Chameleons

Perusal score Not for performance

AJ Harbison

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Chameleons (2022)

for orchestra

in 12 sections

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Instrumentation

- 2 Flutes
- 2 Oboes
- 2 Clarinets in Bb
- 2 Bassoons
- 4 Horns in F
- 2 Trumpets in Bb

Tenor trombone

Bass trombone

Tuba

- 3 Timpani (G2, A2, D3)
- 2 Percussionists:

Percussion 1
Glockenspiel

Snare drum
Bass drum (shared with Perc. 2)

Percussion 2 Vibraphone

Bass drum (shared with Perc. 1)

Clash Cymbals Suspended Cymbal

Strings

Performance Notes

Chameleons is intended to be performed as part of an educational concert, with explanation and speaking before and between the sections of the piece. The main educational themes of the piece are 1) teaching the different sections and instruments of the orchestra through explanations of the orchestration (e.g. "In this section the glockenspiel, a percussion instrument, has the melody, and is accompanied by plucked strings"); and 2) teaching about how different orchestration, tempos, harmonies, etc. can change the feeling of a melody. The versatility of the orchestra can make a melody change its "color" based on its surroundings — like a chameleon.

To demonstrate the concept, section 1, the melody of the second movement of Beethoven's Seventh Symphony, is played. Then the audience will hear two versions of it: the original, as Beethoven wrote it for low strings (section 2), and a light and cheerful arrangement for woodwinds (section 3).

After that introduction, section 4, the intro for Melody A, is played, at which point the audience can vote on whether they would like to hear this melody in light orchestration (section 5) or heavy orchestration (section 6). Based on the vote, only section 5 or section 6 will be played — not both. (A comment could be made on this point that composers are always having to make choices on how to orchestrate their compositions — they can score a section light or heavy but not both!)

After this Melody B is introduced, the audience votes on whether they would like to hear it as an adventure theme or a sad theme, and the orchestra plays either section 8 or section 9. Finally, Melody C is introduced, the audience votes on whether they would like to hear it as a love theme or as a march, and the orchestra plays either section 11 or section 12.

Alternatively, all sections can be played, and the audience can vote on which of the two versions they would like to hear first. Or all sections can be played without audience participation, with brief comments introducing each section (e.g. "This is how the melody sounds with light orchestration"). If all sections are to be played, the first three Beethoven sections are optional.

Duration

If only one version of each melody is played: ca. 6 to 7 minutes (not including speaking)

If all versions are played: ca. 10 minutes 30 seconds (not including speaking)

If all versions are played but Beethoven sections are omitted: ca. 9 minutes (not including speaking)

Composed for Stephanie Brimhall and the Kansas City Symphony

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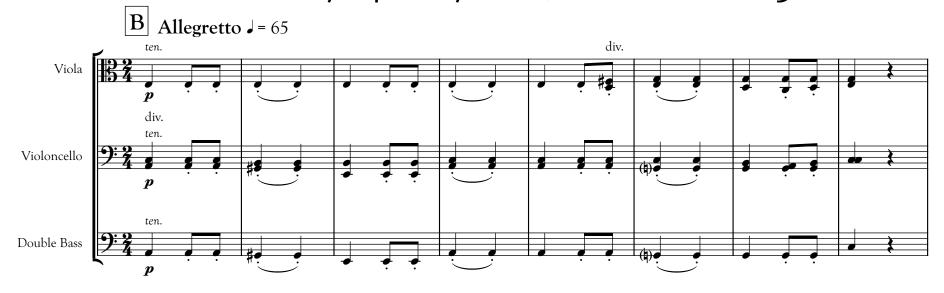
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1. Beethoven Symphony No. 7 Mvt. II — Intro





2. Beethoven Symphony No. 7 Mvt. II — Original





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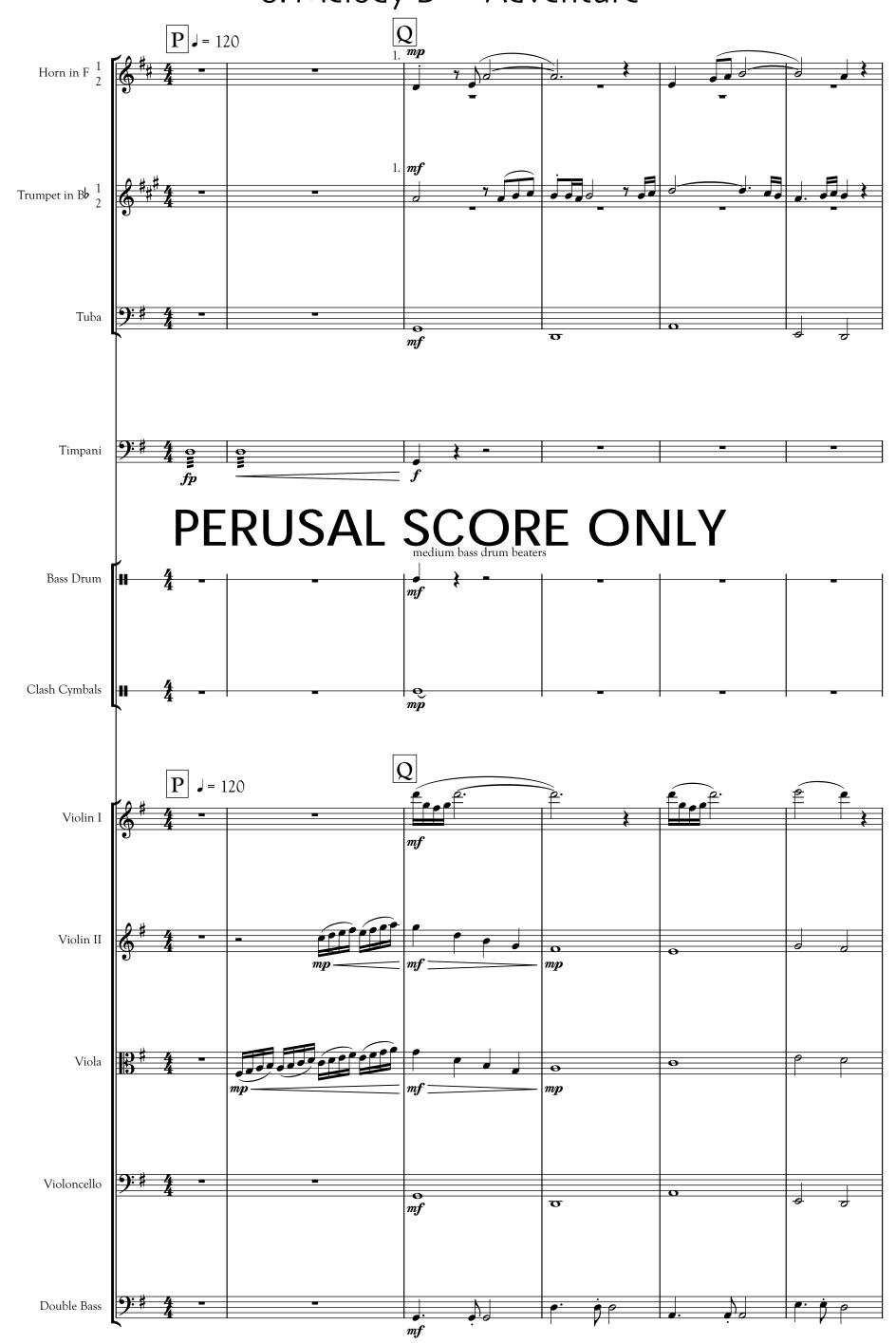


7. Melody B — Intro





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11. Melody C — Love Theme







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