Dess(o)us Paris : for viola and chamber orchestra.

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https://doi.org/10.18297/etd/2129
DESS(O)US PARIS

for Viola and Chamber Orchestra

By
Justin Giarrusso
B.A., Ohio Wesleyan University, 2013

A Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of the
School of Music of the University of Louisville
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of

Master of Music in Music Composition

School of Music
University of Louisville
Louisville, Kentucky

May 2015
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A Thesis Approved on

April 30, 2015

by the following Thesis Committee:

_________________________________________
Steve Rouse
Thesis Director

_________________________________________
Marc Satterwhite

_________________________________________
Kimcherie Lloyd
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to first of all thank my composition teacher and thesis advisor, Steve Rouse, for all his help and guidance during my two years at the University of Louisville, particularly while working on my thesis. I would like to also thank Marc Satterwhite and Kimcherie Lloyd for providing helpful feedback on my work as members of my thesis committee and for all their support during my studies at the University of Louisville. I would also like to thank my viola teachers—Brittany MacWilliams, Karl Pedersen, David Niwa, Korine Fujiwara, Daniel Auerbach, and Katie Overfield-Zook—without whom I never would have dreamed of writing a viola concerto. And finally, I would like to thank my family and friends for encouraging and supporting me every day.
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Les Catacombes and Notre Dame de Paris: two places that hold my most vivid memories of Paris, but these two places are also inextricably related. Notre Dame de Paris was built from limestone extracted from mines beneath Paris—mines that eventually became the ossuaries known today as the Catacombes. In depleting stone from the ground, cavernous and cathedral-like spaces were created beneath Paris while a cathedral rose toward the heavens on the Île de la Cité. In a way, two cathedrals were built: one a negative image of the other above. Dess(o)us Paris captures the duality of these opposite cathedrals, with the first movement relating to the Catacombes, and the second to Notre Dame de Paris.

The depiction of the Catacombes draws upon their original role as limestone mines, particularly upon the gradual depletion of minerals from the earth. “130 Pas Au-Dessus” is a passacaglia, divided into five sections. In each section, the ground bass is presented in its entirety but loses a tone with each sectional repetition. In the first section there is only one repetition and one tone lost. But in the final section, five repetitions strip the ground bass down to three pitches left to echo in the cavernous space that remains.

“La Cathédrale Au-Dessous” draws from my own personal experience with Notre Dame de Paris, conveying a vague narrative. The music begins around the pavilion of the cathedral, bells ringing in the background. Tonal grounding is abandoned as the listener spirals up the unending stairs to the bell towers, eventually emerging into the exuberance and awe of Paris from above. The amazement, however, succumbs to fear after making the mistake of peering down the height of the bell tower. A sudden bout of acrophobia sends the listener in a frenzy back down the spiral staircase to the pavilion, where the music regains its composure as the last bursts of gold, orange, and crimson fade to the purples and blues of dusk.
The antiphonal arrangement of the violins is crucial to the effectiveness of the first movement and important to the stereophonic nuance of the second movement.

The score is transposed. (Piccolo sounds one octave higher than written. Harp harmonics sound one octave higher than written. Crotales and glockenspiel sound two octaves higher than written. Contrabass sounds one octave lower than written.)
PERFORMANCE NOTES

Spatialization plays an important role in *Dess(o)us Paris*, so the suggested layout for the orchestra provided on the instrumentation page is critical to the stereophonic success of the whole work. If it is not possible to rearrange the entire ensemble, the antiphonal arrangement of the violins should at the very least be preserved.

This score reflects a string count of 6-5-4-3-2. Whenever staves are divided beyond *divisi a 2*, each line should be performed by a single player unless otherwise marked. The number accompanying such staves refer to individual players in seating order. Standard *divisi a 2* should be handled with the typical outside/inside division, (unless otherwise noted); a player without a stand partner in sections with odd numbers should play the outside of the *divisi*.

All artificial harmonics should be played *senza vibrato*.

Harmonic trills in the strings are achieved by “trilling” the touched finger of an artificial harmonic rapidly enough to create a timbral trill-effect. The lower note will not sound; there will be a haze of the octave between the harmonic tone and fingered note, and the artificial harmonic should sound near-continuously.

The dynamic marking “*n*” represents *niente*. While not all instruments are capable of achieving true *niente*, players should strive to come as close as their instruments will allow.

In the brass, the indication “air sound” accompanied by diamond noteheads calls for the performer to blow air through the instrument without producing the tone that occurs from buzzing the lips.

In the harp, the top pitch in all rolled chords should arrive “in time.”

Percussion and harp should be allowed to ring *sempre* unless otherwise noted by text, pedaling (in vibraphone and chimes), etc.

The Percussion 2 part calls for bell plate. It should be tuned to an E-flat (preferred) or a B-flat. If a bell plate at either of these pitches is not available, a *pianissimo* roll on tam-tam is an acceptable substitution so long as the higher overtones are avoided.

The following percussion set-up is recommended for ease of sharing the tam-tam and for ease of Percussion 2 to transition between various mallet instruments. Changes may be made to suit the preferences of individual performers.
Murmuring (d = 52)

Solo Vla.

Vla. I

Vla. II

Vc.

Cb.

Ob.

Hp.

Cl.

B.

A. Fl.
rearticulate at random, uncoordinated with section
Bell Plate (E- or B-)
soft mallets

*If no bell plates, substitute a pp roll on a medium or large Tam-Tam avoiding the higher overtones (same notated duration).
CURRICULUM VITAE

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Education

Doctor of Music in Music Composition, 2015–2018 (expected)
Florida State University

Master of Music in Music Composition, 2013–2015
University of Louisville
Studies with Steve Rouse

Bachelor of Arts in Music Theory, 2009–2013
Ohio Wesleyan University
Studies with Jennifer Jolley, Clint Needham, & Jason Bahr

Selected Honors

Recipient of Graduate Student Dean’s Citation at University of Louisville, 2015

Divertissement Concertante selected for the Lexington Philharmonic’s New Music Experiment, 2014

Recipient of the Mu Phi Epsilon Senior Achievement Award for East Central Province, 2013

Winner of the Mu Phi Epsilon Original Composition Contest, Division I, Class A for a light through stained glass glows, 2013

Recipient of the Lillian Harlan Ramage and Ellen Jane Lorenz Porter Grants for Graduate Study in Composition from the Mu Phi Epsilon Foundation, 2013

Winner and audience favorite for the Manhattan Choral Ensemble’s New Music for New York Composition Competition for “Central Park at Dusk” from Five Boroughs, One City, 2013

Selected Compositions & Performances

Dess(o)us Paris for viola and chamber orchestra (2015) – 13:00
Reading: Michael Hill & the University of Louisville Symphony Orchestra (April 7, 2015)

Mid-Park at 64th for organ (2014) – 2:00
Performance: Dr. Jack Ashworth, University of Louisville (February 18, 2015)

Urge for violin duo and dance (2014) – 6:00
Performances: Charlotte New Music Festival (June 28, 2014)
Classical Revolution Louisville (November 9, 2014)
University of Louisville Student Composers Recital (November 19, 2014)

Theme and Variations for marimba and percussion (2014) – 5:00
Performances: Charlotte New Music Festival (June 26, 2014)
University of Louisville Student Composers Recital (November 19, 2014)

The Deep for orchestra (2014) – 1:30
Reading: University of Louisville Symphony Orchestra (April 17, 2014)
Performance: University of Louisville Symphony Orchestra (March 29, 2015)

Out, Damned Spot for solo ‘cello (2014) – 3:00
Performance: Jakob Kullberg Guest Artist Recital, University of Louisville (March 24, 2014)

Dangerous New Avenues for soprano and percussion (2013) – 7:00
Performance: University of Louisville Student Composers Recital (April 2, 2014)

Sparkling Spring for grade 2 string orchestra (2013) – 2:30
Performances: Auten Road Intermediate School, Hillsborough, NJ (May 29, 2014)
Superior String Alliance, Little Lake, MI (July 21, 2014)