

When my colleague Scott Kinmont approached me with the idea of composing a solo work for euphonium, my original intention was to create a sonata with piano accompaniment. However, as I began developing my musical ideas for the work it became clear that the colours and textures of my ideas could only be expressed through the use of a full orchestra. In order not to overpower the soloist I have used full strings and woodwinds but only one of each of the members of the brass family. I found that this instrumental balance also lends itself to frequent use of the brass players (including the soloist) as a chamber ensemble, or brass quintet (trumpet, horn, trombone, euphonium, tuba).

Although, as in my previous orchestral works, I use dodecaphonic or “12-tone” technique for creating the main thematic material for this work, the lyric quality and warm tone of the euphonium has pulled me in the direction of a style that is less “contemporary” in tonality than my previous works. Indeed, the overall effect of this concerto is more conventional-sounding, despite the fact that 12-tone technique permeates the work through its melodic, if not its harmonic and rhythmic aspects. The structure of the piece has also turned out to be a return to “neo-classicism”, being a typical 3-movement sonata-form composition, and each movement is also based loosely on classic sonata form.

First movement:

An undulating pattern of semi-quavers hovering just above and below a central note is immediately introduced by the soloist:



I use this pattern at various stages in all 3 movements, sometimes as an ostinato accompaniment, sometimes as proper thematic material.

The soloist soon presents the main dodecaphonic theme of the concerto



as the following melody:





The slightly faster middle section of this movement is underpinned by a driving, rhythmic piano ostinato, over which the woodwinds and brass begin a long trek, as if on a mission, striving upwards:

The image shows two staves of musical notation. The top staff is labeled 'piano' and features a driving, rhythmic ostinato in the bass clef. The bottom staff is labeled 'woodwinds' and shows a melodic line with several long, sweeping phrases, indicating a 'long trek' as described in the text.

After these forces reach a passionate, climax of optimistic character we return to the melancholy of the original eulogy, however now the pizzicato ostinato has been re-scored in opposing registers and in the upper strings:

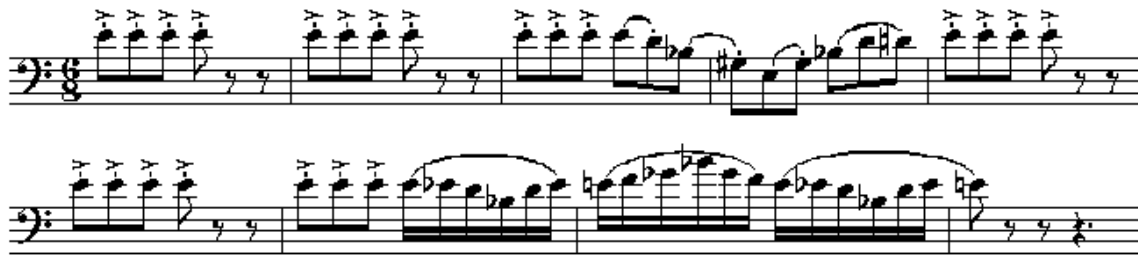
The image shows a single staff of musical notation labeled 'pizz'. It features a rhythmic ostinato in the treble clef, which is a re-scoring of the piano ostinato from the previous section, now in the upper register.

The term “Burlesque” implies parody, or “making fun” of something. The main object of parody in the 3<sup>rd</sup> movement involves the dialogue between the solo euphonium and the orchestral trombonist. These 2 instruments utilise more or less the same mouthpiece and range, but the inherently differing qualities of a “slide” vs. a “valve” instrument are played out in this “burlesque” towards the end of the movement.

The jovial opening melody is a dodecaphonic fragment or “cell”, a term that I have coined in my previous 12-tone works:

The image shows a single staff of musical notation in the bass clef. It contains a melodic line with several phrases, each starting with a similar rhythmic and melodic motif, representing the 'jovial opening melody' mentioned in the text.

The movement evolves, develops, and reaches a cadenza that leads into a quick Rondo, or Scherzo in 6/8 time. Here the woodwinds, percussion and orchestral brass personify the “burlesque” in the music, parodying the simple, macabre theme that the soloist begins, which itself incorporates an elaboration of the “undulating” semi-quaver figure from the 1<sup>st</sup> movement:



This Scherzo eventually arrives at a sensuous, dream-like episode where the soloist echoes back to the opening theme of the first movement, accompanied by rippling woodwinds and harp glissandi. This brings us to a second, more extensive solo cadenza that is based on themes from the 1st and 3<sup>rd</sup> movements. At the end of this cadenza the euphonium hands us back to the orchestra which uses our 6/8 rondo figure as an ostinato background to gradually build and pick up major thematic material from all 3 movements along the way.

This scherzo accelerates to a climax, and we are suddenly returned to the opening 4/4 music, but this time played by the full-bodied string section, who aggressively elaborate on it. This finale culminates in a fanfare led by the “brass quintet” made up of the soloist plus the orchestral brass.

As the rest of the orchestra members pitch in to build this fanfare to a climax, the final reprise of the Scherzo highlights a playful parody-interplay between soloist and his colleague the trombonist. In this “burlesque” coda the Euphonium shows-off to the trombone his flexibility through the use of his valves, and the trombone thumbs his nose at the euphonium using his slide to play the same notes as glissandi:



As they duel to the finish, the orchestra punctuates the end of the work with the same staccato figure that previously rounded off the euphonium’s opening melody of this movement.

I composed the original sketches of this composition during my tenure as Artist-in-Residence at Bundanon, the property of the Arthur Boyd family on the South Coast of New South Wales. In light of this I would like to express my appreciation to the Bundanon Foundation for the opportunity to participate in the artist-in-residence program at this beautiful property, and for the inspirational interaction with the fellow artists who were also in residence at the time.