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The Twentieth Century's Most Significant Works for Cello: Historical Review and Analysis

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THE TWENTIETH CENTURY’S MOST SIGNIFICANT WORKS FOR CELLO:
HISTORICAL REVIEW AND ANALYSIS

By

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ABSTRACT

The scope of this project includes thirteen selected pieces for violoncello (small pieces, unaccompanied and accompanied sonatas, and concerti) composed during the twentieth century, which hold a place of major importance in the literature on the instrument. The criteria for selection of these works are the new features they introduce to the cello as a solo instrument and the depth of influence they had among the musical societies and audiences at the time of their premieres. These features could be related to novel forms, unusual and novel techniques, frequency of performance, changes altering the sound qualities of the instrument, introducing new harmonic structures, reflecting national characteristics of a particular country, reflecting the political environment during the time of their composition, etc. The pieces are arranged according to their genre and year of composition, regardless of the composer’s nationality. The first chapter contains smaller pieces and unaccompanied and accompanied sonatas, and Chapter Two – concerti, or pieces with orchestral accompaniment of the same rank. The document includes historical data about each composer and composition, analysis of some music excerpts, when it is necessary, and my personal comments on these works.
INTRODUCTION

In many countries during the twentieth century the cello concerto and sonata flourished. In contrast to past centuries when art was inspired by religion, or was used to express the innermost feelings of the artists, the compositions written after 1900 often reflect the spirit of the age and the particular political and social environment in which they were created. Certain features of the concerto and the sonata genres remain, some change very substantially, while others disappear completely. The performer is given more freedom and in some cases aleatoric elements are present in the interpretation due to the new content. Aleatoric elements and freedom of performance can be observed particularly well in rhapsody and fantasy type pieces.

The tremendous growth in the number of works for cello in the last century is a result of the exceptional progress of the cello art in this period. It is impossible to list and analyze, or even to review the entire Western cello literature created during the last hundred years. Most of these pieces were never performed publicly or performed once or twice and then quickly took their places in the archives.

Although sources such as The Cello by Elizabeth Cowling and The Cambridge Companion to the Cello edited by Robin Stowell discuss in detail the instrument’s origin, evolution, manufacture, and literature, neither one summarizes, lists, classifies, and analyzes all compositions that managed to pass the test of time, became audience favorites, and successfully established themselves as the main representatives of the cello art of the twentieth century. This project will attempt to eliminate that gap, and provide interested readers with important information concerning these works.
CHAPTER 1
SONATAS AND SMALLER PIECES

Anton Webern:

*Three Little Pieces for Cello and Piano, Op. 11 (1914)*

Webern’s *Three Little Pieces for Cello and Piano*, Op.11 is the earliest piece composed during the twentieth century to remain a frequent member in the recital programs of today’s performing cellists. It is also the composer’s best-known work for cello. In addition to these miniatures, Webern composed two more works for the same instrumental combination: *Two Pieces for Cello and Piano* (1899), which were his first attempt to write for these instruments, and *Sonata for Cello and Piano* (1914). Although the last two are also well known to the audience and performers, the pieces Opus 11 established themselves as main representatives of Webern’s cello music. The composer’s interest in the cello and the piano came early in his life as a musician. During his high school years at Klagenfurt he played cello in the civic orchestra and thereafter frequently in string quartets.¹ It may seem strange that a work of smaller proportions, such as the *Three Little Pieces*, Op.11, prevailed over the bigger sonata, but there was an underlying cause. In the spring of 1914 Webern received a request from his father to compose a work for cello. In a letter to Arnold Schoenberg dated May 26, 1914 he shared: “I shall now write a major piece for cello and piano. My father asked me for it. He likes cello music. For me, however, his wish becomes the occasion to find at last an approach to longer movements again – your idea.”²

While working on the sonata’s first movement (completed on May 9, 1914) Webern realized that the entire work would be much larger than he anticipated. This perspective led him to the decision to temporarily put aside its composition, and instead

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he began work on the *Three Little Pieces* as a replacement. In the same letter to Schoenberg he apologizes:

“I beg you not to be indignant that it has again become something so short. I should like to tell you how this happened and thereby try to justify myself. I already had the quite distinct conception of a major two-movement composition for cello and piano and at once began working it out. However, when I was already far along with the first movement, it became ever more compellingly clear to me that I had to write something else. I felt with complete certainty that I would leave something unwritten if I suppressed the urge. Thus I broke off that major work, although my progress in it had been smooth, and quickly wrote these small pieces.”

Soon after these words were written, the First World War broke out, and Webern never again returned to the composition of that sonata.

The *Three Little Pieces* (*Drei kleine Stücke für Violoncello und Piano*), Op.11, came as a sudden inspiration for the composer. This is the only time Webern used the term *klein* in the title of one of his works even though others could be also described as such (Opus 7 for example). The word means, literally, “little” but is often translated as “short”. By *kleine* Webern meant to convey the idea that the pieces are not major works, just as Schoenberg had called his Opus 19 *Sechs kleine Klavierstücke* (1911) to distinguish the opus from those on either side: Opus 18, the opera *Die glückliche Hand*, and the concert aria *Herzgewächse*, Opus 20. Indeed, it is quite possible that Webern was influenced by the title of Schoenberg’s Opus 19 when he invented the title of Opus 11. These pieces were the last works he wrote in the purely instrumental genre for the next ten years.* Trying to minimize and compress their form, Webern wrote the pieces within nine, thirteen and ten measures respectively, with a total playing time of about two minutes. Their construction and texture differ greatly from the established compositional plan of earlier works for the cello. Up to that point the composers of Romanticism and Impressionism presented the cello with its best qualities as a solo instrument: its rich, singing tone and wide expressive and sonic range. In Webern’s work all of these features are left behind. The traditional large or motif-like melodic lines are replaced by two,

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3 Ibid.


* Since the beginning of 1914 Webern turned his interest towards the composition of primarily vocal music. The beginning was set by the composition of several songs, later incorporated into Opus 12 and Opus 13.
three, or at the most four–note motifs, which are meant to serve as a fulfillment of the vertical construction presented in the piano, and whose interrelations can only be noticed after repeated hearings and in good performances. For the first time in music for the cello all of the twelve tones of the chromatic scale were used in a row*, a technique fully realized a decade later by Schoenberg.

The *Three Little Pieces*, Op.11, were published by Universal Edition in August 1924. They were premiered on December 2 of the same year in a concert of the Society for New Music at Mainz by Maurits Frank, cellist of the Amar Quartet, and Edouard Zuckmayer on the piano. It is interesting that the first performance occurred a decade after the work’s composition, and that the pieces are not listed at all in the annals of the Society for Private Musical Performances, where many of Webern’s compositions were heard. This work, along with many of Webern’s compositions, was far ahead of its time, and perhaps this accounts for its delayed premiere. A performance in Berlin in 1926 by Gregor Piatigorsky aroused laughter from the audience. This event alerted Webern of the reaction he could expect from the audience, and in late October of 1939, he advised his friend and promoter Willi Reich in the preparation of a concert planned for Basel: “The violin pieces would be more suitable than the cello pieces. Those preferably *not at all!* Not because I do not think they are good. But they would just be totally misunderstood. Players and listeners would find it hard to make anything of them. *Nothing experimental!*”5

The first piece, *Mäßige*, is divided into four sections indicated by Webern’s tempo markings “rit.---tempo”. The first section takes place between measures 1 and 3 and is characterized by the intervallic relationships occurring between the notes of the piano’s chords and the notes in the cello. The cello’s F sharp in m. 1 is both preparation to, and a part of the piano’s arpeggiated chord appearing on beat 4. The five notes in the piano and the single note in the cello create a six–note group containing three semitonal intervals in it. The four–note motif in the right hand of the piano (appearing in m. 2) is also supported by another chord in the piano’s left hand. The cello’s false harmonic plays the role of a

* A pattern first explored by Webern in his *Five Movements for String Quartet, Op. 5* (1909)

final note of the motif and transforms it from a four-note, to a five-note structure. By overlapping into the second section, which is developed in a similar way, a twelve-note group appears. A chromatic interval also dominates the rest of the piece: in m.7 there is a nine-note group, the last two measures contain an eight-note group with one note repeated, and in the second and third sections of the piece an eleven-note and a twelve note group overlap. The motivic relationships are mainly audible in the way the phrases move:


The second piece, *Sehr bewegt*, could be described as fast and loud-words usually not associated with Webern’s music. The two instruments present different melodic contours throughout the movement. In the cello, the short melodic figures follow predominantly descending trajectories (Ex. 2b). An exception is the final, isolated B flat in m. 12 (Ex. 2a). In contrast, the melodic contours in the piano are either up or down,
with those contours occurring together in mm. 2-3 (Ex. 2b) and at the end, in m. 13 (Ex. 2a).\textsuperscript{6}

Example 2. Webern, \textit{Three Little Pieces, Op.11}, No. II, meas. 12-13 (a), 1-3 (b)

This piece begins with a twelve-note group presented within the first three measures (here marked by the punctuated line). It appears through the combination of four three-note motifs:


There immediately follow a nine-, a twelve-, and a ten-note group and in the last two measures there is another ten-note group.

But the most astonishing piece from the point of view of chromaticism is No. 3 (Äußerst ruhig). An eleven-note group (lasting as far as G in m.5) is joined to a twelve-note group, with G and G sharp as their common notes:


An important fact to be mentioned is that even though these pieces are among the shortest compositions for cello, they apply the use of all sound capabilities of the instrument. *Mit Dämpfer* (con sordino), *pizzicato, am Steg* (sul ponticello), *am Griffbrett* (sul tasto), false harmonics, and glissandi are extensively used.

The *Three Little Pieces*, Op.11, were written almost nine years before the official discovery of the twelve-note method, and after the twelve-note experiments in Webern’s Opp. 5 and 9. It is certainly one of the earliest, if not the first work of twelve-note music.7

Some of the most interesting features of these three pieces are the previously discussed melodic contours of both cello and piano. If one examines the score or listens carefully to a recording, one will notice that the two instruments complete each other’s melodic lines. When the piano has a descending motif, the cello has an ascending one (counterpart) which complements the direction of the piano’s line with almost perfect

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symmetry. Good examples of this can be found in mm. 2, 6, 8, and 9 of the first piece and throughout the entire second piece where Webern transfers the opposing contours from cello and piano to the piano’s left and right hand. A perfectly symmetrical opposition can be observed in mm. 3, 9, and 13 of that piece. Webern’s *Three Little Pieces for Cello and Piano* is one of the first compositions for this instrumental combination in which both cello and piano share equal importance.

Claude Debussy:

Sonate pour Violoncelle et Piano (1915)

Debussy’s *Sonata for Cello and Piano* is the first piece for that instrument to make a break in style from romantic form and harmony. Along with Fauré’s late sonatas (Op. 109, 1917; Op. 117, 1921), it represents the French Impressionistic style in the cello literature. In contrast with the last two, Debussy’s work remains a favorite piece of the concert cellists, and today is much more often performed than Fauré’s works. The cello sonata was intended as part of a cycle including six sonatas for various instruments, but in the end Debussy succeeded in writing only three: the first for cello and piano, the second for flute, viola and harp (the viola part was originally meant to be played by oboe), and the third for violin and piano. An interesting fact is that the Cello and Violin sonatas do not comply with the conventional (classical) principles of composition of pieces in that genre. The titles of their movements, *Prologue*, and *Sérénade et Final* (from the Cello Sonata) and *Pastorale et Interlude* (from the Violin Sonata) suggest their rhapsodic character.\(^8\)

The cello sonata was written in only a few days between the end of July and the first days of August 1915 in the coastal town of Pourville, near Dieppe in Normandy. The composer himself stated that he liked “its proportions and its form, which is classical in the true sense of the word”. Although described as “classical” by Debussy, the real character of this sonata can be considered as ironic and even sarcastic. In conversation

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with Maurice Maréchal*, the composer mentioned his intentions of calling it “Pierrot fâché avec la lune” (Pierrot, angry with the moon), as he wanted to represent characters from Verlaine’s commedia dell’ arte Fêtes galantes. An interesting discussion among music historians concerns the place of the sonata’s first performance. Recent discoveries found that the premiere did not take place in France but in London, and was given by C. Warwick Evans and Madame Alfred Hobday in London’s Aeolian Hall on March 4, 1916. Shortly thereafter, on March 9, the work was performed again at the Casino Saint-Pierre in Geneva by Léonce Allard and Marie Panthès.\(^9\) The French premiere of the work (which was considered to be the real one) took place in Paris on March 24, 1917, and was given by Debussy on the piano, and Joseph Salmon on the cello.\(^11\)

The first movement, Prologue, begins with Lent, a brief introduction in the piano followed by the cello entrance in the form of recitative quasi cadenza. The purpose of these seven measures is to introduce the listener to the character of that movement, which is nostalgic and reminiscent. Although the cello is introduced in m. 4 with \(f\) dynamic, the dominant \(p\) dynamic occurs in m. 6 and remains uninterrupted almost until the end of the movement. The first theme is presented in m. 8, Poco animando, and continues until m. 15 suggesting the symmetrical structure (eight measures), common for the classical period. In contrast with the compositions from that time and the later Romantic period, this theme is constructed not on the foundation of large melodic lines, but on small, three-tone segments. This fragmental construction can be clearly observed in the cello’s opening theme:

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* A famous French cellist from the beginning of the 20th century.


The *au Mouvt* passage in m.16 can be associated with the motion of sea waves. Each group of four sixteenths represents the birth, rise, and the fall of a wave. The legato, portato, and the dynamic development from *p* to *mp* are Debussy’s compositional tools with which he achieved the closest sound representation of this natural picture. The performance of this passage, however, presents the cellist with some technical difficulties. Although the four-tone motifs seem easy for the left hand, their performance requires a very sensitive right hand. In order to create the light, airy character, the cellist should be able to delicately separate each note of the motif on both down and up-bow, and strictly follow the dynamic contrast, which should not exceed *mp* in its loudest:


The *agitato* passage (mm. 21 – 28), marked also *sur la touche*, is in essence a transition in character from the nostalgic first theme to the dramatic *largement déclamé*. Here, the cello accompanies the piano. Similarly to the *au Mouvt* section, the *agitato* passage was also meant to create the sonic impression of moving sea waves. This effect can be achieved through the balanced use of left and right pedals in the piano, and very
light *sul tasto* in the cello, so the overall sound will be blurred, and the notes almost undistinguished. The only important factor here is the dynamic nuances:

![Musical notation]

Example 7. Debussy, *Sonate pour Violoncelle et Piano*, Mvt. I, meas. 21

*Largement déclamé* is the movement’s culmination point. Ranging from m. 29 to m. 34, it is the only area marked *f molto sostenuto*. From that point on, the movement returns dynamically to its starting point, and ends with a coda in the form of recapitulation, presented by the literal repetition of the opening theme.

The programmatic character of this piece is evident in the connection of the second and third movements. Debussy did not distinguish them by naming each one separately, but combined both into one comprised movement, *Sérénade et Final*. This suggests that maybe the composer intended to represent Pierrot’s two antipodal faces, the melancholic in the *Sérénade*, and the joyful in the *Final*. In their essence, they are one big movement consisting of two characteristically opposite sections.

The *Sérénade* alternates *pizzicato* with *arco* playing. In terms of tempo, it is the slower one of the two movements. Although there is no indication of sudden tempo changes, the performers can be flexible with regard to timing. In contrast with the *Prologue* where both instruments share importance, here the leading instrument is the cello. It shows the frequent and drastic changes in Pierrot’s personality. The movement begins with chromatically ascending motif in *pp* marked *fantasque et léger* (with fantasy and light). This indication suggests that the performers do not need to follow the composer’s markings literally. Variations in the tempo, note values, and dynamics are acceptable in order to represent more vividly the general character of the movement:

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*In order to create this sound effect, the cellist should play this passage on the C string due to the string’s darker timbre and slower vibration response.*

This image of mystery is presented until m. 8, where for first time appears the false e harmonic in *arco* followed immediately by another three notes in *pizzicato*:


This motif visualizes a question, or wondering, followed by almost panicked rush in m. 10. The next *arco* section between measures 12 and 19 (also marked *sur la touche*) should represent a mixture of irony (as marked *ironique* by Debussy), gallantry, and to some extent, flirtatiousness. But it is up to the cellist to combine these characteristics in the right proportions, so neither one of them dominates over the others:

Measure 25 is of special interest. It is marked *Fuoco*, which is uncommon for Debussy’s style. It also contains the only real *f* in this movement, and consists of a four–note motif transferred in three different octaves:

![Example 11. Debussy, *Sonate pour Violoncelle et Piano*, Mvt. II, meas. 25](image)

All of these signs suggest that its character should be completely different from what we have heard before, and what we will hear after it. It should be at the same time in, and out of the context of the movement. In context because the whole idea of the *Sérénade* is to be illogical, and out of context because it needs to differ from the overall sound picture of the surrounding sections. The *Vivace* section (mm.31-36) is actually a dance. The rhythmical combination between cello and piano clearly shows that. Maybe Debussy intended to represent some grotesque dance of Pierrot’s:

![Example 12. Debussy, *Sonate pour Violoncelle et Piano*, Mvt. II, meas. 31-36](image)

At the end of this movement Debussy experiments with the sound of the cello. The *Presque lent* section (mm.48-51) consists of alternating descending scale-like motif marked *flautendo* with quickly stroked descending *pizzicato* arpeggios on open strings:

The *Flautendo* section is meant to imitate the sound of a flute, which may suggest that the composer wanted to draw a picture of Pierrot daydreaming of something (since the sound of a flute is sometimes associated with lyric and nostalgic mood), and then becoming quickly disappointed (the *pizzicato* motif). Due to the cello’s natural specifications, which do not allow easy production of an airy (not dense) sound from the left hand, the performance of the *flautendo* passage can be done through the use of false harmonics played on G string. In addition to this left hand technique, the cellist can play *sul tasto*, which will increase the airy effect already achieved through the use of the false harmonics.

The *Final* consists of numerous sections, which once again represent Pierrot’s frequently changing moods. These sections are clearly identified by the frequent key changes. Overall, its character is determined and energetic. Another dancing theme appears twice in this movement (mm.15-18 and mm. 96-99):


An important section, which deserves special attention, is the central *Lento, molto rubato con morbidezza*. This theme is presented in B-flat minor, the darkest key so far in the sonata, and represents the final unmasking of Pierrot when his real self emerges:

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In a way, Debussy’s sonata can be considered a programmatic work. Although its final title was set as *Sonate pour Violoncelle et Piano*, the composer’s initial intention to title it *Pierrot fâché avec la lune* clearly suggests his preoccupation with Verlaine’s character. Knowing these facts, the cellist should interpret this work more as a theatrical play rather than a purely musical piece. In order to represent Pierrot’s character in the best possible way, the musician has to completely comprehend the sonata’s style and possess the ability to visualize and materialize in the form of sound the images implied in the musical text.

**Zoltán Kodály:**

_Sonata for Solo Cello, Op. 8 (1915)_

Kodály’s *Sonata for Solo Cello*, Op.8 is among the twentieth century’s most popular and often performed compositions for solo cello. The composer’s works involving the cello as a solo instrument are only three: *Sonata for Cello and Piano*, Op. 4 (1909-10), *Duo for Violin and Cello*, Op. 7 (1914), and *Sonata for Solo Cello*, Op. 8 (1915). As the year of composition and opus number indicate, these compositions were written within only five years, during a period when Kodály was composing works primarily for solo instruments and chamber ensembles. These pieces represent the style
of Hungarian folk music in the cello literature pioneered by Bartók and Kodály, the two most prominent Hungarian composers.

The Solo Sonata, Op.8 is the first major work (apart from the three Suites, Op. 131c by Max Reger from 1914-15) for unaccompanied cello since J.S. Bach’s Six Suites for Solo Cello. In an article from 1921, “The New Music of Hungary”, Bartók comments on the piece: “No other composer has written music that is at all similar to this type of work – least of all Reger, with his pale imitations of Bach. Here Kodály is expressing, with the simplest possible technical means, ideas that are entirely original. It is precisely the complexity of the problem that offered him the opportunity of creating an original and unusual style, with its surprising effects of vocal type; though quite apart from these effects the musical value of the work is brilliantly apparent.”

A very important feature of this piece is its scordatura. Kodály is the first composer to employ the retuning of the cello since the time of J.S. Bach’s Suite in C Minor, BWV 1011. In difference with Bach’s work where only the a string is retuned down to g, Kodály’s Sonata calls for retuning of the two lower strings: G string to F sharp, and C string to B. This unusual change in the instrument’s settings is determined by two reasons: By retuning the strings Kodály changes the sonority of the instrument (which becomes darker than usual), and creates the possibility for achieving certain intervals characteristic for Hungarian folk music, which would be inaccessible for playing with the cello’s natural tuning. The Sonata also carries the widest tonal range in the entire cello literature. Its span is from B to b’’. For first time a composition for cello contains in itself the entire variety of instrumental techniques: right- and left-handed pizzicato, arpeggios, chords, tremolos, trills, sul ponticello, sul tasto, saltato, and glissandi. Although Kodály collected a large amount of authentic Hungarian folk-tunes, he did not quote literally any one of them in the sonata. Instead, he chose to reflect only the style of Hungarian folk music by using its characteristic modes and interval relationships.

The sonata is dedicated to Eugène de Kerpely, a leading Hungarian cellist of the Waldbauer-Kerpely Quartet, who was also a close friend of Kodály. Although he was in

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his mid-twenties at the time, Kerpely succeeded to establish a reputation as a good interpreter of contemporary Hungarian music. That was the reason for Kodály to choose him to be the promoter of his cello works. In 1910 Kerpely and Bartók (on the piano) premiered Kodály’s *Sonata for Cello and Piano*, Op. 4 in a joint concert of the two composers.\(^5\)

The *Sonata for Solo Cello* consists of three movements. Due to its duration (ca. 30 min.) and technical difficulties, it is often performed only partially. The most often played excerpt of it is the first movement, *Allegro maestoso ma appassionato*. The movement’s first subject is also the most well-known part of the sonata:


Although there is no key signature in this movement, the tonal plan revolves around the key of B minor. As one can see in the example above, the subject contains the note \(b\) in every measure, as part of the typical Hungarian pentatonic scale used by Kodály. The second theme appears in m. 32. It is a complete antipode of the first subject with its *pp* dynamics and tempo change. While the opening theme is marked *frisoluto*, the theme in m. 32 brings the character of *pp sostenuto*. Both themes comprise the movement’s exposition.

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* Due to the earlier discussed *scordatura* all notes played on G and C string will sound a half step lower than their written pitch.
The development takes place at m. 80. Its foundation is the transposed first subject. It begins with a transposition in E-flat minor followed by a pentatonic figuration. The first subject appears three more times in full, and two fragments of it are present throughout the development. The full theme is transposed in A major (m. 100), G major (m. 116), and E minor (m. 124), and the fragments are present in B minor (m. 132-3), and C-sharp minor (m. 146-148). The recapitulation appears in m. 152. Here Kodály abandons the tradition of repeating the opening theme, and constructs the recapitulation on the second theme. This time it is transposed an augmented fifth higher.

The second movement, Adagio (con grand’ espressione), is another example of the rhapsodic, highly ornamental melodic style of Hungarian folk music. It also contains the main weight of the composition by representing a slow folk song, a type of song existing in the vocal traditions of the people from the mountainous regions of Eastern-European countries. Camilla Lundberg in her program notes to The Solitary Cello (BIS-CD-25) states: “This is a rhapsody with meditative, capricious, and sensuous elements, but it is also a rhapsody on the cello’s possibilities.”

The finale, Allegro molto vivace, is in the style of a fast dance characteristic for the folk music of some Eastern European countries such as Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania, and Serbia. It is constructed on the basis of different themes and motifs which in this case are derived from Hungarian folk music. Example 18 illustrates the movement’s opening theme, which sets up the initial tempo and character of the movement:

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This theme is followed by a connecting passage (starting at m. 17) to m. 45 where another folk motif appears:


Through this motif Kodály shifts the accent from the first beat to the second, which is another frequently seen characteristic in the folk music of the earlier mentioned countries. Another motif appears in m. 62 (Ex. 20):


This time it is accompanied by an ostinato D played on open string. This D has two functions: to support harmonically the motif, and to represent the sound of a bagpipe.
The second major theme appears in m. 247 (Ex. 21), and is later repeated in transposition (mm. 264-271):


Along with discussed themes and motifs, the movement contains a large amount of cadenza-like passages and arpeggio figurations which are in essence rhythmic variations of the themes and motifs.

In his recording of October 1957, Janos Starker\footnote{Janos Starker (1924 - ) is the Hungarian cellist who made this sonata popular to the large audience. Prior to that, the work was known primarily in Hungary.} omits a whole page of the third movement (mm. 272-325). In a conversation with the author in February 2007, on the question why he omits this section, Mr. Starker responded: “Just because I did not like it.”

Paul Hindemith:

Sonate für Violoncello Allein, Op. 25, No. 3 (1922)

Although the cello compositions by Hindemith constitute only a small portion of his work, the pieces presenting the cello with its soloistic qualities succeeded in reserving a major place among the audience’s favorite compositions. The works composed for solo cello and cello with accompaniment were created between 1916 and 1948. Hindemith was an excellent violist, and also knew the cello very well. Aware of its tonal and technical capabilities, he composed music in different genres for it, from pieces for
children to full-scale concerti. During his student years, Hindemith composed two sonatas for cello and piano and three solo sonatas, but they remained in manuscript form and were never published. His earliest important composition for cello is the *Concerto in E-flat for Violoncello and Orchestra*, Op. 3, started in the summer of 1915 and completed in April 1916. It was first performed in Frankfurt on June 28, 1916, with Maurits Frank (cellist of the Rebner Quartet) as soloist and Hindemith conducting. Between February and March 1917 the composer wrote *Three Pieces for Violoncello and Piano*, Opus 8, comprised of *Capriccio in A, Phantasiestuck in B*, and *Scherzo in C Minor*. This was the first work by Hindemith to be published by Breitkopf & Härtel in the summer of 1917. In the following eight years, Hindemith composed three more pieces: *Sonata for Violoncello and Piano*, Opus 11, No.3, written between July and August 1919 (extensively revised in Spain, October 1921); *Sonata for Solo Violoncello*, Opus 25, No.3; and *Kammermusik No.3*, Op. 36, No. 2 (1925), which is in essence a Concerto for cello obligato and chamber orchestra. In 1934 Hindemith wrote a small *Scherzo for Viola and Cello*, and after his departure from Germany the same year, he composed *Three Easy Pieces for Cello and Piano* (1938), a *Cello Concerto* (1940), *Variations on an Old English Song for Children* (1941), and a *Sonata for Cello and Piano* (1948).

The solo sonata Op. 25, No.3 is indicated as No.3, because it is part of a cycle comprised of three thematically connected pieces: Opus 25, No.1 is *Sonata for Solo Viola* (March, 1922), Opus 25, No.2 is *Sonata for Viola d’Amore and Piano* (May, 1922), and the third piece, written in July 1922, is the *Sonata for Solo Violoncello*. The reason for including this piece in the present treatise is the sonata’s high popularity among the performing cellists and large audience. Although the earlier discussed cello compositions by Hindemith are of an equal aesthetic value, the sonata Op. 25, No.3 succeeded to establish itself as the most frequently performed cello composition by the composer. Based on the frequency of its performance, the sonata achieved the status of the most popular representation of Hindemith’s music for the cello.

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*A Frog He Went A-Courting*

Op.25, No.3, dedicated to Maurits Frank, is considered to be one of the few pieces labeled by Hindemith’s researchers as “transitional”. The composer wrote it before his turn towards the New Objective Manner in early 1923. The sonata consists of five contrasting movements (Lebhaft, sehr markiert; Mäßig schnell, Gemächlich; Langsam; Lebhafte Viertel; and Mäßig schnell), which is not a typical construction for pieces in that genre. These movements are arranged symmetrically around the central Langsam. The outer movements (Nos. I and V) are relatively long, fast, and emphasized (markiert), compared to the brief second and fourth movements. The second movement could be described as a quiet (due to the p markings) intermezzo containing dance elements. The third (slow) movement is exceptionally expressive and like the first, contains elements of improvisation, while the fourth movement is a pianissimo scherzo in triplets of eighths. The most prominent feature of the fifth movement is its main structural unit, a rhythmical group of a dotted eighth note and two thirty-second notes. Here are its opening measures:


The following analysis will focus on the first two movements of this sonata and will be based on their vertical and linear construction.

The opening Lebhaft, sehr markiert is written in a simple rondo form: \( A B A1 B1 A2 \). The \( A \) section (mm.1-7) consists of three and four note chords and triplets of eighths. Section \( B \) (mm.8-16) presents a theme in triplets of eighths, which first focuses on providing of perfect fifths in the lowest register, and then on arpeggations. \( A1 \) (mm.17-24) is actually a development section. It starts with a version of the main theme that

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21 Ibid, 125.

follows exactly the rhythmic pattern already seen at the beginning. Also, here is provided the same contour as in theme A. The reappearance of B (mm. 24 – 31) is transposed a half step higher (The first appearance is from c sharp, and the second, from d) and the arpeggiations are altered. A2 begins with a false recapitulation (mm. 32-34) followed by the real repetition of A (mm.35-36), and a coda.

The first feature to attract the performer’s attention when examining the score will be the lack of key signature and metric pulsation. At first it may seem that the movement is atonal, and the reason is the numerous alterations placed almost on every note, which makes the relations and the tensions between the different notes in the phrases very relative. A cellist who begins to work on this piece will have the feeling that all the time they are playing in the key of C major. Although there is no strong evidence about the C major nature, there are certain locations in each of the movements that make the listener assume so. This feeling is based on a very important factor: the occurrence of c (the tonic of C major) and g (the dominant) at structurally important places. In the first movement there are six places where C major is undoubtedly stated. The first is in the opening measure (Ex. 26b). This is the chord that the piece and theme A start with. It is a four-voice chord, which forms the set of (0, 1, 5, 7) and it is divided into two internal components, each with a motivic role: perfect fifth in the two bottom voices and minor sixth in the two higher voices, connected by an enharmonic minor seventh between the second and the third voice. The perfect fifth in the bottom states exactly the C major key. On the cello, this fifth will be played by two open strings (C and G) that will continue to sound a little longer than its written duration of a quarter. This continuous sounding will provide an important C major harmonic foundation to the melody started by the two upper voices of the chord (e sharp and c sharp). On the second beat in m.2 we have another perfect fifth between d and a, and in m. 4, a chord on beat two repeated again at the same place in m.6. In m.7 Hindemith gives another chord on the second beat, which produces perfect symmetry with the other constructions - harmonically and rhythmically. By this way, the feeling for the down beat in this theme transfers from the first beat of the measure to the second:
The second occurrence of C major is the beginning of the extension of theme B (m. 14, b. 1):


The extension begins with c in the middle register of the cello, and consists of three measures of arpeggiation. This extension is preceded by a measure (the last one of theme B) built on the perfect fifths between the notes a and e. The second beat of this measure consists of triplet of eighths, containing the notes of e, a, and b. They are leading tones to the c:


The arpeggiation in the extension are written in the rhythmical form of triplets, but triplets made out of dotted eighth and three sixteenths. The first note of every pattern creates the melodic line of the extension (c, d, e, g, b). By their nature, these are tones of the C major pentatonic scale. The third confirmation of C major is at the end of theme B:

and the beginning of theme A1. In the last measure of the extension of B we have a triple repetition of the note b leading to its resolution in the note c in the chord of theme A1 (m.17 b.1). Here b is used like a leading tone to the “tonic” of c. Looking in detail, I could say that this measure is occupied by the dominant (using classical terms). It contains every note of the C major dominant seventh-chord (b, d, f) except the root of g. Instead, Hindemith uses for a root the note d. This use is based on the need of leading tone to the root of the chord in m.17, which is g. By this way, Hindemith maintains the V – I relationship (d-g) typical for a classical cadence.

The fourth appearance of C major is at the beginning of theme A2, and especially, its false recapitulation (m.32). Here, we have an enharmonically B diminished chord, but its root is again c, a note which does not belong to the chord. We could suppose that the idea of its use is, again, to underline the harmonic base of this movement. The real recapitulation occurs in m.35 and resembles the fifth place of C major’s confirmation. Here, the conditions are the same, as in the first appearance of theme A.

The movement ends with a coda. At the very end of this section (m. 42) Hindemith writes for a final note, g. Alone, this g would not be considered as a clear sign for C major, but if we look at the first note of the second movement, we will see that it is again c. This leads us to conclude that actually Hindemith thought of the first measure of the second movement as a last one of the first movement. Similar evidence for this also could be considered the fermata written over the g. The fermata’s meaning is of expectation-an expectation for a resolution in the tonic of c. From an interpretational point of view, this suggests that there should not be any break between the two movements during performance. The first movement ends with the beginning of the second one. That is the sixth place of confirmation.

In connection with the previously explained structure of the opening chord of theme A, I will add that the root of the first interval and the top note of the second (the perfect fifth and the minor sixth) form the extremes of the chord (c-c sharp). The half step by itself is emblematic in this movement. Constructions built on this interval occur throughout the piece. For instance, the second and the third notes in the first measure are a minor second; the last eighth note of b.1 and the bottom note of the pair on b.2 in m.2
are also a minor second, and so forth. Hindemith treats this relationship as motivic and structural, not only in this movement but throughout the piece. The second and third movements close plainly on $c$, the first and the fourth on $g$, and the final movement ends on a C sharp major triad. I could say that the entire tonal plan of the sonata is contained in the first chord. The pitch class set of this chord $(0,1,5,7)$ recurs most obviously in the second repeat of $A$. If we look at the chord in m.17 (Ex. 26a), we will see that its function is the same as the function of the chord in m.1 (Ex. 26b).

Example 26. Hindemith, *Sonate für Violoncello Allein, Op. 25, No. 3*, Mvt. I. meas. 17 (a), 1 (b)

The difference here is that the second chord (Ex. 26a) is transposed, and with a missing note (it is only a three-voice chord), which makes the notes unequal between the two. Looking for the fourth note, we will find it in the previous measure. That is the last note in the measure, which is $d$. This note is repeated seven times as a root in the previous two measures, which clearly forms the harmonic function of the entire extension, preparing its resolution in the chord in m.17. If we add this $d$ to the chord, its structure will become full, and absolutely equal (according to the pc-set theory) to the structure of the chord in m.1 $(0,1,5,7)$. From the present analysis, we see that this note has two very important functions: act as a Dominant to the Tonic of $g$; and act as a note from the construction of the chord in m.17. From interpretational point of view, this means that the last $d$ could be played as a part of the next chord, and not as a part of the previous triplet.

In theme $A$ we could find some pc-sets. They are $(0,2,6)$, $(0,2,7)$, and $(0,1,3)$. The first one appears in measures 3 and 4 respectively on beats 3 and 2; the second one in measures 3 and 7, beats 1 and 2; and the third one in measure 3, beats 3 and 4.

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* Pitch Class Set
In theme B we will find two basic sets. The first arpeggiation in m.14, presents the set of (0,3,4,7). The other set occurs in m.15 b.1 (0,5,6). These sets are basic, because they are the core of other sets that form the constructions in the theme and its extension. They will be either with one changed or one added note, but the main structure will remain the same. The set (0,3,4,7) has a version which could be found on the first beat in m.16. Here, the set is presented like (0,1,4,7). This is the construction which I called earlier “dominant”. This set also could be seen in m.29 at the place of the extension of theme B1. The extension is a version of the “original” extension from the first appearance of B. Its range is the same (3 measures). The construction in m.29 (repeated in the next measure) is with a modified second beat. Here we have a triplet of six sixteenth notes, instead of two beats by four sixteenths. The first beat of the extension presents again (0,3,4,7), and the second one – its augmentation as (0,3,4,7,8). Another augmentation is the construction in m.31. Here, the “extra” tone is in the beginning of the set (0,1,3,4,7). It seems that this set is emblematic in this movement. If we look more carefully, we will see it also in m.25 b.2; the entire measure 26, and in m.28. Versions of the other set are presented in m.15. The main set on beat 1 is followed by two other versions: (0,4,5,6) and (0,1,5,6), respectively on beats 2 and 3. Measure 8 also contains variations. The second and the third beat of theme B are formed by (0,2,5,6) and (0,1,5,6).

The coda starting at m. 37 contains one interesting set: (0,1,6). This is the perfect fifth on the second beat with the sixteenth of the previous beat one. The first beat of this measure produces one already observed set (0,2,7):


This set occurs in theme A in measures 3 (b. 1) and 7 (b. 2), as a set constructed in one beat.

In m.37 we have different voice leading. The previous line created by the last two beats of m.36, resolves on the first beat of the next measure, and the line started on b.2 in m.37 actually begins from the sixteenth of b.1. Although this sixteenth is rhythmically connected to the minor seventh of $a$ and $g$, it logically belongs to the next fifth. In this way, the created triad of $a\#$, $d$ and $e\flat$ will contain the half step, which I mentioned in the beginning of this analysis. The same set is repeated four times in the last two measures of the movement.


The half step relationships are evident most clearly in the second movement. As I mentioned in the introduction, this section is a small intermezzo connecting the characters of the two larger movements: the first and the third. This movement is written in a simple ternary form (A-B-A). In theme $A$ (mm.1-9), there are two constructional factors that require more attention: the half step, and the pc - set of (0,1,4). The half step is presented in the very beginning. We have $c$ with a trill, which is indicated as a half step trill to $d\flat$. The second beat of the measure is comprised of $c$ and $d\flat$. The next row of half steps begins from the second beat of m.2 and is sustained until b.1 of m.4 as a sequence model:

The first notes of this three-note patterns (C#, G#, F, D) form one already observed, in the first movement, set of (0,1,4,7). Later, in the repetition of A, this set occurs as augmentation. Again, the augmentation is already seen (0,1,3,4,7). On b. 2 in m.4, we have a connecting passage to the repetition of the first phrase of theme A, which ends in m.8 with a short cadence. The pc-set appears at three locations: m.2, b.1, and on the first beats of measures 6 and 7.

Theme B (Ex. 31) contains one interesting row of sets. Here, we have two main sets, and two augmentations. The first one is (0,1,5), located on b.4 in m.12. The second one is (0,2,5), which is presented twice: in m.12, b.3, and in m.13, b.1. This set has two other versions of (0,2,6) and (0,2,7), which could be found respectively on b.2, m.13, and on the second half of b.1 and the first half of b.2 in m.14. The pattern of perfect fifths observed in the first movement is sustained in this movement, too. These are the two notes that theme B starts with: d flat, and a flat (m.10). This pattern occurs again in measures 11, 16, and 17 in transposition. In measures 16 and 17 it is presented in reverse. The sets presented above are, also, written in the form of perfect fifths:

This movement ends similarly to the first one: with repetition of theme $A$, and a coda. Theme $A$ is provided in full with the only exception of the cadential m. 8. Instead, Hindemith writes an extension of six measures, which resembles a coda (m. 26 – m. 31):


Dmitri Shostakovich:

*Sonata for Cello and Piano, Op. 40 (1934)*

Shostakovich’s *Cello Sonata* is undoubtedly one of the most often performed works for cello of the twentieth century. It deserves its place in the present treatise due to the fact that almost every professional cellist has played this composition at least once in their career, and also it is among the most favorite cello pieces of the audience. The cello was one of Shostakovich’s favorite instruments, probably due to his close friendship with Mstislav Rostropovich. The total number of Shostakovich’s works for the cello as a solo instrument is six: *Three Pieces for Cello and Piano, Op. 9* (1924); *Sonata for Cello and Piano in D Minor, Op. 40* (1934); *Cello Concerto No. 1 in E-flat, Op. 107* (1959); *Cello Concerto No. 2 in G, Op. 126* (1966); and two re-orchestrations of Schumann’s *Cello Concerto, Op. 125* (1963), and Tischenko’s *Cello Concerto No. 1* (1969).

The *Cello Sonata* was composed between August and September 1934 during Shostakovich’s stay at Prokofiev’s home in Moscow (the older composer had left the city in June to spend the summer in Paris with his family). That was Shostakovich’s first small-scale work since the *Three Pieces for Cello and Piano, Op. 9* (composed during the winter of 1923–4) and the first piece of chamber music composed in Russia since the
Cultural Revolution. The first movement of the sonata was written in just two days (according to Solomon Volkov), probably as a result of the continuous insisting from one of the leading cellists in Russia at that time, Viktor Kubatsky (the sonata’s dedicatee). It was considered to be a deceptive piece. Some Soviet critics (Dmitri Rabinovich for instance) call it “a sudden ray of sunshine”, while others in the West refer to it as, “mainly lyrical”.

The sonata consists of four movements: Allegro ma non troppo, Allegro, Largo, and Allegro. The first movement opens with a lyrical melody in the cello, reminiscent in character of a piece from the Late Romanticism in the style of Schumann, or Fauré:

Example 33. Shostakovich, Sonata for Cello and Piano in D Minor, Mvt. I, meas.1-8

Shostakovich establishes a mood of delicate nostalgia. In 1935, a music critic from a Prague newspaper commented on the piece, that it was “a model of bourgeois music”, an opinion used against the composer again in 1936. The character of this work was pre-Revolutionary, and thus did not comply with the artistic expectations of the political regimes and critics in Soviet Russia and Eastern Europe. The movement’s first theme is sustained until m. 54 where the second subject appears in the key of B major. It is first presented in the piano, and later (m.71) in the cello:

Example 34. Shostakovich, Sonata for Cello and Piano in D Minor, Mvt. I, meas. 71-78

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24 Ibid.
25 Ibid.
In this theme the roles of the cello and piano alternate: In m. 54 the cello accompanies the piano (which at that time plays the theme), and in m. 71 the piano repeats the cello part from m.54, while the cello takes over the second theme. This subject possesses much different character than the first theme. Although there is not any indication in the score of a tempo change, it should be played a little slower and with rubato.

The development begins at m.111 with harmonically unstable figurations. It is dominated not by a melody, but a rhythmical pattern of two eighth notes and a quarter. This pattern is initially presented in the piano (from m.107 to m.110) and in m.111, in the cello, which plays it pizzicato:


Another lyrical theme appears in the development (played by the cello) supported with the same rhythmical pattern in the piano. It has the same character as the second theme, but this time Shostakovich writes *pp* instead of *mf molto espressivo*:


The movement concludes with a recapitulation of the first theme and a coda (m. 210 to the end), which confirms its belonging to the classical sonata form. Here Shostakovich applies three features that clearly determine the nature of this section: he writes a new tempo (*Largo*) and establishes the sonority and character through *con sordino* and *pp*. These three features cause the recapitulation to change its traditional
form in which it is a close repetition of the exposition. Although its thematic material is the same as the material in the exposition, the tempo change from Allegro to Largo and the change of sonority and dynamics create a feeling of a completely new section.

The second movement (Allegro) is a folk-dance in the form of a scherzo. Its grand structure is ABA with smaller sub themes within them:

\[
\begin{array}{c|c|c}
A & B & A \\
a b a & a b a & a b a \\
\end{array}
\]

Similarly to the first movement, the themes are presented in both cello and piano in alternation. The cello begins the A section with its marked accompanying motif and is joined almost immediately by the piano, which presents the first theme (Aa). The theme (Ab) is once again given to the piano, which introduces it in m. 22. The cello has the accompanying function until m. 34. On the last beat of m.34 the roles change. Now the cello takes over the second (Aa) theme, and the piano plays the supporting scale-like motif from the beginning of the movement. The B section appears in m. 76. Here the construction is the same, as in section A. The cello starts it with arpeggios in harmonics, and the piano joins five measures later (m. 80) with theme (Ba). The cello starts the theme on the last beat of m. 87, while the piano simulates the cello arpeggios from m.76. The theme (Bb) occurs in m. 96, and the second (Ba) in m. 112. The second section A is a literal repetition of the first and is positioned between m. 123 and m. 197. The movement finishes with a short coda (a literal transposition of theme (Bb)) between m. 198 and the end. The alternation between piano and cello in presenting the different themes is identical and clearly indicates the imitative nature of this movement.

While the first and second movements lean more toward Romanticism with their lyrical themes, the third and fourth movements begin to develop the very well-known dramatic and sarcastic images from Shostakovich’s later works. In contrast to the previous two movements, the Largo is almost entirely given to the cello. This movement is extremely slow and somewhat enigmatic. It begins with a short introduction, in which the cello emerges alone, seemingly from the air, in \textit{pp} and is joined by the accompanying chords of the piano in m. 5. The only leading theme appears in m. 20:

From this point on, the movement transforms into a lonely monologue of the cello lasting until m. 72. Here the theme is partially repeated by the piano, while the cello accompanies. The cello resumes its leading role in m. 77. The movement, similarly to the previous movements, closes with a coda consisting of its introduction in transposition (the first movement ends with repetition of its first theme, and the second movement, with repetition of theme (Bb)).

The last movement (*Allegro*) is actually a rondo. Its structure is ABACADA. The opening theme of A is characteristic with its simplicity and reminds of another sarcastic melody found in the fourth movement of Shostakovich’s *Piano Trio, Op.67*:

Example 38. Shostakovich, *Sonata for Cello and Piano in D Minor*, Mvt. IV, meas. 17-31

The other sections (B, C, and D) are constructions lacking thematic material. They serve as three development sections, in which both cellist and pianist are asked to show their instrumental technique. Most notable of them is section D, which contains scale-like passages—extremely difficult for the pianist. The range of the sections is as follows:
Elliott Carter:
Sonata for Violoncello and Piano (1948)

Although the number of works for cello composed by American composers during the twentieth century is smaller than the number of works composed by European composers, pieces like the concerti by Samuel Barber (Op. 22) and Virgil Thomson, and the sonatas by Elliott Carter and George Crumb constitute a valuable addition to the cello repertoire. The selection of Elliott Carter’s *Sonata for Violoncello and Piano* as a representative of American cello music in this project is based on its experimental nature, and innovative rhythmic structure it possesses.

The number of works by Carter for solo cello, and chamber music compositions in which the instrument is given a leading role is quite impressive: *Elegy* (Adagio) for cello and piano, which remained unpublished (1942), *Sonata for Violoncello and Piano* (1948), *Sonata for Flute, Oboe, Cello, and Harpsichord* (1952), *Triple Duo* for Flute, Clarinet, Violin, Cello, Piano, and Percussion (1982), *Enchanted Preludes* for flute and cello (1988), *Con Leggerezza Pensosa* for clarinet, violin and cello (1990), and *Figment* for cello solo (1995).26

The *Sonata for Violoncello and Piano* was completed on December 11, 1948 (according to the manuscript). It is dedicated to Bernard Greenhouse, a famous American cellist and a member of *Beaux Arts* Piano Trio, who gave its premiere on February 27, 1950 at Town Hall, New York, accompanied by pianist Anthony Makas.

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The sonata was published in two editions. The first was by the Society for the Publication of American Music, and the second (corrected in 1966) – by Associated Music Publishers, Inc.\(^{27}\) This piece marks an important moment in Carter’s compositional work. Being influenced by the music of Stravinsky, Bartók, the second Viennese School, and the neo-classical movement in France\(^*\), the young composer did not have his own distinct style. By the time of the sonata’s composition, Carter was already forty years old, and his personal style had began to emerge. The stylistic contrasts and varieties that were characteristic of the composer’s early music transformed into a new kind of counterpoint. That became his style, and later, a structure.\(^{28}\) In the years following World War II Carter turned to re-examining the works he had written in his youth. During the process, he began to develop an interest in the systematic study of their rhythm. His attention turned towards the rhythmic patterns of the Indian talas, the “tempi” of Balinese gamelans (especially Gangsar and Rangkep), and the newer recordings of African music, that of the Watusi in particular. These, along with his interest in the music of Scriabin, Ives, and the techniques described in Henry Cowell’s *New Musical Resources* were the sources of inspiration for the creation of the so-called “metric modulation”\(^*\) in the Cello Sonata.\(^{29}\) The term refers to a technique developed by Carter in this sonata and later used in his other compositions. Example 39 clearly illustrates the metric modulation: the lower voice keeps the same rhythmic values, while the upper (which begins with the same values as the lower) gradually changes its rhythm.

\(^{27}\) Ibid, 106.

\(^*\) Carter studied in Paris with Nadia Boulanger.


\(^*\) Richard Franko Goldman was the one to use the term in a review of the Cello Sonata written in “Current Chronicle,” *The Musical Quarterly* 37, No.1 (January 1951), 83 – 89.

An interesting feature of this sonata is its circular form. This term describes the “connection between the ending of a work and its beginning that suggests that the work could be imagined as a continuous loop. Carter first used this device in the Cello Sonata, where, in fact, the first movement was composed after the last."\(^{30}\) This work was meant to be a representation of the differences between cello and piano. In contrast with the common approach in the composition of a chamber music piece where the objective is to disguise and blend the different instruments, in his sonata Carter accents on the differences in expression and sound of the cello and piano, and makes them one of the main points of the piece.

This strategy of accenting the instrumental contrast is most evident in the first movement, \textit{Moderato}. As I mentioned earlier, this movement was composed after the second, third, and fourth movements were completed. “The first movement” Carter said, “presents one of the piece’s basic ideas: the contrast between psychological time (in the cello) and chronometric time (in the piano), their combination producing musical or “virtual” time.”\(^{31}\) Carter’s intentions here were also to create a musical structure “resulting from two simultaneous, but differently characterized, planes of music – a type of texture used to great effect in many operas, but seldom in concert music. Here the clocklike regularity of the piano is contrasted with the singing, expressive line of the cello, which, although accurately written out, sounds as free from the underlying beat as the jazz improviser from his rhythm section – the musical situation which suggested this passage. [Sonata for Violoncello and Piano, mm. 1-67]"\(^{32}\) There is a difference in the rhythm of the two instruments, which allows the

\(^{30}\) Ibid, 36.


cello and piano lines to never coincide with each other. The movement is comprised of three long themes. The first is presented until m. 68 and is characterized by the piano’s pulsation and the cello’s thematically varied material, which includes elements from the third (m. 38) and second movement (m. 43).\textsuperscript{33} This theme is also the holder of the basic harmonic material for all four movements. This material is represented by the six-note set of (0, 1, 2, 5, 7, 8), which is contained in the very beginning of the piece (m.1), and is immediately repeated in transposition.\textsuperscript{34}

![Example 40. Six-note set](image)

The second theme (mm. 68-103) is much different from the first. It begins with a solo cello, which is later joined by the piano. The structure here reminds of a classical cadenza. This theme also contains the most lyrical character of this movement. It is portrayed very briefly in the cello (mm. 68-71) and in the piano (mm. 78-83). The theme develops gradually, and reaches its peak in mm. 95-100 where the two instruments play the same note values (sixteenth notes). The third theme begins at m. 103 and is quite similar to the first. Although it suggests a recapitulation, the theme is actually a reversal, which instead of intensifying, “gradually fades away to the interval of the minor third.”\textsuperscript{35}

The sonata’s composition started with the second movement, \textit{Vivace, molto leggiero}. According to Carter, it “verges on a parody of some Americanizing colleagues of the time.”\textsuperscript{36}


\textsuperscript{34} Ibid, 106.

\textsuperscript{35} Ibid, 109.

It could be described also as a “jazzy scherzo,” in which Carter cites almost literally a passage from the third movement of Debussy’s cello sonata:


While the first movement is somewhat reminiscent of jazz music with its texture, the second is more closely related to jazz and pop music in its character. It is constructed in a ternary form comprised of two sections, which alternate (A B A B A) in the style of a scherzo. There is not an established key in this movement. Although the key signature suggests B flat minor, D minor, and B flat major, the real tonal contrast is between the keys of B major and B flat minor, which occurs in the first two measures.  

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The rapid key change makes the movement tonally unstable, which causes the appearance of diatonic passages to look more like an irony, rather than a confirmation of a certain key. According to Carter, the more tonal parts of the movement (for example measures 37 – 40) should be considered as parodies of pop music.\(^{39}\)


\(^{39}\) Ibid.
The third movement, *Adagio*, is interesting primarily due to its tempo variations and meter changes. In his analysis David Schiff separates the tempo in four sections based on their metronome mark: A-MM 70; B-MM 60; C-MM 80; and D-MM 48. According to this deviation, the movement is described as having the form of ABCACD. The A section appears with the minor third, recitative-like motif in the cello at the beginning, the B section accents the semitone relationship of *d* and *e flat* (m. 15), section C (m. 30) is an intensified variation of B, and the D section is a coda. The movement contains fourteen different meters including 3/4, 4/4, 6/16, 9/16, 14/32, etc; which change almost every measure creating the feeling of anxiety and instability in the music.

The last movement, *Allegro*, begins with a repeated by the piano fragment of the cello’s final phrase of the third movement. Similarly to the earlier discussed tempo construction of the third movement, the fourth movement also could be divided into four sections based on the metronome marking: A-MM 120, B-MM 140, C-MM 160, and D-MM 112. If we look at the tempo marking as a structure, we will see that it forms the pattern of ABACABD, which suggests the form of a rondo. The D section, which serves as a long coda, is preceded by the climax of the sonata occurring between measures 146 and 149. An interesting observation could be made in section D: Knowing the fact that the first movement was composed after the fourth, we could assume that the thematic material for the first movement was inspired by the thematic material already existing in the previous three movements. In m. 154 of the fourth movement Carter writes, “Tempo of first movement.” That suggests that the composer had already thought about the first movement and intended to prepare it through the D section of the fourth. Some support for those elements also exist in measures 167-168 and in measures 177-181 where traces from the first movement can be found. These are the quarter notes in the cello, which were later transferred to the piano line of the first movement.

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40 Ibid, 110.
Benjamin Britten’s compositions for cello owe their existence solely to the composer’s friendship and collaboration with Mstislav Rostropovich. The composer met Rostropovich in 1960, and for the next sixteen years the Russian cellist became a source of inspiration for Britten to compose music for the cello. His compositions include a Sonata for Cello and Piano, Op. 65 (1961), Symphony for Cello and Orchestra, Op. 68 (1963), a Cadenza to Haydn’s Cello Concerto in C Major (1964), and four compositions for cello solo: the three suites Opp. 72 (1964), 80 (1967), and 87 (1971); and Tema “Sacher” (1976) written for Paul Sacher’s* seventieth birthday. Although all of these compositions possess a high aesthetic value, the solo suites established themselves as a main representative of Britten’s cello music. In distinction from J.S. Bach’s suites and the suites by Max Reger which were written as cycles, the suites by Britten were composed separately from one another and years apart. This fact suggests that they have somewhat few features in common. Indeed, they differ in character and structure. The reason for including all of them in this project is their shared popularity by the audience. Each one of these three works is frequently recorded and performed in recitals worldwide.

The Suite Op. 72 was the first composition of an intended set of six suites, of which the composer successfully completed only three. They came as a promise made to Rostropovich during one of his and Britten’s tours of England, where the couple had established a chamber music duo. At that time Britten and Rostropovich were scheduled for a recital in Rosehill, Cumberland. During their travel, they were invited to spend the night at a friend’s of Britten’s house, where the hostess was Princess Mary, sister of George V. Excited of the possibility to meet with genuine royalty, Rostropovich decided to greet the princess with a pirouette. Worried about his behavior in the princess’s presence, Britten tried to convince the cellist not to perform his pirouette. However, Rostropovich could not be convinced. During a lunch at Lincoln, the composer made another attempt to dissuade the determined Rostropovich by promising to fulfill any of

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* A distinguished Swiss conductor.
the latter’s wishes—provided he refrained from his pirouette. Rostropovich took the
restaurant’s menu and wrote on it: “I, Benjamin Britten, promise to write six major works
for cello in recompense for which Slava Rostropovich will agree not to perform his
pirouette in front of Princess Mary.”41 Britten agreed, signed the menu, and the two
continued their journey. It is unclear why, but the composer kept his word to the extent of
composing only three of the promised six works. They became what we know today to be
the suites Opp. 72, 80, and 87. The compositional structure of these pieces suggests
Britten’s interest in the old Baroque genres and the genre of the character pieces. The
connection could be seen in the titles of the suites’ movements, which are Canto, Fuga,
Ciaccona, Bordone, Serenata, Marcia, Scherzo, etc.

The first of the suites, Op. 72, was written between November and December
1964, and was premiered by Rostropovich at the 1965 Aldeburgh Festival in England. It
could be described as a “song-cycle without words”42 consisting of six continuously
played movements divided by a Canto: Canto primo and Fuga, Lamento, Canto secondo
and Serenata, Marcia, Canto terzo and Bordone, and Moto perpetuo e Canto quarto. The
first three cantos (songs), which are tonally related, but modified in each repetition, are
all written in double stops and serve as an introduction to the attached to them character
pieces Fuga, Serenata, and Bordone. Although clearly separated from the cantos, the
three character pieces remain closely related to the introductions in their motivic shapes,
characteristic intervals, and improvisatory phrase-structure.43 The final Canto quarto
(which is not clearly separated from the Moto perpetuo and appears indicated as
tranquillo and sostenuto) has the opposite function. It plays the role of an epilogue.

The two-voiced Fuga is maybe the most technically difficult section of the suite.
It is comprised of two sections. The first is dominated by the main subject, and the
second, by the sixteenth-note figurations beginning at m. 37. The main subject is
relatively long (ten measures) and contains three distinct features: the opening scale-like

43 Ibid, 381.
motif of two eighths and a triplet of eighths, the motif of a dotted eighth note and two thirty-second notes, and the motif of the two staccato eighth notes (Ex. 45).


An interesting feature of this movement is the alternation of the two voices. Between measures 77 and 83 Britten “…alternates double stops in one voice with single notes and then a small slurred motive from the other voice. The voices exchange their material in mm. 79-80 (the intervening measures). Not only do the two voices here have different articulations, but for the first four measures of this passage they are widely separated in register.”

The *Lamento* movement is very reminiscent of J.S. Bach’s *Sarabandes* with its expressive melodic line and a slow (*Lento rubato*) tempo. This is the solo-line piece within the suite, lacking any harmonic support with the exception of the one existing in the line itself. This support is provided by the main linear harmonic feature of this movement, an E minor arpeggio, which confirms the E minor key of the movement. This occurs numerous times in different rhythmic variations, and is provided as an ascending and descending passage.


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The second Canto is a brief introduction to the Serenata, which is quite similar in character to the Sérénade of Debussy’s sonata for cello and piano. The similarity can be found not only in the title of the two movements, but also in the extensive use of pizzicato: Britten’s Serenata is played entirely pizzicato, and much of Debussy’s Sérénade is pizzicato.

The Marcia is written in an idiomatic style. It uses the instrument’s open strings and natural harmonics. The march-like main theme is constructed on the foundation of two ostinato elements: the natural harmonics and the drum-like rhythm played col legno saltando on open-string fifths. The peak of the movement comes with its second section, which appears in m. 30 and resembles the “trio” section in a scherzo movement.\(^{45}\) The da capo of the march (m. 48) immediately reminds one of the ABA structure of the Minuets, Bourrées, and Gavottes used in J.S. Bach’s suites.

The Bordone could be accepted as a sound representation of a bagpipe\(^{46}\) achieved through the constant use of an open D string, and the ornamentation attached to it consisting of sixteenth notes and a rhythmical motif of a quarter note and eighth note. The movement consists of two themes: the first—a pizzicato version of a theme from Britten’s violin concerto Op. 15, the second—a gentle phrase in the character of the first subject of Elgar’s cello concerto.\(^{47}\)

The Moto perpetuo is constructed on the basis of a semi-tonal motif of two sixteenths, which gradually transforms itself into the final Canto. Unlike the previous cases in which the character pieces contained traces of the preceding cantos, now the Canto quarto is the section to encourage an association with the thematic material from the Moto perpetuo.

The suite Op. 80 was completed on August 17, 1967 and premiered by Rostropovich a year later, again at the Aldeburgh Festival. It consists of five movements: Declamato (Largo), Fuga (Andante), Scherzo (Allegro molto), Andante lento, and

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Ciaccona (Allegro). A parallel could be made between the beginning of the Declamato and the opening theme of Shostakovich’s Fifth Symphony:48


The movement’s rhapsodic character is in sharp contrast with the character of the Canto from the first suite. While the purpose of the latter was to color the character pieces that followed it, the Declamato serves more as an independent movement, which prepares the entrance of the next Fuga in the same way the Prelude prepares the Fugue in J.S. Bach’s fifth cello suite.

The Fuga of the second suite is of special interest because of the placing of rests in its subject (Ex. 49a).


These rests are an important part of the fugue, as they reserve a place for the notes of the countersubject, which appears later in m. 54 (Ex. 49b). Similarly to the four-voice

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fugue from the *Prelude* from J.S. Bach’s fifth cello suite, Britten’s fugue is constructed with the use of only one voice. This development of a complete fugue with its canonic episode, subject, and a countersubject is described as “…perhaps the most elaborately consistent use of style brisé ever attempted.”

![Example 49b. Britten, Suite for Cello, Op. 80, Mvt. II, meas. 54-57](image)

The *Scherzo* has two main ideas. The first is characterized by the fast tempo of the eighth notes in the beginning, and the second is illustrated very briefly in the lyrical section between measures 66 and 71, also marked “meno mosso”. Although this section is very short, an indication of its existence is provided in advance through the appearance of the theme’s specific rhythmic motif initially found in m. 5.

Traces of thematic material from Britten’s earlier compositions can be found in the fourth movement, *Andante lento*. These are passages from the Cello Symphony’s slow movement, the Wordsworth episode in the *Nocturne*, and the preparation for sacrifice in *Canticle II: Abraham and Isaac*. This movement incorporates mixed playing; pizzicato and arco. The pizzicato’s function is to accompany the slower arco melodic line, which is created on the basis of alternating major and minor thirds. Initially, the pizzicato is used only on open strings, but later (in m. 30) it transforms into an independent chromatic idea and creates a kind of duet with the arco theme recurring from m. 45 on.

The last movement, *Ciaccona*, is the longest section of the suite. It is constructed on the basis of the most common Baroque prototype with its five-bar ground bass and descending tetrachord from tonic to dominant. Although the formal meter is ¾ (so

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characteristic for the original Baroque dance), the movement’s metrical tensions often lean toward a duple, quadruple, and even a quintuple pulsation. The movement’s musical content is based on a theme (which appears also in inversion) and twelve variations. In contrast with the first suite, Op. 80 is more profound in character. It does not contain thematic relationships between the different movements. The only exception could be found in the *tranquillo* section at the end of the *Ciaccona* where a slight reminiscence of the *Declamato* occurs. That suggests an analogy with the cyclic nature of Op. 72.

The third suite (Op. 87) was composed in only nine days, between February and March 1971, and is usually considered the most attractive among the three. Britten brought the manuscript to Rostropovich (who successfully premiered it on December 21, 1974 at the Maltings, Snape) during his visit to Russia in April the same year, but it was decided that the edited version of the piece would not be published* until the cellist was able to premiere it during his next visit to England. This next visit, however, was postponed for quite some time. In October 1970 Rostropovich had written an open letter to the Russian press, in which he defended Alexander Solzhenitzyn, who had been attacked in the Moscow newspapers after being awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature.

In a letter to Britten from May 22, 1972, Rostropovich shared: “To our great chagrin we learned that once again they would not allow us to come to England. The reasons for all this are never told us. Perhaps you could manage somehow to come to our dacha this summer, if only for a week. We could go to Pushkin once again. Ben, your suite is sheer genius. If they forbid me going abroad for a long time please give me permission to play it for the first time in Moscow…Where genuine human love and devotion is concerned we can do without these idiotic “permissions” and “restrictions”.”

A detailed comment on this work was made by the composer himself: “I wrote this suite in the early spring of 1971 and took it as a present to Slava Rostropovich when Peter Pears* and I visited Moscow and Leningrad in April of that year. The occasion was a week of British music, and our programme with the London Symphony Orchestra was made memorable by the

* The suite was published by Faber Music Ltd. in 1976.


* An English tenor and life-long partner of Britten.
fact that both Richter and Rostropovich joined us – surely a unique gesture of Anglo-Russian friendship.

As a tribute to a great Russian musician and patriot I based this suite on Russian themes: the first three tunes were taken from Tchaikovsky’s volumes of folk-song arrangements; the fourth, the “Kontakion” (Hymn for the Departed), from the English Hymnal. When I played the suite through to Dmitri Shostakovich during our visit to Moscow, he remarked that he had been brought up on a different version of the Kontakion. I consulted my friend Bishop Pimen of Saratov and Volgograd, who confirmed that my version was the one he had always known and regularly used. In the score I print both versions, for players to choose whichever they prefer.\footnote{Benjamin Britten: Third Suite for Cello, Op. 87 (London: Faber Music Ltd; 1976) Foreword.} The three “Tchaikovsky” themes derived from the songs: The Grey Eagle, Autumn, and Under the Little Apple Tree. These themes are presented mostly in a varied form throughout the suite. Their original forms appear at the end of the finale where the songs are presented in succession.\footnote{The Cambridge Companion to the Cello, edited by Robin Stowell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 140.} The suite consists of nine movements: Introduzione (Lento), Marcia (Allegro), Canto (Con moto), Barcarola (Lento), Dialogo (Allegretto), Fuga (Andante espressivo), Recitativo (Fantastico), Moto perpetuo (Presto), and Passacaglia (Lento solenne). Although some of the movements hold the same title as the movements from the first suite, their character is quite different. It is based on the movements’ origin, which derive from the different sources discussed above.

The opening Introduzione, for example, is based on the Kontakion. A sign of the hymn could be found in the introduction’s rhythms, which are reminiscent of the rhythms of a chant. In difference with the last, the Introduzione passes through several tonal fields, which are constantly opposed by the open C string played pizzicato. It seems that the note “C” is meant to represent the real tonal sphere in which the suite was composed. A suggestion for that are the work’s last note, and the occurrence in the finale of the Kontakion’s full statement.
The Marcia is comprised of two of Tchaikovsky’s songs. Its opening theme could be related to The Grey Eagle, and the second idea - to the Autumn, which is implanted in the descending and ascending passages of sixteenth notes in thirds.

The third movement, Canto, is based on the folksong Under the Little Apple Tree. Autumn is presented with its complete melody in the Barcarola. It is provided in transposition and is incorporated in the movement’s arpeggio figurations. A reminder of the tonal sphere of “C” is presented again in the form of a pedal note. At first the figurations appear with G as a pedal (which resembles the dominant), and later, a rhythmic variation of these figurations is equipped with C as a pedal, resolving the Dominant-Tonic tension.

The Dialogo consists of two voices. The first is a melodic line derived from both Under the Little Apple Tree and Autumn, and the second, a melodic outline of phrases from the Kontakion incorporated in the pizzicato harmonies. The “C” ground is again sustained through the accompanying pizzicato on the open C string.

While the subject of the Fuga quotes literally Under the Little Apple Tree, the Fantastico’s recitative could be referred clearly to Autumn and The Grey Eagle.

The Kontakion’s opening is suggested again in the Moto perpetuo by the structural unit of a descending third plus a semitone. This unit is rearranged by the reordering of its notes in the Passacaglia. In this way, the relationship between the unit and the chant becomes most obvious. The final reappearance of the three folksongs in their full versions is made gradually after the introduction of the Passacaglia’s opening theme. The listener is led first to Under the Little Apple Tree, followed by Autumn, The Grey Eagle, and Kontakion.

Although all of Britten’s cello compositions were intended as a tribute to Rostropovich, the suite Op.87 was the most personal and affectionate.⁵⁵

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CHAPTER 2

CONCERTI

Sergey Prokofiev:

*Sinfonia Concertante for Cello and Orchestra*, Op. 125 (1952)

While a large number of works in the genre of cello sonata succeeded to establish themselves as pieces with major importance in the cello repertoire of the twentieth century, the compositions for cello and orchestra from the same period that achieved worldwide recognition and became frequent features of orchestras’ repertoire are not so many. Despite the countless concerti composed during the last hundred years, the first symphonic work for cello to become an audience’s favorite did not appear until 1952.


Prokofiev began work on the *Sinfonia Concertante* in 1950 with the initial intention to make a revised version of his cello concerto, Op. 58, commissioned in the early 1930s by Gregor Piatigorsky. This idea came in late 1947 when the composer heard Rostropovich playing his first cello concerto. Inspired by the cellist’s virtuosity, Prokofiev met Rostropovich after the concert and proposed to rewrite the concerto especially for him.\(^{57}\) However, during the compositional process (which took almost two years) the original work became so extensively modified that the composer decided to separate it as a completely new composition. In fact, “Sinfonia Concertante” was not the original title of the piece. According to the manuscript, Prokofiev entitled it “Second


\(^{57}\) Ibid, 484.
Cello Concerto”. During its composing Prokofiev often consulted Rostropovich (who became the dedicatee of the work) about the editing of the cello part. The collaboration between the two musicians on that piece ended in early January 1952, and the Russian press announced the birth of the Sinfonia with an extensive article in Sovetskoe Iskusstvo (Soviet Art) from January 12, 1952. Rostropovich’s advice to Prokofiev was described as “helpful in the revealing of the instrument’s rich melodic and technical capabilities.”

The premiere of the concerto was given on February 18, 1952 by Rostropovich and the Moscow Youth Orchestra conducted by Sviatoslav Richter. The audience and critics did not accept the new work with enthusiasm. Despite the piece’s attractive lyrical themes, many of Prokofiev’s friends and colleagues expressed opinions that it would be better if he reduced the orchestral part and improved the work’s form in general. Influenced by the criticism, Prokofiev spent all of 1952 working on improving the concerto. Based on the independent role of its complicated orchestral part, the composition (in its final version) received the title of “Symphony-Concerto”.

In contrast to the classical structure of a symphony where four movements are present, the Sinfonia Concertante’s structure leans more towards the structure of an instrumental concerto with its three movements: Andante, Allegro giusto, and Andante con moto.

The opening Andante serves as a lyrical introduction to a cyclic work, which incorporates the two most prominent features of Prokofiev’s music: a steady and marked rhythm, and a lyrical melody occurring simultaneously. The characteristic sound of the composer’s works is also found in the typical intervallic successions of sixths, sevenths, and even ninths. The movement consists of two main themes. While the opening one is powerful and at the same time lyrical, the second (starting at m. 69) has an expressive and lighter character. Provided is the opening theme of the movement given to the solo cello. It is accompanied by a firm four eighth-note motif in the orchestra.

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*Allegro giusto* is the largest movement in the piece. In contrast to the majestic and rhapsodic-like first movement, this section of the *Sinfonia* opens with a stormy motto perpetuo-like sixteenth-note figurations. The character of this movement is very close to the character of a Scherzo. The first theme (which appears in m. 23) could be considered as an allabreve version of the opening theme from the first movement:


The second theme appears suddenly in m. 96, and the third – in m. 116. Both themes are similar in character to the opening theme of the first movement, and bring a calm, lyrical mood (despite the $f$ indication of the first theme), the appearance of which is unexpected at this stage of the piece. The established calmness is quickly interrupted by a technically challenging cadenza, probably composed with the extensive help of Rostropovich. A notable similarity could be found between this cadenza and the cadenza from Shostakovich’s First Cello Concerto written six years later. *Sinfonia Concertante* was an inspirational work for Shostakovich, who, after hearing Rostropovich playing it, decided to write a cello concerto on his own. The connecting link between the two compositions is the Russian cellist, who participated actively in the composing and editing of the two concertos.

The final, *Andante con moto*, is the closest in character to the full texture of a symphony. It is in the form of double variations with two leading themes. The first one (Ex. 52) is introduced by the solo cello in the very beginning of the movement, and it
would not be hard for one to imagine it as played by the entire cello section or the strings in general.


This sound effect is fortified by the repeating of the theme in double-stops occurring in the solo cello between measures 11 and 15. The role of these double-stops is to compensate, or also to fill in the missing thickness caused by the thin orchestral texture. A meter change of \( \frac{3}{4} \) appears in m 19. This is the place where the first variation begins. It is given to the solo cello, which plays it simultaneously with the first theme provided by the solo trumpet. The theme is transferred from the trumpet to the solo horn, and from the solo horn, to the flute and clarinet, which in unison with the solo cello transforms the theme into its second variation (mm. 42-53). Due to the pulsation of the \( \frac{3}{4} \) meter (as opposed to the \( \frac{3}{2} \) meter from the beginning), the character of the theme changes from relatively heavy, to a waltz-like music. While the two pairs of instruments (flute and cello, clarinet and cello) are “dancing” together, the rhythmic support is maintained by the first variation played by the first violins. A short cadenza appears between measures 73 and 105 followed by the third variation of the theme. The second theme of the movement is marked *Allegretto* and is initially provided by the bassoon (Ex. 53):

It is repeated in double-stops by the cello, which introduces also the theme’s first variation in m. 246. The second variation is marked Allegro marcato. An exceptionally powerful moment is the theme’s appearance in the brass section between measures 289 and 311. A short coda (mm. 312-336), serving as a bridge, leads the material back to the opening theme and its fourth variation marked Poco meno mosso. The fifth variation (mm. 349-362) is a transposition of the varied material in B flat minor, where the leading role is given to pairs of trumpets and oboes. The movement closes with a two-part coda beginning in m. 363. This section starts with a slow cello solo theme, which suddenly transforms into forte E major arpeggios leading straight to the end of the work.

With Sinfonia Concertante Prokofiev enriches not only the cello literature, but the symphonic literature as well. This work does not restrain itself in the limitations of the usual performance practices, but expands the arsenal of the cello technique even further. With its complicated technical requirements (jumps, arco and pizzicato changes, double and quadruple stops, fast passage work, etc.) the piece could be easily added to a list of the most difficult examples in the cello repertoire.

Dmitri Shostakovich:

Concerto for Cello and Orchestra, Op. 107(1959)

“We need brave music. I mean brave, because it is truthful”
Dmitri Shostakovich

Some call Shostakovich the most important Soviet composer, which may be true or may not be true, but doubtlessly he will be recognized decades and even centuries from now as one of the most important musical voices and figures of the twentieth century in the same way as the century will be remembered as a period of dictatorship, repression, and genocide. Shostakovich's musical career took place entirely within the
Soviet Union, mostly under Stalin’s severe regime. During his rule, Stalin ordered about forty million of his own Russian people brutally killed. One would expect that Shostakovich’s music would be a reflection of this tragedy and repression, which often appeared to be the day-to-day way of life in the former USSR. The composer lived his life in fear, expecting to be arrested any day, which had a great impact on his music. Stravinsky once said of Shostakovich that he was one of the most frightened men he had ever met. The power and pathos of his music is a clear representation of his time. The *Cello Concerto No.1*, Op.107 was written in 1959, years after Stalin’s death, but in order to present this extraordinary musical creation I would like to bring your attention back in time, so you can have a better understanding of the historical events that influenced Shostakovich and his music.

Formalism was a stream of Russian literary criticism that existed from 1915 to about 1930. Originally it had to do with the analysis and aesthetics of language, but it was soon applied to any art form adhering to models or rules. The formalist movement ignored social or political elements in art, and ignored the historical background of a work's creation. Formalists cared about art's patterns and structure, not its “meaning.” This later became the official Marxist doctrine of art, the Socialist Realism. It was officially declared that Socialist Realism was adopted as the style of Soviet art, music, and literature at the First Congress of Soviet Writers in 1934. Andrei Zhdanov and Maxim Gorky articulated the doctrine at the Congress. All the artists were absolutely required to produce visual art, music and literature only according to the rules of this official style. Socialist Realism insisted that the art should mirror the “real” life. The Social Realism as a style was very suitable for the official doctrine of the Communist Party, proclaiming the equality between people, the “bright” future, and the building of the communist society as a whole. As such, the Social Realism was very appropriate and used as a strong implement from the propaganda machine. A variety of visual images, symbols, and musical pieces demonstrated “the bright communist reality” and the building of the communist life, society, and future - assuring and encouraging people to believe in what they see. As such it was becoming a strong instrument of propaganda used by the Communist party. In the mid 1930s, the statutes of the Soviet Composer’s Union clearly made Socialist Realism the only acceptable approach (or style) to music.
Eventually, the terms “formalism” and “socialist realism” lost any specific meaning. Anything that was so innovative that it exceeded the intellectual grasp of untutored peasants was condemned as formalist. Anything that promoted the party's social goals was welcomed as socialist realism. This was not an artistic climate conducive to the development of the young Shostakovich, who had made a brilliant compositional debut at the age of eighteen with his first symphony. In 1934 came the premiere of his opera *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District*, which was dealing with adultery, murder, and suicide in a bourgeois home in Czarist Russia. The work was initially hailed as a model of socialist realism, but two years later it was assaulted in a famous Pravda article entitled *Chaos Instead of Music*. The attack devastated Shostakovich. He was forced to shelve the innovative scores he was working on (including a grim, complex fourth symphony), and softened his style.

Shostakovich’s next major work had an immediate success at home and abroad. This was his fifth symphony, which Shostakovich subtitled *A Soviet Artist's Reply to Just Criticism*. After Stalin's death in 1953 Shostakovich and his friends and colleagues (Soviet composers who had been threatened by a cultural purge in 1948) found the artistic climate more conducive to individual expression. From the mid 1950s to his death in 1975 Shostakovich wrote music that was increasingly brooding and experimental, finally free of optimistic facades. Any seemingly joyful moments in these late works were thickly laced with irony. Four years after the composer's death, Solomon Volkov published in the West a book entitled: *Testimony, The Memoirs of Dmitri Shostakovich.* According to the *Testimony*, Shostakovich intended even his most banal music of the Stalin years to be ironic, a veiled criticism of the Soviet leadership.

Shostakovich was not as innovative as Stravinsky, or as revolutionary as Schoenberg, but he expressed such powerful emotional truths for his people and for posterity, and he did so in a way that allowed him to survive. That is in itself a great achievement.

Born in St. Petersburg in 1906, he received his first musical lessons from his mother who was a professional pianist. Later, he studied with Shteynberg at the Petrograd

Conservatory during the period of 1919-1925. His graduation piece was his *Symphony No.1*, (mentioned earlier) which brought him early international attention. His creative development, however, was determined more by events at home. Like many Soviet composers of his generation, he tried to reconcile the musical revolutions of his time with the urge to give a voice to revolutionary socialism, most conspicuously in his next two symphonies, *October* (No.2), and *The First of May* (No.3), both with choral finales. At the same time he used what he knew of contemporary Western music (perhaps Prokofiev and Krenek mostly) to give a sharp grotesque and mechanical movement to his opera *The Nose*, which definitely had a satiric character. At the same time he was also expressing irony in major works for the ballet like *The Age of Gold*, *The Bolt*, and also the movie *New Babylon*. Shostakovich was pronounced as one of the greatest composers of the twentieth century. During his sixty-nine year life, he wrote a great number of works including fifteen symphonies, six concerti for solo instrument and orchestra (two piano, two cello and two violin), three sonatas (for cello, violin and viola), two trios, fifteen quartets, many songs, operas, choir music, four ballet suites, film music, orchestrations, and arrangements. Although it is probably not his most famous piece, the *Concerto for Cello and Orchestra, Op. 107* can be considered as one of the greatest pieces ever written for solo instrument and orchestra. It also can be measured as a symphonic work with an extremely big influence on the audience.

The creation of this work has a long history. The idea of composing a concerto for cello comes from the creation of Shostakovich’s *Sonata for Cello and Piano, Op. 40* (1934). In 1943 Mstislav Rostropovich began to study instrumentation and harmony with Shostakovich at the Moscow Conservatory, and in the next few years their professional relationship developed into a close friendship. This connection, combined with Shostakovich’s ideas for writing a bigger piece for cello, led the composer to write a concerto for cello and orchestra dedicated to Rostropovich, who received its manuscript on August 2, 1959. Learned and memorized in just four days, the work was played for the composer at his private *dacha* on August 6 with pianist Alexander Dedukhin. The first official performance was just a few months later, on October 4, with Yevgeny Mravinsky
and the Leningrad Philharmonic.\textsuperscript{59} With the examples below I would like to make the attempt to look at the music in depth, and to reveal some of its main and most important characteristics.

The first movement is marked \textit{Allegretto}. Usually, this mark is known as a tempo mark in pieces with happy and light character, but in Shostakovich’s compositions it frequently means grotesqueness. Its timing is approximately six minutes, but even in this short period of time, the Russian composer had succeeded in developing the full idea of musically expressed Social Realism. This movement is unusual for the fact that its basic tempo is considerably faster than most of Shostakovich’s opening sections.\textsuperscript{60} The meter is irregular, comprised of alternating \textit{allabreve} and 3/2, and the sound colors are predominantly dark. This movement contains only two themes: The opening theme consists of four-note motif of $g, f\ flat, c\ flat, and b\ flat$ (Ex. 54A), which is constantly present throughout the movement, sometimes in transposition, in the different instrumental sections of the orchestra. This could be considered as the “leit motif” of the movement. The second theme (Ex. 54B) appears in m. 86 and contrasts the first theme extremely. In fact, the two themes are complete antipodes: The first is short and marked, while the second is large and sustained:

\begin{align*}
\text{A} & \\
\text{B}
\end{align*}

Example 54. Shostakovich, \textit{Cello Concerto No. 1}, Mvt. I, meas. 1-9 (A) and 86-90 (B)


An interesting reversal of roles appears in m. 260. At that point the only playing instruments are the French horn and the solo cello. However, this time the soloist is the horn, which takes over the second theme, while the cello accompanies it with the orchestra part of m. 82. I would not think that one needs a big imagination to see in this duet a war picture. If so, then the solo cello would be the army, and the solo horn would be the army horn playing, while the soldiers march on The Red Square in Moscow for the annual military parade on May 9.*

The second movement is *Moderato*. Similarly to other compositions of his, Shostakovich based it on a melody of a Jewish folk song presented initially by the strings, and later by the horn. This movement expresses profoundly deep and sacred feelings. In my opinion it can even be compared with Mozart’s *Requiem* in its influence. It can be considered as a one-movement requiem based on the largeness of the Russian spirit and the reality of the life in the Soviet Union at that time. We can find inside it such feelings like deep sorrow (the beginning), a reminiscence of all people killed during the World War II and in the Russian GULAGs, and also a hard anger. The movement closes with a remarkably eerie passage in which the melody from the opening is shared between the cello, playing in harmonics and the celesta.

The third movement is a *Cadenza*. As the title suggests, this is a section given solely to the solo cello. Different from the usual cadenzas where the soloist exhibits his instrumental technique, Shostakovich’s written-out cadenzas are primarily oriented towards expanding and elaborating on the movements they have been attached to (usually the slow movements, as is the case here). Three times it leads to a series of punctuations in pizzicato whose rhythm recalls the first movement’s motto. Then it gradually builds up speed and transforms into a bridge to the finale.62

The fourth movement, *Allegro con brio*, is typical of the usual ironic character of Shostakovich’s fourth movements. It seems to be the composer’s structural signature when it comes to character. The movement is quite similar to the fourth movements of

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* The Ninth of May was considered one of the most important holydays in the former USSR. On this day Nazi Germany officially submitted its capitulation to the Soviet Union.


62 Ibid.
Shostakovich’s *Cello Sonata in D Minor*, Op. 40 and the *Piano Trio Op. 67*. This last movement brings the fastest music we have heard so far in the concerto. The finale of the concerto contains a melody, which may be described as “happy music” or like a “funny children tune”, but certainly, Shostakovich had quite different thoughts in mind.

A phrase appears in the strings close to the beginning of the finale based on one of Stalin’s favorite songs called *Suliko*. The phrase consists of five notes that represent only fragments of the song. Even Rostropovich did not notice the allusion right away: six years after Stalin’s death one could not be too careful.63

Shostakovich’s *First Cello Concerto* can be acknowledged as a musical creation with great significance. This is a piece not only recognized as a great composition, but also as a representation of the spirit of a phenomenal period of the history of mankind. In her memoirs Galina Vishnevskaya, Rostropovich’s wife, recalls words of Shostakovich, which he often used in their conversations: “Don’t waste your efforts. Work, play. You are living here, in this country, and you must see everything as it really is. Don’t create illusions. There’s no other life. There can’t be any. Just be thankful that you’re still allowed to breathe.”

Witold Lutosławski:

Concerto for Cello and Orchestra (1970)

Witold Lutosławski was born on January 13, 1913 in Warsaw, Poland. His name became known in the Polish musical society in 1938 when Polish conductor Grzegorz Fitelberg premiered his *Symphonic Variations* (1936-8). Shortly after the event, World War II began and the promising career of the young composer was put on hold. Lutosławski was drafted in the Polish army and soon after arriving at the front line; was captured by the Germans and became a prisoner of war. After he escaped while being marched to prison camp, Lutosławski returned to his musical practices by forming a piano duet with Andrzej Panufnik, a fellow composer and a pianist. With that ensemble Lutosławski appeared in many concerts, most of which were performed for only a

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63 Ibid, 436.
selected circle of musicians. The work which built a name for the two artists was Lutosławski’s *Variations on a Theme of Paganini* (1941), a piece based on a theme from the violinist’s Twenty-Fourth Caprice for solo violin. After the war, a pro-soviet government was established in Poland, and very quickly Lutosławski found himself in the same situation as Shostakovich did in the Soviet Union. Following the Soviet doctrine of anti-formalism, the Polish government condemned Lutosławski’s First Symphony as “formalist”, and prohibited its performance. It was the first work to be officially banned in Poland. From that moment on, the doors for Lutosławski’s compositional career were closed. In order to promote his music, he had to write only simple music for films and radio, and to arrange folk songs.  

In early 1960s, a new tendency in music began to emerge. Many composers in Europe and the United States (such as John Cage, Iannis Xenakis, Pierre Boulez, and Karlheinz Stockhausen) started to write music which to a great extent depended on the composing abilities of the performers for whom it was written. The new approach was called *Aleatory* (from the Latin *alea*, “dice”). The term was first used by Pierre Boulez in an article entitled *Aléa*, which he wrote in 1957 for the *Nouvelle Revue Française*, and was referring to “compositions in which some element of chance or unpredictability plays a significant role.” In that article Boulez expressed the opinion that the composers who wrote music in the aleatoric style were bringing the performer “back into the creative role after many years during which he has been asked merely to play the text as ‘objectively’ as possible” and transforming him again from “an interpreter-robot of bewildered precision [to] an involved interpreter freed to make his own choices.”

After Stalin died in 1953 Khrushchev’s era began, the suppression of artists in Eastern Europe began to let up. The Soviet government eased the restrictions on cultural exchange with the West, and that made it possible for many artists in the Eastern bloc to get acquainted with the latest achievements of the musical world. Around 1958 Lutosławski had the chance to hear a broadcast of John Cage’s *Concerto for Piano and Orchestra*, which immediately got him interested with its aleatoric elements. Gradually,

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64 Ibid, 245.
65 Ibid, 246.
66 Ibid.
between 1958 and 1960, the composer shifted his compositional technique towards the aleatoric style. His last composition to employ his old style of composing was *Three Postludes for Orchestra* completed in 1960.

Lutosławski’s compositions for the cello are limited to only three examples: *Bucolics* for viola and cello (a transcription from the original for piano [1952] made by the composer in 1962), *Concerto for Cello and Orchestra* (1969-70), and *Sacher Variation* for unaccompanied cello (1975), commissioned by Rostropovich and dedicated to Paul Sacher in honor of his seventieth birthday.

The *Concerto for Cello and Orchestra* deserves its place in this current treatise due to its status of the world’s most famous example of a cello composition in the aleatoric style. The work (as many of the cello compositions from the second half of the twentieth century) was requested by, and later dedicated to, Mstislav Rostropovich. The cellist requested from Lutosławski a cello concerto as early as the 1950s, but due to the composer’s business at that time, the work on the piece did not begin until 1969. The concerto was commissioned by the London’s Royal Philharmonic Society and the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation in 1968, and was premiered by Rostropovich and Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra in London on October 14, 1970. The genre of the work was not particularly determined by the Society, but under the constant insisting of Rostropovich, Lutosławski decided to use that opportunity and write a cello concerto. In the beginning of the compositional process, Rostropovich told Lutosławski to not worry about ‘cellistic’ problems. He wanted the composer to write the music he wanted, and he (Rostropovich) would figure out how to arrange the technically ‘unplayable’ parts. Later, in a comment on the work, Rostropovich admitted that he had had to work out some fingerings that were completely new to himself too, even after thirty years of performance.⁶⁷ Along with a limitless technique, the concerto also requires the performer to possess a vivid imagination. Asked about his interpretation of the work, Rostropovich replied: “This is the Central Committee’ at full strength,” referring to the part of the concerto where the brass brutally interrupts the lyrical line in the strings.

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⁶⁷ Ibid, 249.

* The Central Committee of the Communist Party of the USSR.
Rostropovich says that it makes him always cry “because here I die,” referring probably to the way he felt when played that moment. Another association made by Galina Vishnevskaya is that the concerto represents “the story of a twentieth century Don Quixote.” Despite all of these picturesque comparisons, however, in a conversation with Polish critic Tadeusz Kaciński about the concerto and Rostropovich’s interpretation, Lutosławski comments that he would refrain from such an analogy, which in some aspects was the one least intended by him, and that he was “horrified” by the fact that one could imply in his work things he never thought of.

The structure of Lutosławski’s cello concerto strongly differs from the structure of the typical instrumental concerto. In contrast to the classical examples of the genre where the solo instrument stands apart from the orchestra’s texture and shows off its musical and technical capabilities, the concerto by Lutosławski was intended primarily as an orchestral composition in which the solo cello has at some moments an equal role to the orchestra, and sometimes the leading role. Virtuosity for its own sake is abandoned. It arises naturally from the completely different approach to the concerto where the composition does not serve the solo instrument’s specifics, but the solo instrument serves as the best tool for the complete representation of the piece’s general idea. One may think that being a part of the orchestra’s texture makes the solo cello part not so difficult for playing, but in reality, it presents formidable technical problems. Another departure from traditional concerto style is seen in the lack of cadenza. Usually, a cadenza is attached to at least one of the concerto’s movements, or is written in the form of a separate movement, but in Lutosławski’s concerto it is completely missing. The clearly separated structure of a fast-slow-fast movement is also missing.

The work consists of four sections played without interruption: an introduction of the solo cello, a cycle of four episodes (which could be accepted as the first movement in the traditional scheme), a slow cantilena, and a finale with coda.

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68 Ibid.


The solo cello introduction is improvisatory in nature. The only sign of a premeditated idea is the repeated single note D marked *piano indifferente*. It is the source of various figures (marked *grazioso*, *un poco buffo*, etc.) which emerge and disappear, but the D itself always keeps coming back. The cello line is quickly interrupted by the *fortissimo* “irascible”\(^71\) phrase in the brass played initially by three trumpets. This interruption, as well as the ones that appear later in the concerto, are derived from the same hexachord of thirdless harmony seen in Lutosławski’s String Quartet and Second Symphony.\(^72\)

While the introduction could be accepted as a monologue of the cello, the cycle of the four episodes resembles a dialog between the soloist and the different groups of the orchestra. All of the episodes start with the same pattern: the solo cello begins with pizzicato notes, and is later joined by the particular orchestral group. The first episode introduces the clarinet, the harp, and the strings in a response to the cello; the second episode adds the flute, bass clarinet, percussion, and keyboards; the third episode includes a mixture of the groups from the previous two episodes and is more developed; and the fourth episode is the textural peak of the movement including all of the instrumental groups except the brass. The brass is excluded from the dialog with the solo cello, and again has only an interrupting role. These interruptions, however, have a major function in the movement by separating the different episodes from each other. At its second appearance the interruption is slightly modified. The three trumpets from the first interruption are now replaced by two trumpets and a trombone. The third interruption is given to the three trombones, and the interruption that marks the beginning of the fourth episode, is given back to the three trumpets. The fifth interruption combines trumpets and trombones together, and serves as a transition to the next movement.

The cantilena functions as the second movement of the concerto. It begins with the returning of the solo cello to the note D from the introduction. Gradually, this D transforms into a slow melody, as more and more string instruments are added to it with the purpose to enforce the arising dramatic effect. In contrast to the previous movement where soloist and orchestra shared importance through their dialogue, in this movement

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\(^72\) Ibid.
the solo cello is the lonely impersonator of Lutosławski’s idea. Maybe it was this movement that Galina Vishnevskaya referred to when comparing the concerto with Don Quixote. Indeed, the character of this section of the work is reminiscent of the finale of Strauss’s piece.

The beginning of the concerto’s last movement is marked by the sudden dissonant outburst of the brass, appearing right in the middle of the cantilena’s approaching climax. In fact, this interruption (this time from the entire brass section) comes completely unexpected. This is probably the moment that Rostropovich referred to as “the Central Committee at full strength.” In contrast to the second movement where the solo cello and orchestra complemented each other, in this final stage of the work they battle. It seems that the goal of the entire orchestra is to silence the cello. But still it can be heard. Another sudden change in the music appears. The tempo reaches the fastest speed heard so far, as the cello climbs in the higher register with the ascending line of E-flat, F, G, and A. The concerto finishes with repeated A’s in the cello, spaced rhythmically, the same way as the D’s were in the introduction, but this time without the mark of indifferenté.\(^{73}\)

Alfred Schnittke:

Concerto for Cello and Orchestra No. 2 (1990)

Alfred Schnittke has become one of the most frequently performed Russian composers in Europe and his compositions appear frequently on the concert programs of contemporary music worldwide. Although Schnittke was not a string player himself, he dedicated a large amount of his compositional work to the string instruments. Among the most popular examples of his music are: the concerti for violin, for viola, and for cello; the concerti grossi featuring solo string instruments; his string quartets and a string trio; and the sonatas for violin and for cello. As it has become a regular practice throughout the history of music, Schnittke received his inspiration to compose for string instruments

from his collaboration with many outstanding performers (such as Gidon Kremer, Tatiana Grindenko, Mark Lubotsky, Oleg Kagan, Yuri Bashmet, Natalia Gutman and Alexander Ivashkin) to whom he dedicated his works. \(^{74}\) Related to the cello literature, his contribution is more than significant. Schnittke’s compositions for the cello as a solo instrument include: \textit{Dialogue} for cello and seven instruments (1965), \textit{Hymnus II} for cello and double bass (1974), Sonata for Cello and Piano No. 1 (1978), Concerto Grosso No. 2 for violin and cello (1981-2), Concerto for Cello and Orchestra No. 1 (1985-6), \textit{Klingende Buchstaben} for solo cello (1988), \textit{Madrigal in Memoriam Oleg Kagan} for solo cello (1990), Concerto for Cello and Orchestra No. 2 (1990), \textit{Musica Nostalgica} for cello and piano (1992), \textit{Improvisation} for solo cello (1993), Sonata for Cello and Piano No. 2 (1994), and \textit{Concerto for Three} for violin, viola, cello, and string orchestra (1994). The reason for including Schnittke’s Second Cello Concerto in this project is based on the fact that this work is by now the latest composition for cello and orchestra to successfully establish itself as a major work in that genre to date.

Schnittke’s First Cello Concerto was dedicated to Natalia Gutman and is his first major composition for the cello since the Sonata for Cello and Piano of 1978. The composition of the work began in the spring of 1985 as a commission for the inauguration of the Gasteig Cultural Centre in Munich, but was interrupted shortly thereafter by a stroke, which struck the composer and left him in a hospital for several weeks. Initially the concerto was planned as a three-movement piece (\textit{Pesante-Largo-Allegro vivace}), but after making several revisions, Schnittke decided to add a forth, calmer movement (\textit{Largo}), which he thought will help in the resolving of the accumulated tension in the \textit{Allegro vivace}. The concerto was premiered on May 7, 1986 in Munich by Natalia Gutman and the Munich Philharmonic Orchestra. In a comment on the work Gutman shared that Schnittke “finished everything himself and only then was I shown the score. The Concerto is a work of absolute genius written in the wake of his terrible illness, something which clearly had an effect on the work’s mood and the philosophical questions which it poses.

\(^{74}\) Jürgen Köchel, \textit{Alfred Schnittke} (Sony CD-SK 48241; 1992), 4.
There is no doubt in my mind that it ranks with the very finest works composed for my instrument.”

The history of the Second Cello Concerto begins four years later. At that time Schnittke was attending as a guest the Berlin College of Science, and during his stay at a villa in Berlin-Grunewald, decided to start work on another cello composition. Similarly to the case of Lutosławski’s Cello Concerto, Rostropovich asked Schnittke to write a cello concerto for him almost immediately after their acquaintance in 1974. However, at that time Rostropovich was already in trouble with the Soviet government due to his support of Solzhenitzyn in 1970. Soon after the two musicians met, Rostropovich had to leave the Soviet Union. For many years the composer and the cellist did not have the chance to discuss the composition of a cello concerto. Rostropovich was not allowed to go back to the Soviet Union, and Schnittke was not permitted to leave it. In the mid 1980s the strong communist regimes of Leonid Brezhnev and Yuri Andropov in the Soviet Union were replaced by the more liberal ruling of Mikhail Gorbachev. This change made the migration of people from East to West easier, and thus, the communication between the two musicians - possible. Schnittke and Rostropovich resumed contact in 1986, and the real planning of a second cello concerto began.

Schnittke considers this work essentially different from his First Cello Concerto. Not only it structurally differs from its predecessor, but also possesses a different character: “Despite the cello’s predominant tone, there is a dramatic build-up of a contrasting orchestral tone,” says Schnittke.

The concerto consists of five movements arranged symmetrically around a central Lento. The tempo structure is slow-fast-slow-fast-slow with a gradually decreasing tempo in the slow movements, and gradually increasing in the fast. The slow movements are as follows: Moderato (I), Lento (III), and Grave (V), and the fast are Allegro (II) and Allegretto vivo (IV).

The opening Moderato serves as a prelude to the next four movements. It is the shortest movement of all with performing time of no more than three minutes. It contains the main four-note motif around which the concerto is constructed (Ex. 55). This motif is

75 Julian Haylock, Schumann and Schnittke: Cello Concertos (EMI CD-CDC 7 54443 2; 1992), 3.
76 Jürgen Köchel, Alfred Schnittke (Sony CD-SK 48241; 1992), 4.
provided by the solo cello in the very beginning of the piece, and contains in itself the
dominant emotional character in which the concerto is set up. To consider this four-note
motif as a theme into itself would be misguided, however it does provide the basis for a
seven measure long phrase:

Example 55. Schnittke, *Cello Concerto No. 2*, Mvt. I, meas. 1-7

The second movement, *Allegro*, is comprised of three alternating sections, each of
which derives its material from the first movement’s motif. The first section is the battle
between the solo cello and the orchestra. Here the two forces try to ‘outrun’ each other,
not in the sense of tempo, but in the sense of rhythm. The movement begins with obvious
and intentional rhythmic mismatching between the solo cello, bass section, and the
woodwinds, achieved through the misplacing of their syncopations. It seems that
sometimes the cello leads the race, sometimes the basses, and sometimes the woodwinds.
Schnittke achieved this inconsistency mainly through the use of the rhythmical unit of
triplets of quarters, which being vertically misplaced creates the feeling that the
instrument that played it ‘got the advantage.’ After this race, the second section appears.
At this point (between numbers 12 and 13*) it seems that the solo cello along with the
cello section (which enforces its point by playing in the solo cello’s rests) engages the
clarinet in a sort of a dialogue. This dialogue shifts from the cello and clarinet to the cello
and bassoon (between numbers 13 and 14), and from the cello and bassoon - to the cello
and the brass section (between numbers 14 and 15). A short waltz-like melody appears
between numbers 15 and 16 as a connection between the dialogue and the third section of
the movement. This section (marked *Meno mosso*) consists of the concerto’s opening
phrase (provided by the strings and percussion) and its four variations. The first variation
is a rhythmic modification of the phrase that appears between measures 195 and 200 (Ex.
56):

Example 56. Schnittke, *Cello Concerto No. 2*, Mvt. II, meas. 195-200

The second variation (Ex. 57) is a harmonized version of the phrase that emerges from the cello figurations connecting it with the first variation. It is immediately repeated in transposition:

Example 57. Schnittke, *Cello Concerto No. 2*, Mvt. II, meas. 215-219

The third variation (numbers 42-43) is very similar to the first with its eighth-note modification of the phrase. The fourth variation, starting at number 43, is actually the closest one to the original. This is the only variation in which the solo cello does not participate. It is given to the strings and percussion only.

The *Lento* differs strongly from the other movements. Although to some extent it could be related to the first and fifth movements, in a way it constitutes an independent piece. There is no significant thematic material going on, and for one it would be hard to find any relationship with the previous two movements. A short cadenza is attached to the *Lento*, which through an *attacca* glissando leads to the fourth movement.

The *Allegretto vivo* is a typical example of a final movement of an instrumental concerto. After a massive eighteen measure long orchestral introduction, the solo cello
opens with fast sixteenth-note figurations. As an antipode to the passages in the cello, a relatively slow-moving background theme is introduced first by the horn, and later by the trumpet. At first glance this theme does not seem to be of an importance, but with the movement’s unfolding it becomes obvious that it is the major structural unit on which the movement stands. A comparison to a rondo could be made due to the theme’s cyclic reappearance. In a way, it could be considered as the A section of the rondo, which sometimes returns in the original form, and sometimes in a varied one. The movement ends with a remarkable similarity to the end of the third movement: both of them have an attached fifteen measure long cadenza, and an ascending glissando attacca.

The Grave begins with the fourth movement’s final chord. Although it is officially assigned to the fifth movement, the chord’s function is to conclude the fourth movement’s activity, which otherwise would remain unfinished. The actual fifth movement begins in its fifth measure with a stunning passacaglia never written before for the cello. Schnittke considers this passacaglia “the most important part of the work”: “Above the chorale of the orchestral groups, mirroring itself in a thousand ways, rises the unending recitative of the cello; at times it progresses thematically, at times it only reacts spontaneously. The music comes to a dramatic climax shortly before the end. This is followed by diminishing orchestral tones, which become increasingly sinister and draw out the sound of this ‘clock of life’ inaudibly, into eternity. – I should add that this passacaglia theme comes from some film music I composed in 1973-74, the music to Elem Klimov’s film The Agony, which tells of Russia’s last weeks before the night fell: the night that lasted for over seventy years in the history of the country.”

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77 Jürgen Köchel, Alfred Schnittke (Sony CD-SK 48241; 1992), 5.
After reviewing all compositions presented in this treatise, one can clearly see the development of the cello literature in the last hundred years. At the beginning of the twentieth century, composers still followed the rules of composition inherited from Romanticism. The first real break in the way of composing occurred around the second decade of the century when a small group of Austrian composers (Arnold Schoenberg, Alban Berg, and Anton Webern) known as the Second Viennese School began to experiment with an increasingly dissonant pitch language. This led to the development of the twelve-note method and the first atonal pieces. The *Three Little Pieces, Op. 11* by Webern was the first composition for cello in which a composer abandoned the tonal limitations of a certain key. Since then, the music for cello has passed through many stages of development and finally reached a state in which no rules and restrictions for its composition apply. The last work listed in this project (Schnittke’s second cello concerto) dates from 1990. Although many compositions for the instrument had been written in the last seventeen years, no other cello piece has established itself as a masterpiece worthy of the attention of those included here. The reasons for that can be related to different factors. As many examples in the history of music literature show (e.g. J.S. Bach’s *St. Mathew’s Passion* and *Suites for Solo Cello*, Kodály’s *Sonata for Solo Cello, Op. 8*, Webern’s *Three Little Pieces, Op. 11*, etc.), a piece frequently needs time to be appreciated. J.S. Bach’s *St. Mathew’s Passion* was discovered by Mendelssohn eighty years after its composition. Bach’s *Suites for Solo Cello* were introduced by Pablo Casals to the large audience nearly two centuries after they were composed, and Kodály’s *Sonata for Solo Cello, Op. 8* was known only in Hungary for more than two decades before it was introduced in the West by Janos Starker. All this suggests that although today’s compositions remain largely unknown, they may gain popularity and recognition sometime in the future. Another factor that affects the creation of new pieces for cello is the constant, and nowadays extremely fast, development of technology. With the latest advancements in computer science, composers are tempted to experiment with a large variety of electronic sounds never seen before. This, to some extent, makes the
composing for instruments with a ‘simple’ (according to today’s standards) sound not that attractive to composers.

Another major source of inspiration for authors to write works for solo instruments was their friendship with a certain performer. Related to the cello, this performer was Mstislav Rostropovich. Since the 1950s he had been one of the major forces that drove the expansion of the cello repertoire. Each one of the pieces composed after 1950 and discussed in this treatise was either commissioned, or inspired by the Russian cellist. He actively participated in their composition giving valuable advice to composers related to the cello’s instrumental specifications. One of his major contributions to the expansion of the cello repertoire is his work on Prokofiev's Cello Concertino. Along with Dmitri Kabalevsky, Rostropovich completed the work after the composer's death. Among the composers who wrote especially for Rostropovich were Shostakovich, Prokofiev, Britten, Bernstein, Schnittke, Khachaturian, Messiaen, Dutilleux, Bernstein, Piazzolla, Lutosławski, and Penderecki. Rostropovich gave the first performances of both of Shostakovich's cello concerti. He introduced the composer’s First Concerto to London and began an association with Benjamin Britten. Britten dedicated his Cello Sonata, three Solo Suites, and his Cello Symphony to Rostropovich, who gave their first performances. He was the first performer of one hundred and seventeen pieces. But Rostropovich’s contribution to the cello art was not limited only to his participation in the composition of new pieces for the instrument. He had a big influence on the younger generation of cellists as well. Many have openly acknowledged their debt to his example. In the Daily Telegraph Julian Lloyd Webber called him "probably the greatest cellist of all time."  

In addition to his career as a performer, Rostropovich also appeared frequently as a conductor. One of his first bigger appearances in that field was in 1967 when he conducted Tchaikovsky’s opera Eugene Onegin at the Bolshoi Theater. Rostropovich fought for art without borders, freedom of speech and democratic values, which resulted


in his prosecution by the Soviet regime. His friendship with Alexander Solzhenitsyn and his support for dissidents led to the loss of his Soviet citizenship in 1978. The cellist was banned from several musical ensembles because of his public opposition to the USSR's restriction of cultural freedom. Rostropovich left the USSR in 1974 with his wife and children and settled in the United States. He received many international awards, including the French Legion of Honour, and honorary doctorates from the most prestigious international universities. He was an activist, fighting for freedom of expression in art and politics. Being an ambassador for UNESCO, Rostropovich supported many educational and cultural projects. He and his wife, Galina Vishnevskaya, started a foundation to stimulate social projects and activities. A museum opened with his name in Baku on March 4, 2002. Rostropovich's instrument is the 1711 Duport Stradivarius considered to be one of the greatest instruments ever made. With his death in April, 2007 the music world lost one of its greatest talents, supporters, and contributors.
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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Hristo Ivanov received the Doctor of Music degree in cello performance from the Florida State University in 2007 where he was a student of Lubomir Georgiev, David Bjella, and Gregory Sauer. Mr. Ivanov is a native of Sofia, Bulgaria and a graduate of the Bulgarian State Academy of Music where he studied cello with Prof. Zdravko Yordanov. Hristo Ivanov holds a Master of Music degree from the University of South Florida where he was a student of Scott Kluksdahl and Lowell Adams. During that time Mr. Ivanov was also a cellist of the university’s Presidential Piano Trio with which he had performances for the Clarion Society, Tampa Bay Performing Arts Center, and the Florida College. Mr. Ivanov has been a member of the Tallahassee Symphony Orchestra, the Valdosta Symphony Orchestra, the Albany (GA) Symphony Orchestra, the Orlando Philharmonic, and the Southwest Florida Symphony.