

Paul Stanhope – Piccolo Concerto

Process Diary and Analysis.

This process diary and analysis was commissioned by the MSO for the 2013 Up Close and Musical Program for VCE students.



Why a Piccolo Concerto? How did it all begin?

January 2011 – Adelaide

I was a staff member of the Australian Youth Orchestra's National Music Camp along with quite a few musicians from the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra including Principal Piccolo, Andrew Macleod. They had performed a piece of mine and at a function afterwards Andrew suggested that I write him a Piccolo Concerto. It sounded like a great 'pie-in-the-sky' idea - I did not think anything would come of it!

As it happened, the MSO, along with the Adelaide and Tasmanian Symphony orchestras, came aboard to commission the piece later in the year. We were all of the same mind on the value of the project. Apart from Vivaldi and a couple of other modern composers, there are no Piccolo concertos! This was a great opportunity to examine the piccolo in details and to explore the many possibilities of the modern instrument.

Orchestration

A medium-sized orchestra is used for this concerto, defined by the size of the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra – the smallest of the orchestras performing the piece. This size orchestra has some advantages with balance, in any case.

The complete instrumentation is:

PICCOLO SOLO PLUS:

2 flutes (2nd doubling piccolo – but used very sparingly only in the first movement)

2 oboes (2nd doubling cor anglais)

2 clarinets (2nd doubling bass clarinet)

2 bassoons (2nd doubling contrabassoon)

4 French horns

2 trumpets

2 trombones

1 Tuba

timpani +2 percussionists

harp

first violins

second violins

violas

cellos

double basses

A third trombone was available, but I didn't need an overly heavy brass section for the piece, so omitted this.

First Steps

30 June 2012

Andrew & I met up to play through some things & discuss the new Concerto. In this session, Andrew played me some orchestral excerpts which will be a great resource.

We discussed some technicalities but the instrument is so versatile it should be great fun to work on.

Andrew had travelled to Sydney, where I live, as the MSO were performing in the Sydney Opera House. This introductory session was a good reminder of some of the capabilities of the instrument. At this stage I didn't have anything written for the instrument.

Initial thoughts – countering perceptions

July 2012

Piccolo perceptions:

- Toy instrument
- Shrieking, painful, shrill
- Unmusical, not serious.

To counter these misconceptions I plan to:

- use instrument ~~mainly~~ mainly in middle, lower registers
- exploit unusual colours - emphasize musicality of instrument ~~in~~ in places.

In the end I have used quite a bit of the upper register of the piccolo for balance reasons, but throughout my aim has been to try and show its different colours and versatility. Where possible, I have tried to use the lower and middle registers, which are not heard as often in the orchestral repertoire.

Big Picture – structural thoughts

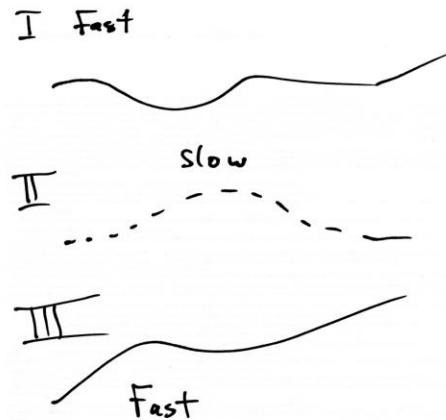
Throughout the process of writing the piece, I have had a couple of ideas about the number of movements and the eventual 'big picture' structure.

Starting a piece can be a bit like flying in over a city. You can see the broad scale outlines and large shapes, but the detail is not very clear. As you fly in closer, the street level detail becomes much clearer. Having come to terms with the street level view, I then began to re-draw the map - something that town planners can't do so easily!

August 2012

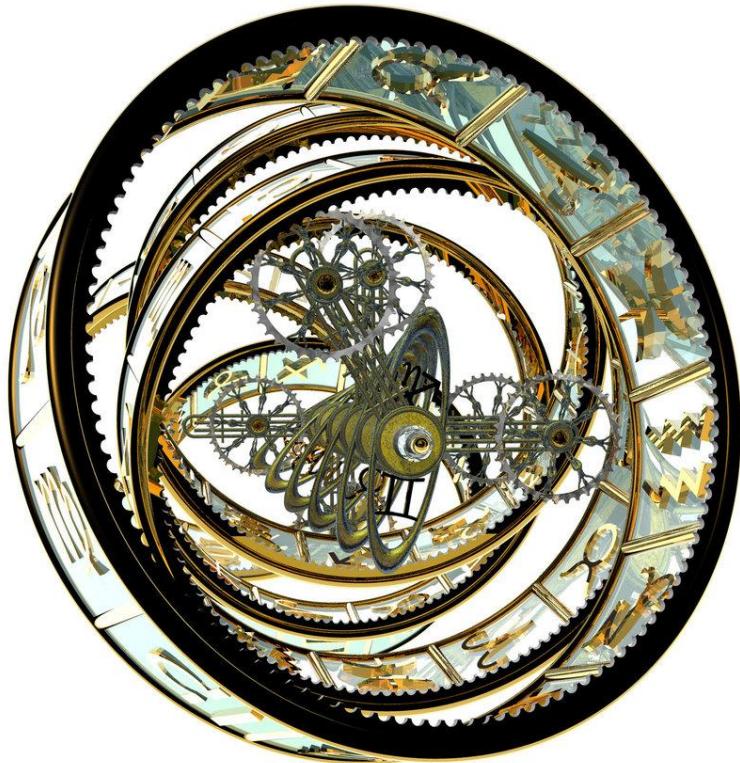
Three movement structure idea – traditional model for a concerto. A big, virtuosic first movement, slow, lyrical middle movement, then ending with an upbeat dance.

I
 "Wheels" / fast 6'30"
 II
 Nocturne 5'
 III
 Fast 5'



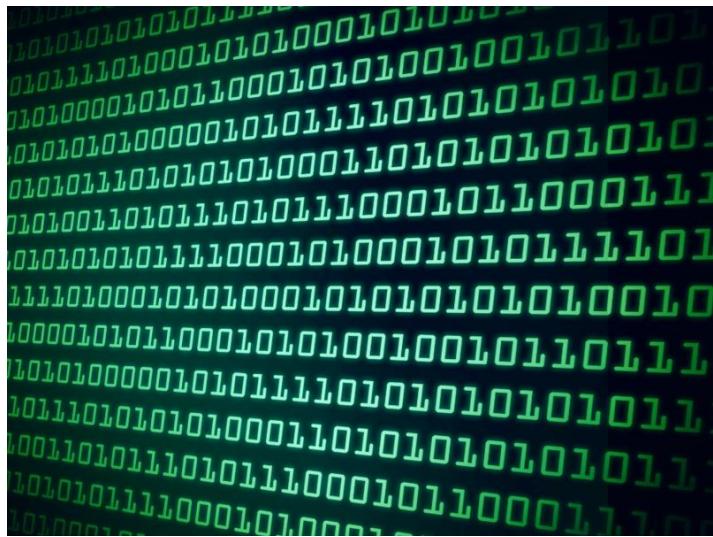
September 2012 – Work begins

I began with some ideas on a movement called “Wheels within wheels” – with the idea that the material in the music might be spinning around at many different speeds simultaneously. This would be pattern-based music in a fast tempo (crotchet = 160). Here is a little image I found which helped me visualize the music:



"Wheels withing wheels" has the initials as **www** – I don't need to explain the significance of this these days.

I did some sketches with number patterns: patterns of 3 and 2 quavers, in a kind of binary choice of these number patterns. Binary is a simple system of one choice or another, but it is incredibly powerful – driving all the computer technology we rely on (and the aforementioned **www**).



Here are my number sketches:

1 / 8 / 2012

Number patterns - "binary idea"

3's & 2's - augmentations
Hand-drawn musical notation showing augmentation dots above notes, indicating a lengthening of the notes by a factor of three.

- diminutions



Number patterns - $\frac{d}{d}$ can = $\frac{d}{d}$
 $\frac{d}{d}$ can = $\frac{d}{d}$

A series of four staves of music. The first staff shows a pattern of eighth notes with a '3' under the first note and '2' under the second. The second staff shows a pattern of eighth notes with a '3' under the first note and '2' under the second. The third staff shows a pattern of eighth notes with a '3' under the first note, '2' under the second, and '3' under the third. The fourth staff shows a pattern of eighth notes with '2' under the first note, '2' under the second, and '2' under the third. The fifth staff shows a pattern of eighth notes with '1' under the first note, '1' under the second, and '1' under the third. The sixth staff shows a pattern of eighth notes with '1' under the first note, '1' under the second, and '1' under the third. The seventh staff shows a pattern of eighth notes with '1' under the first note, '1' under the second, and '1' under the third.

Augmentations

Two staves of music. The top staff has three groups of three eighth notes each, separated by vertical bar lines. The bottom staff has two groups of three eighth notes each, separated by vertical bar lines.

→ double bass pizz?

A single staff of music consisting of six eighth notes. Each note is grouped with a brace that spans its duration, indicating it is held over multiple measures.

too many "on beats"

I needed a system to organize the pitch, and I went with a concept known as a non-octavating mode. A non-octavating mode is one where the notes are different in any octave. For example if in the lowest octave of your scale you had:

C, D, E, F, G, A, B

The next octave might start:

C#, D#, E#, F#, G#, A#, B#

And the next:

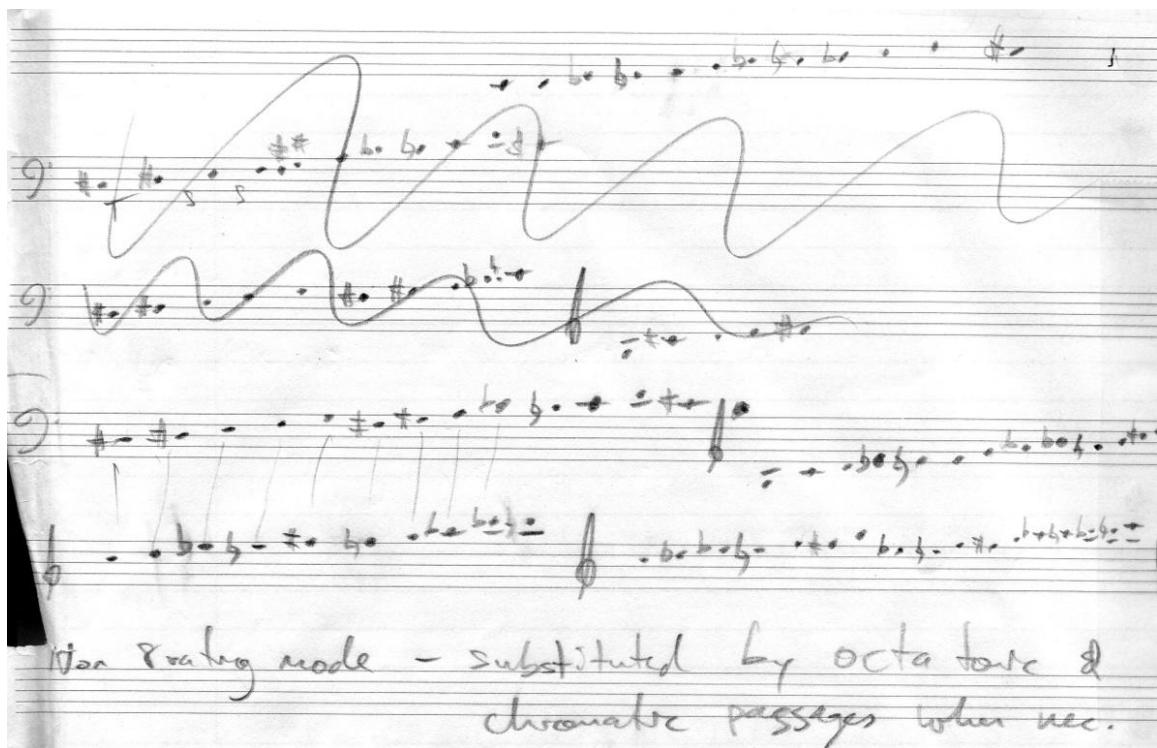
D, E, F#, G, A, B, C#

Etc.

This means that you might be able to achieve some interesting effects in harmony (different chords juxtaposed against each other), polytonal effects etc.

In my case, I chose a more abstract scale (rather than C major) which is then altered in every octave. Here are my initial couple of sketches:

8 September 2012



I formalized this a few days later and also made a number of transpositions of the scale:

12 / 8 / 2012

Score

Piano

Picc concerto

non octavating mode

maj 7th

maj 7th

piccolo range

8va

Note the coffee stains! This was a much referred-to document!

As substitutes for this scale, I also use an octatonic scale, which is a symmetrical scale with the intervals semitone, tone, semitone, tone etc. An example:

C, C#, D#, E, F#, G, A, Bb, C.

I also use the chromatic scale in parts, especially for some of the slower, descending movement.

Mixing the ingredients together



Putting together the non-octavating mode and the number patterns gave me the material I needed in the opening of "Wheels within Wheels".

In this musical example, the scale and number patterns are combined. Note the use of the augmented rhythmic patterns as well.

Score in C

2. Scherzo: "Wheels within wheels"

Paul Stanhope
2012-2013

Funky & Fleetfooted (♩ = 160 ♪ = 80)

Piano

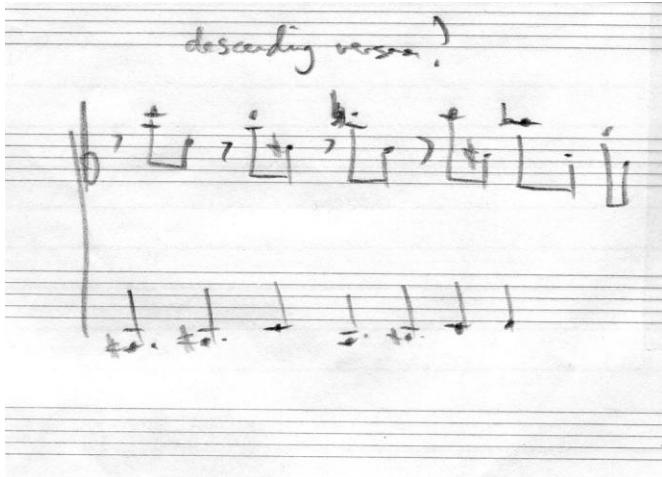
5

11

a

Developing further material

The piece begins with ascending scales at different speeds, but other motives and material derived from the same ingredients was needed. Here is an early sketch showing ideas for a piccolo part against the scales idea of the opening:



The upper 'leaping' part became the material used in much of the Piccolo part. (NB the piccolo always sounds an octave *higher* than written!).

Although the picc does a lot of leaping (it is a very agile instrument) there is a sense of line in the movement – it basically outlines two descending scales resembling descending stairs. Elsewhere I have used ascending versions of the same stairs! Here is a completed version of the same passage:

Funky & Fleetfooted ($\text{♩} = 160 \text{ ♩} = 80$)

An important motive (seen in bar 63) is derived from the use of the non-octavating scale. This is used especially in climactic moments, but throughout the piece as well.

16 August 2012

Opening minute and a half of the material has been written, including the opening scale-driven passages and the motives shown above. Once the ingredients are shown to be working, the material comes together quite fast! At this stage I was working in 'short-score' so the full orchestration of the material (often painstaking) would be left until later.

Early September 2012 – first workshop of Piccolo ideas

1 - 9 - 2012

*Piccolo part sent to Andrew so he
can have a play through before our
meeting on 8 Sept. Look forward to
hearing it!*

*I have sent about $2\frac{1}{2}$ mins of
music so far. I think this is
about half way or a little under.*

I was wrong about half way! I was actually only about 1/4 of the way through the movement in its eventual form. I was initially thinking it would be 5 minutes of music, but in the end it was longer and needed more substantial developing.

5 September 2012 Workshop with Andrew Macleod and Rob Cossom



Andrew Macleod – Principal Piccolo, MSO

Andrew played through the opening sections of the movement and offered some constructive feedback as to articulation. I also had the opportunity to try out some combinations of piccolo and the wonderful tuned chromatic cowbells that the MSO owns. Rob Cossom (percussionist with the MSO) helped out by reading through and improvising some things with piccolo. I loved the combination and have used it in a number of sections in the piece.



Rob Cossom playing chromatic cowbells

September-October 2012

After the workshop, I spent the next six weeks or so refining the material, developing motives further toward the first climactic section. I also began orchestrating the piece in full score. This is much slower than the short-score orchestration that I was doing up to this point. It was time to get more detail into the score, which is an important part of the drafting process.

Developing the ideas further

Having established the ideas in a piece of music, everything is down to the art of development. There are many techniques for a composer to use in order to make this take place – the idea is to give the piece shape, and also to constantly refer to the original material in ways that seem fresh. In this way I hope my music sounds ‘organic,’ all springing from the one source.

Here are a couple of examples of musical motives being extended and developed. The trumpet solo at Letter F is an inverted and elaborated version of the music introduced by the Piccolo in bar 63:

JP

f straight mute
solo



Furthermore, the solo piccolo part in Letter G is an extension of the same motive introduced in bar 63. Note the use of alternating rhythmic patterns which add up to 3 and 2 quavers, respectively – harking back to the number patterns of the opening:

Musical score for Letter G, measures 92 and 95. The score shows a piccolo part with various dynamics (ff, mf, p, mf) and rhythmic patterns. Measure 92 begins with ff and includes a dynamic marking mf. Measure 95 begins with p and includes a dynamic marking mf. The score features complex rhythmic patterns and time changes between 8/8, 3/4, and 2/4.

Here are a couple of pencil sketches to show my original thoughts.

1) trumpet melody (later changed to lower pitches)



2) full orchestra with piccolo heard at letter G – extending earlier motives



I tend not to think of music as melody with a chordal accompaniment. Rather harmony/chords are created by a conglomeration of pitches drawn out of motivic and scale structures. In the following section, chords are formed as conglomerations of notes from the motives. Here is a piano reduction of the orchestra part at letter G.

A piano reduction of an orchestra part. The key signature is one sharp. The time signature changes between 8/8, 5/8, 3/4, and 4/4. Measure 1 starts with a forte dynamic (f) in 8/8. Measure 2 begins in 5/8 with a sustained note. Measure 3 starts in 3/4. Measure 4 starts in 4/4 with a piano dynamic (mf). Measures 5-6 show a cluster of notes. Measures 7-8 show a sustained note. Measures 9-10 show a cluster of notes.

Clusters are also created by sustaining notes from scales in the various parts of the orchestra. Here is an early sketch and then an example of how I eventually used it:

1 Sept. 2012
 "Cluster" build up 1st chnck
 section

1)

97

h

6

f upper strings

A handwritten musical sketch followed by a piano reduction. The sketch shows a series of notes being added to a cluster over four measures. The piano reduction shows a treble clef staff with a 4/4 time signature. It features sixteenth-note patterns and sustained notes, with a dynamic marking 'f' for 'upper strings'.

A third example of deriving chordal material from motivic ideas is found in the climactic sections. Here is the first of them at letter I. The solo Piccolo part outlines the chords from one of the main motives:

The image shows two staves of musical notation. The top staff, labeled 'I', begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one flat (B-flat), and a common time signature. It consists of a series of eighth-note pairs connected by vertical stems. The bottom staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F-sharp), and a common time signature. It features eighth-note pairs with horizontal stems and includes dynamic markings 'mp' and '3' under groups of notes.

This has a major/minor chord sound to it (the pitches are F, Ab, A and C – so you can form both F minor and F major), which comes about because there are different notes in different octaves in the non-octavating mode. This defines a kind of harmonic flavour used in sections of the piece.

A musical score showing a bracketed section spanning measures 4 to 8. The top staff is in treble clef, common time, and has a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The bottom staff is in bass clef, common time, and has a key signature of one sharp (F-sharp). The section concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots at the end of measure 8.

“minor/major chord”

November 2012 – Final strands and a completed first draft

After the first climactic section at letter I, the music winds down to a pause. I left space at this stage for a short cadenza.

In my earlier sketches from September 2012, I had explored the idea of some contrary motion. I used some of these ideas as the basis for the second section of the movement.

Development.

contrary motion scale exploration?

picc.

These sketches eventually surfaced in passages such as the following in the solo piccolo and other instruments. You can see that although initial shapes are preserved, quite often the fine details change.

PICCOLO CONCERTO - 2. Scherzo

35

1

2

177

dolce

181

The climax of the piece builds via what I called a “Big Unison” or a “Big Dance” which combines the ascending and descending lines and the rhythmic patterns heard throughout the piece. Here are some initial sketches and the finalized Piccolo part, which contains all the material.

D

strings & picc. “scurrying?”

BIG DANCE → $\begin{matrix} 5 \\ 8 \end{matrix} \downarrow . ! | 8 ! ! . ! \\ \{ ! . . | 8 . . . ! \}$

[counterpoints:]

* Is binary ratio generator?

bass cl.?

97 [b] [i] [b] [i] [b]

1-11-2012 1st sketch - large 8ve buildup

The image shows a handwritten musical score for a solo Piccolo. The score consists of four staves of music. The top staff begins with a dynamic of ff and a tempo of 8 . A handwritten note says "as ferment with 8ves". The second staff starts with a dynamic of f . The third staff starts with a dynamic of f . The fourth staff starts with a dynamic of f .

Here is the final version, in which most of the material is in the solo Piccolo. It is scored as an orchestral tutti section (ie all the instruments) playing one of two lines. This builds into the second and larger climax of the piece.

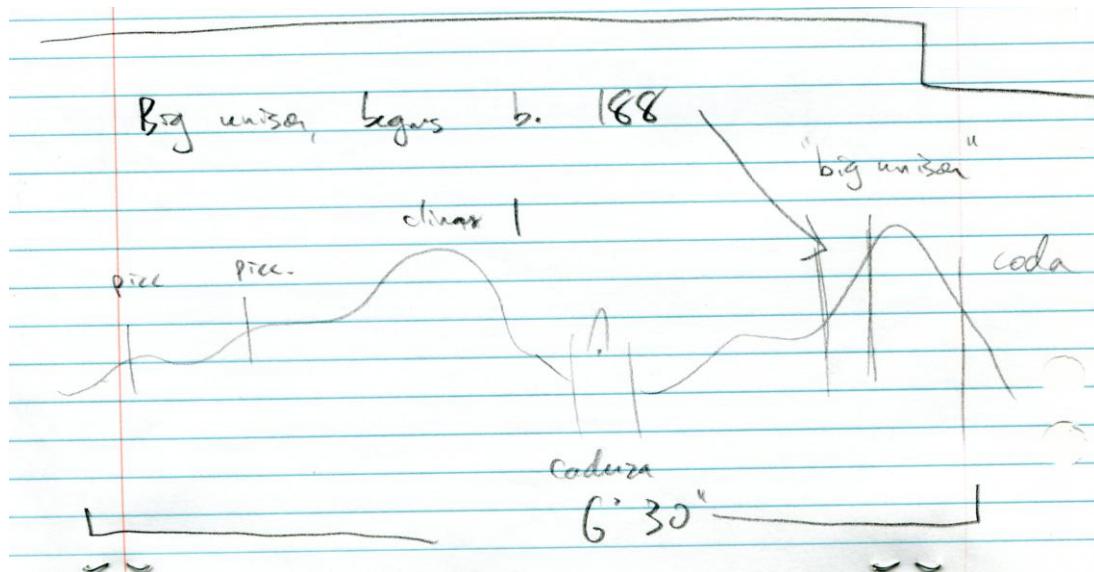
Here is the “Big unison” or “Big dance” section. It ended up going from unison to two criss-crossing parts. The solo piccolo plays all the notes, however:

The musical score consists of three staves of music for solo piccolo. Measure 206 starts with a dynamic of *mf*, followed by a forte dynamic *ff*. Measure 210 begins with a dynamic of *sub. mf*, with the instruction *marc. sempre*. Measure 216 ends with a dynamic of *sfp* followed by *mf*.

Cadenza & Coda

18 November 2012

Having left space for a short cadenza (thinking this to be the first movement still) I came back and wrote this small passage for solo piccolo to join up the two halves of the movement and wrote a short coda with the solo part ending softly. I had a completed first draft and put the piece aside to complete a choral piece for Gondwana Chorale, which I managed to complete in three weeks. Phew! If only orchestral music were that quick to write!



18 October 2012 – sketch for structure of “wheels” movement. Note the space left for the cadenza. I find it interesting that the structure as sketched here in October is exactly how it has turned out, except for a new ending and the longer duration of the eventual movement!

Things are a-changing

April 2013

Skipping forward in time a few months! Having worked through larger structural changes to the piece as a whole (see Part 2 for more on this) it became clear that two large changes needed to be made to “Wheels within wheels”. Firstly that the Concerto needed an extended section for solo Piccolo, since that had not been utilized and secondly the soft ending needed to change from a whimper into a bang!

Original Cadenza (November 2012)

134 **Cadenza** $\text{♩} = 54-66$

135 *poco a poco accel.*
cresc. poco a poco **f**

($\text{♩} = 84 - 92$) *Sweetly*

136 **mp** **f**

137 *Slower, more reflective* **Tempo Primo** ($\text{♩} = 160$ $\text{♩} = 80$) **17**

Revised Cadenza (2-3 April 2013)

134
Perc I
tam-tam
Perc.
Perc. Solo *p* Cadenza $\text{♩} = 54-66$

138
Picc. Solo *f* *rit.* *pp* *mf* *harp* *trill key*
pulse

140
Picc. Solo *p* *accel.* grace notes integrated into the trill, punctuating each one *mf*

144
Picc. Solo *p* *cresc. poco a poco* *ff*

November 2012 Original Ending – ‘a whimper’ to set up a projected slow movement

Poco Adagio $\text{♩} = 60$

227 *p*

229 *pp*

12 April 2013 New ending – A bang to finish the whole concerto!

A musical score consisting of six staves. The first three staves are blank. The fourth staff begins with a dynamic of ***ff*** and a bass drum. The fifth staff follows with a dynamic of ***ff*** and a suspended cymbal. The sixth staff concludes with a dynamic of ***sfs***. The music ends with a final dynamic of ***ff***.

Spirito ($\text{♩} = 176$ $\text{♩} = 88$)

A musical score for a section titled "Spirito". It consists of one staff of music. The dynamic is ***f***, and the tempo is indicated as $\text{♩} = 176$ and $\text{♩} = 88$. The music features a series of eighth-note patterns.

A musical score consisting of six staves. The first three staves are blank. The fourth staff begins with a dynamic of ***ff***. The fifth staff follows with a dynamic of ***ff***. The sixth staff concludes with a dynamic of ***sfs***. The music ends with a final dynamic of ***sfs***.

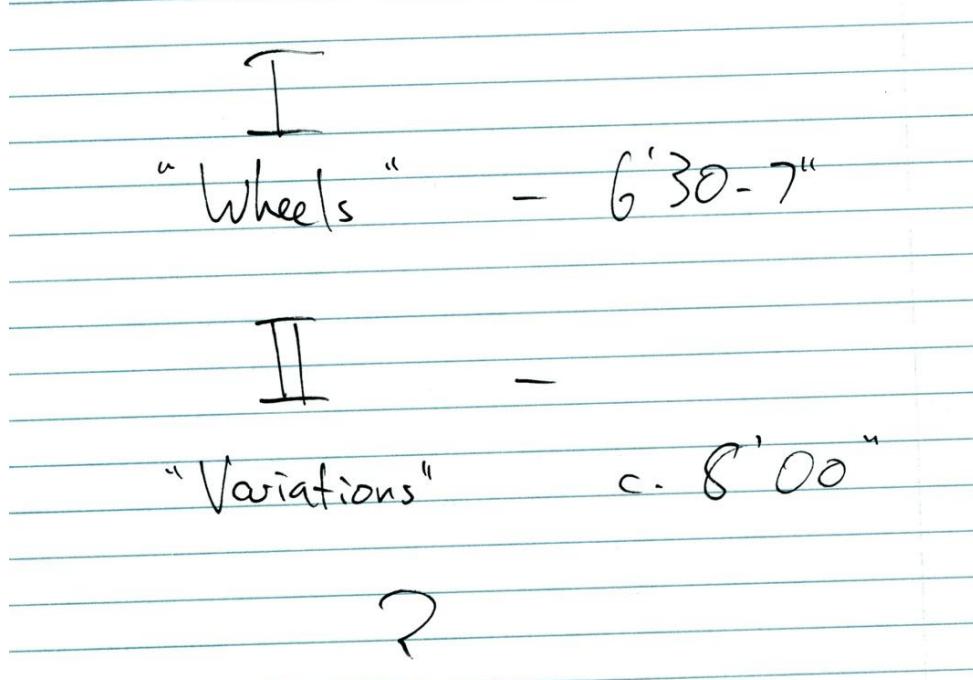
January 2013

Began work on a slow movement – a 'Nocturne'. Here is a sketch of the opening material:



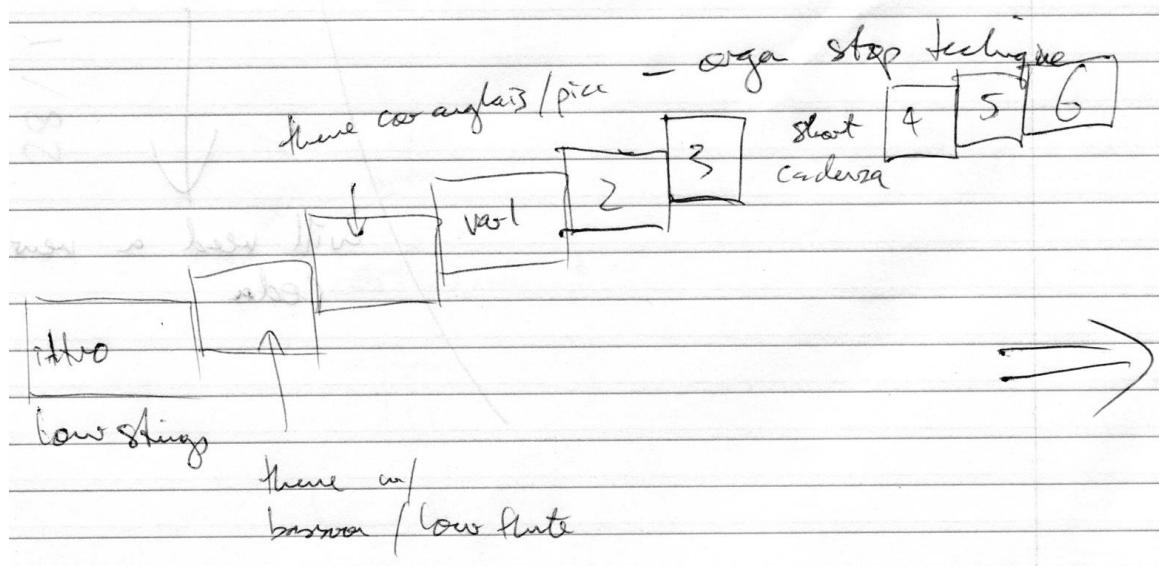
I had planned a very atmospheric movement with lots of percussion and spacious textures. Pretty soon, however, I was not convinced by the material and its direction. I began thinking about changing the structure to two larger movements, especially as the completed movement was already close to 7 minutes long.

Did I want the piece to be over 20 minutes in length? Here was a new concept for the structure:



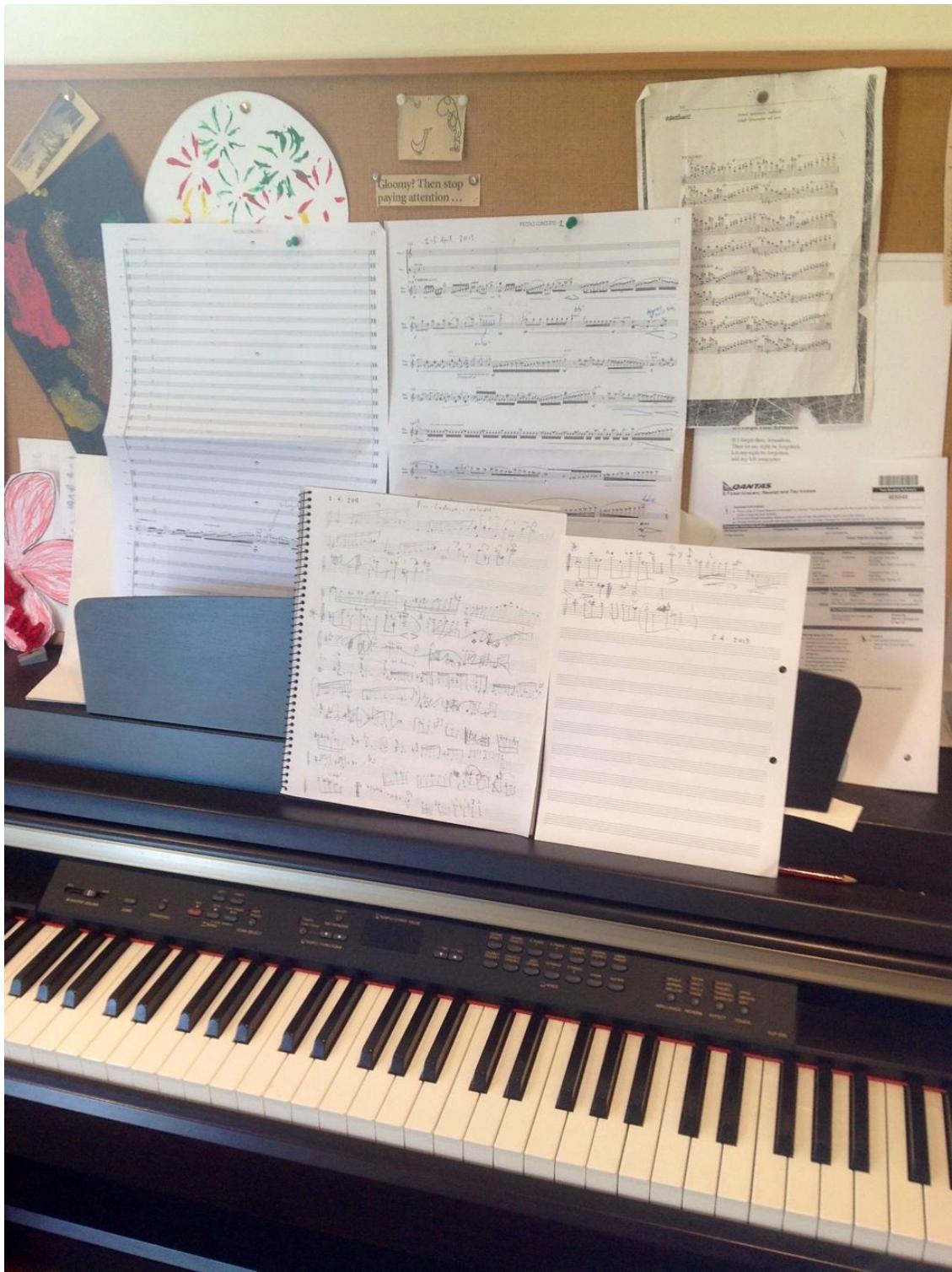
Question was – would there be enough contrast between the movements?

Here is a sketch from 26 January 2013 for a set of variations for a second movement:



I worked on material for the variations for about two weeks before realizing that the material didn't have the amount of contrast with the first movement that I was after. I was concerned that the structure was not convincing.

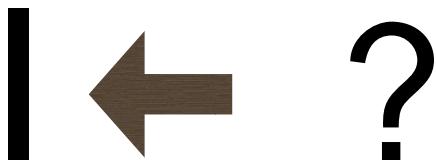
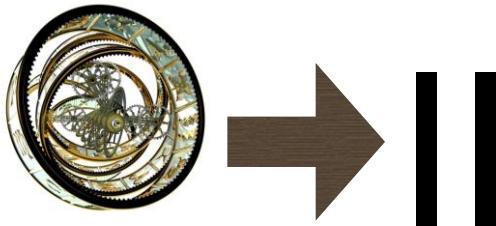
Back to the Drawing Board!



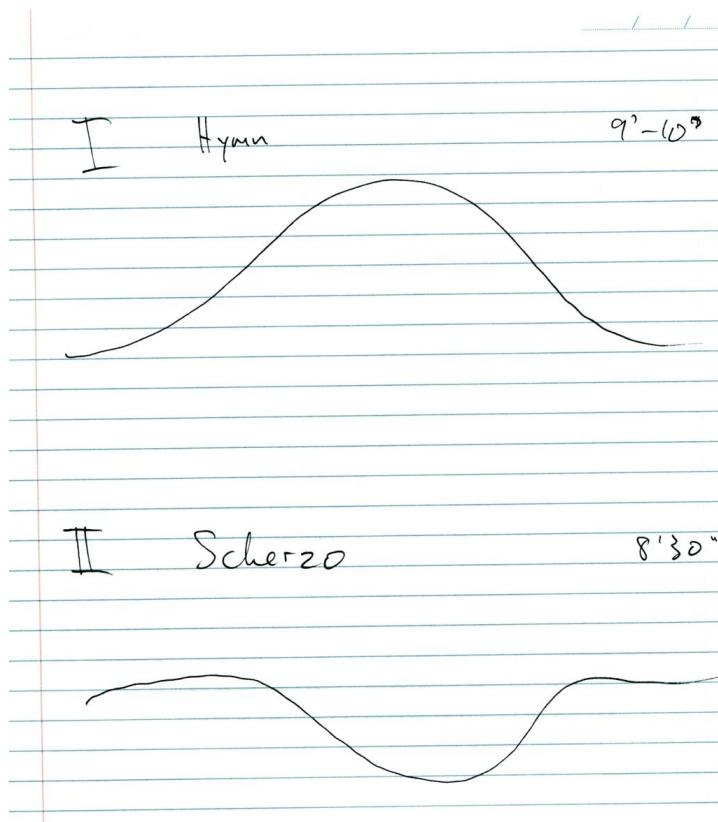
My workspace in Sydney.

February 2013

A new idea was to swap the order of the movements and write a new opening movement.



I came up with a new structural concept that would have the two movements as opposite shapes and create a sense of balance in this way:



I wanted to write the first movement as a sort of Palindrome: ie a symmetrical structure – where the hymn tune was only revealed in full at the very end.

The eventual structure looks like this:

A	B	C	D	C1	B1	A1
Intro slow, reflective, fragments	Chorale-Prelude idea: musical material woven around longer sections of hymn tune.	Faster more dance-like character, developing fragments toward a short climactic "cliff-hanger".	Development section, dealing mostly in a few central fragments from the hymn tune. Material is interrogated and the piccolo solo performs a playful role in jumping between two contrasting characters - one charming, one more aggressive.	The material of C returns almost literally, but with a longer climactic section which finally reveals:	Hymn tune, revealed completely for the first time in the strings. The manner of the 'chorale prelude' is recalled. A reflective section.	Brief, simple coda of chords explores extreme registers of the soloist and orchestra.

Antecedents



The idea of composing a piece based on someone else's music is, of course, a very old idea. In the Western tradition, we have music dating back to 1200 that does this, where composers took the old plainchants as the structural basis of music, elaborating them with new complex layers.

I have also used this technique in a variety of pieces before, notably in my *Fantasia on a Theme of Vaughan Williams* for orchestra. Why not try this out in a concerto?

Why this hymn?

It's just a beautiful tune for a start! It also expresses a strong sense of compassion which I have been feeling gets lost in a lot of contemporary discourse. I am not trying to express anything particularly religious in the piece at all! The first verse of the tune expresses the compassionate plea from the start:

341

LOVE UNKNOWN 66.66.4444

John Nicholson Ireland
1879–1962

*My song is love unknown
 My saviour's love for me
 Love for the loveless shown
 That they might lovely be...*

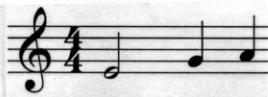
(♩ = 58–63) *UNISON*

I wrote the tune out in C and then later cut it up into fragments in order to find something of a road map for the piece.

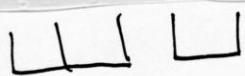
My song is love unknown

Voice

C G A
upside down



ostinato

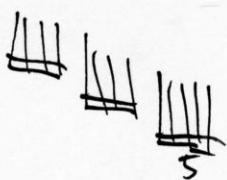
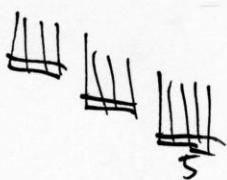
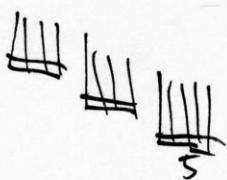


middle section?

ostinatos?



cascading
descending



Section A

The opening section of the piece is based around the first two fragments of the sliced-up hymn tune as follows:

upside down

C B A

I flipped the 2nd fragment around and put it in the bass clef to give me these pitches.

upside down

C B A

Here are the opening chords of the movement, based on these fragments.

winds!

p

low strings?

Section B February 2013

I began to think of the Chorale-Prelude form as way to conceive this section. A Chorale-Prelude is often used in organ music, where a hymn tune is used as the basis for a piece with material improvised around the original chorale and eventually written down. These pieces (such as those by JS Bach) became very elaborate in their decoration of the original tune.

I use a number of components in this section:

- 1) call and response between the Horn, trumpet and solo piccolo
- 2) ostinato, based on a five-note fragment from the hymn
- 3) a ground bass, or a recurring, cyclical bass-line

1)

Handwritten musical notation on a staff. The notation includes a bass clef, a key signature of one sharp, and a time signature of common time. The melody consists of eighth and sixteenth notes. Above the staff, there are handwritten lyrics: "Hn?" above the first measure, "call & response?" above the second, and "tpt?" above the third. Below the staff, the word "Picc" is written.

2)

Handwritten musical patterns. The top row shows two measures of eighth-note pairs. The bottom row shows a staff with quarter notes followed by a bracketed group of eighth notes, with a corresponding bracketed group of eighth-note pairs below it.

Handwritten musical notation. The top line is labeled "ostinato". The notation is in common time, with a bass clef and a key signature of one sharp. It shows a repeating pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes. The bottom line shows a continuation of this pattern, with a bracket under the first four measures and the text "etc" at the end.

3) Bass line – pitches constructed in major or minor 3rds

Handwritten bass line. The notation is in common time, with a bass clef and a key signature of one sharp. The bass line consists of eighth notes. Intervals between notes are labeled with "M3" (major third) and "m3" (minor third). The notes are grouped into pairs, with some pairs labeled "bo" (bassoon) and others labeled with a sharp symbol (likely referring to a higher pitch). Brackets indicate the grouping of intervals: one bracket covers the first two notes, another covers the next two, and a third covers the last three notes, which are grouped into two pairs separated by a sharp symbol.

The solo piccolo part gradually becomes more and more elaborate over the top of these textures. It weaves in and out of other woodwind lines.

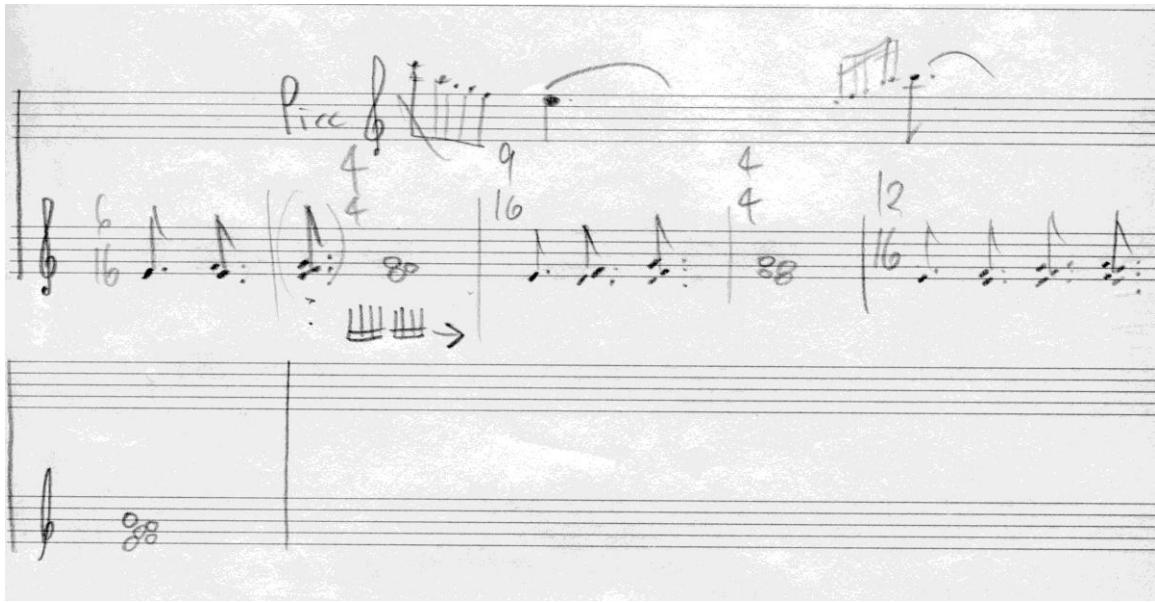
Musical score for rehearsal numbers 24 and 30. Rehearsal 24 starts with a piccolo part at *p* with grace notes and eighth-note pairs. The dynamic changes to *p* with a crescendo, followed by *f*, *mf*, and *f*. Rehearsal 30 shows a more complex piccolo line with sixteenth-note patterns and grace notes, accompanied by woodwind parts marked with '6' and '5' below the staff.

The example below shows that the Hymn tune is decorated and is in canon in the lower strings, moving to the upper strings from rehearsal letter B. The piccolo part sails above this in a decorative way.

Musical score for rehearsal 36. The piccolo part (Picc. Solo) starts with a short melodic line. The score then transitions to rehearsal letter B, where the hymn tune is played in canon by the lower strings (Vln. 1, Vln. 2, Vla., Vc.) in 3/4 time. The upper strings (Vln. 1, Vln. 2) play the same melody in 2/4 time. The piccolo part continues to play above the strings in a decorative manner. Dynamics include *mf*, *f*, *mp*, *pp*, and *cresc. poco a poco*.

SECTION C February 2013

The next section also continues the use of fragments of the hymn, but lets them take on more of a life of their own. As you can see, the original sketch allowed for expanding patterns of dotted quavers, followed by a 4/4 bar. In the end I changed the third repetition of the dotted quavers to two x 5/16 bars which = ten semiquavers. This helps give a better lead in to the dancing piccolo music that follows.



The section at rehearsal letter E shows the piccolo's great agility at playing fast short notes and leaping octaves effortlessly (well, so it seems to the listener!).

E

SECTION D March 2013

This is the central part of the piece and is perhaps the most abstract in terms of materials used. It could be viewed as a 'development' section in that it takes elements of old material and also adds new material into the mix, taking the piece into a new direction. Being the central panel of the symmetrical structure, it does not get a repeat as some of the other sections do.

I used these fragments from my original 'cut-up' hymn as the basis of much of this part of the piece.



Here are examples of these fragments as they appear in the strings. Note the rhythmic groups in lots of two and three semiquavers:

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

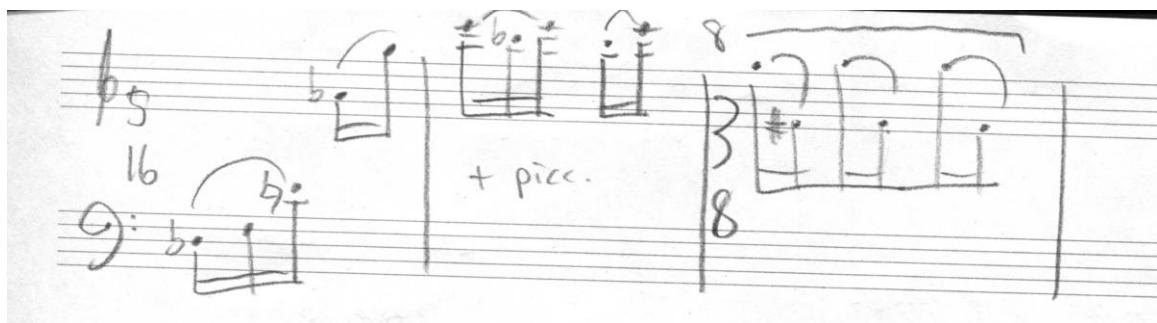
Vla.

Vc.

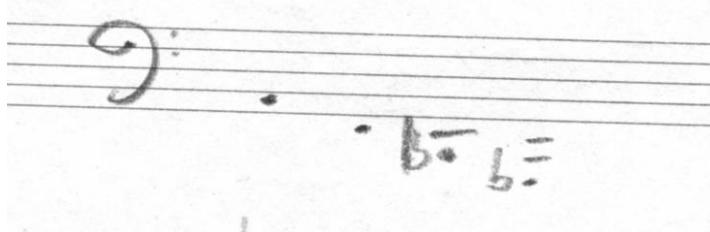
D.B.



These two hymn fragments have the words “love to the loveless shown” – there is special significance given to these figures. Another musical motive is introduced at this point, functioning as a kind of contradiction to the “love to the loveless” idea. It is as though the music is being interrogated by a shock jock or at least someone with a very robust yet opposite opinion. This “shock-jock” music is angular and spiky but fits into the same rhetorical world as the “love to the loveless” theme. Here is a piano sketch for the “shock-jock” motive.



The juxtaposition of these two figures gives the music an amount of tension, musical drive and shape. Moreover, in a link to the music of Section B, the “shock-jock” motives always begin on one of the notes from the ground bass notes, A, F, D flat or B flat.



Section D is brought to a climax with a series of cascading descending figures derived from the “love to the loveless” motive. A descending semitone and descending major third in a linked chain create these cascades.

An angry iteration of this motive in slow durations, barked out by the horns and lower brass and strings, seems to be the final word on the subject, before giving way to a repeat of Section C.



Section C1 and B1

After the tension and climax of the previous section, the return of the more dance-like music in Section C comes as a relief. The music is repeated almost exactly, with a few slight changes of rhythmic grouping and a longer, more celebratory climax. Finally the hymn tune is quoted clearly for the first time in the piece and elements of its original harmony are stated overtly. "Love to the loveless" rings out clearly and unashamedly for the first time after the immense struggle of the middle sections of the piece. A short, muted horn call ushers in the reprise of section B.

Hp. {

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poco rit. Meno Mosso poco a poco rit. Poco Allarg.

In. 1 In. 2 Vla. Vc. D.B.

Here is the original sketch for "But who am I, that for my sake" horn call from the cut-out hymn and the final version:

quote directly with harmony?

A musical score for four horns (Hn. 1, Hn. 2, Hn. 3, Hn. 4). The music consists of a series of eighth-note patterns. The first three horns play 'con sord.' (with mute), indicated by a bracket above them and the text 'con sord.' below the staff. The fourth horn enters later, also playing 'con sord.' The dynamics 'pp' (pianissimo) are marked under the first three horns. The tempo is indicated as 'Largo'.

The return of Section B is much less literal than Section C1, although it contains all the ingredients of the original iteration of the material (ostinato, ground bass, decorative weaving of the solo part and woodwinds). My plan all along was to quote the hymn quite literally at the end of the piece, starting in the low strings, gradually working up higher. The solo piccolo has the same role as earlier on, weaving and elaborating in the manner of a choraleprelude, although it too gives way, being purely decorative and finally joining in with the singing, so to speak.

A musical score for various instruments, including piano (lp.), cello (cc.), oboe (obo), and bassoon (ba.). The score is divided into five systems. System 1: Piano (lp.) plays a steady eighth-note pattern. System 2: Cello (cc.) and Oboe (obo) play eighth-note patterns. System 3: Bassoon (ba.) enters with a melodic line. System 4: Bassoon (ba.) continues with 'sul tasto' (on the edge of the keys) and 'express.' markings. System 5: Bassoon (ba.) continues with 'ord.' (ordinary) markings. The tempo is marked as 'Semplice' and '♩ = 66-72'. Dynamics include 'p', 'mp', 'mf', and 'f'.

Section A1 - Coda

This is a simple, short coda, restating the opening chords but with a change of emphasis in orchestration. The piece ends on an A minor chord with ethereal piccolo and string harmonics, plus the lowest note on the piano played by the contrabassoon. This is actually a semitone lower than the official lowest note for the contrabassoon, but Brock from the MSO has this extra note on his instrument – it should make for an amazing effect (I hope!!) with some of the highest and lowest notes in the orchestra.

Concluding Remarks

What I hope to do have achieved in writing this Piccolo Concerto is to create a piece that is a great vehicle for the instrument and that also has serious musical content. Although I believe the instrument shines well on its own, the piccolo works best in combination with other instruments; finding these interactions and blends has been one of the joys of writing this concerto. The orchestra is an instrument of resonance, and the piccolo adds the top layer of that resonance in a spectacular way.

The biggest challenge for me – and the one that caused me some considerable consternation – was finding a suitable structure. Having abandoned the original three-movement idea, finding a workable two-movement alternative caused me some sleepless nights and real soul-searching. I think the solution that I found works well. I have taken painstaking care to map it all out; the slow, reflective opening and coda of the Hymn movement form the contrast that the Concerto needs. The extended cadenza in the “Wheels” movement also gives the piccolo a real chance to show its often-hidden colours and versatility. I got a good sense of this when Andrew played through the part for me and I hope the audience have their experience of the piccolo challenged and enriched.

A friend once told me that piccolo players in orchestras never get to stand up and take a bow. When an oboe plays a few solo notes in an orchestral piece, the conductor stands them up for applause. But the poor old piccolo, despite having played millions of notes, is kind of viewed as an embarrassing relative. A necessary freak show. I hope this concerto helps to start debunking that myth and to show that the *Piccolo Flauto* is indeed a beautiful creature worth taking seriously.

Paul Stanhope
April 18, 2013.