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A Return to Old Techniques in Recent Concertos by Ivo Petrić

Vrnitev k starim tehnikam v nedavnih koncertih Iva Petrića

Prejeto: 28. april 2011
Sprejeto: 6. maj 2011

Received: 28th April 2011
Accepted: 6th May 2011

Ključne besede: Ivo Petrić, koncert, trobenta, rog, saksofon, tolkala

Keywords: Ivo Petrić, concerto, trumpet, horn, saxophone, percussion

IZVLEČEK

Potem ko se je v osemdesetih letih vrnil k običajni menzuralni notaciji, je Ivo Petrić napisal številne nove koncerte. V štirih takih delih za solo instrument in orkester so navkljub spremembi stila tako instrumentalne tehnike kot oblikovne zasnove ostale podobne.

ABSTRACT

Since Ivo Petrić's return to conventional measured notation in the 1980s, he has composed numerous new concertos. In four such works for solo instrument and orchestra, formal plans and instrumental techniques have remained similar even with the change of style.

Among the works of Ivo Petrić (b. 1931), music for solo instrument or instruments and orchestra occupies a very special place. His varied and prolific output of orchestral works includes many that feature one or more soloists. The idea of writing for a soloist is one that has appealed to the composer since his earliest compositions; as a former oboist he explored wind instruments' capabilities but works for stringed instruments have also been particularly impressive. This concentration on instruments that play a single melodic line has influenced the character of much of the music which tends to be linear. The other feature that is noticeable in much of the work is a focus on orchestral colour, partly for its own sake and partly to clarify the texture and structure.

Petrić's early music in the 1950s was composed in a style that owed something to Hindemith, Prokofiev and Shostakovich. There is excellent orchestral handling, especially in the symphonies, while formal control is always intelligible and lucid, traditional

in approach but flexible. Petrić never had any desire to adhere rigidly to systems or techniques. The concertos are generally modest in stature but precise in their plans. Concertos for flute and clarinet and a *Suite Concertante* for bassoon feature at this time, in addition to a concerto for violin and one for harp. From the early 1960s Petrić moved away from the traditional metrical structures to more free coordination with irregular conductors' cues, the so-called aleatory style.¹ The piece which established this style was the impressive *Croquis sonores* for harp and ensemble of 1963, first performed at the Warsaw Autumn Festival. This was followed by the stylistically similar *Mosaïques* for clarinet and ensemble of 1964 and *Petit concerto de chambre* for oboe of 1966. These chamber works suited the Slavko Osterc Ensemble which Petrić was directing at the time, but they also prepared the composer for the larger scale concertante works for stringed instruments that followed in the 1970s. These comprise *Dialogues concertants* for cello of 1972, *Gemini Concerto* for violin, cello and orchestra, *Tako je godel Kurent* of 1976 for viola and orchestra and the very substantial *Trois images* for violin and orchestra of 1972-73, a concerto in all but name.² One can add to these *Jeux concertants* for flute and orchestra of 1978. All are composed as multi-tempo single-movement works, even if there are still some vestiges of the traditional separate movements as in *Trois images*. None are specifically entitled 'concertos', although the word appears as part of the subtitle of *Trois images*. The techniques achieved by Petrić in these works enabled a fluency and flexibility that would have been restricted if he had adopted the more formal division into separate movements.

The composer's decision to return to metrical barring in the early 1980s was influenced to some extent by practical considerations. Rehearsals would be more straightforward with players using their normal metrical coordination and rehearsal time would be noticeably reduced. However, the composer did not want to lose the lessons learned in developing his aleatory techniques. In an earlier article I concluded with these words:

If in some ways he appears to have returned to a form of neo-classicism, this is something of an illusion, as the music does not use the rhythmic patterns found in music of this type. Indeed, while exact rhythmic and harmonic coordination and synchronisation have now become more important for the composer, his melodic techniques have remained remarkably consistent.³

Yet for Petrić it was not an easy transition as he has written:

The return to "old and traditional" ways of forming the flow of music was rather traumatic, since my aleatorics have been giving me (perhaps) too much freedom which had of course been creatively more challenging. However, after twenty years, this very freedom and joviality seem to have become depleted and weary. Once again I was filled with the desire to form musical thoughts in more orderly notation,

¹ The more elegant traditional adjective 'aleatory' is preferred to 'aleatoric' a term which derives from the German noun 'Aleatorik'.

² See my paper Niall O'Loughlin, "Concertante Techniques in *Trois images* by Ivo Petrić," *Muzikološki zbornik* 37 (2001): 103-112.

³ Niall O'Loughlin, "Melodic Workings in the Music of Ivo Petrić," *Muzikološki zbornik* 29 (1993): 112.

taking advantage of traditional compositional values: thematic work, formation of greater wholes by using traditional forms, contrasts and repetition, polyphonic interweavement of musical ideas, together with freer instrumental colours inherited from aleatorics.⁴

This study aims to investigate the character of a number of the concertos that Petrić has composed since his return to the use of regular metrical barring. Since 1985 Petrić has composed four major solo concertos, for trumpet (1985-86), alto saxophone (1997), horn (1997), and marimba (2005), and two concertinos, *Pomladni concertino* ('Spring Concertino') for percussionist in 1993 and the *Concertino doppio* for flute, horn and strings with piano in 2007. The composer also created in this period the *Dresdener Konzert* for strings of 1987 which relies less on the use of solo instruments and the Second Concerto for orchestra of 2009.⁵ The focus in this paper is on the first three solo concertos (for trumpet, saxophone and horn) and the first of the concertinos (*Pomladni concertino*).

Formal Considerations

Taking a broad formal view of these four works, the first observation is that they are all composed in a number of contrasting sections, but played without a break, and with a duration of approximately fifteen minutes. This makes them similar in approach to the freely coordinated works of the 1970s for instrument or instruments and orchestra. However, the composer suggests in the above quotation that he is using traditional forms for his new works, a fact which is not immediately obvious. It is only by close examination of these four works in turn will the connections with traditional plans begin to emerge.

In the Trumpet Concerto one can group a number of slow sections to form a composite opening exposition presenting a number of different motifs which are used throughout the work. The tempos involved, *Sostenuto moderato*, *Moderato poco mosso*, *Larghetto tranquillo*, *Quieto* and *Largo* (see Table 1), are sufficiently similar to each other to make a unified first 'movement', called here 'I'. The thematic material throughout, both for the soloist and for the orchestra, is normally created around an arch shape, often moving heterophonically, the separate parts operating at different speeds, in different rhythms and starting at different points. This in itself helps to unify the structure. The second main section (here called 'II') is marked *Allegretto scherzando*, the first part of which alternates bars of three crotchets with those of four, before introducing more irregular patterns of rhythmic emphasis. The slow 'movement' proper (III) now enters (*Largo cantabile* and then *Più lento*) before the final fast section (IV), *Giocoso vivo*. Thus it is not now so difficult to see the work as a four-movement concerto (see Table 1 for suggested groupings of four sections).

⁴ Booklet notes to CD set: *Ivo Petrić: 6 Koncertov/6 Concertos*, SIP 09-10 (Ljubljana, 2002), p.11.

⁵ This was a new work which used some ideas from the withdrawn Concerto for orchestra of 1982.

Table 1: *Koncert za trobento in orkester (Edicije DSS 1166, Ljubljana, 1989).*

Movement	Tempo	Pages	Bars
I	Sostenuto moderato	1-3	1-15
I	Moderato poco mosso	3-8	16-53
I	Larghetto tranquillo	9-12	54-78
I	Quieto	12-14	79-91
I	Libero - cadenza (solo)	14	92
I	Largo	14-16	93-104
II	Allegretto scherzando	16-30	105-194
III	Largo cantabile	30-35	195-229
III	Più lento	35-37	230-245
IV	Giocososo vivo	38-57	246-395

The *Pomladni concertino* has a similar pattern of four grouped sections, but with an increased complexity and flexibility. The extended opening *Allegro moderato* is prefaced by an accompanied atmospheric cadenza-like slow section for the vibraphone, and later is divided into two parts by another cadenza, again for the vibraphone. Petrić is fond of the scherzando idea to enliven the music in these concertos. This is apparent in the second section (*Scherzando animato*) which introduces the strong rhythmic element which was less prominent in the smooth melodic style of the *Allegro moderato*. The change of solo instrument to the xylophone now emphasises rhythmic pointing and precision. Again there is a break for short cadenzas, one before the end, and one to link to the slow movement marked *Largo sostenuto*, where the soloist now plays the glockenspiel, leading to the *Moderato quieto* in which the player returns to the vibraphone. As in the previous scherzando section the xylophone is used in the later *Vivo scherzando* section. Petrić, however, is constantly surprising us, this time by ending the work majestically with the vibraphone drawing in some of the earlier motifs (see Table 2 for suggested groupings of four sections).

Table 2: *Pomladni concertino (Composer's Score: www.ivopetric.com).*

Movement	Tempo	Pages	Bars	Solo instrument
I	Moderato libero	1-3	1-8	vibraphone
I	Allegro moderato	3-15	9-80	vibraphone
I	Cadenza (extended)	15-17	81-97	vibraphone
I	Allegro moderato	17-22	98-124	vibraphone
II	Scherzando animato	22-34	125-228	xylophone
II	Cadenza (extended)	35	229-248	xylophone
II	Scherzando animato	36-38	249-266	xylophone
II	Cadenza (short)	38	267	xylophone/glockenspiel
III	Largo sostenuto	39-43	268-284	glockenspiel
III	Moderato quieto	44-49	285-323	vibraphone

IV	Vivo scherzando	49-56	324-378	xylophone
IV	Moderato	56-57	379-384	vibraphone
IV	Maestoso e mosso	57-61	385-407	vibraphone

The concertos for saxophone and for horn show a similar inspiration and flexibility of form. In the Saxophone Concerto, a three-movement pattern can be discerned, with an extended *Allegretto giocoso* section followed by a cadenza, part solo, part accompanied, leading to substantial slow movement, *Andante moderato*, with another cadenza and a transition leading to the final *Vivo giocoso*. As usual Petrić is unpredictable, inserting a short *Andante* into the *Vivo giocoso* section for the soloist to hold the music back for a moment before the final virtuosic section (see Table 3 for suggested groupings of three sections).

Table 3: *Koncert za alt-saxophon in orkester* (Composer's Score: www.ivopetric.com).

Movement	Tempo	Pages	Bars
I	<i>Allegretto giocoso</i>	1-15	1-104
I	Cadenza (solo/accompanied)	16-17	105-122
II	<i>Andante moderato</i>	17-28	121-214
II	Cadenza (ad lib)	28-29	215-217
II	Un poco più mosso	29-30	217-225
III	<i>Vivo giocoso</i>	31-44a*	226-370
III	<i>Andante</i>	45-46	371-386
III	<i>Vivo giocoso</i>	46-50	387-438

* There is an extra unnumbered page in the score between pages 44 and 45.

The Horn Concerto naturally falls into four broad movements, with a slowish opening movement followed by an extended *Allegretto scherzando* section or movement. The transition to the slow movement includes an accompanied cadenza. The *Allegro* that follows is slowed down at the end, as in the *Pomladni concertino*, but only briefly, for a broad and majestic coda (see Table 4 for suggested groupings of four sections).

Table 4: *Koncert za rog in orkester* (Composer's Score: www.ivopetric.com).

Movement	Tempo	Pages	Bars
I	Moderato mosso	1-15	1-110
II	<i>Allegretto scherzando</i>	16-30	111-227
II	Poco più moderato	31-32	228-241
II	Libero - improvviso (accompanied cadenza)	32-35	241-273
III	<i>Andante e quieto</i>	35-37	274-286
III	Grave e poco movendo	38-44	287-337
IV	<i>Allegro</i>	44-55	338-416
IV	Poco largamente e maestoso	55-56	417-429

Summing up the formal attributes of these four compositions, one can note a desire to plan the works in three or four movements, but not following traditional plans in detail. Petrić maintains flexibility by his varied approach to formal design. One way of achieving this is by inserting cadenzas at suitable movements, either to break the flow of the music or to provide a suitable transition to the next section in which the music slows down or speeds up. The contrast between the sections is very well managed, but never predictable, sometimes with gradual changes and at others with sudden shifts in musical character. The musical 'types' that Petrić creates for his different sections vary from the slow brooding *moderato* or *sostenuto* tempos to exuberant *scherzando* or *giocoso* ones. These are all used with great variety and in support of the soloists' techniques and virtuosity.

Other Features

Taking each concerto in turn we can see how Petrić has turned the 'reinvented' style to his own advantage, instilling into each work recognisable features that identify the compositions in a unique way. Because the composer has an expert knowledge of instrumental abilities drawn from his long experience with his performing group, it is no surprise then that the character of each concerto is determined to a great extent by the capabilities of the solo instruments used. It is this point that is now examined. For each concerto further details of the techniques employed are briefly discussed to give some clues to the nature of the newer works.

The Trumpet Concerto casts the soloist in a very melodic role. Although there are occasional suggestions of military style, the trumpet here is primarily a singing instrument with full chromatic abilities across the whole range. Something of the character of the trumpet part can be inferred from Example 1, taken from the second main section (II in table 1), in particular the smooth scalar runs, the chromatic alterations within phrases and the highly imaginative rhythmic variety. One notes in particular the alternation of bars of 3/4 and 4/4, the two three-note motifs, the first consisting of two rising or descending whole tones, and the second a falling whole tone followed by a rising semitone (bar 2 and bar 4).



Example 1: *Koncert za trobento in orkester* (Edicije DSS 1166), pp.17–21, bars 110–133.

The opening section of the concerto is preparatory in two ways: it introduces the main slow first movement, but it also presents some important music. All the instruments chart an arch-shape with the melodic material, something which features strongly as the work progresses. The trumpet's music is clearly defined but the accompanying music is less easy to hear as the overlapping rising and falling phrases are infiltrated into the contrapuntal texture. This is skilfully combined with a rising and falling semiquaver figure that is frequently taken by the soloist but also forms part of the intricate accompaniment. The main fast section (*Allegretto scherzando*) uses a brilliant combination of the rising and falling semiquaver figure and thematic material presented by the trumpet in Example 1. The brief slow movement (*Largo cantabile*) has an elaborate trumpet ornamentation with mostly descending heterophonic phrases from the orchestra. The transition to the fast final section uses the wa-wa mute in a very intense section slightly suggestive of jazz. In the *Giocosso vivo* the brilliant trumpet part elaborates much of the accompanying material in a flourish.

The second concerto, the *Pomladni concertino*, has a completely different approach to the melodic material because of the solo instruments used. The predominant instrument is the vibraphone, but the more rhythmic sections employ the xylophone and the slow section the glockenspiel. Example 2 gives some idea of the character of the music for vibraphone with arpeggiated writing which falls naturally under the hands. Note though that while the chordal shapes are laid out in traditional patterns, the notes do not normally mark out diatonic chords or scales. Thus the tonality is in a state of constant flux. Sudden chromatic changes in fast moving scalewise passages that were such a feature of the trumpet concerto and also the saxophone concerto are not so frequent in this concertino. There are opportunities for chords but these are not very frequent. The last two lines of Example 2 show a number of two-note chords.



Example 2: *Pomladni concertino* (Composer's score: www.ivopetric.com), pp.3–7, bars 9–39.

The character of the *Pomladni concertino* is very vivid with strong instrumental colours. The short introduction is highly atmospheric with no clearly defined tonality, the chords being built up one note at a time. The free tonality is emphasised by the vibraphone's chromatically inflected chords and melodic phrases. The main opening

Allegro moderato is interestingly constructed. The vibraphone part (see Example 2) is supported by repeated chords on the horns and violins, but it is also complemented by a subtle contrapuntal network of phrases from most of the orchestra. This section is divided almost in the middle by a cadenza that develops some of the motifs. The return to the *Allegro moderato* is in effect a 'recapitulation', not in the literal sense but a reworking of much of the earlier music. For the *Scherzando animato*, the xylophone is introduced almost hesitantly, but soon it displays its virtuosic nature. Again Petrić assigns both repeated chords and counterpoints to the orchestra, and also introduces a xylophone cadenza fairly close to the end of the section. Surprisingly the slow 'movement' uses the glockenspiel with arpeggiated phrases. It is at the end of this section that the composer changes to the vibraphone in similar style for the accelerating section that leads into the xylophone's *Vivo scherzando*. In this part Petrić makes the soloist's relationship with the orchestra one of dialogue and imitation. The important final structural feature of the work is the long coda for vibraphone which recalls a number of earlier motifs. The formal effect of this section is one of enclosing the potentially disparate elements of the work in a neat and tidy way.

The Concerto for alto-saxophone and orchestra dates from 1997. It treats the instrument in a virtuoso fashion with many florid runs as well as arpeggios of the type found in the *Pomladni concertino*. Example 3 shows the particularly extravert nature of the solo part, with non-diatonic arpeggios and scales and sudden shifts of harmonies within the same phrase. The full range of the instrument is employed to great effect. Rhythmic phrases are sometimes repeated with different notes, but more often the rhythmic structures are changed at each appearance giving the work unity without any form of predictability. One is reminded from time to time of various aspects of jazz idiom even though the music owes only a very small amount to the style. Rhythmic flexibility is important in defining the character of the solo part, with syncopation frequently used as part of this process (see particularly bars 3-10 of Example 3).



Example 3: *Koncert za alt-saxophon in orkester* (Composer's Score: www.ivopetric.com), pp.2-5, bars 13-40.

Brief rhythmic ostinatos prepare the listener for the dramatic opening *giocos* entry of the saxophone (see Example 3). The passage is accompanied by subtle and intriguing counterpoints, notably from the celesta and vibraphone, in a movement of delicate orchestration. In fact, the light textural weavings of the orchestra prove a perfect foil to the virtuoso solo line. An extended cadenza, sometimes accompanied by percussion, leads into the dreamily chromatic *Andante moderato* whose contrapuntal string textures allow the solo to stand out. Another cadenza, now brief and again accompanied by percussion, leads to the final *Vivo giocoso*, rhythmically solid to anchor the saxophone's fluid passage work with its numerous syncopations. The only interruption to the section's momentum is a sixteen-bar *Andante* which recalls some earlier thematic material, before the final return to the fast tempo launched with stamping four-note chords (B flat, D flat, A flat, C).

The Concerto for horn and orchestra is perhaps the most serious of the four concertos. It is less concerned with elaborate exuberance than the Saxophone Concerto or the playful rhythmic xylophone sections of the *Pomladni concertino*. Example 4 presents a passage in the slow third main section (see Table 4) that is the emotional heart of the work. In many ways its melodic lines are developed from those of Gustav Mahler and show the same generally easy movement by step or small leaps. Petrić, of course, does not use Mahler's tonal language so the frequent chromatic inflections are not linked to diatonic harmony as Mahler's are, but they still have the same emotional effect. The arch shape of many of Mahler's melodic lines is also found in Petrić's concerto and in particular the slow section (or movement) shown in Example 4, something also noted in the earlier part of the Trumpet Concerto.



Example 4: *Koncert za rog in orkester* (Composer's Score: www.ivopetric.com), pp.39–42, bars 295–324.

The opening section is an extended movement without obvious changes of tempo (*Moderato mosso*) and leads into a similarly structured *Allegretto scherzando* movement. Orchestral textures are exquisitely imagined and carefully gauged with an emphasis on high and low sounds leaving the middle register clear for the horn to sound effectively. There is an emphasis on motifs that are extensively transformed and used for structural definition. The scherzando movement merges into a cadenza-like section accompanied by percussion, piano and harp. This leads directly into the slow movement, richly harmonised, at first by the strings and then by the wind to accompany the horn's expansive

melodic line (see Example 4). The finale (Allegro) reintroduces motifs from earlier in the work in further development of the musical material. Unlike the florid ending of the Saxophone Concerto but more like the longer slow coda that concludes *Pomladni concertino*, Petrić broadens the tempo, *Poco largamente e maestoso*, which allows the soloist to end emphatically with a modern fanfare.

Conclusions

These brief notes and observations on the four works give us the opportunity to draw some conclusions about the way that Ivo Petrić has solved the problems suggested in returning from an aleatory style to one involving metrical barring. The first feature is that of form. It is very clear from this survey that the composer has paid the closest attention to form. While the avant-garde works of the 1970s were very flexible in their treatment of form, it is this very flexibility that has been transferred to the newer works. While this is most pronounced in the Trumpet Concerto and *Pomladni concertino*, even in the Saxophone or Horn Concertos, which show a greater fondness for traditional movement structure, there is for example the important structural use of the cadenza and considerable attention given to the techniques of creating successful transitions. One can happily repeat the conclusion reached by Andrej Rijavec in 1975 concerning Petrić's previous change of direction:

Petrić – thanks to an inherent creative sense of form – operates with form-building procedures which seem to be typical of all musical cultures: a balanced treatment of repetition, variation and contrast makes unity – and form.⁶

Turning to other features it is evident that the composer has continued to devote much of his compositional skill to the abilities of solo players whose instrumental techniques he fully appreciates. In addition he has used the metrical precision of traditional notation to his advantage by making exact harmonic relations and contrapuntal connections to make his points effectively. His use of motivic development and manipulation continues in exactly the same way as in the avant-garde concertos.⁷ In short, the underlying continuity of Petrić's style is assured even if there is a difference in compositional techniques.

POVZETEK

Potem ko je v sedemdesetih letih napisal številna koncertantna dela v svobodno koordiniranem aleatoričnem stilu, vštevši izjemne *Trois images* za violino in orkester, se je Ivo Petrić vrnil k metrično-taktovski notaciji v koncertih, ki jih je skomponiral sredi osemdesetih. Med deli za solo in orkester so bili za pričujočo podrobno obravnavo izbrana dela za trobento, saksofon in rog ter tolkala (*Pomladni*

concertino). Vsi ti novejši koncerti so napisani v enem večdelnem stavku, ki pa le zakriva tradicionalno večstavčno strukturo. Instrumentalni karakter določa značaj posameznih koncertov. Skladatelj se je odločil izrabiti tradicionalne kompozicijske vrednote, kar je potrdila tudi podrobna raziskava. In vendar: kar se je bil naučil v aleatoričnih delih, je skladatelj učinkovito uporabil v svojih novejših kompozicijah.

⁶ Andrej Rijavec, "Problem forme v delih Iva Petrića," *Muzikološki zbornik* 11 (1975): 101–108.

⁷ See especially my article "Concertante Techniques in *Trois images* by Ivo Petrić," *Muzikološki zbornik* 37 (2001): 103–112.