

JITTERBUG- PROGRAM NOTE

Jitterbug was written for Milica Jelača Jovanović and premiered by her on May 30, 2015. The Jitterbug was a dance popular in the early 20th century United States and is often considered part of the “swing” movement. The lyrics of a 1934 recording of “Call of the Jitterbug” by Cab Calloway establish a strong relationship between the dance and alcohol consumption:

If you'd like to be a jitter bug,
First thing you must do is get a jug,
Put whiskey, wine and gin within,
And shake it all up and then begin.
Grab a cup and start to toss,
You are drinking jitter sauce!
Don't you worry, you just mug,
And then you'll be a jitter bug!

I imagined a pianist who has the “jitters” or “heebie jeebies” and I used an abundance of ever-changing quintuplet rhythms to create the effect of “the shakes”. The work is light-hearted and nervy, producing the effect of “not quite being in control”... but in truth, it takes an enormous amount of control to sound on the edge and be a “jitterbug”.