

## DIVERTIMENTO

1. Prologue: Toccata *attacca*
2. Air
3. Echoes
4. Song, with Words Unsung *attacca*
5. Epilogue: Toccata

A sense of multi-layered interpretation informs my *Divertimento*, starting with the genre itself. Generally understood to be an entertainment—a “diversion”—the divertimento also has a history of exhibiting artistic weight. For example the piano sonata is a form, like the string quartet, where composers were at their most inventive, experimental, and personal. The genre’s earliest giant was Haydn, but many, if not most, of his sonatas are called “divertimenti”. Likewise, my piece is intended to be accessible but also challenging and deeply felt. Having been written shortly after 9/11, this combination of the intensely personal with a musical *lingua franca* seemed right to me.

The *Divertimento* is written in a type of arch form, in which the third of the five movements stands alone at the center of the work, and the other movements reflect aspects of each other around this central point. Thus, thematic material from the first movement returns in the last, and the outer pairs of movements are played without pause. In addition, many elements of the first movement influence those that follow. For example, the very first chords are revoiced throughout the piece to form central harmonies. One easily audible incarnation is the opening of the fourth movement, where the first two chords are rhythmically altered and set in a new context.

The first movement, “Prologue: Toccata”, is very short and leads directly to the second as the violin sustains a high harmonic E. The title of “Air” carries a double meaning, as both a song-like form common throughout the ages, and also reflecting the natural element, air. Thus the winds, especially the most mechanically pure wind instrument, the flute, are featured. A solo flute passage in a Japanese mode common to the *shakuhatchi* (a wooden flute) begins the movement. As in Japanese music, certain notes are ornamented by bending the pitch, and this is echoed by *glissandi* in the violin.

“Echoes” also contains multiple meanings. The opening hammered chords are revoicings of the prevailing harmony of the first movement, and the sharply punctuated attacks are echoed and sustained by sympathetic vibrations of selected piano strings, whose dampers are raised by the *sostenuto* pedal. Solo passages for the violin and cello present material that returns at the end of the movement, as do the hammered chords.

The fourth movement is a setting of a poem by Ann Bretz. The lyrics actually appear in the score, hence the title, “Song, with Words Unsung”. As was mentioned above, the opening chords from the beginning of the piece return in a new setting. At first this passage serves as both an introduction and a refrain which recurs between portions of the song, but towards the end the refrain is incorporated into the body of the song itself.

“Epilogue: Toccata” begins as the Song fades on a trill in the cello and clarinet. The first movement returns and is developed much further. The opening chord, which resolved down from F to E in the first movement, now resolves upward in the traditional manner from E to F, enhancing both the connection to the beginning of the piece and the sense of closure.

*Divertimento* was commissioned for the Ronen Chamber Ensemble by Harold Bretz, and is dedicated to Harold and Ann Bretz, with gratitude and admiration for their selfless devotion to the propagation of the arts. It was premiered at the Hilbert Circle Theater in Indianapolis on April 2, 2002 and was revised in June, 2006.

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