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The Violin Concerto in E Minor, Opus 1, by Jules Conus—Historical, Performance, and Pedagogical Perspectives

Marguerite Bradford Richardson
THE FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF MUSIC

THE VIOLIN CONCERTO IN E MINOR, OPUS 1,

BY JULES CONUS—

HISTORICAL, PERFORMANCE, AND PEDAGOGICAL PERSPECTIVES

By

MARGUERITE BRADFORD RICHARDSON

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The members of the Committee approve the treatise of Marguerite Bradford Richardson defended on April 1, 2011.

___________________
Alexander Jiménez
Professor Directing Treatise

_____________________
Evan Jones
University Representative

_____________________
Eliot Chapo
Committee Member

_____________________
Eric Ohlsson
Committee Member

The Graduate School has verified and approved the above-named committee members.
This treatise is dedicated to the following:

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ABSTRACT

This treatise provides an extensive look into the Violin Concerto in E minor, opus 1, by Jules Conus, and seeks to justify its inclusion into the ranks of the standard Romantic violin concerto repertoire. Written in 1896, and performed extensively by such artists as Jascha Heifetz and Fritz Kreisler, as well as the composer himself, the Conus Violin Concerto is an excellent vehicle for both teaching and performance. Biographical information on Conus, including his circle of influential musical friends, is included in the paper.

A structural and harmonic analysis of the work is presented in the study, as well as a look at the orchestration of the concerto. A comparison of six available editions of the work follows, including biographical sketches of each editor. A detailed look at each edition includes an examination of differences of notes, articulations, and rhythm, as well as other anomalies. Both performers and teachers will benefit from the detailed examination of technical and interpretive challenges presented by the work, as well as the application of the technical mastery of the Conus to other works in the genre.
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The violin concerto is one of the most extensive of the musical genres, with examples from the late seventeenth century to the present. It is not surprising, when considering the large number of compositions from which to choose, that only a few have been included in what is considered the standard violin concerto repertoire. There are excellent examples of violin concertos from the Baroque and Classical periods by composers such as Johann Sebastian Bach, Antonio Vivaldi, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, and Ludwig van Beethoven, among others. It is in the Romantic period, however, that the violin concerto rises above simply being a composition that features the violin to being a true showpiece for the virtuoso artist. The concertos of Tchaikovsky, Brahms, Sibelius, Mendelssohn, and Bruch are among the best-known examples of the genre. There are many good works from the Romantic period—the "non-standards"—which unfortunately have been allowed to fall into relative obscurity. The violin concertos of Glazunov, Vieuxtemps, and Goldmark are among the concertos which were popular in their day but have been eclipsed on the concert stage by the more popular works previously mentioned. This is perhaps due to the popularity of those composers in other genres, in particular, the symphonies of Brahms, Mendelssohn, and Tchaikovsky.
Another such work, popular in its day but now relatively unknown, is the Violin Concerto in E minor, opus 1, by the Russian violinist and composer, Jules Conus. Premiered in Moscow in 1898, the Conus violin concerto was long popular in Russia and was championed by such violinists as Fritz Kreisler and Jascha Heifetz. It was performed a number of times in the early part of the twentieth century, but, like the concertos of Vieuxtemps, it has become primarily a vehicle for teaching. The number of available editions, as well as the credentials of the editors, indicates the attention that the work has been given since its composition. Many contemporary artists list the Conus concerto in their repertoire, but, due to a number of factors such as its short length and lack of familiarity to audiences, it is rarely programmed. The justification for the inclusion of this concerto in the list of "standard" Romantic works can be substantiated through a thorough examination of the work, including a study of the available editions and the prominence of those artists who have performed, recorded, and taught the concerto. As a vehicle for teaching, the work includes a number of technical demands which prepare the student for the major repertoire and can also introduce to the advanced student the concept of learning a concerto in its entirety as opposed to just the first movement, a common practice of the intermediate violin student. Additionally, Conus' own family background and musical achievements give credibility to the work. When taken all together, these factors justify the Conus Violin Concerto's place in both the teaching studio and the concert hall.

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1 The name “Jules Conus” appears in many different spellings, depending on the source, among them: “Julius Conius,” “Yuly Conus,” “Julius Konyus,” etc. For the sake of consistency, the French spelling of “Jules Conus” will be used in the text of this paper. Likewise, certain Russian names appear in the text in their Anglicized spelling, for example, Peter Tchaikovsky.
CHAPTER TWO

BIOGRAPHY

Jules Conus was born in Moscow on February 1, 1869, to a family of French heritage, having moved to Russia from France at the time of the Napoleonic Wars (1799-1815).² His entire family was involved in music, a tradition which continues to this day. His father, Eduard Conus, was a piano teacher. His brothers George (1862-1933), a theorist, and Lev (1871?-1944, name sometimes appears as "Leo"), a pianist, were also prominent Russian musicians.³ The three brothers all studied at the Moscow Conservatory under such notable musicians as Sergei Taneyev and Anton Arensky (all three brothers later taught at the Conservatory). Jules Conus studied violin with Jan Hřímaly (1844-1915), to whom he would later dedicate his violin concerto. Hřímaly, a pupil of Mildner at the Prague Conservatory, had come to Moscow to teach in 1869, and is best known for his Scales Studies for the Violin.⁴


Upon graduation in 1888, Conus was awarded the Gold Medal at the Moscow Conservatory. Conus then went to Paris where he attended masterclasses given by Lambert Massart. Conus became known as a violinist in Paris as a member of the Paris Opera Orchestra and Edouard Colonne's orchestra, and in Cologne, gaining a reputation as a virtuoso violinist. In 1891 he was appointed assistant concertmaster of the New York Symphony Society Orchestra (now the New York Philharmonic), a position made possible for him by the considerable influence of his close friend Peter Tchaikovsky. Tchaikovsky had chosen Conus to be the stand partner of concertmaster Adolf Brodsky, the violinist to whom Tchaikovsky had dedicated his violin concerto after Leopold Auer turned down the original dedication.

Conus later returned to Russia, teaching at the Moscow Conservatory from 1893 to 1901, where he taught violin and performed frequently. He formed a close friendship with Sergei Rachmaninoff, often performing with him in various chamber ensembles of Rachmaninoff's works. In 1893, Rachmaninoff dedicated his Two Pieces for Violin and Piano, opus 6, to Conus. After the Russian Revolution, Conus moved to Paris with his brother Lev, and he began teaching at

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6 Alexandria Vodarsky-Shiraeff, Russian Composers and Musicians (New York: The H.W. Wilson Company, 1940; reprint, New York: Da Capo Press, 1969), p. 33; and Frederick B. Emery, The Violin Concerto through a Period of Nearly 300 Years (Chicago: The Violin Literature Publishing Co., 1928), 261. There is some confusion about whether or not Conus played in the city of Cologne, or whether the reference to the city in some biographical entries is a mistranslation from Russian of the name "Colonne," for Edouard Colonne, French violinist and conductor for whom Conus worked in Paris.


the Russian Conservatory there in 1921. Among his students was the Canadian violinist and composer Claude Champagne. Conus remained close to Rachmaninoff, and in 1932, Conus’s son, Boris, married Rachmaninoff’s daughter, Tatiana.

With the Nazi threat moving across Europe, Lev moved to the United States in 1935 and Jules Conus went back to Russia in 1939. Three years later, Conus was refused an exit visa by the Communist party, which he had refused to join. According to family history, this refusal and his subsequent "blacklisting" by the Soviet government led to his death on January 3, 1942, in the Ivanov District of Moscow.

In addition to his violin concerto, for which he is best known, Conus composed a number of original works, transcriptions, and violin etudes. Conus’s son, Serge (1902-1988), a pianist who had a long performing career in Europe and Morocco, refused to ever perform in Russia due to the treatment his father had received at the hands of the Soviets, despite many invitations to perform there. Serge Conus came to the United States in 1959 and taught for two years at the Boston Conservatory.

9 Vodarsky-Shiraeff, p. 33; and Emery, 261.


11 Riemann, I, 664; and Slonimsky, 492.


13 Personal electronic communication from Dominique Conus, the grandson of Jules Conus, received July 12, 2010.

Relationships with Other Musicians

Jules Conus was well-respected as a musician and violinist, as evidenced by the musical friendships he had. His entire family was well-known in Russia, and his teachers and classmates at the Moscow Conservatory were among the best-known composers, performers, and theoreticians of the day. Through his studies, professional life, and travels, he came in contact with such notables as Jan Hřímalý, Ferdinand Laub, Lambert Massart, Sergei Taneyev, Anton Arensky, Peter Tchaikovsky, Sergei Rachmaninoff, Walter Damrosch, and Adolf Brodsky.

Perhaps Conus' most influential friend in his early career was Peter Tchaikovsky (1840-1893). Exactly how they met is uncertain. Tchaikovsky was on the faculty of the Moscow Conservatory beginning in 1866, when Nikolay Rubinstein asked him to move from St. Petersburg to Moscow and teach theory at the new music school Rubinstein was starting.\textsuperscript{15} Although Tchaikovsky left the Moscow Conservatory in 1878, he had become associated with it again by 1885 through his friend Sergei Taneyev, the director of the conservatory following Rubinstein's death. At this time, Conus would have been a student at the school, based upon his 1888 graduation. Although Tchaikovsky did not teach there, he did attend student examinations and no doubt knew many of the students. Tchaikovsky was also a friend of Conus's violin professor, Jan Hřímalý, who had premiered several of Tchaikovsky's works, including the Second String Quartet (1874) and the Piano Trio (1882).\textsuperscript{16} Certainly Conus and Tchaikovsky knew each other by 1891, the year that Tchaikovsky came to the United States to conduct the

\textsuperscript{15}Oxford Music Online, s.v. "Tchaikovsky, Pyotr Il'yich,"

\textsuperscript{16}Ibid.
opening concert of the new music hall in New York City, Carnegie Hall. In a letter to his brother, Modest, dated April 18-27, 1891, Tchaikovsky writes, "I departed Paris the day before yesterday. Vasia, Menter, and Conius [sic] saw me off." The two maintained their correspondence during Tchaikovsky’s visit to America, and it was during this time that Tchaikovsky saw a possible opportunity for his young friend. Tchaikovsky wrote the following in a letter to Conus from New York on May 5, 1891:

My dear friend,

Am writing on business and awfully afraid that my letter will not reach you in Paris. Yesterday, in the company of big local musical bosses, discussed the fact that their major symphony orchestra requires two concertmasters. In hopes of finding them, the conductor Damrosch goes to Europe. It suddenly dawned on me that it would not be bad for you to come here, and I immediately told Damrosch that he would not find anybody better than you. They want concertmaster-soloists. Damrosch became awfully interested in you but he is somewhat embarrassed by your extreme youth. This last circumstance will probably prevent you from becoming the 1st concertmaster but then you can easily be the second. I would strongly suggest that you accept the invitation. You will not believe what an amazing country it is and how easy you, with your talent, can have a tremendous artistic and material success here.18

Although Conus was only twenty-two years old, Walter Damrosch apparently did decide to follow Tchaikovsky’s suggestion, and on July 4, 1891, wrote to Tchaikovsky from Bayreuth, saying, "I have already invited little Conius [sic] and also [Adolf] Brodsky, your friend and admirer." Tchaikovsky, who was at that time planning a return to New York following his successful concerts at Carnegie

17 Yoffe, Tchaikovsky in America, 39.
18Ibid., 80.
19Ibid., 175.
Hall, responded, "You will not believe how happy and grateful I am to you for engaging little Conius [sic]."\textsuperscript{20}

Although the negotiations for his own return broke down, Tchaikovsky continued to encourage his friends Conus and Brodsky to come to America. Conus was ultimately appointed assistant concertmaster of the New York Symphony Society Orchestra. With Tchaikovsky’s assistance, Conus arranged a special concert in which he and some friends performed in order to raise money for his travels to America. Several of Tchaikovsky’s compositions were performed and the composer himself attended. Prior to the concert, Tchaikovsky wrote the following to his friend, the publisher Peter Jurgenson:

Dear friend,

I really want to help Conius [sic], at least a bit, with raising [money]. Tickets are to be sold at your place. If you see that receipts are poor, please, take for me 15-20 tickets and hand them out at your office to whomever you want in general; of course, say nothing to Conius.[sic]\textsuperscript{21}

Many years later, the conductor Modest Altschuler wrote this recollection of the concert in \textit{Musical America}, dated April 25, 1947:

Julius Conius [sic], a talented young violinist of French extraction, was befriended by Tchaikovsky…We had a benefit concert to raise money for his journey. Among the general run of money-less, badly groomed, ill-fed, happy-go-lucky students of the conservatory, Conius [sic], in contrast, was always immaculately dressed with innate Gallic taste.

His concert was a big event…The program of the evening contained Tchaikovsky’s Trio played by Conius [sic], cellist Brandukov and Taneyev. The great contralto Lavrovskaya sang "At the Ball" and shorter numbers were sandwiched in. Among these, to our astonishment,

\footnote{Yoffe, \textit{Tchaikovsky in America}, 176.}

\footnote{Ibid., 187.}
Tchaikovsky had allowed his favorite to put in the Andante Cantabile from the First string quartet in an arrangement Conius [sic] made for violin and piano! How the composer could sit there and listen to his creation minus the glorious tonal web of the three other instruments replaced by the tinkling sound of the piano, the students could not understand.22

Conus's success in New York was heralded in an article in the Musical Courier dated November 18, 1891, where it was stated, referring to the addition of Adolf Brodsky to the New York Symphony Society Orchestra, that "his [Brodsky's] influence will doubt-less be felt in the orchestra, the personnel of which is strong, the new solo cellist, Anton Hekking, and Julius Conius [sic], violinist, being worthy additions."23 In addition to playing in the orchestra, Conus also performed with Brodsky in a string quartet to some acclaim.

Even at the end of his life, Tchaikovsky remained close to Conus. In a letter written in Klin on February 5, 1893, the year of his death, Tchaikovsky wrote:

A sad note resounds in your letter...Will you return to Russia? When will we see each other? I probably will not go to Chicago but, who knows, if they invite me to Music Hall in the next winter for a decent fee, I might make the trip, at least in order to embrace you and Brodsky...And now with indescribable fondness I embrace you, my dear friend, and remain your faithful friend.24

Sadly, Tchaikovsky did not return to America, and died nine months later, not having the opportunity to see Conus again.

22 Yoffe, Tchaikovsky in America, 187-88,

23 Ibid., 193.

24 Ibid., 199-200.
Another member of Jules Conus’s circle of influential friends was Sergei Rachmaninoff (1873-1943). Rachmaninoff was a classmate of Jules’ brother, Lev, and friends with the three Conus brothers while they were all students at the Moscow Conservatory. Both Conus and Rachmaninoff revered Tchaikovsky, and, at times, were rivals for his attention and approval. At the end of the summer of 1893, there was a musical evening held at Taneyev’s home. Conus’s own arrangement of Tchaikovsky’s Symphony No. 6 was performed with Conus and Taneyev at the piano. Tchaikovsky interrupted the performance so many times over details of Conus’s transcription that the evening grew tense. Rachmaninoff then played his own piano transcription of "The Rock" to Tchaikovsky’s great approval, saying that he (Tchaikovsky) looked forward to conducting the piece on tour. It was the last piece by Rachmaninoff that Tchaikovsky heard.\(^\text{25}\)

Despite their rivalry, Rachmaninoff and Conus remained close friends. They continued their collaborations even upon the death of Tchaikovsky, with Jules Conus playing the premiere of Rachmaninoff’s *Elegiac Trio*, op. 9.\(^\text{26}\) The trio, dedicated to their friend and mentor, was begun the day Tchaikovsky died, and was played in Moscow at the first all-Rachmaninoff concert on 31 January 1894. Rachmaninoff’s trio, however, never achieved the popularity of the Tchaikovsky trio which he tried to emulate.\(^\text{27}\) Rachmaninoff dedicated his *Morceaux de Salon*, opus 6, for violin and piano (a *Romance* and a *Danse hongroise*) to Conus.


\(^{26}\) Ibid.

\(^{27}\) Ibid., 88.
according to the first printing by Gutheil (1894 or 1895), although the dedication
does not appear on the manuscript.\textsuperscript{28}

Conus and Rachmaninoff, as friends, sometimes participated in themed
musical social gatherings, or "group projects," sponsored by Taneyev. In the
winter of 1896 (the year that Conus began composition of the violin concerto),
there was a series of these gatherings to discuss the compositions of Wagner.
The gatherings began at four in the afternoon and continued until late in the
evening. The music critic Leonid Sebaneyev described one of these events:

I also recall that present were: Igumnov, Goldenweiser, Rachmaninoff,
Catoire, Scriabin, Conus, Pomerantzev, Metzel, my brother, and I.
Goldenweiser and Igumnov were at the piano, sometimes helped by
Taneyev. Of all only Catoire and I (I was fourteen) were familiar with
Wagner's music—we were already "Wagnerites." The others were either
hesitant in their praise, or open foes of Wagner and his principles.
Rachmaninoff did not take part in the demonstrations; he sat in the corner
in a rocking chair, with a huge orchestral score on his knees. From time to
time we would hear, coming from his corner, some gloomy remark in his
deep voice: "A thousand pages more." An hour later, and more gloomily:
"Eight hundred and eighty pages to go."\textsuperscript{29}

Rachmaninoff, known as a conductor in Russia as much as a composer,
conducted Conus's Violin Concerto in 1909.\textsuperscript{30} Over the years, Conus often helped
Rachmaninoff in the editing of the string parts in his symphonic works. In July
of 1927, Rachmaninoff, who was involved in revising his Fourth Piano Concerto,
wrote to Conus in Paris, asking if he would transfer to the orchestra parts all the
corrections Rachmaninoff had noted in the full score. Rachmaninoff wrote:

\textsuperscript{28}Harrison, \textit{Rachmaninoff—Life, Works, Recordings}, 53.

\textsuperscript{29}Sergei Bertensson and Jay Leyda, \textit{Sergei Rachmaninoff: A Lifetime in Music} (New York: New York
University Press, 1956), 69.

"After one and a half months’ solid work I have finished the corrections to my concerto. I am sending all the material to Paris and hope that, as you promised, you will enter all these corrections in the parts...The first twelve bars are rewritten, and also the whole of the coda."\(^{31}\) In addition to their professional collaborations, Conus and Rachmaninoff were linked through the marriage of their children: Conus' son, Boris, and Rachmaninoff's daughter, Tatiana, were married on May 8, 1932, after which they made their home in Paris.\(^{32}\) Rachmaninoff was very close to his daughter and sometimes kept his grandchildren at his summer home. Of Tatiana and Boris's son, Alexander (Conus's grandson, also known as Sasha), and granddaughter, Sofinka, Rachmaninoff wrote to Vladimir Vilshau from Paris in a letter dated April 6, 1934, the following:

The children will come to Switzerland much later. At first, Sofinka (Volkonskaya) will appear with her governess, about May 1\(^{st}\)...And toward June 1\(^{st}\) Tanyusha will arrive with her son. Her husband works here and he will come toward the 1\(^{st}\) of July. (Tanya's husband Boris Conus is the son of Jule [sic].)

I love my grandchildren very much, but I love my own daughters even more. They are very good. Not at all the modern kind!...Sofinka is now eight years old. She is so pretty. She is very talented, just like her mother. She has been studying the piano for the last two years. She has an excellent ear and wonderful hands. She is working here with Olga Nikolaevna Conus (the wife of Lev). The boy Sasha (Tanya's son) was one year old last March 8\(^{th}\). Well, there is not much one can say about him. Perhaps just that he has a calming effect on me. We talk very little, and his little face is so funny and so gay that even looking at him I feel better. Thus we are occupied with a silent conversation together.\(^{33}\)

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Rachmaninoff, though popular in the United States, became unpopular in Russia during the 1930s. His name was signed to a letter published in the New York Times on January 15, 1931 which heavily criticized the Soviet Government in post-revolutionary Russia, and he was subsequently declared an "enemy of Soviet Russia." The newspaper Pravda declared:

Sergei Rachmaninoff, the former bard of the Russian wholesale merchants and the bourgeoisie—a composer who was played out long ago and whose music is that of an insignificant imitator and reactionary: a former estate owner, who, as recently as 1918, burned with a hatred of Russia when the peasants took away his land—a sworn and active enemy of the Soviet Government.

Conus's association with Rachmaninoff would have been well-documented, and, although it cannot be proven, it seems a possible conclusion that this association might have contributed to the treatment Conus received upon his return to Russia, ultimately leading to his death. The two friends, who were so close in life, died just one year apart.

During his tenure with the New York Symphony Society Orchestra, Conus had the opportunity to work with the prominent violin virtuoso Adolf Brodsky. Regarding Brodsky, Peter Tchaikovsky wrote to Conus:

I am awfully glad that you became friends with Brodsky (d, not t as you wrote). He is a nice person in the full sense of the word.....And his wife is simply charming! But for them, I would be suffering for you. How it pleased me that in praising Brodsky's talent you confessed your envy. This kind of envy is nothing else but a striving for perfection; this is a sign that you will not come to a halt...a thousand kind words to Brodsky.


34 Seroff, Rachmaninoff, 182.

35 Ibid.

36 Yoffe, Tchaikovsky in America, 189-190.
Tchaikovsky had written to Brodsky, only a month earlier:

…I recommend to you your stand partner, Conius [sic]. He is not only a talented and sensible youth but a young man excellent in all respects, who comes from an unusually talented and marvelous family. Lately I’ve come to love him very much since growing close to him in Paris and was awfully glad for him when I learned of your moving to America. It will be the greatest happiness for him to find in an alien land such good people and compatriots, as yourself and Anna Lvovna. I beg both of you to care for this dear young fellow, who is entirely worthy of your sympathy.37

The *Musical Courier*, in a review of the first concert of the New York Symphony Society Orchestra, dated November 18, 1891, stated:

The redeeming feature of the evening was the superb violin playing of Mr. Adolph [sic] Brodsky, the newly imported concertmaster of the society, who gave a manly, musical and technically finished reading to Brahms’ beautiful violin concerto in D, a work that exhibits its composer in the best light.….Mr. Brodsky, who is a long felt want supplied, for New York has hitherto had no great resident violin artists, covered himself with glory, and responded with the Adagio of the G-minor violin sonata of Bach. His influence will doubtless be felt in the orchestra, the personnel of which is strong, the new solo cellist, Anton Hekking, and Julius Conius [sic], violinist, being worthy additions. 38

Brodsky, who had already achieved a good deal of success with the *Brodsky Quartet* he had founded in Leipzig39, was quick to form a quartet once he arrived in New York. The *Musical Courier* of December 9, 1891, continuing its praise of both Brodsky and Conus, contained the following mention of the new group:

37Ibid., 191-192.

38Ibid., 192-193.

A new string quartet club of such strength as the New York Symphony String Quartet, which had its first public hearing last Sunday afternoon in the Chamber Music Hall of the new Music Hall, cannot go without a passing word. The club is under the artistic leadership of Mr. Adolph [sic] Brodsky, its first violin, and the concertmaster of the Symphony Society Orchestra. The second violin is Mr. Julius Conius [sic], a French artist Mr. Damrosch especially engaged for the orchestra, to sit at the same desk with Mr. Brodsky. The viola is Jan Koert, a most excellent artist, and the cello is Anton Hekking, who is in addition to being a virtuoso on his instrument, also a fine chamber music performer....

Brodsky, like Conus, did not stay in New York, but left after only three years with the New York Symphony Society Orchestra. The two do not seem to have worked together again.

Conus, though not a familiar name to most, certainly was influenced by the most notable and prominent musicians and composers of his day. Some of them were only in his life in the early days of his career, while others, like Rachmaninoff, remained life-long friends. No doubt these influences came together when, in 1896, the twenty-seven year old Jules Conus wrote his enduring work, the Violin Concerto No. 1 in E minor.

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CHAPTER THREE

STRUCTURAL AND HARMONIC ANALYSIS

The structure of the Conus Violin Concerto is somewhat unusual compared to other large Romantic works of its time, but is certainly not unique in concept. The work can be described as being contained all in one movement, with a slow section "interrupting" a large, sonata form. Due to the "fast-slow-fast" arrangement of the three main sections, the performer has a sense of the concerto's having three movements, with the so-called third "movement" essentially a re-working of the opening.

Composers during the Romantic period began to lessen the importance of the second, or slow, movement since their main intent was to write virtuosic show pieces and slow, lyrical movements were not a means to that end.\(^{42}\) In the Mendelssohn Violin Concerto, for example, the first movement is linked to the second, as is the case with the Bruch Violin Concerto No. 1. (Max Bruch actually considered calling the work a "Fantasy," because of the "prelude" nature of the first movement, but was convinced by Joachim that the formal structure of the second and third movements justified its being called a concerto.\(^ {43}\)


\(^{43}\) Ibid., 285.
The Romantic composers were not the first to experiment with form. Beethoven actually used the practice of linking the second to the third movement in both his fourth and fifth piano concertos. The composer Louis Spohr (1784-1859) experimented with classical forms in his violin concertos and in his short show pieces for violin and orchestra, sometimes referred to as "potpourri." Among the experimental devices he used were linked movements, written-out cadenzas, forms other than sonata form, slow introductions, and free recitatives. His Violin Concerto #8 in A minor (1816) is in the form of a "Gesangsszene" or vocal scene. The three movements are played together without pause, and the powerful orchestral introduction sets up the solo violin entrance, a sort of accompanied recitative. The orchestral forces for which Spohr writes are sparse and almost inactive during the solo sections. These descriptions could just as easily apply to the Conus Violin Concerto.

A Romantic composer known for departure from traditional, eighteenth-century forms was the French composer Camille Saint-Saëns (1835-1921). For his Cello Concerto in A minor, opus 33 (1872), Saint-Saëns utilizes a single movement format with an "Intermezzo" placed after the "development" of the work. A cadenza follows, and then a return of material from the opening of the concerto. Thus, Saint-Saens, like Conus, achieves the effect of a "fast-slow-fast" three section concerto within one continuous movement. Interestingly, a work written eight years after the Conus concerto by a fellow Russian composer, the Violin Concerto by Alexander Glazunov (1865-1936), is also in a single-movement format.

44 Roeder, *The History of the Concerto*, 210-211.

45 Ibid., 212.

46 Ibid., 288.
The Conus Violin Concerto opens with a full orchestral introduction, which states the first theme in the horns, punctuated by chords in the strings and winds. The violins take over a lyrical part of the first theme and then go almost immediately into a rhythmic sequence, all of which leads to a transition into the first solo violin entrance. The transition ends on a German augmented sixth chord (m. 55), a device that Conus uses throughout the concerto to signal a change or the beginning of a new section. (See figure 3.1)

![Figure 3.1 Conus Violin Concerto, mm. 51-60, Luck’s Music Library](image)

The violin entrance, marked *Recitativo* and with the indication *ad libitum*, leads into a long melodic section accompanied mostly by whole notes in the orchestra, rather like an accompanied recitative. This whole section seems to be an introduction to the solo violin’s statement of the first theme that was presented by the horns at the very opening of the work. Conus uses long sequential passages, marked by the triplet rhythm, to transition into the second thematic area of G major, the relative major of the tonic key. Again, Conus introduces the
new thematic material in the orchestra, which leads to another *ad libitum* passage in the solo violin, which now takes the second theme. The transition that follows contains one of the most overt displays of technical difficulty in the piece. There are several measures which are indicated to be played entirely on the G string, a technical device that is considered an innovation of Nicolò Paganini (1782-1840), and which Conus uses several times in his concerto.47 (See figure 3.2)

![Figure 3.2 Conus Violin Concerto, mm. 191-196, International Music Company](image)

A brief orchestral *tutti* section follows the fireworks in the solo violin, which leads into the next section, marked *Andante*. This interlude is reminiscent of the mood of the opening "accompanied" recitative, and leads directly into a short lyrical section, notable for the melodic use of harmonics, another innovation of Paganini.48 The first "movement" of the concerto comes to a conclusion with a dramatic passage of double-stops and sweeping arpeggios in the solo violin part. The octave passage work in this section is made a bit more awkward by its inclusion of double-sharped notes and diminished descending intervals, which requires a fine tuned sense of intonation to perform well. (See figure 3.3)

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48 Ibid., 235.
Another sequential transition is played by the orchestra, which ends with a rhythmically written-out *rallentando*, achieved by the rhythmic shift from quarter notes, to half-note triplets, to half notes, to whole notes. A final sustained E minor chord is played by the lower-voiced instruments (bass, cello, bassoon, and trombone). Without pause, the second "movement" or large section begins. A hauntingly beautiful *Adagio*, this movement is in the key of B major (the dominant of E minor). It relies upon repetition, slight variation, and sequence, and is carried by the beautiful soaring melody, all qualities often associated with the music of Tchaikovsky.\(^{49}\) This movement is not just melodic in nature, but requires some technical prowess in the execution of numerous double-stops and octaves. The last notes of the solo violin sound above a final cadence in B major, which is followed by a chromatic decent to a single, unison C natural in the cellos and basses.

Seamlessly, the third "movement" begins with the return of the solo violin, holding an E natural above the unison C natural. There is a moment of tonal ambiguity, but, once again, Conus signals that something is about to change through the sounding of a German augmented sixth chord in the woodwinds. What follows is essentially a recapitulation of the opening material of the concerto, including the opening solo violin recitative as well as the first thematic section, all in the tonic key. A transitional passage, slightly re-written from the

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\(^{49}\) Roeder, *The History of the Concerto*, 293.
opening but still punctuated by the triplet rhythm, leads to a return of the second thematic area, this time in the key of A major (the subdominant) and once again, introduced by the orchestra. The solo violin repeats a transposed version of the transitional recitative and presents the second theme, with the accompaniment essentially unchanged from the first section. A dramatic tutti section follows in the orchestra, with another rhythmic rallentando, which culminates in a dominant seventh chord. Here, Conus places the cadenza that expands the technical demands beyond those of the concerto, including double-stops, triple-stops, and quadruple-stops, often used in a melodic context. (See figure 3.4)

The cadenza comes to a firm close in E minor, and, without a pause, reprises once again the opening accompanied recitative. This return is abruptly cut short by, not surprisingly, a German augmented sixth chord that announces the beginning of the closing coda section, Allegro subito. Other than a fragment of the first theme, the coda is primarily a series of triplet passages which serve to increase the pace to the very end. The piece ends dramatically with E minor arpeggios in the solo violin, followed by four final E minor chords.

The orchestration of the Conus Violin Concerto is designed to showcase the solo instrument and demonstrates the composer’s keen knowledge of how best to display the violin so that it can be heard in all registers. The orchestra itself is an almost exact copy of the one Tchaikovsky uses for his violin concerto,
with the addition of one more flute and three trombones. During the *tutti* sections, the orchestra is used to its fullest, but during the solo sections, the orchestra provides harmonic support only. The writing often includes pizzicato and tremolo in the accompanimental string writing. Often, the dynamics in the orchestra are extremely soft in places where the solo has extremely loud dynamics indicated. (See figure 3.5)

![Figure 3.5 Conus Violin Concerto, mm. 335-338, Luck's Music Library](image)

Most of the solo woodwind writing is for the darker-timbred instruments, such as the clarinet and bassoon, and when the brighter instruments, such as the flute, are used, the writing is in the lower registers. For countermelodies to the violin, Conus sometimes uses the principal viola in the orchestra, which, again, is a darker timbre compared to the solo violin. (See figure 3.6)
Conus does write one particularly charming duet between the solo violin and the principal flute, one of the few times in the concerto that an accompanying instrument plays a higher pitch than the soloist. (See figure 3.7)
Conus does not rely upon variation when he repeats material. The accompaniment for the second theme, for example, is almost a verbatim transposition of the first presentation in G major when it returns in the third section, in A major. The tonic thematic areas are almost identical when they are repeated following the slow movement. There is one difference that does seem curious: at the end of the introduction at the beginning of the piece, the pivotal German augmented sixth chord sounds before the entrance of the solo violin. When this same material returns after the slow movement, the violin enters before the winds play the German augmented sixth chord. (See figures 3.8a and 3.8b) Of course, the reason for this difference is not clear, but certainly stands out in a composition which relies so heavily on exact repetition.

Figure 3.8a Conus Violin Concerto, mm. 55-60, excerpted from score

Figure 3.8b Conus Violin Concerto, mm. 371-375, excerpted from score
An overview of the form of the concerto is given in Table 3.1

Table 3.1
Structural and Harmonic Format—Conus Violin Concerto

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MEASURE NUMBERS</th>
<th>SECTION</th>
<th>KEY AREA</th>
<th>COMMENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-83</td>
<td>Exposition--Introduction</td>
<td>E minor</td>
<td>Orchestra states the themes, solo presents a recitative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>84-150</td>
<td>1st Thematic Area</td>
<td>E minor</td>
<td>Theme is presented by the solo violin, followed by transitional material</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>151-215</td>
<td>2nd Thematic Area</td>
<td>G major</td>
<td>Theme is presented first by the tutti orchestra, and then the solo, followed by transitional material</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>216-301</td>
<td>Transition/Closing Material</td>
<td>Various keys</td>
<td>Unstable key centers--functions as development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>302-370</td>
<td>Second Movement</td>
<td>B major</td>
<td>Melody in violin, much sequential writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>371-398</td>
<td>Recapitulation of Introduction</td>
<td>E minor</td>
<td>Violin begins before the German augmented sixth chord sounds in the winds (reverse of opening)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>399-450</td>
<td>1st Thematic Area</td>
<td>E minor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>451-506</td>
<td>2nd Thematic Area</td>
<td>A major</td>
<td>Subdominant key, not tonic; accompaniment not varied from exposition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>507-571</td>
<td>Composer's cadenza</td>
<td>E minor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>572-578</td>
<td>Introductory material</td>
<td>E minor</td>
<td>Brief statement of the introductory material from the exposition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>579-615</td>
<td>Coda</td>
<td>E minor</td>
<td>Orchestral score ends in E minor</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Overview for Performance

As a piece for the orchestra, the Conus Violin Concerto is extremely well-written. The instrumentation is typical for an orchestra of the Romantic period, and no unusual instruments are required. The *tutti* sections are full and quite dramatic, but do not have the technical difficulty of those found in the violin concertos of Bruch, Tchaikovsky, or Mendelssohn. The orchestral writing during the solo passages, in contrast, is generally thin in texture, and rarely employs the brass instruments, with the exception of the occasional use of the horns. The key of E minor, and the harmonic language of Conus, again typical of the late Romantic period with his use of chromatic harmonies, Neapolitan chords, German augmented sixth chords, and secondary dominants, is accessible to the soloist, orchestra and audience. For the conductor, Conus indicates most 4/4 sections of the music as either in common time or alla breve in the score, depending on the general feel of the pulse as "in four" or "in two." Surprisingly, many of these changes in time signature do not appear in the solo violin part as published by Jurgenson in 1898. Perhaps Conus felt that the information on time signatures was not necessary for the interpretation of the solo part, but was only needed for the conductor to determine the correct beat pattern (the indications of 4/4 and alla breve do appear in the orchestral parts). Knowing that Conus had a career as both an orchestral player and as a soloist, perhaps he wrote his concerto to have something in his repertoire that was easier to play on short notice and would require little preparation from the orchestra. There are very few ensemble issues between the solo and orchestra. Most of the accompaniment is written in a straightforward fashion, and consists generally of punctuating chords or sustained notes in the orchestra. There are a few solo passages written for the
principal horn and principal wind players, as well as for the principal violist, but these do not present much difficulty in fitting with the solo part.
CHAPTER FOUR

COMPARISON OF THE SIX EDITIONS

Since its original publication by Peter Jurgenson in 1898, the Conus Violin Concerto has been edited and published at least five additional times. The publishers include such iconic publishing houses as Carl Fischer, G. Schirmer, Paganiniana Publications, and International Music Company. It was also issued by the publishing house Muzyka, which was essentially the state-run version of Jurgenson under the Soviet regime. The names of the editors of these publications read like a "who's who" of important violinists and pedagogues of the early to mid twentieth century. Most interestingly, each editor offers more than just his own ideas of fingerings, bowings, and interpretation. In some cases, notes are added or removed, and, at times, entire passages have been completely re-written. One editor, Efrem Zimbalist, offers his own cadenza in place of the composer's cadenza. There is a legacy in these editors as well, with two of them being student "descendants" of Leopold Auer, himself an editor, and one editor, Ivan Galamian, a student of Jules Conus. In order to appreciate the status of each editor, the following are brief biographies of each editor, as well as an overview of his edition. Further detailed comparison of the six editions follows.

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Leopold Auer

Hungarian violinist, teacher and composer, Leopold Semenovich Auer was born on June 7, 1845 in Veszprém, Austria-Hungary, as Lipót Auer. He enrolled at the Budapest Conservatory when he was eight years old, studying with Ridley Kohne, and later studied at the Vienna Conservatory with Jakob Dont. He completed his studies in Hanover, Germany with Joseph Joachim. Auer was known as a soloist and chamber musician, and, in 1868, was appointed by Anton Rubinstein to succeed Henri Wieniawski as the violin professor at the St. Petersburg Conservatory, a position he held for more than fifty years. While at the conservatory, he taught many of the violinists who would become the best known players of the early twentieth century, including Mischa Elman, Nathan Milstein, Efrem Zimbalist, Oscar Shumsky, and Jascha Heifetz. Auer is often remembered as the first dedicatee of the Tchaikovsky Violin Concerto, which Auer declared to be unplayable. (Tchaikovsky changed the dedication to Adolf Brodsky.) Auer later rewrote many passages of Tchaikovsky’s masterpiece and performed it in 1893, shortly before Tchaikovsky’s death. In June 1917, Leopold Auer left Russia and in 1918, he settled in the United States where he continued to perform and teach, both in New York and at the Curtis Institute in Philadelphia. In 1921, he published his definitive treatise, Violin Playing As I Teach It. Auer died in Loschwitz, outside of Dresden, Germany, on July 15, 1930, and was buried at the Ferncliff Cemetery in Hartsdale, New York.


52 Ibid.

Auer's edition of the Conus Violin Concerto, published by Carl Fischer in 1927, is almost identical to the original Jurgenson edition. Other than a few changes in fingerings, bow direction, and articulations/slurs, Auer's changes are generally confined to the addition of a few fermatas.

**Efrem Zimbalist**

Violinist Efrem Zimbalist was born in Rostov-na-Donu, Russia, on April 9, 1889, the son of a professional violinist and conductor of the Rostov Opera. Zimbalist began his violin studies with his father, and in 1901, joined the class of Leopold Auer at the St. Petersburg Conservatory. Upon his graduation in 1907, he received both the Gold Medal and the Rubinstein Prize. Zimbalist had successful appearances in Berlin, London, and Leipzig, and made his American début in Boston in 1911, playing the Glazunov Violin Concerto. With his success in the United States, he decided to stay, marrying twice and becoming director of the Curtis Institute (his second wife was Mary Louise Curtis Bok, founder of the school). He was known for his noble performances, unhurried tempos, and, generally, an avoidance of virtuosic playing. Among his pupils were such important musicians as Aaron Rosand, Oscar Shumsky, and Eliot Chapo. Zimbalist was also a composer whose compositions included an opera, a symphonic poem, concertos, chamber music and solo violin music. He died in Reno, Nevada, on February 22, 1985.

Zimbalist’s edition of the Conus Violin Concerto shows the greatest departure from the original edition. Published in 1942 by G. Schirmer, the statement "revised and supplied with an original cadenza by Efrem Zimbalist"

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appears on the first page, and seems a bit of an understatement. One wonders if the severe cuts in the *tutti* sections reflect his intent for this edition to be utilized primarily in the violin/piano format, although there are also entire passages in the solo part which have been simply removed. Although not atypical of some early twentieth century editions of violin concertos, the cadenza Zimbalist composes falls considerably outside of the technical demands of the concerto itself, as if to be an attempt to make the piece more virtuosic and difficult.

**Raphael Bronstein**

Born in the small Russian town of Vilna in 1895, Raphael Bronstein was quickly recognized as a child prodigy on the violin. At the age of ten, he débuted with the Warsaw Philharmonic which was followed by a concert tour of various cities in Russia, including an appearance with the Odessa Symphony Orchestra. When he was twelve years old, he was awarded the Alexander Glazunov Scholarship to study at the St. Petersburg Conservatory with Leopold Auer. He was in the same class as Jascha Heifetz, Nathan Milstein, and Richard Burgin. In 1923, Bronstein came to the United States, becoming a citizen in 1929. After his playing career was cut short due to a left-hand injury, he became a teaching assistant to Auer. He went on to serve on the faculties of the Mannes College of Music, the Teachers College of Columbia University, Queens College, and the Graduate Center of the City of New York. From 1950 until his death on November 4, 1988, Bronstein was on the faculty of the Manhattan School of Music. In his obituary, it was said that "he was 93 years old and had suffered a stroke Monday evening after an active day of teaching." 55 Among his students

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were Ariana Bronne (his daughter), Elmar Oliveira, and Dorothy DeLay.  

The Bronstein edition of the Conus Violin Concerto was published by Paganiniana Press in 1976 as part of a series of "teaching" editions prepared by Bronstein. Because this is a "teaching" edition, Bronstein includes detailed technical analysis and very specific suggestions for interpretation. There are a number of passages which are harmonically the same as the original edition, but which have been re-voiced or re-written. Oddly, he claims that Auer's version is "quite different" from the original and that his version is the only one that is "absolutely true to its original content."  

He also refers to an unpublished edition that Heifetz "reconstructed," yet the Bronstein edition is more similar to the concerto as recorded by Heifetz in 1952 than it is to the 1898 Jurgenson edition or the Auer edition.

Ivan Galamian

Ivan Galamian was born in Tabriz, Persia (now Iran), on February 5, 1903, to Armenian parents who moved to Moscow soon after their son's birth. He started his violin studies at the School of the Philharmonic Society in Moscow with Konstantin Mostras (a student of Leopold Auer) where he stayed until his graduation in 1919. He then left for Paris where he studied with Lucien Capet.


Capet was a French violinist and composer, primarily known for his teaching of bow technique as described in his book, *La technique supérieure de l’archet*, published in Paris in 1916. Galamian gave his début in Paris in 1924. Also while in Paris, he studied with Jules Conus, whom Galamian considered a "second father." Because of nerves and health issues, as well as a fondness for teaching, Galamian gave up the concert stage and decided to focus on teaching. He served on the faculty of the Russian Conservatory in Paris beginning in 1925 and came to the United States in 1937, where he taught violin at the Curtis Institute and at the Juilliard School.

In 1944, Galamian founded the Meadowmount School of Music, a summer music program located in Westport, New York. He died on April 14, 1981, in New York.

Galamian’s teaching style was derived from the Russian school of violin playing, set forth by Leopold Auer and his followers, and the French school of sound production, which he learned from Capet. Galamian used an analytical approach combined with extreme attention to all technical details. He published two important pedagogical books, *Principles of Violin Playing and Teaching* (1962) and *Contemporary Violin Technique* (1962) which outlined his approach to teaching, in addition to editing a large number of violin works. Galamian taught many important violinists, including Itzhak Perlman, Pinchas Zukerman, and Michael Rabin. He also had a number of teaching assistants who

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59 Ho and Feofanov, 274.


61 Ibid.
became well-known teachers themselves, including Dorothy DeLay, Sally Thomas, Margaret Pardee, and David Cerone.

Galamian's edition of the Conus Violin Concerto was published by International Music Company in 1976, and, like the Bronstein edition, seems to mirror the 1952 recording of Heifetz. Many of the revisions seen in the Bronstein edition are also in the Galamian edition, with the exception of some fermatas and a few other minor differences.

**Abram Yampolsky**

Born in 1890, Abram Ilich Yampolsky is known as one of the founders of the modern Soviet school of violin playing. He studied in St. Petersburg with Sergey Korguyev, a student and teaching assistant of Leopold Auer. He taught at the Moscow Conservatory, where his pupils included Leonid Kogan and Elisabeth Gilels. Yampolsky died in 1956.62

The Yampolsky edition of the Conus Violin Concerto was published by Muzyka in 1979, over twenty years after the editor's death. The Muzyka publisher was, in fact, the name eventually given to P. Jurgenson after the Russian Revolution, when the publishing house came under control of the government (first renamed Muzgiz in 1930 and then Muzyka in 1964). The violin part is, for the most part, a re-print of the 1898 Jurgenson edition. However, there is often a second line, labeled "editor's version," added above the original in places where the editor's version is quite different from the original. Interestingly, this "editor's version" is strikingly similar to the Bronstein and Galamian editions, and, again, seems in line with the Heifetz recording.

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Comparison of the Editions

The Auer edition of the Conus Violin Concerto, as mentioned earlier, is for the most part a reprint of the 1898 Jurgenson edition. In the introduction to his edition, Raphael Bronstein writes:

While studying in Leningrad I introduced the work to Professor Auer and so established the style of the concerto for my contemporaries. At one time it was a very fashionable piece played by artists such as Kreisler, Heifetz, and Zimbalist. During World War I the original concerto was lost so Auer made his own edition, adding notes which were quite different from the original…\(^{63}\)

This seems somewhat at odds with the actual Auer edition. The few changes between the two editions that Auer makes are the suggestion of a cut in the long opening \textit{tutti} section (when playing with piano), the addition of a few fermatas, some phrasing indications and suggested breaks in the cadenza, a few articulation changes (adding slurs, taking out slurs, etc.), and some octave changes in a few harmonics. The overall impression of the Auer edition is that he edited from a copy of the Jurgenson, adding a few ideas of how to interpret the piece, but not making any drastic changes. Most interestingly, the Auer edition also puts the final five measures of the piece in E major, not E minor. This is also the case in the 1898 piano/violin edition printed by Jurgenson, but does not seem to be the case with the full orchestra score (the score published by Luck’s Music is said to be a reprint of the original Jurgenson score, according to the Luck’s Music website, and it ends in E minor). Why the decision to end the piece in E major was made remains a mystery. Perhaps it was to be more like the more famous Mendelssohn Violin Concerto, also in E minor but with the last movement in E major. Or perhaps it was simply to end the piece in a more

cheerful manner, rather than keeping the dark E minor to the end. In any event, both the Auer edition and the Jurgenson piano/violin edition have that harmonic curiosity.

With the Efrem Zimbalist edition, one sees the original piece used more or less as a point of departure. The opening tutti is cut down to only twenty-seven measures (from fifty-five). The first major change occurs in measures 62 and 63 (measure 90 and 91 in original), where Zimbalist takes out Conus's original octave passage (see figure 4.1a) and replaces it with one of his own composition. (See figure 4.1b)

Often, Zimbalist adds notes in the passage work, as if to make it a bit more showy and difficult. (See figures 4.2a and 4.2b) In some cases he adds one or two notes, but in others, he doubles entire passages in octaves. He occasionally simply cuts entire passages out, in both the solo and piano (tutti) parts.
The cadenza Zimbalist composed is extremely difficult and uses technical development which far exceeds the original work and the original cadenza. It makes use of extremely high writing on the E string, complicated double-stops, including one descending scale in major seconds (see figure 4.3), and left hand pizzicato. Gone is the lyricism of Conus's original cadenza.

Zimbalist reduces the coda to nineteen measures (from thirty-seven in the original), but his edition does end the piece in E minor. The overall impression is
that Zimbalist wanted to make the piece much more of a virtuoso show piece, perhaps for himself or his students. With the cuts and many missing passages, it would be difficult to perform this edition with the orchestral accompaniment. Perhaps Zimbalist’s intent was for it to only be played with the piano reduction.

The Bronstein and Galamian editions were published at about the same time. It seems interesting that Bronstein makes mention in the introduction to his edition of a Heifetz "reconstruction" of the concerto, which is not published. The famous 1952 recording by Heifetz has alterations from the available editions he would have had at his disposal (Jurgenson and Auer), and both the editions of Bronstein and Galamian seem to incorporate those changes as performed by Heifetz. These changes range from very minor alterations, such as a grace note changed to a solid note and incorporated into a double-stop, to rhythmic shifts in entire passages and re-voicing some of the harmonies. (See figures 4.3a-c)

![Conus Violin Concerto, mm. 136-144, Jurgenson edition](image)
It is in the recording by Heifetz that the rhythmic change in the passage at measure 202 shifts from duple to triple, and both the Bronstein and Galamian editions reflect that shift. (See figures 4.5a and 4.5b)
In the cadenza, both the Bronstein and Galamian editions incorporate many of the fermatas and pauses as introduced in the Auer edition. Both editions also end the concerto in E minor, just as the Heifetz recording does.

The Yampolsky edition, as discussed earlier, reflects little innovation in the concerto. For the most part, it presents the original Jurgenson, with an *ossia* line, or editor's version, above the original in the places where there are discrepancies between the Jurgenson and the version that Heifetz played. The cadenza incorporates many of the fermatas as added by Auer, but not the breaks. At the end of the piece, the final five measures are offered in both E major and E minor.

All of the editions have slight variations in some of the dynamic markings, with the more modern editions tending toward more loud dynamics. The Galamian and Bronstein editions (again, in step with the Heifetz recording) sometimes have passages rewritten in a slightly more brilliant manner so as to cut through the orchestra texture more easily than the original version would have. (See figures 4.6a and 4.6b)
In all the editions, very little change occurs in the *Adagio* second movement. Indeed, it is the one part of the concerto that stands on its own as needing no improvements.
CHAPTER FIVE

THE CONUS VIOLIN CONCERTO IN PERFORMANCE
AND THE TEACHING STUDIO

The Conus Violin Concerto in Performance

Since its premiere by the composer in Moscow in 1898, the Conus Violin Concerto has had an interesting performance history. The first performance was given in Moscow with Jules Conus himself as soloist and Mikhail Michailowitsch Ippolitov-Ivanov, Professor of Harmony, Orchestration and Composition at the Moscow Conservatory, conducting. The concerto received its London debut in 1904 with Fritz Kreisler as soloist. But it was in Jascha Heifetz’s hands that the concerto gained a certain vogue, reaching its height in the 1920s, at which time it was heard almost as often as the violin concertos of Glazunov and Tchaikovsky. Due to its relatively short length, it could be coupled easily with another solo work, or could be sandwiched into a program between selected movements from longer works, and shorter, single movement works. This type of programming (mixing small works and single movements of larger works) was not uncommon.

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66 Benjamin Folkman, *Concerto for Violin and Orchestra, E minor (In One Movement)* JULES CONUS (New York Philharmonic, Andrew Davis, conducting, June 5, 1981. Program notes.)
in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Among those artists who performed the piece during the twentieth century were Oskar Shumsky (1929, Philharmonic-Symphony Society of New York), Rosa Fain (1981, New York Philharmonic), and Nancy Bracken (1994, The Boston Pops), and more recently, in the twenty-first century, Maria Larionoff (2009, Seattle Symphony). Of performing the piece, Larionoff says:

Heifetz owned it...[except for a recording by Itzhak Perlman]...nobody's taken it on since. It's a beautiful, audience-accessible piece, a big piece of chocolate. For a violinist, it takes you back to when you were a kid playing virtuoso pieces. There are different technical passages, a romantic middle, and a complicated cadenza followed by a short coda.

Among the artists of today who include the Conus in their repertoire lists as given on their websites are such violinists as David Garrett and Anita Chen, both of whom have recordings of the concerto in their discographies. Other artists who have recorded the Conus Violin Concerto are L. Edvin Csüry, Chuanyun Li, Andrei Korsakov, Rudolf Koelman, and Itzhak Perlman. Because of the somewhat definitive nature of the 1952 Jascha Heifetz recording, many artists have seemed reluctant to record the concerto until recently. The Heifetz recording is still regarded at the "gold standard" in most violin circles.

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70 "Seattle Symphony goes 'off the charts' with rarely heard Conus," in The Seattle Times online, June 4, 2009 (accessed January 31, 2011)

71 Ibid.
The Conus Violin Concerto in the Teaching Studio

As a teaching tool, the Conus Violin Concerto seems to have enjoyed a bit more success than it has as a concert piece. Teachers from Leopold Auer to the present day include it in the repertoire sequences that they teach. The great violin pedagogue Carl Flesch counted it among the concertos he taught, saying specifically:

...in the concertos by Beethoven, Brahms, Bohnke, Dohnányi, Dvořák, Dalcroze, Elgar, Hindemith, Joachim, Křenek, Manen, Moor, Noren, Pfitzner, Prokofiev, Reger, Respighi, Schillings, Sibelius, Szymanowski, Sinigaglia, Suk (Phantasie), Weill, Weingartner, Weissman, etc., the piano score represents only an unsatisfactory make-shift for the absolutely necessary orchestral apparatus. This the more, because in the most recent works, the orchestral color (like color in general), usually takes on a greater importance than does the thematic material or its development. In such works the substitution of the piano for the orchestra is out and out inimical to art and destructive to meaning.

Who can deny, on the other hand, that the concertos of d’Ambrosio, Aulin, Bruch, Chausson, (Poëme), Conus, Ernst, Glazounoff, Godard, Goldmark, Hubay, Lalo, Mendelssohn, Mozart, Paganini, Saint-Saëns, Spohr, Tschaikowsky [sic], Vieuxtemps, Viotti, Wieniawski, etc., may be played with piano accompaniment without any damage done their musically important components? Hence what is of the greatest moment is to find the line of demarcation. In many cases the piano accompaniment is even preferable to the orchestral accompaniment, although the latter may represent the original form.72

The great twentieth century pedagogue Dorothy Delay placed the Conus Violin Concerto in her teaching sequence after the Mozart Concertos but before the Mendelssohn, Bruch, or Lalo, as did another of Ivan Galamian’s former pupils,

That the editors of the published editions of the concerto were all well-known artist-teachers attests to its enduring value in the teaching studio. The reason for the inclusion of the Conus Violin Concerto in so many teachers' studios is likely the natural way the Conus concerto fits the hand of the violinist, since the composer himself was a virtuoso performer. Although there are some instances of technical requirements that reach outside the normal "octave" hand structure, for the most part those instances are few and far between. The concerto is excellent for the development of both left hand and bow arm technique, as well as musicality. It is also a good preparatory piece for the standard concertos for the advanced student, leading to the major virtuoso violin concerto repertoire.

Memorization of the Conus Violin Concerto is made somewhat easier by the large amount of repetition, especially since the third "movement" is, essentially, a reworking of the opening material. It is a very good choice for an advanced student who needs to learn an entire concerto (with a substantial cadenza) from memory, and it is certainly a "step up" from a student level one-movement concerto such as the Concerto in A minor by Jean-Baptiste Accolay, written thirty years before Conus's work. For the student who is accustomed to learning only the first movement of his/her concerto (especially common with works such as the Bruch Violin Concerto no. 1 in G minor and the Lalo Symphonie Espagnole), the challenge of playing an entire work, complete with different characters and moods, is presented by the Conus Violin Concerto.

The Conus is also an excellent tool for developing musicality and expressive playing in a student. The printed music is replete with musical

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directions, from actual use of the word *espressivo* in numerous places, to extensive tempo alterations (*accelerando, più vivo, rallentando, largamente, molto ritenuto*, etc.), with the music seeming to ebb and flow throughout the work. There are also directions for the character of the music, such as *leggiero, appassionato, risoluto, con fuoco, cantabile*, and *tranquillo* in addition to the numerous tempo marks. There are even occasional reminders for *vibrato*. The dynamic indications range from *pianissimo (pp)* to *fortissimo (ff)*, with much of the phrasing indicated through crescendo and diminuendo symbols. Tone color is indicated through specific string choice at times, and not just the G string color, but also, at times, the upper A and D strings. With all the specificity of the tempo, tone color, and dynamic indications, Conus also helps the student develop a sense of spontaneity through the opening Recitativo, marked *ad libitum*. All of these extensive markings are not only present in the edited versions of the concerto, but are also found in the original Jurgenson edition, likely edited by the composer himself.

The technical demands throughout the Conus Violin Concerto are challenging but achievable by the committed student. In the introduction, the player must navigate a number of smooth shifts between the E and high A strings, and later, up to the high D and G strings. (See figure 5.1)

m. 61

Figure 5.1 Conus Violin Concerto, mm. 61-78, excerpted from score
This leads to a series of triple- and quadruple-stops which require a good deal of lateral finger and hand strength, as well as a double-stop of a tenth which must be approached following an open E string, with no preparatory shifting available. (See figure 5.2)

![Figure 5.2 Conus Violin Concerto, mm. 82-83, excerpted from score](image)

Immediately following the violin solo statement of the first theme, there are ascending arpeggios in octaves, the shifting of which must be measured very carefully to ensure good intonation. Conus, by putting a grace note before the octaves sound together, actually assists the player in measuring the interval between each octave by placing more focus on the exact placement of the stronger first finger, demonstrating his first-hand knowledge of violin technique. (See figure 5.3)

![Figure 5.3 Conus Violin Concerto, mm. 86-91, excerpted from score](image)

The passage which follows, though not technically difficult for the left hand, requires a great deal of bow technique. The long, sustained melody, played
initially at *fortissimo*, requires the player to distribute the bow evenly and carefully so as to not get unwanted accenting or, conversely, lapses in intensity. The player must alter the bow speed and pressure as well, to adjust for the sometimes slow sustained bow followed immediately by a necessarily short fast bow in both loud and soft dynamics. (See figure 5.4)

The transitional passage beginning in measure 120 and extending to the beginning of the second thematic area is characterized by its driving triplet rhythm. There are three episodes of activity, each offering a different technical issue. The first episode alternates triplets with double-stop passages, and is notable for the extreme chromaticism in the writing. The performer must be careful to read all the accidentals—and there are many—and read enharmonically as needed to ensure accurate measurement of the given half and whole steps. (See figure 5.5)
The second episode explores the use of the high G string, with a sequential pattern punctuated with accents (occurring on the fourth beat) which drives up to a D harmonic. This type of figuration is used later in the first "movement" and again in the coda. (See figure 5.6)

The third episode, similar to the first, also employs the alternation of triplets and double-stops, as well as the chromaticism, but adds to the difficulty by extending the double-stops into a hand configuration more similar to quadruple stops. The player is required to hold the fingers down over the expanse of four strings at a time, even though only two notes are sounding at any one time (there is usually one open string in each chord structure). This takes a good deal of lateral stretch.
in the player's hand, including some stretches beyond the natural limit of an octave. (See figure 5.7)

A series of octaves and double-stops, including stretches of tenths, finishes up the transitional section.

Following the orchestral presentation of the second theme, a brief *ad libitum* section is played by the solo violinist, offering another opportunity to work on playing with *rubato*. Although not indicated in the original Jurgenson edition, the second theme gives the player a chance to use different string colors if desired, and is typically introduced using the high D string color. Controlling the point of contact of the bow in relation to the bridge is of particular importance when playing high on the lower strings, and this passage develops that bow control on both the high D and A strings. (See figure 5.8)
Following the second theme is another transitional section which also is characterized by triplet figures and is similar to the earlier transitional section. This section has perhaps slightly more virtuosic writing, with scales of octaves in both triplets and, later, sixteenth-note patterns. One of the more pyrotechnicsounding passages is actually written to fit the player’s hand quite naturally. The player sets the hand in one basic formation of a three note pattern, with one whole step of space between each finger, and each finger on an adjacent string. The player then ascends through a diminished arpeggio, measuring the ascending intervals with the first finger on the lowest string. In the original edition this pattern is in a duple rhythm, but in the modern editions (Galamian and Bronstein) the figure is set into a triplet configuration, which gives the passage a bit more of an energized feeling. (See figures 5.9a and 5.9b)

![Figure 5.9a Conus Violin Concerto, mm. 200-205, Jurgenson edition](image1)

m. 200

![Figure 5.9b Conus Violin Concerto, mm. 200-205, Galamian edition](image2)
Finishing up this solo section is a dramatic scale in broken octaves (modern editions) which requires good intonation and extremely even string crossings.

The next solo section following the orchestra tutti is essentially a variation on the opening introductory material. Whereas at the beginning of the concerto, the melody is played simply and in a pianissimo dynamic, here the same melody is presented in dramatic double- and triple-stops, followed by rapidly ascending flourishes of scales. (See figures 5.10a and 5.10b)

A sequential section follows, with a great deal of chromatic alteration, in addition to melodic use of both false and natural harmonics. To ensure good intonation, the player must concentrate on the sound of the intervals and not be intimidated by the use of sharps and double-sharps. The harmonics require a steady hand and good point of contact to make the tone speak clearly. (See figure 5.11)
The closing measures of the first "movement" present perhaps the most technically challenging material within the body of the piece. Pairs of double-stops, some played by the tandem movement of the two fingers together, descend followed by arpeggios which ascend. The movement is finished off by a difficult octave passage characterized by the diminished interval, and studded with sharps and double-sharps. A keen ear must listen carefully to all descending intervals to ensure good intonation. (See figure 5.12)

The second, or slow "movement," begins in B major. The opening lovely theme, though not particularly difficult, offers another opportunity for the performer to experiment with tone and string color. The original Jurgenson edition does not specify which string to use in the passage, although the printed

Figure 5.11 Conus Violin Concerto, mm. 240-249, excerpted from score

Figure 5.12 Conus Violin Concerto, mm. 264-270, excerpted from score
fingerings do suggest an avoidance of the E string. In the modern editions, the use of the A string, and later the D string, is specified. The central section of this movement is a long sequence of double- and triple-stops, made difficult by the extensive use of sharps and double-sharps. This is actually more of a visual and comprehension problem for the performer rather than an actual technical problem. If this passage were rewritten enharmonically, the performer would quickly see the C and G double-sharps as open strings D and A! However, Conus studied music theory and composition with Arensky and Taneyev, and carefully followed all the correct spellings of the harmonies as written in the key of B major. (See figures 5.13a and 5.13b)

m. 327

Figure 5.13a Conus Violin Concerto, mm. 327-334, excerpted from score

m. 327

Figure 5.13b Conus Violin Concerto, mm. 327-334, rewritten enharmonically
Once the performer conquers the reading of the notation in order to play this section in tune, he/she must then concentrate on accurate subdivision of the duple and triple rhythms, both in the more difficult double-stop passage and later, in the dénouement of the movement.

The third "movement" (really a recapitulation of the opening material) presents, for the most part, all of the same musical and technical challenges. After a restatement of the first and second thematic areas, the music is interrupted by a quite challenging cadenza. The opening of the cadenza presents issues of voice leading similar to those one finds in a Bach fugue from the solo sonatas. The moving voice must be brought out, and the player sometimes has to roll the chords (triple-stops) from the top to the bottom note, instead of the more traditional roll from bottom to the top note. (See figure 5.14)

There is also a passage which requires a great deal of strength and flexibility in the left hand, as the player has to ascend four strings in quadruple-stops, while bringing out the "bass line" movement up the G string. As the notes go higher, the distance to the fingerboard increases requiring additional pressure to completely stop the string. (See figure 5.15)
The remainder of the cadenza is marked with melodic and rhythmic double-stop passages, rapid ascending scales, and complicated cross rhythms. The cadenza ends by leading back into one last statement of the introductory theme, which almost immediately leads to the coda. The coda utilizes the triplet motive again and is actually the least technically difficult portion of the piece. The piece ends with a gesture of an E minor arpeggio and strong E minor chords to the end, the soloist playing to the very last note.

The Conus Violin Concerto is an excellent choice for the student who has a solid foundation in scale studies, Kreutzer, Mazas, and Rode études. It fits most hands quite well, but will still be challenging to a motivated student. Musically, it helps to develop the student’s ability to play with expression through the carefully placed directions by the composer, helping to prepare the student for such works as the Bruch Violin Concerto in G minor, the Mendelssohn Violin Concerto in E minor, or any of the other great Romantic violin concertos often studied at the student level (upper high school or early college).

Technically, the Conus Violin Concerto helps to prepare the student to be ready for the challenges in the major violin concerto repertoire. For example, the octave passage in the first thematic area of the Conus, which includes the grace note to aid in accurate shifting (see figure 5.3), helps to prepare the student for the octave passage at the beginning of the Mendelssohn Violin Concerto (octaves
sounding together and broken), as well as the delicate violin entrance at the beginning of the Beethoven Violin Concerto. (See figures 5.16a and 5.16b)

m. 39

Figure 5.16a Mendelssohn Violin Concerto, mm. 39-55, Schirmer edition

m. 80

Figure 5.16b Beethoven Violin Concerto, mm. 80-95, International edition

The ascending triplet passages on the G string (see figure 5.6) help to prepare the student for a similar passage, albeit in sixteenth notes, in the Sibelius Violin Concerto. (See figure 5.17)

m. 54

Figure 5.17 Sibelius Violin Concerto, mm. 54-59, Schlesinger edition
The rapid ascending scales learned in the Conus (see figure 5.10b) will give the student more confidence when facing a similar passage in the Tchaikovsky Violin Concerto. (See figure 5.18)

![Figure 5.18 Tchaikovsky Violin Concerto, mm. 97-100, International edition](image)

The descending octave passage in the Conus (see figure 5.12) is a good preparation for a similar but more expanded passage of octaves in the Sibelius concerto. Although the passage in the Sibelius is longer, it is actually more diatonic and therefore easier for the player to hear the descending intervals, as opposed to the diminished fourths and diminished fifths in the Conus. (See figure 5.19)

![Figure 5.19 Sibelius Violin Concerto, mm. 457-472, International edition](image)
There is a curious similarity between one technical passage in the Conus Violin Concerto and a Tchaikovsky work written nineteen years before Conus's piece, the *Valse-Scherzo in C* for Violin and Orchestra, opus 34 (1877). The ascending diminished arpeggio in the Conus (see figures 5.9a and 5.9b) is technically approached exactly the same way as a similar passage in the Tchaikovsky work. Interestingly, the Tchaikovsky passage is set in a triplet rhythm, which, as stated earlier, is the way the passage from the Conus is presented in modern editions, unlike the duple rhythm in the Jurgenson publication. (See figure 5.20). No doubt Conus was familiar with Tchaikovsky's work.

![Figure 5.20 Tchaikovsky, Valse-Scherzo, mm. 305-315, Muzgiz edition](image)

Figure 5.20 Tchaikovsky, *Valse-Scherzo*, mm. 305-315, Muzgiz edition

Clearly, learning the Conus Violin Concerto, with its variety of technical challenges, opens the door for the student to learn many great works, with these examples being but a few.
CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSIONS

The Conus Violin Concerto has an interesting and colorful history behind it. It has been studied, edited, and performed by many great violinists, and by probably more than a few violin students in colleges and conservatories around the world. Jules Conus himself was a wonderfully experienced professional musician, whose concerto has touched countless young lives as they have aspired to be better players and artists. But Conus was more than just a "one hit wonder" of a composer. His family was revered as the great musical pedagogues and artists that they were. He himself dedicated his life to teaching and performing, and, on occasion, composing and transcribing. Why he chose to go back to Russia as World War II was breaking out across Europe will never be understood. He hinted at being homesick in a letter he wrote to Tchaikovsky during his time in America,\textsuperscript{74} and by 1939, he had spent many years in Paris away from his home land. Perhaps to understand Conus's reasons, one has to look at what his dear friend Rachmaninoff wrote in 1933:

\begin{quote}
You cannot know the feeling of a man who has no home. Perhaps no others can understand the hopeless homesickness of us older Russians...Even the air in your country [United States] is different. No, I cannot say just how.\textsuperscript{75}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{74} Yoffe, \textit{Tchaikovsky in America}, 189.

\textsuperscript{75} Bertensson and Leyda, \textit{Sergei Rachmaninoff}, 300.
Though Conus died in 1942, his concerto and its legacy live on. In the United States, his student Ivan Galamian went on to teach many of the most noted violinists performing today, and many of Galamian’s students teach the Conus Violin Concerto. Further research into the provenance of the various editions, including a study of the edition Heifetz used for his definitive recording (now housed in the Library of Congress) may help to shed light on the many discrepancies that exist between the editions explored here. Perhaps, as more people learn about the composer and the value of his one masterwork, the Conus Violin Concerto will come out of the darkness of the practice room and back into the warmth of the concert stage.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


DISCOGRAPHY


BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Violinist Marguerite Richardson is a native of Columbia, South Carolina. She began her violin studies at the age of four with Dr. John Bauer (DML, Florida State University, 1969), and holds the distinction of being the youngest member ever of the South Carolina Philharmonic Orchestra. Richardson earned the Bachelor of Music degree from the Cleveland Institute of Music, the Master of Music degree from the University of South Carolina, and the Doctor of Music degree from The Florida State University. Her principal teachers include David Cerone, Ronald Gorevic, Kochira Harada, John Bauer, and Eliot Chapo. For seventeen seasons, Richardson was a full-time member of the Jacksonville Symphony Orchestra (Jacksonville, Florida), before joining the full-time faculty of Jacksonville University. Richardson continues to perform with the Jacksonville Symphony, in addition to extensive solo and chamber music recitals, including numerous premieres of new compositions by her colleagues. Richardson has taught at several summer festivals, including the Brevard Music Center, Cannon Music Camp, and Prelude Chamber Music Camp, as well as maintaining a private studio. She has served on the faculty of the University of North Florida, starting a string program there in 1995, and is currently Assistant Professor of Strings at Jacksonville University. In addition to conducting the Jacksonville University Orchestra, Richardson is Associate Conductor of the Jacksonville Symphony Youth Orchestra program, and serves as conductor of the Repertory Orchestra.