

Concerto Italiano (Looking Back)

Concerto Italiano arose from my growing interest in juxtaposing and combining traditional techniques with elements of contemporary music. Elements of Baroque music have served as my principal source of thematic and structural inspiration for this work – in particular, two of George Frederic Handel's Italian operas: *Alcina* and *Ottone*.

The Concerto is divided into three movements, which are three free reinterpretations of these three arias originally written for *castratti*:

- 1) "Dell'onda ai Fieri Moti" (War Aria from *Ottone*)
- 2) "Credete al Mio Dolore" (Love Aria from *Alcina*)
- 3) "Vorrei Vendicarmi" (War Aria from *Alcina*)

Building upon these three arias, I have created recognizable melodic cells and polyrhythmic combinations within a stable, Baroque-influenced time structure and bitonal harmonies over a traditional foundation.

The score is complex, as one would expect in a contemporary concerto, but not indecipherable. Similarly, the timbric possibilities of the recorder and the guitar have been thoroughly exploited, in some cases supported by the orchestration and in others opposed by it, but always within the limits of conventional writing for each instrument. The *Concerto Italiano* thus acquires a dual character, at once traditional and contemporary, maintaining a coherent narrative which is elaborated over a harmonic and melodic foundation that may be called non-atonal.

In order to shed light on the ideas behind this Concerto and my motivations for composing it, it may help to mention certain factors and subjective phenomena which I believe define the work. In my opinion, there is a great deal of confusion today about the objectives of contemporary music and the elements it has at its disposal. In the absence of a single unifying tendency or a specific defining style, young composers have been forced to choose between continuing along the path of experimentation or returning to a classical framework. Some of us have felt unable to continue conforming to the aesthetic models that have dominated classical music in recent decades. "Looking back" is perhaps the only viable alternative: re-examining the past, working with classical (horizontal and vertical) structures and concepts, and rehabilitating traditional views of musical expressiveness.

I believe artistic creation is primarily an intuitive phenomenon, although I certainly don't wish to deny the intellectual dimension of music. When I began writing this Concerto, I wanted to create a dual work in the sense that it would be both a product of instinct and a result of formal reflections on structure and development. I have chosen to give the Concerto a classical formal character, with defined structure and development, as well as cadenzas; I have also made use of traditional techniques such as counterpoint, fugues, and functional-harmonic development. Above all, I have taken care to avoid the impression of randomness, ensuring that the sounds conform to a plan and follow an organization that reflects their inherent relationships and correspondences. Without this

previous organization, the music would lack all expressive power and would amount to little more than haphazard forms in space. In short, I have attempted to create a solid musical structure that governs the piece from beginning to end.

Twenty-five years ago the historian Leonard Meyer wrote prophetically that “the coming period will be characterized not by linear development but rather by the coexistence of a multiplicity of widely differing styles.” Very little has occurred that would cause us to question Meyer’s vision; it could even be said that today’s music expresses the general spirit of our age. That is, it reflects a complete lack of consensus. In contemporary consciousness, music has retained its pluralistic and decentralized character. Nothing has changed.

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