

# At Rome Around Jovian Moons

For Viola with fixed media  
and optional improvisers



**Paul Rudy and Erika Eckert**  
Commissioned by the American Academy in Rome

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## At Rome around Jovian Moons

For Viola, with optional improvisers and fixed media

### Program Notes

In September, 2010, I arrived starry-eyed at the American Academy in Rome for a year that promised wide open potential. Among the first things I learned was that my studio was on the site of Galileo's telescope demonstration to the Lyncean Society of Rome on April 14, 1611. I began contemplating the stars in a different way: through a lens of others' contemplation. On Christmas Eve, 1968, the first images of Earth came to us from space through the Apollo 8 crew. A few years later, Galileo, the space probe, was designed to continue to gather and send data even as its eyes and ears disintegrated during its plunge into Jupiter's atmosphere: information comes at a cost. Further out yet, Voyager's image of Earth shows our home as a small blue dot from 3.7 billion miles away, and for the first time we can actually see our own smallness. Galileo, the man, invited a new scientific gaze outward, while Galileo, Apollo 8 and Voyager invite us to take a look at how we see ourselves. Telescopes are wormholes outward while ideas, the rabbit hole inward. Galileo the man, among other things, discovered the moons of Jupiter, hence the title of this work. One of his moons, Io, is a beautiful handmaiden, but also the lover of Zeus, and a white cow, or even the companion to Prometheus, who was chained, as She is chained around Jupiter, just where Galileo left her 400 years ago for us to re-gaze upon. In contemplating Galileo's political and religious challenges, we began to focus compositional energies around the human challenge of dogma. Dogma, no matter how it is expressed, enforced or perpetuated (whether in religion or science, or spirituality and thought), easily becomes stuck energy, and is a force that tends to limit human potential. Perhaps Leto II in Frank Herbert's Children of Dune says it most concisely when he reflects that "knowing is a barrier to learning." Learning outward begs a balancing inward and an openness to changing notions of how we see our universe, how it works and how we fit into it all.

*At Rome Around Jovian Moons* was created during a week-long intensive collaboration with Erika Eckert at the American Academy in Rome. It uses sound samples from the Cassini, Voyager and Galileo Space Probes courtesy of NASA and the University of Iowa; recordings of my brother Jon's Ham radio contacts from around the globe; sounds from Rome and the Academy, and in specific, those recorded on New Years Eve 2011 as Rome exploded in fireworks. *At Rome Around Jovian Moons* was commissioned by the American Academy in Rome for the 400<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration of Galileo's Telescope Demonstration, April 14, 1611 with generous supported by the University of Colorado at Boulder. Special thanks to Adele Chatfield-Taylor, Christopher Calenza, T. Corey Brennan, and Karl Kirchwey.

### Performance Notes

It is vital for the successful performance of *At Rome Around Jovian Moons* that the violist learn the fixed media part by ear. This requires listening to it ahead of time (in your car, during practice, while you sleep, be creative!). Specific aspects are noted in the score, but many aspects are left up to the discretion of the performer within the spirit of, and informed by the fixed media part. Additional performers on any instrument may improvise along with the violist and fixed media part, with the violist anchoring the performance. Some instructions have been given, but by and large, the improvisers should be sensitive to both viola and fixed media.

# At Rome Around Jovian Moons

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Co-composed by  
Paul Rudy  
Erika Eckert

## I. Surfing the stars

Cassini Space Probe traversing through the ring of Saturn (blurred viola harmonics which may sound out of tune at times)

Fixed Media

Viola

10'

$\text{♩} = \text{ca. } 52$

*mp* *f*

*simile*

All notated viola material is intended to be a point of departure for improvisation

Additional improvisers-play guide tones from harmonies given, or play outside or against the given harmony in gentle ways.

Radio static (1:45)

Morse code (2:00)

Be patient!

Noodly Noise: match fixed media pitch

Quiet static

Mass in Santa Maria di Popolo, with siren

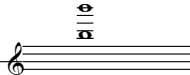
*pont.*

(b minor pitch clusters)  
with or against Morse code

Siren (2:20)

Improvise in E minorish  
(start slow)

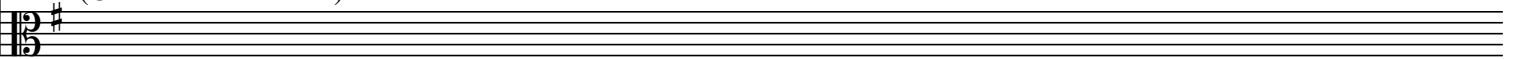
"S.O.S."  
||| --- |||



(ca. 2:40)

Static becomes pitched (2:50)

(Continue E-minorish)



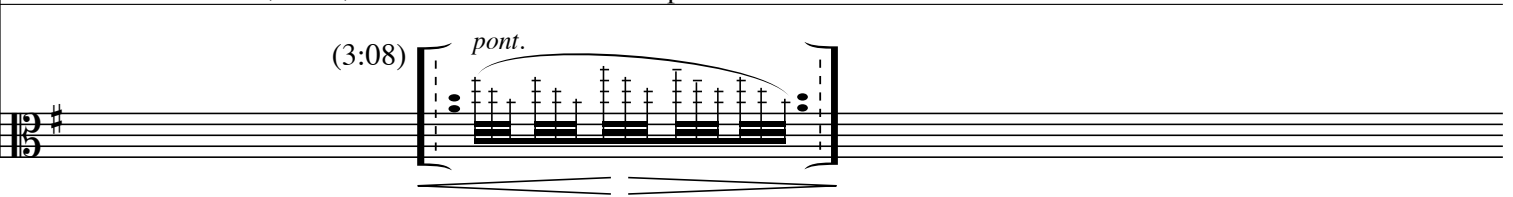
"S.O.S."  
||| --- |||

Morse code continues...(till 4:05)

Noodly Noise:  
match fixed media pitch

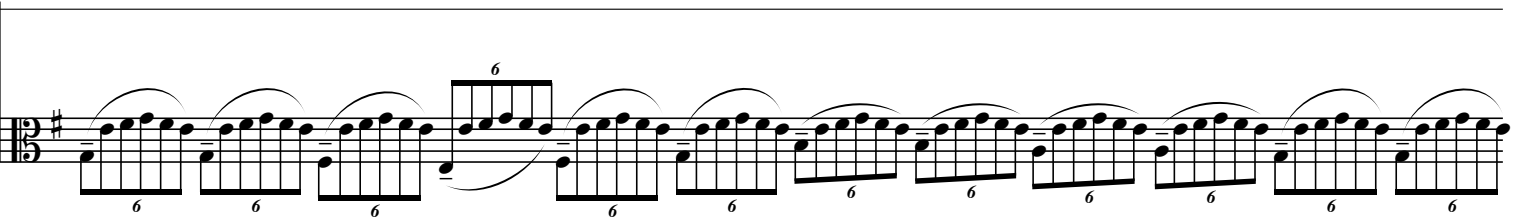
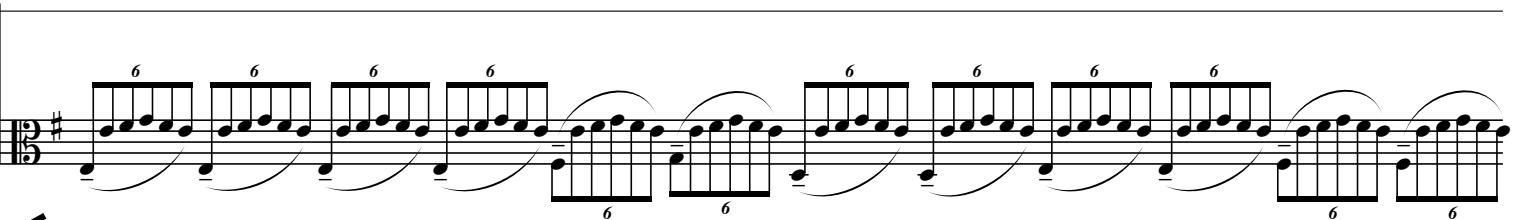
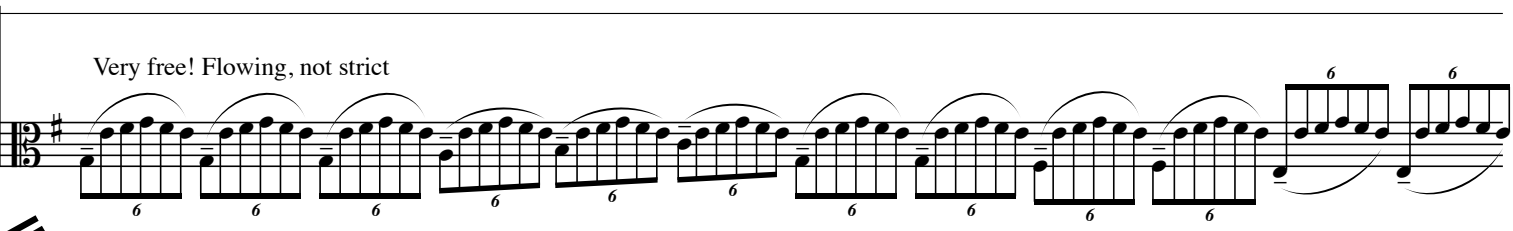
(3:08)

*pont.*



(ca. 3:20)

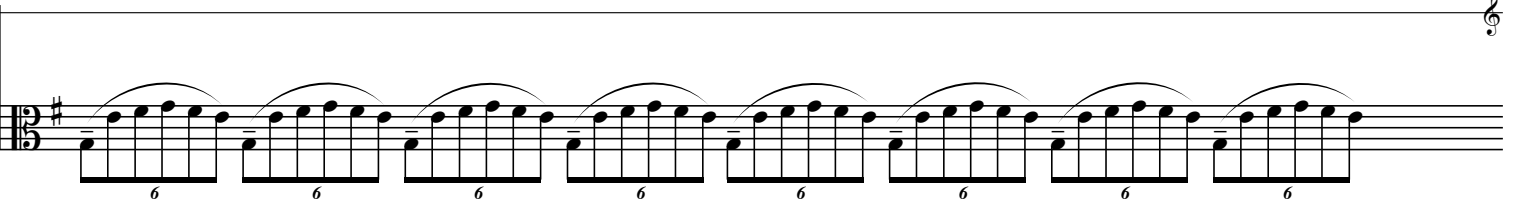
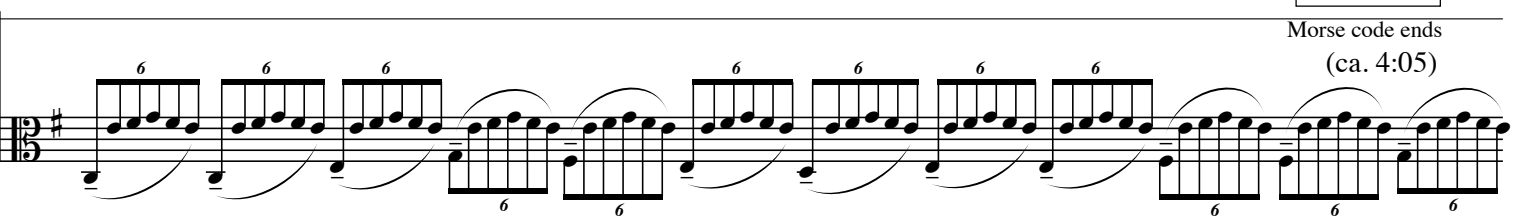
Very free! Flowing, not strict



"S.O.S."  
||| --- |||

Morse code ends

(ca. 4:05)



More active, energetic, but still free!

(fireworks)

(ca. 4:45) *simile*



More urgency!

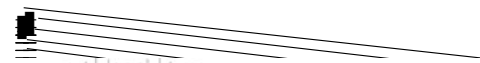
repeat/reorder/re-invent



(ca. 5:15)

## II. Conflicting reports

Big bang clusters, descending



Do something! ... or nothing at all...

(5:35)



ticking sound



Sagging...

Radio static (6:30)

Improvisers! (viola tacit)

Tentatively explore clusters, static or moving, stationary or twinkling

Mass in Santa Maria di Popolo, with siren

(7:00)

Siren (7:20)

Ghost melody: Doxology

(Distant viola freely flowing and accumulating)

(8:00)

*pont.* (transparent, ghostly)

Very slowly  
Pensive, freely improvise (e minorish)

*mp*

echoing viola

(8:30)

Viola begin reaching higher, for the stars

(8:50)

Airy bass tone

voices

III. Paradise lost Guilty, speechless...wounded

Monolithic noise bursts...static...

(10:10)

Viola: tacit or try without success... (using any previous material)

Anti-cadenza

Fixed media tacit till 13:42

Tentative, as if trying to find footing

Sing, play, drum, hum, rattle, squirm, shake, rattle, roll...  
(improvisers slowly enter supporting viola and harmonizing)



(very low note)

(17:25)

Morse code blessing: "The universe is filled with the Mystery. Seek the Divine golden light of the highest common good."

(satrun ring crossing noise pitched in B♭)

Be crative with the ending!  
Plant some wind chimes, rain sticks or other "star like" percussion instruments in the audience (such as finger snapping), and on cue, have them begin to gently play them fading after the viola fades.

(17:45) *pont.*

Noodly Noise:  
match fixed media pitch

audience fades after viola

(18:30) (18:45) (silence ca. 19:22)

*(pont.)* *ord* slowly scordatura as low as possible... *n*

*mp*