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Concertante Techniques in *Trois images* by Ivo Petrić

Koncertantne tehnike v *Trois images* Iva Petrića

POVZETEK

Obsežno zasnovani romantični koncert so prevzemali številni skladatelji 20. stoletja, med njimi Stravinski, Honegger in Frank Martin, ki so sprva vsi nameravali napisati mnogo krajša dela. Ena takih skladb je delo *Trois images* Iva Petrića, violinski koncert, ki je nastal v letih 1972-73. Skladba razodeva dvoumen pristop v formi, v razmerju med solistom in orkestrom, v uporabi glasbenih motivov in koncertantnih idej. Na eni strani je navezana na tradicijo z uporabo krajše, tristavčne koncertantne strukture, s tradicionalnim dialoškim razmerjem med solistom in spremljavo, z razvijanjem motivov in virtuozno tehniko. Na drugi strani pa tradicijo prelamlja s potvarjanjem kontrastov in ločitvijo med posameznimi stavki ter s transformiranjem tradicionalnih koncertantnih tehnik v prosto uravnanem idiomu, ki ga je tedaj skladatelj uporabljal. Delo je odličen primer tega, kako je mogoče povezati koncertantne tehnike z avantgardnimi.

SUMMARY

The large-scale romantic concerto has been re-evaluated by many composers of the 20th century. These have included Stravinsky, Honegger and Frank Martin, who have all tended to compose on a much smaller scale. One such work is Ivo Petrić's *Trois images,* a violin concerto dating from 1972–73. It displays an ambiguous approach to form, the relationships between the soloist and orchestra, the use of musical motives and the idea of the concerto. On the one hand, it has links with tradition in that it uses the title and three-movement structure of the concerto, the traditional relationships of dialogue, solo and accompaniment, development of motives and virtuoso techniques. On the other hand, it breaks with tradition by disguising the contrasts and separation of the individual movements, and transforming traditional concerto techniques for use in the freely co-ordinated idiom that the composer was using at the time. It proves to be an excellent example of how concerto techniques can be combined with the techniques of the avant-garde.

103

The Background

One of the greatest legacies of 19th-century music to the 20th century was the romantic concerto, particularly for piano or violin and orchestra. It had established itself early in the century as a leading form in which the skills of an expert instrumentalist could be displayed to an audience. The solo concertos of Beethoven, especially the Violin Concerto and the Third, Fourth and Fifth Concertos for piano and orchestra provide an obvious starting point. The idea of a conflict between soloist and orchestra, displayed so clearly in the slow movement of Beethoven's Piano Concerto No.4, was frequently presented in 19th-century piano concertos, for example, in the first Piano Concertos by Tchaikovsky and Brahms, and coming into the early 20th century, by the Piano Concerto by Busoni.

The idea of a conflict between soloist and orchestra was not so strong in the case of the violin concerto, although the concertos of Brahms and Tchaikovsky display a strong dominating character by the soloist. Other violin concertos, for example, those by Max Bruch and Mendelssohn, have a much more lyrical and less combative approach, even though the level of virtuosity required is still very high. Some violin concertos in the first half of the 20th century were composed in the same spirit: the Violin Concerto No.2 by Bartók and that by Schoenberg feature a dazzling level of virtuosity entirely in keeping with their 19th-century models. Inevitably there was a reaction against the excesses of this type of composition, as there was to many of the grandiose musical forms of the 19th century. More modest neo-classical conceptions, Piano and Violin Concertos by Stravinsky, looked back more to models from the classical period, as did other works such as the Piano Concertino by Honegger of 1924. This approach is also found in the same composer's *Concerto da camera* of 1948, Frank Martin's Concerto for 7 wind instruments of 1949, and Richard Strauss's Oboe Concerto of 1945 and *Duett-Concertino* of 1947.

In the second half of the 20th century, there has been a considerable re-evaluation of the form of the concerto and of the relationships within it. There have been some examples of the large-scale romantic-type concerto, but they have been relatively infrequent. Recent concertos tend to have durations of 30 minutes or less and, in general, they have taken the three-movement plan normally associated with the 18th and 19th centuries, adopting a number of relationships between the soloist and the orchestra that have long been accepted as 'normal'. In simplified form these can be summarised as follows:
1. solo accompanied by orchestra
2. orchestra accompanied by the soloist
3. soloist and orchestra in dialogue
4. solo without orchestra (often the 'cadenza')
5. orchestra without soloist ('tutti')

It must be made clear, of course, that there is not always a definite distinction between these categories as composers often combine the features of different headings or move from one to another very rapidly. Adopting these headings, however, does help us to gain an insight into the processes involved.

It is in the context of the re-examination by many composers of the importance and position of the concerto in the later 20th century that Ivo Petrić composed his concerto for violin and orchestra in late 1972 and early 1973. It has a fascinating ambiguity. On the one

hand it adopts, even if only remotely, the classical three-movement plan and the five relationships noted above. On the other hand, it employs a modernist idiom that embraces fast unmetred flourishes, freely coordinated repeated ostinato patterns and, for most of its duration, a synchronisation between the solo violin and the separate orchestral parts that is only partly regulated by a system of conductor's cues but is often free. It is in the reconciliation between these two groups of elements that the strength of the work lies.

Form

The form of the work is a good point with which to start. It plays without a break for just over 25 minutes, but is broadly divided into three sections, whose tempos, moderato, lento and vivo, correspond roughly with the movements of the classical concerto. Two features, however, confuse the issue. The first is that Petrić did not use the word 'movement' and kept the word 'concerto' only in the subtitle. Instead, he entitled the whole work *Trois images* ('Three Pictures'), the pictures being the movements, suggesting something more than the normal virtuoso composition for solo instrument and orchestra. The second is the way that the composer created links between the 'images' or movements in a way that makes it difficult to discern the change from one tempo to another. This clearly contradicts the classical idea of movements unambiguously distinguished by tempo and separated by tonality and cadence.

Relationships

Within the broad three-movement structure, the subdivisions are made clear by differing relationships between the solo violin and the orchestra. Just as in the classical concerto, there is an alternation between 'solo' and 'tutti' sections, so the same can be discerned in Petrić's *Trois images*. The first 'image' (the term 'movement' is used from here onwards) can be viewed as a sequence of passages in which the violin is prominent, separated by four orchestral *tuttis*. Likewise the central *lento* movement can be viewed as a five-part structure of three solo passages with orchestral accompaniment separated by two *tuttis*, although the divisions are not as clearly defined as this description suggests. The final movement, *tempo vivo*, has three short *tuttis* that are enclosed by multiple solo sections before a final extended and overwhelming orchestral *tutti* ushers in the reflective *molto sostenuto* coda, with which the work ends.

Motives

Trois images, in common with other works by the composer from this period, is dominated by motivic activity. Often the motives are quite short – three or four notes is the norm – but what is fascinating about this use is that the motives are in a constant state of flux. The pitch, the order and the number of the notes is constantly being varied.

Imitations between one part and another, although clear to the ear, are rarely exact: the rhythm may change, the order of the notes may be varied, and notes may be added or subtracted. Simple motives may be repeated in decorated form or simple motives may be played simultaneously with a decorated form. The motives in Petrić's music are sometimes transformed from prominent melodic foreground figures to background accompanying ostinatos without the listener really being aware of the process. This motivic activity produces two things that have been valued in many periods of musical composition: variety and unity. To sum up, the ear instantly recognises the similarities even if the mind notices the differences.

Integration of the elements

We are now in a position to investigate the three movements separately to see how the form, relationships and motives combine to produce the concertante techniques that characterise Petrić's *Trois images*. The three tables are set out to show how the different techniques are combined throughout the work. It must be made clear that the music is continuous throughout and that the division into sections has been made purely for the purposes of this study and does not imply any sectional approach for the listener. It is certainly not desirable to listen to the work as anything other than a continuous structure. It must be stressed that Petrić composed these parts in such a way that the sequence is dramatically paced so that it is often extremely difficult to distinguish the individual parts. It is used only to help to understand the processes involved in creating a concerto in an idiom in which some of the concerto techniques used are not so easily appreciated.

Of the five relationships listed earlier Petrić naturally favours the first (solo accompanied by orchestra) and the third (soloist and orchestra in dialogue) and these are the most frequent. Sometimes he merges the functions of the two or transforms the latter into the former. Inevitably there are numerous passages in which the solo violin is unaccompanied (the fourth category), but these are relatively short-lived. Also of brief, sometimes very brief, duration are most of the orchestral *tuttis* (the fifth category). Indeed, some of the actual examples chosen here may well be thought to be almost insignificant because of their brevity, but they do fulfil a structural purpose and are noted for this reason. Examples of the second kind (orchestra accompanied by the soloist) are hard to find – the opening of the *Lento* may fall into this category – and this suggests that the kind of decoration that is found in, say, Mozart's piano concertos, does not lend itself so readily to this idiom.

Moderato sostenuto

The first movement is evenly measured only in the opening section with its falling and rising phrases, and in the short *tutti* at figs 31–32.[1] The remainder consists of solo violin sections gently accompanied by repeated ostinatos or punctuated by synchronised chords, and by *tuttis* which build to a climax and then collapse to reveal the solo violin.

In the first movement, two sections, nos 1 and 7 in Table 1, feature dialogue. The opening is very clear in its techniques. In a strictly measured three in a bar, wind instruments, first flutes, then clarinets and bassoons play a wide variety of variations on a *descending* four-note phrase. Parts overlap and interlock in a gentle cascade of notes. The overall change of pitch is downwards. The basic motive can be seen as the descending semitone and tone followed by a rising semitone, but this is constantly being altered. At one point the flutes play a three-part variation on this. The violin is contrasted against this in the most obviously contrasted way, by playing *ascending* phrases, again using the same four-note motive now in inverted form. Some of the violin's phrases are played faster, but the connections with the original form are instantly clear. The mirror forms separate soloist and orchestra.

The later section (no.7) that features dialogue is more complex. Again the violin employs short motives, but here there are accompanying textures produced by repeating passages from the brass which use the same motives as the violin (brass, cellos, basses). The scurrying motives on the bass clarinet at fig 34 are taken up by the bells and in the dialogue with the violin in the section from fig 38 to 42 which acts as a form of recitative in which the violin's moving lines are punctuated by different groups in turn.

It is thus to the three recitative-like sections that we now turn (sections 3, 5 and 9 in Table 1). We should observe that recitative technique would naturally favour the freely coordinated lines that the composer is using and the variety of different types of rhythmic motive also reinforce this idea. In the first example (section 3, fig 15 to 22) the violin freely improvises on the form of the short motive, expanding or contracting it at will. It is the violin's ricochet repeated notes that are taken into the repeated notes of the orchestral accompaniment. These notes are built up into a complex but static textural accompaniment of built up that acts as an effective background to the soloist's elaboration of motives, with its range of ricochets, portamentos, and flourishes. We can see this as a modern version of the long sustained chords that underpin baroque recitative.

The second example (fig 28 to 31 in the score) is more interesting in that the music starts with an orchestral string chord and short-lived descending wind flourishes, leaving the violin to muse freely on the four-note motive. The chords at figs 29 and 30 act like the chords in 18th-century recitative. This section ends as if on a cadenza for violin. The final recitative-like section of the first movement is punctuated by the entry of ostinato repetitions before the final fade into the simple melodic character of the opening of the slow movement.

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[1]   References to figures are to the conductor's cues in the published score: Ivo Petrić: *Trois images* (Ljubljana: Edicije DSS, 1974). The timings for individual sections are taken from the compact disc recording of the work played by Igor Ozim with the Slovenian Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Uroš Lajovic (SIP 06, Ljubljana, 2000), and published by the composer.

The four sections of the first movement described here as *tutti* are all quite short. The first (fig 10 to 15) is intriguing in the way that textural groupings of very varied lengths are overlaid by a clearly defined non-repeating solo clarinet line using at first three-note motives and then expanding them. This section is concluded with a congested statement of the various forms of the motive played in a simultaneous flourish (fig 15) that ushers in the solo violin, a very effectively dramatic gesture. Also worthy of comment is the *tutti* that follows the violent climax at fig 22. Randomly scattered piccolo notes and 'boxed' repetitions from percussion, piano and harp form the background for imitative brass entries of a clear soloistic nature. These all gradually dissolve into textures whose climax again reintroduces the violin, now *molto calmo*, in the second recitative section. The third *tutti* is the brief linking passage already mentioned (fig 31 to 32), while the final one (fig 42 to 47) is a loud connecting passage that leads into the final solo link into the slow movement.

Lento

The slow movement consists of three sections in which the solo violin is prominent, separated by two *tuttis*. This is followed by a coda which deceptively and skilfully with the interweaving of different materials into the final *tempo vivo*.

The three solo sections (Sections 1, 3 and 5 in Table 2) feature different relationships between solo violin and the orchestra, the first a form of melody and accompaniment, the second is a dialogue and the third a recitative. The three elements of the opening section (fig 55 to 56) are juxtaposed: a syncopated solo cello melody is placed in counterpoint to violin tremolos with pianissimo rising scales from clarinets, violas and violins. There seems to be a deliberate ambiguity about which is the accompanying instrument, the cello or the violin. The second solo section (fig 62 to 65) is a dialogue between the solo violin and individual brass instruments. It is interesting how the latter start their imitative entries clearly and distinctly, but then use repetitions based on the arpeggio-like descending figure and two notes of the violin's four-note motive. The initial dialogue changes very subtly by the end of the section to the relationship of solo with accompaniment.

The *tutti* sections, as in the first movement, are short, in both cases significant to musical argument but each just over thirty seconds long. The first (fig 56–62), consisting of different motives emerging from along note, builds to a fortissimo climax that leads into the central dialogue section that consists of imitating descending phrases of varying lengths.

The second *tutti* (fig 65–66) in effect starts at fig 63 with descending models based on the solo violin's opening of the previous section, followed by similarly loosely coordinated imitative phrases from the woodwind, then percussion, piano and harp. The overlap into the violin's recitative section (fig 66–76) is beautifully shaded, the violin starting 'when the vibraphone finishes the model for the first time'.

The way that *tutti* passages playing at the tempo of the finale are infiltrated into the end of the violin's recitative are superbly managed. Portamentos are increasingly appea-

ring towards the end of the recitative (fig 67–76) to anticipate the music of the main *tempo vivo* section of the finale. They are also being combined with downward rushing flourishes to anticipate the semiquaver runs mostly on the woodwind. At fig 76, 78 and 80, this is precisely what we hear. Between fig 76 and 80 the tempo keeps changing from free to regular metre. At fig 80, when the new tempo is properly established, the short portamentos that feature so prominently in the opening section are clearly in evidence. This is the real beginning of the finale.

Tempo vivo

At fig 80 *tempo vivo* is fully established (Table 3, section 1). Although this opening solo is only brief, it can clearly be heard as solo and accompaniment with a strong rhythmic articulation emphasised by the tom-toms. After a short *tutti* (fig 82–86), Petrić embarked on a complex central part (Table 3, sections 3–5), employing a variety of techniques. The first part (section 3, fig 86–90) uses recitative-type methods of the kind found in the first movement, with variable length segments of free rhythm, punctuated by brief flourishes and the entry of trilled notes or repeated groups notated in boxes ('models'). This is followed by the second section (section 4, fig 90–94) with dialogue by imitation, in which the violin's motivic shapes are taken up, first by the strings as repeated ostinatos and then at fig 93 by flutes and clarinets. The third part of this central solo passage (section 5, fig 94–95) is in effect a virtually unaccompanied cadenza, in which the soloist works successively with repeated groups, slides and flourishes.

Unlike most of the previous *tuttis*, the passage from fig 95 to 102 is an enormously complex section. It starts by drawing together various motives in transformed versions. The entry of the percussion (fig 99) is the prelude to a huge and violent outburst of repeated groups, removing the tension for the quiet and unassuming entry of the violin for the coda, marked *molto sostenuto*. The recitative techniques in the coda are very varied. Sustained string notes are joined irregularly by slides while the violin plays versions of the motives freely and slowly. In the last section, marked *sempre più lento*, all or part of the four-note motive has the last word in a collections of different forms: the solo violin's, as a prominent melodic line; in individual subsidiary non-repeating solos from solo orchestral players, piccolo (fig 108), double bass (fig 108c), bells (fig 109 – only three notes); and in two- or three-note phrases as repeated models in the strings. This long and drawn out coda is a fitting close to a work of great emotional intensity.

Conclusion

Petrić's *Trois images* is a unique work that draws on some of the techniques of traditional virtuoso writing. Yet it recreates these in an idiom totally removed from those in which it was originally nurtured in the 19th century. The free coordination of the aleatory techniques that the composer uses in most of the work naturally lend themselves to recitative-type techniques. However, the composer also made great play of

the possibilities of dialogue between his soloist and the orchestra at a number of different levels: equal, accompanying, or background. The *tuttis* used are of relatively short duration, but are immensely effective, nevertheless. They act as clear structural markers to help the listener to understand the large-scale planning of the work, introducing at each stage important new developments. Despite the fact that Petrić has now returned to measured rhythms and metrical barring in his latest music, *Trois images* stands as an important and effective example of the use of the avant-garde techniques that were commonly employed in the 1970s.

Table 1
Moderato sostenuto

Section	Cues	Approx duration	Type	Features
1	0-10	2 min 28 sec	Dialogue	Orchestra: descending and overlapping variants on four-note motive. Violin: ascending variants on motive becoming more florid. Then florid groupings and imitations between soloist and members of orchestra. Constant dialogue. Recitative-like section leads to first tutti.
2	10-15	53 sec	Tutti	Build up of textures by increasing elaboration of basic motive: woodwind plus percussion.
3	15-22	1 min 50 sec	Recitative	Wide range of virtuoso solo techniques accompanied by repeated notes and patterns in orchestra.
4	22-28	1 min 2 sec	Tutti	Repeated patterns with solo brass instruments entering in turn: trombone, horn. Fortissimo climax fades to reveal solo violin.
5	28-31	1 min 54 sec	Recitative	Violin solo molto calmo with harmonics and crossing of strings. Recitative-like chords from orchestra.
6	31-32	5 sec	Tutti	Short measured section of ten quavers in anticipation of tempo of finale (tempo vivo)
7	33-41	1 min 11 sec	Dialogue	Violin with four-note motive, with orchestra sometimes imitating this (trumpet, horn, trombone). Repeated models from lower woodwind and lower strings. Recitative techniques used in orchestra between figs 39 and 41.
8	42-47	15 sec	Tutti	Recitative 'chords' taken over as passage introducing solo violin (molto marcato).
9	47-55	1 min	Recitative	Violin recitative: double stopping with one fixed note. Varied orchestral entries to punctuate solo.

Table 2
Lento

Section	Cues	Approx duration	Type	Features
1	55-56	32 sec	Solo and accompaniment	Violin tremolos against descending lines from cello and trombone.
2	56-62	33 sec	Tutti	Strings hold piano A, crescendo to descending flourishes after brass entry; woodwind similar; brass start with string tremolos and woodwind trills, fading to violin entry
3	62-65	58 sec	Dialogue	Descending phrases, mostly in thirds, solo violin then horns, taking this up as repeated ostinato models.
4	65-66	37 sec	Tutti	Repeated descending phrases in orchestral strings, woodwind and percussion, piano and harp group.
5	66-76	2 min 20 sec	Recitative	Violin: descending phrases mostly in thirds and fourths as repetitions fade. Short fragmentary phrases. Recitative-like 'chords' punctuate violin figures, mostly fast ascending or descending phrases and slides
6	76-80	34 sec	Dialogue	Transition from recitative to Tempo vivo, recitative and tempo vivo in dialogue between violin and orchestra

Table 3
Tempo vivo

Section	Cues	Approx duration	Type	Features
1	80-82	24 sec	Solo and accompaniment	Full establishment of tempo vivo in bars of 2 or 3 crotchets. Almost traditional melody and accompaniment.
2	82-86	22 sec	Tutti	Free coordination: textures from string harmonics, woodwind flourishes and percussion and harp chords
3	86-90	22 sec	Recitative	Recitative with solo violin virtuoso runs
4	90-94	35 sec	Dialogue	Solo violin's phrases taken up by strings and woodwind as repeated ostinato models
5	94-95	1 min 6 sec	Cadenza	Solo violin with repeated groups, slides and flourishes. Mostly unaccompanied.
6	95-101a	1 min 46 sec	Tutti	Solo strings, brass and woodwind with brief melodic fragments developing into repeated models. Complex loud wind and string climax fading to entry of violin in coda.
7	102-109	4 min 13 sec	Solo and accompaniment	Coda: Molto sostenuto. Solo violin with textural background, ricochets, repeated notes and trills. Sempre più lento, Violin takes fournote motive with imitations from different instruments.