



Four Commentaries

for piano and violoncello

Nigel Morgan

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About the music

During 2007 I had the opportunity to hear performances of three entirely different compositions of music for cello and piano: Shostakovich's Sonata, Alexander Goehr's Fantasie and a revelatory performance of three of Beethoven's Cello Sonatas. Following the Beethoven experience I felt I could no longer sit on the fence deliberating about this challenging combination of sonorities and chose to write a preliminary work that explored how my own musical preoccupations might react to the cello and piano duo.

Four Commentaries was written with Beethoven's F major sonata Op.5 No.1 open on my desk. On the first page of Beethoven's score it became obvious that sequential harmonic and melodic movement was something largely absent within my musical style. My first task was to attempt my own expression of such sequential movement as a building block of a composition. Furthermore, a comparison with this early sonata and the mid period Op.69 in A Major showed that Beethoven developed a sophisticated approach to voice exchanges, shifts of register, changing of rhythms and articulations. I have tried to follow a similar path: the piece opening with the cello occupying the acoustic space between the treble and bass registers of piano and then gradually exploiting all kinds of textural relationships and combinations.

All that said the work is not a set of commentaries on Beethoven's sonatas – that is perhaps a project for the future. The subject of commentary here is the first movement of my own first Concerto for orchestra (2004). Each commentary looks at the melodic material of the music focusing in turn on a different musical element. These elements are expressed using the celebrated descriptions of composer Sam Richards, descriptions I continue to find a source of inspiration and challenge. They provide a kind of subtitle to each commentary.

The work is dedicated to Martin Roscoe and Moray Welsh whose performance at the Beverley Chamber Music Festival 2007 I was privileged to hear.

... rising, falling, hovering

agilmente ♩ = 65

Cello

Piano

mp *cresc.* *mf*

mf *mp* *cresc.* *mf*

5

mp *mf* *mp*

10

enfatico

mp *mf* *mf* *cresc.*

15

pizz

f

f

mp

mf

mf (en dehors)

poco staccato

8

22

arco

mp semplice

mf

cresc.

mp

mf

f

8

27

deliberato

f

sub. mp

mf

mp

cresc.

mp

mf

cresc.

f

mp

32

f *mp* *mf* *mp* *f*

f *mp* *mf* *cresc.* *f*

37

a tempo *mp*

cantando e poco meno *piu mosso* *allargando*

mp *mf* *p* *p*

44

mf *p* *mp* *p* *mf* *mp*

sub. *mp* *p* *mp* *mf* *f*

mp *p* *mp* *mf* *f* *mf*

poco ritard. ed allargando *attacca*

... rate of change

48 *innocente* ♩ = 56

Cello

Piano

f *deliberato* *mp* *gracile* *cresc.*

f *mp* *mf*

52

articolato *delicato* *grazioso*

mf *sub. mp* *p* *mp*

en dehors

57

mf *f* *mf*

mf *f*

62 *articolato*

Musical score for measures 62-64. The piece is marked *articolato*. The score is in three staves: Bass, Treble, and Bass. Measure 62 is in 4/4 time, measure 63 is in 4/4 time, and measure 64 is in 9/8 time. Dynamics include *mf*, *cresc.*, and *f*.

65

Musical score for measures 65-69. The piece is marked *mp*. The score is in three staves: Bass, Treble, and Bass. Measure 65 is in 7/8 time, measure 66 is in 7/8 time, measure 67 is in 5/8 time, measure 68 is in 6/8 time, and measure 69 is in 8/8 time. Dynamics include *mp*, *cresc. poco a poco*, and *f*.

70

Musical score for measures 70-74. The piece is marked *mf*. The score is in three staves: Bass, Treble, and Bass. Measure 70 is in 7/8 time, measure 71 is in 2/4 time, measure 72 is in 1/4 time, measure 73 is in 2/4 time, and measure 74 is in 4/4 time. Dynamics include *mf*, *f*, and *mp*.

75 *leggiero*

cresc. mf mp

80 *leggiero*

cresc. mf mf f p mp

85

mp cresc. mf mp f

90 *grazioso*

mf mp mf p mf p mp mf

mf mp mf

en dehors

95 *articolato* *deliberato*

mp mf f

f

attacca

99 *risoluto* ♩ = 120
pizz. *arco* ... what happens together

Cello

Piano

103

mf *deliberato*

108 *preciso*

mf *f*

113

pizz. arco

mf *f*

117

animato

mp *p* *mp* *cresc.* *mf*

122

pizz. arco

mf *f* *f*

126

affabile

Musical score for measures 126-129. The score is in 4/4 time and consists of three staves: a single bass line and a grand staff (treble and bass). The music features a melodic line in the bass and a more active line in the grand staff. Dynamics include *mf* and *f*. There is an 8-measure phrase and a triplet in the lower bass staff.

130

leggiero

Musical score for measures 130-135. The score is in 6/8 time and consists of three staves: a single bass line and a grand staff. The time signature changes to 4/4 for measures 131-132 and back to 6/8 for measures 133-135. Dynamics include *mf* and *mp*. The word *leggiero* is written above the grand staff.

136

Musical score for measures 136-140. The score is in 4/4 time and consists of three staves: a single bass line and a grand staff. The music features a melodic line in the bass and a more active line in the grand staff. Dynamics include *mp*, *p*, and *mf*. There is a 5-measure phrase in the grand staff.

140

chiaro *non dim.*

mf *mp* *mf* *mf* *mf*

p *mf* *mf* *mf* *mf*

attacca

... where things come from

145 *severo* ♩. = 52

Cello *f*

Piano *f*

* see note below

♩. = 80

mf impaziente

150

tempo 1 ♩. = 80 *sul pont flautando* *p*

f normale

discreto *mp*

f

allargando e bravura ♩. = 65

157

con sord. *accel.* ♩. = 75 *mf*

(tempo 1) ♩. = 52 *accel. a tempo 2*

soffocato *mp* *mf*

mf leggiero

Red. * *Red.* *

* make these empty bars long enough to prepare the listener for a different tempo, timbre or style of playing

162 *tempo 2* ♩ = 110 *pizz.* *arco*

mf *senza sord.* *ritard. a tempo 1* *mf*

170 *accel. a tempo 2* *tempo 2* ♩ = 110 *tempo 1* ♩ = 80

mf *f* *f incisivo* *mf*

178 *accel. a tempo 2* *tempo 2* ♩ = 110

p *ff* *f*

187 *ritardando ed allargando a tempo 1* *tempo 1* ♩ = 80 *accel. a tempo 2*

f *mf* *f* *mf* *f* *mf* *f*

196 *tempo 2* ♩ = 110 *deliberato* *ritard. a tempo 1* *tempo 1* ♩ = 80 *animato*

f *mf* *f* *mf* *f* *mf* *f* *mf* *f* *mf*

206 *ritard. ed allargando* *tempo 1* ♩ = 80

f *mf* *f* *mf* *f* *mf* *f* *mf*

212 *tempo 2* ♩ = 110

giustamente

trem. ♩ = 60

accelerando a tempo 1

mp *f*

f *mf* *cresc.*

8

217 *tempo 1* ♩ = 80

scorrendo

accelerando a tempo 2

mf *f*

mf

220 *tempo 2* ♩ = 110

pizz.

ritard. a tempo 1

tempo 1 ♩ = 80

f *f* *preciso* *f*