



Ken Herrera
Aurora Borealis

A vibrant green aurora borealis (Northern Lights) is visible in the night sky, with a dark, silhouetted landscape in the foreground. The aurora consists of several horizontal bands of light, with a particularly bright and dense section on the right side. The background is a dark, starry sky.

Three Dances

- 1** *I – Andantino*
- 2** *II – Allegro moderato*
- 3** *III – Allegro vivo*

4 Second Nocturne

5 Flamenco Sketches

Aurora Borealis

- 6** *I – Allegro commodo*
- 7** *II – Adagio non troppo*
- 8** *III – Maestoso*

Second Piano Sonata

- 9** *I – Andante – Allegro commodo – Allegro vivo*
- 10** *II – Allegro molto*
- 11** *III – Adagio molto – Moderato*
- 12** *IV – Adagio – Allegro non troppo*

Three Dances (2011)

One of the main strands of my composing has always been easier music for learners. In these dances the left hand work is fairly simple and easy to master, allowing the player to concentrate on other elements.

The first piece has a gentle Brazilian sway to it, while the second owes more to North American folk music. The third? I'm not quite sure where this one came from, but there's definitely some Spanish touches in there, as well as something that sounds more like Shostakovich, and who knows what else...

Second Nocturne (2010)

Without transgressing the outer limits of twilight and dawn, this piece tries to get as far away from more traditional 'night music' as possible. Instead of rippling arpeggios undulating under a soulful melody, the opening is bare and unsettling.

This night is a skeletal one, and although there are flashes of consolation and pleasure throughout, it is the bleak and macabre chorale of the opening returning again and again which defines the nocturne.

Flamenco Sketches (2012)

Despite being completely unable to dance it, flamenco has long been a passion of mine. This rhapsodic piece is a slightly blurred, impressionistic view of a music and dance that is generally bold and sharply defined; hence the 'sketches' of the title.

Episodes come and go very quickly in the music, seemingly very different but actually based on a small amount of musical material. You might hear the flicker of flames, the strumming of guitars and the thunder of feet and hands in ferocious syncopation.

Aurora Borealis (2011)

Looking through some photos of the Aurora Borealis, I was struck by the enormous variety of moods they suggested. That was the origin of this suite, three short 'character' pieces played without a break.

The first is a glittering piece, full of filigree, kaleidoscopic colours and almost constant motion. The colours are more muted in the second, but occasional shafts of light do glimmer in the darkness. Finally another piece in perpetual motion, but whereas the first is mercurial and dazzling, this finale is majestic and not to be rushed.

Second Piano Sonata (2009)

Like my first sonata, the second takes inspiration from the musical cultures surrounding the Mediterranean, in particular those of North Africa and Spain. These influences are combined in a structure that basically follows classical forms, but in a way

that is more intuitive than rigorous.

The piece begins with a slow introduction, which, apart from setting the mood of the sonata, will provide a huge amount of the musical material for all four movements. The remainder of the expansive first movement takes these musical ideas and develops them - firstly into a melancholy, song-like theme, and then into an interlude of knotty counterpoint.

A scherzo follows without a break, lightening the tone somewhat with perpetual motion and some surprising twists and turns, but still essentially continuing the journey that was begun in the introduction.

The slow third movement has a very simple, emotional melody, but the core of it is actually the accompaniment. I think of it as waves breaking on the shore in slow motion. This free-flowing movement moves directly into the fourth, which I like to think of as the epilogue of the sonata. Themes and motives from the preceding three parts are revisited in new ways, leading to a kind of apotheosis - one which helps to knit together the disparate elements of the piece.

More than any other piece that I have written thus far, this sonata traces a clear line between the very first note and the very last. It may be unreasonable to suggest taking half an hour out of your day in this hyper-occupied age, but following this sonata with your full attention from beginning to end may just give you rewards you didn't expect.



Ken Herrera has been composing since 2007. His musical career began with piano studies at the Tasmanian Conservatorium of Music in 2001 and he has since performed his work in recitals in Sydney, Melbourne and Hobart, as well as in a series of concerts in France. His first disc of solo piano music, *Tales from the Dead Sea*, was released by Move Records in 2012.

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Ken Herrera (2015)

Artist's caricature © David McGuinness

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Front cover photo:

Northern lights over Iceland

Photo page 4: Overhead Northern Lights – Roman Krochuk

Photo page 2: Northern lights over frozen lake Myvatn in Iceland

Photo page 3: Northern lights over Norway – Kolbjorn H. Larssen

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