2010

For orchestra

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“FOR ORCHESTRA”

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Music

in

The School of Music

By David Cortello
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INSTRUMENTATION

Transposed Score in C
1 Piccolo (picc.)
2 Flutes (Fl.)
2 Oboes (Ob.)
1 English Horn (E. Hn.)
2 Bb Clarinet (Bb Cl.)
2 Bassoons (Bsn.)
1 Contra bassoon (C. Bsn.)

2 Horns in F (Hn.)
2 Bb Trumpets (Bb Tpt.)
2 Trombones (Tbn.)
1 Tuba (Tuba)

Timpani (Timp.)
Percussion I (perc. I)
   snare drum, triangle, crash cymbal, marimba, chimes, glockenspiel
Percussion II (perc. II)
   suspended cymbal, triangle, gong, temple blocks, snare drum,
   crash cymbal, bass drum
Percussion III (perc. III)
   triangle, bass drum, crash cymbal, suspended cymbal, snare drum,
   temple blocks
Marimba            (mrb.)
Glockenspiel       (glck.)
Snare Drum         (sn.dr.)
Temple blocks      (tm. bl.)
Triangle           (tr.)
Triangle mute      (t.m.)
Triangle open      (t.o.)
Chimes             (chm.)
Suspended Cymbal   (sus.cym.)
Crash cymbal       (cr. cym.)
Gong               (gong)
Bass Drum          (b. d.)

1 Harp (Hp.)
Violin I (Vln.I)
Violin II (Vln. II)
Viola (Vla.)
Violoncello (Vc.)
Contrabass (D.B.)
PROGRAM NOTES

“For Orchestra” is a four movement work of contrasting sections.

The first movement is an Andante and features thick textures of imitation, beginning with the strings at measure 1. A slightly quicker tempo and a woodwind chorale begin at measure 21. The original tempo returns at measure 29 and the texture thins out in a lighter, out of sync rhythmic section. This gives way to a maestoso at measure 42. Again, at 51, we return to the original tempo and transitional material that leads to a restating of the original theme at measure 65. The movement ends with a short woodwind canon cadencing on a diminished chord, previewing the octatonicism of the next movement.

Movement two is a scherzo, whose main theme is introduced in the first measure with an ostinato accompaniment. In measure 17, the theme is presented in canon and continues to develop, with short interruptions at measures 28, 33, and 45. At measure 46 the theme continues to develop, but is spun out into a longer melody with heavier textures. At measure 67 short fragments of the original theme begin a new canon that includes statements by all players except for a single percussionist. Measures 79-80 use the main theme of the first movement as a transition into an augmentation of the second movement theme. At measure 103, a new idea in 7/8 is introduced. There several short interruptions of this idea, and by measure 128, we return to the original theme at a much slower tempo of ¼ note = 96.

Movement three, an adagio, begins with a slowly descending chromatic oscillation that is interrupted at measures 9 and 16. A new theme is introduced with a new, faster tempo at measure 18 that crescendos to a variation at measure 27. An ostinato accompaniment is introduced at measure 30 and continues through 42. At measure 52, there is a crescendo back into the original tempo that reuses the second theme in a different tonality before returning to the original theme at measure 61.

Movement four has three main sections defined by tempo: adagio, allegro, and adagio. The first adagio has some of the lighter character of a scherzo, echoing the second movement. A piccolo solo begins the piece and at measure 8, with a slightly slower tempo, an accompaniment enters. This “lighter character” continues, but with forte bursts at 18 and 31 that foreshadow the allegro to follow. At 37, the allegro begins in earnest, with a new tempo of ¾ note = 112. At measure 54, we hear the full array of fortissimo bursts hinted at in the adagio. This gives way to a transition at measure 61 that ends in near-silence at measure 73. Measure 74 marks the beginning of the adagio which closes out the movement and the work.
ABSTRACT

“For Orchestra” is a four movement symphonic reflection on an unfinished life that ultimately finds redemption and a new beginning. Conflict and questioning are depicted through combinations of tonally ambiguous techniques. Debussian chord planing is combined with elements of twelve-tone technique; symmetrical scales offer hints of the familiar without sounding clear tone centers; rhythmic elements fight each other, resolve, and fight again, leaving questions still unanswered.

There are moments of joy and triumph heard through tonal progressions, and a scherzo that is later darkened, first through an augmentation, and then a tritone harmonization.

The third movement represents a slow spiral downward with a gradual chromatic oscillation that occasionally resolves, only to spiral down again, and then to be interrupted by a variation of the original theme of the Andante. This theme leads to a more triumphant section that echoes, in both tonality and mood, the similar music of the first movement. The Adagio seems to be heading for a resolute cadence, but instead finishes on a chord of stacked fourths that includes eight notes of the chromatic scale.

The final movement begins with a carefree piccolo solo whose mood conflicts with the oscillating woodwinds that enter on measure eight. This ambiguous tone is occasionally interrupted by sharp jabs that foreshadow the ultimate conflict that begins about 2 minutes into the movement. This “final battle” seems to end in defeat; the near silence of the orchestra signals the end, an elegy begins in the contrabass, but it spreads through the strings, and then the rest of the orchestra, resurrecting the original triumphant theme of the first movement.

Although the piece is not composed to fit into a particular form, there are hints of an overall sonata form in the recapitulation in movement four of a section from movement one; additionally, many cyclic elements hint at parts of movement two and three as a development.

The organizing principle of the work is clearly programmatic, but the title of the piece and movements are generic, leaving the listener to form his or her own opinions.
FOR ORCHESTRA
Scherzo

\( \text{j} = 120 \)

Piccolo

Flutes I, II

Oboes I, II

English Horn

Clarinets in B♭ I, II

Bassoons I, II

Horns in F I, II

Trumpets in B♭ I, II

Trombones I, II

Tuba

Timpani

Percussion 1

Percussion 2

Percussion 3

Violin 1

Violin 2

Viola

Cello

Double Bass
Adagio

Adagio \( \frac{4}{4} \)

Piccolo

Flute I, II

Oboe I, II

English Horn

Clarinet in B\(_b\) I, II

Bassoon I, II

Contrabassoon

Horn in F I, II

Trumpet in B\(_b\) I, II

Trombone I, II

Tuba

Timpani

Percussion I

Percussion II

Harp

Violin 1

Violin 2

Viola

Cello

Double Bass

45
VITA

David Cortello (b. 1959), began studying guitar at the age of twelve, and piano at fifteen. He studied classical guitar with Elias Barriero and jazz guitar with Hank Mackie; he studied piano with Heywood Hamilton, and played for many years in local New Orleans cover bands. He became director of music at St. Clement of Rome Catholic Church, in Metairie, Louisiana, in 1985; while working at St. Clement he completed his bachelor of arts degree at the University of New Orleans.

During his twenty-three year tenure at St. Clement he composed two complete masses, numerous psalms, and many original compositions and arrangements for flute, clarinet, brass quintet, handbells, and SATB choir.

Currently, Mr. Cortello is a teaching assistant at LSU and is pursuing his master’s in composition as a student of Boyd Professor Dinos Constantinides.