

ChiaSsO program note

Apart from the fact that the acronym “CSO” (for Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra) can be drawn from it, the Italian word “chiasso” has several different meanings, each of which separately and all of which together powerfully suggested a piece of music to me.

Here are the definitions:

1. a cramped, restricted space
2. a dark, narrow alley or street, little traveled
3. a burst of noise from a crowd of people, caused by some particular news or an unexpected event.

Further, the words “restricted” and “narrow” immediately came to mind when I enthusiastically agreed to write this piece to commemorate the CSO’s one-hundredth anniversary, because I was asked (as were the other composers in this series) to write a very *short* work. And finally, the “burst of noise” part of the definition was certainly appropriate to the celebratory nature of the music.

So much for the title. I would like to offer a metaphor which might help the listener a little further into the world of this little piece:

Imagine two parallel moving walkways (the kind you see at airports). In this case, they are both moving in the same direction, and one is moving much more quickly than the other--twice as fast, in fact. If you were to remain on either one for even a short time, you’d quickly lose a sense of how fast you were going. On the other hand, if you were to jump back and forth from one to the other, you’d be constantly reminded of many of the aspects of the motion(s) with which you were interacting--it would be a curious and suggestive experience.

The ways in which we experience motion in music are fundamental and direct, and yet often difficult to describe and explain. *ChiaSsO* explores some of the little-traveled bits of this fascinating world.

Joel Hoffman