# Concerto for Piano and Chamber Orchestra 

by

Elliot Sneider

# A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree <br> Doctor of Musical Arts 

Approved November 2013 by the Graduate Supervisory Committee:

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#### Abstract

Concerto for Piano and Chamber Orchestra was conceived in February of 2013, and conceptually it is my attempt to fuse personal expressions of jazz and classical music into one fully realized statement. It is a three movement work (fast, slow, fast) for 2 fl., 2 ob., 2 cl., bsn., 2 hrn., 2 tpt., tbn., pno., perc., str. ( $6,4,2,2,1$ ). The work is approximately 27 minutes in duration.

The first movement of the Concerto is written in a fluid sonata form. A fugato begins where the second theme would normally appear, and the second theme does not fully appear until near the end of the solo piano section. The result is that the second theme when finally revealed is so reminiscent of the history of jazz and classical synthesis that it does not sound completely new, and in fact is a return of something that was heard before, but only hinted at in this piece.

The second movement is a kind of deconstructive set of variations, with a specific theme and harmonic pattern implied throughout the movement. However, the full theme is not disclosed until the final variation. The variations are interrupted by moments of pure rhythmic music, containing harmony made up of major chords with an added fourth, defying resolution, and dissolving each time back into a new variation.

The third movement is in rondo form, using rhythmic and harmonic influences from jazz. The percussion plays a substantial role in this movement, acting as a counterpoint to the piano part throughout. This movement and the piece concludes with an extended coda, inspired indirectly by the simple complexities of an improvisational piano solo, building in complexity as the concerto draws to a close.


## DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to the endless encouragement from my incredible family. Unwaveringly supporting me every day has been my wife, Nicole, without whom I could have never accomplished this goal. Offering all of the motivation I ever needed has been my daughter, Dylan, who was six weeks old when I began the DMA process and moved to Arizona from New York City. Mom, Dad, Howie, Gwen, Grandma, Nana, Darlene and Ann have all understood the difficulties we have assumed in this return to academia and have believed in this decision every step of the way. Finally, I dedicate this to my grandfather Harold "Red" Bryan, who would have been enormously proud of my accomplishment.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my committee members, in particular Dr. Rodney Rogers for his patient reassurance and detailed guidance through the dissertation process; Dr. James DeMars for encouraging me as a composer/pianist, giving me the confidence to write a concerto, and providing insightful feedback on the piece and the research paper; Dr. Ted Solis for the education on the history and philosophy of ethnomusicology, which has been indispensible to my current understanding of music; and Dr. Glenn Hackbarth for his steady, positive feedback and advice.

Additionally I would like to acknowledge the influence of Hankus Netsky, who taught me a respect for music of all types, and exemplifies the performer/scholar I hope to become. I have been blessed with a number of additional compositions teachers who have encouraged me to explore the different facets of my musical personality while also imbibing me in the tradition of classical composition: Michael Gandolfi, Marc AntonioConsoli, Roshanne Etezady; as well as teachers in the jazz idiom that taught me the constraints and ultimately the great freedom inherent in jazz and blues music: Beth Seperak, Bevan Manson, Danilo Perez, Paul Bley, and Nanette Natal. I would like to thank Dr. Kay Norton and Dr. Larry Starr for providing meaningful feedback on my blues research. I would be remiss to not mention the influence of composer Andrew Waggoner, who is an inspiration for his dedication to improvisation and its role in modern classical performance and composition, and who once gave me two cassette tapes that changed my life, one containing Charlie Parker's combo recordings and one containing Miles Davis' In A Silent Way. Last but not least I would like to acknowledge the influence of my first piano teacher, Richard Smernoff, who for 10 years successfully parried my desire to play blues and jazz with encouragement in my interpretations of Beethoven and Chopin.

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# Elliot Sneider CONCERTO <br> FOR PIANO AND CHAMBER ORCHESTRA 

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## PROGRAM NOTES

Concerto for Piano and Chamber Orchestra was conceived in February of 2013, and conceptually it is my attempt to fuse personal expressions of jazz and classical music into one fully realized statement.

Originally I planned to write the first movement in sonata form with a double exposition, a reflection of the ritornello concept that was so often used in classical and romantic piano concertos. This formal concept ended up only influencing the composition, with the final product being a more fluid form. A fugato begins where the second theme would normally appear, and the second theme does not fully appear until near the end of the solo piano section. The result is that the second theme when finally revealed is so reminiscent of the history of jazz and classical synthesis that it does not sound completely new, and in fact is a return of something that was heard before, but only hinted at in this piece.

The second movement is a kind of deconstructive set of variations. I worked from a specific theme and harmonic pattern which is implied throughout the movement. However, the full theme is not disclosed until the final variation. The variations are interrupted by moments of pure rhythmic effectual music, containing harmony made up of major chords with an added fourth, defying resolution, and dissolving each time back into a new variation.

The third movement is in rondo form, using rhythmic and harmonic influences from jazz. The percussion plays a substantial role in this movement, acting as a counterpoint to the piano part throughout. This movement and the piece concludes with an extended coda, inspired indirectly by the simple complexities of an improvisational piano solo, building in complexity as the concerto draws to a close.

The Concerto is built from long melodies, expansive harmonic motion, and formal concepts. Despite the jazz influences, a pianist performing this piece need not be comfortable improvising in jazz. In fact, it is unnecessary and is not required for any performance. The decision to exclude improvisation from this piece was a difficult one, and was not done without reservation. I cherish improvisation as an element of performance and a way of generating new interactions and ideas. However, I ultimately decided that the jazz influence I was looking for was not the performance practice of jazz, but something else. Although an improviser could no doubt create some beautiful, emphatic additions to this piece, I have written every note and encourage a performance of the score. That being said, I am a firm believer in the connection of interpretation to improvisation, and encourage all interpreters of this piece to approach it will the recognition that their input is essential to bring the piece to life, and should not be afraid to fully engage their own concept of music in performing the written page.

Elliot Sneider
November 2013

## INSTRUMENTATION

2 Flutes (2nd doubling Piccolo) 2 Oboes (2nd doubling English Horn) 2 Bb Clarinets (1st and 2nd doubling A Clarinet) Bassoon<br>2 Horns in F<br>2 Trumpets in Bb<br>Trombone (doubling Bass Trombone)<br>Piano<br>Percussion*<br>6 First Violins<br>4 Second Violins<br>2 Violas<br>2 Violoncellos<br>Contrabass<br>*Percussion (One Performer):<br>Bass Drum<br>Crotales<br>Cymbals<br>Snare Drum<br>Timpani<br>Tubular Bells<br>Vibraphone

Duration : approximately 27 minutes
Movement I- approximately 11 minutes
Movement II - approximately 7 minutes
Movement III- approximately 9 minutes

## CONCERTO



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Andante (. = ca.100)















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Grave con Variazioni, delicato ( $\delta=$ ca.40)








rit.

rit.



























FF Con spirito


FF Con spirito
















































## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Elliot Sneider studied jazz piano at New England Conservatory of Music with Paul Bley and Danilo Perez, and composition with Hankus Netsky and Michael Gandolfi. He earned a Masters degree in Music Composition and Technology from New York University, where he studied composition with Marc-Antonio Consoli. At Arizona State University he studied composition with James DeMars, Roshanne Etezady and Rodney Rogers. In addition to his research on the blues, Elliot has researched the intersection of improvisation and composition and is exploring an analytical concept in which the improvisational elements of a composition are discussed as part of an eclectic analysis.

