

THE GORDIAN KNOT UNTIED

Overture

Henry Purcell

Arranged by Andrew H. Dabczynski (ASCAP)

INSTRUMENTATION

Conductor Score	1
Violin I	8
Violin II	8
Viola	5
Cello	5
String Bass	5

Purcell's overture provides an opportunity to perform a dramatic Baroque overture with authentic style, and is an outstanding vehicle for learning important foundational string skills. Carefully edited, here's a definitive and timeless selection that will grace any orchestra concert program!



Please note: Our band and orchestra music is now being collated by an automatic high-speed system. The enclosed parts are now sorted by page count, rather than score order.

PROGRAM NOTES

Henry Purcell is widely regarded as England's first truly great composer. In his brief life (1659–1695), Purcell produced an abundance of music, including many works for the theater—such as his overture for the play, *The Gordian Knot Untied*. The play described the ancient and very intricate legend of a Greek “everyman” hero named Gordias, as well as Alexander the Great. The phrase “The Gordian Knot Untied” has become a metaphor for a complicated problem (the challenge of untangling a convoluted knot) that can be simply resolved by “thinking outside the box” (by merely cutting the tangled knot with a knife). While the play itself has been lost, its overture survives as a superb example of music in the Baroque style.

NOTES TO THE CONDUCTOR

This overture is an excellent example of a Baroque “French overture.” In this arrangement, efforts have been made to provide bowings and articulations that will allow students an opportunity to play—age-appropriately—with authentic Baroque style. The conductor is urged to play audio and video recordings of the original version of the overture for students, so they can become familiar with and try to emulate the engaging Baroque string techniques. To capture Baroque style, the following general principles—all approachable even by beginning string students—are suggested and indicated in the music:

1. Instruct players to hold their bows at the balance point of the bow, above the winding/grip, throughout the piece.
2. Emphasis should be placed on the strong beats of the measure/phrase (the agogic accents), and this emphasis should be created using bow length and speed, not accented with pressure.
3. As indicated in the music, individual quarter notes should be separated, but not staccato.
4. Similarly, notes marked with “down-down” or “up-up” bowing patterns should be separated, but not staccato.
5. Half and whole notes should be played with a swell created by bow speed.
6. Eighth-note patterns that are scale-like in nature should be played legato.
7. Eighth-note patterns that leap, or are arpeggiated, should be played off the string.

The overture begins with an adagio, sixteen-measure, repeated introduction (mm. 1–16). In this section, long notes (including dotted-quarter notes) in all voices should be played with bow-speed swells, while any moving 16th notes should be played legato. Measure 17 marks the beginning of a fugue-like allegro section. Each time the primary subject appears (i.e., mm. 17–20, Vln 1), the first two “leaping” notes are played off the string, and subsequent descending notes are played legato as indicated. Throughout the allegro section, players should be reminded to adhere to the general principles discussed above. Further, care should be taken to observe the dynamic markings to achieve balance and to allow transparency in the overall texture. In particular, those voices accompanying the primary subject—whenever it appears—should be reduced in volume, following bowing indications. Note that an optional upper divisi line appears in the first violin part (mm. 22–24). Ornamental (turn) markings are provided (i.e., mm. 20 & 30, Vln 1); depending on the capability of the players, these can be ignored, played as written, or alternatively changed to more stylistically-appropriate trills. Regardless, players should be encouraged to play the trills as indicated (mm. 70 & 78, Vln 1) in the slower sections. The return of an adagio section (mm. 71–79) closes the movement in typical French overture form. Again, long notes in this section should be performed with bow-speed swells, and a final, held diminuendo. The allegro and closing adagio usually are repeated; however, the repeat is optional, as indicated.

The Gordian Knot Untied

Overture

CONDUCTOR SCORE
Duration - 3:15

Henry Purcell
Arranged by Andrew H. Dabczynski (ASCAP)

Adagio (♩ = 78)

Violins I
f-mp

Violins II
f-mp

Viola
f-mp

Cello
f-mp

String Bass
f-mp

1/2 Pos. -1 2

1 2 3 4

Vlns. I

Vlns. II

Vla.

Cello

Str. Bass

4

4 1

5 6 7 8

9

Vlns. I

Vlns. II

Vla.

Cello

Str. Bass

mf-p

mf-p

mf-p

mf-p

mf-p

9 10 11 12

Vlns. I

Vlns. II

Vla.

Cello

Str. Bass

1st Pos.

1/2 Pos.

1. 2.

13 14 15 16

17 Allegro (♩ = 120-144)

Vlns. I

Vlns. II

Vla.

Cello

Str. Bass

17 18 19 20

*Play eighth notes with dots off the string, play all other eighth notes legato.

**Play all quarter notes separate, but not short.

Vlns. I

Vlns. II

Vla.

Cello

Str. Bass

21 22 23 24

26

Vlns. I

Vlns. II

Vla.

Cello

Str. Bass

f

sim.

mf

sim.

25 26 27 28

Vlns. I

Vlns. II

Vla.

Cello

Str. Bass

29 30 31 32

33

Vlns. I

Vlns. II

Vla.

Cello

Str. Bass

p

p

p

p

p

1 1/2 Pos.

1/2 Pos.

33 34 35 36

37

Vlns. I

Vlns. II

Vla.

Cello

Str. Bass

mf

mf

mf

mf

37 38 39 40

I Vlns. *mf*

II Vlns. *cresc.*

Vla. *cresc.*

Cello *cresc.*

Str. Bass *cresc.*

41 42 43

I Vlns. *cresc.* **f**

II Vlns. **f**

Vla. **f**

Cello **f**

Str. Bass **f**

44 45 46 47

Vlns.
I
II

Vla.

Cello

Str. Bass

48 49 50 51

This block contains the musical score for measures 48 through 51. It features five staves: Violins I and II, Viola, Cello, and String Bass. The Violin I part begins with a four-measure rest. The Viola and Cello parts include 'V' markings above certain notes. The String Bass part has a '-1' marking at the end of measure 51. A large red watermark is overlaid on the score.

Vlns.
I
II

Vla.

Cello

Str. Bass

52 53 54 55

This block contains the musical score for measures 52 through 55. It features five staves: Violins I and II, Viola, Cello, and String Bass. The Violin I and II parts have long horizontal lines in measures 54 and 55, indicating sustained notes. The Viola part has a circled measure number '54' above it. The String Bass part has a '2' marking above it in measure 54. A large red watermark is overlaid on the score.

I
Vlns.
II
Vla.
Cello
Str. Bass

56 57 58 59

dim.

dim.

dim.

dim.

dim.

I
Vlns.
II
Vla.
Cello
Str. Bass

60 61 62 63

mp

mp

mp

mp

mp

65

Vlns. I *cresc.* *f*

Vlns. II *cresc.* *f*

Vla. *cresc.* *f*

Cello *cresc.* *f*

Str. Bass *cresc.* *f*

64 65 66 67

rit. *mp* **71** Adagio (♩ = 80)

Vlns. I *mp*

Vlns. II *mp*

Vla. *mp*

Cello *mp*

Str. Bass *mp*

68 69 70 71

Vlns. I

Vlns. II

Vla.

Cello

Str. Bass

4

2nd Pos.

1

2

4

75

cresc.

72

73

74

75

cresc.

Vlns. I

Vlns. II

Vla.

Cello

Str. Bass

rit.

tr.

Opt. Repeat

f \rightarrow *p*

f \rightarrow *p*

f \rightarrow *p*

f \rightarrow *p*

f \rightarrow *p*

f \rightarrow *p*

-1

-1

76

77

78

79