

Program Notes for Lebenstänze

Lebenstänze (Dances of Life), a concerto for violin, viola and orchestra, was commissioned by the Metropolitan Symphony Orchestra in 1988 and was written for David and Alice Preves. The work describes a range of human events that are present in a life-long relationship between two people.

The first movement, "Society," represents the continuum of life and emotion in the world. Against a background of 16th-note murmuring, the thematic fragments are presented, culminating in a "fanfare-like" section.

Following the first movement without a break, the second movement begins with the individual statements of the soli violin and viola. The progression of a relationship is shown by the developing intensity of musical interaction.

The third movement explores the different aspects of birth. An extended bassoon solo followed by a duet with the viola represents the human spirit before it is born and the unique relationship between mother and child. This movement grows in texture and ultimately reaches the moment of birth.

"Conflict," the fourth movement, is written using a modified rondo form. The character of the movement as well as its ending reflect the inevitability of conflict and its lack of poignance.

The fifth movement begins quietly with a quartet in the winds. The soloists echo this material and move to a slower section which ends in string harmonics. Much recitative material follows in the solo violin and cello. Thematic material from the third and first movements briefly returns before the close of the work.