

Spirals

Program notes

Spirals was commissioned by and dedicated to Susan Chan, Violist and Artistic Coordinator of the New Century String Quartet (a resident faculty ensemble at the University of Indianapolis). This collaboration was a part of Susan Chan's Creative Renewal Arts Fellowship project entitled "The Glorious Viola, a Chamber Music Journey, 1500 – present" awarded by the Arts Council of Indianapolis for the year 2005-2006. This piece was commissioned with the purpose of promoting the viola's significant position in the chamber music repertoire since its birth in the 1500s.

In my piece, I have derived most of the motivic material from the first few bars of Brahms' Op. 67 string quartet, drawing especially on a phrase that ends the passage. The waltz-like character of the movement suggested a swirling, circular character, and I thus organized the piece around the image of coexisting spirals, some tighter, some looser.

In the overall shape of my work, the piece begins with a relaxed spiral, quiet and slow, and quickly jumps to a tighter one at a much faster tempo. Material from the Brahms saturates immediately. Following this introduction is a series of spirals starting with the slowest music of the piece and moving through gradually faster tempi until the conclusion of the work. After a fugal treatment of Brahms' theme leads to a climax, the original is quoted for some fourteen bars, where all but the viola are muted, as they are for the first 128 bars of my work. The fastest music follows the quotation, ending with the biggest climax.

-Chris Rutkowski

Spirals was premiered by

The New Century String Quartet

Dean Franke and David Bartolowits, violins

Susan Chan, viola

Dennis McCafferty, cello

Presented by the University of Indianapolis Faculty Artist Series at the Christel DeHaan Fine Arts Center on February 20, 2006.