**Saxophone Concerto**

My Saxophone Concerto was commissioned by Nobuya Sugawa, one of the leading saxophonists in the world today. The world premiere was given by Nobuya Sugawa and the BBC Philharmonic, conducted by Clark Rundell, on May 10, 2006, in Manchester.

The work is scored for alto saxophone, doubling soprano saxophone in the second movement, and symphony orchestra, with important parts for piano and kit percussion. The work lasts for some 24 minutes and is cast in three linked movements. Although the movements have no formal titles they do express certain ideas, so that the first movement could be described as of the city, the second movement of love, and the third movement of life.

The work opens in a slightly unusual way which I shall not reveal here. However, the mood of the slow introduction is rather improvisatory – a sort of interplay between the soloist and various sections of the orchestra. The movement proper is fast, rhythmic, sometimes jazzy, sometimes violent, and expresses the diverse landscape of an urban environment. The more relaxed second subject is calmer in mood and more obviously tonal, although each time this settled harmonic world is invaded by subversive elements.

As in the transition from the introduction to the first movement proper, the held pitch of C on the violas links to the reflective slow movement where the solo soprano saxophone gradually develops a lyrical melodic expression. Initially this is set against a background of chromatic harmony, but as the movement progresses, so the harmonic context becomes simpler until the final ‘song’ expresses a heartfelt sadness in modal C minor. Once again, the held pitch of C links directly to the final movement.

This final movement is a buoyant moto perpetuo which exploits the virtuoso side of the alto saxophone, both in technique and character. The movement is structured around a repeated quaver ostinato, which moves through each note of the chromatic scale until, eventually, it returns to C, but this time reaching a harmonic and tonal resolution in C major, pointed by a simple but expansive melody towards which the piece has been heading, and ending in a blaze of joyful colour.

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