CONCERTO FOR AMPLIFIED MANDOLIN, STRING ORCHESTRA, AND PERCUSSION

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ABSTRACT

Elainie Lillios, Advisor

Concerto for Amplified Mandolin, String Orchestra, and Percussion (timpani plus three percussionists playing an array of instruments) is an exciting work intended to supplement the small repertoire for the classical mandolin. The concerto is a single-movement work of eleven minutes that blends art music and vernacular styles. I drew from the string orchestra tradition of Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky, Béla Bartók, and Samuel Barber, and also from the compositions of bluegrass/newgrass mandolin style innovators such as Chris Thile, Mike Marshall, and Béla Fleck.

The concerto is largely through-composed, using a quasi programmatic form rather than a traditional concerto form, such as sonata allegro form. Although themes return throughout the piece, no section repeats identically. The harmonic language of the work is primarily neo-tonal, with free atonal sections providing dissonant contrast. While tonal centers are often present, harmonic progressions rarely work in functional ways; the harmonies either remain static or move frequently to non-related key areas. On a whole, regular rhythms drive the piece, but these rhythms are frequently disrupted with more rhythmically complex sections.

The vast majority of classical mandolinists (including newgrass mandolinists that play classical music) perform violin solo pieces transcribed for mandolin. However, the limitations and possibilities of these two instruments are greater than often assumed. Likewise, most of the classical pieces written for the mandolin are better suited for the violin, since they focus primarily on single melodic lines and never on strumming chords. Concerto for Amplified Mandolin, String Orchestra, and Percussion, by combining traditional and modern styles, provides mandolinists with a new, challenging composition created specifically and idiomatically for their instrument.
Instrumentation

Acoustic Mandolin
(amplified with microphone)

String Orchestra
  Violins 1
  Violins 2
  Violas
  Violoncellos
  Contrabasses

Timpani (4 drums)
(2 suspended cymbal needed - one on stand, the other loose)

3 Percussionists
  1: Woodblock, Suspended Cymbal,
      Snare Drum, Triangle, Toms
  2: Triangle, Crotales, Bass Drum
  3: Snare Drum, Crotales, Suspended Cymbal, Glockenspiel, Tam-tam

Percussion Notation Maps
Concerto for Amplified Mandolin, String Orchestra, and Percussion

Chad Kimbler
(2005-06)
Becoming agitated

Forcefully

Bell of crystal
w/ handle of mallet

w/ handle of mallet
X Suddenly faster, like before

X Suddenly faster, like before
As fast as you can!