

NOTTURNI APPASSIONATA

FOR
PIANO SOLO

Notturmo I: Rings of Crystalline Sky (1988-89, rev. 2002, 2004)

Dedicated to my dear teacher George Sanders. In the late 1980's I began working on a programmatic piece that would exemplify some of the colors, the enormity, the grandeur, and the ice crystal composition of the rings of Saturn. I had originally made a calligraphy ink score (1989) and in 2002 I made changes I had known about for some time—mostly some technical revisions to difficult left hand parts, and especially a new dramatic conclusion. I completed the revisions and re-notated the score on *Finale* for a performance in October of 2002. A final revision of the last measure was completed in 2004.

The form is a large scale ABA with nocturne sections framing a large fantasia. The left hand accompaniment is based on stacked 5ths. The opening nocturne section has three parts; the first is a lyric melody, the second part uses a five-note motive repeated sequentially, then elaborated, the third idea features chords and octaves building up to a climax. The fantasia opens with a brilliant Appassionato section featuring fast broken fifths in the left hand. The fantasia is a multi-part rhapsodic menagerie of themes, motives, and coloristic effects, unified through a weaving of similar passages, many of which have been previously foreshadowed before they are fully developed. The opening nocturne returns with much elaboration and ornamentation and a dramatic coda brings the work to a conclusion.

Notturmo II (2006)

Composed for Jason Sifford, the work explores quintuplet divisions of the beat in the left hand with quintuplet and almost anything else in the right hand. It is a modified rondo form with the opening melodic material returning twice—ABACDA-coda. Major seventh intervals begin the work and foreshadow the dramatic D section. The nocturnesque left-hand motion is consistent through the first three sections. The C section features a hemiola figuration in the left hand and syncopated chordal melodic writing in the right hand followed by a contrasting halt to the motion with chords and legato sevenths. The D section then brings the sevenths to the forefront as grace-note figurations in the melody. With the return of the A section, the sevenths remain as part of the original melody. Compositionally, I avoid thirds to the bass and it was wonderful and at the same time a little strange that the added seventh below the original melodic line in the final A section does not bring about any of these thirds I avoid.

Notturmo III (2009)

Notturmo III was composed for Gabriel Sanchez. Formally, a hybrid structure that resembles a modified arch form (the second DC interrupts the form): ABCDCBDCA-coda. The typical nocturne left hand appears only in the outer A sections. The middle sections are either dramatic or very quiet and subdued. The first section opens with a sonority that contains a tritone and yet is the stable sonority for the work. A quiet melody enters that is lyric in spite of the dissonant pitch set that is formed. Half step clusters, tritones, sevenths and ninths, as well as an occasional consonant interval are all outlined in the melodic movement. The opening motive appears three times, all with varying harmonic implications. The B section begins with a broad left-hand arpeggiation and dissonant melodic sonorities. This B is short and leads to a sparse and quiet melodic section (C) with open octaves in the bass that are tinged with added minor seconds. The D section that follows has a right-hand arpeggiation featuring minor seconds and tritones with a chordal melodic passage underneath. The phrase moves to an unresolved ending that will pick back up at its return—like an interrupted period structure. The C section returns and leads to a more dramatic B section recap. The D section returns and fulfills the unresolved phrase from before and a last entrance of the C material is used to complete this middle part and transition to the original material. The recap A section begins the same as the beginning but then varies into a cadenza-like passage. New material enters as a coda before reaching the end where the last motive from the original melody enters creating the last tritone sonority.