

Ananda Dances

for Violin and Piano

Original String Quartet, January 21—March 30, 2008 Duration: ~24 minutes
Arrangement for Violin and Piano, March 7—April 7, 2009

“Families is where our nation finds hope, where wings take dream.”
George W. Bush

Ananda Dances is one of a series of pieces written for Ananda-Eric Pritchard, first violinist of the Ciompi Quartet of Duke University, originally as a string quartet. At Eric’s request, I have arranged this work for violin and piano (March 7—April 7 2009). This is very much an arrangement and not a simple transcription, so any comparison with the quartet will find significant variance.

This is the first music I’ve written with the possibility of dance intended from conception. As such, the movements are restricted in rhythmic ambiguity, and there is only one short instance of meter change within a movement in the finale. It is more customary in my music to have more complex rhythms and meter changes that would make choreography difficult.

The first and third movements are waltzes, a form I find very useful and which crops up quite a few times in other scores. The tempo marking in the first movement is a reference to a local, extremely conservative radio station that will not play music by living composers, frequently favoring low-quality 19th century ballroom fare that sounds much like art music to the inattentive. The second movement, *Texas Two Step*, pays at least nominal tribute to the state of my birth and home for many years. I can’t claim much authenticity in its two-stepness but at least it’s fairly up-tempo and in 4/4, and appropriate for a formal and rather crazed square dance. The last movement, *Wild Gypsy Fling*, stems from the inspired fiddling and great musicianship of the Roma people. I have long admired George Enescu for his violin playing and composition, and have put a little of his flavor into this finale. Although 40 generations removed from their homeland in India, the Roma were originally musicians in a huge Vishnu temple complex, which is harmonious with my personal spiritual practice.

On a technical note: I have wrestled for many years on how to indicate sustained notes on the piano most efficiently. Early scores have frequent pedal markings, but now I tend to notate rather literally, as well as relying on slurs to indicate phrasing and depending on the musicality of the performer to pedal with maximal effect. Pedal markings are at a minimum where the pedal is required and might not be clear from the music. This piece requires the sostenuto pedal in several places, which should be clear by the context. Also I have used three staves instead of two for the piano in brief passages in the middle two movements, as this makes the score much more legible.

Bill Robinson

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