

CHAMBER CELLO CONCERTO Op.29 (1985)

by Hiroaki Zakoji

This is not so much a concerto as a dialogue between orchestra and soloist. This is indicated even in the idiosyncratic way the composer has of writing out the score that is with the orchestra in one block and the soloist quite separately on a line of its own at the base of the score so that it looks like a separate work.

Like all of Zakoji's work it is essentially contemporary in concept and effect but, typically, based on tradition, and therefore essential musically constructive principles. If you accept that music is a dialectic, an expression of melodic, harmonic and rhythmic motifs, according to the concept of the composer, then this work, like all of Zakoji's work, demonstrates this in abundance.

It opens with a cello line that is simplicity itself but then develops in the most imaginative way, constantly in a dialogue with the orchestra. This work must give the conductor an especially complicated task as much of it is written without a time signature whilst sometimes the orchestra is in a strict fourfour whilst the soloist is exploring its material without a time signature, thus emphasising that aspect of the work as a dialogue between orchestra and soloist, with the orchestra commenting on the soloist's statements and vice versa.

It is a work that needs to be heard several times to get the full impact of its meaning. It is most certainly a virtuoso work for both orchestra and soloist and like most of Zakoji's work demonstrates the conflict between his outer and his inner self, the outer personality joyful and enterprising, the inner self full of doubt and apprehension. What will happen to the world, why can society not enter into an (amalgam) of conciliatory gestures. What is wrong with the human race? This is a concept that seems to invade all of his work. In this particular work it is most transparent because of the interchange between orchestra and soloist. Each apparently integrated idea is suddenly interspersed with an ejaculation from the ensemble that brings the content into question. Are we doing the right thing?

It is difficult to talk about music except in a strictly academic sense, subject, development, counterpoint and so on. But in the case of this work there is a deeper meaning that cannot be denied. The demands it makes on both soloist and orchestra, not to mention the conductor, are truly justified by its non literal but expressly stated extra musical implications. It is altogether a magnificent work that should be in the repertoire of every cellist worthy of the designation.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'James Stevens', with a horizontal line underneath.

[James Stevens](#)
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