

NICKY SOHN

BUTTERFLY

FOR STRING QUARTET

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(2024)

Instrumentation

Violin I
Violin II
Viola
Cello

Duration - ca. 6 minutes

Program note, edited by Justin Son

"Butterfly" is a composition inspired by the enchanting journey of butterflies and the invigorating thrill of their journey of constant new beginnings. Commissioned in celebration of the Cavani Quartet's 40th-year anniversary, the composition serves as a reflection on their impactful past as well as an anticipation of their adventures that lie ahead.

Much like the initial liftoff of a resting butterfly, the work delves into its first measures with a small flutter of color and quickly finds itself in a delicate mid-air dance between curiosity and trepidation. From a graceful glide in lush paradise to uncontrolled spirals in strong winds, the flight we encounter in the work is one that imitates the butterflies we find not only in gardens but also inside ourselves. Rediscovering the flutter of butterflies within, I realized the profound beauty that comes with embracing vulnerability—the unpredictable yet exhilarating journey of feeling alive. It mirrors the journey of self-discovery and emotional rebirth. In my personal life, I thought I had lost the capacity for such emotions. It was only after this feeling resurfaced when I experienced a deep relief and a profound revelation that showed me the resilience of the human heart.

Emphasizing the exceptional and dynamic nature of a butterfly's life, the composition draws parallels between the quartet's journey and the lifecycle of these creatures. Celebrating every ending as a new beginning, "Butterfly" stands as a tribute to the enduring spirit of creativity and the limitless possibilities that come with embracing change. As the quartet marks four decades of musical excellence, this composition is created to evoke a sense of wonder, introspection, and the unceasing curiosity that accompanies the anticipation of the unexplored chapters yet to unfold.

Often times, allowing your heart to brave whatever that may come means being as helpless and futile as a butterfly in the wind. Still, like the Monarchs that embark on their strenuous migration that stretches for thousands of miles, these moments of breathtaking helplessness is something we must all take part in to survive.

Commissioned by Cavani String Quartet in celebration of their 40th anniversary
and the Gabriela Lena Frank Creative Academy of Music

Butterfly

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I. Fluttering $\text{♩} = 112$

Musical score for Violin 1, Violin 2, Viola, and Violoncello, measures 1-5. The score is in 4/4 time and features a key signature of one sharp (F#). The music is characterized by trills (tr) and dynamic markings (p, fp, f). The Violin 1 part starts with a trill on G4, followed by a series of notes. The Violin 2 part has a trill on G4 and then a series of notes. The Viola part has a trill on G3 and then a series of notes. The Violoncello part has a trill on G2 and then a series of notes. The dynamic markings are p, fp, fp, fp, f, p.

Musical score for Violin 1, Violin 2, Viola, and Violoncello, measures 6-8. The score continues from measure 5. The Violin 1 part has a trill on G4 and then a series of notes. The Violin 2 part has a trill on G4 and then a series of notes. The Viola part has a trill on G3 and then a series of notes. The Violoncello part has a trill on G2 and then a series of notes. The dynamic markings are fp, fp, fp, fp, f, p.

Musical score for Violin 1, Violin 2, Viola, and Violoncello, measures 9-11. The score starts with a section marked 'A' in a box. The Violin 1 part has a trill on G4 and then a series of notes. The Violin 2 part has a trill on G4 and then a series of notes. The Viola part has a trill on G3 and then a series of notes. The Violoncello part has a trill on G2 and then a series of notes. The dynamic markings are f, f, f.

23 **C**

Vln 1 *fp* *f*

Vln 2 *fp* *f*

Vla *p* *f*

Vc. *fp* *f*

Detailed description: This system covers measures 23 to 26. It features four staves: Violin 1, Violin 2, Viola, and Violoncello. The key signature has one flat (B-flat) and the time signature is 4/4. Measure 23 starts with a dynamic of *fp*. A box labeled 'C' is above measure 23. A fermata is placed over the first measure of the system. A triplet of eighth notes is marked with a '3' in measure 24. Dynamics increase to *f* in measure 25. The system concludes with a fermata over the final measure.

27

Vln 1 *ff*

Vln 2 *ff*

Vla *ff*

Vc. *ff*

Detailed description: This system covers measures 27 to 30. It features four staves: Violin 1, Violin 2, Viola, and Violoncello. The key signature has one flat and the time signature is 4/4. Measure 27 begins with a dynamic of *ff*. The music is characterized by rapid sixteenth-note passages in the upper strings and a more active bass line. The dynamic remains at *ff* throughout the system. The system ends with a double bar line.

30 **D** *molto rit.* II. Enchanting ♩=100

Vln 1 *pp*

Vln 2 *pp*

Vla *pp*

Vc. *pp*

Detailed description: This system covers measures 30 to 33. It features four staves: Violin 1, Violin 2, Viola, and Violoncello. The key signature has one flat and the time signature is 4/4. Measure 30 starts with a dynamic of *pp*. A box labeled 'D' is above measure 30. The tempo is marked *molto rit.* and the tempo indicator ♩=100 is shown. The music is significantly slower and more lyrical than the previous system. Dynamics remain at *pp* throughout. The system concludes with a fermata over the final measure.