The Checkered Flag Villanelle

Toccata for piano and orchestra
THE CHECKERED FLAG VILLANELLE

Toccata for piano and orchestra
by Taja Astar
2022
Duration ~ 7 min

INSTRUMENTATION

Flute 1
Flute 2 (doubling Piccolo)
Oboe 1
Oboe 2
Clarinet 1 in Bb
Clarinet 2 in Bb
Bassoon 1
Bassoon 2
Horns 1 in F
Horns 1 in F
Trumpet 1 in Bb
Trumpet 2 in Bb
Percussion (1 player)
Timpani
Whip
Marimba
Vibraphone
Crotale
Suspended Cymbal
Bass Drum
Strings
Violins I
Violins II
Violas
Violoncellos
Double Basses

THE CHECKERED FLAG VILLANELLE - PERFORMANCE NOTES

1. Piano part is going to be mostly improvised. It consists of material for improvisation and some cues for the conductor and musicians. Even the notated elements are not obligatory to be performed completely as written.

2. Hairpins without a new dynamic mark indicate slight changes within the given dynamics.

PROGRAMME NOTE

This piece is both an exploration of integrating improvisation techniques in an orchestral setting and an attempt at intertextuality in uniting poetry and music. The work correlates with the topics dealt with in a villanelle by Anna Astar (below), and tries somehow to reflect in its structure this traditional poetry form, characterized by a complex pattern of rhyming and refrains. It plays also with the concept of a checkered flag with its combination of black and white colors. The piano part represents a continuous improvisation based on two motifs, one of which is played on the black keys, the other on the white keys, with the hands alternating, when one hand touches rather only black or white keys.

The Checkered Flag by Anna Astar

It's sport: you're playing white, I'm playing black and always seem to move one step behind.
The game's about who takes the checkered flag.

We race across the board and down the track.
Fate on piano sets the tempo high,
his right hand playing white, left playing black.

Two lines now clash, now kiss, now throttle back.
Hands changed, this time it's I who's playing white, but I don't care about the checkered flag.

I move and watch the patterns interact,
their smart confusion capturing my mind - all mixed: who's playing white, who's playing black…
And suddenly, our ways that zig and zag from light to night, then back, get justified and fill the matrix of the checkered flag.

And you, my darling. When you start to lag,
I slow my pace, to tango by your side.
You'll see: one playing white, the other black, it takes us both to weave the checkered flag.
Astar: The Checkered Flag Villanelle (Score in C)

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4/11/2022
Short piano solo, not cond.

E  A tempo

Fl. 1

Picc.

Ob. 1

Ob. 2

Cl. 1

Cl. 2

Bsn. 1

Bsn. 2

Hn. 1

Hn. 2

Tpt. 1

Tpt. 2

Timp.

Pno.

短音楽独奏、非指揮

E  A tempo

Vln. 1

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Db.
Improvisation on given material (cond.)

To B. D.
Piano solo, not cond. (c. 20 s)
A start: The Checkered Flag Villanelle (Score in C)
Fl. 1
Picc.
Ob. 1
Ob. 2
Cl. 1
Cl. 2
Bsn. 1
Bsn. 2
Hn. 1
Hn. 2
Tpt. 1
Tpt. 2
Timp.
Pno.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
D. B.

Improvisation on given material (cond.)

sul tasto

pp

sul tasto
Astar: The Checkered Flag Villanelle (Score in C)
Short piano solo, not cond.
Fl. 1
Picc.
Ob. 1
Ob. 2
Cl. 1
Cl. 2
Bsn. 1
Bsn. 2
Hn. 1
Hn. 2
Tpt. 1
Tpt. 2
Cym.
Pno.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.

N A tempo

To Fl.

Improvisation on given material (cond.)

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Fl. 1
Fl.
Ob. 1
Ob. 2
Cl. 1
Cl. 2
Bsn. 1
Bsn. 2
Hn. 1
Hn. 2
Tpt. 1
Tpt. 2
Whip
Pno.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
D. B.

Piano cadenza, Q not cond. (c. 20-30 s)

Cadenza ending with arpeggio on given pitches (c. 20-30s)

To Timp.

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4/11/2022
Improvisation on the final chord