

Notes on Second April

The first movement, *Song of a Second April*, begins with a churning eighth note pattern and bird calls announcing “April this year, not otherwise than April of a year ago.” Soon all the voices are imitating bird song as the piano figures leap and hop up and down. Hepaticas and butterflies are introduced with strong melodies comprised of eight-note chords as the scale reaches higher and the excitement of the spring breaks into the noises of building repairs, woodpecker taps, children playing, streams running deep, and finally arpeggios up, up, up the hillside in the sun. We pause a moment as the figures slow and begin again. At the recapitulation, the words change: the loved one is absent. There can be no return of the “April of a year ago!”

The second movement contrasts starkly with the excitement of the first breath of spring. *Mariposa* (Butterfly) floats in 3/4 time over a running sixteenth note figure in the bass of the piano, which stops suddenly as soft chords announce that “Death comes in a day or two.” As the butterflies continue their short flight (most live only a month!) with the return of the running left hand figure, we are encouraged to enjoy and appreciate the moment. The music starts and stops again, reminding us of our short life span.

Movement three, *Alms*, rolls on in 6/8 time as the heart suffers with unrequited love. The rollicking piano figure changes to chords, 12-note arpeggios and back again, as we attend “our” love – watering it, caring for it – while watching “your” love wither. We give alms to the beggar and to the birds, but receive none in return.

Movement four, *Into the Golden Vessel*, begins with a broad piano melody in 3/4 followed by sopranos and altos announcing the theme of great song. Tenors and basses soon join, and all pour out their passion in great chords. The second theme, syncopated in changing meters, leads to another piano solo section. The third theme alternates 3 men’s voices with 3 women’s voices, adding triplet figures to the 7 note bass figure in the piano. After a series of homophonic key changes, a truncated recapitulation ends quietly in honor of “great song.”