

## *Triple Concerto* (1992)

Stanislaw Skrowaczewski

“When the Verdehr Trio asked me to write a concerto for them with orchestra, I became fascinated by the idea of writing for such an unusual set of instruments, opening the whole gamut of rather unusual tonal combinations. Also, at that time, this kind of composition didn’t seem to exist in the music literature.

To underline the tonal freshness of such a set, my orchestra is of a chamber type and consists of: three flutes, bass clarinet (which has a role both of an ‘older brother’ and of a ‘double-ganger’), two trumpets, three horns, three trombones, large percussion section, timpani, harpsichord, and small strings.

There are five movements, all played without intermission. The titles describe, I think, the big contrasts of mood, tempo, dynamic, etc. between the movements.

The work starts with a slow, mysterious introduction, displaying a sort of main theme, or themes, progression of chords, intervals, and harmony that will be repeated in various combinations and shapes through the entire work, creating a big climax at the very end of the work. After the introduction comes a faster *Allegro* whose form could be considered as a sonata form having an exposition with three themes, a development, and a reprise.

The second and fourth movements have a form of *Lied* (song), while the third and fifth are a sort of one steady development or progression.

Any concerto of a solo instrument(s) I have written, has at least two different aspects: one, very obvious, is the ‘show’ of the solo instrument, a display of all possibilities of tone, technique, dynamics, lowest and highest register, etc., thus, of course, a ‘show’ of the skill of the player. The other aspect for me is purely musical, philosophical, tentatively metaphysical: this is a matter of a content, message, self-expression, search of a meaning, and beauty. This is what great masters of the past gave us; this is what music and art are about! I live so emotionally with the great music of the past I am conducting that I want to have the same feeling for every piece of contemporary music—including my own.

And it may sound rather presumptuous, (and hopeless!) to compete in such a way with the best we had, but for me the reason and urge to compose consists in trying to become as much emotionally moved as I am in the presence of great composers.”

—Stanislaw Skrowaczewski

The world premiere of the *Triple Concerto* was on April 19, 1992 with the Honolulu Symphony Orchestra, Honolulu, Hawaii with the composer conducting.

Stanislaw Skrowaczewski (1923–2017) was born in Lwów, Poland (now in Ukraine) and began piano and violin studies at the age of four. He composed his first symphonic work at seven, gave his first public piano recital at eleven, and two years later played and conducted the Beethoven *Piano Concerto No. 3*. An injury to his hands during World War II terminated his keyboard career. After the war, he graduated from the Academy of Music in Kraków in the composition class of Roman Palester and the conducting class of Walerian Bierdiajew. In 1946, he became conductor of the Wroclaw (Breslau) Philharmonic, and later served as Music Director of the Katowice Philharmonic, Krakow Philharmonic, and Warsaw National Orchestra.

Skrowaczewski spent the immediate postwar years in Paris where he studied with Nadia Boulanger and co-founded the *avant-garde* group Zodiaque. In 1956, he won the Santa Cecilia International Competition for Conductors in Rome and was invited by George Szell to make his

American debut with the Cleveland Orchestra in 1958. In 1960, he was appointed Music Director of the Minneapolis Symphony (renamed the Minnesota Orchestra under his tenure). He held that position until 1979 when he became conductor laureate. From 1984 to 1990, he served as Principal Conductor of the Hallé Orchestra in Manchester, England. During his career, he also served as artistic advisor to the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra, composer-in-residence for the Philadelphia Orchestra's summer season at Saratoga, and as guest conductor for orchestras worldwide.

Skrowaczewski's interpretations of the Bruckner symphonies earned the Gold Medal of the Mahler-Bruckner Society, and his programming of contemporary music was acknowledged with five ASCAP awards. His *Ricercari Notturmi* for saxophone and orchestra received the 1979 Kennedy Center Friedheim Award. *Passacaglia Immaginaria* was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize in 1997 and *Concerto for Orchestra* received a nomination in 1999. He also received the Ditson Conductor's Award and the Commander Order of the White Eagle, the highest order conferred by the Polish.

Skrowaczewski was a resident of the United States from 1960. He was living in Wayzata, Minnesota at the time of his death.