

Aaron Israel Levin

# In Prayer

*for singer & violist, w. auxiliary instruments*



# In Prayer

for singer and violist, with guitar and kick drum

By Aaron Israel Levin

## Performance Notes

The **guitar** and **kick drum** can be played in one of two ways.

In one case (1), **the singer can play the guitar**. The guitar should be **laid flat** (horizontally) either on the singer's lap, on a table, or on the ground with the singer kneeling (for reference, see Chris Cerrone: *Memory Palace*). The composer originally envisioned the piece for a **Steel String Acoustic Guitar**, but other instruments may be substituted (see below).

The **kick drum can similarly be played by the violist**. The violist should take care to dampen the kick drum by inserting blankets, cloths, etc. into the instrument so that it does not overpower the ensemble.

In the other case (2), **the guitar and kick drum can be played by separate players**. These players do not necessarily need to be guitarists or percussionists by training, since the parts are relatively simple, and could be played by a wide variety of capable musicians.

There is an additional layer of flexibility:

The guitar part may be played on any wound string instrument, including electric guitar, zither, auto harp, and/or plucked piano, using the same pitches.

The kick drum part can be played on any low, resonant drum (with a kick pedal), such as cajon. If a separate player is used, then a low tom (or similar instrument) is preferred.

### The guitar should be tuned scordatura:



To create this unusual scordatura, it is recommended to string the guitar using two sets of steel strings, strung low to high thus: E, E, A, G, B, E. That being said, the scordatura tuning will work with the traditional strings as well.

#### To the juror/panelist:

If time is limited, please listen to the third (final) movement (p. 15).  
Excerpt begins at 6:40.

Total duration: c. ten minutes

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visit [aaronisraellevin.com](http://aaronisraellevin.com); listen at [soundcloud.com/aaronilevin](https://soundcloud.com/aaronilevin)

## In Prayer

- i. with devotion
- ii. with impatience
- iii. with resolve

### Text

Hebrew transliteration: *el na refa na la*

English translation: Please God, heal her

### Program Notes

*In Prayer* takes its text from a moment of heightened drama in the Old Testament in which Miriam is suddenly struck with a fatal sickness. In desperation, Miriam's brother Moses pleads to God with a humble, one-sentence prayer for healing, reciting the phrase "*el na refa na la*" (please God, heal her). I decided to set this text in three different ways in order to explore a myriad of approaches one might take to appeal to God at such an urgent moment. The outer movements are more solemn and ritualistic, calling God forth with reverence and respect. The middle movement, on the other hand, is agitated, frustrated, and cynical, riddled with desperation and disbelief.

I'd like to dedicate this work to my mother, Mia Nosanow, who is the greatest healer I know, and who also introduced me to this poignant text.

*In Prayer* was commissioned by Rattlebox Music for Soomin Kim and Harris Bernstein.

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i. with devotion

$\text{♩} = 96-100$  | Hushed, sacred, focused

The score is in 4/4 time with a key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#). It consists of three systems of staves. The first system includes a Singer staff with a whole rest, a Guitar staff with a bass line and a guitar tablature (E, B, G, D, A, C#), and a Viola staff with a whole rest. The second system continues the same parts. The third system starts at measure 11, marked with a box 'A'. The Singer part begins with a melodic line starting on G#4, moving through A4, B4, and C#5, ending with a triplet of B4, A4, and G#4. The lyrics 'el na' are written below the notes. The Guitar part has a bass line with notes G#2, A2, B2, and C#3. The Viola part enters with a *ppp quasi niente* dynamic and a *cresc. poco a poco* marking, playing a sustained chord of G#2, A2, and B2.

Singer

always let ring, gentle never too long

Guitar

*p sempre*

*never too long*

Viola

6

S.

Gtr.

Vla.

11 **A**

emerge from vla.  
*ppp*

*mf*

3

el na

Gtr.

enter imperceptibly; emerge from gtr.

V

*ppp quasi niente*

*cresc. poco a poco*

## In Prayer – i. with devotion – Ver. 2

16

S.

Gtr.

Vla.

III; harmonic trill 1)

*mp* *ppp*

20

**B** *p* *mf* *ppp* *mp*

S.

Gtr.

Vla.

re - - - - - fa

little, imprecise  
grace-note gestures

I V trill IV I trill

*ppp* *mp*

24

S.

Gtr.

Vla.

*pp* *ppp quasi niente*

slow, even gliss.

enter imperceptibly

1) **Vla.:** Alternations between stopped pitches and their harmonic nodes should oscillate between the two different pitches while maintaining the same finger position; blend between both pitches is acceptable. Feel free to play around with adding a bit of *sul ponticello* in order to make the harmonic pop out. The effect should be a gentle flickering; not harsh or shrill.

28 **C**

S. *p*  
na la

Gtr.

Vla. *f* *n* *f* *n* *f*

32 **D**

S. *p* ————— *mf* *mf*  
el na re - fa

Gtr.

Vla. *ppp* *quasi niente* *f* *ppp*  
*enter imperceptibly*

36

S.

Gtr.

Vla. *mf* ————— *p*

40 **E** *mf*

S. *na la el na*

Gtr.

Vla. *n*

44

S.

Gtr. *p*

Vla. *f n f n f*

49 **F** *p* *f*

S. *re - - - - - fa*

Gtr.


Vla. *III V tr* *II tr* *I tr*

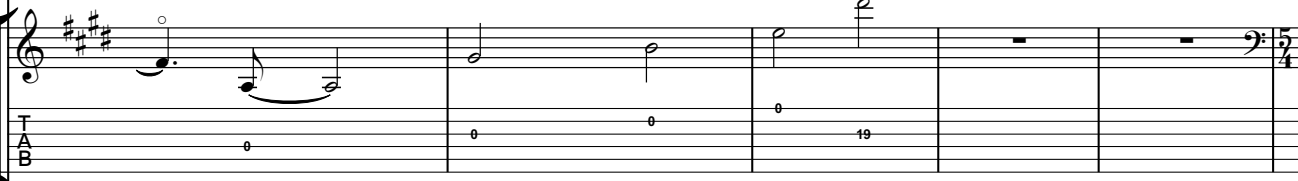
*p cresc. poco a poco*




*rall.* . . . . . *mp* . . . . . *n*

52


S. 

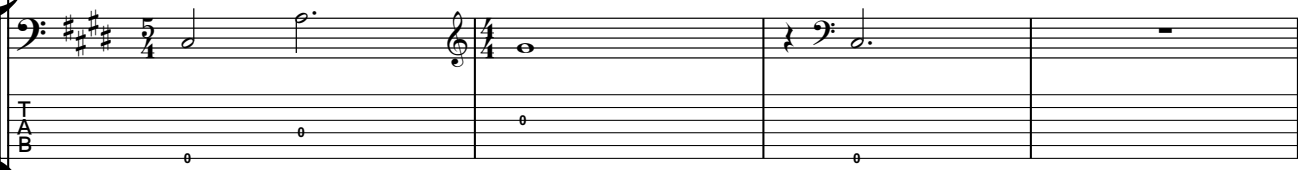
Gtr. 

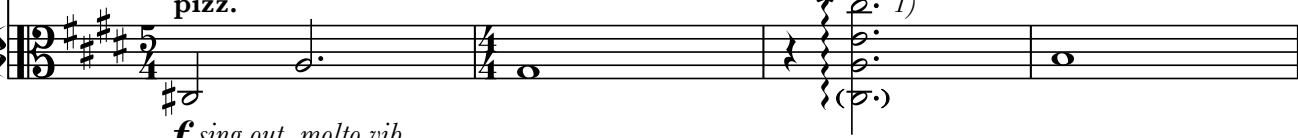
Vla. 

*f* . . . . . *dim. poco a poco* . . . . . *molto dim.* . . . . . *pp*

57 **G** **A tempo** ♩ = 96-100


S. 

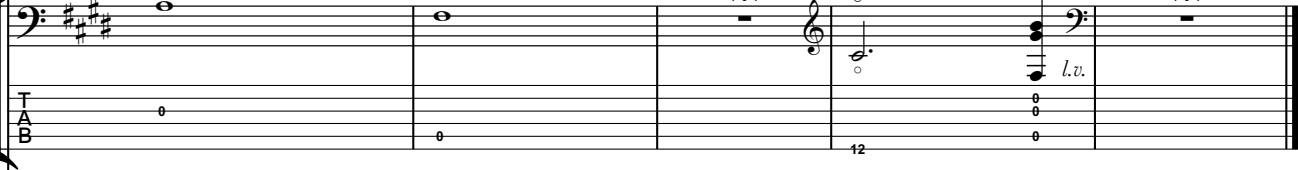
Gtr. 

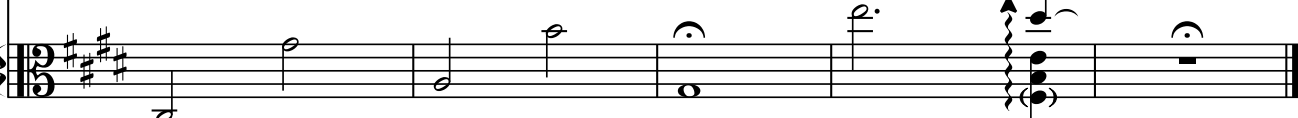
Vla. 

*f* *sing out, molto vib.*

61

S. 

Gtr. 

Vla. 

1) **Vla:** The bottom note (in parentheses) may optionally be left out in order to accommodate the cohesion of the chord. However, the composer prefers that all notes are played if possible.

ii. with impatience

♩ = 92 | Edgy, agitated, somewhat devious

*f* full and intense, but pointed

Singer

el el na el na re - fa

Guitar

*f* *secco* mute w. LH

Viola

*sf p sf p n sf p sf p sf p sf p*

5

S.

re - fa na na la

Gtr.

Viola

*n sf p sf p sf p sf p sf p n*

9 **A**

S.

el el na el na re - fa

Gtr.

Viola

*sf p sf p n sf sf p sf p sf p*

13

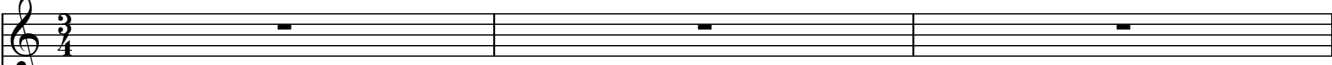
S. 

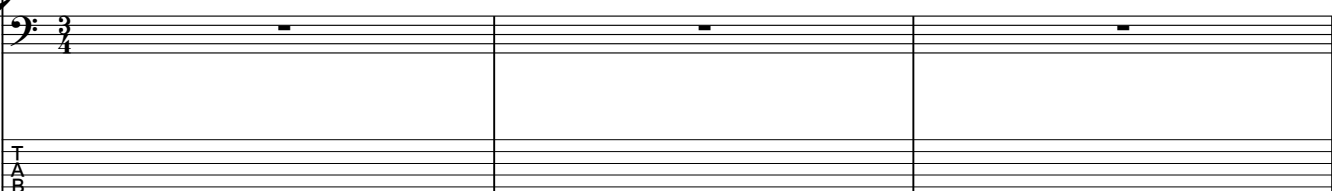
Gtr. 


Vla. 

*ppp* ————— *sf p sf p sf p sf p sf p n* <

17 **B**

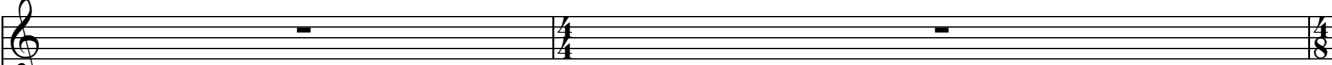
S. 

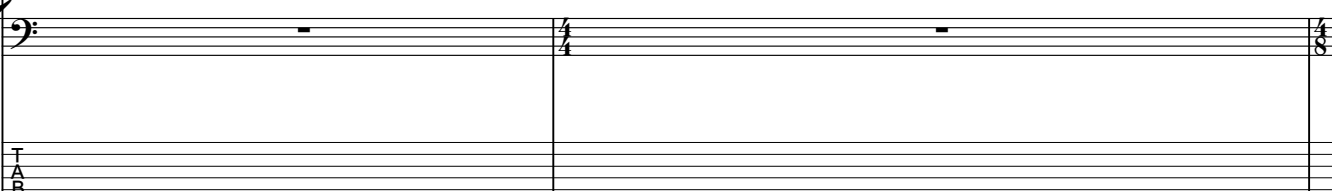
Gtr. 


Vla. 

*sf* ————— *pp*      *sfz pp*      *sf* ————— *pp*

20

S. 

Gtr. 

Vla. 

*sfz pp sfz ppp* —————

22 **C** *mp*

S. el el na

Gtr. *p*

Vla. *p*

25

S. el na re - - fa

Gtr.

Vla. *p*

28

S. na la na na la

Gtr.

Vla. *ff* *p*

**D**

31

S. *p*  
el na re - fa na la

Gtr. *p*

Vla. *pp*

34

S. *ff*  
el na re - fa na la

Gtr. *f*

Vla. *n*  $\curvearrowright$  *f*

**E**

37

S.

Gtr. *solo* *ff*

Vla. *pizz.* *ff*

41

Gtr.

Vla.

45

Gtr.

Vla.

50

Gtr.

Vla.

54

S.

Vla.

**F**

*pp*

*p*

**G**

*p* — *f*      *p* — *f*      *p* — *f*

el na re - fa na la

*arco*      *pizz.*      *arco*

*ppp*      *f sub.* — *pp*      *pp sfz*      *pp* — *ff*

Detailed description of the musical score: The score is for guitar (Gtr.) and viola (Vla.). It consists of four systems of music. The first system (measures 41-44) features a guitar part with a treble clef and a viola part with a bass clef. The second system (measures 45-48) includes a dynamic marking of *pp* for the guitar and *p* for the viola. The third system (measures 50-53) continues the instrumental parts. The fourth system (measures 54-57) introduces a vocal line (S.) with lyrics 'el na re - fa na la' and a viola part with various dynamics and articulations. A section marker **F** is placed above the first system, and **G** is placed above the vocal line. The guitar part includes TAB notation. The viola part includes various dynamics such as *ppp*, *f sub.*, *pp*, *pp sfz*, *pp*, and *ff*, along with articulations like *arco* and *pizz.*

58

S. *f* *p* *f*  
el na re - fa na la el na re - fa na la la

Vla. *ppp* *f* *pp* *sfz* *pp* *sfz* *ff* *p* *fff*  
pizz. arco

62 **Faster** ♩ = 100-104

S. el na re - fa na

Gtr. *f*

Vla. *f* *p* *f* *p* *f* *p* *f* *f* *p*

66

S. la el na

Gtr.

Vla. *f* *p* *f* *p* 5 n

69

S. re - - fa na la

Gtr.

Vla. *f p sf p sf p ffz*

72

S. *p* el na re - fa na la el na **rall.**

Vla. *f p f p f p f p*

76

S. re - - - - fa

Vla. *f p f ff fff*



80 **I** **A tempo** ♩ = 92 **mp** **rit.** . . . . .

S. *el el na*

Gr. **pp**

Vla. **A tempo** ♩ = 92 **p** **rit.** . . . . .

83 **Slower** ♩ = 88 **rit.** . . . . .

S. *el na re - - fa*

Gr.

Vla. **Slower** ♩ = 88 **pp** **rit.** . . . . .

86 **Even slower** ♩ = 80 **Subito a tempo** ♩ = 92 **molto rall.** . . . . .

S. *na la na*

Gr. **ff**

Vla. **Even slower** ♩ = 80 **Subito a tempo** ♩ = 92 **molto rall.** . . . . .

**ppp** **ff** **p**

89 **A tempo** ♩ = 92  
**p**

S. el na re fa

Gr. **pp**

Vla. **ppp**

91

S. na la el na

Gr.

Vla. *sickly; light*

94

S. re fa na la

Gr. *l.v.*  
12

Vla. **pizz.**  
**p** (pizz.)  
**pp**

The image shows a musical score for three instruments: Soprano (S.), Guitar (Gr.), and Viola (Vla.). The score is divided into three systems, each starting with a measure number (89, 91, 94). The tempo is marked 'A tempo' with a quarter note equal to 92 beats per minute. The first system (measures 89-90) features a Soprano line with lyrics 'el na re fa', a Guitar line with a piano (p) dynamic, and a Viola line with a pianissimo (ppp) dynamic and triplet markings. The second system (measures 91-92) has Soprano lyrics 'na la el na', a Guitar line, and a Viola line with a 'sickly; light' performance instruction. The third system (measures 93-94) includes Soprano lyrics 're fa na la', a Guitar line with a 'l.v.' (lute vibrato) marking and the number 12, and a Viola line with 'pizz.' (pizzicato) markings and dynamics of p and pp. The score uses treble clefs for Soprano and Viola, and a combination of treble and bass clefs for the Guitar. Time signatures change from 7/8 to 4/4 and then to 3/4.

iii. with resolve

♩ = 76 | Intimate, honest, inward; as if performing a sacred ritual

*mp sempre*

Singer

el na re -

Guitar

Viola

*let ring ad lib. sempre*

*fffz*

Kick Drum

*sfz*

5

S.

fa na la el na re -

*non ferm. sempre*

Vla.

*non ferm. sempre sim.*

*fffz*

Perc.

*sfz*

11

S.

fa na la el na

Vla.

Perc.

15 **A**

S. re - fa na la el na

Vla.

Perc.

21

S. re - fa na la el

Vla.

Perc.

25 **B**

S. na re - fa na la

Gtr. *always let ring*  
*p gentle, delicate*

Vla.

Perc.

29

S. el na re - fa

Gtr.   
 T A B

Vla.

Perc.

33

S. na la el na

Gtr.   
 T A B

Vla.

Perc.

37

S. el na re - fa na la

Gtr.   
 T A B

Vla.

Perc.

41

S. *el na re - fa*

Gtr. *T A B*

Vla.

Perc.

45

S. *re - fa na*

Gtr. *T A B*

Vla.

Perc.

48 **D**

S. *la el na re - fa na*

Gtr. *pp*

Vla. *con vib. ad lib. sempre*  
*p very expressive, but not over the top*

Perc. *(sfz sempre)*

**E**

51

S. *la el na re - fa*

Gtr.

Vla.

Perc.

55

Gtr.

Vla.

Perc.

57

Gtr.

Vla.

Perc.

*sola*

*mp*

(sounding pitch; any string)  
*gva*

60 **F**

Gtr. *3* *3* *3* *3* *3* *3* *3*

Vla. *loco*

Perc.

63 **G**

Gtr. *3* *3* *3* *3* *3* *3* *3*

Vla. III *3* (sounding pitch)

Perc.

66 *3* *3* *3*

Gtr. *3* *3* *3*

Vla. *p*

Perc.

69 *slow even microtonal gliss.*

Vla. *ppp*