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Can you talk a little bit about the Kati Agócs Horn Concerto and just talk a little bit about the commissioning process. And what is this concerto like?

Well, it's great. It forms an interesting connection with the third Mozart concerto. Because one thing that's unusual about the Mozart is that it has normal string sections for classical orchestra, and then the pairs of bassoons and clarinets, and that's very unusual for classical scoring.

And if people are not really familiar with symphonic and concerto writing from that time, it might seem like a just slightly different color, but it really makes it a very different color in the accompaniment. It's as if you hear a singer sing a song and they're accompanying themselves on an electric guitar. And then you hear the same thing accompanied on a nylon string, classical guitar, but it's a much woodier or darker sound. So she took that as a jumping off point in how her piece was arranged and orchestrated. And it makes it a little easier to program, too, because then you just have all the same players. But she took those instruments in a very creative and interesting way, and expanded what they were able to do beyond what Mozart thought of.

So they play, one of the clarinets plays bass clarinet and one of the bassoonists plays contrabassoon, right? And those are both much lower, different sounding instruments. And then in terms of what she asks the rest of the orchestra to do, there's a lot more.

It's very delicate, very independent writing, so that all of the string players in the group might be playing slightly different parts and they'll be playing very transparent music way up high. So it has this really cool airy sound to it, but also one thing that I really love about the piece is that it just has beautiful tunes.

People worry about brand new music because they wonder if there's something that they can actually find themselves humming as they leave the door. I played a lot of new pieces and after practicing this for a while, I'd find myself doing laundry and humming the tunes to myself.

When I was prepping for the interview, I was listening to the violin concerto (*Concerto for Violin and Percussion Orchestra*). It's like a violin concerto with percussion. I was thinking that exact same thing. The violin part is beautiful. It's very melodic and very tuneful. Can you talk about the commissioning?

It was commissioned by Symphony Nova Scotia, the Sioux City Symphony, the Manitoba Chamber Orchestra, Kalamazoo, and Prince Edward Island. The process started with conversations between Kati and me. We've known each other quite a long time, and I've commissioned works from her in other situations. I was music director of the Hamilton Philharmonic in Ontario and we commissioned a really successful short orchestral work from her.

And then as a playing member of the Boston Symphony, that organization commissioned a small chamber work from her a few years ago. So, we're in touch, we both teach at the New England Conservatory, and we cross paths. I'm pretty sure she raised the idea of writing a concerto.

And so we just both started making phone calls. We both have a number of connections in the music world and so we put out some feelers among the very different orchestras that were interested in being a part of it. Kalamazoo's music director Julian Querti is an old pal. I already talked about my connection here [Winnipeg], and then Sioux City. Their music director Ryan Haskins is a friend of Kati's and had, again, loved her music. He'd been looking for an opportunity, so it just fell into place.