



Ney Rosauo's "Concerto for Marimba and Orchestra"

BY DOMENICO E. ZARRO

One of the three most-performed marimba concertos in the last five years, Ney Rosauo's "Concerto for Marimba and Orchestra" is based upon Brazilian and jazz motifs. Rosauo's goal for the "Concerto" was to be inspirational, not only to the listener, but to the soloist as well.

The "Concerto for Marimba and Orchestra" was originally written for string orchestra. The piano reduction was first performed in 1986 at the National Theater of Brazil, with Rosauo as the soloist and Ana Amelia Gomide as his accompanist. In 1989, Rosauo arranged movements one, two and four of the "Concerto" for percussion ensemble, and in that same year, premiered the arrangement with the Meistersinger Konservatorium Percussion Ensemble in Nurnberg, Germany under the direction of Helmut Schwander. The completed arrangement, with all four movements, was premiered in 1995 in Manchester, England with Edward Cervenka as soloist, and the RNCM Percussion Ensemble, under the direction of Ian Wright. Dr. Thomas McCutchen subsequently completed a wind-ensemble arrangement of the "Concerto" [which will be performed at PASIC '99 with the composer featured as soloist]. Rosauo has made sure that each arrangement follows exactly the original composition, so the marimbist will be able to perform the "Concerto" with any of the arrangements available.

Rosauo's "Concerto for Marimba and Orchestra" is approximately eighteen minutes in length and has four movements: "I. Saudação (Greetings)," "II. Lamento (Lament)," "III. Dança (Dance)" and "IV. Despedida (Farewell)." The work was premiered in 1986 with the Manitowoc Symphony Orchestra, under the direction of Manuel Prestamo, with Rosauo as the marimba soloist. In 1990 the "Concerto" was first recorded on compact disc by Swiss marimbist Sevrin Balzer and the Kammermusikensemble Zurich

Orchestra. It was also recorded by Evelyn Glennie on video and compact disc in 1992. Since that time the "Concerto" has been performed with more than a hundred orchestras. The number of performances utilizing the piano reduction and percussion ensemble versions is even larger.

This work, which is written for the advanced performer, requires the soloist to use four mallets in each movement. The first, second and fourth movements call upon the soloist to perform an ostinato progression and tremolo (movement II) with the left hand, while the right hand plays the melody. The solo marimba part is written in such a manner that the soloist could perform this piece without any accompaniment. Thus, Rosauo has structured this composition for the soloist to always be in the forefront, leading and setting the pace for the orchestra, percussion ensemble, accompanist, or wind ensemble.

When asked for information that represents his feelings and thoughts about his "Concerto for Marimba and Orchestra," Rosauo supplied this brief description by Neil Butterworth:

"Saudação" is a rondo whose principal theme of irregular bar lengths imposes a restless character to the whole movement. There are three episodes inserted between the repetitions of the rondo theme, a sequence of dissonant chord clusters, a cool jazz digression and a lively syncopated tune. The "Lamento" is the longest movement of the "Concerto"; it is in four parts, opening with a chromatic figuration on the marimba against a tremolo accompaniment. The orchestra comes to the forefront in the second section while the soloist adds a chattering descant, followed by a marimba solo of tremolo chords, before the opening music returns. "Dança," a scherzo marked *Molto Animato*, is a brilliant toccata for the soloist with hardly a space to take a breath. The virtuosic display of the

movement is further developed in the "Despedida" which reaches an exciting climax that leads to the principal cadenza. In the recapitulation, material from the previous three movements is recalled.

Following is a performance analysis of the solo marimba part to Rosauo's "Concerto for Marimba and Orchestra." Each movement is divided into four sections indicated by measure numbers. These sections were chosen due to one or more of the following: sticking difficulty, questionable phrasing, and overall importance to the movement. The analysis provides suggestions to stimulate critical thought about the work. Hopefully, this will prove to be beneficial for performers and pedagogues alike.

MOVEMENT I

The choice of mallets throughout movement one and most of the "Concerto" is medium-hard. A medium-hard mallet will allow rhythmic clarity as well as a warmth and richness of sound in any register.

In measures 1-24 and 131-146, the performer must concentrate on the multiple stickings of the left hand. The sticking pattern should permit the natural accent of the frequent meter changes to fall in line as the left hand scissors the intervallic distances. This sticking pattern should also allow the right hand to move smoothly while performing the melodic line. While practicing the pattern, the performer should try to achieve a "swing-like" motion in the left hand.

The technique required for measures 59-82 is not as demanding as the opening theme of this movement. The emphasis in this section is on fluidity of the hands and clarity of tone. While practicing this section, the performer may try using the ends of the bars on the chromatic notes of the lower register, in order to support the tempo. In the upper part of the register, the player can easily

move into the center of the bars of the chromatic notes without inhibiting the flow of the hands or the phrasing.

Unlike the frequent meter changes of the opening theme, this section is in common time, but performed in a cut time or 2/4 feel. The phrase structure begins and ends on beats 1 and 3 of each measure, making this melodic line extremely reminiscent of a jazz motif.

The performer can also take liberties regarding the consistency of tempo. Slight changes in tempo can be employed to bring out rounded shapes to the phrasing. Since the rhythmic pulse is essential to the phrase structure, the player must not be too zealous with technique, because it can distort the natural flow of the phrasing.

The technical aspects and the phrase structure of measures 101–114 are extremely similar to those in measures 59–82. Unique to this section are the rapid changes in register. The performer is required to move about the registers of the instrument quite frequently without any gradual progression, as in measures 59–82. Therefore, consistency of tempo is imperative to ensure cohesiveness with the rest of the ensemble.

The primary function of measures 127–130 is to bridge the material between the jazz motif and the opening theme. Another dilemma regarding stickings is found in this section as well. Both hands are going in opposite directions and are moving about the instrument quite rapidly at a softer dynamic level.

MOVEMENT II

Unlike the rest of the “Concerto,” the mallet choice for this movement is quite different. The performer should strive for a very warm and soft tone on the marimba.

In regards to the phrasing of this movement, the performer should keep in mind the title “Lament.” It is helpful to use visual images to support the motion and emotion of this title as it pertains to the phrase structure. Technically, in measures 1–11 and 70–79, the soloist must experiment to find that fine line as it pertains to moving, stretching, and shaping the melodic phrasing without altering the rhythmic pulse. The left-hand tremolo, quite soft dynamically, functions more as a feeling and soft cushion to the melodic line, instead of being an

overly audible component. The performer can also take advantage of the nodal points on the instrument to help balance the sound between the tremolos of various intervals in the right hand.

The performer must be as rhythmically accurate as possible in measures 12–19 and 80–87. Numerous cross-stickings are employed to achieve optimal rhythmical clarity. Cross-sticking can be complicated to perform, especially in this section. The performer may try shifting the right hand to the lower end of the bars without striking the nodes, and angling the right hand to allow the left hand to strike a given note with confidence.

After the very rhythmic patterns and complex phrasings of the opening themes of this movement, a transformation occurs in measures 22–45, having the soloist function as an accompanist to the first violinist. The phrasing is simplistic in nature and is predominantly dictated by the rhythmic and metric structure. The meter has changed from 6/4 to 3/4. Thus, the phrasing is now shaped into a soft, flowing waltz.

Additionally, in this section the choice between a ripple roll and the common hand-to-hand roll is worthy of debate. The ripple roll adds a more complex sound and works quite well with the open chords of this section, but becomes very difficult to implement when the chord structure is in a closed position. Rosauro performs this section by using the ripple roll for the open chords and reverts back to the hand-to-hand roll for the closed chords. Because this section is so open and delicate in nature, the soloist may desire to provide the listener with consistency of sound. Therefore, the hand-to-hand roll works best overall to acquire symmetry and ease of control while performing the various chord structures in this section.

In measures 46–70, the meter continues in 3/4, but the waltz pattern begins to alter. It becomes more romantic in nature and is not dance-like, as in measures 22–45. The performer again needs to move and stretch the tempo in order to adequately phrase. Even though the performer’s technique is not challenged in this section, consideration should be given towards the accuracy of performing octaves either as double stops or melodically, while keeping an even tone between the registers. Because this sec-

tion requires the performer to move about the instrument with leaps involving wide intervals, it is advisable to position hands as close to the instrument as possible in order to ensure accuracy.

MOVEMENT III

In the third movement, measures 13–41 and 113–141 require the performer to address several technical questions. One question involves the logistics of the performer’s body in relation to the mallets and the instrument in order to avoid entanglement of the mallets. The answer is to angle both hands inward. Unfortunately, due to the makeup of the instrument, compromising a little in order to save the whole is sometimes employed. Therefore, the left hand can play closer to the nodes in order for the right hand to play the melodic line with very little compromise in tone clarity and quality.

The second question involves the large intervals played by either hand, while not diminishing sound quality and fluidity. The objective here is to again angle the hands so that the natural notes are being played as close to the resonators as possible with the chromatic notes being played towards the ends of the bars. Because of the size of the bars in the lower register and the notes used in these particular intervals, it is almost impossible to have one hand play over the resonators for both notes. Thus, playing in this manner permits both notes of the interval to have clarity and quality of tone. The performer must be careful to avoid the nodes in order for evenness of sound to be attained.

It is recommended that the performer return to medium-hard mallets for this movement and the rest of the “Concerto.” The shape of the phrasing in this section is distinguished by the first sixteenth note of each beat of every measure. This note needs to be brought out more than the other sixteenth notes in order to achieve the desired phrasing. Be careful not to stress this note too much, since the upper register of this instrument stands out more than the lower register.

In measures 42–46 and 50–57, Baroque influences unfold. The performer is required to play the opening theme of a fugato with the string ensemble. It is imperative to perform each voice of the fugato equally, while being as rhythmically accurate as possible in order for the natural phrasing of this section to occur.

The performer is asked to imitate and expand upon the multitude of voices that have been played by the string ensemble in this section.

The fugato ends in measures 57–61 and serves as a bridge into the waltz section of measures 65–105. The final sixteenth-note pattern of measures 57–61 establishes the new tempo for measures 65–105. Thus, the performer must be careful not to be too conservative or liberal with this *accelerando*.

The fast waltz in measures 65–105 supports the theme established by the title of this movement, “Dance.” The performer may choose to use two mallets instead of four in this section because of the frequent chromatic runs and the necessity for double stickings. Four mallets can become cumbersome. Also, due to the brisk tempo, the performer may choose to use the ends of the bars on the chromatic notes to ensure accuracy while performing some of these patterns.

The phrasing is simplistic in nature and is predominantly structured by the rhythmic and metric feel of a waltz. The performer needs to emphasize the first beat of every measure in order to ensure the flow and proper phrasing of this section. Towards the end of the section, the performer will perform a sixteenth-note pattern across the instrument, which leads into the opening theme of the movement.

MOVEMENT IV

The fourth movement is the most rhythmic of all the movements in the “Concerto.” In measures 16–116 and 169–184, the marimbist functions as a metronome for the rest of the ensemble. The left hand outlines the natural accents of the meter changes while keeping a steady eighth-note pulse for the string ensemble. This is reminiscent of the opening theme of the first movement, due to the continuous pattern in the left hand as it outlines the frequent meter changes. However, the metric pattern in the fourth movement stays the same throughout the movement.

The positioning of the hands, in relation to the intervals employed, follows suit from the previous movement. Those intervals in which both mallets of one hand are required to play on a natural note and a chromatic note at the same time are to be angled in such a manner that the natural note is being performed

as close to the resonator as possible. The chromatic note should be performed on the end of the bar. The phrasing is simplistic in nature and is established by the natural rhythmic pulse of the meter changes.

The structure of the melodic line in measures 52–84 permits the performer to be freer and does not conform to the rhythmic pulse established by the frequent meter changes. The disjunct motion of the melodic line requires the performer to make large leaps across the instrument. The large leaps and brisk tempo of this section can truly challenge the performer’s technical abilities. Another factor to consider is the ease of clicking mallets together in the right hand while performing this section. Therefore, careful consideration should be given towards grip to prevent the clicking of mallets. Unfortunately, the clicking of mallets cannot always be avoided due to the type of mallets being used, the interval being performed, and the force used to strike the instrument.

In measures 132–153 and 185–209, because of the tempo and rhythmic pattern, the performer must take into account how to best move from one note to another while ensuring clarity and quality of tone. A recommended solution is to perform over the resonators for the natural notes. For the chromatic notes, the left hand should be positioned near the resonator while the right hand is positioned near the end of the bar. Therefore, the rhythmic clarity is sustained along with the quality of tone. In regards to phrasing, it is simplistic in nature and is based upon the pulse of the meter changes.

The opening of the cadenza is based upon the thematic material of measures 1–24 of the first movement. These measures are followed by the thematic material found in measures 22–45 of the second movement. Next is a sixteenth-note pattern that is reminiscent of measures 13–25 of the third movement. The closing of the cadenza is the similar to the fugato section from the third movement.

A common thread between the movements of the “Concerto” is the very rhythmic passages that accompany frequent meter changes. In the cadenza, the soloist does not have to conform to a meter or strict rhythmic pattern, but is free to explore, shape, stretch, and move

the lines. Subtlety is the key when meshing these sections together. The tempo changes are an essential part of making this cadenza sound musical, while being true to the thematic material from previous movements.

As previously discussed, the last section of the cadenza is part of the fugato from the third movement, which leads the ensemble into a restatement of the opening theme of the fourth movement. Therefore, careful consideration must be given to the tempo of this section in order to ensure that the conductor does not have to make any sudden changes in tempo when the string ensemble enters. Subdividing will aid the performer in determining the correct tempo for the recapitulation.

Ney Rosaura’s contributions to the world of percussion grow each year. He has twenty-four works in his catalog, with another six works in the final stages of completion. His latest accomplishment is “Concerto for Vibraphone and Orchestra,” which is dedicated to Evelyn Glennie. Rosaura’s “Concerto for Marimba and Orchestra,” as well as his other complete works and method books, are published by Pro Percussao Music and distributed by MalletWorks.

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