

### **C. Kotrba, Violin Sonata No. 1 in G major, Op. 19 (2022)**

This violin sonata is one of my favorite compositions to date. Like many of my works, the piece revolves around a relatively small number of themes, which I try to manipulate and introduce in new and different ways throughout the two movements. The first two themes are introduced right away in the violin. The joyful G major theme of the opening returns throughout the entire sonata, and I took pride in hiding it in as many places as possible. Shortly thereafter, the duple counterpoint melody is introduced; the two-against-three rhythmic interplay defined by these two themes is also a defining trait of the sonata.

As the first movement progresses, the opening theme reaches its full expression as the key modulates to C major, but the joy is not to last; a minor version of the counterpoint theme foreshadows the corruption of the opening theme into a soulful lament, reinforced by double stops in the violin. As the first movement's middle section arrives, the second theme is introduced suddenly as the time signature quickens from 9/8 to 6/8; though it starts with spare piano accompaniment, the section quickly gains rhythmic complexity as versions of the counterpoint melody flicker in and out and as the phrases shorten. The final statement of the second theme is followed suddenly by a sense of loss, as the violin wanders alone, through the desolation caused by the long minor section, struggling to recall the joy of the opening. What can save us when the meaning and the purpose of familiar things have been stripped away? The answer comes in the form of an accelerating sequence based on the first phrase of the hymn "Christ, the Life of All the Living", which leads us to the glorious recapitulation. At the first movement's conclusion, the second theme is finally presented in the original key of G major, revealing the purpose of the interior loss.

The second movement opens mournfully, with the only brief section of the entire composition that is not in compound meter. The first several minutes are an extended foreshadowing of the movement's main theme; after a sorrowful violin soliloquy, the music settles into an exploration of the violin's initial notes. The major IV chord within a minor key, a harmonic feature from the first movement, is accompanied by the violin, which ascends in register as if reaching for motion and certainty. Finally, the theme, long hinted at, arrives as the time signature once again shortens from 12/8 to 9/8. As the theme is iterated upon and builds, and as another hymn, "Thy Strong Word", is suggested, the music reaches an epiphany, a powerful plagal cadence that concludes the middle section. Nervously excited, as if unable to believe that the strife may be over, the violin begins again in a new tempo, which quickly blossoms into a triumphant reference of the first movement's second theme. The violin becomes hushed, mischievously repurposing the sorrowful notes that began the movement into a joyful jig. As the movement builds to its climactic conclusion in the original tonality of G major, the sonata closes with a final version of the opening motif, confirming the thematic unity of the two movements and the final choice to be joyful in the face of darkness.