

An Archive of the musical compositions by Herb Bielawa

Composition: **Duo for Violin and Harpsichord**

1. Fantasy
2. Recitative
3. Dirge
4. Aria
5. Variation

Date: 1984

Duration: 20:00

Recording: by Brooke Aird and Sandra Soderlund

Program Note

Work on DUO began at the MacDowell Colony in 1982 and ended in early 1984 at the Montalvo Center for the Arts. The outer five movements (I and V) have the most in common. V is, in fact, a variation of I. In V the harpsichord and violin actually exchange musical parts. This means, of course, that in V the violin part had to be expanded to accommodate the original harpsichord writing of I and the harpsichord part, likewise, had to be compressed to accommodate the original violin writing of I. II and IV share the same moderate tempo. In II, both instruments play in the same tight mid-range of an octave. They seem to "step on each other" because of this. In IV the violin is limited to its lowest octave, below the harpsichord which, itself, is locked into its high range. As the work's unique centerpiece III is the slowest and most austere movement of all. In it the violin plays solely in its highest range, the harpsichord in its lowest. In the gaping hole in the middle there exists a sort of musical "no-man's land" Taken as a whole, the five movements form an inverted arch: fast, moderate, slow, moderate, fast.

But what does all of this mean? It describes how the piece was written. It also says that the piece has no program. It is purely abstract. What it says on a more transcendental level is not for the composer to say, because he just doesn't know. My preoccupation was with melody, harmony, rhythm and texture and the timing of their interactions as they coalesce into a dramatic whole. It is but a serious concert work meant to be performed and audited by people who may themselves discern the essential meaning of it as a work of art.