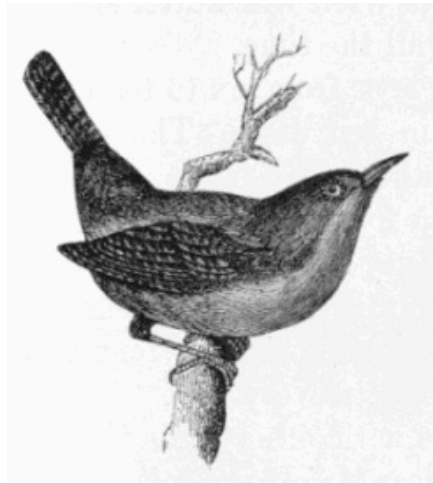


# Seven Duos for Birds or Strings

for Annette-Barbara Vogel



for violin and viola

Written with support from the Erik Stokes Fund, the Culture and Animals Foundation,  
and the Canada Council for the Arts

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## Seven Duos for Birds or Strings

1. *Cyphorhinus arada*
2. *Branta canadensis*
3. *Gymnorhina tibicen*
4. *Myadestes occidentalis*
5. *Cossypha heuglini*
6. *Alectoris rufa*
7. *Thryothorus euophrys*

Duration: Approx. 15'00"

For violin and viola

For Annette-Barbara Vogel, written with support from the Erik Stokes Fund, the Culture and Animals Foundation, and the Canada Council for the Arts.

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In temperate regions of European and North American, most bird songs are sung by males, typically in the context of attracting a mate or defending territory. The females of these species are often very selective about which songs (and thus which birds) they find attractive, and play a large role in determining the direction in which the songs develop. In tropical regions, however, duet songs are common, and the females of many species sing as often as the males. In some species, duets occur between mated pairs: a tightly coordinated duet indicates a well-bonded pair. Sometimes when one bird of these birds dies, its mate will take over singing both parts of the duet. In other species, pairs sing a more loosely coordinated-call-and response, perhaps keeping track of each other in a dense forest through the alternation of songs. In a few species, birds gather in groups of more than two, with all males singing one part and all females singing the other.

In *Seven Duos*, I've explored many different ways two singing birds can relate to each other. Some of the birds I've chosen to represent here are true duetters – each bird has its own part, and the two interlock in a specific way. In other cases, I've simply chosen a species where two or more birds may sing together, but not in a coordinated way. As well, each duo explores a different way that music can relate to birdsong. In some I've transcribed the song as accurately as possible (though I'm keenly aware of the difficulties of notating exact rhythms, pitches, and timbres – some bird-like particularities are always lost, while human musical and instrument-specific particularities are always added.) In other I've used a transcription as a starting point, from which I have allowed the music to develop in its own direction, or have tried to recreate the general atmosphere of hearing the song, rather than trying to transcribe it accurately.

1. *Cyphorhinus arada* (musician wren, or uirapuru) is a small brown wren native to the Amazon. The bird is an important character in Amazonian mythology, and its song has inspired much music in South America and elsewhere. It is unknown whether musician wrens sing interlocking duets, but recordings suggest that they do antiphonally alternate complete songs. The violin part is a direct transcription of the song of a musician wren (recorded by Patrick Ingremeau and available on the Xeno-Canto website) – one which, amazingly, fits almost perfectly into a Lydian scale. The viola part is a song I've composed to complement it, adhering as closely as I can to Musician Wren style. When the piece opens, one bird is depicted as being the background, but it gradually approaches until the two parts can be heard equally, combining to make a musical composite.

2. *Branta Canadensis* (Canada goose) came close to extinction in the first half of the 20th century, but revised game management plans and a program of introducing captive-raised Canada Geese into the wild has led to such a substantial regrowth in population that they are now considered an invasive pest in some areas. (Border Collies are sometimes employed to encourage large groups of geese to leave lawns and public parks!) Though Canada Geese aren't duetters, they are usually found in large groups, honking together. The thing I love about goose sounds is that an individual goose sounds ridiculous, but in groups they sound hauntingly beautiful.

3. *Gymnorhina tibicen* (Australian magpie) is a medium-sized, crow-like bird native to Australia and Southern New Guinea. Their song is rich in overtones and sounds a bit like

a modern connecting up, but when it is slowed we can hear that it is full of wild arpeggiations and modulations. Though these birds do duet, their song is so complex that I ended up needing both instruments simply to capture one bird's song. I transcribed a slow version, and then expanded it through repetition of motives, and the occasional addition of harmonic notes to try to capture the bright, rough timbre of the Australian Magpie's sound.

4. *Myadestes occidentalis* (brown-backed solitaire) is a bird in the thrush family, native to montane and lowland evergreen forest in Mexico, Belize, Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador. Like the song of the Australian magpie, this song has to be slowed considerably for human listeners to hear that it is made of harmonic-sounding arpeggios. However the Australian magpie leaps from one arpeggiated chord to another, while the brown-backed solitaire gradually glissandos up and down.

5. *Cossypha heuglini* (white-browed robin chat) is a member of the Old World flycatcher family, found in sub-Saharan Africa, and known for its beautiful song. In this species, the male and female sing distinctly different parts. The male sings a repeated warbling motive, which increases in volume as the song progresses. When it is sufficiently loud, the female adds a bright, trilled descant.

6. *Alectoris rufa* (red-legged partridge). This could really be any of a number of small or medium-sized ground birds, clucking as they peck at the ground. Though these birds do not duet, interesting cross-rhythms and textures may arise when two of these birds are together.

7. *Pheugopedius euophrys* (Plain-Tail Wren) These small wrens, native to the Andes, gather in groups of two to seven to sing tightly interlocking duets. All the males sing one part and all the females the other. The parts are so well-coordinated that they sound like a single song.

Although the *Seven Duos* are conceived as a whole, they could also be performed in subsets, and the order can be arranged as desired.

The composer would like to thank the Erik Stokes Fund, the Culture and Animals Foundation, and the Canada Council for the Arts for commissioning this work, and for providing the funding which enabled me to research the songs of duetting birds at the Max Planck Institute for Ornithology in Seewiesen, Germany. Thanks to ornithologist Dr. Henrik Brumm and his lab for being my hosts in Seewiesen, and to Annette-Barbara Vogel for her input as I was working on the piece.

# 1. Cyphorhinus arada

♩ = 120

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*Dampen strings with left hand so no definite pitch is heard. Play with percussive spiccato bowing.*

*Pure, ringing tone, notes slightly detached, not much vibrato.*

violin

viola

5

11

15

21

24

*Dampen strings with left hand so no definite pitch is heard. Play with percussive spiccato bowing.*

*Pure, ringing tone, notes slightly detached, not much vibrato.*

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

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

28

*mf* *f* *mf*

*mp* *mf*

31

*f* *mf* *f* *mf*

*< piu f* *mf*

35

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

*mf* *f*

39

*f* *mf* *mf* *mf*

*> mf* *mf* *mf*

42

*f* *mf* *f* *mf* *f*

*f* *mf* *mf* *f*

45

*f* *mf* *f* *mf* *f*

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

# 2. *Branta canadensis*

*wide, hoarse sound*

*lots of bow, little or no vibrato*

♩ = approx. 132 - 200, violin and viola should not match tempo

Emily Doolittle

(rest duration) approx. 2"      approx. 2"      approx. 2-3"

violin *p*

viola *p*

Start with short rests between statements of figure A, then more continuous.

Continue figure with slight variation (2, 3 or 4 of repeated pitch, sometimes with grace note at beginning, sometimes without.)

7

A

*p*

Start with short rests between statements of figure 1, then more continuous.

1

Continue figure with slight variation (2, 3 or 4 of repeated pitch, sometimes with grace note, sometimes without, etc.)

Mix of 1 and 2 (with small variations)

1 2

*p*



Mix of A and B (with small variations)

Mix A, B and C

Mix of 2 and 3

*mf*

(m. 7) approx. 25-40"

approx. 2-3"

*p*

(Viola ends before violin.)

*p*

9

A B C

1 2

mostly 2

just E (m. 9) approx. 10-15" approx. 1-2"

E E E

5 5 6

*f* *f* *ff*

mostly F (m. 11) approx. 10-15" approx. 1"

F E G E

7 8 6 7

*f* *ff*

(m. 13) approx. 10-15"      approx. 2"      (m. 15) approx. 4-6"      approx. 3"

C H H

*f* *mf*

8 9

*f* *mf*

17 H (m. 17) approx. 4-6"      approx. 4"      A (m. 19) approx. 5-10" (Viola ends before violin).

H A

*mp* *pp*

1 1

*mp* *pp*

# 3. *Gymnorhina tibicen*

*lively, impulsive*

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$\text{♩} = 108$

violin *f*

viola *f*

7

15

sub. *mp*

sub. *mp*

21

*f*

sub. *mp*

*f*

27

sub. *mp*

*f*

*f*

32 *f* *p*

38 *p*

44 *f* *pp*

52 *f* *pp*

59 *mp*

67

2 2

*mp* *mf*

2 2

*mp* *mf*

Detailed description: This system contains measures 67 through 74. The music is in 2/4 time. The treble staff begins with a dynamic marking of *mp* and ends with *mf*. The bass staff also begins with *mp* and ends with *mf*. There are two fermatas, one in each staff, above the first measure. The key signature has one flat (B-flat).

75

3

*f*

3

*f*

Detailed description: This system contains measures 75 through 83. The music is in 2/4 time. The treble staff begins with a dynamic marking of *f*. The bass staff also begins with *f*. There are two fermatas, one in each staff, above the first measure. The key signature has one sharp (F-sharp).

84

*f*

*f*

Detailed description: This system contains measures 84 through 90. The music is in 2/4 time. The treble staff begins with a dynamic marking of *f*. The bass staff also begins with *f*. There are two fermatas, one in each staff, above the first measure. The key signature has one sharp (F-sharp).

91

Detailed description: This system contains measures 91 through 96. The music is in 2/4 time. There are two fermatas, one in each staff, above the first measure. The key signature has one sharp (F-sharp).

97

2 4

2 4

Detailed description: This system contains measures 97 through 100. The music is in 2/4 time. The treble staff has dynamic markings of 2 and 4. The bass staff also has dynamic markings of 2 and 4. There are two fermatas, one in each staff, above the first measure. The key signature has one sharp (F-sharp).

# 4. *Myadestes occidentalis*

*rough, gritty*

Down and upbow as fast as possible (each box should take less than half a second). Downward arpeggiation on downbow, lean into doublestop on upbow. Occasional variation (extensions, contractions, etc.) of boxes ad lib.

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0" (at) 2" (approx.) 4" 6"

sul A □∇  
sul D  
sul G

*f*, poco a poco accel. (to *ff* at ~23")

sempre

violin

viola

Gradual upwards gliss. (from G Maj at 8" to A Maj at 13")

8" 9.5" 11" 12" 13"

Accel., up to every 0.5" or faster.  
No more rests between motives,  
so motion should be continuous.

violin

viola

Continuous flow of notes, following the same pattern. Slight slide upwards or downwards (no more than a semitone), ad lib. Occasionally prolong a note, as before.

~15" Occasionally sustain a note briefly. Occasionally include E string.

violin

viola

Repeat from beginning 3 times, varying slightly ad lib.

~20" ~23"

*ff*

violin

viola

*rough, gritty*

Down and upbow as fast as possible (each box should take less than half a second.) Downward arpeggiation on downbow, lean into doublestop on upbow. Occasional variations/extensions of boxes ad lib. Continuous sound. Entire section (viola solo) lasts approx. 20".

*f*

Continue arpeggiation pattern ad lib., gradually slowing and allowing more and more time between boxes.

Fast downward arpeggio.

*pp*



# 5. *Cossypha heuglini*

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♩ = 204

violin

*wispy, breathy, smooth*

First eighth of each pair slightly longer, second slightly shorter, like baroque "inegal" or a very subtle swing. Add slides between pitches ad lib.

viola

*ppp* (barely audible), poco a poco cresc.

7

3

3

*bright, a bit shrill*

(*pp*, poco a poco cresc.)

Fast tremolo glissando. Exact timing and number of notes can vary, so long as start and end pitch are as written.

15

*p*

21

2

2

*mp*

(*p*, poco a poco cresc.)

27

31 **3** *mf*

(*mp*, poco a poco cresc.)

37 *mf*

(*mf*, poco a poco cresc.)

42 *f*

46 *f*

51 *boisterous* *f*  $\text{♩} = \text{♩} (\text{♩} = 274)$   $\text{♩} = 274$

56

*bright, a bit shrill*  
short slide up to note.

60

64

(slide pattern up 1/4 tone)

Fast tremolo glissando. Exact timing and number of notes can vary, so long as start and end pitch are as written.

68

71

75

3

3

like beginning

*pp*

82

*p*

86

*pp*

*ppp*

91

niente

niente

# 6. *Alectoris rufa*

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With left hand, hold instrument gently across fingerboard, so strings can't vibrate. Play by striking strings with a pencil held loosely between thumb and index finger so pencil can bounce.

♩ = 60-90. Choose your own tempo (different than the viola), and try to keep steady, without joining viola. Try to make each strike hit a single time (without bouncing).

20"

violin

*pp* etc.

viola

*pp* etc.

Strive for double hits (bounces). Slight accel., as desired.

35"

Strive for triple bounces. Slight accel., as desired.

45"

*p* etc.

Strive for double hits (bounces). Slight accel., as desired.

*mp* etc.

Strive for triple bounces. Slight accel., as desired.

*p* etc.

*mp* etc.

Four or more bounces.

50" As fast as possible, ending together.

60"

*mf* etc.

Four or more bounces.

*f* etc.

As fast as possible, ending together.

*ff*

*mf* etc.

*f* etc.

*ff*

# 7. *Thryothorus euophrys*

as fast as possible (approx. ♩ = 168)  
like one voice  
add slides between pitches ad lib.

Emily Doolittle

The musical score is written for violin and viola. It consists of five systems of two staves each. The key signature has one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 6/8. The tempo is marked 'as fast as possible (approx. ♩ = 168)'. The performance instructions include 'like one voice' and 'add slides between pitches ad lib.'. The score includes dynamic markings (*mf*, *f*, *f > mf*, *sempre*) and articulation marks such as slurs and accents. Measure numbers 5, 12, 17, and 22 are indicated at the beginning of their respective systems. The final measure of the fifth system (measure 22) features a triplet of eighth notes in both parts.

28

Musical notation for measures 28-33. The system consists of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef and the lower staff is in bass clef. Both staves are in 6/8 time. The key signature has one sharp (F#). Measure 28 starts with a dynamic marking of  $mf$ . The music features a melodic line in the upper staff and a rhythmic accompaniment in the lower staff. The lower staff accompaniment consists of eighth-note patterns with slurs and ties.

34

Musical notation for measures 34-37. The system consists of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef and the lower staff is in bass clef. Both staves are in 6/8 time. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The music continues with the melodic line in the upper staff and the rhythmic accompaniment in the lower staff.

38

Musical notation for measures 38-41. The system consists of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef and the lower staff is in bass clef. Both staves are in 6/8 time. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The music continues with the melodic line in the upper staff and the rhythmic accompaniment in the lower staff.

42

Musical notation for measures 42-45. The system consists of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef and the lower staff is in bass clef. Both staves are in 6/8 time. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The music continues with the melodic line in the upper staff and the rhythmic accompaniment in the lower staff.

46

Musical notation for measures 46-51. The system consists of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef and the lower staff is in bass clef. Both staves are in 6/8 time. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The music continues with the melodic line in the upper staff and the rhythmic accompaniment in the lower staff. Measure 51 features a triplet of eighth notes in both staves, indicated by a '3' above and below the notes.

53

Musical notation for measures 53-57. The system consists of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef and the lower staff is in bass clef. The music features a sequence of chords and melodic lines with various accidentals and articulation marks.

58

Musical notation for measures 58-62. The system consists of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef and the lower staff is in bass clef. The music continues with complex harmonic structures and melodic patterns.

63

Musical notation for measures 63-68. The system consists of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef and the lower staff is in bass clef. Measure 64 includes a "2" marking above the staff. The music shows intricate chordal textures and melodic lines.

69

Musical notation for measures 69-73. The system consists of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef and the lower staff is in bass clef. The music features a more active melodic line in the upper staff with frequent eighth notes.

74

Musical notation for measures 74-78. The system consists of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef and the lower staff is in bass clef. The music concludes with sustained chords and melodic fragments.



79

Musical notation for measures 79-83. The system consists of two staves: a treble clef staff on top and a bass clef staff on the bottom. The key signature has one sharp (F#). Measure 79: Treble staff has a quarter note G4, a quarter rest, and a quarter note A4. Bass staff has a quarter note G3, a quarter note F#3, and a quarter note E3. Measure 80: Treble staff has a quarter rest. Bass staff has a quarter note G3, a quarter note F#3, and a quarter note E3. Measure 81: Treble staff has a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, and a quarter note B4. Bass staff has a quarter note G3, a quarter note F#3, and a quarter note E3. Measure 82: Treble staff has a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, and a quarter note B4. Bass staff has a quarter note G3, a quarter note F#3, and a quarter note E3. Measure 83: Treble staff has a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, and a quarter note B4. Bass staff has a quarter note G3, a quarter note F#3, and a quarter note E3.

84

Musical notation for measures 84-87. The system consists of two staves: a treble clef staff on top and a bass clef staff on the bottom. The key signature has one sharp (F#). Measure 84: Treble staff has a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, and a quarter note B4. Bass staff has a quarter note G3, a quarter note F#3, and a quarter note E3. Measure 85: Treble staff has a whole rest. Bass staff has a whole rest. Measure 86: Treble staff has a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, and a quarter note B4. Bass staff has a quarter note G3, a quarter note F#3, and a quarter note E3. Measure 87: Treble staff has a whole rest. Bass staff has a quarter note G3, a quarter note F#3, and a quarter note E3. Above the treble staff, the number '2' is written above the first measure, and '4' is written above the third measure. Above the bass staff, the number '2' is written above the second measure, and '4' is written above the fourth measure.