

BERND FRANKE

**Music for Trumpet, Harp, Violin and Orchestra**  
**(in memory of Leonard Bernstein)**

(1990-93)

Première: 6. Juni 1995, Leipzig, Gewandhaus, Gewandhaus Festival

Orchestra/soloists: Gewandhausorchester, Kurt Masur, K.-H. Georgi, C. Seehafer, K. Suske

Duration: 26`

Publisher: Breitkopf & Härtel, Wiesbaden, Paris, Leipzig

Instrumentation: Soli: Trp.Hrp.Vl. - 3.3.3.3. - 4.3.3.1. - Tmp.Perc.(4) - Strings

The Boston première of his 1985/86 chamber music work "Time is a river without banks" was a thunderbolt for the composer Bernd Franke: He had hardly dared to hope that his work would be chosen from among some 400 scores by the critics and receive the *1987 Kucyna International Composition Prize*; at that time his work could only leave Leipzig by an adventurous route and he himself had no possibility of travelling to the USA.

On the recommendation of Gewandhauskapellmeister Kurt Masur and the composer Hans Werner Henze as well as through the presentation of his scores which were accepted by the selection committee, in Summer 1989 Bernd Franke was finally able to go to the United States and study for two months at the renowned Tanglewood with such distinguished musicians as Leonard Bernstein, Lukas Foss and Oliver Knussen, and to discuss his work. Through this Bernd Franke received support for the rehearsal of the American première of his composition "Solo 3times" from Louis Krasner, who as a violinist had premiered the Violin Concertos of both Alban Berg and Arnold Schönberg.

In 1990, full of the impressions he had received, he was beginning to conceive his "Music for Trumpet, Harp, Violin and Orchestra" when he heard the news of the sudden death of the world renown conductor, pianist and composer Leonard Bernstein who had shortly before written to him with the intention of an artistic collaboration. Thus it was that Bernd Franke, in gratitude for the unforgettable stay at Tanglewood and in sadness at the death of Bernstein, dedicated his new work to this "extraordinary man" and drew from the letters of Bernstein`s name the kernel of its main structure.

As if to transform the news of the death into music, the diatonic, dulcet tones of the Prologue are fragmented by the shrill sound of the orchestra which Bernd Franke compares with the glass-shattering scream of Oskar in Günter Grass` "Tin Drum".

The note A, which through its Italian counterpart *La* draws on the initial of the first name of the American dedicatee, is central, and is followed by the first letter of Bernstein`s surname; a threefold descent follows in which the requiem-like Adagio character of the first movement develops. This again is symbolic, the four tone motif *b-e-flat-d* on Bernstein's name which is dealt with as a permutation of notes and metre in remembrance of the great Jewish artist and contributes to a gradual blending of the musical flow.

The programmatic, tension-laden minor ninth *a1 – b2*, which emerges as an igniting spark from the first movement, structurally binds the unbroken sequence of the four parts of the composition and brings out the symphonic intention of the work. Additionally this main motif is given as a major seventh *b-a1* to the vibraphone and solo harp in the Epilogue, while at the outset the solo violin joins with the solo trumpet, moving above a chromatically broadening carpet of strings, and climbing ever higher.

The dance-like vitality and scherzo-like nature of the second movement, with its racing exchanges between the trumpet and violin solo, avoids this note symbolism, since Franke also brings into his composition his “Chagall-Musik” for Orchestra, which was successfully premiered by the Gewandhaus Orchestra in 1988 and gave rise to the commission of the new work by Kurt Masur.

The new composition, as the composer explains, is “the next chapter of a growing book”, in which the solo violin renews the memory of the picture of Chagall’s fiddler, while the solo trumpet this time not only gains influence at the end of the work, but, together with the harp, joins in the musical process from the beginning.

The concert action is intensified and isolated by the solo instruments in the third movement, since here, under the leadership of the harp and the violin, two completely different orchestral blocks are, collage-like, layered over one another, lacking however the colouring of the brass. The contrasting, internally-compressed results of these two strata simultaneously form layers of Allegro and Adagio character, without either being able to communicate or affect the other. A similar separation is developed between the soloists and the orchestra in the final movement, since here the simple instrumental song of the protagonists lifts itself above the orchestra, which, with dynamic and aleatoric passages, proceeds into emptiness, and places the initial individual conflict in a changed, all-embracing context.

(Christoph Sramek, from the program for the première on the 6<sup>th</sup> of June, 1995, in the Leipzig Gewandhaus)

Translation from the German text: W.D. Bengree-Jones, 2001

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