

*Take Me* is a piano sonata in three parts (innings or movements, depending on your frame of reference). It has been created for and is inspired by the romance of Jennifer K. Allen Cooper and Jonathan Allen Cooper celebrated publicly in a ceremony of matrimony on September 28, 1996 at Moran's, a 19th-century restaurant in Manhattan's Chelsea.

Jeri and Jon are hopelessly addicted to sports in the same way that I am hopelessly addicted to music. I've frequently used my answering machine to propagate recent musical discoveries; their answering machine broadcasts a baseball game. While the worlds of sports and music seem completely unrelated, my friendship with them suggests otherwise. This suggestion is the guiding principle of *Take Me*.

It should be said here that the concept of a foul ball or a dugout is about as alien to me as the concept of parallel fifths or modulation is to them. Therefore, an attempt has been made in *Take Me* to find solutions which can work both musically and, if you would, sportsically. The music takes as its point of departure the song "Take Me Out To The Ballgame" and the keys of A(llen) and C(ooper). The sonata is expositionless yet monothematic, that is to say the melody of "Take Me Out To The Ball Game" is never quite stated literally, but serves as the exclusive theme from which all the other material in the sonata is developed.

The first movement, "Windup," is an extremely fast, quasi-minimalist set of variations centered around a four-note motive which is a distillation of the melody line of "Take Me Out To The Ballgame" (C-A-G-D) which begins in the key of C but winds up in the key of A. It is like a detached development section in sonata form. To this musician, the word "Windup" conjures up a perpetuum mobile that gets more and more intense, like winding up a clock or a toy gradually until it becomes too tight to wind anymore. In baseball, a game begins with the pitcher's windup: the preparatory arm movements with the ball that ultimately lead to a pitch. And, of course, after a marriage the bride and groom wind up with each other, so the title seems all the more apt.

The second movement, "Stretch," takes its structure from an actual baseball game. The teams are represented by the tonalities of A and C with free modulations between the two representing each team's turn at being up to bat in an inning. (The "home" key of A is returned to nine times.) The tonality of each key is reinforced in a left-hand configuration that spans three octaves, paralleling the three outs that bring back the opposing team. As a baseball game can have a total of 54 outs, the movement has 54 measures. Musically, it is a slow arioso requiring a few stretches. Somewhere in the middle of this movement, it comes closer than any of the others in giving away the thematic goods. I'm told that in baseball the stretch occurs toward the end of a game when the players prepare for their final chance at winning. Imagine a player reflecting on the entire game with an idealized outcome, or the last-minute thoughts of the bride and groom before the ceremony actually begins.

In the final movement, "Home," baseball's four bases become four bass whole notes which serve as the ostinato of a passacaglia in seven parts. These four bass notes are the melodic distillation of "Take Me Out To The Ballgame" from the opening movement, only now in retrograde (D-G-A-C). (In a passacaglia, the bass line ostinato repeats over and over again but everything above it changes.) Although this movement comes out of a minimalist sensibility and sounds like minimalism, no two measures in it are exactly the same. To someone unfamiliar with baseball, all games can seem identical. But any fan will tell you that no two plays are ever the same. "Home" has been specifically designed to accompany a procession of seven people on September 28, 1996. As each person walks toward the altar (or home plate, if you will), the music builds in momentum until it culminates in a fugue which ushers in a bombastic march resolving in both the keys of A and C. It is the final victory where all the players reach home and where the establishment of a new home is celebrated.

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