

BRIAN WILBUR GRUNDSTROM

MUSIC II FOR WIND QUINTET (2005) 15:05M

Commissioned for the Trinity Chamber Players here in DC, Music II for Wind Quintet was originally conceived as Music for Piano Solo II, written in 1990.

I choose this lively and spirited piano piece, complete with hoedown, because it was less idiomatic for the piano. By contrast, my Music for Piano Solo IV (Crystalline Textures) would be a more difficult piece to arrange for instruments. This piece is an exercise in color variation on the piano, which would make it much harder to orchestrate. Music II has more of the structural elements of music -- melody, harmony and rhythm than Crystalline Textures, which is more about dynamics and color. While five instruments have more varied color than just the piano, the pianistic ways of changing color would require much more reworking to achieve the similar effects with a quintet.

In arranging the Music for Piano Solo II for wind quintet, there were still several challenges however: There are many more notes on the piano than you can get with just five instruments, so finding the essential harmonies was important. This was further amplified by not wanting the piece to be all tutti playing -- it is important to leave out instruments for color variation, especially with so much color opportunity in a wind quintet.

Tempo also had to be adjusted. I had to determine the difference between structural tempo changes and the natural rubato when playing the piano. Sometime I would write out ritards -- keeping the tempo the same, but using longer note values to simulate slowing down. And then of course there were melodic problems: Melodic lines on a piano can have many huge leaps, including of course octaves, which you have to use sparingly with the winds. I often would split up lines among the instruments to make it more playable.

When lines rise or fall, there is so much more range on the piano than in just one wind instrument. For a rising line, I would reword the notes so that the chord was essentially the same, yet the distance between notes was less. This maintained the overall effect of rising, yet was playable because the overall range was considerably less than what was originally on the piano. Toward the end of the piece, I actually increased the counterpoint by adding in a few lines that weren't in the original piano part.