

Harp Program Notes

• *TOCCATA FOR TWO HARPS AND MALLET PERCUSSION*

The *Toccata* is a three-sectioned work that exploits many differences of touch between “plucked” and “struck,” including percussive effects by the harps, which differ from those of the mallet percussion. The mallet instruments include vibraphone, marimba, xylophone and glockenspiel, each a different timbre that either folds into the sound of the harps or is thrown into relief as contrast.

The first section is constructed primarily around a consistent motor rhythm, two easily distinguishable motifs appearing immediately in the harps: an insistent repeated note and a short back-and-forth octave figure. Variations ensue.

The second section is slow and mysterious, built upon shimmering textures: arpeggios, glissandi and *bisbigliando*, a sort of whispering tremolo.

The final segment begins with an aggressively dramatic accompaniment figure in the harps that supports the short and insistent theme in the marimba. Pieces of the motif are used as the structural basis of the entire section to the end.

The *Toccata* was composed for and premiered at the 1986 Conference of the American Harp Society in Los Angeles.

• *“TYVEK WOOD” FOR HARP, FLUTE AND VIOLA*

Tyvek Wood was commissioned by The Debussy Trio, which, like the famous trio written by Claude Debussy, features the same instrumental combination. It was premiered in Prague at the World Harp Congress in 1999.

The first movement is a loosely structured sonata form. Many of the motives heard at the very beginning are used either as primary thematic elements or as accompaniments for secondary thematic ideas. The contrast in the movement relies primarily upon instrumental “shout-outs” or coloristic and percussive effects.

The second movement, “Reflectively expressive; dreamlike,” is slow and lyrical, featuring high harmonics in the viola. The form of the movement is determined by the systematic addition of a new sharp in the harp tuning until the piece, which begins tonally in E with only one sharp - C#, ends with seven sharps, albeit in a different tonal center than the expected C# major: an enharmonic version of F minor.

The last movement, "Quick and determined," relies upon two main motivic elements: the opening repeated notes in the viola and the three note "xylophonic" motif which introduces the harp. These elements combine with a third motive in the flute and drive the piece to an exciting conclusion.

• **"DANCING FOR LOVE, DANCING FOR THE GODS" FOR FOUR HARPS**

The inspiration for the title of *Dancing for Love* refers to a disparaging comment made by the dancer Isadora Duncan about the dancers at the Paris Opera in 1900: "They do not dance for love. They do not dance for the Gods." The piece, intended as a positive turn on the statement, was commissioned by and dedicated to Skaila Kanga and the Harp Department of the Royal Academy of Music, London.

The title notwithstanding, the three sections that comprise this piece are meant to invoke the spirit of the dance rather than actual forms. The first section, the only one with a consistent dance rhythm, is a "light and quick" representation of a waltz, while the second section is less formally structured, and is a setting that contains elements of a stylized procession, but is in reality a fantasia both stately and vague. The last section ("Fast") begins with one harp tapping out a $\frac{7}{8}$ rhythm, which, in combination with other meters throughout the piece, is the primary musical underpinning for this energetic paean to the spirit of a folk dance.