Concerto for Piano and Orchestra

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COLLEGE OF MUSIC

CONCERTO FOR PIANO AND ORCHESTRA

By

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ABSTRACT

The *Concerto for Piano and Orchestra* is a three-movement work for small orchestra and piano solo. Typical of the genre, the movements are arranged by tempo in a fast-slow-fast configuration. The overarching concept of the piece is a kaleidoscopic view of a single idea; that is, each movement represents the metaphorical twist of a kaleidoscope which is itself always fixed on a single point. That point, stated in musical terms, is the interval of a third (particularly the minor third), and it is prominently re-examined in each movement, both in the orchestral and solo parts.

The tonal centricity of the movements is governed by the above rubric as well. The first movement begins with a sustained F-sharp major sonority, the second in G major, and the third in a quasi-A minor, thus tracing the interval of a minor third from F-sharp to A on the largest scale. (In microcosm, the third movement exhibits this phenomenon in reverse, beginning in A, recapitulating in G, and concluding on F-sharp.) Each movement ends with an F-sharp tonal center.

The first movement is framed by two expansive sections featuring a wavering minor third in the orchestra, and a sober solo piano line which clashes with the prevailing tonality. Out of this springs a more joyous melody, first in the piano, then in the entire ensemble. Midway through the movement, a fanfare motive (again based on the minor third) emerges, and leads to a developmental passage in which various motives introduced earlier in the piece are juxtaposed and intertwined. A brief cadenza then gives way to a *giocoso* interplay between soloist and winds that caps off the development and leads to a recapitulation of the opening material.

The second movement differs greatly in character from the first, beginning with a *semplice*, quasi-Baroque G major orchestral *tutti*. Despite this contrast, important connections remain. The opening motive of the melody is a descending major third, while the closing gesture of this section is a lilting minor third—a transformation of the passages which encapsulate the first movement. Serving as a sort of *ritornello*, this opening expository material is interspersed with rhapsodic piano interludes. The third and final statement of the *ritornello* is given at first to the soloist alone, before cascading into a *tutti* statement of the lilting minor third closing gesture, followed by a brief coda.
Finally, the light-hearted third movement introduces a minimalist-inspired *ostinato* figure, which is present throughout most of the movement and suggests the music’s *moto perpetuo* label. This figure is a series of repeated pitches (accenting groupings of 3+3+2) concluded by a single ascending minor third. This *ostinato* figure is metrically at odds with the more prosaic and insistent quarter note pulse found in the percussion section. Throughout this movement, the soloist’s skills are put on display with fast passagework that requires both quick fingers and a high level of endurance.
INSTRUMENTATION

2 Flutes
2 Oboes
2 Clarinets in B-flat
2 Bassoons
2 Horns in F
Trumpet in C
Trombone
Timpani
Percussion (2 players)
Xylophone, Crash Cymbals, Slap Stick,
Tam-tam, Glockenspiel, Suspended Cymbal,
Hi-hat, Marimba, Triangle (Medium), Snare drum
Violin I
Violin II
Viola
Violoncello
Double Bass

Piano (solo)

Score in C
(Double Bass, Xylophone, and Glockenspiel observe their usual octave transpositions)

Duration: Approximately 20 minutes
Concerto for Piano and Orchestra

I

Score in C

Con moto \( \textit{J} = 92 \)

2 Flutes

2 Oboes

2 Clarinets

2 Bassoons

2 Horns

Trumpet in C

Trombone

Timpani

Percussion I

Percussion II

Piano (solo)

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Cello

Double Bass

* Stagger bow changes; change bow imperceptibly
Cadenza ad lib.
* Stagger bow changes; change bow imperceptibly
molto rit.
III

Moto perpetuo \( \approx 50 \)

- 2 Flutes
- 2 Oboes
- 2 Clarinets
- 2 Bassoons
- 2 Horns
- Trumpet in C
- Trombone
- Timpani
- Percussion I
- Percussion II
- Piano (solo)
- Violin I
- Violin II
- Viola
- Cello
- Double Bass

\( \text{pizz.} \)
\( \text{mf} \)
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Martin Blessinger was born on Long Island, NY on July 7, 1978. After graduating from Chaminade High School, he studied composition at the State University of New York at Stony Brook with Sheila Silver and Perry Goldstein, receiving both his undergraduate and masters degrees. He continued his study of composition as a doctoral student at the Florida State University, studying with Ladislav Kubik and Ellen Taaffe Zwilich. His works have been performed around the country by ensembles such as the North Shore Symphony Orchestra, the Metropolitan Brass Quintet, the Stony Brook Contemporary Chamber Players, the Florida State University New Music Ensemble, Sounds New, and the new music ensembles of the University of Nebraska at Kearney and Franklin Pierce College. His "Cradle Song," a recent work for soprano and piano, was named a finalist in the 2005 Diana Barnhart American Song Competition, and his string quartet, “Postcard from the Americas,” was a winner of the biennial Florida State University Eppes Quartet Competition in 2006. Additionally, his orchestration of Jessica Grace Wing’s score for the hit off-Broadway musical “Lost” won Best Music in the 2003 New York City Fringe Festival.