

Sinfonietta for String Orchestra by Aldo Rafael Forte

- I. Adagio molto misterioso***
- II. Satirical Marches***
- III. Counterpoint***
- IV. Scherzo - Tradicional***
- V. Rondo – Finale***

The first four movements of the sinfonietta were composed in the Spring of 1977 as a graduate school student piece while Forte was working on an M.M.E. at the University of Southern Mississippi. In 1981 he added the fifth movement which is as long as the first four movements combined. The five movements bear intervallic and sometimes thematic relationships to each other. The mysterious motive in the celli and basses which opens the work is built out of thirds, fourths and seconds. It is the germ cell which forms the basis of the entire work. The sinfonietta is in a neo classical style and makes use of cyclic treatment of material. The piece was premiered in 1982 by members of the Alabama Symphony in Birmingham, AL.

In the first movement the intervals stated above are expanded upon and after an emotional climax lead directly to the second movement. *II. Satirical marches* consists of four contrasting marches arranged in a peculiar ABCABDC form – the first one (A) is stately and brief while the second one (B) features the violas in a “tug of war” between Spanish-like march rhythms and waltz rhythms. The third march (C) is also stately but more contrapuntal than the first. After “A” and “B” are repeated, the “March of the Oriental Parables”(D) is introduced. With its use of quartal harmonies, finger tapping “on the wood”, and jazzy rhythms, it forms a sound contrast to the other two marches. The movement ends with the third march (C).

III. Counterpoint is, for the most part, a diminutive version of the opening of the work. A secondary idea in the first violins is briefly introduced but the main idea quickly interrupts it. After three fermatas of “dissonant despair” the movement ends on pizzicato notes.

The fourth movement follows a classic scherzo – trio form. It is interesting to note that in part of the trio section a fugue played pizzicato ensues whose subject is based on the opening intervals of the work.

The last movement, *V. Rondo – Finale*, is the longest of all the movements. Cast in Rondo form, the A section introduces a jolly folk-like theme in the solo violin while the ensuing B section is vigorous with tutti strings. After a second A section, the C section brings back the opening of the work couched in lush harmonies. The A section returns, this time more aggressive than before and accompanied polytonally. After a pizz. B section there is some free material which eventually pauses on octave “D”s. This is followed by an extensive fugue with more finger tapping, a return of the “...Parables” theme and many other cyclic devices. A, B, and A return to close out the work. The cacophony created in the fugue with the use of banal folk-like material accompanied with polytonal harmonies is intentionally reminiscent of Charles Ives, whose music Forte was very interested in at the time he composed the sinfonietta!

Aldo Rafael Forte

Composer

