

Nigel Morgan



Concerto 1

from Six Concertos

for (self-directed) orchestra

Six Concertos

These six concertos, from an on-going collection called *Instrumentarium Novum*, are written in the spirit of earlier times. They invite a more flexible approach to making music in an ensemble setting, encouraging a more dynamic and collaborative view of interpretation. The music is made available in three versions: for piano duo; for chamber ensemble; for symphony orchestra.

Although the scores are presented in straightforward performance-ready editions, there is an opportunity to create original, indeed radical, realisations able to reflect the character and purpose of an ensemble, or respond to a particular programme, performance medium or location. As in the composer's earlier scores such as *Metanoia* and *Self Portrait* this approach has proved particularly valuable to student orchestras and ensembles.

The way the **Six Concertos** have been imagined and composed provides a map for an adventure in co-creation and collaboration between performer and conductor/director. The notated score is seen as a starting point for extending performance practice from the play of articulation, dynamics and tempo to include re-scoring, re-voicing, restructuring and re-ordering of phrases, and the use of ornamentations and improvisation.

The key to such flexibility has been to restore the *continuo* to the heart of a large ensemble. By underpinning in the *continuo* the harmonic rhythm and resonance of the music, accompaniment figures and textures can be largely eliminated and instrumental parts can adopt a more democratic and flexible nature. Such practice developed out of two works written for members of the BBC National Orchestra of Wales, *Conversations in Colour* (2001) and *Schizophonia* (2002). In these pieces, written for multi-location performance across an ISDN network, a continuo trio (keyboard, bass and percussion) led orchestral and choral forces without a conductor, devising both a unique sound and a performance practice lying between jazz and early music.

In developing such practice further into a substantial sequence of new music for chamber ensemble and the symphony orchestra parts for orchestral instruments are composed within a comparatively narrow compass. This enables performers to experiment with applying organ-

like registrations, ghosting and doubling parts, indeed anything that responds imaginatively to the varying conditions of performance and the make-up of the ensemble.

With such possibilities present in the scores the relationship of conductor to an ensemble can be re-imagined. Instead of guiding performers to execute the composer's instructions to the note and the letter, a conductor can facilitate the bringing together of a unique interpretation, one that can include and celebrate creative ideas and responses from the ensemble itself. Ideally the concertos are best as self-directed pieces with a conductor involved either as a performer (usually in the *continuo* group) or as a kind of performance curator responsible for co-ordinating final decisions and directing essential cues.

The aesthetic of the open-form surrounds the *poiesis* of the six concertos. By applying repeats to selected sections and phrases, new and different scoring and dynamic schemes can be introduced as well as opportunities for improvisation. Examples of such practice, and details of the composer's *Active Notation* technology designed to support the use of open-form, can be viewed and auditioned at www.nigel-morgan.co.uk

One of the inspirations behind this composition project has undoubtedly been the concept of the *Instrumentarium*, a term used by the conductor and scholar Nikolaus Harnoncourt to describe the commonplace collection of instruments and performance practice found in Baroque and early Classical music. Here there was usually an expectation that music would be enriched by all the instrumental variety and timbral variation the imagination of musicians could muster. Instrumentation and performance detail rarely dictated the nature of the music itself. Matters such as instrumental doubling, register placement, chord voicings, dynamics and articulation held a more speculative interpretation in the composer's mind.

Such a speculative approach is celebrated in the composition of the **Six Concertos**. This is amplified by the hexagram images attached to each concerto taken from the ancient Chinese book of divination, the *I Ching*. They provide a kind of rhetorical *affekt*, giving a gentle measure of guidance to both performer and listener as to the overall character of each concerto.

Six Concertos

Concerto 1



Yu / Enthusiasm

Instrumentation (version for orchestra)

2 Flutes
2 Oboes
2 Clarinets in Bb
2 Bassoons

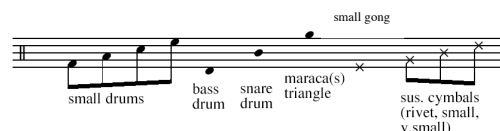
2 Horns in F (4 opt.)
2 Trumpets in Bb
2 Tenor Trombones
Bass Trombone

Strings

Double Bass
Tuned Percussion
Untuned Percussion
Electric Piano / Sampling Keyboard

Although the scoring is predominantly for the instruments and forces of the standard symphony orchestra, reductions to a chamber orchestra size can be most effective, either for a complete performance or as part or whole of a particular movement. A 'one to a part' scoring is quite practical and wind and brass players will find that their parts include cues to cover solo passages taken by the 2nd instrument of a pair. The exception is in the music for horn, which is better not reduced to a single part. In reduced scorings use of extra and additional instruments such as sax, bass clarinet, alto flute and tuba are encouraged. Using a small body of strings can work very well, particularly if devices like *tremolando* are employed for sustained textures and crescendos.

The percussion parts may be distributed freely between the two players, with both parts 'orchestrated' between several instruments simultaneously. Ideally, a variety of tuned percussion should be used – vibraphone, marimba etc. The un-tuned part calls for a collection of standard orchestral percussion but may be extended by the performers to include more exotic sounds if appropriate.



The continuo group should be both adventurous and colourful. Harp and electric guitar may supplement this ensemble (and parts are available if required). BBC NOW's *continuo* group made most effective use of a MalletKAT playing dynamically layered samples and synthesised sounds. The keyboard is imagined with a Fender Rhodes electric piano sound as a default, with a volume pedal able to 'hide' attacks and swell chords.

Performers are encouraged to explore a series of on-line resources written to support building interpretations of the **Six Concertos**. *The Introduction* to the Six Concertos explains the music's rationale and gives an outline of the special compositional techniques employed. There are also example pages from the scores and instrumental parts. *A Resource for Performance* shows in an interactive presentation how phrases and structures in the scores may be extended, reduced, customized, and reworked to suit particular performance situations and opportunities. These can be viewed at:

www.nigel-morgan.co.uk/SixConcertos/

Concerto 1 I

con zelo ♩ = 180

Fl. 1 *f* *mf*

Fl. 2 *f* *mf*

Ob. 1 *mf* *mf*

Ob. 2 *mf* *mf*

Cl. 1 in Bb *f* *mf*

Cl. 2 in Bb *f* *mf*

Bsn. 1 *mf* *mf*

Bsn. 2 *mf* *mf*

Hn. 1 in F *f* *f*

Hn. 2 in F *f* *f*

Trp. 1 in Bb *mf* *mf*

Trp. 2 in Bb *mf* *mf*

Tbn. 1 *f* *mf*

Tbn. 2 *f* *mf*

Tbn. 3 *mf* *f* *mf*

Vn. 1 *f* *mf* *f*

Vn. 2 *f* *mf* *f*

Vla. *mf* *f* *mf*

Vc. *f*

Db. *mf* *pizz.* *mf*

Db. *mf* *f* *mf*

Vibr. *f* *mf*

Pc. *f*

Kyb. *mf* *f* *mf*

3/4 *sempre pizz.* 5/4 2/4 3/4 *mf*

