

TWENTY

When Simon Over asked me if I would write Southbank Sinfonia a 20th anniversary overture, he also requested that I collaborate with orchestra's members in the creation of the piece. I sent them all a questionnaire with the following questions: What does the number 20 mean to you? What are your favourite effects/techniques/figurations to play? What do you do you wish you could be doing more of, within the orchestra?

I have included as many of their requests as possible, which you'll see in **bold**, in the description of the piece below. The woodwind all requested that they play on their doubling instruments so they are scored as **piccolo**, flute, oboe, **cor anglais**, clarinet, **bass clarinet**, bassoon and **contra-bassoon**.

TWENTY is based on a progression of 20 harmonies, which we hear initially in a **chorale-like** fashion with **quintuplet** flourishes throughout the orchestra. The time signature is always in divisibles of 20 – **multiples of** 5, 4 and 10. The percussion starts with a complex rhythm that pits 5 against 4.

In A. *With anticipation of joys to come*, the harmonies (1 – 5) become **excited** ostinato (including some nifty **double-stopping** in the horns), accompanying various instruments as they play their **carefree, light, cheerful melodies**. A request for **6/8 + 2/4** (neatly becoming 10/8 and an opportunity to **combine 6/8 against 3/4**) gives us a driving rhythm, played with **spread pizzicato** and **open string arpeggios** in the strings. **Soloistic playing in the double basses** start the melodic ball rolling. Then the **bassoons** carry on the melody with **glissandi** and **rising scales in 3rds**. The 'cellos take over, fulfilling their wish to duet with **other orchestral instruments in a different pitch zone**, the flute and piccolo. The double basses further accentuate the 10/8 rhythm with **Bartok pizzicatos**.

Interestingly, the wind and upper players unanimously requested some ethereal effects so the next section B. *Mysterioso*, makes use of **fluttering** and **pitch-bends** in the winds, **harmonics** in the violins and **bisbigliando trills** on the bassoons. The woodwinds **pass the melodies between themselves** as the harmonies (6 – 15) gracefully propel us towards C. *Locomotively*. In the players' thoughts about the number 20, their **sense of excitement** at having all the **freedoms of adulthood with no responsibilities** and the anticipation at the decade to come was pretty much universal. So, we start this last section slowly and at the bottom end of the orchestra with harmonies' 16 – 20's bass line. At first trepidatious, more instruments join in becoming faster and faster as the train of adulthood gathers in pace, finishing in a pyrotechnic display of all 20 harmonies.

I am hugely grateful to Simon Over for commissioning this piece – and to the players of Southbank Sinfonia who were hugely inspirational with their requests and generous with their time in trying things out. The piece is dedicated to Simon Over, celebrating the Twentieth Anniversary of Southbank Sinfonia

RP 25th July, 2022