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Suite for Flutes and Brass

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SUITE FOR FLUTES AND BRASS

(TITLE)

BY

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I HEREBY RECOMMEND THIS THESIS BE ACCEPTED AS FULFILLING
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PREFACE

The Suite for Flutes and Brass is programmatic music. It is in six movements and requires thirty minutes to perform. It is written for two flutes, string bass, and brass choir. There is one player for each part written, however there is doubling in the trumpets and flutes.

This work was composed for the college level musician. The demands on the performer are primarily those of endurance and flexibility, rather than range and technical facility. The performer of this suite should feel an individual responsibility since there is a minimum of doubling, and the section work is demanding.

PROGRAM

Programmatic music is largely confined to orchestral composition and while it savors somewhat of the descriptive (at times using direct imitation), it is a much more advanced type in that it tells its story (which may be quite a definite one) largely through suggestive atmosphere, though it depends upon program notes to set up the desired connection between story and music. It is a style generally very interesting to audiences, and is most grateful to some composers, particularly those who are swinging far in the direction of freedom from restraint of precedent in the use of rhythm, melody, harmony, and formal beauty. Program music is less directly imitative than descriptive music, and generally has more actual musical value.

The Suite for Flutes and Brass is program music, and the story accompanying it was written by the composer. It is the story of a young man named Thor, of his travels, of his struggle to regain a lost ego and self-image, and of his death and rebirth. The suite is in six movements, each movement having a different title.

PROGRAM NOTES

THE JOURNEY -

In the beginning of The Journey Thor is sad. His defense mechanisms aren't strong, and his self-image is in great danger (we can hear this in the introduction to the Maestoso, the voices of all the instruments acting in repetition in the key of C minor). Thor is introduced to the King (Maestoso), and later is directed into a Cathedral (mea. 91) where three trumpeters dressed in black robes are playing a hymn (mea. 122).

THE ARENA -

Thor learns to his dismay that the hymn played in the church by the three trumpeters is an introduction to the sacrifice of his self-image. There is a great arena beneath the cathedral and Thor is led down the stairs by the three trumpeters. The Arena contains high, marble walls, and it is here that Thor encounters his enemies, Faith and Doubt. It is a long battle, but Thor is defeated and his ego and self-image die.

THE BURIAL -

This is the burial of Thor. A wooden cart pulled by a big black horse carries his body out of the village,

and the way to the grave is long. There are no friends, no acquaintances - the village is deserted. Thor is lowered into the grave by the three trumpeters, but now they are dressed in white robes.

THE SALUTE -

Thor suddenly awakens in his grave to find the three trumpeters in white robes playing a salute to him. He is told that he is being saluted because he no longer has an ego and self-image, and that his soul must answer the salute by playing a bugle. If the soul plays well enough, Thor may receive a new ego and self-image.

THE JUDGEMENT -

Thor is visited by his Father and is given a new ego, but is told that if he is reborn he must build a new self-image in another world, and that he must return to the arena and take Faith as a friend and in so doing, Doubt will die.

DER SONDERZUG -

Thor is reborn - he takes a "special" train to another world with a new ego and Faith and the beginning of a self-image that will lead him to many, many more travels in other lands.

INSTRUMENTATION

The trumpet, trombone, baritone and BBb Tuba are established members of the brass choir, so I shall conduct this conversation with the flute, the horn, and briefly with the string bass. The instrumentation is as follows:

Flutes	(2)
Trumpets	(3)
Horns F	(2)
Trombones	(3)
Baritone	(1)
String Bass	(1)
BBb Tuba	(1)

As a performer, I have always enjoyed playing music for the brass choir. I feel that not nearly enough of this music has been, nor is being written at the present. In the beginning I had decided to write for brass choir and percussion. However, I didn't wish to depend upon the percussion to the extent that it would reduce the challenge, because it would have been quite simple to depend upon the percussion, as many composers do when the musical train of thought appears to end. I will not say that percussion couldn't have been used to great effect in Part II, Part IV, and the tympani to great advantage in Part III; however, I don't believe in composing a movement, and when the work is finished, "filling-in" the percussion. When one attempts to do this, the

percussion sounds exactly that way - not a real part of the work, but just "filled-in".

Another thing that I had missed as a performer in doing various brass compositions was a definite percussive effect without the use of percussion. The flute is capable of so very many things. In an Allegro passage it can be a drum, or in a Vivace movement it can be a whole percussion section. (Part IV-319,332, 398-434). In the Largo and the Andante it is the most beautiful instrument in the world. It is a perfect unison partner for the horn, baritone and the trumpet. The flute, because of its overtone series has sounds closely related to the brass.

The musical idea determines the category of the horn and flute as a brass or woodwind instrument. In Part V, (measures 11 and 12, and the first four measures of letter B), in order to establish the sound desired, it is obvious that the horns are considered as woodwinds, because in these example passages they adhere to the flute as a woodwind instrument. This is in part due to the nature of the movement and the over-all feeling represented by the repetition of the musical idea. The point I wish to stress, however, is that in voicing the flutes and horns in this example as woodwinds, one may accomplish the exact opposite. (Part II, mea. 167 and

168). In this example the flutes are definitely in the brass category as are the horns.

The string bass when played pizzacatto and in unison with the tuba, contributes greatly to the attack (again the percussive effect), and when played with the bow in unison with the tuba, creates a heavier, grandiose effect.

In summing up this brief conversation on instrumentation I place the greatest emphasis upon challenge and the musical idea. To possess a musical idea is not difficult, but to express that idea through the talent of the performer can only be accomplished through composition, whether it be for a solo, a string quartet, a brass choir, or a symphony orchestra. In regards to challenge, I believe that sometimes it is not good to have every musical instrument with which to work at one's fingertips. It is more challenging to convey the musical impulse or idea with fewer instruments. These are the instruments that I chose to convey the sound I desired, and to meet the challenge I had set in my mind.

FORM

"A composer's relation to his work is an organic one - the conception and composition of a piece of music are not a matter of set procedure, but a living process of growth."¹ What we call musical form is as much a product of the composer's feeling and imagination as are the more obvious details and features such as themes, the striking contrasts, and other matters with which the vast majority of writers on music deal.

Many preludes of Bach or certain Etudes of Chopin are not thematic in any possible sense of the word, or in which the musical idea lies in what we call pure structure, however these same works are so frequently and so obviously full of passionate expression. "Structure" and "Passion", when the occasion demands, are the very essence of the other.

There are two main aspects of form if one believes Roger Sessions. The second aspect, the more obvious details and features such as the themes, the striking contrasts, and other matters are discussed briefly under the heading of "An Analysis of the Suite" (p. 11).

In discussing the primary aspect of form in my suite, I can relate very little. I do feel however, that one

¹Roger Sessions, The Musical Experience, p. 54.

must possess the basic tools of composition before undertaking a work involving the use of brass and woodwinds. The composer must "hear" the sound as he writes the score. These tools and the more obvious details, we learn in the beginning, but to possess only the tools does not justify composition - we must learn how to use them.

There is the purely impulsive composer I suppose, who is incapable of being consciously aware of musical relationships, therefore totally devoid of constructing recognizable musical patterns. However, I wouldn't classify this sort as one who had learned the basics and fundamentals, although there are some who might easily fall into this category through a technical sense. As an example, I have a friend who constructed a set of scales and from these scales developed a "system" as a performer and composer. These were the type of structures that could only be used in a set way. My friend discovered that after working on these particular scale patterns for two and one-half years, his writing and playing were becoming technical. The music did possess a certain amount of tension and excitement, but it had little feeling and emotion. It was technical and cold because it was composed from a "system." It possessed form in the secondary aspects, but was void

of the primary aspect.

So, in my conclusion on form, permit me to say that feeling, imagination, invention, one's basic concepts of life, and the awareness of the basic elements of music are the important factors. Of secondary importance are the tools one has learned to associate with the secondary aspect of form, the so-called classic forms - the minuet, rondo, sonata, and variation - level of intensity and interest, meter, pitch, texture, harmonic structure, repetition, etc. - these are the tools.

The form of the Suite for Flutes and Brass is the musical train of thought; it is all the stimuli that activated the conscious and subconscious to create a continued sound, having the qualities derived from the basic elements of music.

In the Suite for Flutes and Brass the themes were established first. In Part II the beginning theme is the same as the first measure of Part I. In measures 80 to 90 in Part I, the harmonic structure was written before the theme, the lower instruments moving from F minor to Bb major while the fundamental was sustained in the bass and baritone. From measures 122 and 137 it is obvious, that the theme was primary, the lower instruments moving from the I-IV-I cadence.

In respect to the concept of structure I will

conclude with a continuation of an idea presented earlier concerning the flute and horn. The heart of harmonic structure is embedded in the classification of different sounds the composer hears before writing the score. In regard to the major or minor keys and modulations, they were used to portray those elements that were stressed in the discussion on form.

AN ANALYSIS OF THE SUITE

Part I - The Journey 6:25

The initial theme is stated in measures six, seven, and eight. From the beginning through measure 27, we find a prelude to the Maestoso, allowing the different instrumental sections to "get acquainted." This is followed by a statement of the initial theme in the trumpets and horns (mea. 44) and echoed by the flutes. The remainder of Part I following the Maestoso is an A B A form.

Part II - The Arena 2:35

(This part begins in measure 153). The initial theme of this part is immediately at the beginning. It is, in part, the beginning theme stated in Part I, however this time it is stated in the Allegro. Measures 167 to 182 are an introduction to the second theme, which I employ in Part IV and Part V.

The B theme is stated in the flute, measure 195, which is an a b a form in itself, the middle section being stated in the trumpets (mea. 203).

From measure 211 the horns and flutes are matched against the trumpets and trombones, speaking back and forth to each other until the Del Segno, where the initial

theme is restated.

Part III - The Burial 4:30

The Burial is a dirge in E minor. The first five measures constitute the main theme. A second theme is stated by the horns, followed by the trumpets (mea. 35). This entire part is plainly statement and restatement of the initial theme by all of the instruments. From measures 70 to 80 there is a short development section intended to break the deathly dirge-like effect of the lower instruments before the restatement and the end.

Part IV - The Salute 2:40

In this part the main theme is stated immediately by the flute, horn, and baritone, followed by the trumpet, and then by the entire ensemble. At letter B there is a modulation to C minor and a restatement of the second theme in Part II (mea. 182). This is followed by a triplet-quarter note, bugle effect from the trumpets (measure 45) which continues to the finish. A little hymn is stated in the horn, trombone, and baritone for eight measures (63 to 71). This is again followed by the bugle effect until the ensemble enters (measures 72 and 73).

Part V - The Judgement 4:15

In Part V are the main themes from Part III, (this time in minor) and the latter half of the main theme of Part IV. In measures 31 and 32, part of the little hymn from Part IV is stated as an introduction to the restatement of the second theme in Part II. Measures 46 and 47 are important as they are the introduction to the third part of the Vivace in Part VI. The little hymn is restated (measure 60) and continues to the end.

Part VI - Der Sonderzug 5:40

This movement is divided into three distinct parts: the beginning, the middle part (measure 139), and the last part (319). In the beginning there are two themes. The first theme is stated in measure 13, followed by a secondary theme in measure 20. These are restated and developed by the different sections to the middle part.

The middle section (139) is typical of the Austrian folk music. I received my inspiration for this part after a trip in a "special" train (Der Sonderzug) high into the Austrian Alps to a resort area (Zell-Am-See) to listen to the music of the country people. In measure 221 I give a glimpse of the second theme of this part. It is heard following a restatement of the first theme of the first part of this movement (measure 273).

The last part (319) begins with a new theme, having been introduced however in Part V (measures 46-47). The themes in the beginning and middle parts of this entire movement are restated and developed (333, 359, 373, 388, 440), the tempo and volume increasing until the finish.

SUMMARY

Programmatic music is a style generally very interesting to audiences, and is most grateful to some composers, particularly those who are swinging far in the direction of freedom in the use of rhythm, melody, harmony, and formal beauty.

The Suite for Flutes and Brass is demanding to the performer. The tonal possibilities in the use of flutes combined with the brass choir are practically unlimited.

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