

Gayatri Sonata

for Violoncello and Piano

Composed Dec. 27, 2004—May 11, 2005

Duration: about 20 minutes

The middle movement is based on a setting I wrote of the Gayatri Mantra, a sacred mantra in Hinduism from the *Rig Veda*, for six-string violin and baritone in 2002. I ended up using only the melody from that original composition as the main theme. The words in Sanskrit are:

Om Bhur bhuvah svahah
Tat savitur varenyam
Bhargo Devasya dheemahi
Dheeyo yo nah prachodayaat

Any translation is highly approximate, but it is something like; “Oh Divine Beings of all three worlds, we meditate on the glorious splendor of God. May He himself illumine our minds.”

The tempo marking of the first movement, “IHWIFATBS”, stands for “It won’t hurt when I fall off this barstool”. Notice that this lyric fits the theme...

This sonata, originally for cello and piano, is in memory of my mother, Frances Vanderkooi Robinson Westman, who died in February 2005. She played both the cello and the piano. I also had in mind during the composition two cellists: David Vanderkooi, my uncle, and Jonathan Kramer, of the music department at NCSU. There is also an arrangement for viola.

The premiere performance was by Bonnie Thron, cellist, and Nancy Whelan, pianist, at Duke University in 2010.

The original score and part were in legal-size format. In 2022, I made a letter-size edition for score and part, as well as an edition of the cello part specifically for electronic music readers, with the part enlarged and including reduced piano staves.

Bill Robinson

Publisher Parrish Press Garner NC Fifth Edition July 2022

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