

An Analysis of Bohuslav Martinů's Sonata No. 1 for Viola and Piano

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ABSTRACT

Bohuslav Martinů (1890–1959) was one of the leading Czech violinists and composers in the twentieth century. His music includes opera, chamber music, solo piano, orchestral work, ballet, and choral music. He drew his inspirations from Czech folk songs, jazz, Stravinsky, Rousset, and Renaissance polyphony.

This paper begins with a discussion of Martinů's life and compositional style during his late period, when he was in the United States and Europe. Martinů spent much of his time traveling and attempting to resettle after the turmoil of WWII. Much of that travel left his life ungrounded and unpredictable. Through all the struggle, he always longed to be back in his home town.

The historical account is followed by an analysis of his Sonata No. 1 for Viola and Piano. The analysis will discuss the form, harmony, melody, rhythmic characteristics, and folk elements of this sonata. As a neoclassicist, Martinů channeled his musical voice through the conventions and structures derived from the Classical period. Although many of the forms maintain the shape of their traditional conception, Martinů imbues them with his own voice and meaning. The goal of this study is to better understand the musical style of this sonata as a whole. The style of this sonata is in contrast to the general stylistic trend of European modernists towards atonalism.

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Introduction

Bohuslav Martinů (1890–1959) was regarded as one of the most influential Czech violinists and composers of the twentieth century. His compositions cover a variety of genres, including opera, chamber music, solo piano, orchestral works, ballet, and choral music. There are various influences on his music. For example, Martinů incorporated elements of Czech folk songs and jazz into his works. He also found inspiration in the works of Stravinsky and Roussel.¹ This paper will study Martinů’s life, the compositional style of his late period, and the historical background of the Viola Sonata.² Furthermore, it will provide a tonal and structural analysis of Martinů’s Viola Sonata. The harmonic perspectives will assist to exemplify the characteristics unique to Martinů’s late compositional period. Based on the harmonic and formal analysis, I will argue that Martinů’s Viola Sonata is tonal. This is in contrast to the general shift of the European modernist style in music towards atonalism.

Previous scholarly research on Martinů’s music discusses harmonic structures in symphonies, operas, and chamber works. The tonalities and harmonies in Martinů’s symphonies are a main point of focus in Crump’s *Martinů and the Symphony*. Crump’s book discusses harmonic relationships in each symphony, offering detailed analyses.³ Walter-Clark’s dissertation “Bohuslav Martinů’s Three Works for Flute, Violin, and Keyboard” examines the tonal and harmonic devices in Martinů’s chamber music.⁴ Berná

¹ F. James Rybka, *Bohuslav Martinů: The Compulsion to Compose* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2011), 239.

² Martinů, *Sonata No. 1 for Viola and Piano* (New York: Associated Music Publishers, 1958). As Martinů wrote no other sonatas for viola and piano, future references to Martinů’s Sonata No. 1 for Viola and Piano will appear as “Viola Sonata” for the sake of simplicity.

³ Michael D. Crump, *Martinů and the Symphony* (London: Toccata Press, 2010).

⁴ Kimberly Walter-Clark, “Bohuslav Martinů’s Three Works for Flute, Violin, and Keyboard” (DMA diss., University of Houston, 1999).

describes Martinů's writing style and compositional style in *Czech Music*.⁵ The helpful points of comparison for Martinů's late period compositional style come from the scores of the Viola Sonata and of the Rhapsody-Concerto für Viola und Orchester.⁶ The score of his Three Madrigals for Violin and Viola is also helpful.⁷

Concerning Czech musical politics, Svatos, in *Martinů's Subliminal States: A Study of the Composer's Writings and Reception*, describes Martinů's Czech musical politics and his speeches from 1941–1947.⁸ In an article from *The Musical Times*, Svatos summarizes Martinů's attitudes toward anti-romanticism and the perceptions of modern music. The article also describes his late compositional style and his American diaries.⁹ Rybka's book *The Compulsion to Compose* describes Martinů's life and also includes considerable information about Martinů's friends and colleagues. Additional context is provided from correspondence between Martinů and his friends—performers and composers, many of whom commissioned pieces from Martinů. Williams' *Lillian Fuchs, First Lady of the Viola* discusses the history surrounding the commission and her premiere of the Viola Sonata in 1955.¹⁰ Other historical background information comes from *Martinů's Letters Home*.¹¹

⁵ Lucie Berná, "Music for Me Is the Idea of Light"—A View of the Life and Music of Bohuslav Martinů," *Czech Music* 3 (2007): 40.

⁶ Bohuslav Martinů. *Rhapsody-Concerto für Viola und Orchester*. (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1980).

⁷ Bohuslav Martinů. *Three Madrigals for Violin and Viola*. (New York: Boosey & Hawkes, 1949).

⁸ Thomas D. Svatos, *Martinů's Subliminal States: A Study of the Composer's Writings and Reception, with a Translation of His American Diaries* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2018).

⁹ Svatos, "Reasserting the Centrality of Musical Craft: Martinů and His American Diaries," *The Musical Times* 150 (2009): 60.

¹⁰ Amédée Daryl Williams, *Lillian Fuchs, First Lady of the Viola* (Lewiston: E. Mellen Press, 1994), 81.

¹¹ Bohuslav Martinů, *Martinů's Letters Home: Five Decades of Correspondence with Family and Friends*, ed. Iša Popelka, trans. Ralph Slayton (London: Toccata Press, 2013).

My research will add to Crump's and Walter-Clark's research by offering a detailed investigation into the existence of similar harmonic tendencies in the Viola Sonata. Furthermore, this paper will focus on the impact created on the Sonata by Fuchs, one of the most prolific female violists. This paper will also extend Berná's research by discussing other influences that contribute to Martinů's idiosyncratic compositional style. The time Martinů spent in the United States contributed to the development of the composer's style toward the end of his life. The Viola Sonata reflects this development. Additionally, this paper will contextualize the historical background of the Viola Sonata with respect to Svatos' perspectives on musical politics. This paper will discuss the musical style of the Viola Sonata. Correspondences and letters will serve as important references in order to describe the story of Martinů and his family as a contributing factor to the stylistic features in the Viola Sonata.

Martinů's Late Life

Bohuslav Martinů and Charlotte Martinů sailed from Marseilles into New York in March of 1941.¹² This journey was a great starting point for Bohuslav Martinů's late creative career.¹³ Many factors led him to go to New York, including the sophisticated social-historical environment in the United States and the beginning of the Nazi advances across the European continent. The looming downfall of Europe immediately impacted the lives of many people. Martinů's home town was already occupied in the time before the Second World War. Paris, where he resided for seventeen years, became his second home town. However, France was overrun, and Paris occupied during the first weeks of the war. Martinů and his wife were forced to escape to safety.¹⁴ Conditions in shelters were horribly decrepit; many were thirsty and hungry, children cried from exhaustion, and their souls were crushed. Martinů and his wife decided to leave, in search of a more secure place to live and a more meaningful life elsewhere. When they made the decision to leave Paris, they received a call on the telephone from their close friend Rudolf Firkušný, the Czech pianist. Firkušný told Martinů that victory on the war front was impossible and that he would be leaving soon, on June 10, 1940. Martinů was forced to abandon his manuscripts and escape from Paris after his name was entered into the Nazis' blacklists.¹⁵ He left his many manuscripts to Père Gogo.¹⁶ Martinů hastily left Paris with only a small suitcase.

¹² Rybka, *Bohuslav Martinů*, 108.

¹³ Berná, "Music for Me," 3.

¹⁴ Charlotte Martinů, *My Life with Bohuslav Martinů* (Prague: Orbis Press Agency, 1978), 61.

¹⁵ Miloš Šafránek, "Martinů's Musical Development," *Tempo* 72 (Spring, 1965): 13.

¹⁶ Miloš Šafránek, *Bohuslav Martinů, His Life and Works* (London: Allan Wingate, 1961), 191.

The United States was a sort of Promised Land for Martinů and his wife. Martinů's close friend Miloš Šafránek, who had recently emigrated to the United States, highly recommended the country as the ideal place for their relocation.¹⁷ The Martinůs experienced a seemingly endless nine months of ambiguity and wandering before they landed in the United States.¹⁸ They encountered considerable difficulty in obtaining American visas, but Šafránek assisted them greatly. When the Martinůs received their visas, they could not express their happiness.¹⁹ However, they also needed to acquire permits to leave France. The blacklisted Martinů had more trouble than his wife in securing the required permissions. They were finally able to leave France on January 8, 1941.²⁰ Their friend Paul Sacher even paid for their boat tickets to America.

When Martinůs arrived in the United States, they felt like they were in another world—a world of peace and calm. They received assistance from the Czech government and their friends. The Czech government awarded Martinů \$300 a month to support their living expenses in New York for the first two years, and Šafránek helped them find a place to live. Martinů already had an illustrious reputation in the United States, and his arrival was warmly received. The League of American Composers held a welcome reception for him, and his friends also held another big reception for him.²¹ Martinů found the atmosphere in New York to be warm and friendly, in dramatic contrast to Paris.²² He and his wife particularly enjoyed the atmosphere of nature in Central Park,

¹⁷ Martinů, *My Life with Bohuslav Martinů*, 60.

¹⁸ Šafránek, *Bohuslav Martinů*, 192.

¹⁹ Šafránek, *Bohuslav Martinů*, 194.

²⁰ Martinů, *My Life with Bohuslav Martinů*, 67.

²¹ Martinů, *Martinů's Letters Home*, 95.

²² Miloš Šafránek, "Bohuslav Martinů," *The Musical Quarterly* 29, no. 3 (July 1943): 345.

and they relished the Czechoslovakian area of Manhattan.²³ However, they faced several challenges in this city. The first challenge was the language barrier; they had difficulty communicating with the American people, although Martinů was much better prepared than Charlotte. The second challenge was that they had difficulty adapting to their new physical surroundings. For example, they were not used to the elevators that could transport people to the fifteenth floor of New York's many tall buildings. The third challenge was the social atmosphere. As a reticent and quiet person, Martinů needed more time to make new friends. When he was with a new group of people, he said little or nothing. When a lag occurred, he was seemingly unable to add anything to help keep the conversation going.²⁴

Despite the challenges that he and his wife faced, Martinů was able to find inspiration for composing. He and his wife had a wonderful vacation on Martha's Vineyard in the summer of 1941. They rented an American style cottage with a piano. The cottage was near enough to the sea that they could feel the ocean mist with each sea-breeze. Martinů gathered tremendous inspiration from this vacation and began to compose again. After this, the Martinůs moved to Long Island, where they lived until June of 1942. Martinů found this location peaceful and beautiful, and it also provided him with an excellent environment in which to compose.²⁵ Martinů and his wife spent their second vacation in Vermont, where they stayed for almost three months. The beauty and serenity of Vermont's mountains were reminiscent of the familiar Vosges mountain range in France. However, they experienced some difficulty finding and moving a piano in

²³ Rybka, *Bohuslav Martinů*, 112.

²⁴ F. James Rybka and Sally Ozonoff, "Martinů's 'impressive Quiet,'" *Czech Music* 23 (2003): 40.

²⁵ Šafránek, *Bohuslav Martinů*, 206.

Middlebury to his vacation home. This vacation also gave him much inspiration to compose.²⁶

The Martinůs returned to New York in September 1942. Their friend Rudolf Firkušný helped them rent an old apartment on 58th Street, but they did not feel comfortable living there.²⁷ Martinů also felt depressed and homesick during the winter of 1943–1944.²⁸ He had received no news from Czechoslovakia during the war. When they finally heard news from their home town, they were saddened to learn that Martinů's mother had died in 1944. Martinů was heartbroken that he had no chance to say goodbye to her.

After the war, in the summer of 1946, the Martinůs planned to vacation in Europe. They were looking forward to visiting their friends. However, Martinů suddenly received an offer to teach at the Berkshire School from Serge Koussevitzky in May 1946.²⁹ Martinů was so enthusiastic to accept the offer that they cancelled their vacation plans. Martinů really enjoyed the teaching position and friendly environment at the Berkshire School. He also relished this position because he had some talented students.

Martinů held composition teaching positions in many universities. He received an offer to teach composition at Tanglewood in 1942.³⁰ He also received offers from Mannes Music School in 1943, Princeton University in 1948, and the Curtis Institute of Music in 1955. However, he remained at Curtis for only one year. He felt the commute from New York to Philadelphia was too long and inconvenient, and his living situation

²⁶ Šafránek, *Bohuslav Martinů*, 203.

²⁷ Martinů, *My Life with Bohuslav Martinů*, 78.

²⁸ Martinů, *My Life with Bohuslav Martinů*, 83.

²⁹ Martinů, *My Life with Bohuslav Martinů*, 87.

³⁰ Rybka, *Bohuslav Martinů*, 125.

was also not stable. He did not have a flat in New York for the first two months and had to stay at a hotel with his friends.³¹ Even though he had a successful teaching and composition career in the United States, he began to feel anxious and uncertain. He wanted to return to teach in Prague, but he never succeeded in returning to his home town.³²

Martinů's life changed significantly when he suffered a nearly fatal accident. The accident occurred in Massachusetts on the evening of July 17, 1946. He fell from a ten-foot high balcony, heavily injuring himself and giving himself a severe concussion. Luckily, someone discovered him during the night, and he was immediately transported by ambulance to the hospital.³³ He received only three thousand dollars in compensation, which was hardly enough to make up for his medical bills and other losses.

This accident had a significant effect on Martinů's health and career. Afterward, he experienced dizzy spells when he played piano. He also could not compose rapidly. He considered whether he should remain in America or move to Prague or France at the end of 1947. He was offered a teaching job in Prague, but he did not take this position because he still felt rather unwell and was unable to go there to teach. Since the United States would provide him a better life and daily necessities, he decided to remain in America for the time being.³⁴ However, his American reputation began to diminish. Thankfully, he was still able to gain his American citizenship in 1952.³⁵ In 1952, the

³¹ Šafránek, *Bohuslav Martinů*, 294.

³² Martinů, *Martinů's Letters Home*, 11.

³³ Michael Beckerman, "Martinů's Mysterious Accident," in *Martinů's Mysterious Accident: Essays in Honor of Michael Henderson* (Hillsdale, New York: Pendragon Press, 2007), 45.

³⁴ Martinů, *My Life with Bohuslav Martinů*, 92.

³⁵ Svatos, *Martinů's Subliminal States*, 74.

Martinů met Violist Jascha Weissi who commissioned Martinů to write *Rhapsody for Viola and Orchestra*.³⁶

Once Martinů and his wife were able to move abroad, they traveled to Paris in May 1953.³⁷ They stayed in Nice from 1953 to 1955, where Martinů began to develop a strong reputation as a composer. The Queen Elisabeth composition competition invited him to be a judge in June 1953. Another famous composition teacher, Nadia Boulanger, was also a member of the jury.³⁸ Martinů returned to the United States on October 5, 1955, to present a lecture at the Curtis Institute. When he came back to the United States, commissions followed one after another. Lillian Fuchs commissioned a viola sonata at this time.³⁹

The Martinůs planned to leave from New York to France in May 1956; however, the American Government refused Charlotte's French visa. Instead, the couple went to Switzerland. Martinů then got a teaching position at the American Academy of Music in Rome. He was able to focus more on his composition because his teaching schedule was flexible. He only needed to teach twice a week.⁴⁰

Meanwhile, Martinů's overall health was slowly getting worse. He developed a sleeping condition, and over time he also developed severe pain in his right hand that forced him to write notes more slowly and placed awkwardly on the page.⁴¹ In September 1958, Martinů's wife accompanied him to the hospital for an examination and surgery as

³⁶ Martinů, *My Life with Bohuslav Martinů*, 111.

³⁷ Martinů, *My Life with Bohuslav Martinů*, 115.

³⁸ Šafránek, *Bohuslav Martinů*, 277.

³⁹ Martinů, *My Life with Bohuslav Martinů*, 130.

⁴⁰ Martinů, *My Life with Bohuslav Martinů*, 134.

⁴¹ Martinů, *My Life with Bohuslav Martinů*, 143.

a result of a stomach ulcer diagnosis.⁴² His wife took care of him for the last two weeks of his life. Martinů told her that he would like to be laid to rest in his family grave in Polička. He died on August 28, 1959, in Switzerland.⁴³

Martinů's remains were not moved to Czechoslovakia until twenty years later, arriving on August 16, 1979. He was so widely respected that, ten days later, a special ceremony was held in his home town of Polička. Thousands of people were in attendance, and they rang the bells while Martinů's coffin was carried to the cemetery. Martinů's last wish came true, as he was able to lie at rest in his home town. There are words " I am home" on his tombstone ⁴⁴

Martinů's Late Compositional Style

Martinů's experience through two world wars impacted both him and his compositions. When he moved to America, he found a peaceful place to continue his composition. However, during Martinů's first three months in the United States, he was busy settling down and becoming familiar with the new environment, so he did not compose any pieces in these three months. Once he was well adjusted, he felt ready to restart his compositional career in the United States.⁴⁵ His compositional visions were also freer than in Europe. He did not compose for propaganda and nationalist purposes.⁴⁶

⁴² Martinů, *Martinů's Letters Home*, 192.

⁴³ Šafránek, *Bohuslav Martinů*, 325.

⁴⁴ Zdenka E. Fischmann, "Vítězslava Kaprálová" in *Essays on Czech Music* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 69.

⁴⁵ Šafránek, *Bohuslav Martinů*, 202.

⁴⁶ Bohuslav Martinů, "Artists Are Citizens," *Modern Music* 22, no. 1 (1944): 11.

After he arrived in the United States, he began to compose symphonies, ultimately completing six symphonies. Some of the world's finest orchestras premiered his works, including the Boston Symphony Orchestra and the Cleveland Symphony Orchestra. In the beginning, he made contact with Serge Koussevitzky in 1941. Koussevitzky was the conductor of the Boston Symphony Orchestra who commissioned Martinů's Concerto Grosso. A performance of this piece was scheduled with the Boston Symphony Orchestra in the following season.⁴⁷ After the Concerto Grosso's successful performance, he was preparing for another career milestone that was his Symphony No. 1. The Boston Symphony Orchestra premiered this symphony on November 13, 1942, conducted by Serge Koussevitzky.⁴⁸ Afterwards he wrote Symphony No. 2 in 1943, only one year after Symphony No. 1. The Cleveland Orchestra premiered Symphony No. 2 under Erich Leinsdorf on October 28, 1943.⁴⁹ Symphony No. 3, Symphony No. 4, and Symphony No. 5 likewise followed in 1944, 1945, and 1946, respectively. In the middle of the creation of his Symphony No. 4, Martinů heard good news from the front: on May 8, 1945, VE Day (Victory in Europe Day), Germany surrendered to the Allies, and his native country was free from Nazi control. While VE Day was a significant triumph for Martinů and countless other Europeans, elements of Symphony No. 4 are not explicitly attributed to that turn of fortune. However, listeners still can hear some victorious sounds and lovely tones in the third and fourth movements.⁵⁰ While he composed these symphonies, he also composed his Concerto for Two Pianos, Violin Concerto, and Cello Concerto. However,

⁴⁷ Rybka, *Bohuslav Martinů*, 113.

⁴⁸ Crump, *Martinů*, 177.

⁴⁹ Crump, *Martinů*, 210.

⁵⁰ Crump, *Martinů*, 269.

there was a six-year compositional gap between Symphony No. 5 and Symphony No. 6 because of his major accident in 1946. In 1951, he began to compose Symphony No. 6, and this symphony was premiered in 1955 by the Boston Symphony Orchestra. In addition to his six symphonies, other representative works in his late period are *The Greek Passion*, the Concerto for Piano and Orchestra No. 5, and *The Parables*.⁵¹

Martinů's hundreds of pieces cover a variety of genres and compositional styles. His compositional styles shifted between his different periods, and he was eventually recognized as a member of the Parisian avant-garde.⁵² He used elements of impressionism, neoclassicism, jazz, and atonality in his compositions before coming to the United States. At first, after eighteen years of composing (1922–1940), he stopped using the double concerto grosso form, even though this was his ideal form and significantly influenced his compositions. Later, the Americans helped him eliminate the restrictions imposed by an excessive focus on technique, even though he had already used speculative techniques in Paris.⁵³ Furthermore, despite the many shifts in style, Martinů's music is consistently identifiable by the numerous fundamental features. These features include the presence of rhythmic variety, melodies based on "domestic folklore, syncopation, lucidity, and proportionally balanced musical forms."⁵⁴ After gaining much experience, Martinů developed a keen awareness of the specific characteristics of each instrument. Additionally, Martinů is unique in his frequent use of the piano, employing it in almost all of his compositions.⁵⁵

⁵¹ Berná, "Music for Me," 41.

⁵² Svatos, "Reasserting the Centrality," 70.

⁵³ Šafránek, "Martinů's Musical Development," 13.

⁵⁴ Berná, "Music for Me," 41.

⁵⁵ Berná, "Music for Me," 41.

Some works have a shared creative history, embodying both earlier and late periods. On the surface, Martinů's compositions do not necessarily follow a logical progression of development, although his long-term subconscious development influences them. In reality, each work has a unique blend of spontaneity and predetermination. While there are often moments of intuitive and even impulsive writing, all musical elements, including harmony, polyphony, and rhythm, are methodically arranged to help build a complete and convincing work.⁵⁶ As a composer, he is characterized by his frequent exploration of new and uncommon paths. To this end, his works often take many detours and directions.⁵⁷ For example, the Double Concerto (1938), First Cello Sonata (1940), and First Symphony (1942) integrated this characteristic.

While Martinů worked hard on composition and teaching, he also participated in many concerts. Martinů attended a concert at Carnegie Hall on January 20, 1947, in which Lillian Fuchs and her brother Joseph Fuchs played Mozart's Duo in B-flat major. Martinů was very impressed by the diverse spectrum of tone colors, the richness in sound, and the cooperation to achieve unified points of rest and musical phrasing. After this concert, Martinů was inspired to compose a duo for this pair. Within three weeks Martinů presented to them *Three Madrigals*. They immediately fell in love with the piece and were excited to perform it at the beginning of the concert for the season opener at Guild's 1947–1948 year.⁵⁸ Martinů was so impressed by the viola's rich and warm tone that he decided to write a concerto for viola. Martinů kept in touch with Fuchs after the

⁵⁶ Šafránek, "Bohuslav Martinů," 330.

⁵⁷ Šafránek, "Bohuslav Martinů," 333.

⁵⁸ Williams, *Lillian Fuchs*, 67.

premiere of *Three Madrigals*. He formed an especially close friendship with her, which led him to write two pieces for the viola—the *Rhapsody Concerto for Viola* and the *Viola Sonata*. Martinů composed the *Rhapsody Concerto for Viola* in 1952. This piece was premiered by Jascha Weissi with the Cleveland Orchestra in 1953. In 1955, Martinů decided to write another piece for the viola, distinctly for Fuchs to premiere. On March 12, 1956 in New York, she gave the premiere of the *Viola Sonata*.⁵⁹ Fuchs was one of the finest string players in the United States, and her concerts frequently drew large audiences. As an advocate of Martinů's work, she introduced his music to many Americans who would have never known his name.⁶⁰

Lillian Fuchs

Lillian Fuchs (1902-1995) was one of the most famous violists in the twentieth century. She came from a musical family and was the second child of her family. Her brothers Harry Fuchs and Joseph Fuchs also were virtuosi violinists. She learned to play the piano, and usually played piano accompaniment with Joseph during his lessons.⁶¹ Lillian became interested in the violin under the inspiration of her brother Joseph, and consequently switched to the violin. Although she made significant progress on the violin, she was assigned the second violin player in the Marianne Kneisel Quartet. Her father would not allow her to play the second violin so she decided to switch to the viola.

⁵⁹ Williams, *Lillian Fuchs*, 81.

⁶⁰ Williams, *Lillian Fuchs*, 107.

⁶¹ Williams, *Lillian Fuchs*, 8.

Fuchs was not only a soloist, but also a pianist and a teacher. In her solo career, Fuchs had her first violin recital in 1926. She also was the winner of the Morris Loeb competition.⁶² Her first viola performance was with the Marianne Kneisel Quartet in 1927.⁶³ She played the Bach Suite No. 2 on viola on April 21, 1947, and subsequently recorded all six suites on the Decca label after the performance.⁶⁴ In her chamber musician career, she was a founding member of the Perolé String Quartet as a violist. In addition to being a virtuoso viola player, she was also a well-known viola teacher. She taught at the Manhattan School of Music, Juilliard School of Music, and Mannes College of Music. Her teaching career lasted sixty-five years.⁶⁵ She also published three sets of etudes that helped her students to improve their technique.

The collaboration between Fuchs and Martinů reached a climax when he wrote the Sonata No. 1 in 1955.⁶⁶ Even though Martinů composed hundreds of pieces, he only composed one viola sonata. At the time he composed the viola sonata, he was also composing an opera. He told his friend Miloš Šafránek in a letter about the progress of the viola sonata that the piece was not ready, and there were no tempo markings.⁶⁷ But only three months later, Fuchs gave the first performance at Town Hall in New York

⁶² Williams, *Lillian Fuchs*, 11.

⁶³ Williams, *Lillian Fuchs*, 14.

⁶⁴ Williams, *Lillian Fuchs*, 85.

⁶⁵ Williams, *Lillian Fuchs*, 116.

⁶⁶ Martinů to Šafránek, December 15, 1955, Bohuslav Martinů Correspondence Collection, Bohuslav Martinů Foundation Library, Prague, https://database.martinu.cz/mails/public_view/2702.

⁶⁷ Martinů to Safranek, December 30, 1955, Bohuslav Martinů Correspondence Collection, Bohuslav Martinů Foundation Library, Prague, https://database.martinu.cz/mails/public_view/2703.

City.⁶⁸ Martinů heard the premiere and told his family in a letter that it was a successful performance.⁶⁹

Analysis of Martinů's Sonata No. 1 for Viola and Piano

Having discussed Martinů's life and compositional style in his late period, we will move on to an analysis of the Sonata No. 1. This sonata does not follow the traditional fast–slow–fast movement sonata structure; rather, Martinů employs a two-movement structure with a slow–fast format. Martinů wrote another viola piece, *Rhapsody Concerto for Viola and Orchestra*, that also embodies the two-movement structure. While the composer indeed followed some traditional sonata structure, he added elements of modern compositional technique. The movement's forms are flexible and free.⁷⁰ Martinů's music exhibits several twentieth-century harmonic techniques including non-functional harmonies.⁷¹

First Movement

The first movement of Martinů's Viola Sonata utilizes a sonata form framework. There are both strong similarities and differences between this Viola Sonata and the classical sonata. Similarities include the existence of traditional rotations, goal-oriented

⁶⁸ Williams, *Lillian Fuchs*, 81.

⁶⁹ Martinů to Šafránek, March 13, 1956, Bohuslav Martinů Correspondence Collection, Bohuslav Martinů Foundation Library, Prague, https://database.martinu.cz/emails/public_view/1339.

⁷⁰ Crump, *Martinů*, 363.

⁷¹ Kimberly Walter-Clark, "Bohuslav Martinů's Three Works for Flute, Violin, and Keyboard" (DMA diss., University of Houston, 1999), 39.

thematic action spaces, and a sense of structural punctuation. The most significant difference stands to be the utilization of the keys, specifically the tonal relationships between sections and thematic associations to specific keys.

The Viola Sonata contains sonata form elements such as the exposition, development, and recapitulation (see table 1). The work begins with a four-measure introduction presented by the solo piano. The exposition contains a standard triple-theme format, featuring a primary, secondary, and closing theme. The primary theme (P) starts with the viola part in m. 5; the secondary theme (S) begins in m. 33; the closing theme in m. 66; and the codetta is mm. 70–71. The development begins in m. 72 and ends in m. 149. Martínů uses a homorhythmic texture to create the climactic passage in mm. 134–49 as a parallel to the dominant lock, a traditional type of retransition (see example 1). In a classical sonata, such a passage would function to launch the music into the recapitulation. Furthermore, the P theme appears in the development, creating a strong musical connection to the exposition as well as a formal connection to the semi-rotational development of a classical sonata. The recapitulation starts in m. 150. Unlike a traditional sonata, the P theme does not recapitulate in its original shapes, but rather is subjected to continued modification. This is an instance of Martínů's creativity: recasting the P theme, as opposed to using a standard copy-paste approach.

Table 1: Martinů; Viola Sonata No.1, movt. I, structure.

Section	Theme	Measures
Exposition	Introduction	1–4
	P theme	5–26
	TR	27–32
	S theme	33–65
	closing theme	66–69
	codetta	70–71
Development		72–149
Recapitulation	P theme	150–169
	TR	170–175
	S theme	176–189
	Coda	190–199

Example 1: Martinů, Viola Sonata No. 1, movt. I, mm. 135–136.

The musical score for Example 1 shows measures 135 and 136. The top staff is in treble clef and contains a melodic line with sixteenth-note patterns, marked with '6' (sextuplet) and 'simile'. The bottom staff is in bass clef and contains a bass line with sustained notes and chords, including a prominent bass note in the final measure.

While Martinů adds small bits of his distinct flavor to the thematic structure, his idiosyncratic voice is found most prevalently in the tonal structures. The most significant difference between the Viola Sonata and a traditional classical sonata is the key scheme and the recapitulatory tonality. According to Darcy and Hepokoski, the key of the S theme in the exposition of a traditional classical sonata should be in the dominant or relative major.⁷² However, in the exposition of this Sonata, the P and S themes are both in

⁷² James A. Hepokoski and Warren Darcy, *Elements of Sonata Theory: Norms, Types, and Deformations in the Late Eighteenth-Century Sonata* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 17.

F major. The development begins in G major. The recapitulation begins in F major, as in the exposition; but the S theme is in E-flat, a whole step lower than in the exposition. He has reversed the classical procedure by having a single key for the exposition and contrasting keys for the recapitulation. This sonata features a shortened recapitulation when compared in length to the exposition.

Martinu used a variety of themes and motives throughout this movement. The P and S themes both appear in the exposition and recapitulation. The P theme also appears a few times in the development. The developmental appearance of the P theme occurs in mm. 72–74 in the viola part (see example 2). It also reappears in the piano part in mm. 78–80 (RH) and m. 85, as well as in the viola part in m. 86.

Example 2: Martinu, Viola Sonata No. 1, movt. I, mm. 72–74.

Tempo I

The musical score for Example 2 consists of three staves. The top staff is the viola part, starting with a forte (f) dynamic and ending with a mezzo-forte (mf) dynamic. The middle and bottom staves are the piano accompaniment, starting with a piano (p) dynamic and moving to mezzo-forte (mf). The tempo is marked 'Tempo I'. The key signature has one flat (B-flat major). The time signature is 3/4. The score shows measures 72, 73, and 74.

Several recurring motives appear throughout the music, providing secondary stylistic and support functions to the primary themes. The first of these important motives is often heard in the piano, usually in an inner voice; It is the inner melody (see example 3). The inner melody is a modal folk-like thematic cell that uses stepwise motion with the range of a perfect fourth. It often begins with an eighth-quarter rhythm that functions to destabilize the metric regularity. A compound or irregular meter is always emphasized or

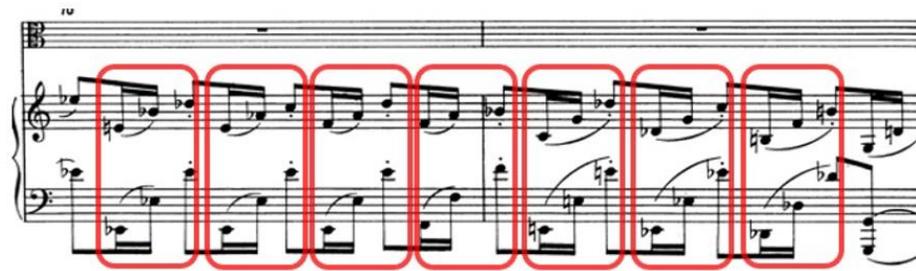
implied by the inner melody and may be followed by further syncopation or a metric restabilization. Appearances of the inner melody include mm. 2–5, mm. 8–10, mm. 67–69, mm. 152–54, mm. 164–66, and mm. 196–98. The inner melody often signals a musical arrival or a structural punctuation.

Example 3: Martinů, Viola Sonata No. 1, movt. I, mm. 1–5.

Poco andante (♩ = 58 - 63)

There is another unique pattern that occurs in an offbeat motif throughout this piece. It is composed of short cells using two sixteenth notes paired with an eighth note. The cells are often arranged sequentially, and the notes are always ascending. Wide unresolved leaps give this motive an extremely unbound and springy character. This motive pattern is a jazz-like tune that begins the pickup beat in m. 70–71 (see example 4) and appears in mm. 76–77, mm. 86–88, mm. 100–5, mm. 115–21, and mm. 119–21. It often creates a dynamic increase in rhythmic energy while maintaining a sense of regularity.

Example 4: Martinu, Viola Sonata No. 1, movt. I, mm. 70–71.



Martinu used nontraditional composition techniques in regard to harmony. He favored plagal cadences and tried to avoid authentic cadences whenever possible. There are five plagal cadences in the first movement. The aversion to strong cadences is made even more apparent by the tendency to use plagal cadences. Rather than place the resolution chord on a strong downbeat, he generally places IV on the down beat and I on beat three. Instances of plagal cadences include m. 20, m. 26, m. 36, mm. 123–24, and m. 197–99 (see example 5).

Example 5: Martinu, Viola Sonata No. 1, movt. I, m. 20.



Another distinct trait of Martinu's sonata is the use of modes and modal mixture. In the first movement, he uses the Mixolydian mode in various transpositions. His preference for the Mixolydian mode is likely tied to his preference for plagal cadences.

The lowered seventh scale degree creates a “soft” leading tone. It is contrary to the semitone space of an Ionian leading tone, which generates a strong pull towards tonic. This “soft” leading tone has a weak attraction to tonic and naturally creates weaker cadences. As mentioned above, Martinů has a bias towards weak cadences and prefers to avoid strong ones. Furthermore, of the three major modes (Ionian, Lydian, and Mixolydian), Mixolydian is the “darkest.” If we consider the idea that adding a sharp/natural to a mode (F Ionian to F Lydian) makes the mode “brighter,” then removing a sharp/natural from a mode (F Ionian to F Mixolydian) makes a mode “darker.” A darker, more subdued mode is more congruent with the dark, mellow qualities of the viola’s unique sound. Although these observations are speculative, they likely played a role in Martinů’s ear when he was composing. The Mixolydian mode can be seen in the introduction section in mm. 1–4, mm. 8–12, mm 60–63, and mm. 151–54 (see example 6).

Example 6: Martinů, Viola Sonata No. 1, movt. I, mm. 60–63.



Additionally, he uses modal mixture and modal borrowing at various points to create dynamic harmonic tension. For example, there is E-flat major-minor modal mixture in m. 13 and m. 93 (see example 7). In both these spots, there is chromatic and tonal ambiguity that allow Martinů to fluidly transition between modes mid-phrase. Polychords are also widely used in this movement; they play a role in creating Martinů’s

dynamic tonalities and modal mixture. In m. 65, the bottom chord is E-flat major, and the upper chord is B-flat major at the end of the first beat; the bottom chord is B-flat major, and the upper chord is A-flat major on the second beat. The other polychord examples are in m. 162: F major plus G major and G major plus A major.

Example 7: Martinů, Viola Sonata No. 1, movt. I, m. 13–14.

Eb minor Eb major

Melodic tritones and broken third figures are important aspects of melody in this movement. The tritone is at the piano left hand in m. 71, which is from D flat to G. There are some continuous tritones from mm. 78–80. The broken third section begins in m. 132 in the piano part. The viola and the piano play together in broken thirds from mm. 134–49. This is an amazing section in which the viola and piano both have important roles. However, the viola part gradually takes a more leading role, demonstrated by the increased presence of accents.

The S theme is a folk-like melody that first appears in the section in mm. 33–64. Martinů alternates different time signatures and syncopation to show this folk-like melody. He alternates the meter among 2/4, 3/4, 4/4, 3/8, 6/8, 5/4 and 5/8. This section implies a wandering mood and a longing to be in his homeland. This section also can be analyzed using hypermeter technique in mm. 33–50. Hypermeter refers to large structures

composed of smaller metric elements. There is generally a “slower” pulse stream where a single pulse represents the time taken up by a complete notated measure. While the time signature denotes the number of beats per measure, the hypermeter denotes the number of measures per hypermetric grouping. Groups on that level depend heavily on melody supported by harmonic and durational patterns. The first and second hypermeter groups, mm. 33–40, are each four measures (see example 8). Then the third and fourth hypermeter groups, mm. 41–46 are each three measures (see example 9). The fifth hypermeter group is mm. 47–50, four measures. The same groupings return in the recapitulation, mm. 176–90 except the coda section, mm. 190–99.

Example 8: Martinů, Viola Sonata No. 1, movt. I, m. 33–36.

Example 9: Martinů, Viola Sonata No. 1, movt. I, mm. 41–43.

Besides hypermeter, polymeter, and accent displacement appear in this movement. Martinů wrote the time signatures 2/4 and 3/4 in mm. 33–35, but the right

hand of the piano part is in a 5/8 metric pattern. Accent displacement is prominent in mm. 127–31. The accent is usually on the downbeat; however, he puts the accent on the second sixteenth note of each beat in the viola part.

Second Movement

The form of the second movement of Martinů's Viola Sonata has some similarities to and differences from sonata form and ternary form. There is a similarity to the sonata form in these ways: there is an exposition, development, recapitulation in this movement. The exposition begins with a primary theme (P) divided between P1 and P2. An energy-gaining transition (TR) section follows P2. The medial caesura (MC) provides a space for the secondary (S) theme to begin after the TR reaches a half cadence. After the MC, a multi-modular S is initiated and features parts S1 and S2. The energetic nature of the music slows towards the EEC and settles completely for the closing theme. A fully rotational development section then commences, which contains new material as well as P-based and S-based thematic material from the exposition. Lastly, Martinů evokes da capo form by repeating nearly the whole exposition, with S in the original key; however, he compresses S1 and S2 (see table 2). There is also a similarity to the ternary form A–B–A. The second A section restates the first A section in same keys and music elements. However, it does not exactly follow ternary form. The B section contains P and S based in addition to new materials. Congruent with Martinů's late style, there are several recycled motives and motivic based passages throughout this movement. For example, in the second movement he used a motive composed of one eighth note and two sixteenth

notes in mm 33-40 of the piano part. Furthermore, in the same movement he used a sextuplet motive in the viola in mm 93-104 and in the piano in mm 105-116.

Table 2: Martinu; Viola Sonata No.1, movt. II, structure.

Section	Theme	Measures
Exposition	P1	1–6
	P2	7–24
	TR	25–42
	MC	43
	S1	44–64
	S2	65–78
	EEC	79
	Closing	79–92
Development		93–195
Recapitulation	P1	196–201
	P2	202–219
	TR	220–238
	S	239–265
	ESC	266
	Closing	266–274

Furthermore, the second movement also makes the cyclical sonata in that it incorporates elements from the first movement. Martinu uses a variety of motives unique to this movement while reusing at least four musical ideas borrowed from the first movement. Elements of the P-based parts of the first movement development are cycled into the second movement. This is seen in the second movement in m. 123 (see example 10) of the viola part in parallel to the first movement in m. 88 (see example 11).

Example 10: Martinu, Viola Sonata No. 1, movt. II, m. 123.



Example 11: Martinu, Viola Sonata No. 1, movt. I, m. 88.

Musical score for Example 11, showing a viola line and piano accompaniment. The viola line is circled in red. The score is in common time (C) and features a key signature of one sharp. The viola part consists of a series of eighth and sixteenth notes, while the piano accompaniment provides a harmonic and rhythmic foundation with chords and moving lines in both hands.

Although the double stops of the first movement are absent in the second, the voicing in the viola remains relatively consistent between the two iterations. The piano does not imitate the gestures in the viola as before but instead fills out the texture with grandiose bell-like chords. The sextuplets in the first movement in mm. 145–48 return in the second movement of the piano part in mm. 163–66. Another cyclical element in the second movement, in mm. 207–11 (see example 12), is from the first movement in mm. 128–30 (see example 13). Here a form of the jazz-like tune returns with a similar function as before. The wide leaps combined with the rhythmic activity increase the energy in the

music. However, the regularity in the rhythm is slightly disrupted by the offset syncopation of the pattern by a sixteenth note. This adds more tension than when it appeared in the first movement. Finally, a version of the inner melody reappears in the second movement from mm. 247–49.

Example 12: Martinů, Viola Sonata No. 1, movt. II, mm. 207–11.



The image shows a musical score for Example 12, consisting of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef and the lower staff is in bass clef. The music is in 3/4 time. A red rectangular box highlights a specific melodic pattern in the upper staff, which consists of a sequence of eighth and sixteenth notes with a syncopated rhythm. The lower staff contains a bass line with a dynamic marking of *f (poco)*.

Example 13: Martinů, Viola Sonata No. 1, movt. I, mm. 128–130.



The image shows a musical score for Example 13, consisting of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef and the lower staff is in bass clef. The music is in 3/4 time. A red rectangular box highlights a specific melodic pattern in the upper staff, which consists of a sequence of eighth and sixteenth notes with a syncopated rhythm. The lower staff contains a bass line with a dynamic marking of *f (poco)*. The number 130 is written above the upper staff.

There are likely two reasons why Martinů may have cycled themes and motives between the two movements. His tendency for spontaneous composing may have led him to reincorporate parts from the first movement into the second because those were his favorite parts in the music. A composer who writes by ear is likely to get his own music stuck in his ear while he composes. The result of his enjoyment of his own writing may have been a sprinkling of identical themes across both movements. In this way, the music may have more of Martinů's unique style and character in it. Alternatively, he may have

intentionally reused the themes to create a formal rhetoric. The idiosyncratic structure of the first movement “failed” to realize the goal of the sonata from a classical perspective. The goal of a sonata is to reach an authentic cadence in the tonic key, however, the first movement ends in a non-tonic key. This means the themes of the first movement failed to satisfy that requirement. Martinů may have reused some of the first movement themes in order to give them a chance to “succeed.” He may have interpreted the functions of the themes in his sonata form with a Classical period musical rhetoric in mind.

A strong tonal center on B-flat major is immediately established at the beginning of the movement with B-flat octaves in the viola and piano. Martinů quickly modulates to the dominant key of F major by the end of P1 using a conventional common-chord modulation. The P2 theme begins on the imperfect authentic cadence (IAC) in F-major following a C dominant 9th chord (see example 14). Despite the firmly established tonic on which the P2 theme began in m. 7, Martinů returns the key area to B-flat major in m. 12 (see example 15). During the second statement of the P2 theme, rather than cadence in m. 20, the music begins spinning out in a fashion resembling a dissolving P into TR merge. This measure begins with a pedal point on E in order to prepare the TR section. In m. 24 a phrase modulation occurs with a downward stepwise movement in the bass line: G–F–E-flat. As a result, in the following measure, the TR section proper begins in E-flat major on a new tonic pedal (see example 16). The musical energy continues to build until the eventual release at the medial caesura in m. 43. With space cleared by the MC, the secondary theme (S1) begins in G major in m. 44. The secondary action space reaches the goal of an essential expositional closure (EEC) in m. 79 in the subsidiary key of C major (see example 17). Returning to the texture, the viola leads the closing section in m. 79.

Many of the normative sonata features and rhetoric, including P, TR, MC, S, EEC, and C, are present in Martinu's sonata form. In the development, the key modulates from C major in m. 93 to E-flat minor in m. 120, then to B-flat minor in m. 142. P-based and S-based materials are used throughout the development, making the development fully rotational. In the viola part, a P idea appears in m. 93 and S materials are used in m. 116. In addition to the many key areas of this development, there is a wide range of dynamic and many sudden changes. The sudden dynamic change to forte in m. 101 creates a stark contrast to the quiet triplet accompaniment in the viola at the beginning of the development.

Example 14: Martinu, Viola Sonata No. 1, movt. II, m. 6.



Example 15: Martinu, Viola Sonata No. 1, movt. II, m. 12.



Example 16: Martinu, Viola Sonata No. 1, movt. II, m. 25.

Example 16 shows a musical score for the second movement of Martinu's Viola Sonata No. 1, measure 25. It features a Viola part (top staff) and a Piano accompaniment (bottom staff). The Viola part is marked with a 'v' above the staff and a 'p' dynamic. The Piano part is also marked with a 'p' dynamic. The key signature is E-flat major, indicated by 'Eb:' below the score.

Example 17: Martinu, Viola Sonata No. 1, movt. II, m. 79.

Example 17 shows a musical score for the second movement of Martinu's Viola Sonata No. 1, measure 79. It features a Viola part (top staff) and a Piano accompaniment (bottom staff). The Viola part is marked with a 'p' dynamic. The Piano part is also marked with a 'p' dynamic. The tempo is marked 'Poco meno (♩ = 104)'. The key signature is C major, indicated by 'C major' below the score.

The recapitulation begins in m. 196 with P1; P2 begins in m. 202; TR begins in m. 220. When the S theme returns at m. 245, it is re-orchestrated to include the viola on the theme doubling the piano, leading towards the ESC in C major in m. 266. The closing section begins immediately after the cadence and sustains a tonic pedal until the end of the movement.

The harmonic devices in this movement are relatively straight forward. Martinu employs several whole-tone and chromatic scales throughout. A whole-tone scale can be found at m. 186. There are three chromatics scales from mm. 189–194. Similar to the first movement, there is a mix of authentic cadences and plagal cadences in the second movement. Martinu continues his preference for weaker plagal cadences over strict authentic cadences. The authentic cadence is in m. 128. The plagal cadence is in m. 82 in

F major. Another plagal cadence is from mm. 90–91 in B-flat major. There are three continuous plagal cadences from mm. 267–73. The first one is in m. 287. The second one is in m. 268. The last one is mm. 270–71. Besides the cadences, some distinctive polychords can be found in this movement; one of them is in contrary motion in m. 71, and the other in m. 147. This is yet another feature that was prevalent in the first movement. It is likely that these are characteristic features of Martinů's writing style in his later period.

The viola and piano begin the movement with an energetic unison entrance. Repeated sixteenth notes in the viola correspond to energized syncopated accents in the piano. This rhythmic pattern appears frequently throughout the movement, showing major structural points or underlying thematic material. For example, the viola and piano play major sixth intervals, which are the same sixteenth-note figures from P1 in the opening. There is another distinctive rhythmic pattern in m.12, where the left hand of the piano plays the dotted eighth and sixteenth rhythm underneath the viola and right hand. The viola part has the accent on the last sixteenth note of each gesture to distinguish it from the piano's right hand, which plays the same rhythm staggered by a sixteenth note. Then the piano part plays continuously syncopated rhythms for six measures from mm. 12–17, with the accented sixteenth notes in the viola part (see example 10). Martinů often uses syncopated rhythms in this movement. Michael Beckerman says that Czech music contains syncopated rhythms, which are often related to dance.⁷³ The viola and piano play sixteenth notes in mm. 20–24, create an energy gain leading to the TR section. The S theme is introduced by the piano with energetic bursts of sixteenth notes. The rhythmic

⁷³ Michael Beckerman, "In Search of Czechness in Music," *19th-Century Music* 10, no. 1 (Summer, 1986): 64.

patterns shift in the closing section. The viola begins the closing section with slower rhythms constructed from quarter and eighth notes. In the closing section, there are several syncopated quarter-note based rhythms. Martinů wrote a peaceful ending for the closing section and exposition; it serves to set up a quiet yet unstable atmosphere for the development section. There is a wide range of dynamics and many sudden changes. The sudden dynamic change to *forte* in m. 101 creates a stark contrast to the quiet triplet accompaniment in the viola at the beginning of the development.

He also applied ragtime rhythm and syncopation in this movement. Ragtime rhythm, using dotted sixteenth notes with double stops, occurs in mm. 114 and m. 115 in the viola part. The syncopated rhythmic pattern in m. 1 in the piano part appears many times in this movement.

Conclusion

This paper primarily focuses on Martinů's late compositional period, teaching career, and the varying techniques of his compositional periods. Additionally, it provides an analysis of his Sonata for Viola and Piano. In this work, Martinů creates a unique neoclassical deconstruction of the sonata form. His sonata contains the frame of a classical sonata, including essential features such as three main rotations and normative action spaces. The Viola Sonata has goal-oriented phrases and elements of musical rhetoric. However, Martinů's realization is distinguished by a strong infusion of modernist deviations from classical conventions. These include non-normative key relationships and associations, structural reliance on ancillary melodies and motives, and an emphasis on modes, mode mixture, and exotic scales. For example, in the second movement, he uses unstable chords for the ending of the exposition. Certain elements of Martinů's writing are seen in both movements and are attributed to the compositional behaviors of his late style. One such feature is an inclination for weak fluid cadences over strong rigid cadences, such as the prevalence of plagal cadences as opposed to masculine perfect authentic cadences. Further features include a use of syncopation, rhythmically based motives, folklike and jazz implications, syncopation and compound meter, and modal fluidity. Together, these factors contribute to forming a unique voice in Martinů's writing. Lastly, having analyzed this sonata, this paper offers a better understanding of the sonata form and harmonic structure in Martinů's late compositional period.

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