RICE UNIVERSITY

Toccata e Corale

by

Brian Richard Nelson

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE DOCTOR OF MUSICAL ARTS

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HOUSTON, TEXAS
DECEMBER 2010
ABSTRACT

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Toccata e Corale is an eight minute work scored for full orchestra. The title represents the two main parts of the work. The opening toccata section is named after the keyboard works of the Renaissance and Baroque, which are characterized by fast moving, virtuosic, imitative, and varied material. The transitional middle section is an expressive adagio focusing on lush string writing with the melody in the violins. The final section begins with a chorale first presented in the brass, accompanied by fast moving scalar lines in the strings and woodwinds. The piece concludes with a brief recapitulation of the toccata and adagio sections before a "Grand Pause", and a final presentation of chorale in C within the coda.

The form of the work is influenced by the third movement of Witold Lutoslawski's Concerto for Orchestra entitled "Passacaglia, Toccata e Corale." Lutoslawski skillfully combines three different musical textures into one cohesive movement through the use of melodic and structural motivic connections. This piece attempts to achieve the same cohesive whole through similar techniques. The work develops from the material presented in the first 28 measures. The opening melody contains half step motions used throughout the work, both melodically and structurally. The top note in the opening harmony and melody in the violins, flutes, and piccolo starts on C♯, which is an important melodic pitch in the toccata. The C♯ also serves a structural purpose later in the work as the tonal center for the complete presentation of the chorale, starting in measure 154. The C♯ is used as a structural chromatic upper neighbor to C, which is the ultimate arrival pitch and harmony in the coda, starting in measure 212. The melodic contour in the adagio section, in turn, is developed from the opening melody's alternating, arpeggiated, and scalar motions, but the harmony used in the adagio anticipates the chorale's harmonic sound world. In this way each section contributes musically to every following section, creating a cohesiveness that binds the different musical textures present in the work.
I want to thank my parents for all the love and support through the years that has enabled me to reach the goal of finishing my dissertation. I also want to thank Rice University for generously funding my D.M.A. program through which this dissertation is the culmination of my composition studies at the Shepherd School of Music.
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Maestoso \( \frac{4}{4} = 108 \)

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