

THE TRAVELING CARNIVAL

CONCERTO FOR VIBRAPHONE

BY
JOE PORTER

PIANO REDUCTION



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Program Notes

Growing up, a traveling carnival would annually come to my home town. I found it fascinating with all of the rides, games and tricks. For some, the event is full of thrills and smiles, and for others it is scary and disappointing. I was also intrigued by the Carnies, I wondered if the life of the Carnie was happy, sad or dark. In this Concerto, I try to capture some of the main elements of the Traveling Carnival.

The vibraphone is a perfect instrument for capturing these elements. The piece begins with the soloist bowing the vibraphone, imitating the mystique of the Carnival. In the second movement, *The Sad Clown*, the vibraphonist has an expressive part, trying to capture the emotions of the poor Clown. In Movements I and III, *Opening Night*, and *Rides, Games and Trickery*, the vibraphonist has virtuosic parts, dazzling the audience and capturing some of the thrills of the rides and tricks of the Carnival.

In writing a concerto for vibraphone, I wanted to utilize some of the musical language of the roots of the vibraphone, in Jazz and later in Latin-Jazz. The Drumset is added to capture the feel of jazz music and to add an exciting layer to the composition. *The Traveling Carnival* combines elements of Jazz, Latin, Rock and Classical music.

The piece is mainly through-composed with the exception of a solo vamp in Mvt I, where the vibraphonist freely improvises, much like how a jazz combo solos over the head of a tune. The drumset part is also played freely, just like a jazz drummer.

Opening Night pays tribute to one of the most common forms used in jazz, the 12-bar blues, but in the minor mode. The movement has many twists and turns, switching gears from Swing to Samba and mixed metre to Afro-Cuban 12/8, all imitating the variety and excitement of the Opening Night at the Carnival. The vibraphonist starts and ends the piece in the dark key of F minor, imitating the behind scenes of the Carnival, and anticipating the next movement, *The Sad Clown*.

In the second movement, I felt it necessary to quote the famous Clown Song, "Entrée Des Gladiateurs" by Ernest Wilhelm Julius Fucík. The piece wasn't originally composed for Carnivals or Circuses, but later it became famous as it was played for the entrance of the clowns. I use it in the *The Sad Clown*, to help imitate the clown going crazy, hearing the song in his head. Meanwhile, the drumset

player resembles the contemplative thoughts of the clown, playing a funeral march-like snare drum part. The Cello and Contrabass have a corky pizzicato part, resembling the outside acting face of the clown, and the Vibraphone and upper Strings portray the Clowns emotions.

The third movement begins with the vibraphonist imitating kids running around playfully. As their adventure unfolds, the piece develops with the rides and games they try. The kids are interrupted when they see the circus part of the show. The vibraphonist cadenza resembles a flashy circus act, ending with rapid arpeggios up and down the instrument. The movement develops with many events and twists, leading up to the climactic ending where a customer tries a rigged game but can't overcome the trickery of the Carnie. The Carnie plays tormenting music to anger the customer. The customer grows with rage and a fight emerges. The piece ends with both happy and disappointed customers and employees.

Joe Porter – July, 2012

The Traveling Carnival - Concerto for Vibraphone, Strings and Drumset

Piano Reduction

I - Opening Night

Joe Porter

Freely, Rubato ♩ = 60-70

Two bows
Motor on

(x) = Strike with wood or plastic ends of bows

Vibraphone

8

RH to single mallet, strike (♦) with rattan

Vib.

13

RH to two mallets
LH remain bow

Vib.

17

LH to two mallets

Vib.

22

accel. rit.

Vib.

25

accel. Moderato

p cresc. f p

The Traveling Carnival

4

63

Pno.

68

Pno.

Vib.

C

f

Pno.

mf

75

Vib.

Pno.

108 2. F (♩ = ♩.)

Vib. *mf*

Pno. *mf*

D. S. *mf* (back to regular ride cymbal)

113

Vib.

Pno. *Optional Tacet

D. S.

117

Vib.

Pno.

D. S.

The Traveling Carnival

10

H

Vib. *mf*

Pno. *mf*

151

Vib.

Pno.

154

Vib.

Pno.

N Bossa Nova Feel (from Mvt. I)

Vib. *f* 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3

Pno. *pizz.* *mf* *mf*

D. S. *mf*

Vib. 143 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3

Pno.

Vib. 146 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3

Pno.