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WATERCOLORS (1998)

Program notes:

Watercolors is not about the substance of water as much as it is about our perception of water. It also has very little to do with watercolor painting, as the title might suggest, although there is something in this piece of the technique's soft edges and blended colors. In *Watercolors* I have not attempted to represent water itself, but rather its fluid qualities of refraction and reflection, opacity and translucence, lightness, darkness, and the myriad shades and tones in between. *Watercolors* consists of four main sections linked by cadenzas for the English Horn. In each section I have utilized the orchestra differently: the first (*tranquillo*) features muted strings, the second (*misterioso*) employs the winds in a sliding and flowing mass, the third (*giocososo*) makes use of almost the entire orchestra in playful and bubbling combinations, and the fourth (*lirico*) uses low strings and a slowly shifting *ostinato* to bring the composition to a quiet close. While I have attempted to explore the lyrical (and sometimes haunting) characteristics of the English Horn in the cadenzas, throughout *Watercolors* I have also tried to showcase the virtuosic qualities for which the instrument is less known. While the interaction between soloist and orchestra is of a fluid nature, it is ultimately the English Horn which sets the pace and directs the development of the piece, guiding it from start to finish. *Watercolors* was commissioned by the Albany Symphony Orchestra and premiered in September 1998 with Robert Sheena as the English Horn soloist and David Alan Miller conducting.

Instrumentation: Solo English Horn in F and Chamber Orchestra (1222 - 2 Horns - Strings)

Duration: 12:00

Premiere: September 1998, Robert Sheena, Soloist, with the Albany Symphony Orchestra, David Alan Miller, Conductor

Watercolors is available on CD from Albany Records (Troy 605) in a recording by the original performers.