

Program Notes by Elisenda Fábregas

Portraits I was commissioned by the Texas Music Teachers Association and was premiered by Roger Wright at the Texas Music Teachers Association State Convention in Austin, Texas, on June 13, 2000. *Portraits I* was the winning work of the Music Teachers National Association Composition Competition and Elisenda was given the 2001 Shepherd Distinguished Composer of the Year Award.

Portraits I includes five pieces representing a range of emotions: passion, lyricism and tenderness in *Image*; playfulness, verve and mischievousness in *Capriccio*; yearning and anguish in *Lament*; contemplation and reflection in *Intermezzo*; and vitality, endurance and decisiveness in the *Toccata*.

I. *Image* consists of two melodic themes characterized by the ascending leap of a ninth. After its initial presentation the two themes collide dissonantly in the *Agitato* and climax fortissimo in the high register of the *Grandioso*. The piece ends in pianissimo with the second theme gradually disintegrating itself in fragmented descending motives as a question mark.

II. *Capriccio /Lento* is unpredictable and has a mischievous and quirky quality. The two-bar main motif of the first theme introduced in the Adagio is then followed by a series of variations in different keys and characters. The music ends slowly with a variation of the introduction.

III. *Lament* has a melancholic and anguished tone which starts with the pianissimo four-note chromatic motif at the beginning. Later the left hand introduces the main theme built on appoggiaturas and leaping grace notes that continue the lamenting tone. A development of these motives lead to the central part of the piece, *poco piu mosso*, introducing a melodically-related tune. In the *Grandioso*, the climactic moment of the piece, the 'lamenting' main theme is like a loud scream. Afterwards the music dies away not without a final outburst.

IV. *Intermezzo* is slow and has an introspected and searching quality. It introduces the *Toccata* with which is melodically related. This intermezzo is a long sustained line that originating in the bass ascends into the higher register. The *poco piu mosso* section increases the intensity and the searching feeling of the otherwise contemplative piece. However the search is unsuccessful and gives up abruptly with a trill in the left hand and a descending chromatic pattern in the right. Afterwards the piece resumes like the beginning as if nothing happened.

V. *Toccata* is brought about without interruption* from the *Intermezzo* providing a wealth of vitality and vigor to the end of *Portraits*. The *Toccata* consists of driving and unrelenting sixteenth-note patterns organized in groups of two, three or four depending on the meter changes that occur in almost every measure. Melodic slurs within these rhythmic groupings accent the rhythmic design of the piece.

* NOTE: The *Toccata* can be played by itself.

Performance time of the piece is approximately 18 minutes.