

DEVA for solo cello and chamber ensemble of seven instruments. (1979)

'Deva' is a Hindu word meaning 'good spirit'. It is particularly used of nature spirits, but is really the same word as 'dea' or 'diva' meaning goddess. This *Deva* is for solo cello, with an ensemble of alto flute, clarinet, bassoon, horn, violin, viola and bass. It lasts 20 minutes.

My image of the piece, or a metaphor for it, is that the ensemble is a landscape through which the cello passes like a stream.. becoming a river.. becoming the sea.

The solo cello creates a shape which is easy to follow: it makes a gradual descent from the top of its register to the bottom, moving back towards the centre in the coda. As the cello line grows it becomes more focused and projected: as it descends it becomes increasingly sonorous. The cello is very much alive, always moving onward, its moments of parenthesis or summary reinforcing its progress through time.

The ensemble play as a group, rather than as seven individuals, so their music is simpler, especially in its rhythmic shapes, than that of the soloist. Two principal ensemble ideas emerge, the first moving in quietly stepping chords, the second fast and brilliant. These act as refrains, pacing the gradual descent of the cello. Sometimes they recur literally and sometimes in transformation.

Thus the overall structure of *Deva* is created in two ways: by the highly articulated line of the cello, and by the ensemble refrains which give it perspective. As a whole, the ensemble music creates the harmonic context from which the cello melody can grow: from the soft and distant opening to the resolution glimpsed near the end.

*Deva* was commissioned by the Camden Festival with funds provided by GLAA. Christopher van Kampen and the Nash Ensemble gave the first performance in March 1979.

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