

Burritt Variations

for solo marimba [2012]

Premiere: November 2nd, 2012, at the Percussive Arts Society Convention, Austin Texas, USA , performed by Michael Burritt.

Duration: ca 11'

To download the MP3 tracks that accompany this score go to:
http://www.vinao.com/DOWNLOADS_Burritt_Variations.html

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Preface by Michael Burritt

Very rarely does a composer's work connect with my musical personality and values as directly as Alejandro's music does. Burritt Variations is yet another of his works that propels the marimba's voice as a solo vehicle to musical heights—much like the music of Liszt and Chopin did for the piano in its time. Alejandro understands the instrument on a level that few composers seem to attain. His music leans on the rhythmic strength of the marimba while using the entire range to create a huge spectrum of seemingly orchestral color. The rolls or tremolos that one often finds in this repertoire are notable by their absence. He understands the marimba's ability and inability to sustain sound and as a result creates an aesthetic that captures the virtues of this beautiful instrument.

I find that there is always a learning curve with Alejandro's music. However, the more I play it, the shallower and shorter the curve becomes. Burritt Variations is challenging more because of its scope and use of four different time signatures than because of its metric and rhythmic language. The thematic material and its many derivations are very clearly delineated throughout and require constantly to be borne in mind in relation to voicing and overall dynamics. From a rhythmic perspective there is always that wonderful 'Viñao groove', a brilliant use of metric modulation, oscillating isorhythms and hemiolas, making an excellent sense of pulse essential to a successful performance. Relentless metronome practice is paramount in the learning stages and I find it imperative in maintaining the work even after it seems to be at your fingertips! And, as in much of Alejandro's work, an excellent kinesthetic sense of the marimba is needed to manage the extreme range demands placed on the performer throughout the piece.

I find Burritt Variations a 'player's piece'. It is both physically and mentally challenging but, by-and-large, it sits well in the hands allowing the performer to open up and explore a wide range of musical expression. I believe Burritt Variations will become a staple of the percussion repertoire for years to come.

MJB 2012

Burritt Variations

Alejandro Viñao

♩ = 86

Theme

Variation I

Marimba

mf

8

f

15

senore f

22

29

mf

36

ff *pp* *mp* *p* *mf*

41

mf (the top voice a mechanical pulse, perfectly evenly spaced & quieter than the other two voices)

mp *f*

45

Variation II

f *p* *mp* *mf*

51

mf