

Concerto for Trombone

About the Work

This work was written not only to showcase the trombone soloist, but also to feature the orchestra in a significant work for the orchestra.

The Trombone Concerto was written in the summer of 2013 for a joint commission of ten bands. The performance at DePauw University on October 15, 2013 was the premiere of this work in piano reduction, performed by James Beckel on trombone and Greg Martin on piano. The orchestral premiere occurred on April 5th of 2014 with the Gulf Coast Symphony conducted by John Strickler. The trombone soloist was Joe Alessi.

The bands and their conductors participating in this commission are DePauw University, Craig Pare; Detroit Symphony Civic Wind Ensemble, Dr. Kenneth Thompson; Indiana University, Stephen Pratt; Indiana Wind Symphony, Charles Conrad; Kutztown University, Dr. Jeremy Justeson; Lycoming College, Dr. William S. Ciabattari; Metropolitan Wind Symphony, Lewis Buckley; Missouri University - Rolla, Dr. Robert J. Cesario; Rock Valley College, Erik Oberg; University of Arizona, Gregg Hanson; and University of Kansas, Dr. Paul W. Popiel.

The work is composed in three movements and the first movement begins with a long tutti introduction marked *Moderato maestoso*. The opening theme, heard in the trombone at the *Andante misterioso*, in the first movement, presents a conflict between the major and minor third. This haunting motif is heard throughout the work and is a unifying theme melodically and harmonically. In this first movement, after the opening *Andante misterioso*, a rondo-like form continues in a tempo marked *Allegro moderato*.

While the standard concerto form is made up of three movements, in this concerto, the second movement borrows from the symphonic four-movement form, combining a slow, reflective *Andante* section with a joyful, waltz-like *Allegretto*. These two sections are through-composed, acting as one movement. The ending of this movement uses elements from both sections in its conclusion.

The third movement is the most intense of the three, continuing the on-going conflict between major and minor tonality. The haunting opening trombone motif from the first movement returns in the middle of this third movement, as if to ask for sanity in a chaotic world. This is followed quickly with a *Presto* that races to a climactic ending.

This work is less programmatic than most of the composer's body of work. Although the concerto is based on personal reflections and introspections throughout this work, the composer, at a more mature age, is looking for answers to life's questions that most people have regarding their existence and the meaning of life. With age comes only the realization that he has more questions than answers to these great religious and philosophical mysteries. The composer decides in his own mind that mankind does have free will, but firmly believes that the consequences of man's free will can also lead to

destinies that are unavoidable. This is the programmatic basis for the 3rd movement. The composer further believes that we are capable of being good or bad in the choices that we make throughout our lives; hence, the juxtaposition of the major and minor third throughout this work. In one regard, this work represents the conflict between good and evil in the real world, religiously and philosophically. In the composer's mind the opening of the second movement is religious in nature and is a search for truth in the world. The scherzo that follows in this second movement loosely reflects the composer's feelings regarding the celebration of life. But as the opening Andante theme, measure 239, now heard in the trombone returns at the end of this movement, measure 408, against the celebrative theme from the scherzo, now present with major and minor keys being concurrent, the movement ends with questions unanswered.

In essence, there is a subtext to each movement. The first movement could be subtitled "More questions than answers." The second movement Adagio could be titled "The search for truth." The waltz component of this movement starting at measure 273 would be entitled "The celebration of life," and the last movement could be subtitled "Unavoidable consequences."

These are some of my thoughts related to the music in this concerto. I hope that this information would help performers play this music with greater expression.

This concerto is available for band and orchestra accompaniment as well as the piano reduction.