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# Variations on a Theme by Beethoven

Michael Braz

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for Solo Flute



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by

*Michael Braz*

## **Performance Notes:**

Inspired by a joking comment from a former music theory student ("Why don't you write me something for my senior recital?"), *Variations on a Theme by Beethoven* was originally sketched out on a flight to England. Based on the slow movement of Beethoven's *Symphony No. 7*, the piece incorporates motives inspired by both Beethoven and flute literature at large.

The Introduction is actually one large cadenza sectionalized by the various tempo indications. While measures 11-14 should be played quite fast, the remainder is to be freely interpreted. Both the Theme and Epilogue should continue this sense of freedom without losing the underlying pulse.

While a sense of motion is necessary in Variation 1, there is no need to rush the sextuplet figures. Pay close attention to the tenuto markings in Variation 2. Approach each dotted eighth note as though it were "sneaking up on" the following three fast notes. Variation 3 is a loving homage to *Für Elise* - treat it accordingly. Briefly abandoning minor for major, the double tonguing and slurred passages provide the contrast in Variation 4. Virtuosoic flurries foreshadow a wild and playful mood in the rapidly approaching Finale. Returning to minor, Variation 5 is introspective, combining characteristics of Poulenc and Prokofiev. It should be approached with a rather dry sense of humor.

The Finale begins by combining elements of Beethoven's "Turkish March" (from *The Ruins of Athens*) with the occasional hint of a sailor song. Gaining energy and exuberance, it culminates in a Fast 6/8 parody of the Scherzo of *Symphony No. 9*. Its abrupt ending leads to a more reflective restatement of the theme as an Epilogue, which gradually slows and fades.

—Michael Braz

**Dr. Michael Braz** received his B.M. and M.M. degrees from the University of Miami, later completing a Ph.D. as a University Fellow at Florida State University. A keyboard soloist in England's Haslemere Festival of Early Music, he has also collaborated with numerous orchestras, music festivals, and ensembles ranging from chamber music to jazz and rock.

As a composer of orchestra/choral commissions for professional, collegiate, and school/community ensembles across the country, Braz received an American Composers Forum/Rockefeller Brother Fund "Faith Partners" grant.

In his many years as a music educator, he has served as Associate Director of the Miami Choral Society, Conductor/Musical Director of the Boy Singers of Maine, and Founder/Director of Tallahassee's Capital Children's Chorus and the Statesboro (Georgia) Youth Chorale. He is currently Professor of Music at Georgia Southern University, where he teaches music composition, analytical techniques, and orchestration, as well as courses on such subjects as Finale music software and Wagner's Ring Cycle. He is also a book and music reviewer for various journals and publishers, and is in demand as a conductor, clinician, lecturer, and adjudicator.

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**Introduction**

*f* freely 6 3

5 *accel. poco a poco* pull back a little

*accel. poco a poco* 6 *Fast! (feel in 1)* *mp*

*f* freely

10 *deliberately*

**Theme**

*mf*

*f* more freely

*mf* *deliberately*