Lansing McLoskey

Occam’s Razor

Solo cello and double chamber orchestra
Lansing McLoskey

Commissioned by cellist Holly Reeves

**OCCAM’S RAZOR**

I. Presto  
II. Adagio tranquillo  
III. The Razor (Allegro assai)  
IV. Larghetto  
V. Allegro agitato  
Postlude

**INSTRUMENTATION:**
Solo cello  
3 flutes (1st doubles piccolo)

**CHOIR I:**
1 oboe  
1 horn  
1 trumpet  
1 trombone  
1 perc: [snare, kick bass drum, 3 high toms, sus. cym., vibes, tubular chimes]  
violin *  
2 contrabass

**CHOIR II:**
1 B♭ clarinet  
1 horn  
1 trumpet  
1 trombone  
1 tuba  
1 perc: [snare, kick bass drum, 3 low toms, Chinese cymbal, 1 timp, tam-tam]  
violin *  
2 contrabass

* The violin parts may be performed by a single player in each Choir, or preferably by a very small section (2-5 players in each Choir).

**PERFORMANCE NOTES:**
Score is in C.

\[ \text{\underline{SM}} \] = senza misuram, or “without measure”

\[ \text{\underline{\text{\textbullet \textbullet}}} \] = repeat figure in box, retaining the same tempo, until cut-off by a cue.

Accidentals hold throughout the measure.

\[ \text{\underline{\text{\textbullet}}} \] = \[ \text{\underline{\text{\textbullet}}} \] at all meter changes unless otherwise indicated.

Approximate duration: 18 minutes

**LAYOUT OF THE ORCHESTRA:**

\[
\begin{array}{ccccccccc}
\text{Fl} & \text{Fl} & \text{Fl} & \text{Tbn} & \text{Hrn} & \text{Hrn} & \text{Trpt} & \text{Tba} & \text{Perc} \\
\text{Cb} & \text{Ob} & \text{Solo cello} & \text{Cb} & \text{Vln} & \text{Vln} & \text{Cb} & \text{Cb} & \text{Cb}
\end{array}
\]
From the very first note of *Occam's razor*, several expectations about what a concerto should be are questioned, though not necessarily totally rejected throughout the piece. The unique sound of the orchestra (no violas or cellos, four contrabasses) is further emphasized by the physical arrangement: three flutes placed center stage, and the remainder of the orchestra divided into two equal ensembles seated on either side of the stage, framing the soloist.

*Occam's razor* was commissioned by cellist Holly Reeves of the Anacapa Quartet, and was a Winner of the ASCAP Grants to Young Composers Award.

Occam, William of, also spelled “Ockham,” by-name Doctor Invincibilis (ca.1285-1349), Franciscan philosopher, theologian, political writer, and founder of a form of Nominalism – the school of thought that denies that universal concepts have any reality apart from the individual things signified by the universal or general term.

After his early training in a Franciscan convent, Occam’s theories and opinions regarding both theological and philosophical issues became progressively more radical, resulting in his expulsion from Oxford University and his eventual excommunication from the Church. He spent the remainder of his life alternating between flight from papal persecution and periods of protection under various rulers. Nevertheless, he continued his studies and writing, and his philosophies became influential in the medieval philosophical community.

The driving principle behind Occam’s logic, and indeed all this theological and philosophical theories, was that of *non sunt multiplicanda entia præter necessitatem*; i.e., entities are not to be multiplied beyond necessity. Although this principle was invoked by other medieval philosophers and scientists, Occam mentioned it so frequently and employed it so sharply that it came to be called “Occam’s razor.”

He used it, for instance, to dispense with motion, which is merely the reappearance of a thing in a different place; with efficient casuality, which he viewed merely as regular succession; and with relations, which he held to be simply the inherent (yet not necessary) results of the interactions between any given separate objects. Similarly, time itself is not an entity separate from things in time, for without the existing things themselves, time, in our sense, would not exist.
[* "not tone". Fingert the A on the C string and bow very slowly with a great amount of pressure. At first you will just hear a non-pitched "growl-tone," try by experimenting with the angle, force, speed and location of the bow (closer to the bridge or fingerboard), a definite pitch of approximately B (below the open C) will result. With some practice, this pitch can be located and sounded almost immediately. The ease of obtaining the sub-tones as well as the resulting pitch varies slightly from instrument to instrument: the pitch may be closer to Bb or A. As an extra, simply play a growl-tone for the same duration.*
Harmonica may be played on either side of the finger, depending on which location of the node is touched.