

Variations on the Grosse Fuge for String Quartet and Orchestra



Bill Robinson

Variations on the Grosse Fuge for String Quartet and Orchestra

January 6—March 22, 1987 (synth version), Las Cruces, New Mexico
revised 2003-2005, revised and orchestrated 2007, edited 2014 and 2024
duration: about 18 minutes

in memoriam Ben Marcato

While a student at Eastman School of Music in 1973-74, I listened every other night to Beethoven's opus 133 string quartet *Grosse Fuge* with a couple of friends for at least two months. (The alternate nights were usually spent with *Hammerklavier*.) As a result this string quartet was branded on my brain, which may not have been the best thing for my early composition style—which tended to the too noisy and too crowded with notes, not to mention horribly hard to play.

I went to NTSU (now UNT) in Denton Texas in the fall of 1974, and started working on a string quintet/string orchestra piece that would be a variation on the *Grosse Fuge*—re-writing the piece in my own idiom and with significant differences. After about two years of work, it was premiered at my senior composition recital in 1977. The performance was rather rough, and the recital failed; I left school without a degree. (I returned to NTSU in the early '80s and got a BM in 1984.)

I took a break from composing in the fall of 1985 to start work on an experiment in transcendental physics. After moving to Las Cruces New Mexico in the fall of 1986, my project was at a standstill, and I livened up my life in a desert trailer slum by composing a completely new variation on the *Grosse Fuge*, disposing of the string quintet and using instead five synthesizers. I had written new and arranged older works for five synths. With this experience, but not having a synth or any electronic equipment myself, I simply imagined what I would like the piece to be like and designed it for live performance. The composition took from January 6 to March 22, 1987. I could neither find performers nor afford equipment to sequence or record the synth scores I'd written.

I revised the score in January 2005 but still did not have a performable piece. I then realized in early 2007 that a string quartet could take on the most difficult passages, leaving more playable material for an orchestra with a reasonable skill level. A decent college orchestra should be able to play this work; the quartet will have to be of professional quality. During the orchestration I recomposed some sections and made several improvements. In late 2014, I revised the layout of the orchestral score and extracted a fresh set of parts.

There is also a version for piano quintet where the string quartet takes on considerably more material. As a result, it is not simply a version with piano taking orchestral parts, but rather is a unique and separate rendition. Not surprisingly, considerable skill for all performers is required for the chamber version. The piano quintet was premiered by the Ciompi Quartet with Randall Love, piano, at the NC Museum of Art in January 2009.

With no apology, this music is intense, hypercomplex, and maybe just a little crazy—as such not so different from the original; but if a focused listener someday can achieve some familiarity with the music, I do hope that the sweat required for its production will have been worthwhile.

The instrumentation is winds in pairs (flute 2 doubles piccolo), four horns, two trumpets, two trombones, bass trombone, tuba, timpani, string quartet, and strings.

Whoever tells a lie cannot be pure in heart—and only the pure in heart can make a good soup. ---L. v. B.

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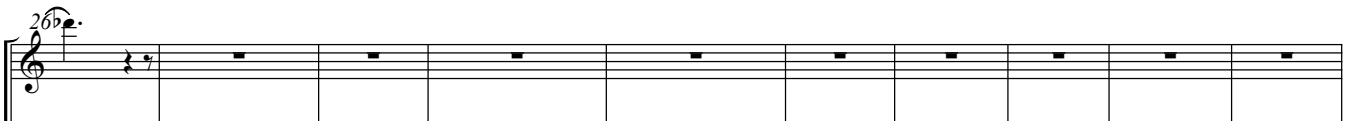
Garner, NC

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p

Fl.

1



B♭ Cl.

1



2

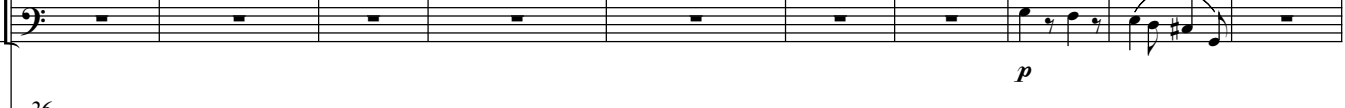


Bsn.

1



2



Hn.

1



3



Vln.

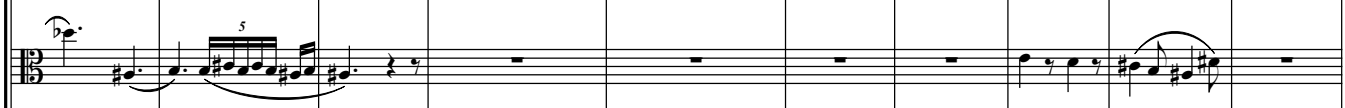
1



II



Quart.



Vla.

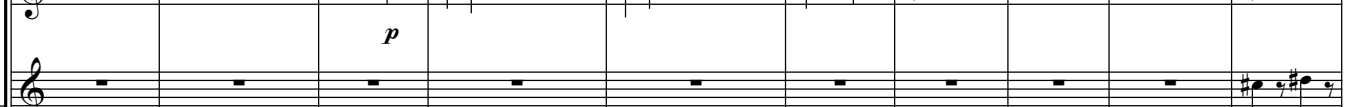


Vc.



Vln.

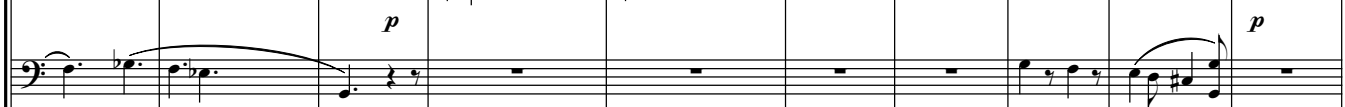
I



II



Vla.



Vc.



DB



VGF

[illegible]

64

Fl. 1 *mp* *ff* 2

(dbl. Picc.) 2

Ob. 1 *mp* *ff* 2

2 *mp* *ff*

B♭ Cl. 1 *mp* 5 *ff*

2 *mp* 5 *ff*

Bsn. 1 *mp* *ff*

Hn. 1 *ff*

2 *ff*

3 *ff*

4 *ff*

B♭ Tpt. 1 *ff* 2

2 *ff*

Tbn. 1 *ff*

2 *mp* *ff*

BTbn. *mp* *ff*

Tuba *mp* *ff*

Vln. I *mp*

II

Quart. Vla. *mp*

Vc. *mp*

Vln. I *mp* *ff*

II *ff* 2

Vla. *mp* *ff* *div.* *unis.*

Vc. *mp* *ff* *div.* *unis.*

DB 64 *mp* *ff*

A

76

Fl. 1

Ob. 1

Ob. 2

B♭ Cl. 1

B♭ Cl. 2

Hn. 1

Hn. 2

Hn. 3

Hn. 4

B♭ Tpt. 1

B♭ Tpt. 2

Tbn. 1

Tbn. 2

BTbn.

Tuba

Timp.

ff

76

Quart. Vln. 1

Quart. Vln. II

ff

ff

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc. unis.

76

DB

f

f

f

[illegible]

This musical score is for the 1997 film "The English Patient". It features a complex orchestration with multiple woodwinds, brass, strings, and percussion. The score is written for a full orchestra, including B♭ Clarinet (Cl.), Bassoon (Bsn.), Horn (Hn.), B♭ Trumpet (Tpt.), Trombone (Tbn.), Tuba, Timpani (Timp.), Quartet Violin (Vln.), Violin I and II, Viola (Vla.), Violoncello (Vc.), and Double Bass (DB). The music is characterized by its lush, romantic style, with a prominent use of woodwinds and strings. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, dynamics (e.g., *f*, *100*), and articulation marks. The overall mood is one of intense emotion and drama, reflecting the themes of the film.

This page of the musical score covers measures 110 through 114. The instrumentation includes Oboe 1, Bassoon 1 and 2, Horns 1 and 2, Trombones 1 and 2, Tuba, Timpani, Violins I and II, Viola, Violoncello, and Double Bass. The score is written in 4/4 time. Key musical features include:

- Measure 110:** Oboe 1 and Bassoon 1 enter with a half note G4 (F#4 in the bass clef). Bassoon 2 and Horn 1 have a half note G4 (F#4). Horn 2 and Trombone 1 have a half note G4 (F#4). Trombone 2 and Tuba have a half note G4 (F#4). Timpani has a half note G4 (F#4). Violins I and II have a half note G4 (F#4). Viola has a half note G4 (F#4). Violoncello and Double Bass have a half note G4 (F#4).
- Measure 111:** Oboe 1 and Bassoon 1 have a half note G4 (F#4). Bassoon 2 and Horn 1 have a half note G4 (F#4). Horn 2 and Trombone 1 have a half note G4 (F#4). Trombone 2 and Tuba have a half note G4 (F#4). Timpani has a half note G4 (F#4). Violins I and II have a half note G4 (F#4). Viola has a half note G4 (F#4). Violoncello and Double Bass have a half note G4 (F#4).
- Measure 112:** Oboe 1 and Bassoon 1 have a half note G4 (F#4). Bassoon 2 and Horn 1 have a half note G4 (F#4). Horn 2 and Trombone 1 have a half note G4 (F#4). Trombone 2 and Tuba have a half note G4 (F#4). Timpani has a half note G4 (F#4). Violins I and II have a half note G4 (F#4). Viola has a half note G4 (F#4). Violoncello and Double Bass have a half note G4 (F#4).
- Measure 113:** Oboe 1 and Bassoon 1 have a half note G4 (F#4). Bassoon 2 and Horn 1 have a half note G4 (F#4). Horn 2 and Trombone 1 have a half note G4 (F#4). Trombone 2 and Tuba have a half note G4 (F#4). Timpani has a half note G4 (F#4). Violins I and II have a half note G4 (F#4). Viola has a half note G4 (F#4). Violoncello and Double Bass have a half note G4 (F#4).
- Measure 114:** Oboe 1 and Bassoon 1 have a half note G4 (F#4). Bassoon 2 and Horn 1 have a half note G4 (F#4). Horn 2 and Trombone 1 have a half note G4 (F#4). Trombone 2 and Tuba have a half note G4 (F#4). Timpani has a half note G4 (F#4). Violins I and II have a half note G4 (F#4). Viola has a half note G4 (F#4). Violoncello and Double Bass have a half note G4 (F#4).

[illegible]

[illegible]

139

B♭ Cl. 1

139

Hn. 1 3

mp

p

139

Vln. 1 II

Quart.

Vla.

Vc.

p

139

Vln. I II

unis. *p*

p

Vc.

139

DB

This musical score page contains measures 139 through 146. The instruments are arranged in a standard orchestral layout. The B♭ Clarinet 1 part begins in measure 139 with a quarter rest, followed by an eighth-note melody in measures 140-141, and then a half-note melody in measures 142-143. The Horns 1 and 3 parts are mostly silent until measure 145, where they enter with a half-note chord. The Violins 1 and 2 parts have a complex rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes. The Viola part has a similar rhythmic pattern. The Violoncello and Double Bass parts have a more active, rhythmic pattern. The score includes dynamic markings such as *mp* (mezzo-piano) and *p* (piano).

148

Ob.

mp

Bb Cl.

mp

Bsn.

mp

Hn.

mp

Bb Tpt.

p

p

Tuba

mp

Timp.

mp

Vln.

ff

Quart.

Vla.

mp

Vc.

mp

Vln.

I

II

Vla.

Vc.

div. senza sord.

mp

DB

148

mf

162

Fl. 1

Fl. 2 (dbl. Picc.)

Ob. 1

Ob. 2

B♭ Cl. 1

B♭ Cl. 2

Bsn. 1

Bsn. 2

Hn. 1

Hn. 2

Hn. 3

Hn. 4

B♭ Tpt. 1

B♭ Tpt. 2

Tbn. 1

Tbn. 2

BTbn.

Tuba

Timp. *(8^{va})*

Vln. 1

Quart.

Vc.

I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

DB

162

ff

mp

ben marcato

ff

$\text{♩} = 120$

Allegro bigga fuga

[illegible]

183

ben marcato

1

FL.

2

(dbl.
Picc.)

ben marcato

ff

1

Ob.

2

ben marcato

ff

ff

1

B♭ Cl.

2

1

Bsn.

2

183

ben marcato

ff

ben marcato

ff

ben marcato

ff

ben marcato

ff

1

Hn.

2

3

4

ff

ben marcato

ff

ben marcato

ff

1

B♭ Tpt.

2

ff

1

Tbn.

2

f

B Tbn.

Tuba

Timp.

183

ff

1

Vln.

II

Quart.

ff

Vla.

ff

Vc.

ff

183

I

Vln.

II

Vla.

Vc.

183

DB

188

Fl.

2 (dbl. Picc.)

Ob.

1

2

B♭ Cl.

1

2

Bsn.

1

2

188

Hn.

1

2

3

4

B♭ Tpt.

1

2

Tbn.

1

2

BTbn.

Tuba

Timp.

188

Vln.

I

II

Quart.

Vla.

Vc.

188

Vln.

I

II

Vla.

Vc.

188

DB

[illegible]

199

D

Fl.

2

(dbl. Picc.)

Ob.

2

B♭ Cl.

2

Bsn. 1

f

Timp.

Vln.

I

II

Quart.

Vla.

Vc.

I

II

Vln.

Vla.

Vc.

DB

199

D

div.

unis.

div.

199

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

1

234

Fl.

2

(dbl.
Picc.)

Ob. 1

1

B♭ Cl.

2

1

Bsn.

2

1

234

Hn.

2

3

4

1

B♭ Tpt.

2

1

Tbn.

2

BTbn.

Tuba

Timp.

1

234

Vln.

II

Quart.

Vla.

Vc.

1

234

Vln.

II

Vla.

Vc.

234

DB

240

Fl.

1

2 (dbl. Picc.)

Ob.

1

2

Bs Cl.

1

2

Bsn.

1

2

[F]

240

Hn.

1

2

3

4

Bs Tpt.

1

2

Tbn.

1

2

BTbn.

Tuba

Timp.

ff

f

8vb

240

Vln.

1

2

Quart.

Vla.

Vc.

ff

ff

240

Vln.

I

II

Vla.

Vc.

DB

unis.

ff

f

[F]

Ob. 1

Hn. 1

Vln. I

Vln. II

Quart.

Vla.

Vc.

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

249

1

Fl.

2

(dbl. Picc.)

Ob. 1

1

B♭ Cl.

2

1

Bsn.

2

249

1

Hn. 2

4

1

B♭ Tpt.

2

BTbn.

Tuba

249

1

Vln. 1

Quart.

Vc.

249

I

Vln.

II

Vla.

Vc.

249

DB

253

Fl. 1 (F1.2)

Ob. 1 *ff*

Ob. 2 *ff*

B♭ Cl. 1

B♭ Cl. 2

Bsn. 1

Bsn. 2

Hn. 1

Hn. 2

Hn. 3

Hn. 4

B♭ Tpt. 1 *ff*

Vln. I

Vln. II *div.* *ff* *unis.*

Vla.

Vc. 253



256

Hn. 4

Quart. Vln. 1 256 *pp*

Vln. I 256 *pp*

Vln. II *pp*

Vla. *pp*

Vc. *pp*

DB 256 *pp*

270

Hn. 4

270

Vln. I

Quart. II

Vla.

p

270

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

DB

pp

This musical score page contains measures 270 through 275. The instruments are arranged in two systems. The first system includes Hn. 4, Vln. I, Quart. II, and Vla. The second system includes Vln. I, Vln. II, Vla., Vc., and DB. Measure 270 begins with a key signature change to one sharp (F#) and a common time signature. The Hn. 4 part has a melodic line with slurs and accents. The Vln. I part has a melodic line with slurs and accents. The Quart. II part has a melodic line with slurs and accents. The Vla. part has a melodic line with slurs and accents. The Vln. I part has a melodic line with slurs and accents. The Vln. II part has a melodic line with slurs and accents. The Vla. part has a melodic line with slurs and accents. The Vc. part has a melodic line with slurs and accents. The DB part has a melodic line with slurs and accents. Dynamics include *p* (piano) and *pp* (pianissimo).

This musical score page contains measures 276 through 278. The instruments are arranged in the following order from top to bottom: Flute (Fl.), B♭ Clarinet (B♭ Cl.), Bassoon (Bsn.), Horns (Hn.), Violins (Vln.), Viola (Vla.), Violoncello (Vc.), and Double Bass (DB). The score includes various musical notations such as rests, eighth notes, sixteenth notes, triplets, and sixteenth-note runs. Dynamic markings include *p* (piano), *mp* (mezzo-piano), and *f* (forte). Measure numbers 276, 277, and 278 are indicated at the beginning of their respective staves.

Musical score for "Allegro bigga fuga" by John Williams, measures 279-282. The score is for a full orchestra and includes parts for Flute, Piccolo, Bassoon, Horn, Violin, Viola, Violoncello, Double Bass, and Double Bassoon. The tempo is marked "Allegro bigga fuga" with a metronome marking of 120. The key signature is one sharp (F#). The score shows various musical notations including triplets, sixteenth notes, and dynamic markings like *p*, *mp*, and *mf*.

[illegible]

289

Fl.

2 (dbl. Picc.)

Ob.

1

2

B♭ Cl.

1

2

Bsn.

1

2

289

Hn.

1

2

3

4

B♭ Tpt.

1

2

Tbn.

1

2

BTbn.

Tuba

Timp.

289

Vln.

I

II

Quart.

Vla.

Vc.

289

Vln.

I

II

Vla.

Vc.

DB

33

297

1 B♭ Cl.

2

1 Bsn.

2

Hn. 2

1 Vln.

II

Quart.

Vla.

Vc.

Vla.

Vc.

297

298

299

300

301

302

303

304

305

306

307

308

309

310

311

312

313

314

315

316

317

318

319

320

321

322

323

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718

719

720

721

722

723

724

725

726

727

728

729

730

731

732

733

734

735</

[illegible]

305

Fl. 1

Fl. 2 (dbl. Picc.)

Hn. 1

Vln. I

Vln. II

Quart.

Vla. *ben marcato*

Vc. 305



311

Fl. 1

Fl. 2 (dbl. Picc.)

Ob. 1

B♭ Cl. 1

B♭ Cl. 2

Bsn. 1

Bsn. 2

Hn. 2

B♭ Tpt. 1

B♭ Tpt. 2

BTbn.

Tuba

Vln. I 311

Vln. II

Quart.

Vla.

Vc.

311

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

DB 311

The image displays a page from a musical score, likely for a symphony orchestra. The score is written for various instruments, including Flute (Fl.), Oboe (Ob.), Clarinet (Cl.), Bassoon (Bsn.), Horn (Hn.), Trumpet (Tpt.), Trombone (Tbn.), Tuba, Timpani (Timp.), Violin (Vln.), Viola (Vla.), Violoncello (Vc.), and Double Bass (DB). The tempo is marked as "Moderato I" with a metronome marking of 88. The score includes musical notation, dynamics (e.g., *ff*, *pp*, *p*), and a rehearsal mark "316". The instruments are arranged in a standard orchestral layout, with woodwinds and brass in the upper staves and strings in the lower staves. The score is written in a single system, with each instrument having its own staff. The notation includes notes, rests, and various musical symbols. The dynamics are indicated by letters like *ff* (fortissimo) and *pp* (pianissimo). The rehearsal mark "316" is placed at the beginning of a section. The overall layout is clean and professional, typical of a printed musical score.

[illegible]

327

Fl.

(dbl. Picc.)

Ob.

Bs. Cl.

Bsn.

Hn.

3

4

Timp.

327

Vln.

II

Quart.

Vla.

Vc.

327

I

Vln.

II

Vla.

327

DB

(Picc.)

pizz.

mp

pizz.

mp

arco

trem.

arco trem.

unis.

mp

This musical score is for measures 331-336 of 'The Swan' from Swan Lake. It features five staves: Flute (Fl.), Horn (Hn.), Violin (Vln.), Viola (Vla.), and Cello (Vc.). The key signature is one flat (B-flat major or D minor), and the time signature is 3/4. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings like *pp* (pianissimo) and *arco* (arco). The Flute part starts with a Piccolo (Picc.) marking. The Horn part has a *pp* marking. The Violin and Viola parts have *arco* markings. The Cello part has a *pp* marking. The score is divided into measures 331, 332, 333, 334, 335, and 336. The time signature changes from 3/4 to 6/8 in measure 335.

[illegible]

Fl.

1

2

(Picc.)

(Picc.)

Ob.

1

2

B♭ Cl.

1

2

Bsn.

1

2

348

Hn.

1

2

3

4

B♭ Tpt.

1

2

Tbn.

1

2

BTbn.

Tuba

Timp.

348

Vln.

I

II

Vla.

Vc.

DB

348

369

L

Fl. (dbl. Picc.)

2

1

Ob.

2

B♭ Cl.

1

2

Bsn. 1

369

Hr.

1

3

B♭ Tpt. 1

369

Vln.

I

II

Quart.

Vla.

Vc.

369

Vln.

I

II

Vla.

Vc.

DB

[illegible]

VGF

 = 96
[M] Moderato II

412

1

FL.

2

(Fl.2)
(dbl.
Picc.)

1

Ob.

2

1

B♭ Cl.

2

412

1

Hn.

2

pp

3

4

Timp.

412

1

Vln.

II

Quart.

Vla.

Vc.

pp  = 96
[M] Moderato II

412

I

Vln.

II

pp

Vla.

pp

Vc.

412

DB

pp



433

B♭ Cl.

Vln.

Quart.

Vla.

Vc.

DB

mp

ff

mp

ff

N Fugato Bordello ♩ = 154

N Fugato Bordello ♩ = 154

[illegible]

(Picc.)

446

Fl. (dbl. Picc.) 2

Ob. I

Vln. I

Vln. II

Quart.

Vla.

Vc.

ff

446

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

DB

446

f

ff

unis.

ff

ff

ff

[illegible]

1 457 Fl. (Fl.2) (dbl. Picc.) 2 1 2 Ob. 1 2 B♭ Cl. 1 2 Bsn. 1

1 457 Hn. 1 2 3 4 B♭ Tpt. 1 2 BTbn. Tuba Timp.

1 457 Vln. I II Quart. Vla. Vc.

1 457 Vln. I II Vla. Vc. DB

462

Fl. (Fl.2)

(dbl. Picc.)

Ob.

B♭ Cl.

Hn.

B♭ Tpt.

Vln. Quart.

Vla.

Vc.

Vln.

Vla.

Vc.

DB

f

ff

ff

div.

467

1

Fl.

(FL2)

2

(dbl. Picc.)

1

Ob.

2

ff

ff

ff

467

1

Hn.

3

1

B $\flat$ Tpt.

2

ff

ff

467

I

Vln.

II

Vla.

Vc.

467

DB

This musical score page contains measures 467 through 472. The instrumentation includes Flute (1 and 2), Oboe (1 and 2), Horn (1 and 3), B-flat Trumpet (1 and 2), Violin (I and II), Viola, Violoncello, and Double Bass. The woodwinds and brass sections play staccato eighth-note patterns, often with accents and fortissimo dynamics. The strings provide a harmonic foundation with sustained notes and moving lines. The key signature has one flat, and the time signature is 4/4.

473

Fl.

1

2 (dbl. Picc.)

Ob.

1

2

B♭ Cl.

1

2

Bsn.

1

2

Hn.

1

2

3

4

B♭ Tpt.

1

2

Quart. Vc.

473

P

Vln.

I

II

Vla.

unis

Vc.

473

DB

Ob. 1

1

B♭ Cl.

2

1

Bsn.

2

1

Hn.

2

3

4

1

B♭ Tpt.

2

B♭ Tbn.

478

478

478

I

Vln.

II

Vla.

Vc.

478

DB

pizz.

482

Ob.

1

2

B♭ Cl.

1

2

Bsn.

1

2

Hn.

2

4

Vln.

1

II

Quart.

Vla.

Vc.

Vla.

DB

ff

p

ff

p

p



487 *non stacc.*

Vln.

1

II

Quart.

Vla.

Vc.

rit.

Vln. I

487 *p*

Vla.

487 *p*

[illegible]

This image shows a page from a musical score, likely for a symphony. The score is written for a large ensemble of instruments, including woodwinds, brass, and strings. The page is divided into two systems of staves. The first system includes staves for Flute (Fl.), Oboe (Ob.), Clarinet (Cl.), Bassoon (Bsn.), Horn (Hn.), Trumpet (Tpt.), Trombone (Tbn.), Tuba, and Timpani (Timp.). The second system includes staves for Violin (Vln.), Viola (Vla.), and Double Bass (DB). The score is written in 2/4 time and features various dynamic markings, including *ff* (fortissimo) and *mp* (mezzo-piano). The tempo is marked as *Allegro* with a metronome marking of 133. The page number 499 is visible in the top left corner.

[illegible]

[illegible]

556

1

Fl.

2

(Fl.2)

Picc.)

ff

1

Ob.

2

ff

1

Bsn.

2

ff

556

1

Hn.

4

1

B♭ Tpt.

2

556

1

Vln.

II

Quart.

Vla.

Vc.

556

I

Vln.

II

Vla.

Vc.

556

DB

This page contains the musical score for measures 556 through 561. The score is arranged in four systems. The first system includes parts for Flute 1, Flute 2 (Piccolo), Oboe 1, Oboe 2, Bassoon 1, and Bassoon 2. The second system includes Horn 1, Horn 4, Trumpet 1 (B♭), and Trumpet 2 (B♭). The third system includes Violin 1, Violin 2, Viola, and Violoncello. The fourth system includes Violin 1, Violin 2, Viola, Violoncello, and Double Bass. The key signature has two flats (B♭ and E♭). The time signature is 4/4. The score features various musical notations including rests, eighth notes, sixteenth notes, and slurs. Dynamics such as *ff* (fortissimo) and *s* (sforzando) are indicated. Measure numbers 556, 557, 558, 559, 560, and 561 are marked at the beginning of their respective measures.

Big Slow Ending ♩ = 60

FL.

(Fl.2)

(dbl. Picc.)

Ob.

B♭ Cl.

Bsn.

Hn.

B♭ Tpt.

Tbn.

BTbn.

Tuba

Timp.

Vln.

Quart.

Vla.

Vc.

Vln.

Vla.

Vc.

DB