

# **Trumpet concerto**

**Joe Wolfe**

## Trumpet concerto

3 Flutes (one doubles piccolo)  
1 Oboe  
1 Cor anglais (or 2nd oboe, plus cues on other parts)  
2 Clarinets  
1 Alto saxophone  
2 Bassoons  
3 Horns  
2 Trumpets  
2 Tenor trombones  
1 Bass trombone  
1 Tuba  
Timpani (playable with 2)  
Conga drums and guiro  
Bass drum and cabassa  
Marimba *ad lib.*  
Solo trumpet in C  
String orchestra

**About the concerto.** Woolahra Philharmonic is a community orchestra in the East of Sydney. One night after rehearsal, the winds were having fluid replacement therapy while the strings did bowing elbow warm-downs at the local pub. Anthony Heinrichs, trumpet player from the Sydney Symphony was there, the next programme was being discussed and his arm was being twisted. But which concerto?

There are many beautiful baroque and classical trumpet concertos, but they are for an orchestra of strings and not much else. Fine for a professional orchestra, whose winds are happy to get home early, but in a community orchestra, people are there to play. As Nigel will readily and emphatically tell you, there are already far too many symphonic works that do not have a tuba part. So what else? Some 20th century concerti are rather challenging, for audience and orchestra alike. Arutiunian's—a romantic work with full orchestra—would have been good, but Woolahra had done that recently. The idea of writing a trumpet concerto appealed to me: Anthony is a great player, I really like the instrument and I had some ideas that sat nicely on trumpet. Then it was closing time. The next thing I recall about it was seeing a list of concert programmes with the Wolfe trumpet concerto (première) and the performance date: 21/9/2003. This focussed my attention.

**About the composer.** My jazz background always shows in my orchestral writing: there are syncopated tunes and rhythms, fairly frequent changes of metre and jazz flavoured harmonies. In a trumpet concerto there seemed to be no reason to hold back on any of these elements.

Although I've written several works for orchestra, this is my first concerto. The first movement cadenza came first, to give Anthony time to practise it. He looked at it, said it was impossible, but with a smile, so I gathered that the level was appropriate. I showed him sketches of the score as it grew, and there have been a few of discussions. My questions have been mainly about breathing, and his suggestions mainly about articulations. It's been great to work with such a virtuoso. Great, too, to work with Romano Crivici: a gifted conductor. And a great pleasure to have the work brought to life by my friends in Woolahra Philharmonic. And yes, Nigel, there is a tuba part: in fact the motif for the Big Tune in the first movement appears as a tuba solo in the first bar. And speaking of bars...

**For musicologists.** The motif 9-8-5 (re-do-so) has become like a signature for me, and it creates the second tune in the first movement. If you invert it ("step down to tonic, then to dominant" becomes "step up to tonic, then to dominant") you have the start of the main theme. The second movement is simple and lyrical, and borrows a tune from a chamber piece I wrote a few years ago. The final movement has a syncopated string motif beginning with semiquavers, a happy tune introduced by the trumpet, and another that appears in very short interludes of chamber music. In something like a musical summary, these elements are put together with the themes from the second, then the first movement to make a finale.

Gday Nicola,

not sure what you or a journo might want. You already know the 1st movement, and will know the second by Monday. So:

It started one Monday night at the Lord Dudley, where members of the Woolahra Orchestra gather after rehearsals. For the wind players, this is called Fluid Replacement Therapy; for the strings it serves as a warm-down for the bowing elbow. Anthony Heinrichs, trumpet player from the Sydney Symphony, was having his arm twisted to perform a concerto with the orchestra. But which one?

There are many beautiful trumpet concertos from the baroque and classical period, but they are for an orchestra of strings and not much else. This would be no problem for a professional orchestra: the winds are happy to get an early mark. But in a community orchestra, people are there to play. As Nigel will readily and emphatically tell you, there are already far too many symphonic works that don't have a tuba part. So what else? Some 20th century concerti are rather challenging, for audience and orchestra alike. The Arutiunian--a slightly jazzy, romantic work with full orchestra--would have been good, but Woolahra had done that recently (with Anthony's SSO colleague, Paul Goodchild, as soloist).

Now Woolahra have played a couple of my pieces in the past, and those members who may not have liked them (why can't he just work out what time signature he wants and stick to it?) were polite enough to keep a low profile. Or they're non-drinkers. I don't recall whose suggestion it was--it could well have been mine--but the idea of writing a trumpet concerto appealed to me: Anthony is a great player, and I really like the instrument. Then it was closing time. The next thing I recall about it was seeing a list of concert programmes with the Wolfe trumpet concerto (premiere) on it. This focussed my attention somewhat.

I come from a jazz background and it shows in my orchestral writing: there are syncopated tunes and rhythms, fairly frequent changes of metre and jazz-flavoured harmonies. In a trumpet concerto there seemed to be no reason to hold back on any of these. And yes, Nigel, there is a tuba part: in fact the motif for the Big Tune in the first movement appears as a tuba solo in the first bar. And speaking of p bars brings us back to where we began. (What musicologists call ternary form, I believe.)

There is some biographical stuff about me on [www.phys.unsw.edu.au/~jw/Joe.html](http://www.phys.unsw.edu.au/~jw/Joe.html) but the server is dead at the moment.

Best Joe

About the piece (diverse info, discard what is unneeded--preferably all, because I'm not sure anyone cares about details like this outside of music departments). It's largely in D minor, a key I like for orchestra because the resonances of the unused open strings give it a specially warm sound. And while a collection of high Ds are a challenge for a trumpet player, they won't kill him. I hope.

I've used a little phrase 9-8-5 (being the notes in a scale: re-do-so) as a signature in several works, and it appears rather a lot in this piece, including the second tune in the first movement. As it's my signature, and because I'm originally a saxophonist, it appears first on the sax. 7-8-12 (ti-do-so) is something like an inversion of the signature, and it is the motif for the main tune.

The second movement borrows a tune I used in a chamber piece a few years ago. It's very simple and tonal, but I rather like it and wanted to hear it played by strings, and to use it as the background for some lyrical trumpet lines.

The final movement has some insistent syncopation and a lot of what string players call scrubbing--lots of work for the right elbow--to provide the rhythms that drive the movement. And if they want to warm-down those elbows afterwards...