**Clarinet Concerto**

My Clarinet Concerto was commissioned by the BBC and was completed in 1994. It
was first performed by Michael Collins (for whom the work was specially written)
with the BBC Philharmonic, conducted by Adrian Leaper, at the BBC Concert Hall,
Manchester.

The work is in two parts and lasts for about 30 minutes. It is scored for large
symphony orchestra, without clarinets except for a bass clarinet, which plays
an important role in ‘shadowing’ the soloist. Part One opens with
the solo clarinet in a cadenza-like introduction, gradually joined by the orchestra,
in which most of the main material of the concerto is announced in embryonic
form. The main allegro section follows, which has a sonata-form outline with
two main thematic ideas announced, developed, and recapitulated. However, there
is a constant process of thematic metamorphosis, so that when the second theme
is heard again near the end it has been transformed into something quite different.
The final bars, with their punctuated dissonant rhythms, leave the music hanging
in the air, unresolved.

Part Two attempts to resolve the musical argument and transforms material from
Part One into more tonal and melodically-based music. It opens with a long slow
movement (strings only at the outset) which presents a chorale-like motive against
a backdrop of a falling semitone ostinato (the same interval with which the
concerto began and one which dominates throughout) heard on high violins. After
a central climax the soloist unfolds a long, but quite simple melody, a gesture
towards which the music has been striving. This leads into the final section,
a boisterous dance, which incorporates ‘popular’ elements as well
as reviewing material from Part One. The music inevitably moves towards its
climax, heading towards B flat major and the melody the whole concerto has been
waiting for. Its final bars resolve everything.

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