

# Tsuga

for solo piano

Charles Nichols

*Commissioned by the Iowa Music Teachers Association and the Iowa Composers Forum*

In the tradition of *24 Little Pieces* by Dmitri Kabalevsky and *Little Piano Book* by Vincent Persichetti, *Tsuga* is a concert piece for solo piano at the intermediate level. Inspired by the hemlock trees in the mountains of West Virginia, a majestic species that is under attack by a non-native insect, dying in large numbers, and recovering as new saplings grow, the composition moves through three attacca movements, each a different treatment of the melodic and harmonic material. This work was jointly commissioned by the Iowa Music Teachers Association and Music Teachers National Association in 2018, as a result of a competition cosponsored by the Iowa Composers Forum, and was premiered on June 3, 2018 in Iowa City, Iowa.

Composer, violinist, and computer music researcher **Charles Nichols** ([www.charlesnichols.com](http://www.charlesnichols.com)) explores the expressive potential of instrumental ensembles, computer music systems, and combinations of the two, for the concert stage, and collaborations with dance, video, and installation art. His research includes motion capture for musical performance, spatial audio, data sonification, telematic performance, and haptic musical instrument design. He teaches Composition and Creative Technologies at Virginia Tech, is a Faculty Fellow of the Institute for Creativity Arts and Technology, and previously taught at the University of Montana. He has earned degrees from the Eastman School of Music, Yale University, and Stanford University, where he studied composition with Samuel Adler, Martin Bresnick, Jacob Druckman, and Jonathan Harvey, and computer music with Jonathan Berger, Chris Chafe, Max Mathews, and Jean-Claude Risset. He was a Research Associate at the Center for Studies in Music Technology at Yale, and a Technical Director at the Center for Computer Research in Music and Acoustics (CCRMA) at Stanford.

He has received funding from the National Endowment for the Arts, National Science Foundation, New Music USA, and the Prop Foundation, and commissions from the Charlotte New Music Festival, Iowa Music Teachers Association, Montana State Music Teachers Association, Institute for Creativity, Arts, and Technology, Montana Institute on Ecosystems, Association of American Medical Colleges, Institute of Medicine and Humanities, Myrna Loy Center for the Performing and Media Arts, Missoula Art Museum, Butte America Radio, Montana Public Radio, Virginia Tech, Drake University, University of Oregon, University of Montana, and Temple University. He has worked with ensembles including Hypercube, the Beo String Quartet, Klang String Quartet, FLUX Quartet, Third Angle Ensemble, Namaste Ensemble, Sapphire Trio, Cascade String Quartet, the Missoula Symphony Orchestra, Headwaters Dance Company, and Montana Transport Company, and has received recognition from the Iowa Composers Forum, the Montana Arts Council, The American Prize in Composition, the National Academy of Music, the Institut International de Musique Electroacoustique de Bourges, and La Fundación Destellos.

His compositions have been presented at conferences and festivals in the US, Argentina, Australia, Canada, China, Cuba, Czech Republic, Denmark, England, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Japan, Northern Ireland, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, and South Korea. His recent premieres include *Or Be Forever Fallen*, three movements for heavily processed amplified string quartet, accompanying animated sci-fi video, *What Bends*, for electric violin and interactive computer music in 3D immersive audio, accompanying narrated poetry, motion capture dance, animation, and processed video in 360° projection, *Beyond the Dark*, ambient synthesized sound and sonified space weather data, accompanying installation art and 3D lighting, and *Nicolo, Jimi, and John*, a three movement concerto, for amplified viola, orchestra, and computer, celebrating the virtuosity of Paganini, Hendrix, and Coltrane ([www.youtube.com/user/CharlesSNicholsII](http://www.youtube.com/user/CharlesSNicholsII)).

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Graceful ♩ = 80

Piano

*p* *cresc.*

Ped.

6

*mp*

11

*cresc.*

16

*mf*

21

*decresc.*

26

*p*

31

*cresc.*

34

*cresc.*

37

*mp*

41

*cresc.*

45

*mf*

49

*cresc.*

52

*cresc.*

55

*f*

58

decresc.

This system contains measures 58 through 61. The right hand features a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes, including a triplet in measure 59 and a half-note chord in measure 61. The left hand plays a steady eighth-note accompaniment. A 'decresc.' (decrescendo) marking is placed above the right hand in measure 61. Rehearsal marks are present at the beginning of measures 58, 59, 60, and 61.

62

This system contains measures 62 through 65. The right hand continues the melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes. The left hand maintains the eighth-note accompaniment. A 'p' (piano) dynamic marking is placed below the left hand in measure 65. Rehearsal marks are present at the beginning of measures 62, 63, 64, and 65.

66

mf

This system contains measures 66 through 70. The right hand features a long, sustained melodic line with a slur over measures 66 and 67, and a half-note chord in measure 70. The left hand continues the eighth-note accompaniment. A 'mf' (mezzo-forte) dynamic marking is placed below the right hand in measure 68. Rehearsal marks are present at the beginning of measures 66, 67, 68, 69, and 70.

71

p

This system contains measures 71 through 75. The right hand features a long, sustained melodic line with a slur over measures 71 and 72, and a half-note chord in measure 75. The left hand continues the eighth-note accompaniment. A 'p' (piano) dynamic marking is placed below the right hand in measure 75. Rehearsal marks are present at the beginning of measures 71, 72, 73, 74, and 75.

76

*p*

81

2

mf

86

*p*

*moderato*

*mp*

91 *rall.* *decresc.*

96 **A tempo**

*p*

101

Measures 101-105. The treble staff contains a melodic line with eighth and quarter notes, while the bass staff provides a harmonic accompaniment with dotted half notes. A purple bracket is positioned below the bass staff, spanning measures 101 through 105.

106

Measures 106-110. The treble staff features a melodic line with dotted half notes and a final half note tied to the next measure. The bass staff continues with dotted half notes. A purple bracket is positioned below the bass staff, spanning measures 106 through 110.