



Erik KREEM

Waltz

Erik Kreem is an emerging Toronto-based composer eager to share his dynamic artistic voice. His music has been described as “fresh” and “inventive,” whose “elements emerge with surprise” (Estonian Life), while reflecting the work of his predecessors of the past two centuries. Initially establishing his musical perspective as a solo pianist and broadening his artistic horizons as a cellist, vocalist, and accompanist, Erik has rapidly expanded his oeuvre beyond the piano to encompass chamber, vocal, and large ensemble works. Working with the Cathedral Bluffs Symphony Orchestra since 2017, Erik’s orchestral music has been performed in the CBSO’s regular concert season, as part of St. Joe’s ArtsFest, and at annual Young Artists’ concerts. Having appeared as a guest conductor for the Orchestra on three occasions, he is the CBSO’s acting Apprentice Conductor for the 2019-20 season. Erik’s many accolades as a composer include first place and special-award wins at music festivals including Toronto’s Kiwanis Festival and Markham’s International Music Festival and Competition. The winner of 2018’s Toronto Teen Composer Award, Erik mentored with composer Christopher Thornborrow to compose and conduct a new chamber work for Continuum Contemporary Music. Erik has recently turned his attention towards composing for the screen, with his first scored film, the documentary *Maestro Roman Toi – Beautiful songs dedicated to you*, scheduled for a 2020 release. He is currently pursuing a bachelor’s degree in music composition at the University of Toronto, studying under Professor Norbert Palej. When he is not composing, performing, or practicing, Erik can be found on the tennis court, at a chess board, in the audience of a concert hall, or with his nose deep in a mathematics paper.

Many of the concepts found in dance are key to my compositional inspiration: dynamic forms in motion; abstract contours of colour, shape, and structure. I take a significant influence not merely from dance music at large, but also the music of my Estonian roots of which folk dance is such an integral component. When I was approached by the Cathedral Bluffs Symphony Orchestra in early 2018 for an orchestral commission, I without hesitation saw the opportunity to develop a waltz which indeed I had already begun drafting but which due to its scale would likely not have come to fruition without a commissioned project. The earliest ideas for the piece, in fact, came to me while visiting Estonia as a performer in the 2017 Youth Song and Dance Festival. That awesome celebration of Estonian culture and of human artistic achievement no doubt served as a great inspiration for the *Waltz* at its earliest compositional stage.

Though I do not compose historical music, the concept of this piece was nonetheless the composition of a dance which both was stylistically and idiomatically mine and which reflected the tradition of its formal models, the grand Romantic waltzes of 19th century Europe. Tonal throughout, the piece is more harmonically static and consistent than much of my work; instead, interest is generated through a driving rhythm and a varied dynamic contour. The piece’s most significant deviation from the waltz tradition is the presence of a slow middle section, which was not part of the initial conception of the work but which I judged to be structurally necessary once I began to lay out the composition’s broader form. I happened at the time to have been working separately on a slow melody in compound-triple meter (1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9) which I realized fit perfectly what the middle section demanded, allowing for the music to effortlessly transition from the spritely opening content to the broad strokes of the contrasting section with barely any need for a true change in tempo. I have a clear memory of working on this passionate central section on a wintry weekend visit to my grandmother at her Bruce County, ON. farm, a place full of wondrous nature that has inspired me and filled me with awe from my childhood through to the present. My *Waltz* is not a programmatic work, but perhaps the listener might imagine in this melody the landscapes of rural Ontario, its forests and farm fields, rolling hills and winding creeks, in which I have found such beauty throughout my own life.

The *Waltz* is not a fundamentally complex work, but it seeks to bring the listener on a journey, as is my intent with all my compositions. Having delivered its initial performances under my own baton in March and September of 2019, I am very excited now to work with the Kindred Spirits Orchestra and to experience their interpretation of the score. I hope the audience may enjoy listening to the piece as much as I enjoyed composing it.