

About the Work

Concerto for Brass and Orchestra

The "Concerto for Brass and Orchestra" was written in 2014 to celebrate the Indianapolis Symphony's 7th Music Director, Krzysztof Urbanski. The work was commissioned by the Indianapolis Symphony and co-commissioned by Eastern Connecticut Symphony Orchestra, Toshiyuki Shimada, Music Director; the Evansville Philharmonic, Alfred Savia Music Director; the Oklahoma City Philharmonic, Joel Levine, Music Director; and the Omaha Symphony, Thomas Wilkins, Music Director. The premiere of this work occurred on March 20, 2015 with the Indianapolis Symphony with Maestro Urbanski conducting.

The composition was composed to feature the brass section of a symphony orchestra. The work is in memory of the ISO concertmaster's mother, Linda DePue, who died tragically when the concertmaster, Zach DePue, was only 6 years old. A melody that Zach DePue wrote as a child in dedication to his mother is included in this work. This adds a programmatic dimension to this concerto for brass and orchestra.

The first movement opens quietly, intending to reflect the loneliness that a child would feel at the loss of his mother at such a young age. The sadness and angst of such a loss is reflected in the harmonic language heard in the string section at the opening of this piece. The first entrance of the brass is also hushed and, when possible, meant to be played off stage as an echo of the memory of the deceased mother. The dialogue between strings and brass continues and grows in intensity until the *L'istesso Tempo* where the orchestra rhythmically goes between 6/8, 3/4, 7/8, 9/8, and 2/4 replicating the unsettling course of events. This leads into a fugue section where the listener hears snippets of Zach DePue's childhood melody contrapuntally displayed in strings and woodwinds. This interplay grows in intensity where we now hear the brass section featured alone in an antiphonal setting not unlike what you might have heard at St. Mark's Cathedral in the time of composer Giovanni Gabrieli. The full orchestra eventually joins in with the brass to at times create a cheerful musical setting, but a horn call reintroduces Zach DePue's childhood theme, still in a fugue-like setting, now more sentimental in nature and musically imitating a distant memory of his mother. This fugue section takes us back to the hush of the opening of this movement where we for the first time hear DePue's childhood song played in its original form by off stage French horn.

The 2nd movement is less programmatic and more of an exhibition piece for the various sections of the brass. The dramatic opening of this movement, however, is meant to reflect some of the anger that might be felt by a child whose parent has been taken from them at such a young age. This 2nd movement motive acts as a cohesive component for this movement that is similar to a rondo form. From the beauty of the trumpet solo entitled "a child's prayer" to a jovial tuba solo, followed by a comical trombone section feature, the soaring horn lines and choir-like brass chorales, these soli sections show off the many qualities of an orchestral brass section.

The 3rd movement is more celebrative in nature. It is in part meant to reflect the great musical achievement that our concertmaster, Zach DePue, has accomplished in his life. We all owe much of our adult successes to the mentoring of loving parents. In another way this movement celebrates the human spirit, instilled in us perhaps from our parents, that encourages us to overcome hardships in life. In that vein, the composer has decided to borrow a theme from his French horn concerto, "The Glass Bead Game." The *coronation march theme* from the final movement of that horn concerto is purposely referenced in the final movement of this concerto for brass and orchestra as a celebration theme. The composer has intentionally waited till the final movement to show off the grand and exciting music that can be created by the brass section of an orchestra. This movement begins with the sound of bells ringing, taking us into a grand brass and orchestra fanfare. The music then briefly features each section of the brass before leading into a return to the quiet theme from the first movement. For the composer, programmatically this music returns us to the memories of our own parents as they stay with us even in their absence throughout our lives. This moment of reflection goes into an exhilarating race to the end of the work where a grand unison melody stated by the entire brass section victoriously concludes this "Concerto for Brass and Orchestra."