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Masks: chamber concerto for violoncello and ensemble

by

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# A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF MUSIC IN COMPOSITION

**DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC** 

CALGARY, ALBERTA DECEMBER, 1999

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0-612-49705-4



#### **Abstract**

Masks is a chamber concerto for solo cello with an ensemble of winds, brass and percussion. The piece has three movements which are played as a single continuous entity. All three movements share the same motivic material. The total duration of the piece is approximately 17 minutes. The thesis also contains an analytical essay.

The underlying issue in *Masks* is the exploration of identity. The roles of the soloist, the individuals within the ensemble, or the whole ensemble are constantly redefined and developed throughout the piece.

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#### 1. Introduction

Masks revolves around the exploration of identity. The title, Masks, refers to the role playing which is at the heart of the musical relationships between the soloist and the ensemble in this piece. The drama of the music arises in part from the possibilities of interchange between soloist and group, soloist and individuals, individuals within the group, and sub—groups within the ensemble. This, at times, involves reversal of roles: soloist becoming accompanist, or accompanist becoming soloist. It may also involve undermining the notion of 'soloist' entirely by embedding a soloistic line within an overwhelmingly group oriented texture.

This piece is concerned throughout with the continual development of a single set of materials. Although there is not an extra-musical program underlying the form of the piece, *Masks* can be compared to a filmic narrative. Musical events are arranged sequentially, according to linear processes of development. As in film, the narrative flow is sometimes disrupted by premature statements or repetitions of material.

Defining a concerto as a work for one or more soloists and ensemble is an oversimplification. Similarly, defining it as a multi-movement work which is driven entirely by the dialogue or conflict between solo and group forces is also misleading. The concerto as a genre has become something more broadly defined. The work may have a single soloist, or all of the instruments in an ensemble may be treated as soloists. Dialogue and conflict may or may not be the central issues in a concerto. The lack of these elements brings into question the role of the

soloist as the focal point of the music.

Although the dichotomy of soloist and orchestra remained the dominant paradigm, that relationship has been called into question as composers give more prominent roles to soloists within the ensemble. The primacy of a single voice was also challenged by the use of intricately woven, dense textures. Elliott Carter addressed both possibilities with works intended for orchestra, such as the *Piano Concerto* and *Violin Concerto*, as well as for ensemble, with his *Oboe Concerto* and *Clarinet Concerto*. The broad range of roles available to the soloist and to the ensemble in a concerto opens many interesting possibilities for formal relationships that give rise to the structure of *Masks*.

#### 2. Background and Models

#### 2.1 Instrumentation

The concerto is no longer solely an orchestral phenomenon. Some concerti have been drawn into the domain of chamber music by a reduction of the size of the ensemble, as well as by a greater emphasis on the individual voices within it. These concerti are as much for an ensemble of virtuousi as they are for a single soloist. Alban Berg's *Kammerkonzert* for Violin, Piano and 13 Winds is the ideal of this. It is a piece which not only displays two primary soloists, but also an ensemble of virtuosi. This genre is ideally suited to the ensembles dedicated to new music. Composers including György Ligeti (*Kammerkonzert*), György Kurtág (*Quasi una Fantasia*), Brian Ferneyhough (*La Chute d'Icare* and *Terrain*), Elliott Carter (*Oboe Concerto* and *Clarinet Concerto*) and Stravinsky (*Movements for Piano and Orchestra*) have since written works that

fit into this mold. The choice of the instrumentation of *Masks* is partially a response to another important development of the 20th Century concerto.

Even though the instrumentalists in *Masks* are treated as soloists, the cello remains the primary focus of the dramatic action. This is not only a function of how the music is constructed or what type of persona the soloist takes on, but also the instrumentation of the ensemble. I placed the soloist in the foreground not only through the weight given to the material it plays, but also because within the ensemble it is timbrally unique.

In deciding upon the instrumentation of the piece, I took programming issues into consideration. *Masks* is oriented toward the new music ensemble ideal: elaborate in design and demanding in execution, it is suited to an ensemble of virtuosi specializing in the performance of contemporary music. The ensemble can also be extracted from the instrumentation of either full orchestra or wind ensemble. This opens possibilities for having the piece programmed by any of these performing organizations without requiring reorchestration.

My decision to use an instrumentation which targets different types of performing groups is in some ways modeled on the flexibility of Ligeti's *Piano Concerto*. He provides the possibility of having the piece performed by either a new music ensemble, or by full orchestra. The ensemble is left the option of using solo strings or a relatively small number of players in each of the string sections. This versatility is a very practical consideration. It enables a somewhat broader range of performance groups to program a work which, though ideally suited to an ensemble of soloists, is also effective for a larger group.

#### 2.2 Models

Masks is positioned between traditional and contemporary models of concerto design.

The conflict between these designs is an important facet of the drama and form of the piece. The first is the traditional model that treats the soloist and the ensemble as opposed forces, which are either in conflict or in dialogue with each other. The traditional elements in Masks come from classical and Italian baroque models. The second is the contemporary model, in which the richness of detail places the voices within the ensemble on a more equal footing with that of the soloist.

#### 2.3 The Classical Model

The form and texture of the piece make reference to the classical concerto. The aspects of this model which are of particular importance in *Masks* are: a three movement form with fast—slow—fast tempo relationships, a balanced and transparent texture, and a dialectical approach to the unfolding of materials. The piece does not incorporate sonata form, either within each movement or as a double—function form. The architecture rests instead on the contrast and juxtaposition of materials.

The piece conforms to the classical three-movement form, with the addition of a long, relatively slow introduction to the first movement. The piece is played as a single, continuous entity, without breaks between movements. The material and rhetoric of the piece are developed in different phases in each of the three movements, forming an integral whole in which all of the movements are bound together on many levels.

The texture of the piece is designed to shift between different levels of clarity and density throughout. At one end of the textural spectrum are passages which are unaccompanied or have minimal interaction between ensemble and soloist. At the other extreme there are passages with an extremely dense texture. In the middle of the spectrum, levels of interaction are closely tied to the Classical model. This includes textures which emphasize a balanced interaction between soloist and ensemble, in either a foreground/ background manner or in a dialogue between the soloist and a member of the ensemble. An example of this can be seen in the interchange between the cello, first clarinet, tom–toms and first flute in mm. 109–114. In this example, the soloist is prominent throughout, but the counterpoint with the other voices provides musical commentary on the action of the soloist.

Passages which present the cello soloist with little or no accompaniment function like cadenzas. There are four passages which feature an absent or extremely transparent ensemble part, and which have an improvisatory character, much like a cadenza. They are the opening solo (mm. 5–52), the solo break in the first movement (mm. 138–156), the transitional solo between the first and second movements (mm.188–196), and the final section of the piece (mm. 430–end).

The cadenza in a classical concerto is usually an opportunity for virtuosic display through improvisation on material from the piece. Formally, it is a prolongation of the dominant before the piece finally returns home to the tonic. In *Masks*, the extended solo passages mentioned above possess some of the attributes of a traditional cadenza, but not others. These passages are characterized by virtuosic display. The freedom in these passages comes from the flexibility of rhythmic content, rather than from improvisation. However, they do not fullfill the formal requirements of traditional cadenzas because they occur in places which are atypical according to the classical expectation that the cadenza signals the closing section of a movement.

Instead, the functions of these passages are expository, transitional, and synthetic. In the same way that the classical cadenza is traditionally an improvised (or composed) development of the material of the movement, the opening cello solo in *Masks* (mm. 5–52) is composed of all the fundamental motivic elements in the piece. Unlike its classical predecessor it is not a continuation of this material, it is its exposition.

The second and third solos are both transitional. The most conventional of the two is the second (mm. 138–156). As in the classical model, this passage signals the final section of the movement. This section is not conclusive. It introduces (or fully realizes, as will be discussed later) a thematic element that is left as an open question to be addressed in the final movement. The third solo provides a link to the second movement, and is a reflection on the violent incompleteness of the first movement.

The final solo section acts as a dissolution of the piece as a whole. It is an undoing of the developmental path taken by the rest of the piece. Motives are subsumed into the downward sweep of the glissando; even the repeated note gesture is no longer stable (m. 457).

Fig. 1 - m. 457



Both the opening and closing solo sections are peppered with brief interpolations from the ensemble. In this way they are similar to operatic recitative. At times, they provide opportunities for reflection on the material or on the transformations that have occurred (as in mm. 188–196). At other times, however, the line which unfolds in the cello part is clearly the central part of the narrative, pushing the development of materials forward with supporting commentary from the ensemble (as in the final section).

#### 2.4 The Italian Baroque Model

Fragmentary references to particular material create formal coherence either within a movement (the second movement particularly), or the piece as a whole. This technique makes reference to the ritornello in the Baroque concerto. While not pervasive, repetitions of musical ideas are used to underpin the form of the piece.

The repeated note material in mm. 1–2 is the most important element to be used in this way. In addition to being developed more fully in the second half of the first movement and in its varied form in the third movement, this material is also stated in its unadorned, homorhythmic state in mm. 186–88, and again in mm. 385–87.

In each case, this idea signals an important formal event. The initial statement introduces the most fundamental material in the piece. The second statement interrupts the culmination of the development of this material which occurs during the fast part of the opening movement, and signals the end of the first movement. Because it is broken off in progress, it calls greater attention to its restatement (the third occurrence of this idea), and therefore to the continued development of the material in the final sections of the piece. The third statement also serves as a

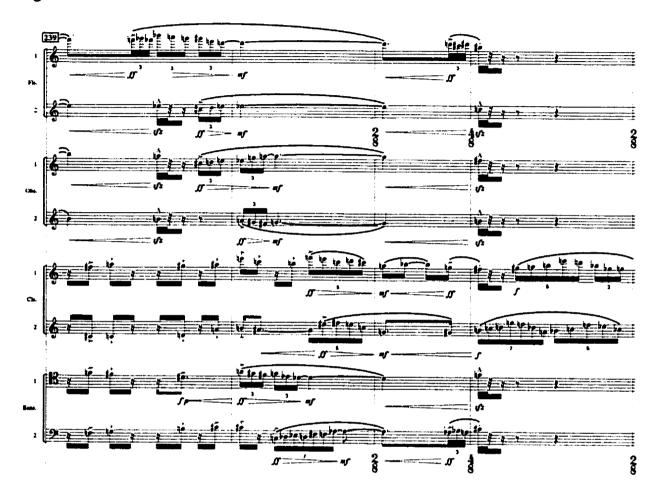
linchpin between major sections, but is redefined in its function. Although it interrupts the musical flow, it also initiates the final development of the repeated-note material.

A strong connection is established between the second and third statements of this material. The first measure and first three beats of the second measure of both statements of this fragment (mm. 186–187, and 385–386) are identical; this is the only literal repetition in the piece. It is intended to create the impression of rejoining a strand of thought which was abruptly interrupted at the end of the first movement. The trajectory of the piece as a whole depends on this feature. It draws attention to the return to the tempo of the first movement, and a more fully evolved treatment of its material, closing the process of development. In the same way that filmic narrative uses techniques such as crosscutting or ellipsis to manipulate the flow of time within a film, *Masks* uses departures from the sequential development to emphasize aspects of the dramatic trajectory.

A more literal use of ritornello is found in the second movement. The movement opens with a canonic gesture. Incomplete statements of this idea return in m. 208 and 212–13. As was frequent in the 17th C. treatment of ritornello, the repetitions of material from the ritornello are partial, while the initial statement is much more full. Once we hear a full statement of the material, it is necessary to only make brief references to it afterward to define the form.

Unlike the Baroque ideal of ritornello, this material is expanded upon and developed in mm. 238–244. The six note fragment which is the basis of the melody is treated canonically (as it is in the ordinary occurrences of the ritornello) beginning in m. 238, and is eventually altered through the extraction and addition of pitches in mm. 240–244.

Fig. 2 – mm. 239–242



#### 2.5 Contemporary Models

A more recent model for this piece is Alban Berg's *Kammerkonzert*. *Masks* has two important resemblances to this work. First, the instrumentation is close to that of the Berg. Second, both pieces make use of motivic materials as integrating factors in the composition. Both pieces involve an ensemble of winds and brass (with percussion added in *Masks*), and soloists which are timbrally distinct.

The motto at the beginning of the Berg, which refers to the initials of Schoenberg, Webern, and himself, serves as the basis for the pitch structures throughout the three movements of the piece. In *Masks*, the opening cello solo functions similarly to Berg's motto by introducing many of the fundamental motivic elements. The difference is that the cello presents an extended melodic statement, while in the Berg, the soloists and horn simply provide a few terse remarks. The brief flourish at the opening of *Masks* is a fragmentary presentation of problems to be worked out during the course of the piece. In contrast to Berg's *Kammerkonzert*, this gesture is material presented in its most developed, rather than its most simple state.

An important aspect the architecture of the piece is the mediation between textures which have clearly defined, hierarchical roles (foreground, middleground, and background) and those in which the density and intricacy of the music suppress that hierarchy. Innovations in the treatment of texture in this manner were made by György Ligeti. In his *Cello Concerto*, and *Double Concerto*, the soloists are incorporated into the micropolyphony typical of his work from the 1960's and 1970's. The solo voice becomes part of the larger texture rather than being a consistently primary voice. In his *Kammerkonzert*, all of the instrumentalists are soloists.

Despite the virtuosity required of them, they are almost always perceived as one component of

the texture. They are all equal in importance.

Elliott Carter explored similar avenues in his *Piano Concerto*. The density of the music plays an important role in detracting from the soloist. This is due, in part, to the presence of a concertino of soloists (a reference to the Baroque Concerto Grosso). Rather than constantly immersing the soloist within the density of the orchestra, the voices of the concertino vie for attention with the piano solo through the intricacy and virtuosity of their respective parts. Dramatic tension results from the struggle of a solo voice to be heard within a more massive texture.

In *Masks* each of the three movements culminates in a passage consisting of a very dense texture, each of which differs in the way it incorporates individual voices into a texture. In mm. 172-185 of the first movement, density of texture overwhelms individuality. The relationship of the soloist to the ensemble recalls the examples by Carter and Ligeti mentioned above. In mm. 253-274, the texture maintains the clarity of the foreground, middleground and background layers, while gradually accumulates more density. The third movement juxtaposes one passage, which focuses on active solos passed from one instrument to another (mm. 411-421), with another passage, which uses the entire ensemble except the soloist (mm. 422-430).

The fabric of the passage in the first movement is dominated by a mass of hocketed voices, all of which share a common sixteenth—note subdivision. Disjunct melodic fragments which have a more varied rhythmic structure are inlayed into the sixteenth note texture. These fragments are brief flourishes, passed from one instrument to another (oboe, clarinet, horn, trombone, with brief flourishes in the cello), which are not allowed to break through the fabric of the sixteenth note material. They are often partially obscured by the sixteenth—note texture which envelops them. Presenting this material which is only partially perceivable becomes an issue

which requires, and eventually receives, further attention in the third movement.

In the second movement, a similar move toward density of texture occurs. However, in this movement the clarity of the foreground, middleground and background strata is maintained. Each layer follows its own process of accretion.

The melody played by the trumpet (beginning in m. 253) is the central voice in the texture. The horns are added (hn. 1 in m. 260 and hn. 2 in m. 266), giving this layer more mass. The middleground of the texture consists of thirty-second note quintuplet arpeggios (beginning in m. 254) and staccato chords passed between the winds and brass. The accumulation of these elements, culminating in mm. 267-269, creates a kind of mosaic of fragmentary gestures. The texture is supported by brief sustained notes and short phrases that act as a counterpoint to the primary melody. This is passed between the 2nd bassoon, horns and trombone in mm. 254-257. The last four bars of the section incorporate all of these elements into a single gesture which sweeps into the third movement.

In the last movement, progress toward density remains focused on individuals from within the ensemble. Rather than being supersaturated with activity, as at the end of the first movement, it is woven from overlapping virtuosic fragments played by individual instruments from within the ensemble. Each instrument adds one or two components of a much larger structure. Even the cello is only a contributor to the whole, albeit in a register which is very distinctive and soloistic.

#### 3. Architecture, Materials, Techniques

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#### 3.1 Form

In addition to similarity to the tripartite Classical and Italian Baroque models, *Masks* makes use of an arch form, which echoes that used by Bartók in works such as the *First Piano Concerto* and *Second Piano Concerto*. Though lacking the strict symmetry of these works, the first and third movements of *Masks* are both divided into two major sections. In both cases, each of the sections has a different tempo. The opening section of the first, and the final section of the third are both focused almost entirely on the unfolding of the solo cello line. The ascent of the cello in the first section is mirrored by its descent in the final section.

#### 3.2 Movements, Sections and Subsections

The first movement has four main sections: A-B-B!-A!. The sections correspond to the following measures:

A = mm. 1-53

B = mm. 54-104

 $B^1 = mm. 105-187$ 

 $A_1 = mm. 188-198$ 

The first section is a slow introduction (quarter = 72), the next two are in a tempo which is twice as fast (dotted-quarter = 144), and the last returns to the slower tempo. Each section has a

distinctive function.

The first subsection (A) introduces various facets of the persona of the soloist. The primary musical action in this section is carried by the solo cello. Most of the interaction between the soloist and the ensemble is restricted to imitative commentary on the action of the soloist. The slow glissando in the trombone part, mm. 30–31, is an imitation or echo of similar glissandi characteristic of the cello part, mm. 22 and 26–27. This type of interaction is also prominent in the call and response of the thirty–second note motives played by the soloist and the brass in mm. 36–39. In both cases, members of the ensemble are amplifying distinctive features of the solo part.

The repeated chords (mm. 1-2) and virtuosic flourish (mm. 3-4) provide glimpses of aspects of the piece as a whole. These fragmentary statements of material function in two ways: they introduce the ensemble as a group force, and they are a snapshot of the passage which builds to the highpoint of the dramatic/formal trajectory of the piece (mm. 411-429, which leads to the climax in m. 430). The function of this moment is similar to the use of foreshadowing in film.

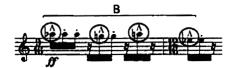
The fundamental musical materials are incorporated into the introduction (mm. 1–4) and in the solo cello line in the slow section (mm. 5–53). There are five primary pitch motives used throughout the piece. In addition, there are three textural or rhythmic ideas that, though less specifically defined, are important as unifying features.

Fig. 3 - Motives

A - neighbor tone motive - vc. m. 9



B - tpt. mm. 2-3



C - vc. mm. 205-208



D-(0, 2, 6) bsn. II, m. 4



E - (0,1,6) vc., mm. 12-13



F - (C+D) cl. II, m. 213



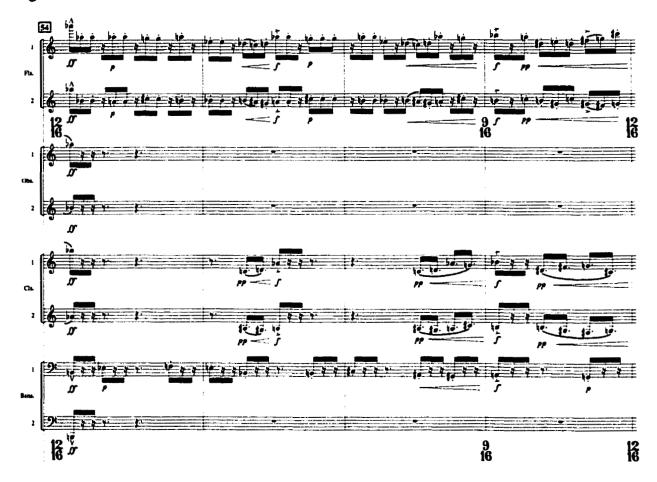
#### Rhythmic/Textural Ideas:

repeated notes
short-long rhythms
glissandi

The second section is focused on the interplay within the ensemble. The absence of the soloist allows the emphasis to remain on the relationships within the group. Duos and quartets are used in the exposition of the material based on the motives presented at the opening (mm. 1–2).

Three basic types of relationships evolve: homorhythmic, canonic and accompanying. For example, in mm. 54–57, homorhythmic relationships are used in the presentation of the foreground (flutes), and the middleground (clarinets), while the background is an accompanimental line played by the first bassoon.

Fig. 4 – mm. 54–57



The canonic texture is first introduced in mm. 65-66 in the first horn and trumpet.

Fig. 5 – hn. I, tpt., mm. 65–66



Three- and four-part examples can be seen in mm. 86-95.

The third section (B1) begins to explore the possibilities for dialogue between the soloist and the individuals within the ensemble. This relationship involves either the exchange of foreground lines, as among the cello and clarinet and flute parts in mm. 109–114, or the support of the soloist by a background line or texture, as in mm. 137–151.

Initially, the second movement refers to aspects of both the Classical and Baroque models. The formal design of the movement is A-B-A1-C. These sections correspond to the following measures:

A = mm. 199-229

B = mm. 230-244

A1 = mm. 245-252

C = mm. 253-274

The movement has the slowest tempo of the three (quarter note = 48, eighth-note = 96), and begins with an *arioso* quality. However, the quality of the solo voice is restrained by its tessitura. Rather than being placed in the tenor register which is often favored for singing lines, it is introduced in a fairly low register (beginning in m. 204), and unfolds by exploring the relatively weak mid-range of the instrument (through m. 212). It is passed to the English Horn in mm. 213–21 while the cello provides a transparent tremolo embellishment played *sul ponticello*. The melody returns to the cello in m. 245. During this final statement of this material, the cello plays *con molto vibrato* in a very high register, exaggerating the expressivity of the melody. Through the restraint of the first passage and the exaggeration of the last, it avoids the stereotype of the romantic slow movement.

The principal line in the final section of the movement is derived from material from the first movement. The intervals in the melody played by the trumpet in m. 253 (Fig. 6B) are a distorted version of the first 11 played by the cello in m. 5 (Fig. 6A - melody is shown from m. 10 to omit pitch repetitions). Intervals are altered according to specific operations in which some or all intervals are exchanged for others.

Fig. 6A - vc. mm. 10-13



Fig. 6B - tpt. mm. 253-258

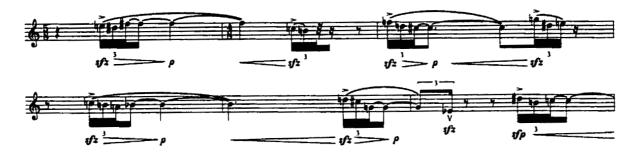


Figure 6C illustrates the process of tranformation from the original material in the cello part to the melody in the trumpet. The pattern of intervallic exchange is:

m2 = m2

M2 = m3

m3 = M3

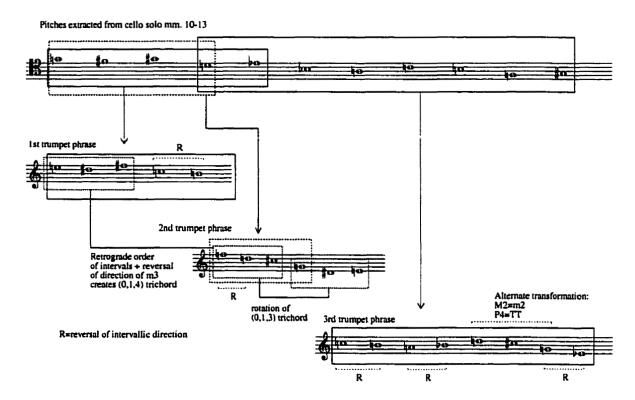
M3 = P4

P4 = M2

TT = TT

After applying this operation to the fragments in the original set, other operations were used to construct each phrase, including: inversion of the direction of intervals, repetition of cells, rotation of pitches within a cell.

Fig. 6C - transformation process



The third movement is a synthesis of the materials and procedures explored in the first two. It is divided into two main sections (mm. 275–384, and mm. 385–end). Each of these sections divides into two parts:

A = mm. 275-345

 $A_1 = mm. 345-384$ 

B = mm. 385-429

C = mm. 430-end

Although the same basic tempo (quarter-note = 120) is maintained throughout the section, the overall fast-slow-fast structure of the three movements is implied. The second subsection (mm. 345–384) begins with a more expansive rhythmic character than the outer sections, due to its shift in focus to a slower subdivision (eighths and quarter-note triplets). This section echoes the ebb and flow of simplicity to complexity, and transparency to density that is pervasive in the piece.

The second part of the section, beginning in m. 362, marks a return to some aspects of the intricately woven contrapuntal texture introduced in the second part of the first movement.

However, this time there is a more highly developed approach to the material and a clarified relationship between foreground, middleground and background elements. This part is a synthesis of not only the material but also the processes of development used in the other movements.

The polyrhythmic material presented in a fragmentary or opaque way in the climax of the first movement (m. 177-185) is finally placed in the foreground and more fully realized beginning in m. 388. Instruments within the ensemble are given equal or greater opportunity for display as soloists. Just as the soloist and ensemble are given separate introductions in the first movement, they are also given their own farewells in the last.

The second section is divided into two main subsections. The first is concerned almost entirely with the ensemble. The music is dominated by a densely woven polyrhythmic texture (mm. 388–411), and later by short, brilliant fragments (mm.412–421) played by woodwind duos and quartets. This subsection culminates with a massive outburst of stuttering sixteenth–notes in the winds and *pesante* lines in the brass. The woodwind texture is an intensified version of the texture at the end of the first movement. This is the point of greatest density in the piece.

The closing subsection (mm. 430-end) is a single gesture of descent and decay. It reverses

the process of accumulation which concludes all of the other major sections. The soloist begins in an extremely high register, almost imperceptible among the piercing woodwind clusters in the same octave. As it slowly descends, its voice becomes more prominent, and the listener gradually becomes more aware of its presence. It also becomes more frenzied until it reaches the bottom of its natural range.

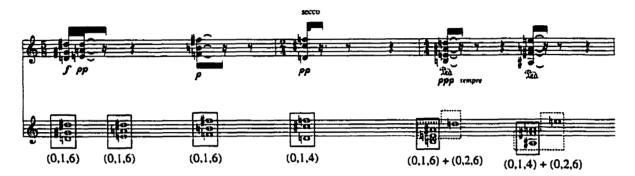
The final disintegration of the piece is accomplished through the distortion of the voice of the cello. As the instrument is tuned down to continue the glissando beyond the low C, the string becomes progressively more slack, and the resulting sound less focused. This continues until the string is too loose to produce a focused sound. The instrument has essentially lost its voice.

This dissolution is mirrored in the ensemble. The last six outbursts from the ensemble are also structured as a subtractive gesture. Beginning with chords consisting of the full ensemble (13 players), each subsequent chord subtracts a certain number of players from the previous one. The number of instruments playing is reduced according to a reversed fibonacci sequence: 13 players are reduced to 8, 8 to 5, and so on. The final note of the piece is a single blow from the bass drum.

#### 3.3 Harmony

The harmony of the piece revolves around the intervallic content of the primary motives. Vertical sonorities as well as large scale horizontal movement are determined by these relationships. An example of this can be seen in mm. 207–209.

Fig. 7 - vibes, mm. 207-209



The three chords played in m. 207 are (0,1,6) trichords – motive E. The tetrachords in m. 209 also consist of (0,1,6) trichords, with the addition of a fourth note determined by creating a (0,2,6) trichord from the tritone. The lower three notes of the first chord in the measure form a (0,1,6) trichord, while the D added on top forms a (0,2,6) trichord with the E and A sharp. The chord in m. 208, a (0,1,4) trichord, is a hybrid of both trichords, and creates a transitional sonority between them. The major third is derived from the (0,2,6) chord, while the major seventh comes from the (0,1,6) collection.

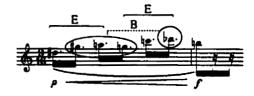
The relationships of the pitches within the motives often govern the large-scale harmonic foundation. An example of this may be seen in the trajectory of the opening melody in the cello part. The first subsection of this passage is divided into three periods (mm. 7-19, 22-32, 32-46). Each period is initiated by a single structural pitch and its lower (1st period) or upper (2nd and 3rd periods) neighbor. The structural pitch for the first (beginning in m. 7) is G, the second (m. 22) is A, and the third (m. 32) is D sharp. These pitches outline a (0, 2, 6) trichord (motive D).

### 3.4 Interlocking Motivic Material

All of the motives have features which are interlocking. This is the foundation of the motivic unity of the piece. Motive A, a minor second, is the most fundamental. While used motivically in its own right, it is also a feature of motives B, C and E. In addition, it is an important building block in the construction of the melody based on motive D.

A second interlocking feature is the (0,1,6) trichord which is contained by motive B and motive E. This is an important factor in the mediation between the triplet and duplet materials presented in the first movement. This can be seen in the first flute part in mm. 125–126.

Fig. 8 – fl., mm. 125–126



The construction of a brief thematic figure based on motive D is one of the developmental trajectories which is a skeletal part of the first movement. The motive is a (0, 2, 6) trichord. It is presented in its isolated form by the cello in m. 26.

Fig. 9 - vc., m. 26



The theme formed from this motive is presented in full by the English Horn in m. 158.

Fig. 10 - E.H., m. 158



This melodic idea is constructed in three segments: a major 3rd, a major 3rd + a major 2nd (0,2,6), and a tritone. In other words, the 1st interval of motive D, the trichord itself, and the outer interval of motive D. The bottom note of each segment is shifted upward a half-step.

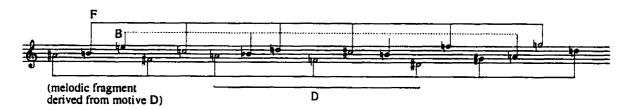
The theme is constructed in three stages. The canonic passage in the flutes and clarinets (mm. 101–103) is the first stage. The first four notes of the gesture in each voice (A, G#, E, G) is the inverted outline of the half step movement which determines the starting pitches of each segment in the theme. The major third between G# and E will become the first interval in the second segment of the theme. The second stage is the first six notes of the canonic entries of the cello and oboe I in m. 131. The three half steps remain intact, emphasized by accents. A chain of major thirds is created. In the final stage of the development of the theme, the first major third remains, the note a whole step above the second third is added, and the third is expanded to a tritone. This is fully stated in the English Horn solo in m. 158.

Once this theme has been fully constructed, it is subjected to further development. This is anticipated by the opening flourish in mm. 3–4. The septuplet in m. 3, played by Flute I, contains the same three segments (M3, M3 + M2, TT) as the English Horn solo in m. 158. However, the contour has been completely altered through the use of registral displacement beginning in mm. 170–171. The 3rd and 4th notes, and 6th and 7th notes of the figure are

transposed up an octave. Similarly, the oboe further distorts the figure in mm. 177–178. In addition to being inverted, the 3rd, 5th and 6th notes are transposed down an octave, while the 7th is transposed up an octave. In m. 177, the cello first states this figure in the version which appears in the flute part in m. 3.

During the second part of the third movement (beginning in m. 385), all of the motivic materials are once again combined within a single line. In contrast with the discrete motives presented by the solo cello at the beginning, the motives are nested within one another to create new lines and intervallic relationships. This can be seen in the line shared by the horns and trombone in mm. 412–421. The seventeen pitches in this line can be divided into three motives (B, D and F).

Fig. 11



This technique creates a synthesis of the motives which were explored and developed in prior sections of the piece.

#### 3.5 Systems of Development

During the course of the piece, the motives evolve continuously. The types of motivic development used range from processes which are reasonably transparent to the listener to those which are more veiled, designed to obscure connections of the original kernel to its final form. Some techniques used in transforming motivic material are fragmentation and repetition of specific features, intervallic transformation, and octave displacement. Many of the large-scale connections within movements, or in the piece as a whole are shaped by the trajectories of the development of motivic strands.

The most prominent motivic element is the repeated note figure which begins the piece. This motive is an important part of the textural fabric throughout the first (mm. 1–53, and mm. 54–198) and third movements (mm.275–384, and 385–end). It is used as foreground, middleground and background material. It is also frequently combined with either motive A or B, and is stated at numerous rhythmic levels. In each case, it is presented at one or more fixed levels, and generally uses fragmentation and repetition.

During the opening cello solo, repeated note textures occur in eighth-note and thirty second-note subdivisions. Both are first introduced in mm. 9-10, and are used in combination with motive A. The beginning of each of the first three periods focuses on the eighth-note subdivision (mm. 9, 23-24, 32). See Fig. 3A (m. 9).

The thirty second—note subdivision gains prominence in motives played by the brass in

mm. 36–39. From m. 40 on, the figuration in the cello part is dominated by this material. Added repetitions of the repeated notes and reiterations of the neighbor notes are used to create extended phrases based on the motive. This can be seen in mm. 46–47.

Fig. 12 - mm. 46-47



The second part of the first movement exhibits a different approach to the use of repeated notes. This elements is linked to motive B throughout this section. Rather than lengthening the phrase by adding repetitions, the three-note cell is fragmented and shifted to create lines. Phrases are built from fragmentary bursts of single notes or from two or three repeated notes.

In the third movement, repeated notes are initially presented in simple textures, mostly in a 2:1 ratio (beginning in m. 275). As the movement progresses, this relationship becomes more complex. The first section of this movement reaches its climax as multiple levels of subdivision are compounded (mm. 379–384).

This paves the way for the final development of this motive in the second section of the movement. Lines incorporate repeated notes at three rhythmic levels. The subdivision fluctuates between duplets, quintuplets, and sextuplets.

Fig. 13 – obs., mm. 389–390



The more obvious developmental aspects include the extension of motives through the repetition of a single aspect of that motive. This is extremely common in all movements. One example is the sixteenth-note passagework in the cello part during the first part of the third movement (mm. 275-289). The initial seven-note motive (Fig. 14) has three fundamental features which present possibilities for development: the repeated notes, the half-step appoggiatura, and the rhythmic profile of the figure (a syncopated initiation which pushes toward the on-beat appoggiatura).

Fig. 14 – vc., mm. 277–278



Passages such as mm. 313-318 demonstrate how this figure is extended.

The series of intervals is subjected to further manipulations which gradually filter out certain identifying features of the original material. These techniques involve retaining some aspects of the original, while obliterating others. An example of this is the retention of all of the intervals of the motive combined with the reversal of some aspects of contour. A melodic motive which contains a rising major third followed by a falling minor second (such as C - E - D#) could be altered by changing the falling m2 to a rising m2 (C - E - F). Thus, a (0, 1, 4) trichord becomes a (0, 1, 5) trichord. The rising M3 common to both motives creates a perceivable link between the original and its altered version while allowing the possibilities of the material to expand. A perfect fourth now becomes part of the intervallic/harmonic implications of the motive.

### 4. Conclusion

I view *Masks* as a synthesis of traditional and more recent models. I intended to create something which is flexible and able to fulfill many possible needs, both in terms of reception by different kinds of audiences and in terms of the complex demands related to programming contemporary music. Most of all, it was an opportunity for me to use the conventional expectations which are part of this genre as a filter for my own ideas. It was my goal to create a piece which would have references that would be familiar enough to the audience to give them a sense of orientation, but that would also use those references as objects to be explored, deconstructed, and transformed.

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## Appendix A: Instrumentation

| 2 Flutes                                 |
|--|
| 2 Oboes (2nd doubling English Horn in F) |
| 2 Clarinets in B flat                    |
| 2 Bassoons                               |
| 2 Horns in F                             |
| 1 Trumpet in C                           |
| 1 Trombone                               |
| 1 Percussion:                            |
|  |
| Small Suspended Cymbal                   |
| Large Suspended Cymbal                   |
| Tam-tam                                  |
|  |
| Woodblock                                |
| Snare Drum                               |
| Bass Drum                                |
|  |

Violoncello solo

5 Tom-toms

Vibraphone

Glockenspiel

Marimba

Duration: ca. 17'

# **NOTE TO USERS**

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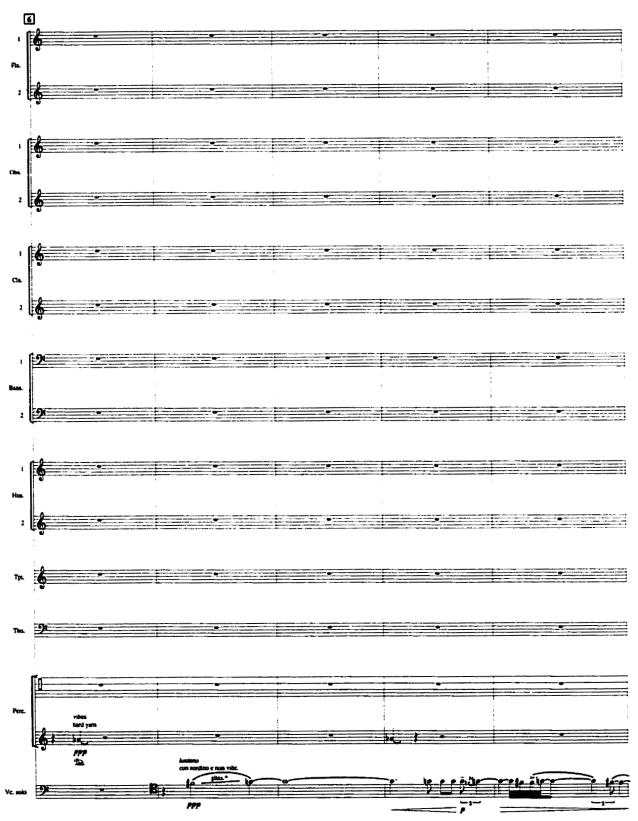
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**UMI** 

#### chamber concerto for violoncello solo and mixed ensemble



å 1999 Chrusopher Wendell Asse



\* All glissand should begin immediately at the beginning of the note they originate from, and should last the entire duration of that note,

