

David Avshalomov—*Pangs of Love*

This lyrical, passionate, dynamically varied work parallels the course of a quick, intense 1970's-style romantic affair through a series of 47 short, progressive, interlocking variations on the "love" theme from Rachmaninoff's Second Symphony (slow movement). It is in two main sections: "*Coming Together*" and "*Falling Apart*". The first variations move from romantic yearning through encounter, flirting, courting/dancing, seduction, passionate union, ecstasy, exhaustion, and melting affection, to sleep. The second section resumes a month later, moving from insecure dreaming through domestic waking, friendly invitation, disinclination, questioning, resistance, confrontation, quarrel, fighting, confession/betrayal, injured pride, tragic tears, bitter disillusionment, rationalization, reminiscence, breakup, and acceptance—and back to romantic yearning. A lively, almost-triumphant coda (optional) suggests that the lovers have learned very little. The arches of progress and intensity shaping the emotions and energy in the two sections are parallel, the flavors and outcomes opposite (love/hate, pleasure/pain).

The style of the work is modern romantic, lyrical and neo-tonal (though occasionally quite dissonant, especially during the quarrel), with affectionate nods to the love music of Berlioz, Wagner, Tchaikovsky, Rachmaninoff, Strauss, Mahler, Scriabine, Shostakovich, Bartok, early Schoenberg, and others. All the material is derived from the original tune (in various ways and various parts of it); the variation technique is developmental, increasingly spun out by allusion rather than by formal ornamentation of the theme. Several variations draw on older popular dance styles, some use classic textures such as fugue, while still others are freely impressionistic. The string writing gives the ensemble a serious workout.

This work was commissioned in 2003 by Barbara Day Turner for her fine San Jose Chamber Orchestra.