

More About TRIO No. 2 (Pastoral)

My second composition for piano trio was written almost 2 decades after the first. Like the earlier piece, **Trio No. 2** has a subtitle, but unlike **Trio No. 1**, it is not based on themes from international folk music.

I wanted to link the two works together as companion pieces, so I thought about having a theme with a subtitle for the new trio just like the first one has. But I rejected the obvious choice of having another work based on some type of folk music because, while I wanted the two trios to be loosely linked, I didn't want them to be clones of each other.

After some thought, I came up with the subtitle "Pastoral" and actually started the first movement with a quiet atonal introduction before I thought of the idea to use motifs from some other work labeled "Pastoral" as germinal material from which to craft my own themes. For that, the obvious choices were Beethoven and Vaughan Williams, both of whom have "Pastoral Symphonies" in their canon. I wanted this work--while (mostly) not screamingly dissonant or completely atonal--to be in a more-or-less vague tonal idiom, which made the 1808 Beethoven work a somewhat difficult fit. So, I chose Vaughan Williams, as his **Pastoral Symphony** (1922) is somewhat less well-known than Beethoven's, and I could also find more useful motifs in it to develop in the contemporary style that I wanted to use for my trio.

Besides, I am a huge fan of RVW's music, and decided to thank the great 20th Century English master for his help by dedicating the trio to him.

I didn't give the 3 movements of this trio titles as I had the first trio. In the earlier work, I used very strict traditional musical forms and named each movement by its form: chaconne, scherzo, and fugue. But that wasn't the case with the new work, which makes little use of traditional named forms.

Here is a brief description of the individual movements:

I: *Lento - Moderato* The opening prologue (*Lento*), which I alluded to above, was the first music I wrote for this piece and was completed before I settled on the procedure of developing motifs from another work called "pastoral." The remainder of the movement (*Moderato*) could be called a subtle ABA form with the second A section incorporating material from the B section.

II: *Animato - Tranquillo - Tempo I* Unlike the outer two movements, this one actually follows a very loose scherzo and trio form, but not closely enough to give it that name. The "trio" section is more contrasting than it would be in a typical scherzo, being in a very slow tempo and melancholy mood.

III: *Adagio - Lento* While I was building my themes on motifs from RVW's symphony, I was not trying to emulate his style, and otherwise the two works have very little in common. But I did take a page from RVW in choosing to close this work with a slow movement and end quietly. The *Adagio* first section builds from *pp* to *ff* and then transitions into the quiet epilogue, which is basically a retrograde (played backwards) version of the opening prologue, making for very symmetrical bookends.

Trios no. 1 & 2 have both been recorded by Trio Casals and released on the albums **Trios and Sonatinas** and **A Grand Journey** from Navona Records. Please visit the Discography page of my website for more information.