

THE BENSON DANCES

I regularly enjoy perusing pieces that have spoken to me in the past. Warren Benson's *Three Dances for Solo Snare Drum* is such a piece. I have very vivid memories of studying *Three Dances* as a teenager and being surprised at Benson's discipline in form coupled with an urgency of content – a rare, healthy example of logos and pathos in percussive art – though at the time I did not know the terms for such observations.

Since then I have enjoyed any number of composers, performers and theoreticians in all disciplines of art. In all cases, however, the practitioners of an art with whom I share the most fervor exhibit a Boethian principle in which the performer, composer, and audience member all share in the responsibility of making a powerful, life-affirming experience.

From a composer's standpoint, *The Benson Dances*, pay homage to this sentiment by emulating, in very close detail, the form of Warren Benson's work, while adapting its content to reflect a more contemporary and virtuosic language – almost half a century later – aiming to even evoke an improvisatory aesthetic.

In the first dance, *Discrete in Dance*, non-parallel rhythms flare up in urgent waves, reminiscent of Delecluse or Zibkovic, and exhibit augmented versions of the original *Cretan Dance*, in a style like that of Gonzalo Rubalcaba. The second dance, *Afreaux Trot*, is loosely based on an Afro-Cuban 12/8 pattern, which replaces the original two-beat feel. Great care was taken employs the same neo-baroque invention form that the original held, but still provide a truncated version of Afro-Cuban rhythm (a “faux” version, if you will.) The third dance, *Fawn*, departs from the traditional Fandango but the popular stick on stick component is still intact. A rock feel is employed in its place.

Throughout this project, I have diligently tried to hold firm to respecting my predecessors (Benson) while using a fresh voice of today. I don't consider this a redux, variation, or embellishment of the original *Three Dances*. *The Benson Dances* should stand as a work on its own, though even the youngest performer would most certainly recognize the similarities.

Should you perform this, I strongly encourage the purchase of Benson's *Three Dances for Solo Snare Drum* both for study and as a long term resource. I hope you enjoy performing this as much as I have enjoyed composing it and studying the fine work of Warren Benson.

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