Grotesques



For Woodwind Quartet

By David Lancaster



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Grotesques

From my office and from my home I can see York Minster and hear its bells; it dominates the skyline and is usually the first thing I see when I return to York from a trip.

The 'grotesques' are hundreds of carvings on the inside and outside of the building, representing distorted human faces, demons, fantastical creatures and other horrors intended to scare away evil spirits. Some of them intriguing, others are very rude! Are they modelled on the faces of the craftsmen who built the Minster, or their families, or their masters?

My intention was to compose a series of grotesques: short pieces with distinctive musical identities, sometimes employing musical distortions (of my own material, or pre-existing pieces associated with the Minster, or the change ringing patterns used by bell ringers) to convey the notion of the grotesque.

In the first book of three Grotesques (for clarinet, violin, cello and piano) composed in 2017 they are each presented as distinct movements; in this second set there are five Grotesques but are all blended together in one continuous span, allowing the musical characters to form relationships and to explore the possibilities of combination and juxtaposition.

The five grotesques are:

- 1) a squirming melody played in the low register of the flute,
- 2) a quick, spiky and abrasive 'fanfare',
- 3) a flurry of descending scales which tends to interrupt the continuity,
- 4) a plaintive melody which is passed between oboe and clarinet, and
- 5) a sequence of sombre minor chords.

This set of Grotesques was composed in York and Paris during the winter of 2017-18.

Notes for performers:

Duration 8 minutes

Tempo changes should be strictly observed.

Tenuto signs (-) are generally used to indicate a firm articulation – not quite an accent!

Grotesques (Book 2)

David Lancaster **Ritmico** =84 5 4 Flute 4 **5 4** Oboe Ï **5** 4 Clarinet in Bb **p** subito Ŕ **5** 4 Bassoon p ſſ





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