

American Dances

for String Quartet

January 21—March 30, 2008; revised Sept. 9—Nov. 24, 2024

Duration: ~24 minutes *for Eric Pritchard*

In 2008, I wrote this quartet for my friend Eric Pritchard, first violinist of the Ciompi Quartet at Duke University. After the premiere performance of the string quartet in 2013, I was not satisfied with the first movement, and recomposed it in 2024, during the presidential election. This motivated me to give it a new title, *Harris Waltz*, in honor of Kamala Harris and Tim Walz, in their failed attempt to stop Donald Trump from having a second term as president. The second movement, *Texas Two Step*, pays at least nominal tribute to the state of my birth and home for many years. I can't claim much authenticity in its two-stepness but at least it's fairly up-tempo and in 4/4, and appropriate for a formal and rather crazed square dance. The third movement was originally written just before the birth of Aaron Pritchard, son of Eric and Laura; during the revisions of 2024, Aaron was quite sick and undergoing difficult treatments, thus the new title to this movement, *Dance for the seriously ill*. The last movement stems from the inspired fiddling and great musicianship of the Roma people, as well as barn dances.

At Eric's request, I have arranged this work for violin and piano (March 7—April 7 2009); during this arrangement I made minor changes to the quartet resulting in a second edition. Later, I adjusted the score format for a third edition; and in 2024, I revised and orchestrated it to make *Symphony No. 4: American Dances*.
Cover photo; the composer at the YMCA, August 29, 2024.

Bill Robinson

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billrobinsonmusic.com