

# ANZVS Viola Competition Competition Winter 2021



## Yüzhi Wang (aka Valky River)

Even though I have composed plenty of pieces, I was not so good at string writing. This was until I looked at the scores of Niccolò Paganini in early 2021. His violin pieces introduced me to string techniques that I didn't understand properly at that time, including some things as simple as triple stops and harmonics.

While Paganini's works were for violin, these techniques were also applicable for viola. Combined with an earlier attempt to write a piece for strings, this led me to write "Allegro fo(u)r violas", which won the student ensemble division of the ANZVS viola composition competition.

This felt like a byproduct of my exploration of Paganini, just as my knowledge of microtonal music all started from a YouTube video about mathematics. Eventually, this piece was developed into a string quartet (which I feel is better), and that became my HSC Music 2 elective composition.



## Jasper Tops

My first orchestral piece "Taming the Dragon" was Highly Commended in the 2020 Artology Fanfare Competition. This piece was then selected to be part of the inaugural Open Fanfare Concert in September 2020 with the Queensland Youth Chamber Orchestra.

So when the Australian and New Zealand Viola Society announced their composition competition I was keen to try another style. There were 3 student categories, solo, duo (viola plus other instruments) and ensemble (2 or 4 violas). I entered pieces in all three. My ensemble piece, 'Codename Locrian' for 4 violas was Highly Commended.

The piece is in the Locrian mode because I wanted to play with slightly different tonalities and because I thought it made the piece sound more interesting. The piece has a ternary-like structure with the active 'A' theme moving into the slower and melancholy 'B' theme before going back to 'A' and finishing on pizzicato in octaves. Because I only had one type of instrument I tried to make each part have a unique role to play in the ensemble from the high first viola that has to play in second position to the bass viola that often plays C at the bottom of the violas range occasionally playing percussive rhythms. The piece shifts around in ways that are not common in western music to create an almost unsettled feel to the average listener. The piece is reminiscent of a Bond theme with recurring syncopated rhythms with the Arabic inspired harmonic structure.

I highly enjoyed the experience of writing for the three categories and having my piece be highly commended by the society made it even better.

I hope to continue my string writing in the future and I can't wait to see what will come next.