Aaron Brooks

Two Grotesque Scenes

for Clarinet in Bb, Violin, and ‘Cello
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Duration: ca. 18’

Program Note:

Two Grotesque Scenes, for Clarinet, Violin, and ‘Cello, features two extended movements, which may be performed in either order or individually. Both movements are concerned with establishing a dramatic, often incongruous dialogue between varying types of repetition and non-repetition, sound and silence, and pulsed and non-pulsed material. Such disparate textures are tied together by a unified atonal harmonic sense, featuring a mediation between strict 12-tone serial material and unordered pitch collections, derived from this material.

Grotesque Scene #1 finds the three players repeatedly trying to coalesce into clear melody and accompaniment “dance” textures across a number of different sections. Each attempt is thwarted, with the ensemble always falling into chaotic, improvisatory material, obsessive repetition, or complete silence. A sometimes tragic, sometimes comical dialogue is sought between minimalistic, complexist, and more moderate aesthetics’ approaches to texture and repetition.

Grotesque Scene #2 features three main sections, where in each case the ensemble embraces some type of counterintuitive dramatic arc. The opening section features a succession of brief, complex gestures that repeat several times, with only slight distortions occurring each time. These repeating gestures are separated by “palate cleansing” sustained notes/glissandi, which act as a sort of substitute for silence. The use of only slightly varied repetition, and the insistence of the long notes gives an oddly meditative quality to the otherwise maximalist nature of this music. This opening material eventually gives way to a middle section which is constructed around a repeating pattern of shifting meters. This pattern is initially left primarily silent; only the performers are privy to its intricacy. As the music progresses, the meters are gradually “filled in” with actual sound material, eventually revealing the rhythmic pattern to the listener. The resulting “dance” material culminates in the movement’s most traditional climax, which immediately breaks apart into the final section, where the opening gestural material is recast in a more conventionally organic narrative. The frenzied nature of this material proves to be unsustainable, as it quickly gives way to the movement’s extended slow ending.
Performance Notes:

1. The two movements may be played together in either order, or separately.
2. Courtesy accidentals are used liberally. However, should any question arise, accidentals do carry through the bar and do not transfer the octave.
3. Staccatissimo markings (wedges) are simply notes shorter than normal staccato notes. They should not be treated as accents.
4. In passages that move between simple and compound meters (5/4 to 6/8, etc), eighth note always equals eighth note.
5. (G.P.): “Grand Pause.” The performers should appear frozen during these silences, as if they may resume playing at any moment.
6. (2+3), (2+2+3), etc: These markings indicate the groupings of the basic rhythmic unit in asymmetrical time signatures.
7. (x 9), (x 5), etc: These markings indicate the number of times a passage should be repeated. The first occurrence of the material (before the repeat sign is reached) is included in this number.
8. Glissandi should always begin as soon as the note articulates.
9. Strings: Short notes featuring glissandi with unspecified terminating pitches/rhythms are quick, instantaneous glissandi without a sense of final pitch. These gestures should sound as if the player is “flying off the fingerboard.”
10. Clarinet: Glissandi with unspecified terminating pitches/rhythms are lip glissandi with a range of no more than a major second.
Grotesque Scene #1

Impish, impetuous

Clarinet in B♭

Violin

Violoncello

\( \text{Transposed Score} \)

\( \text{Aaron Brooks} \)

\( \text{\( \text{\( f \longrightarrow mp \)} \quad p \longrightarrow 5 \quad f \longrightarrow ff \quad pp \longrightarrow mf \)} \)

\( \text{\( \text{\( f \longrightarrow p \)} \quad 4:3 \quad f \longrightarrow ff \)} \)

\( \text{\( \text{\( f \longrightarrow mp \)} \quad p \longrightarrow \)} \)

\( \text{\( \text{\( f \longrightarrow mp \)} \)} \)

\( \text{\( \text{\( f \longrightarrow mp \)} \)} \)

\( \text{\( \text{\( f \longrightarrow mp \)} \)} \)

\( \text{\( \text{\( f \longrightarrow mp \)} \)} \)
Contemplative, deadpan

Dance-like
Insistent, Argumentative
Obsessive, with stubborn interruptions

60

64
Impish, impetuous

88

sul pont.

ord.

(2+3)

(2+3)

(2+3)

ff p

sul tasto ord.
Dance-like
Losing steam
poco rit.

\[ \frac{3}{4} \]

\[ \frac{2}{3} \]
Settling
A tempo
\[ \frac{4}{4} = ca. 84 \]

135

141

147

sul pont.
(2+3)
(G.P)
(x 5)
(2+3)
(G.P)
(3+2)
(G.P)
(last time only)

sul tasto
(2+3) ord.
(2+3)
(G.P)
(2+3)
(G.P)

ord.
(2+3)
(G.P)

arco
(2+3)
(pizz)
(2+3)
(G.P)

4:3

(3+2)
(G.P)

4:3
Dance-like

(2+3)

(2+3)

(2+3)

(2+3)
Embracing Obsession

176

fff

ord.

(G.P)

183

mf

(2+3)

(3+2)

(G.P)

188

p

(2+3)

(3+2)

(x 9)

4:3

(x 9)

(2+3)

pizz

(G.P)

4:3

p

(x 9)

(2+3)

pizz

(G.P)
Grotesque Scene #2

\( \text{j = ca. 72 Meditative} \)

\( \text{mp} \rightarrow f \)  
\( \text{sul pont.} \)  
\( \text{ord.} \)  
\( \text{mp} \rightarrow mf \)  
\( \text{arco} \)  

\( \text{mp} \rightarrow f \)  
\( \text{pizz} \)  
\( \text{ord.} \)  
\( \text{mp} \rightarrow mf \)  

\( \text{mf} \rightarrow f \)  
\( \text{p} \)  

\( \text{mp} \rightarrow f \)  
\( \text{pizz} \)  
\( \text{ord.} \)  
\( \text{mp} \rightarrow mf \)  
\( \text{arco} \)  

\( \text{mf} \rightarrow f \)  
\( \text{p} \)  

\( \text{mp} \rightarrow f \)  
\( \text{p} \)  
\( \text{mp} \rightarrow mf \)  
\( \text{ord.} \)  
\( \text{pizz} \)  

\( \text{mf} \rightarrow f \)  
\( \text{p} \)  

\( \text{f} \)  
\( \text{ff} \)  
\( \text{mf} \rightarrow f \)  
\( \text{p} \)
(bounce on one bow) (normal bowing)

sul pont.
\( \frac{1}{4} \) = 100 Quirky, maintaining rhythmic energy through the silences

\((2+3)\) (visual cues encouraged)

\((2+2+3)\)
78 \( (2+3) \) sul tastò
\[ mf < f > mp \]
\( p < f \) ord.

85 \( (2+3) \) arco sul tastò
\[ mf \rightarrow pp \]
\( mp < ff \) ord.

92 \( (2+3) \) sul tastò
\( f > p \)
\( p < f \) (sul pont.)
Dance-like
(2+3)

(2+3)

(2+2+3)

(2+2+3)
\( \text{\( j \) = ca. 72 Beginning explosively, then mellowing drastically} \)