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Analysis paper 2

Ernest Bloch's (1880 - 1959) Concerto Grosso No. 1 is a piece that departs from his usual Jewish influenced style. His daughter claims that he wrote as a response to his composition students, who supposed that traditional practices had no relevance in the future of art music. As such, the entire piece draws inspiration from the previous eras of Western music and approaches to composition. In the third movement titled "Pastorale and Rustic Dances", Bloch incorporates elements of the pastorale style and infuses it with twentieth century techniques.

Rustic folk dances are part of the pastorale concept of retreating from more intellectual forms to more simple and idyllic ones. The third movement is comprised of sections that include the pastorale style (A) and rustic folk dances (B) in an A-B-A'-B'-coda format.

Theorists have noted the common representation of bird calls in pastorale style, and Bloch opens the piece with a motive that does exactly that. The quick triplet ornamentation is indicative of a bird trilling. This motive is repeated many times in the A section, and comes back throughout the piece, opening the A' section as well.



Besides the bird calls, another frequent symbolism is the horn call in the interval of perfect fifth. These are reminiscent of hunting horns that call people to action in older times. Pastorale pieces make use of melodic and harmonic fifths to portray the horns, and Bloch is no exception. The first dance theme is multipurpose; it functions as a horn call, a dance theme, and as secondary material that develops underneath the other themes.

violas

solo violin I

mm. 9-11, 14-16

Later in the movement, the opening of the theme is altered to start a fifth below, generating the melodic fifth that depicts the horn calls. The quality of openness found in the harmonic fifth may also illustrate the vastness of a field, particularly when held as a pedal. The movement opens with a harmonic fifth as a pedal in the tutti (gli altri) cellos, and sparse yet warm melodic fifths (which inverted is a perfect fourth) appear in the piano and viola in mm. 11-12, and mm. 16-19. A musical narrative almost seems to appear as Bloch generates this illustration of an open field of grass and flowers, birds singing, and hunting horns calling the rest of the piece into action.

The flat keys are often emphasized in pastorale music. Bloch chooses to begin the piece in F mixolydian and end the piece in F major, both of which are collections containing flat pitches. In addition to the usage of flat keys, pastorales may include flat harmonies. The movement opens with an immediate example: an F major triad steps downward to an E♭ major triad, ♫VII of F mixolydian.

Of equal or even greater importance in pastorales in the Classical and Romantic eras is the subdominant. An exemplary place where Bloch places immense emphasis on the subdominant is the last three measures. Despite the final cadential ii-V-I progression of the entire movement occurring, the cellos and contrabasses play a subdominant pedal with its harmonic fifth underneath the rest of the voices. On a larger scale, Bloch tends to use unconventional harmony throughout the piece, but he gives preferential treatment to the subdominant chords, placing them strategically and using the major triad instead of another chord. Pedal point is another characteristic of pastorales, and within the pastoral sections (A and A') of the movement, the contrabasses and sometimes the cellos as well hold out very long pedals.

For the final few characteristics of pastorales, an example is presented in the second pastorale section. After some contemporary techniques (discussed later), the violas warmly and gently introduce a new theme which will be utilized in the rest of the movement.



Bloch introduces this new theme in A major that epitomizes the pastorale style. The melodic contour is very simple; the range is very limited. The harmonic rhythm is very slow: in this first phrase, the entire melody is under a I chord, and only the final chord is a V. The second half of the phrase is more active, but not by a large margin. The lower divisi as shown above moves homorhythmically in parallel sixths, which is another device used in pastorale settings. In m. 128, the third is missing from the V chord, which again is related to the open quality of the perfect fifth interval. Above this melodic line, the violins have a soft tremolo inverted pedal on the dominant note E.

Modal inflection plays a role in defining the pastorale feeling as well. Bloch takes this compositional device to an entirely new height; nearly the entire piece is modal. The movement primarily uses the dorian and mixolydian modes, modulating between collections and pitch centers. An example of a particularly interesting modulation is in mm. 28-29, where he uses the notes C and E♭, which are part of the tonic triad in C dorian, as leading tones into D dorian, encircling the new tonic. In general, modulation techniques that are used in this movement typically involve common tones.

Another intriguing aspect of the piece is despite writing melodies with a strong pull to common practice harmony, Bloch rejects the pull towards it by placing non-tonic chords instead. In the example below, the second dance theme is introduced by the violins. In itself, the theme implies G major. However, the chords underneath are unconventional in G major and do not imply

that key. In fact, there are only two G major triads in first inversion placed under the pitch of D in the melody. This clouds potential G major feeling, since the inversion weakens the chord, and the fifth is not as important of a pitch in the G major triad. Doing such maintains the initial D dorian mode presented earlier.

Nontraditional harmony is present throughout the movement. Bloch often elects to use quartal harmony. The first prominent example is in measure 21; a quartal chord with five pitches starting on D is played and held over two measures. In the following measures ostinato violins play in fourths, and Bloch obscures any tertian feeling by not including the third scale degree of C dorian.

Bloch uses some bitonality, though not in a complete manner. He places the tonic of a section as a pedal while having material in a different tonal center move above the pedal. The pedal is usually unobtrusive and does not provide much meaningful chordal value, but nevertheless it is still there. This technique is used in mm. 8-20 and mm. 136-142.

Measures 118 to 123 provide some other twentieth-century techniques. There is planing of major-minor sevenths from 118-119 ($E^7 - F^7 - F\#^7$) over a pedal on F. In measures 121 to 123, Bloch

shifts to the octatonic collection on C♯ and D♯. The cellos play the scale up and down while the violins and violas hover in different parts of the collection, generating a common tone diminished seventh chord that connects with a perfect-augmented three note quartal chord in measure 124. The chord is comprised of F, B, and E; the E and B function as a dominant sounding open fifth while the F steps down to E in the following beats, which the violas take over and beautifully present the pastorale theme beginning with dominant-tonic motion. A little narrative can even be seen through the composition of this initial part of the A' section: the planing over the pedal climaxes with the soft quality of a C minor-minor seventh chord in an anguished and almost severe moment, which then ascends even more within the octatonic collection. While the violins I line ascends, the violins II and violas add to this sort of anguish with the fully diminished "chord" (linear material from the octatonic collection), and the cello line descends, expanding outwards in tense awaiting. The violas gently bring a retreat from the complex harmonies, playing the pastorale melody in simple A major and in sixths. This is a conflict-resolution narrative, and Bloch manages to achieve this in less than twenty bars of music.

Finally, in addition to the microscopic conflict-resolution narrative, there is an overarching macroscopic conflict-resolution narrative in the entire piece. A large part of the piece is modal, reveling in complex and non-tertian harmonies. However, the coda is not fully modal. Although some modern voice leading and progression is used, it is tonally centered and harmonically functional in F major. A long majestic cadential passage prepares for the coda, which begins with a stately orchestration of the second dance theme. The change is obvious here: the first time the second dance theme was present, Bloch avoided using the implied key of the melody. However, in this grandiose statement, Bloch embraces common practice tonality and lands, pedals, progresses, and cadences all in F major. This resolution from complex to simple is truly representative of the pastorale retreat, harkening back to more traditional practices.

Bloch: Concerto Grosso No. 1, mvt. III

form	event	F mixolydian	measure
A: pastorale	bird call	F mixolydian	1 - 7
	dance 1	A dorian	8 - 20
	transition	C to D dorian	21 - 36
		F mixolydian	37 - 40
B: dance	dance 1	D mixolydian	41 - 46
	dance 2	D mixolydian	49 - 69
	transition	D mixolydian	70 - 78
		F to B \flat major	79 - 93
		D mixolydian	94 - 113
A': pastorale	bird call	F Mixolydian	114 - 124
	pastorale	A major	125 - 135
B': dance	dance 1	D to E dorian	136 - 172
	transition		173 - 186
	cadential	F: ii - V	187 - 193
coda	dance 2	F major	194 - 218
	pastorale	F major	219 - 231

Form: ABA'B' coda

3. PASTORALE AND RUSTIC DANCES

A. Pastoreale

Assai lento $J = \text{circa } 60$ espr.

Solo
Violin I
Gli altri
Violin II
Sola
Viole
Gli altri
Solo
'Celli
Gli altri
Contra Bass

bird call

Assai lento $J = \text{circa } 60$

Piano

F mixolydian: I bVII

20 Allegro $J = 120$ I bVII rall.

breeze

common tone modulation

ritmico dancer theme I

bitonal: pedal on F and A

20 Allegro $J = 120$ I bVII rall.

mf rull.

A mixolydian: I

Allegro ritmico *dance theme I* rall.

Solo II. III. IV senza sord. *foco dim.*

Gli altri div.

Vl.II

Vl.II

Viole

Solo 'Celli (One Cello)

Gli altri

C.B.

Piano

horn fifths

bracce

pp

Allegro

rall.

bracce

p

8

common tones of leading tones in D

22 animando poco a poco

(22) animando poco a poco

A.B.173-48 D phrygian: I

8

Soli I, II *f ritmico*

Soli III, IV *f ritmico*

Gli altri *poco cresc.*

VII *diss.* *poco cresc.*

Viole *diss.* *p poco cresc.*

Solo 'Celli

Gli altri

C. B.

Piano *f ritmico*

Animando

Common tones

B: Dance

Allegro giocoso $J = 126$

19

div. 8

I
VI.
II
Viole
C'celli
div.
C.B.
Allegro giocoso - 126
Piano

sempre marcato

pizz. *sempre marcato*

segue

segue

D mixolydian

D mixolydian:

dance theme 2

dante theme 2

23 *p*

四
6

poco pesante a tempo

25

on A

四

立

工

Circle of 5ths

allargando

26 *div.* *I*

sf mp *div. C* *cresc. F* *cresc. Bb*

sfp *cresc.* *cresc.* *cresc.* *cresc.*

sfp *cresc.* *cresc.* *cresc.* *cresc.*

sf *p* *cresc.* *allargando*

allargando

sf *p* *cresc.* *allargando*

A.B.173-48 F:

Bb.

1 VI. II. Viole. Cello. C.B. Piano.

a tempo (27)

dim. poco a poco

I⁶ **IV⁷** **I⁶** **D: b VI**

I VI. II. Viole. Cello. C.B. Piano.

div. *div.* *pizz.* *pizz.* *pizz.*

II⁴ **I⁶**

I VI. II. Viole. Cello. C.B. Piano.

poco a poco rall.

più p *pp*

più p *div.*

più p *div. arco*

più p *pp*

più p *dim.* *poco a poco rall.*

più p

A: Pastovale

Tempo I (assai lento) $\text{♩} = 72$
 28 *espress.*
 I
 VI.
 II
 Viole
 'Celli
 dir.
 C. B.
 Piano

unis. v.

div.

p

mf ritmico

arco espress.

mf *3* *p*

arco

p

arco

p

mf

F mixolydian:

poco animando **Planning** **a tempo**

Octatonic 1,2 **poco slentando**

pedal on F

E⁷ F⁷ F#⁷

A.B.173-48 *A dorian:*

26

I VI. II Viole 'Celli C. B. Piano

(33)

I VI. II Viole 'Celli C. B. Piano

(33)

Circle of Fifths C

on B

on E

Piano

I VI. II Viole 'Celli C. B. Piano

(34)

on C# I

on B7

7 VII

on e7

p ma marcato

I

C#: I

7 VII

Piano

VI. I

VI. II *div.*

Viole

'Cello

C. B.

Piano

cresc. *mf* *cresc.* *mf* *cresc.* *mf* *div.*

on F# III

chromatic medium

Common time

I⁶ *E⁷* *C⁷* *C.t. dd⁷* *F#6 of G*

(F: II⁷) - large II preparation

Poco meno mosso

VI. I

VI. II

Viole

'Cello

C. B.

Piano

f *s* *tutti l'arco* *f*

f *f* *f* *f* *f* *f*

Poco meno mosso

f *f* *f* *f* *f* *f*

G dorian or C mixolydian

F: ii⁷ vii⁰⁷/ii

vii⁰⁷/II

allargando molto

VI. I

VI. II

Viole div.

'Celli

C. B.

Piano

28

allargando molto

on F cresc.

cresc.

cresc.

cresc.

allargando molto

ii vii⁰⁴/II

IV 3 7

(35) Moderato (J = 84)

Coda

VI. I

VI. II

Viole

'Celli

C. B.

Piano

35

unis.

dis.

unis.

pedal

Piano

35

Moderato (J = 84)

IV

V

VI

A.B.173-48 I

36 *sempre molto marcato*

V. I. *div.* *unis.*

V. II. *div.*

Violoncello

C. B.

Piano

I⁶ *ii⁷* *ii²* *II⁵* *II⁷/IV* *III* *ii⁶*

(poco pesante) *a tempo*

V. I. *rit.* *IV^a*

V. II. *div.* *div.* *div.*

Violoncello

C. B.

Piano

I⁶ *II⁴* *II⁷/IV* *IV⁷* *ii⁶* *III⁷* *IV⁴* *3*

A.B.173-48

1

立/四

三

11⁴ II⁶₅ II⁶₅ IV⁴_H

VI.1 VI. II Vcl. 'Celli C.B. Piano

meno f *meno f* *meno f* *meno f* *meno f* *meno f* *meno f*

cresc. *cresc.* *cresc.* *cresc.* *cresc.* *cresc.* *cresc.*

fourths *molto allargando* *div.* *div.* *div.* *div.*

subdominant pedal

AB 173-48

A.B.173-48