2006

String Quartet (Honors)

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String Quartet

Luke Gullickson

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String Quartet (2006)

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I began my String Quartet in the summer of 2006 with the opening section, which flashes in a sort of montage between passages from the first three movements. The piece then grew into four ostensibly disparate movements that are linked through many references that are built into the musical structure.

The pitch centers of the piece are derived from the D octatonic scale, with the fourth movement representing the culmination as it reaches B and G#—which surround the dominant of the piece’s central key, D.

The first movement, following the introductory foreshadowing, is in a straightforward Sonata form, and the pitch material is characterized by tension between octatonic and pentatonic scales. The first theme presents these scales in small, palindromic blocks, while the second theme is more lyrical.

The second movement is a light Scherzo with some humorous gestures, built in an arch form around a central developmental section. The movement recalls Classical-era Serenades, incidental pieces meant to be played outdoors, with its waltz feel and metric regularity.

The third movement develops slowly, with three basic themes in imitation: one for whole notes, one for halves, and one for quarters. These themes exhibit varying degrees of tension between the octatonic and major scales. The rhythm moves from whole notes to quarters and back, followed by a freer central section and a warm, pandiatonic Coda that combines the themes.

The fourth movement is the most enigmatic and reflective. It opens with a night music section that moves between B and G#, followed by a more lyrical section. The clarinet solo should be played from offstage, provided this can be done audibly. Preferably, the clarinetist should also go uncredited in the program, so the solo comes as a complete surprise to the audience.

There are numerous personal references in the musical content here, but they are ultimately insignificant. Of more import is the idea of musical ideas recurring in different contexts, so their tone shifts as a result of the experiences that have been endured over the course of the piece. The references, from the first movement’s opening montage to the last movement’s hushed recallings, come large and small, and are meant to create a dialogue between initial and later recurrences of ideas and gestures.

Duration: 25 minutes
String Quartet: I

A bit faster. \( \dot{q} = 80 \)

cresc. poco a poco...

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

cresc. poco a poco...

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

cresc. poco a poco...
String Quartet II

Freely.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

\[ \text{A tempo.} \]

B
III.

\( \frac{\text{j}}{} = 80 \)

\( \text{p very slow cresc....} \)

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

\( \text{p very slow cresc....} \)

\( \text{p very slow cresc....} \)

\( \text{p very slow cresc....} \)
Note: all col legno passages are to be played battuto.
String Quartet: IV

D 71
A tempo; freely, with motion.

(Play only if no clarinet is available)