

Christopher James

ODE FOR VIOLIN AND CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

(2018)

Claudia Schaer, Violin
Max Lifchitz, Conductor
The North/South Consonance Chamber Orchestra

Duration: about 10 minutes

Introduction and Notes

I began sketching this work in 1979, put it aside for nearly 40 years, and finally completed it in 2018. It was originally conceived as part of a set of variations on a theme by Beethoven for classical orchestra, the theme for which was the first 24 bars of the piano sonata op. 90. References to the theme are plainly to be heard in the present work, but not in any systematic or developmental way; they emerge from the texture here and there as quotations.

But the fundamental *structure* of this work is strictly determined by the bass line of Beethoven theme. This is presented nearly verbatim (with small mutations necessitated by the change of mode from minor to major), slowed down by a factor of 8: the first movement of the piano sonata opus 90 is typically played at a speed of quarter note equal to 144 beats per minute (sometimes more quickly); in the Ode, a quarter note is four times as slow, 36 beats per minute, and a half note is equivalent to a quarter note of the Beethoven theme. 24 measures of 3/4 at quarter note equal to 144 beats per minute in the Beethoven becomes 72 measures of 2/4 at quarter note equal to 36 beats per minute in the Ode; thus 30 seconds becomes 4 minutes. Then the entire bass line is repeated with a different superstructure (i.e. a variation on a ground).

This work is replete with the style, rhetoric, and ethos of high Romanticism to a greater extent than the majority of my works. The solo part requires a high degree of virtuosity, a requirement that Claudia Schaer easily meets, and surpasses. Once again I am most grateful to Max Lifchitz for his strong and continued advocacy of my work.

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