

PROGRAM NOTES: "Southern Harmony"

"Southern Harmony" is a portrait of the South, where I grew up (Georgia and Tennessee). The three movements depict gentle aspects of Southern life: a slower pace, simple living, and an emphasis on traditional, handed-down music. This piece includes some of the techniques that are found in Appalachian-style string playing (open strings and slides). The first movement, "Soft Summers", is a musical portrait of long summer evenings, a time for quiet porch-sitting and "fellowshipping" with friends, neighbors and relatives. The second movement, "Reel Time", is a dance based on the form of the reel (a dance occurring in a moderately quick duple meter)...this is a dance that you might witness in a place where there is some serious fiddling going on. The final movement is Gentle Waltz, which is self-explanatory, and was probably the result of having heard the Tennessee Waltz so many times while growing up. While this work is much less complex and moves at a slower pace than most of my music, I like to think that it doesn't necessarily reflect the South as being simple, but rather what is for me a simpler time.

This work was commissioned in 2003 by the Hanson Institute for American Music of the Eastman School of Music. It was premiered by the Ying Quartet.

--Jennifer Higdon