

Reflections on the Concertino for Marimba and Strings by Daniel Berg

In November 2017 the music score *Concertino for Marimba and Strings* were published by Gehrmans Musikförlag in Stockholm, Sweden. Front cover was made by Bengt Berglund, the photo by Per Buhre and the engraving by Martin Möller.

The Swedish composer Lars-Erik Larsson wrote in the late 40's 12 *Concertini* – twelve smaller solo concerts for various instruments accompanied by string orchestra, all composed to be performed by amateur orchestras while the solo parts made higher demands on the instrumentalists' skill. In the 40's the percussion instruments were not yet a common solo instrument and therefore Lars-Erik Larsson never wrote a *Concertino* for percussion. With inspiration from Lars-Erik Larsson, I got the idea to write a new *Concertino* in two movements for a virtuoso solo marimba in combination with a soft string timbre.

The artistic challenge was:

1. To what kind of orchestra, professional or amateur, should this *Concertino* focus?
2. In what level should the solo part be written?
3. How can this *Concertino* inspire young people to start playing marimba?

When I looked through other concertos for Marimba and orchestra I first got in contact with the *Concertino for Marimba* by Paul Creston from 1940 and the *Concerto pour marimba, vibraphone et orchestra* by Darius Milhaud from 1947. They are, in my opinion, both fantastic nice concertos and very well written. Notable is that the orchestra parts are quiet tricky, also the solo parts - all the parts are written in same difficulty. Most of the concertos I found had a little of the same idea – to focus a mallet instrument with an orchestra in a very high level.

For that reason I decided to aim this *Concertino* to an amateur and/or youth orchestra. I simplified all the rhythms in the string parts and used longer notes, rather than the short sixteen notes. In the first movement I let the strings played the full harmonies and the marimba to play a virtuoso part. In the second I simplified the movements in the string parts to a quiet repeated form. Together with string teachers I changed the finger positions to fit a young violin player.

For many young people classical music and music for orchestra is a new experience. I chose harmonies in classical style, but with clear elements of jazz harmonics. The reason for that was to approach the music young people normally listen and hopefully attract them to discover classical music, the orchestra and the classical percussion.

The marimba is still a not very common instrument and therefore I wanted this *Concertino* to actually present the instrument in the best way. I tried to write the marimba part in the level of being virtuoso, but not too hard. I was very much thinking of a talent marimba player in the age of high school. Since almost 20 years back I have been teaching young students and knew very well the level and limit of technic for this young players.

I would like this Concertino to be played by a talent young marimba player together with a youth orchestra and in the best of all worlds I hope it can be very inspiring for a young musician to meet and discover a virtuoso marimba. In Sweden most of young percussion players are male. What will happen for the future if a young talent female marimba player performs this Concertino with all the orchestras in Sweden?