

Artfelt

for chamber sextet

James M. Stephenson

painting ©2019 Sandra Eiger
Miller

Stephenson
Music

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Artfelt

Sextet for Flute, Oboe, Violin, Viola, Cello, and Piano

by James M. Stephenson

Commissioned by the Rembrandt Chamber Musicians in memory of Sandra Eiger Miller

duration - c. 6'30

Program Notes - by the composer --

Artfelt was a commission from the Rembrandt Chamber Players, to be in tribute to their longtime friend Sandi Miller. Because Sandi was an artist, it was decided that the work should be based upon a "signature painting" that she had created. The cover page is that painting.

About the music --

At first glance, the painting appears abstract, and so I knew I wanted the piece to have an abstract quality to it. But the painting is also quite beautiful (in my opinion), and therefore I knew I also wanted to represent that quality as best I could. Sandi herself, in her personal artist's statement said:

"My work is spontaneous expression... to me, color dictates the mood, the direction, and the passion as it relates to everything around it. I work with balance and contrast, harmony and tension: all of these color the way I see, and serve as a direction in my work."

After studying the painting for a while, an image began to appear to me that I could not ignore. I can't see the painting anymore without seeing this image. Therefore, I knew I had to try to capture that image musically. Visually, I see a family of animals: specifically, cows. The gray shape is the mother cow. She is standing, facing to the viewer's right. Standing next to her, (behind, from the viewer's perspective) is the bull - represented with the much larger red head. Finally, the calf, standing beneath the mother - perhaps nursing - is represented lower right in the painting, and has the most vivid and active colors. It almost appears as if the little tail is wagging, showing excitement and energy.

I first wanted to capture this youthful energy with a playful opening flute cadenza. The leader of the RCP, Sandie Morgan, is a flute player, and she is the one who approached me about this commission after hearing my piccolo sonata premiered. Being a playful instrument, I used the flute throughout to represent the calf, first at the opening, and then darting in and out of the texture, almost like a young calf trying to gain its parents attention. The strings and RH of the piano represent brush strokes for most of the piece. Because the painted brush strokes are visible, and not exact/defined, the scored brush strokes are rhythmically ambiguous, and are written to represent different pressures and speeds of application. The oboe pairs with the LH of the piano, and other instruments, to represent the artist standing back and viewing the beauty and seriousness of the painting as a whole. In other words, while there is much activity and color in the work, there is a calmness and beauty to it when taken as a whole. Finally, nearing the end, the entire ensemble joins in to proudly celebrate a completed piece of art, before adding just a few final brush strokes (our artistic work is never done) as touch-up.

My main goal of the work was to celebrate the beauty of another artist. All of Sandi's paintings that I looked at were quite stunning, and were inspirational to me musically.

This piece is entirely about Sandi - it is truly heartfelt, except I wanted to remove the "he" to make sure it was all about her; therefore: "Artfelt".

Jim Stephenson; July 30, 2019

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Cadenza - freely

Flute SOLO *p* *pp* *f*

6 *p* *f* *pp* *f* *pp* *mf* *p* *mf* *p* *mf* *p*

schierando **a tempo**

12 *mf* *f* *p* *f* *mf* *ff*

Slowing

15 *f* *mf* *mp* *p* *pp*

A Andante non troppo ♩ = 60

22 Fl. *p* *pp*

Ob.

Vln. *p* *p* *mp* *mf* *p*

Vla. *p* *p* *mp* *mf* *p*

Vc. *p* *p* *mp* *mf* *p*

Pno. *p* *pp* *p* *mp* *pp*

30

Musical score for measures 30-37. The score is in G major and 3/4 time. It features a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The piano part includes triplets and dynamic markings such as *p*, *pp*, *mp*, *mf*, and *f*. The vocal line starts with a *p* dynamic and moves to *pp*. The piano accompaniment has a complex texture with triplets in the right hand and chords in the left hand.

38

B

Musical score for measures 38-45, marked with a section symbol **B**. The score continues in G major and 3/4 time. The piano accompaniment features triplets and dynamic markings including *p*, *pp*, *mp*, and *p*. The vocal line has a long note in measure 38 and then moves to *pp* in measure 39. The piano part has a more active texture with triplets and chords.

43

C

Musical score for measures 43-46. The score is in G major (one sharp) and 3/4 time. It features a piano and a grand piano. The piano part includes a melodic line in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand, with dynamic markings ranging from *pp* to *f*. The grand piano part includes a right hand with chords and a left hand with bass notes, with dynamic markings ranging from *mp* to *f*. A box labeled 'C' is positioned above the first measure of the grand piano part. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, accents, and dynamic hairpins.

47

Musical score for measures 47-50. The score continues in G major and 3/4 time. The piano part features a melodic line with dynamic markings from *p* to *ff*. The grand piano part includes a right hand with chords and a left hand with bass notes, with dynamic markings from *p* to *ff*. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, accents, and dynamic hairpins.