

Violin Concerto No. 2

for Violin and Orchestra

January 2014; May 9–July, 2016; October 13, 2017–May 15, 2018
Duration: about 26-28 minutes

for Eric Pritchard
in memoriam; Fred Robinson, Jane Hawkins Raimi, and Anshel Brusilow

I have had the pleasure of making music with violinist Eric Pritchard since 2006. In 2009, Eric performed the first edition of Violin Concerto No. 1, *Ananda Concerto*, with the Raleigh Civic Chamber Orchestra. (That concerto has since been extensively revised.) I started a second violin concerto for Eric after finishing my Cello Concerto for Bonnie Thron. Spring and summer 2016 was a difficult and depressing time for me, as I was losing my job teaching physics at NCSU, and had to scramble to find a place to live after spring 2017. As a result, I wrote no music for about six months. After retiring and moving to the small town of Cleveland, NC, I was able to start back into the violin concerto in the fall of 2017. This is a companion piece to the Cello Concerto, with the same instrumentation both in the chamber and orchestral versions, four movements, and a third movement with origins in my sonatas for solo violin.

The concerto is in four movements:

I. Country Fiddling	Playful	[7']
II. Between Earth and Space	With awareness	[8']
III. Scherzo	Vivace	[4']
IV. Sufinale	Dervishistorical	[7']

In the first movement, measures 108 (clue; look that up in Hindu symbology) through 115, and again measure 144 to the end, I use a melody introduced by Ram Dass in his 1969 Sculpture Garden lectures in NYC. These lectures formed the basis for the book *Be Here Now*. The tune was used to chant “Rama”.

The short third movement started life in 2002 as the second movement of my *Ninth Sonata for Solo Violin*. (There are ten such sonatas.)

The fourth movement is titled *Sufinale*, as both Eric and I are interested in Sufi mysticism and spiritual practices.

Three people noted above died during the composition of this work. Fred Robinson (no relation) was a composer, arranger, and saxophonist I met in 1974 when I first attended NTSU in Denton, Texas. I heard of his death while writing measure 208 in the fourth movement, as I think you can tell. Jane Hawkins was a phenomenal pianist and educator who was a very significant figure in the Duke University musical scene for many years. Anshel Brusilow had a long career, first as a violinist and then as a conductor. I played under his baton at NTSU, and studied conducting with him.

Performance notes

Instrumentation: two flutes (second flute doubles piccolo), two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, two horns, two trumpets, timpani, harp, solo violin, and strings.

In the fourth movement, measure 232 to the end, the solo part is marked *tutti*. The soloist is playing with the first violins, and it doesn't matter that it cannot be heard distinctly. There are several passages through the piece where the orchestra will overpower the soloist. In those places, **the violin should be amplified**, thus allowing full volume for the ensemble. Frequently, when the orchestra should be loud but the solo violin is also playing, I have used “*ff assez*” to indicate as loud as possible without drowning out the soloist. With amplification, this should not be a major issue.

As the harp has a prominent part, it should be located in proximity to the soloist, not in the back as usual.

The first performance was by Eric Pritchard with the Raleigh Symphony Orchestra, directed by Jim Waddelow, on March 11, 2023.

Cover photo; Eric Prichard and Bill Robinson, April 2018.

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