Tropes
Variations on a Medieval Kyrie
John Prescott

1 Full Score
1 Piccolo
4 Flute 1
4 Flute 2
2 Oboe
2 Bassoon
3 Bb Clarinet 1
3 Bb Clarinet 2
3 Bb Clarinet 3
2 Bass Clarinet
2 Alto Saxophone 1
2 Alto Saxophone 2
2 Tenor Saxophone
1 Baritone Saxophone
3 Bb Trumpet 1
3 Bb Trumpet 2
3 Bb Trumpet 3
2 F Horn 1
2 F Horn 2
3 Trombone 1
3 Trombone 2
1 Bass Trombone
2 Baritone B.C.
2 Baritone T.C.
5 Tuba
1 Timpani
2 Percussion 1: Tom-toms, Snare Drum
3 Percussion 2: Bass Drum, Crash Cymbals, Sus. Cymbal, Hi-hat, Tam-tam
2 Mallets 1: Xylophone, Vibraphone
1 Mallets 2: Marimba
2 Mallets 3: Bells, Crotales
2 Mallets 4: Chimes, Vibra-slap, Triangles

Extra Part - P3017221
Program Notes

I first ran across the concept of a trope when I was a freshman in college and learned about them in medieval music history. In the early Christian church, tropes were little pieces of musical material added to the standard mass setting by local composers who wanted to add their own personal creativity to the service. Eventually there came to be a lot of tropes until they were outlawed by the church in the 16th century. In that same music history class, I learned the Kyrie Cunctipotens Genitor, which scholars think was written in about the year 900, and I always meant to use it somehow in a piece of my own.

That opportunity came in the Summer of 2013 when I found myself in the hospital with a serious illness. I woke up at 3:30 in the morning with the exposition of a new piece going through my head, and asked the nurse for a pencil and paper in order to write it down. During my long convalescence, I would occasionally think of a new variation, or trope, and would add it to my collection. Then later, I put all the tropes together into a piece.

There are many repeated patterns and ostinati in Tropes, and the reason is that the music represents the many centuries of rituals observed by people of faith. I once performed in a cathedral in Poland built in the 9th century, and to get up to the organ/choir loft, one walked up stone steps that were grooved in the center by the many centuries of walkers going up to perform music as I was. In the central section of Tropes, many members of the ensemble whisper “Kyrie Eleison, Christe Eleison, Kyrie Eleison.” I like to think of this section as the echoes of people of faith from centuries past.

So this music is about faith, perseverance, resilience, and finally about overcoming adversity. It celebrates those qualities in all of us.

About the Composer

John Prescott is a Professor of Music at Missouri State University, where he teaches theory, composition, and commercial music. His compositions include works for band, orchestra, chorus, solo, and chamber ensembles, as well as multi-media pieces, and have been performed nationally and internationally. Dr. Prescott holds degrees in music theory and composition from Florida State University and from the University of Kansas, where he studied composition with John Pozdro and James Barnes.
Picc.
Fl.

Ob.

Bsn.

Cl. 1

Cl. 2

B. Cl.

A. Sx. 1

T. Sx.

B. Sx.

Tpt. 1

Tpt. 2

Hn. 1

Hn. 2

Tbn. 1

Tbn. 2

B. Tbn.

Har.

Tba.

Timp.

Perc. 1

Perc. 2

Mlt. 1

Mlt. 2

Mlt. 3

Mlt. 4

149
150
152
153
154
155
Tropes