

PROGRAM NOTE

Concerto for Violin and Percussion Orchestra was commissioned by the Fromm Music Foundation at Harvard University. Scored for solo violin and six percussionists, and conceived as a companion piece to the eponymous work by Lou Harrison, my concerto is cast in four contrasting movements that flow into one another to make an eighteen-minute trajectory; the last two movements are played without pause. The first movement, marked “encantata” (enchanted), conjurs an exotic, pure sound world by way of a lyrical violin barcarolle with ringing pitched percussion, including a pair of vibraphones, as the accompaniment. The second movement, “inquieta” (restless), is a fast dirge that highlights two xylophones in close conversation both with one another and with the violin. The third movement, majestic in tone and tempo, is a recitative and aria that showcase the warmth and mysterious colour of a pair of marimbas. The recitative features the solo timpani in dialogue with the violin; chromatic inflections of the aria’s lyrical violin line embody the drama (and sense of melting) of flying too close to the sun. The final movement, “brioso” (spirited), creates a dialectic between a wild, exotic dance and a bittersweet anthem (“cantabile”). All mallet percussion instruments now join in a melodic role, building to a “wall of sound” with the return of the brioso theme. After a brief violin cadenza, the skins (drums) rise energetically to the foreground for the first time. *Concerto for Violin and Percussion Orchestra* is dedicated with gratitude and appreciation to Frank Epstein, Nicholas Kitchen, and the New England Conservatory Percussion Ensemble.

- Kati Agócs, 2018