

# Four für Marv

for solo guitar



by Nitin Arora

painting by Henriette Ronner (1821 - 1909)

## Preface

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Marvin was still in the grips of youth when first we formed a fast and fortuitous friendship. Typical off younglings – especially those such as him who were also foundlings – Marv displayed an array of behaviors, behaviors unbound by a sense of duty to others. Selfish, however, he was not. Though just a boy, he simply was his own man.

An eater of life, Marv – as I knew him – lived fast and hard. A treacherous height? Marv conquered it. A mountain of vittles? Devoured. His ravenous exploits led, naturally, to equal doses of his favorite pastime – napping. Despite his adventurous spirit, tranquility was not unknown to him.

As were his moods, his slumbers, too, were erratic – both in location and in the hour of their coming. He slept anywhere, at any time. Attempting to decipher the pattern of either was folly. Acceptance often triumphs over understanding.

Upon waking, Marv nearly always craved two things, food and discussion – and in that order. The benefits of nutriment are clear to all, but conversation, as Marv implied in that manner uniquely his own, was the very bedrock of humanity. Indeed, Marv's appetite for mental gymnastics exceeded even the demands of his natural athleticism.

My discussions with Marv traversed the full spectrum of living – art, our fellow man, our numbered days and their bloody significance if in fact they had any. Despite the topic, despite his feelings, and yet because of his nature, Marv's responses and the propositions he set forth were always the same ...

"Meow."

My gratitude for the musical inspiration Marv has provided me is matched by more than a touch of melancholy in knowing that of all those who can read these words and the fewer who can comprehend the black dots set forth on the following staves, Marv himself is not to be counted amongst either.

These four compositions are therefore and hereby dedicated with humility to my friend Marvin Gaye-verkamp, affectionately referred to as Marv by those, such a I, who can cite having known him – albeit for only a little while – as one of life's great privileges.

Sincerely,

Nitin Arora

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Raleigh, North Carolina, USA

## Music

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Of the music I would first like to state in no uncertain terms that these pieces are intended to be played on a "romantic" or 19<sup>th</sup> century guitar strung with gut – naturally of the sheep or cattle, but not the cat, variety. Their very essence is bound with the sonic qualities of such an instrument as they were conceived on one.

I would also like to add that any allusions to tone painting or programmaticism are based on my interpretation of my own music *a posteriori*. That is to say, the music was written as absolute music with a deference to voice leading and counterpoint – the bedrock of Western classical composition. The weaving of fanciful titles and tales are a result of *having composed* though that does not render the fabric necessarily irrelevant. Yet, any claimed influence of the titles or any internal narrative on the process of composing or editing is, honestly speaking, wishful at best and revisionist at worst. Any re-working of the music that occurred after such fancies had already taken root was done to satisfy musical, not literary, demands.

Initial tempo indications include a parenthetical metronome marking to denote *my current preference*, though they are naturally subject to the performer's own interpretation.

Pitches, durations, and fingerings were proofread numerous times, though errors surely remain. Of course, some objects may seem erroneous though they are quite intentional.

As each piece is now intended to evoke or at least reference a particular aspect of my memory of Marv, some brief notes on the musical notes follow.

## #1, at the windows sill

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Of all four pieces, this is the only one for which I have an entire narrative in mind to match each section.

For this piece – a sort of *style brisé*, I think of Marv staring outside the window waiting for a friend to enter and give him company.

Initially, Marv spots a few people outside the window who he thinks may come in only for him to realize they aren't even aware of him (mm. 1 – 8). By mm. 14 (deceptive cadence) he begins to become indignant, trying to convince himself that he needs no friends though this quickly turns to despair (mm. 15 – 21, chromatic descent) where he begins to believe and finally concludes (mm. 22, mediant dominant) that he is abandoned and alone, forever and always.

In mm. 25, a harmonic shift on the second beat signifies a glimmer of hope and Marv sees a familiar face approaching. His anticipation rises (mm. 28 – 31, melodic ascent) as they climb the stairwell toward the door to greet him. Finally, in mm. 32 the tonic harmony of D Major is cemented, signifying the joyful reunion of friends.

Note that the two *acciaccatura* may be interpreted – if so desired – as a short "meow". Regardless, what is needed for this piece is to approach it as a vocal melody with accompaniment.

## **#2, a whisker sour**

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As previously stated, Marv seemed to have an "array of behaviors". Once while he was sitting in my lap, I realized as his claws retracted that I was in the midst of a being who could – in a flash – revert from the gentlest of creatures to one who could gouge my eyes out with neither warning nor hesitation.

While my sight thankfully remains intact, this piece can signify the sudden shifts in mood that lie within Marv's repertoire of personality. The large melodic leaps – to me – mimic this "jerky" behavior. As such, the performer must take care not to sustain the notes far beyond their written value.

The sections alternative between the tonic minor and relative major, the respective "sour" and "sweet" of my feline friend. A little shading in color might help to further draw this distinction.

## **#3, midnight murder manifesto**

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This piece has less to do with an observance of Marv's behavior, but rather a lingering suspicion brought about by a bevy of missing (escaped?) toys. As he seemed to take stock of his lost prisoners throughout the day, I felt as if that night's witching hour would bring to them, if found, a fate far too terrible to mention on these random sheets of waste paper.

The group of three slurred 16<sup>th</sup> notes that begin the primary rhythmic motive throughout the piece must be articulated as well as if they were to be individually plucked. Indeed, I had originally intended for them to be played *apoyando* until I realized that *good*

murderers are suave, debonair. We guitarists have much to learn from these elegant messengers of Death.

#### #4, moto purrpetuo

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Cats, be they of the big variety or our domestic friends such as Marv, have a physical prowess unknowable to man.

Perhaps due to the pangs of his adolescence or some latent *unruhe* in the boy, Marv would often enter some sort of possessed state of physical mania – chasing after his own tail, running hither and thither, leaping across the room with no care for what or who he landed on, and often clawing at the air – or perhaps some invisible foe.

For better or worse, the piece itself has some of these same qualities.

The nearly ceaseless presence of diminished harmonies allows the music to quickly arrive at the mediant minor (mm. 11) and depart from it with even greater haste. The descending chromatic sixths also lend themselves to the music's perpetual restlessness. Meanwhile, a favorite technique of mine, the cross-string slur, and its metrical brethren, the cross-beat slur, are employed throughout, lending a certain demand for a "physical prowess" on the part of the performer.

## Cover Art

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After nearly a year and a half of working on these compositions, little reward awaited – for the joy of completion awaits only the inexperienced. Indeed one is – after all the labor – faced with the question of "Now, will I put forth an equal effort in order to learn these damnable pieces?"

Yet, there is something about selecting a fine piece of art with which to make a cover and a proper looking publication.

Only in the latter months, as the work was sounding to a close, did I let my mind wander as to what would make suitable cover art. It was with great surprise that I found anything as suitable as many of the works of Henriette Ronner-Knip.

Ultimately, the selection process was not wanting in intrigue. Only on one website<sup>1</sup> did I find the particular iteration of the work used. Otherwise, I found a very similar painting seemingly entitled *The Guitar Lesson*<sup>2</sup>. I've chosen the former over the latter in preference for its hues and also because it depicts a title page of sheet music by the composer Fritz Spin(dler?) that is lacking in *The Guitar Lesson*. Whether the work used is an imitation or an alternate by the artist herself ... this I do not know.

Anyone wishing to pursue Ms. Ronner-Knip's cat art may wish to know of a book entitled *Cats and kittens at play : the art of Henriette Ronner-Knip, 1821-1909*.<sup>3</sup> Perhaps the answer to the riddle lies within.

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1 <http://www.klassiskgitar.net/1800-1850-29.html>

2 <http://www.artnet.com/artists/henriette-ronner-knip/the-guitar-lesson-yrAWSYk257d3ciTgednrw2>

3 <http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/40074387>



at the window sill

Larghetto (65)

Guitar

The image shows a guitar score for the piece 'at the window sill' by Nitin Arora. The score is written in treble clef with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). It consists of five staves of music, each with a measure number (8, 8, 15, 22, 29) at the beginning. The tempo is marked 'Larghetto (65)'. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and fingerings. Dynamics include *mp*, *mf*, *p*, *doloroso*, *dolce*, *giojoso*, *poco accelerato*, and *impetuoso*. There are also performance markings like hairpins and accents. The score ends with a double bar line and a final chord.

a whisker sour

Andante (85)

Guitar

The image shows a guitar score for the piece 'a whisker sour'. It consists of four staves of music, each with a treble clef and a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The tempo is marked 'Andante (85)'. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and fingerings (indicated by numbers 1-4 and 0 for natural). Dynamics include *mf* (mezzo-forte) and *mp* (mezzo-piano). Performance instructions include *patetico* and *rall.* (rallentando). The piece concludes with a double bar line and the word 'Fine'. The final measure is marked 'D.C. al Fine'.

# midnight murder manifesto

Guitar

Moderato (115)

The score is written for guitar in 2/4 time, featuring a complex melodic line with frequent accidentals and a steady bass accompaniment. The piece is marked 'Moderato' at 115 bpm. It begins with a *mp* dynamic and includes various performance instructions such as *cresc.*, *f*, *delicato*, *poco a poco accelerando*, and *rall.*. The score is divided into systems, with measure numbers 13, 25, 36, 48, and 59 clearly marked. A repeat sign is used at the end of the first system, indicating a return to measures 1-15. The piece concludes with a *mp* dynamic.

*mp*

*mf*

13

*cresc.*

*f*

25

*mf*

*delicato*

*mf*

36

*cresc.*

*f*

*delicato*

48

*mf*

*mp*

*repeat mm. 1 - 15.*

59

*poco a poco accelerando*

*rall.*

*mp*

moto purrpetuo

Allegro (130)

Guitar

This is a guitar score for the piece 'moto purrpetuo'. It consists of five staves of music, each starting with a measure number (8, 5, 8, 11, 15) and ending with a measure number (8, 8, 8, 8, 8). The music is written in treble clef with a common time signature (C). The tempo is marked 'Allegro (130)'. The score includes various dynamic markings: *mf*, *mp*, *cresc.*, *fp*, *poco agitato*, *f*, *mf*, *leggero*, and *fp*. The piece features complex rhythmic patterns, including sixteenth and thirty-second notes, and is heavily ornamented with fingerings (numbers 1-4) and slurs. There are also some circled numbers (e.g., 4, 5, 3) and a circled '2' above a measure. The overall style is highly technical and virtuosic.

18 *a tempo*  
④ *espressivo* *rall.* *mf*

22 *mp* *cresc.*

26 *fp* *poco a poco accelerando*

29 *ff* *sfz* *mf*