Metamorphoses (15.178) for Violin Clarinet Cello and Piano

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Metamorphoses (15.178)
for Violin, Clarinet, Cello, and Piano

By

Max Caplan

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Submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for
Honors in the Department of Music

UNION COLLEGE

June, 2016
ABSTRACT

CAPLAN, MAX  Metamorphoses (15.178), for Violin, Clarinet, Cello, and Piano.
Department of Music, June 2016.

ADVISOR: Hilary Tann

A chamber music composition, approximately eight minutes long, for the above instrumentation. The title refers to a line from Ovid's epic, which reads, "All things are fluid, and every shape is born to change." Ovid puts the words in the mouth of the ancient Greek philosopher Pythagoras, who soliloquizes on the meaning of life, the nature of time, and the interconnectedness of all things. The speech centers around his ideas of reincarnation (either literal or metaphorical), which, as a kind of metamorphosis, links the passage thematically to the rest of the poem.

Metamorphoses (15.178) reflects this central notion of change within permanence. Two main musical motives recur throughout the piece and constitute its fundamental fabric, thus paralleling Pythagoras' concept of cosmic unity. Yet each also undergoes metamorphosis: the first, from the ruminative opening melodic statement in the violin to the pounding bass ostinato in the final section; the second, from the playful imitative subject in the Allegro sections to the soaring unison melody at the climax.
Metamorphoses (15.178)

for Violin, Clarinet, Cello, and Piano

MAX D. CAPLAN
Metamorphoses (15.178)
for Violin, Clarinet, Cello, and Piano
MAX D. CAPLAN

Duration: ca. 8 min.

First performance: May 23, 2016, Emerson Auditorium, Taylor Music Center, Union College, with the Musicians of Ma'alwyck
(Ann-Marie Barker Schwartz, violin; Brett Wery, clarinet; Petia Kassarova, cello) and Max Caplan, piano

"There is nothing, in all the world, that rests:
all things are fluid, and every shape is born to change.
Time itself marches on in relentless motion –
not unlike a river, for neither the river
nor the fickle hour can stand, but as wave impels wave,
each driving away the last and driven on by the next,
so time flees and gives chase in equal measure
and is ever new; for what was before, is gone;
and what was not, is come to pass;
and each moment is constantly reborn."

Ovid, Metamorphoses (15.177-85); tr. composer
Program note: The title refers to the following line from the above passage, quoted from the final book of Ovid's epic: "All things are fluid, and every shape is born to change." Ovid puts the words in the mouth of the ancient Greek philosopher Pythagoras, who soliloquizes on the meaning of life, the nature of time, and the interconnectedness of all things. The speech centers around his ideas of reincarnation (either literal or metaphorical), which, as a kind of metamorphosis, links the passage thematically to the rest of the poem.

Metamorphoses (15.178) reflects this central notion of change within permanence. The two main motives are:

These recur throughout and constitute the fundamental fabric, paralleling Pythagoras' concept of cosmic unity. Yet each undergoes metamorphosis: the first, from the ruminative opening melodic statement in the violin to the pounding bass ostinato in the final section; the second, from the playful imitative subject in the Allegro sections to the soaring unison melody at the climax.

Other parts of the passage resonate: the "river" in the piano arpeggios; the "fickle hour" in the flitting, imitative passages (where each statement is soon replaced by the next); and the "relentless motion" of time in the final, inexorable crescendo. In contrast, the opening and inner sections are static and timeless, reflecting Pythagoras' belief in the fundamental eternality of all things.

Acknowledgements: I am grateful to my thesis advisor, Professor Hilary Tann, for her guidance and support at every stage of the compositional process, and to the members of the Musicians of Ma'alwyck.

UNION COLLEGE
April 2016
Metamorphoses (15.178)

Max Caplan

Violin

Clarinet in B♭

Cello

Piano

Very free \( (\mathcal{q} = c 66) \)

Più mosso \( (\mathcal{q} = c 100) \)

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Metamorphoses (15.178)

Vln.

B♭ Cl.

Vc.

Pno.

206 Slow, inexorable ($q = 66$)

206 cresc. poco a poco

206 cresc. poco a poco

206 Slow, inexorable ($q = 66$)

206 cresc. poco a poco