

A Serenade for Six (1993)

One of the most interesting developments in recent music is the establishment world-wide, in centers of musical activity, of virtuoso chamber ensembles of mixed instrumentation committed to the performance of new musical works. The New York New Music Ensemble, for whom this piece was written, is one such ensemble. When writing for a group of virtuoso performers, it is tempting to take advantage of their skill and artistry not only as soloists, but in their ensemble playing as well. In addition, the composer can explore the virtually infinite possibilities for instrumental color offered by a mixed ensemble of winds, strings, piano and percussion. All of these attractive possibilities went into composing *A Serenade for Six*.

Much of the music in this piece is dance-like in character, vivacious in the outer movements, and restrained in the middle *andante*. The first movement begins with an alternation between two tempi, one twice as fast as the other. Eventually the faster tempo manages to establish itself for an extended period before the opening music returns. The second movement begins *attacca*, resolving the shimmering, unstable, final harmony of the first movement. Felicitous ritards mark the close of each section of this movement, and balance the swirling, accelerating gestures of the first. The finale flies along light-heartedly.

A Serenade for Six is a virtuoso three movement work for mixed chamber ensemble that takes advantage of the performers' skill and artistry not only as soloists, but in their ensemble playing as well; the instrumental resources also present the opportunity to explore the virtually infinite possibilities for instrumental color and dramatic contrast offered by a mixed ensemble of winds, strings, piano and percussion. Commissioned in 1993 by the New York New Music Ensemble, it was recorded in 1997 by New Millennium Ensemble, with Tara Helen O'Connor (flute), Marianne Gythfeldt (clarinet and bass clarinet), Sunghae Anna Lim (violin), Gregory Hesselink (cello), Margaret Kampmeier (piano), and John Ferrari (percussion).