

Program Notes for Three Portraits

Three Portraits for alto saxophone and piano was commissioned by Scott Hyslop and written during the winter of 1986-87. Each movement represents a musical "portrait" of someone in the composer's life.

"I thought it would be interesting to compose a self-portrait much in the same way that a visual artist would create a perception of himself. It was a revealing process and represents those intangibles which can only be expressed through music." The first portrait, "Myself," begins expressively, plaintively, and builds to a dramatic and frenetic statement.

"Old Spirit Song" is a theme and five variations. "This musical portrayal is that of my grandmother and the tangents her mind took during her struggle with Alzheimer's disease. The theme is derived from a favorite folk song, 'The Old Arm Chair,' that she sang to me when I was a child." During the first statement of the theme a counter melody is heard in the right hand of the piano which later dominates in the saxophone during the last thematic presentation. The movement closes with a somber and ethereal coda.

"'Rubanesque,' the third portrait, is dedicated to Ruben Haugen, my father-in-law and long time teacher, performer, and respected advocate of the saxophone and serious saxophone music. This portrait displays the agility and incredible gymnastic capabilities of the instrument along with the energy and humor of the man".