

Angels & Watermarks

Program Note

Angels and Watermarks is a four-movement suite (with postlude) for solo harpsichord, and was composed during my 2004 stay at the Djerassi Resident Artists Program in Woodside, California.

Being in the area brought back memories of my own studies as a Stanford composition student, where I was surrounded by a love for and dedication to early music.

My challenge in writing the piece was to combine the instrument's rich heritage with a contemporary voice. The result was four movements in which traditional ornaments, gestures and sensibilities intermix with 21st century rhythms and harmonies: a prelude (*Before [Angels]*), a perpetual movement piece (*Flying Lessons*), a slow movement (*Little Angel Dreams*), and a virtuoso homage to the toccata (*Touch*). The suite concludes with *After (Watermarks)*, a brief reminiscence of the opening prelude.

The title comes from a story by Henry Miller in which he continually alters a painting (through some incredible and hilarious evolutions) until he discovers what was waiting to be revealed – an angel, which he calls his watermark. I felt it spoke well of my desire to let the older style shine through my work, not to mention the joy of having little cherubs flying through the music.

The suite may also be performed on piano.