

Firedance

Fire has a profound place in the reality and symbology of our species, manifested in so many ways—both constructive and destructive. For me it is the symbology that drew my attention. Fire is the passion and desire—the fire in her eyes, the fiery heart in his soul, the sensual out-of-control desire that is part of us. Fire is destruction as it ravages out of control, but just as importantly, the rebirth that can follow—the phoenix and the forest are my examples, the imaginary and the real. *Firedance* certainly emphasizes the extremes, and in that sense is both sensual and catastrophic. Fire is in constant motion, mesmerizing us over the whole of human history, and the piece attempts to capture, to mimic this motion. In the same way dance has engaged us over our whole history and all the sections have a tremendous passion for dance, both slow and fast, at their core. My mind pictured a shaman (or a whole company of shamans) trance-dancing and twirling in wild abandon, and I envisioned the dance partner as a spirit of fire—the light and warmth, the survival of our primordial selves, the sense of peace in our hearths from the beginnings of civilization, and the sensual passion awakened by the ritual of dance. The outer fast sections conjure up images of destruction and rebirth; filled with energy and anticipation, the music is driven in rhythmically controlled chaos. Slower music is smoky and sultry, passionately evoking a scene of hazy colors and exoticism. The center section is almost psychotic in its energies and rhythms, leaving us breathless.

The work is dedicated to my friend, Sarah McKoin and the TTU Symphonic Wind Ensemble. It underwent a substantial revision in the summer of 2019, and the subsequent premiere of the revised score and the recording sessions took place at MTSU under the baton of Reed Thomas in November of 2019.