

PROGRAM NOTE

My Horn Concerto highlights the lyrical and virtuosic properties of the solo horn. The piece's instrumentation— two clarinets, two bassoons, and strings— takes the rich, dark hues of Mozart's orchestra in his Third Horn Concerto as a point of departure. Apart from the parallel with the Mozart in terms of instrumentation, my Horn Concerto inhabits a sound world that is very much its own, showcasing different kinds of horn playing in each of its three movements.

The first movement, with its insouciant quality, evokes the instrument's hunting-horn origins, embedding fanfare-like melodies in non-functional harmony. The second movement is lyrical; its long, embellished melodic lines evolve through gauzy string textures, featuring an interplay between the solo horn and the first clarinet, who start out trading phrases and end up duetting. The third and final movement is driven and angular. A spirited subject/answer complex gives way to more atmospheric sonorities but ultimately returns to its chromatic and punchy start, featuring members of the orchestra soloistically along the way. This movement introduces low woodwind doublings (bass clarinet and contrabassoon) that I have added as an extension of Mozart's orchestra. The cadenza features the special sonority of glissandi (slides through many partials) combined with a stopped sound in the solo part.

My Horn Concerto was written for James Sommerville in 2020 as a co-commission by a consortium of five orchestras in the U.S. and Canada. It is eighteen minutes in duration.

- Kati Agócs, August 2021