

Brydie's Commentary on *Dance Diversions*

I've really enjoyed studying the score and listening to the recording of *Dance Diversions*. If I heard this on a sample CD from a publisher, I'd buy it straight away.

It's a dazzling work that would make an excellent feature in any program, themed or not. While the concertino moves through contrasting characters, the dance connection really gives it a great sense of cohesion. I really appreciate the way that you've engaged the ensemble in the action; they are just as challenged as the soloist.

Parody

I loved this section the first time I heard it, and it keeps growing on me. The dialogue between the soloist and ensemble is constructed so well. The ensemble figure on beats 2 and 3 really brings a smile to my face! I can almost hear the comic 'stumble' in the trombone motif from 18 onwards. The comic tavern characters that come through at 59 really add to the fun of it; I can hear they're tinkering on the edge and coming close to falling over.

Pas de Deux

This section brings contrasting 'relief' from the comedic opening. The trombone's melodic line from 4-8 is beautiful – as an ex-dancer, I can really image dancing to this. However, with the entry of the trumpet the delicacy gets lost: I can't work out if it's because the contour of the line transforms, or the instrumentation shifts, or the players on the recording aren't 'dancing' too well. The beauty comes back at 30 however, when the line returns and the combination of instruments somehow feels subtler, and dare I say more sensitive? I know that the idea is that the trombone dances with various members of the ensemble, but somehow the parts don't lock in as closely as the title 'pas de deux' suggests. Maybe it was just the players on the recording?

Primitive

I find this section really exciting; it evokes tremendous movement! The rhythmic intensity really grabs you from the beginning. The timpani part certainly drives this. I also love the percussiveness in the piano. The trombone motif and piano part at 39 is my favourite part in the piece – it has an underlying current that intrigues me; controlled yet brooding. At 96 the character changes for a few bars, and I'm sure you're preparing for the next explosion as the trombone works through an ascending figure: if I was conducting this I would find it hard not to let 'the bottom fall out of it.' From 116 onwards I really hear the potential for the trombone to taunt the ensemble in a much more aggressive way; the percussion even sets this up. Is this Jamie's reticence coming through, or is it the part? From 239-244, I wonder what kind of situation would be evoked if the parts were 'less polite' to one another. The interlocking of the trombone with different entries from the ensemble almost seems too calculated and courteous, given all that has come before in the section. Having said that, the end really finishes on an explosive high!

Regarding your commentary about the work, you talk about Jamie's *spoken* persona, but don't seem to talk about his *musical* persona. I have seen Jamie talk, and indeed he is reticent, but when he has a trombone in his hands, he becomes a different character all together. I want to know more about the *musical* character that you gave him to play.

The trombone itself also has such an interesting personality, and the solo part that you give it in this piece brings out a lot of its unique qualities. It can be playful, it can be introverted, it can be mellow and it can be downright harsh. The way that you've written for this instrument, and the way that you've written for Jamie's musical personality, make this work very special. If I were preparing this piece, I would want to know more about these connections.

Kind regards,

Bydie
