mf*

63

Musical score for measures 63-70. The score is in 4/4 time and features four staves: Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Cello/Double Bass. Dynamics include *mf*, *pp*, *f*, *mp*, and *p*. Performance markings include accents, slurs, and a *pizz.* marking in the Cello/Double Bass part.

71

Musical score for measures 71-77. The score continues with four staves. Dynamics include *pp*, *mp*, *ff*, *mf*, *p*, and *mp*. Performance markings include accents, slurs, and a *tr.* marking in the Violin I part.

78

83

Musical score for measures 78-84. The score continues with four staves. Dynamics include *mf*, *f*, *mp*, *ppp*, and *p*. Performance markings include accents, slurs, and a *tr.* marking in the Violin I part.

85

Musical score for measures 85-90. The score continues with four staves. Dynamics include *pp*, *mp*, *ppp*, and *p*. Performance markings include slurs and accents.

92

p *mp* *mf* *p*

pp *mp* *pp* *mp*

f

p *mp*

This system contains measures 92 through 96. It features four staves: Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Cello/Double Bass. The music is in a minor key. Measure 92 starts with a piano (*p*) dynamic in the Violin I part. The Viola and Cello/Double Bass parts have a steady eighth-note accompaniment. Measure 93 introduces a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic in the Violin I part. Measure 94 features a fortissimo (*f*) dynamic in the Viola part. Measure 95 has a piano (*p*) dynamic in the Violin I part. Measure 96 ends with a mezzo-piano (*mp*) dynamic in the Cello/Double Bass part.

97

mp *pp* *mf* *pp* *mp* *pp* *mf*

pp *mp* *pp* *mp*

f

p *mf*

This system contains measures 97 through 101. The dynamics continue to vary across the staves. Measure 97 has a mezzo-piano (*mp*) dynamic in the Violin I part. Measure 98 has a piano (*p*) dynamic in the Violin I part. Measure 99 has a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic in the Violin I part. Measure 100 has a piano (*p*) dynamic in the Violin I part. Measure 101 ends with a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic in the Violin I part.

102

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

mp *pp* *mp* *pp* *mp* *pp*

mf *mf* *mf* *mf* *mf*

mp *mf* *mf*

This system contains measures 102 through 106. Measure 102 has a piano (*p*) dynamic in the Violin I part. Measure 103 has a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic in the Violin I part. Measure 104 has a fortissimo (*f*) dynamic in the Violin I part. Measure 105 has a piano (*p*) dynamic in the Violin I part. Measure 106 ends with a piano (*p*) dynamic in the Violin I part.

107

mf *mp* *mf* *rit.* *p* *mf*

mf *mp* *mf* *mf* *mf*

mf *mf* *mf* *mf* *mf*

mp *mf* *mf* *mf* *mf*

This system contains measures 107 through 111. Measure 107 has a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic in the Violin I part. Measure 108 has a mezzo-piano (*mp*) dynamic in the Violin I part. Measure 109 has a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic in the Violin I part. Measure 110 has a *rit.* (ritardando) marking in the Violin I part. Measure 111 ends with a piano (*p*) dynamic in the Violin I part.

112 114 (♩ = c. 102)

con sord. ord. con sord. ord.
p f mp mf p sub. p pp < mp > p
sul tasto ord. ord.
pp mf ppp pp < mp > p
sul tasto ord. pizz. mf
mf ppp < mp > pp pp < mp > p

122

mp p p < mp > pp mf
f mp f mp pp
arco pp ppp pp
p f mp p mf

130

p mp p < mf > pp
mp p f mf mp p < mf > pp
mp f mp f mp p < mf > pp
mp p < mf > mp p < mf > pp

138

mp p < mp > pp mp
mp mf mp
mf mf
mf mp mf mp

145

mf mp pp mp

tr

mp

Detailed description: This system contains measures 145 to 150. It features four staves: Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Cello/Double Bass. Measure 145 starts with a *mf* dynamic in the Violin I staff. The Viola staff has a *tr* (trill) marking. The Cello/Double Bass staff has a *mp* marking. Dynamics change to *mp* in measure 146, *pp* in measure 147, and *mp* in measure 148. The music includes various rhythmic patterns and rests.

151

pp mf pp mf mp pp mf

Detailed description: This system contains measures 151 to 154. It features four staves. Measure 151 starts with a *pp* dynamic in the Violin I staff, which then crescendos to *mf*. Similar dynamics are seen in the Violin II and Viola staves. The Cello/Double Bass staff has a *mf* marking. The music is characterized by rapid sixteenth-note passages and rests.

155

accelerando poco a poco.....

mp mf mf

Detailed description: This system contains measures 155 to 158. It features four staves. Measure 155 starts with a *mp* dynamic in the Violin I staff. The music is marked with *accelerando poco a poco*. Dynamics change to *mf* in measures 156 and 157. The music consists of continuous sixteenth-note patterns across all staves.

159

(♩ = c. 114)

p mf p ff p mf ff mp mf ff

Detailed description: This system contains measures 159 to 164. It features four staves. Measure 159 starts with a *p* dynamic in the Violin I staff, which then crescendos to *mf*. The music is marked with a tempo of *(♩ = c. 114)*. Dynamics change to *p* in measure 160, *ff* in measure 161, *p* in measure 162, *mf* in measure 163, and *ff* in measure 164. The music includes various rhythmic patterns and rests.