

Notes for : Concerto Grosso

For many years, the two neoclassic works that fascinated me were Stravinsky's *Pulcinella Suite* from 1924 and Bloch's *Concerto Grosso No. 1* from 1924. Both works explore the opposition of concertino vs. ripieno groups: in the Stravinsky the solo strings oppose both the paired winds (oboe, bassoon, horn) and the string section, while in the Bloch the piano is an obbligato to the string orchestra. I think that the effect is analogous to the control of weight with organ stops in that keyboard repertoire.

In my *Concerto "Dies Irae"* for piano trio and wind ensemble I had a chance to explore some of the dichotomies, however, with less consistent homogeneity as in the new *Concerto Grosso*. Here, the string orchestra is augmented by a different solo string in each of the three movements: violoncello for the first, viola for the second, and violin for the third, with the coda of Movement III using all three string soloists. The obbligato piano is present throughout the piece and participates in a manner similar to the Bloch, carving out unique passages as well as supporting the strings and accompanying the cello solos.

A few elements from traditional baroque concerto grosso structures are used here: the idea of a tutti ritornello, which periodically reoccurs, delineates the sections of the piece; however, this ritornello develops and has great timbral variety with variable overlapping phrase structure and alignment of the melodic materials. This procedure sounds complicated, but it is necessary to preserve the illusion of temporal unity that characterizes the neoclassic style. In Movement III the procedure is combined with the deconstruction of the ominous "Dies Irae" which collapses in the repeated "Ds," a death knell, in the coda. The piece ends with an Amen in resignation.

Although a large string orchestra, like the string section of a modern symphony orchestra, would be desired, a minimum of 4-4-3-3-1 will work as the ripieno strings. It is assumed that the solo cello, viola, and violin would be separate from the group. Also, the single contrabass should have the low "C." extension.

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