

World Concerto for Cello and Orchestra

Program Notes

The *World Concerto for Cello and Orchestra* is a musical evocation of the undeniable global interdependence of the world we inhabit in the early 21st century. In a general way, the cello is our guide, our protagonist, in a journey of self-discovery and external exploration, a Westerner who introduces us to three "world" cultures: China, India, and the Arab world, whereby we can hope to better understand ourselves, those in distant lands, and the new opportunities that lie open to all of us through global cooperation and mutual respect. In the first movement, the cello appears with the orchestra alone, in a narrative that at times is rife with challenge and struggle, as well as joy and triumph; it is a "hero's journey" that ultimately leads to self-knowledge and a quiet confidence to throw open the gates of discovery to the world beyond. A short musical motive introduced by the cello near the beginning, a#-B-a#-b, provides cohesion throughout the movement, as indeed through the entire concerto, as a symbol of the cello's consistent inner-identity despite the many challenges and transformations it endures.

The second movement is a "global rondo", an excursion that sees our hero visit in turn three different cultures, each of which is represented by a distinguished musical ambassador: the erhu (China), the sarangi (India), and the oud (Arabia). In each encounter, the foreign "ambassador" introduces the nuances and nature of its musical language to the cello, who with increasing confidence is able to appreciate and assimilate the host language, carrying out a friendly dialogue with the host as it gains in knowledge and comfort; some tensions occasionally arise, but cooperation inevitably wins the day. The musical expression of each "world" soloist is based – in a varied manner befitting its indigenous musical language – on a motive introduced by the cello early in the movement (d-e-f-g-f-e-F-e). Surrounding each "global" episode is a recurring, rhythmic motive in the cello section, representing the confident curiosity that such an excursion requires.

The third movement is an attempt at full global cooperation, a "synthesis" that follows from the opening two movements' "thesis" and "antithesis", respectively. All four soloists participate in the "reconciliation", with the cello acting as a kind of directing guide to this global musical symposium. While a main thrust of the movement is collaboration and cooperation, the movement also gives an opportunity for each soloist to articulate an independent message - the "world" instruments (oud, sarangi, erhu) by means of an improvisatory section, and the cello by means of an extended cadenza. The principal theme of the movement, introduced by the orchestra shortly into the movement, is an outgrowth of the cello's solo motive of the second movement, but now transformed into a soaring gesture of hope and enthusiasm for a new day of global unity and fellowship.

The concerto is dedicated to Jim and Bonnie Bell, who are more than patrons, but a tangible inspiration to the work - Jim especially. The work is written for cellist Maya Beiser, an embodiment of this global perspective, with thanks for her involvement in the premier performances. The composer is also indebted to the expert "world" soloists, Jiebing Chen (erhu), Aruna Narayan (sarangi), and Bassam Saba (oud) for their talents and wonderful spirit in joining in these performances.