Passacaglia Tenebrosa

for orchestra

by Justin Henry Rubin
This piece stands as my first large orchestra piece since developing a new tonal language between 1996 and 1998 when most of my work was concentrated on small ensemble pieces and solo compositions. It was also begun shortly after my arrival in Minnesota from Arizona during the summer of 1998. However, work on it was interrupted by other short term commissions and my learning the ropes as a newly appointed professor at the University of Minnesota-Duluth. Following a long hiatus in working on the Passacaglia, I was able to finally concentrate on its completion alone during the following summer. It has an overall tripartite structure breaking down the variations on the ground into smaller sets divided by two sizable interludes. Following the statement of the theme in the trombones, seven variations immediately follow of increasing strength. The seventh diminishes as the strings quietly conclude with a sequence of descending chorale-like chords. The first interlude then begins in a mist of melancholy lyricism and a sparse textural background to contrast with the agitated passacaglia theme. The concluding passage of the interlude is dovetailed into the eighth variation, which begins to rebuild the lost energy once again only to subside by the eleventh into the second interlude, itself an extended development of the material of the first. The final set of three variations (bringing the total number to fourteen) are again dovetailed out of the interlude and brings about a recapitulation of the opening variation. This comparatively relaxed texture is foreshortened by the final variation, wildly engaging all the forces of the orchestra into the climactic coda, a tension that is quickly released as the piece extinguishes into a smoldering end.
**Orchestra**

- 3 flutes, 3 oboes, 2 clarinets (Bb) and 1 bass clarinet (Bb),
  2 bassoons and 1 contrabassoon-

- 4 horns (F), 2 trumpets (Bb), 2 trombones and 1 bass trombone-

- Timpani and 1 percussionist (triangle, xylophone*, glock.**, vibes, bass drum, and tam-tam)-

  *xylophone sounds one octave higher than written; **glockenspiel sounds two octaves higher than written

- Strings-

**Outline of the Passacaglia**

**PART I**


  Theme Var.I Var.II Var.III Var.IV Var.V Var.VI Var.VII

**PART II**

Bars:  63-83   84-91   92-98   99-105   106-128

  Interlude I Var.VIII Var.IX Var.X Var.XI

**PART III**

Bars:  129-166   167-196   198-204   205-230

  Interlude II Var.XII Var.XIII Var.XIV and Coda
Variation II
più mosso (subito)
Fl. 1
Fl. 2-3
Ob. 1
Ob. 2-3
Cl. 1-2
B. Cl.
Bn. 1 & 2
C. Bn.
Hns. 1-2
Hns. 3-4
Tpt. 1-2
Tbns. 1-2
B. Tbn.
Timp.
Perc.
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vln.
Vcl.
Cb.
Variation V

to piccolo

Fl. 1

Fl. 2-3

Ob. 1

Ob. 2-3

Cl. 1-2

B. Cl.

Bn. 1 & 2

C. Bn.

Hns. 1-2

Hns. 3-4

Tpt. 1-2

Tbns. 1-2

B. Tbn.

Timp.

Perc.

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vcl.

Cb.
Variation VI
Interlude I

Fl. 1
Fl. 2-3
Ob. 1
Ob. 2-3
Cl. 1-2
B. Cl.
Bn. 1 & 2
C. Bn.
Hns. 1-2
Hns. 3-4
Tpt. 1-2
Tbns. 1-2
B. Tbn.
Timp.
Perc.
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.
Cb.

Interlude I

Interlude I
Variation IX
più mosso (subito)
Variation X

*un poco più mosso*

to piccolo
Variation XI

un poco più mosso

Fl. 1

Fl. 2-3

Ob. 1

Ob. 2-3

Cl. 1-2

B. Cl.

Bn. 1 & 2

C. Bn.

Hns. 1-2

Hns. 3-4

Tpt. 1-2

Tbns. 1-2

B.Tbn.

Timp.

Perc.

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vcl.

Cb.

Variation XI

un poco più mosso
Rit. molto

Interlude II

Tempo di Interlude I
Rit...

a tempo più mosso (subito)
Variation XIII

a tempo primo

Rit...
Variation XIV and Coda