University of Cincinnati

Date: 3/30/2017

I, Laura Harrison, hereby submit this original work as part of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Musical Arts in Composition.

It is entitled:
Corners of the Sky

Student's name: Laura Harrison

This work and its defense approved by:

Committee chair: Douglas Knehans, D.M.A.
Corners of the Sky

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate School of the University of Cincinnati in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Musical Arts in the Department of Composition of the College-Conservatory of Music

by

Laura Harrison

M.M. University of Cincinnati
April 2014
B.M. Wheaton College
May 2012

Committee Chair: Douglas Knehans
Abstract

_Corners of the Sky_ was written for pianist Kristofer Rucinski and conductor Jon Norywota, as part of the New Concerto Project. This project was developed by composer Rachel Walker and myself to help promote orchestral works, specifically those written by young female composers. The title is an adaptation of a title of a poem by Frederico Garcia Lorca, _In a Corner of the Sky_. While my piece has no programmatic elements, the imagery of the poem fits well with the character of the piece.

This piece is a single-movement work for piano soloist and orchestra, with a form that is constructed in four distinct sections: A-B-A'-C. These sections are contrasting in character, as well as being distinguished by different treatment of the harmonic material. The first section is fully chromatic, using a twelve-tone chord at the beginning, and an ostinato that also uses all twelve pitches. Although section B also uses chromatic harmony, it is more focused on intervallic relationships, specifically tritones and minor seconds, and later, perfect fifths. Section C is the least harmonically dense section of the piece. Although it uses eleven pitches in total over the course of the section, they are spread out in the piano part over a flowing pentatonic ostinato, while the rest of the orchestra presents a sustained pentatonic chord.

The construction of this work is based on five motivic ideas. The first is a plodding, insistent ostinato, first presented in the piano at the beginning of the work, and then passed through the orchestra until it builds up to a tutti climax. The second idea, a brooding, angular melody is also first presented by the piano. Fragments of this melody appear recontextualized throughout the piece in various sections of the orchestra. The third idea develops over the course of the piece. It is a chromatic descent, which first appears as only two notes, but gradually adds notes until it becomes a full chromatic scale passed through the woodwind section and descending portamenti played by the strings. The repeated notes that constitute the fourth motivic idea are presented as a rhythmic ostinato, and is sometimes combined with other motivic ideas. The final motivic idea is sharp, accented notes that appear first in the woodwinds as interruptions, and is later taken up by other sections of the orchestra. This idea is often combined with the repeated notes and the chromatic gestures.
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Corners of the Sky
for piano and orchestra

Laura Harrison

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Corners of the Sky
Laura Harrison

Written for Kristofer Rucinski, Jon Norywota, and the Cincinnati Soundbox Orchestra

Duration: ca. 15 min.

Transposed Score

Instrumentation
2 Flutes (2nd doubling piccolo)
2 Oboes
2 B♭ Clarinets
2 Bassoons
2 Horns
2 C Trumpets, with straight mute
2 Trombones, with straight mute
Tuba, with straight mute
Piano Solo

Strings:
Violin I
Violin II
Viola
Cello
Contrabass
Performance Note:

All crescendos and diminuendos without a starting/ending dynamic marking indicate to start/end the note as softly as possible.

Strings: Starting with the highest note possible on the indicated string, glissando continuously down to the open string

Hit the string with the wood of the bow as fast as possible. Do not sync with other players.
Corners of the Sky

for Kris

Laura Harrison

Insistent \( \frac{d}{4} = 88 \)

*All crescendos/diminuendos without a starting/ending dynamic indicate to begin/end the note as quietly as possible.

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Repeat as fast as possible
Col legno battuto

Repeat as fast as possible
Col legno battuto

Repeat as fast as possible
Col legno battuto

Repeat as fast as possible
Col legno battuto