

Title: "Duels and Dances"

For: Oboe and Wind Ensemble

OR

Oboe and Orchestral winds + 3 saxes.

Written for/Premiered by: Alex Klein and the US "President's Own" Marine Band

Commissioned by: the Minnesota Commissioning Club

Length: 13 minutes

Piano reduction available: yes

Sale price: \$25

3 solo versions: Alex's version: includes bass oboe, oboe d'Amore, English Horn, oboe and musette
other versions include: oboe only, or oboe/English Horn

Program notes:

The inspiration for *Duels and Dances* came, strangely enough, while attending a church service in my hometown of Lake Forest, IL. During the prelude (a baroque piece), I was struck by how interesting the music can be, even if only one or two voices are being used. This thought process led to the imagery of a soloist and ensemble "fighting" one another (admittedly this is not entirely original), which then in turn led to the concept of duels. The concerto is therefore largely built around "fight sequences", where both soloist and ensemble participate in, or comment upon, music that suggests action of a aggressive nature.

All music requires, or thrives on, contrast, of course, and that is where the dances come in. Alex Klein - for whom the concerto was written - is a musician of incomparable musicality, and I wanted to highlight this innate ability he possesses. The melodic material in his part is often accompanied by rhythmic counterpoint with a dance quality. Though not immediately related to the music of Prokofiev or Bernstein, I have always been struck by how their music is so dance-like, and therefore so human.

Duels and Dances was commissioned by the wonderful Minnesota Commissioning Club, and I am deeply indebted to them for their continued support of my music. Along with the club, the piece is dedicated to Alex Klein, and to The "President's Own" United States Marine Band, all of whom are musicians of the highest degree, and for whom it is the ultimate pleasure to create music.

Lastly, it should noted that the piece is a through-composed one-movement concerto, lasting roughly 13 minutes. It uses 5 different oboes (at Alex's request) - in performance order: Bass oboe, Oboe d'amore, English horn, Oboe and Musette. There is also a version for the more common instruments of the oboe family: English horn and oboe.

Premiere date: March 4, 2011, Norfolk, VA. Alex Klein, soloist with The "President's Own" United States Marine Band, conducted by Major Jason K Fettig.

James M. Stephenson - January, 2011