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hoquet perpétuel

for orchestra

Alexander Kolassa

(2012)
The first impetus for this piece was a short passage of music I had written originally for the combination of piano and marimba. For me, *hoquet perpétuel* began as an experiment in orchestration, in which I explored different ways to distribute the material (originally written for two instruments)—constructed using recursive techniques and integer sequences—across an entire orchestra. The intended result was that the material should be entirely unrecognisable when compared alongside the original instrumental source material. The ‘hocket’ technique—processes of this kind are found throughout many musical cultures, see particularly the Kotekan in Indonesian gamelan—involves the alternation of sound materials across multiple voices, and this became my primary preoccupation here.

I have attempted to explore the various ways in which a hocket-like effect can be treated within an orchestral context. Melodies are constructed through the exchange of pitches on both the micro and macro level (i.e. through a duet between two clarinets, or across the entire string section) and seek to exploit in various ways the spatial and geographical possibilities inherent within the orchestra—that is to say, the physical space and configurations between different instruments or combinations of instruments.

Despite all this academic and conceptual discussion, I hope that what really comes across to the listener for much of the piece is a Stravinsky-esque sense of rhythmic immediacy and interplay (and fun, too). For a slower middle section the lively hockets disintegrate briefly into more slowly changing textures made of *klangfarbenmelodie* figures which struggle, languishing behind contrasting chorale-like passages that emphasise dissonant minor 2nds (the piquancy of which forms the harmonic basis of the whole work). The piece is rounded off with an even more overt – and overtly enthusiastic – return to the opening hocket material. This is designed to give the orchestra a real work-out before an abrupt and striking, though with luck also satisfying, end.

(programme note: November 2012)
2 flutes
2 oboes
2 clarinets in Bb (2 doubling on bass clarinet)
2 bassoons

2 horns in F
2 trumpets

percussion (2 players)
   (1) timpani, suspended cymbals, woodblocks, triangle, tam-tam, 3 tom-toms

vibraphone

strings
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Fl.
Fl. 2
Ob. 1
Ob. 2
Cl. 1
Cl. 2
Bsn. 1
Bsn. 2
Hn. 1
Hn. 2
Tpt. 1
Tpt. 2
Timp.
Perc. 1
Vib.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Cb.

poco rit.

p
mf
pp
f
p
mf
p
pp

mp

ff

ff

ff

ff

ff

ff

ff

ff
a tempo, energetic

flutes

oboe

clari

bass clarinet

cornets

vibraphone

vibraphone

trombone

tuba

viola

cello

double bass

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