

**T**HIS CONCERTO WAS WRITTEN in October and November, 1963, and February, 1964, as *Three Pieces for [solo] Piano*. The first and last of the three pieces were written slowly and intuitively, at the piano. They are centered on soft dynamic levels and smoothly phrase lines, meant to be played very softly. The middle piece was added later, for contrast, pitched on a much louder level, and alternates violent and rapid gestures with ringing sonorities. It uses only pitches omitted in the outer movements; otherwise the composition follows only intuitive principles of structure, not conventional tonal or serial concepts.

Much of the music is essentially unmeasured and meant to be played quite freely, such indications of duration as those in m. 4 to be considered merely suggestions. The third movement ends with a performer's choice between two possible approaches to the close.

The music was orchestrated in May, 1964. No new material was added ; I simply assigned some of the notes to rather large orchestra, including a harmonium in the wings, a pair of Wagner tubas, and alto flute among the more usual instrumentation. In this form the music was premiered in August 1965 at the Cabrillo Music Festival, with Nathan Schwartz as soloist and Gerhard Samuel conducting the Festival orchestra.

Orchestration:        2 flutes (2d also alto flute)  
                              oboe  
                              English horn  
                              2 clarinets in A (2d also bass clarinet)  
                              2 bassoons  
                              4 horns in F (2d and 4th also Wagner tubas ad lib.)  
                              2 trumpets  
                              trombone  
                              bass trombone (or tuba)  
                              harmonium (offstage: may be taken by two violas and one cello)  
                              strings

score sounds as written : duration ca. 8 minutes

# Small Concerto for Piano and Orchestra

for Edith Fizzell

I

Delicato  
senza misura

Charles Shere

$\text{♩} = 72$  **3** *ritardando* **4**  $\text{♩} = 60$   $\text{♩} = 69$

Flutes  
Flute 2: take alto flute  
*niente*

Oboes  
sounds as written

English Horn  
sounds as written  
*ppp* *ppp* *fade into trumpet*

Clarinet in A  
*pp* sounds as written  
*pp* *ppp*

Bass Clarinet in B $\flat$   
sounds as written  
*pp* *ppp*

Bassoon  
*ppp* *ppp* *f*

Horns in F  
1.3. sounds as written  
2.4. *ppp* *niente* 2.4. take Wagner tubas (ad lib.)

Trumpets in B $\flat$   
sounds as written  
*pp* 1. Harmon mute (plunger in) imitate clarinet sound *f*  
2. Fiber mute *f*

PIANO  
*p* S.P. (center pedal)

Harmonium  
in the wings. This part may also be given to two violas and one cello.  
*pp sempre e senza vibr.*

$\text{♩} = 72$  **3** *ritardando* **4**  $\text{♩} = 60$   $\text{♩} = 69$

Violin I  
1. solo senza sord.  
*f* tutti con sord.

Violin II  
*f*

Viola  
*f*

Violoncello  
1. *f*

Div. a3  
2.3. *ppp* arco *f*

Violoncello  
*pizz.* *pp* *ppp* *f*

Double Bass  
sounds octave lower div. a2  
*ppp* *ppp* unis. *f*

9" 8-9"

6

Fl. 1 1. dolce

Cl. **2** **4** **5** *molto legato, ♩ = ca. 92*

B. Cl. *dolce* *b.cl. take clarinet* *ppp (play into stand)*

Bsn. 1. dolce *pp*

PIANO *silent* *p delicato* *ppp* *ppp* *mf* *mp* *pppp*

*(loco)* *1/2 Ped.* *1/2 Ped.* *1/2 Ped.*

Harm.

Vln. I **2** **4** **5** 1. solo con sord. *delicato* *p dim. col piano* 1. solo sul tasto senza sord. *pp*

Vln. II 1. solo ord. *pp*

Vla. 3 soli sul tasto *pp*

Vla. 3 soli ord. *pp*

Vc. 3 soli con sord. *pp*

*pp*

9

Fl. 1 *ppp* *accelerate, then decelerate the tremolo* *let the pad produce the sound, (not the breath)* *as little attack as possible (like a breath) pppp*

Fl. 2 *pppp* *take flute*

PIANO *pp dolce* *sfz* *mf* *ppp*

**3** **5**

Vc. 3 soli con sord. *pppp* 2 soli div. *pp* *one bow length*

Db. 2 soli con sord. *pppp*

**Violently**  
*fuori misura*

**Cantando**

*Scherzando /  
dolce*

**Molto legato**

Fl. 1  
Fl. 2  
Ob.  
Cl.

Hns.  
Tpts.  
Tba.

PIANO

**Violently**  
*fuori misura*

**Cantando**

*Scherzando /  
dolce*

**Molto legato**

Vln. I  
Vln. II  
Vc.

7  $\frac{4}{4}$  ♩ = 60

Fl. I *mp* *più p* *più p* 1.

Cl. *mp* 1.

Bsn. *mp* *più p* 1.

Hns. 2.4. (or Wagner tubas) *poco meno f* 2. (3. if 2. has Wagner tuba) *mp* *più p*

Tpts. 1 Harmon (in) *mp*

Tba. *f ma dolce*

**PIANO**

*p* *pp* *mp* *poco f* *p* *f* *ff* *p!* *pp* *ff* *mf* *p non troppo*

$\frac{4}{4}$  ♩ = 60

Vln. I *p non troppo* *ben p* 1. solo sul tasto *ppp* tutti sul tasto *mp*

Vln. II *p non troppo* *ben p* *tasto* *mp* 1. solo sul tasto *ppp* *div. a3 sul tasto* *a2 tasto* *p* *mp* *mp*

Vla. *ben p* *tasto* *mp* 1. solo sul tasto *ppp* tutti sul tasto *mp* *mp*

Vc. *p non troppo* *div. tasto* *mp* 1. solo sul tasto *ppp* *mp* tutti sul tasto *mp* *p*

Db. *poco meno f* *tasto* *mp* tutti sul tasto *mp* *p*

← ♩. = **6/4** ♩. = 160 →

Fl. 1  
Cl.  
Bsn.  
Hns.  
Tpts.  
Tbn.  
B. Tbn.  
Tba.

1. ,  
*p dolce*  
1. ,  
*p dolce*  
1. ,  
*p dolce*  
2. ,  
*ff*  
*ff*  
*ff*

*Abrupt but not violent*

PIANO

*p mp f mf mp sfz*  
*mp p mp*

← ♩. = **6/4** ♩. = 160 →

Vln. I  
Vln. II  
Vla.  
Vc.  
Db.

sord. 3 via sord. ♩. = **6/4** ♩. = 160 →  
*mp p*  
sord. 3 via sord. *ff*  
Unis. warm 5 *pp*  
Div. a3 senza vibr. 3 *pp*  
*ff*  
*ff*







## Reviews

The modern repertoire ranged from the pleasantly restful charm of two of Milhaud's chamber concertos (for viola and trombone, respectively — both magnificently performed by Rolf Persinger and Stuart Dempster respectively) to the all too predictably academic avant-garde gestures of the Florentine Bartolozzi's *Immagine*, a setting of intensively distorted Rilke poems. In between these extremes there was the strangely brooding and quite attractive *Small Concerto with Piano* by Charles Shere, and Lou Harrison's *Koncherto por la Violino kun Perkuta Orkestra...*

*Ingolf Dahl, Arts and Architecture, Dec. 1965*

Sandwiched in between was a *Small Concerto* with piano in three movements recently composed by Charles Shere. Perhaps it was felt that this brief work was so overwhelmed by the music of the Bachs that it should be repeated.

The reason Gerhard Samuel gave was that patterns repeated become familiar and more enjoyable, which is usually true, except that in this case there was something familiar about Shere's piece the first time it was played. In any event, it was enjoyable both times, Wagner tubas, alto flute, harmonium, Webern, familiarity, et al.

*Watsonville Register-Pajaronian, Aug. 25 1965*

It was another new composition which added above average interest to the afternoon concert. Although Charles Shere's *Small Concerto with Piano* is not quite as direct in its appeal as Harrison's *Koncherto*, it proved to be an extremely interesting study in soft tone clusters, kaleidoscopic harmonies, and a treatment of phraseological elements which seem to predict the kind of music Webern might have written, had he not gotten in the way of a bullet.

*Dean Wallace, San Francisco Chronicle, Aug. 24 1965*

The afternoon concert posed the provocative question: Is hissing permissible in the concert hall?

Scattered hisses — the first we ever recall having heard in this country — greeted Charles Shere's very lightly scored "Small Concerto" for piano and orchestra.

The elementary compositional exercise hardly withstood the searchlight scrutiny of a festival performance. Indeed, one was inclined to view young Berkeley composer Shere as a victim of questionable programming.

In any event, his three-movement, 10-minute piece of tonal patterns for a large orchestra, which did little more than dot i's and cross t's, met with very tepid applause.

Whether the hisses at the end were because of the music itself or because of conductor Samuel's unexpected decision to repeat the work despite the cool initial response, was not entirely clear.

*Paul Hertelendy, Oakland Tribune, August 1965*



*Charles Shere (b. 1935) is a composer and writer living in Northern California. He studied composition with Robert Erickson and Luciano Berio and conducting with Gerhard Samuel, and graduated in English literature from the University of California, Berkeley. He was Music Director at KPFA-fm, staff announcer, producer, and director at KQED-tv, arts critic at the Oakland (California) Tribune, and lecturer on music and art at Mills College, Oakland.*

## Publications by Charles Shere: **Music**

**Three Songs from Tender Buttons:** “Rhubarb,” “A Carafe,” “Suppose an Eyes.” Poems by Gertrude Stein. 1983; 1989. Soprano, violin, piano. 13 pages. Duration ca. 6 minutes. She01.

**Three Pieces for Piano.** 1964. Piano solo. 12 pages. Duration ca. 6 minutes. She02.

**Five Pieces from Handler of Gravity.** 1975. Piano solo. 12 pages. Duration ca. 8 minutes. She03.

**Sonata: Bachelor Machine.** 1989. Piano solo. 32 pages. Duration ca. 17 minutes. Solo piano. She04.

**Tender of Gravity.** 1974. Flute-piccolo, oboe-English horn, clarinet-bass clarinet, bassoon, piano or harmonium, violin, viola, cello, contrabass. 14 pages. Duration ca. 7 minutes. She06.

**Ladies Voices.** 1987. Chamber opera in 5 acts with words by Gertrude Stein. Three sopranos, woodwind quintet and percussion. Score & parts. She07.

**I Like It To Be A Play.** 1989. Chamber opera in eleven scenes to words by Gertrude Stein. Tenor, baritone, bass and string quartet. Score & parts. She08.

**Bride Arias** (from the opera **The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even**). Texts by Marcel Duchamp. Soprano, violin, piano; optional snare drum, contrabass. She9.

**Trio** for Violin, Piano, and Percussion. 1996. She10.

**Three More Stein Songs:** “Red Roses,” “It Was Black, Black Took,” “You Can Only Say What You Know.” Poems by Gertrude Stein. 1997. Soprano, bass clarinet, violin, piano. She11.

**Seven Bagatelles.** 1996. Piano solo. 3 pages. She12.

**Ballet: Handler of Gravity.** Orchestra score, from **The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even.** She13.

**Dates.** 1972. Chamber cantata to poems by Gertrude Stein. Soprano, clarinetist, violist, and percussionist. Duration 14-18 minutes. She14.

**Lullaby and Finale.** 2004. Piano solo. She 17.

**Small Concerto.** 1964. Piano and orchestra. She18.

**Sonata ii: compositio ut explicatio.** 2004. Solo piano. She19.

**Handler of Gravity.** 2004. Organ with optional percussion. She20.

## Prose:

, even recent cultural history, place, art, and poetry in ordinary life. Five lectures from the 'eighties. Berkeley: Ear Press, 1995. 98 pages. She05.

**Thinking Sound Music: the Life and Work of Robert Erickson.** 278 pages. Berkeley: Fallen Leaf Press, 1995. ISBN 0-914913-33-6 cloth, with a CD containing three compositions by Robert Erickson. ISBN 0-914913-42-5, paper.

**Everbest Ever: Correspondence with Bay Area Friends.** By Virgil Thomson, Charles Shere, and Margery Tede, gathered and annotated by Charles Shere and Margery Tede. 105 pages. Berkeley: Fallen Leaf Press, 1996. ISBN 0-914913-38-7, cloth; 0-914913-39-5, paper.

**Why I Read Stein.** 40 pages. Oakland: Mills College Center for the Book, 2002. Foreword by Sumner Carnahan. She 15.

**How I Saw Duchamp.** 32 pages. Healdsburg: Ear Press, 2004. No. 5 in the Guppy series from Prog Peak. She16.

**Getting There.** 212 pages. Memoir, 1935-1964. Healdsburg; Ear Press, 2007.

**Roman Letters.** 258 pages. Travel: two months in Rome.. Ear Press, 2007

**Mostly Spain.** 240 pages. Travel in Andalucia. Ear Press, 2007.

**The Company of Strangers.** 128 pages. Travel: four weeks in The Netherlands, Piemonte, Budapest, and Vienna. Ear Press, 2007

**The Eastside View: 2007.** 172 pages. From the blog *The Eastside View* [cshere.blogspot.com]: travel, theater, restaurants, books. Ear Press, 2008

**Walking the French Alps.** 144 pages. Travel: a month walking GR5 from Geneva to Nice. Ear Press, 2009.

**Search for Meaning.** 60 pages. Play in two acts for five actors. Ear Press, 2012.

**The Idea of Permanence.** 173 pages. From the blog *The Eastside View*: dispatches from a month in Venice; notes on theater and opera.. Ear Press, 2012.

(She) items so marked available from Frog Peak Music. Fallen Leaf Press titles now available from Scarecrow Press: <http://www.scarecrowpress.com>. Ear Press titles available from <http://www.lulu.com>.