

Sonata Breve No. 4

for Oboe and Piano

John Burge

Duration: Approximately 14 minutes

Barbara Bolte, oboe, accompanied by John Burge,
premiered *Sonata Breve No. 4*, on February 1, 2008,
Harrison-LeCaine Hall, Kingston, Ontario.

About the work...

John Burge's *Sonata Breve No. 4*, was composed in 2006 for Barbara Bolte, Principal Oboe with the Kingston Symphony and Oboe instructor at Queen's University. Each of the previous *Sonata Breves* were written in appreciation of performers who had a close musical and personal connection with John Burge and this is certainly the case with this work. As a member of the Kingston Symphony, Barbara Bolte has premiered and performed many of Burge's compositions. A sensitive musician, he never hesitates to write her an expressive solo. On a more personal level, for a number of years she also gave oboe lessons to John's oldest son. With the oboe lessons coming to an end, the time seemed right to provide Barbara with a small gift in the form of this piece.

Like the previous *Sonata Breves*, this work is in two contrasting movements. The more common title for short sonatas is *Sonatina*, but works with this title are often less technically difficult and demanding. The *Sonata Breve* series maintains a level of virtuosic expectation for both the performer and listener but in just two movements. The first movement of this piece has a leisurely pacing with many long-held notes in the oboe part. The second movement has a more quirky rhythmic profile and a returning theme that creates a rondo-like structure. The harmonic colour of this entire work is characterized by simultaneous voicings of two minor triads a semitone apart. Often these two triads are e minor and d sharp minor and the juxtaposition between these two keys provides the primary point of tension in the work. This tension is momentarily relaxed in the short, slow introduction to the second movement, which is for the most part in E major.

About the composer...

John Burge was born in Dryden, Ontario in 1961. He holds degrees from the University of Toronto (B.Mus. and M.Mus.) and the University of British Columbia (D.M.A.) where his composition professors included John Beckwith, Walter Buczynski, Stephen Chatman, John Hawkins and Derek Holman. Since 1987 he has been teaching at the School of Music, Queen's University where he is a Professor of Composition and Theory. In addition to teaching at Queen's, he was Composer-in-Residence for National Youth Orchestra of Canada during their three-week residency in Kingston, Ontario in 2001, 2002 and 2003. The National Youth Orchestra premiered Burge's composition, *Sonic Architecture*, on their Canadian tour in 2003. A passionate advocate of Canadian music, he was a member of the executive of the Canadian League of Composers for fourteen years, serving as President from 1998 to 2006.

Burge has written music for a variety of ensembles and instrumentalists but he is particularly recognized for his choral music, much of it involving orchestral accompaniment. Many of these works have been published by the American publishing firm, Boosey and Hawkes. His orchestral compositions include a symphony, a piano concerto, a trumpet concerto, a clarinet concerto and a number of orchestral tone poems such as, *Rocky Mountain Overture*, *Snowdrift* and *The Canadian Shield*. He has also composed a number of pieces for string orchestra, the most popular being, *Upper Canada Fiddle Suite*, which has been heard in numerous broadcasts on CBC Radio.

for Barbara Bolte

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Moderato (♩ = c. 72)

The musical score consists of four systems of music for oboe and piano. The first system (measures 1-5) starts with a piano dynamic (p) and an *espr.* (expressive) instruction. The piano part features eighth-note patterns with dynamic markings (pp, p, mp) and a tempo of *misterioso*. The oboe part consists of eighth-note patterns with dynamic markings (p, mp) and a tempo of *Reo.* The second system (measures 6-10) shows the piano and oboe continuing their eighth-note patterns with dynamic markings (mp, p, mp, p, mp, p, mp, p, mf) and a tempo of *Reo.* The third system (measures 11-15) shows the piano and oboe continuing their eighth-note patterns with dynamic markings (p, mp, mf, p, mf) and a tempo of *Reo.* The fourth system (measures 15-19) shows the piano and oboe continuing their eighth-note patterns with dynamic markings (mp, mf, mp, cresc., rall., p, mf, rall., p, mf) and a tempo of *Reo.*

19 *a tempo*
ff

25 **A**

29

33

Detailed description: The image shows a page from a musical score for piano and orchestra. It consists of six staves of music. The top staff is for the piano (treble clef) and the second staff is for the orchestra (treble clef). The third staff is for the piano (bass clef), the fourth is for the orchestra (bass clef), and the fifth and sixth are for the piano (bass clef). Measure 19 starts with a forte dynamic (ff) and 'a tempo' marking. Measure 20 begins with a piano dynamic (p) and 'a tempo' marking, followed by a dynamic marking 'dim.' and a melodic line. Measure 25 is labeled 'A' and features a piano line with dynamic markings 'p', 'mp', and 'cresc.'. Measure 29 shows a piano line with a forte dynamic (f) and a bass line. Measure 33 shows a piano line with a dynamic marking 'dim.' and a bass line.

38

[B]

(sempre **p**)

f

p

Re.

43

p dolce

mp

p dolce

(no cresc.)

mp

48

p

cresc.

mf

cresc.

53

[C]

mp

mf

f

mp

58

62

66

D

72

78

[E]

dim. rall. *p a tempo* *mp*

rall. *sempre p* *a tempo*

Réol.

84

p *mp* *p* *mp*

Réol. *

89

p *mp* *p* *mp* *p*

Réol. * *simile*

[F]

mp *p* *mp* *p*

(sempre p) *mp*

Réol. *

II.

Largo e espressivo $\text{♩} = 60$

Oboe

Piano

5

9

13

17 Allegro humoresque $\text{♩} = \text{c. 104}$

17

p

(no cresc.)

22

p *mp* *p*

mp *mf* *p*

26

mf

mp

30

f *p* *mp* *p* *cresc.*

mf *p* *cresc.*

8va

The image shows a page from a musical score, likely for orchestra and piano. The score is divided into four systems by vertical bar lines.
System 1 (Measures 35-38): The top staff (treble clef) has a dynamic of *mf*, followed by *cresc.*, then *sfp*. The middle staff (treble clef) has dynamics *8va*, *f*, *f*, and *mp*. The bottom staff (bass clef) has a dynamic of *b*.
System 2 (Measures 39-42): The top staff (treble clef) starts with a dynamic of *p*. The middle staff (treble clef) has dynamics *p (sub.)*, *mf*, *p*, and *(r.h.)*. The bottom staff (bass clef) has a dynamic of *b*. The text "Reo. * Reo. *" appears at the end of the system.
System 3 (Measures 44-47): The top staff (treble clef) has dynamics *mp* and *mf*. The middle staff (treble clef) has a dynamic of *b*. The bottom staff (bass clef) has a dynamic of *b* and the text "cresc. poco a poco". The instruction "simile" is written below the bass staff.
System 4 (Measures 48-51): The top staff (treble clef) has dynamics *sfp* and *mf*. The middle staff (treble clef) has dynamics *b* and *mf*. The bottom staff (bass clef) has dynamics *b* and *b*.

