Woodwind quintet n. 2

M. William Karlins

"...and all the world is dew..."¹ Woodwind quintet n. 2 was composed between August 1977 and January 1978. The title of the piece was inspired by two haiku poems by Issa:

On The Death of His Child

Dew Evaporates
And all our world
Is dew, so dear,
So fresh, so fleeting.
The world of dew is
A world of dew...and yet,
And yet

It is dedicated to the memory of my Godson, Lee Robert Kantscheidt (March 29, 1954 – August 8, 1976). It was not an easy piece to compose, because of my being emotionally involved with the death of my Godson and, six weeks before that, the death of my nephew. It was also an intense period of reevaluation of my work.

The background material for the quintet is the tone row: D♭ F A D♭ Ab C E G B♭ E♭ B♭ G♭, which is used with a good deal of flexibility. In my music the order of the tone row is a starting point and open to free rotation, segmentation and whatever inspiration demands. A cursory look at the row reveals that it is made up mostly of triads, including three augmented triads. The piece is composed using the chromatic scale and centered tonally in D♭, I refer to this process as tonality without a key.

The first movement, Prelude, is in a three-part design. The first part begins with and returns to, in measure 17, sudden, loud leaping gestures. The second part is in five sections, each one beginning with a tremolo. The section becomes more agitated until the return of the leaping gesture, in measure 68, on D♭, and winds down ending on the central pitch, D♭.

The second movement is titled Capriccio. The first section, Tranquillo con Grazia, is fugal. The first pitches of the first three subjects are Ab, D♭ and F, outlining the D♭ major triad. After a short transition, a set of variations, with a focus on Ab, is built on a two-voiced ground beginning in the clarinet and horn. The variations proceed to a climactic section, Con Fuoco, centered on Ab, and continues until it is interrupted by a horn solo which leads to a closing Tranquillo con Mistero. A static transition proceeds directly to the third movement, Epilogue.

Part 1, Reflections, is sectional and canonic. A static transition, similar to the one that connected the second and third movements, this time in the horn and clarinet, connects Reflections to Part 2, Meditation, marked Calmato. Meditation begins with long held four-part chords (the first six of which contain the D♭ augmented triad) interrupted by long rests, and proceeds to a progression of uninterrupted chords,
ending with a cadence on the central pitch of Db in the bassoon, and F, the tenth above, in the clarinet.

The piece was commissioned by the Western Illinois University College of Fine Arts, for the Camerata Woodwind Quintet, who recorded it, along with my Woodwind Quintet n. 1, on an OPUS ONE CD, number CD 154.

Note

1. “...and all the world is dew...” WOODWIND QUINTET N.2 is published by Música Hodie under permission of Garlic Music.
"...and all our world is dew..."
Woodwind Quintet No. 2
M. William Karlins
(1977-78)
a little slower a tempo

fl.
ob.
cl.
hn.
brn.

fl.
ob.
cl.
hn.
brn.

poco cresc.

mp

poco cresc.

mp