

Tango Fantasy



piano works by
Ken Herrera

A woman with long, wavy hair and a butterfly on her shoulder. The butterfly is white with black markings on its wings, resembling a piano keyboard. The woman is looking slightly to the right of the camera with a soft expression. The background is a dark, moody blue.

1 **Tango Waltz** (2018) 5'42

Suite (2013)

2 *I – Allegro* 4'00

3 *II – Allegro* 2'25

4 *III – Andantino* 5'41

5 *IV – Presto* 3'59

6 **Third Nocturne** (2012) 4'50

Tango Fantasy (2016)

7 *I – Andante – Allegro
– Allegretto – Presto* 11'16

8 *II – Vals – Allegro vivo* 5'04

9 *III – Milonga – Presto* 5'21

10 *IV – Andantino* 5'36

11 *V – Presto* 5'43

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1 Tango Waltz (2018)

While I was happy with my first attempt at a tango waltz (which appears later on this disc as part of the Tango Fantasy), I felt I could get closer to that difficult-to-define something which makes a tango waltz different from other waltzes. I'm confident that this piece proves I was right. The driving waltz beat is there, but there's also that extra rhythmic kick to grab you by your Argentinian bootstraps and propel you onto the dance floor.

Suite (2013)

2 I – Allegro

3 II – Allegro

4 III – Andantino

5 IV – Presto

One strand of my composing continues to be music that can be played by amateurs, but which is more interesting than much of what is written for learners. The Suite was originally intended to be for intermediate pianists, but I'm afraid the music ran away from me somewhat and there are some quite thorny passages for the player here.

The model for the piece is the Baroque keyboard suite, such as those of J.S. Bach. Suites in the Baroque period were generally collections of dances, often for keyboard, and often prefaced by a piece to loosen up the fingers (and the audience.) Accordingly, the first piece is a gentle toccata to exercise both the hands and the musical imagination. The second movement is a lively dance

in double time, much dependent on cheeky interplay between the hands. The tempo slows somewhat for the third piece, a stately dance which transcends its modest beginnings to become quite majestic in the final bars. Many of Bach's suites ended with a gigue, a dance that derives distantly from the Irish jig. I have brought that dance back to its origins for the last movement, a very lively quick-stepping work to finish the suite with a smile.

6 Third Nocturne (2012)

A nocturne is a piece for the night. That's a very broad definition which can encompass any number of moods, so I've made it my goal in my series of nocturnes to make each one as different as possible from its fellows. For the third nocturne, the night we are talking about is clearly a sultry, tropical one in which cocktails and dancing are involved. The rhythm of the piece seesaws between Brazilian bossa nova and something closer to blues, in both cases allowing the player a lot of freedom.

Tango Fantasy (2016)

7 I – Andante – Allegro –

Allegretto – Presto

8 II – Vals – Allegro vivo

9 III – Milonga – Presto

10 IV – Andantino

11 V – Presto

Perhaps the fantasy in 'Tango Fantasy' refers to the idea that I would one day be able to dance the tango. In fact, after many years and many beginner classes, I've decided that I'm fundamentally unteachable. This has not stopped me loving the music however, and this longer work allows me to explore several of the different tango forms.

The first movement is quite a long and expansive piece - beginning with a slow introduction with barely a hint of tango, it is only gradually that the distinctive, driving rhythm insinuates itself into the music. A brief middle section brings in a more melancholy theme before the main tango reclaims its place at the end, this time in the form of some knotty counterpoint with little nods to Bach and Piazzolla.

The second movement is a tango waltz, which is quite a difficult beast to play on the piano - not because the notes are especially hard, but because what distinguishes a tango waltz from one by Chopin or Strauss is not the rhythm or the harmonies, but the instrumentation. A pianist must try and make the listener think less of the solo piano, and more of the standard tango ensemble - piano, strings, and in particular the crisp articulation of the bandoneon.

As far as rhythm is concerned, the tango doesn't have that much in common with other Latin dances. The same cannot be said for its nimbler and cheekier cousin, the milonga, which does

have a real Latin sway and bounce to it. Generally danced at fast tempos with steps that are variations on those of the tango, milongas are an opportunity for the tangueros to let their hair down and enjoy showing off for a moment.

Just as in the introduction, the slow fourth movement contains only shades of the tango rhythm. I consider it more of an interlude, prefacing the last helter-skelter dance of the final movement.

Ken Herrera has been writing and performing his own work for more than 20 years, across Australia and overseas. While Melbourne remains his base, he grew up and received the better part of his musical education in Hobart. His first album of piano works, *Tales from the Dead Sea*, was released by Move in 2012, followed by *Aurora Borealis* in 2015.

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