PASIC 2015 Keyboard Committee Panel Discussion

Concerto Repertoire – William Moersch

1. Takemitsu, Toru. Gitimalya (Bouquet of Songs), for Marimba and Orchestra. [YT] Paris: Salabert, 1974. [Associated Music Publishers] 2-2-3-2, 3-2-3-0, cel, 2 hp, gtr, 4 perc, 0-0-10-8-6 (15’)


7. Schwertsik, Kurt. Now you hear me, now you don’t, Op. 102, for Marimba and Strings. [YT] London: Boosey & Hawkes, 2008 Strings (15’)


10. Theofanidis, Christopher. Concerto for Marimba and Wind Sinfonietta. Brooklyn: Bill Holab Music, 2013. 2-1-3-2-1, 2-2-2-1, bass, hp, 3 perc (22’).
Notes on PASIC 2015 Keyboard Panel Discussion: Keyboard Concertos

For those unable to hear my remarks at PASIC, I offer the following comments. As the "senior" member on the panel, I choose to cover a somewhat broader perspective. When I first began playing the marimba in 1970, the entire standard repertoire consisted of three concertos. Since then, however, there has been exponential growth. The New Music Marimba Concerto List, which I began compiling in 1995, now numbers 255 marimba concertos with orchestra, concert band, or wind ensemble. For the PASIC panel, I choose to highlight ten, providing both solo part score excerpts and audio excerpts for six of those. Moreover, many of my selections are also available in complete form on YouTube, as indicated by "[YT]" after the title listing. I remind readers that concerto scores are often available on perusal from the publishers, commonly provided today as PDF files online.

I began with Toru Takemitsu's marimba concerto, as it is still somewhat lesser known, but deserving of wider attention. In addition to the marimba, the soloist is also asked to improvise on low-octave Swiss almglocken. Boris Papandopulo's charming xylophone concerto in four movements first came to my attention though Ivana Bilic's recommendation in the Keyboard Committee Panel Discussion of PASIC 2009. I subsequently performed the USA premiere in 2011 and now pass it on with further recommendation.

The next three concertos are of my own commission. Richard Rodney Bennett's marimba concerto in two movements is perhaps my all-time favorite. The first movement is impressionistic, with echoes of his solo piece, After Syrinx II; the second movement is rhythmic and dramatic, featuring an athletic solo cadenza. Preceding this cadenza is an energetic orchestral interlude; the marimba's entrance should equal and continue the orchestra's sound and energy until reaching an abrupt halt and then ushering in a recapitulation of the first movement. An otherwise excellent recording by an Italian colleague is available on YouTube, failing only to heed the composer's instruction of tempo giusto, con gran energia, molto ritmico in the second movement cadenza. One further note: be sure that the solo part includes page 13a, which has been missing in some copies sold.

When Andrew Thomas composed his solo piece, Merlin, it was a continuation of some ideas he used in a chamber piece written for the New York Quintet, Dances for Five. I later expressed interest in a concerto, expecting something along the lines of Merlin with orchestra. In the meantime, however, Andrew had written The Great Spangled Fritillary for Marimolin; the four movements of Loving Mad Tom reflect that phase in his compositional style.

Libby Larsen's marimba concerto After Hampton was commissioned with a private consortium of orchestras and was the first example of a now-common funding model. One of the selling points in the piece's design was to feature the orchestra's percussion section in the third movement, in addition to the guest marimba soloist.

Bright Sheng's marimba concerto, Colors of Crimson, was written for Dame Evelyn Glennie, but recorded recently by Pius Cheung and the Hong Kong Philharmonic, with the composer conducting. Kurt Schwersik wrote his marimba concerto for Colin Currie and the Scottish Ensemble, featuring a solo violin along with the solo marimba and string ensemble. A recording is not yet available, but there is a video documentary of a first rehearsal meeting of the two soloists, with excerpts from the piece.

For those seeking a more "accessible" concerto, Satoshi Yagisawa's marimba concerto is thoroughly tonal and Neo-Classical in style, a piece that any non-musician could love. I reviewed Robert
Grosot's concerto for marimba and vibraphone in the March 2014 issue of Percussive Notes; of potential interest here are the versions for orchestra, concert band, "tango ensemble," or piano reduction accompaniment.

My most recent concerto premiere was Christopher Theofanidis' marimba concerto, commissioned by a consortium of university wind ensembles led by the University of Illinois. Although intended for Robert van Sice, I was asked to fill in on short notice for the premiere and thoroughly enjoyed the experience. This work offers an unusual glimpse into the mind of the soloist, via the Prelude and Aria surrounding the typical three-movement concerto structure.
CADENZA

con gran energia, molto ritmico

il tema, bel march.
SENZA MISURA (SUS TO M')
freely as cadenza

back of the mallets

ordinary
SOLO MARIMBA

III. Vivace $\frac{j}{ \text{= 180} }$

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