Jennifer Higdon's Violin Concerto: The Genesis of a Twenty-First Century Work

Max Brenton Harkey Williams
THE FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF MUSIC

JENNIFER HIGDON’S VIOLIN CONCERTO:
THE GENESIS OF A TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY WORK

By

MAX BRENTON HARKEY WILLIAMS

A Treatise submitted to the
College of Music
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Musical Arts

Degree Awarded:
Spring Semester, 2010
The members of the committee approve the treatise of Max Brenton Harkey Williams defended on March 5, 2010.

________________________________________
Gregory Sauer  
Professor Directing Treatise

________________________________________
Denise Von Glahn  
University Representative

________________________________________
Alexander Jiménez  
Committee Member

The Graduate School has verified and approved the above named committee members.
This treatise is dedicated to the loving memory of
Beth Newdome, mentor and friend
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Jennifer Higdon, Hilary Hahn, Mario Venzago, Louise Alexander, Sheldon Person, Roger Roe and Samuel Banks for being so generous with their time. Information gleaned from their interviews contributed tremendously to the success of this project.

In addition I would like to offer my appreciation to: Cheryl Lawson (for her help with Lawdon Press scores and midi files); Karen Stahl (for setting up all of my interviews with Ms. Hahn and Baltimore-related travel); Eric Stahl (Stalwart transporter and conversationalist to and from Strathmore); Cassie Goldstein (for handling all the details concerning my interview with Mr. Venzago); Tom Ramsey and Joanna Weiler (for cutting through the red tape so I could acquire the premiere performance recording of the Concerto); The Tremont Hotel (for providing posh accommodations in Baltimore at “soloist” prices); The administrators who saw fit to award me an FSU Dissertation Grant that made it possible for my research trips to Indianapolis and Baltimore; Russell Brown (for Finale-related tips); Daphne Gerling (for extremely well-timed batches of cookies); and Crystal Peebles (for sound theory guidance).

I am also extremely grateful to my committee members: Greg Sauer (for stepping up to an unexpected leadership role, support and friendship); Denise Von Glahn (for her expert musicological advice and endless encouragement, both academic and performance-related); and Alex Jiménez (for his eleventh-hour call to service).

I would also like to acknowledge the incalculable contributions made by my family. To Laura and Scott Novak for premiere weekend-related housing. To Pearl Willis for her unwavering support—both moral and financial—and for convincing me to attend my first (not to mention extremely influential) summer music festival. To my parents Max and Linda Williams for providing me all that one could possibly need to succeed in life both distant—including many years of violin lessons—and recent contributions—offering expert editorial services and becoming full-fledged student loan saviors. Finally, I offer my most heartfelt thanks to my wife, Ginger Harkey Williams. Your love and devotion make anything seem possible.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF TABLES</td>
<td>viii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF MUSICAL EXAMPLES</td>
<td>ix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. JENNIFER HIGDON: BIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Style and Works</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Works Listed Alphabetically</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discography</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recordings Listed by Title</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recordings Listed by Album</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. A HISTORY OF HIGDON’S VIOLIN CONCERTO</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conception</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influences</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hilary Hahn</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samuel Barber/Arnold Schoenberg/Charles Ives/Dmitri Shostakovich</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zach De Pue/Time For Three</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Premiere Preparation</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Premiere</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alterations</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. A PERFORMANCE GUIDE</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to Begin</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fingerings</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bowings</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Concerns</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rehearsal Technique</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. THEORETICAL ANALYSIS</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1726</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chaconni</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF TABLES

Table 3.1: Adjustments—Post Indianapolis Premiere........................................57
Table 5.1 (I: 1726, mm. 1-33)........................................................................79
Table 5.2 (I: 1726, mm. 165-195).................................................................81
Table 5.3 (I: 1726, mm. 54-104 & 216-265)....................................................83
Table 5.4 (III: Fly Forward).............................................................................95
LIST OF MUSICAL EXAMPLES

Example 4.1 (I: 1726, mm. 20-23)…………………………………………………………...63
Example 4.2 (I: 1726, m. 88).................................................................................63
Example 4.3 (I: 1726, mm. 105-106)......................................................................64
Example 4.4 (I: 1726, m. 72)..................................................................................65
Example 4.5 (I: 1726, mm. 292-293)......................................................................65
Example 4.6 (II: Chaconni, mm. 65-71).................................................................66
Example 4.7 (II: Chaconni, mm. 125-128)...............................................................66
Example 4.8 (III: Fly Forward, mm. 114-120).........................................................67
Example 4.9 (III. Fly Forward, mm. 115-119).........................................................71
Example 5.1 (I: 1726, mm. 1-10).............................................................................78
Example 5.2 (I: 1726, mm. 179-184).....................................................................82
Example 5.3 (II: Chaconni, mm. 1-6).................................................................85
Example 5.4 (II. Chaconni, mm. 7-14).................................................................86
Example 5.5 (II. Chaconni, mm. 61-64).................................................................87
Example 5.6 (III: Fly Forward, mm. 91-99)............................................................92
ABSTRACT

Jennifer Higdon's Violin Concerto was completed in August of 2008 and premiered 6 February 2009 by the work’s dedicatee, Hilary Hahn, with the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra (co-commissioner) and Mario Venzago, serving as conductor. The piece stands as a major contribution to the violin concerto repertoire and, although it is impossible to predict so early into the twenty-first century, has the makings of becoming a landmark work for the instrument.

Primary source material garnered from interviews with all the musicians most crucial to the work’s inception, as well as reflections by the author who attended the premiere rehearsals and the premiere itself are presented. As part of this ethnographic approach, the very evolution of the work (including actual alterations before and after the premiere) is presented offering a distinct look at the processes of composition and performance in classical music. Additionally, a biographical sketch of the composer as well as all known influences on the Concerto are discussed. Performers interested in learning the Concerto will no doubt find many practical suggestions in regards to bowings, fingerings and performance practice contained within this treatise. A theoretical analysis of the work and speculations as to its future complete the study.
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This treatise documents the genesis of Jennifer Higdon’s *Violin Concerto* (2008)\(^1\) written for and dedicated to the Grammy Award™-winning violinist Hilary Hahn.\(^2\) The author was not content with simply dredging up information from the distant past, but engaged history as it was being made—whether as an active or passive observer. Access to the musicians who were crucial to the *Concerto’s* inception and evolution (before and after its premiere) allowed for a unique glimpse into the creative process that is typically lost to the cogs of time.

The author has chronicled the composition, development, and impact of the work by approaching it largely from a performer’s perspective, paying particular attention to the technical and musical aspects of the solo part but also rendering a more general account of the orchestral desks. This can be found in “A History of Higdon’s *Violin Concerto*” (Chapter Three) and “A Performance Guide” (Chapter Four). The former information was garnered via pre- and post-premiere interviews with Hilary Hahn\(^3\) [the soloist/dedicatee] as well as the author’s own studies of the part.\(^4\) The latter was tackled by way of interviews with Mr. Venzago\(^5\) [the premiere’s conductor/Indianapolis Symphony music director], various Indianapolis Symphony musicians,\(^6\)

---

3 Hilary Hahn, phone interview by author, February 7, 2009, Indianapolis, IN/Fishers, IN. Hilary Hahn, interview by author, June 6, 2009, The Music Center at Strathmore dressing room, North Bethesda, MD. Hilary Hahn, interview by author, June 7, 2009, Joseph Meyerhoff Symphony Hall dressing room, Baltimore, MD.
5 Mario Venzago, interview by author, February 4, 2009, Hilbert Circle Theatre office, Indianapolis, IN.
6 Louise Alexander (Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra 2nd violin), Roger Roe (ISO acting principal oboe), Sheldon Person (ISO viola), Samuel Banks (ISO 2nd bassoon), interview by author, February 5, 2009, The Taste of Tango: 36 E. Washington St, Indianapolis, IN.
and, once again, the author’s own studies of the score. All of the above was enhanced by a series of planned interviews with the composer herself.\textsuperscript{7}

An ethnographic approach has been employed to allow the author to document the musicians’ preparations, the impact of the work’s premiere on the public-at-large and the rarely-seen evolution of the piece from an interpretative standpoint as well as the literal alterations to the score that traditionally take place during the initial run of the work. In so doing, the author observed the pre-premiere rehearsals,\textsuperscript{8} attended the work’s first two performances in Indianapolis\textsuperscript{9} as well as the last two in Baltimore,\textsuperscript{10} and interacted with the abovementioned parties in formal (interviews) as well as informal settings.

The author will also present a biography of the composer (something that has heretofore received minimal published treatment), a general stylistic analysis, a works list, and current discography in Chapter 2. A theoretical analysis of the \textit{Concerto} (to aid in future studies) appears in Chapter 5, and hypotheses regarding what the future holds for the \textit{Concerto} populate Chapter 6.

There have been a number of issues that this project has brought to light. Included among them are: 1) Primacy of place—how a performer’s view of the ownership of a new work has changed over time and how it can affect future interpretations of the piece; 2) Virtuosity for virtuosity’s sake—when a composer’s desire to challenge the soloist influences the final product, for better or worse, and how these actions can affect its dissemination; and 3) American mavericks—whether or not the idea of linking Higdon to the long line of renegade composers in


\textsuperscript{9} Hilary Hahn (violin soloist), Mario Venzago (conductor), Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra, \textit{Lilly Classical Series/Program Eleven} (Hilbert Circle Theatre, Indianapolis, IN), February 6, 2009.; Hahn, \textit{Lilly Classical Series}, February 7, 2009.

\textsuperscript{10} Hilary Hahn (violin soloist), Marin Alsop (conductor), Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, \textit{Marin Alsop and Hilary Hahn} (Joseph Meyerhoff Symphony Hall, Baltimore, MD), June 7, 2009. Hilary Hahn (violin soloist), Marin Alsop (conductor), Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, \textit{Marin Alsop and Hilary Hahn} (The Music Center at Strathmore, North Bethesda, MD), June 6, 2009.
the U.S. is justified, desired, and/or fair. These subjects are not found exclusively in any one chapter but will be discussed throughout the treatise where the author has deemed it relevant.
JENNIFER HIGDON: BIOGRAPHY

Jennifer Elaine Higdon was born in Brooklyn, New York 31 December 1962 to Judy and Kenny Higdon. At the age of six months, Jennifer and her family (which would later include her younger brother Andrew Blue Higdon) moved to Atlanta for a period of ten years—1963-1973. Her father was an instructor at the Atlanta College of Art and was also working as a freelance commercial artist and painter. Her mother “did paintings and abstract quilts.” It was there that her “hippie parents steeped her early and long in a counter-culture filled with ‘art happenings’ (early performance art events) and experimental film festivals. From the beginning, she was encouraged to question authority and to think outside the lines.” In Higdon’s own words:

From around the age of five, I had a chance to experience all sorts of art, although at the time, I certainly didn’t think much of it qualified as art. In the 1960’s and early ‘70’s, my hometown of Atlanta was a bustling city of young creativity. That’s when Midtown (the neighborhood of the Woodruff Arts Center) used to be known as Hippietown. There were lots of experimental film and animation festivals going on in the city. The art school located at the Woodruff Center had ‘happenings’ . . . those events that were the precursor of performance art. Put on by the art students and faculty members, the performers would be dressed in costumes (like black outfits with white feathers attached) and would be onstage with a film as a backdrop, moving objects around, speaking bizarre phrases that had no connection to anything. There probably was some sort of sonic background to all of this (maybe some form of electronic music; perhaps scratches on the soundtrack of the 16-millimeter film), but strangely enough I didn’t notice, because as a young mind, I was so distracted by how silly the adults seemed on stage that I wasn’t paying attention to the musical or Cage-ian sound world that enveloped these happenings.

---

1 Jennifer Higdon, e-mail message to author, August 20, 2009.
2 Higdon, e-mail message, August 20, 2009.
After their time in Atlanta, the Higdon family moved to the rural town of Seymour, Tennessee (from mid 1973-1981) where Jennifer’s musical life continued to revolve more around “marching bands . . . daily doses of the Beatles’ *Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band*” and “Smokey Mountain fiddlers” than it did classical music. As quoted in Drukenbrod’s article, Higdon observed: “When I started college I didn’t even know the symphonies of Beethoven. Some of my influences had to come from the Beatles; Peter, Paul and Mary; Simon and Garfunkel.” Her earliest creations came in the form of “making art, including eight-millimeter movies and photographs.”

Her childhood was not completely devoid of classical music, of course. She fondly recalls hearing a broadcast of Aaron Copland’s *Appalachian Spring* “on National Public Radio as a girl and . . . liking it.” She also attended at least one orchestral concert while a child, as she cites the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra as being the first she ever heard in person. Perhaps it should not be surprising having come from a self-proclaimed rock-and-roll family, that Higdon’s “introduction to music-making came via the school marching band, in which she played drums. It was only when she stumbled on a cheap flute in the attic that she was overtaken by the instinct that has guided her ever since.” After teaching herself how to play flute at the age of fifteen by way of an old band-method book “she found lying around the house . . . she asked her mom to order the next three books, and by the end of the year she was good enough to win first chair” in

---

her Heritage High School band.\textsuperscript{13} She is considered by some to be an “outsider to the stratified world of classical music” having gone “without formal music training until the age of 18.”\textsuperscript{14}

In the years that followed, she more than made up for this seeming gap in classical music education. She earned a Bachelor’s degree in flute performance from Bowling Green State University (graduating in 1986), where she studied primarily with Judith Bentley, but she also took lessons in conducting from Robert Spano.\textsuperscript{15} Higdon didn’t actually come to composing until the age of twenty-one when she was asked by her flute professor at BGSU to compose a short piece for a master class to be performed by flutist/composer Harvey Sollberger.\textsuperscript{16} Bentley gave her a rudimentary knowledge of 12-tone serialism and sent her on her way.\textsuperscript{17} What Higdon created was her first musical composition—a two-minute work she titled \textit{Night Creatures}.\textsuperscript{18} She admits that it wasn’t a full 12-tone composition but thinks “it was a 6-tone row . . . it’s possible that there were 8 tones.”\textsuperscript{19} Whatever the number, this led to composition lessons with Wallace De Pue at BGSU.\textsuperscript{20} She also completed an Artist Diploma (in 1988) at Philadelphia’s Curtis Institute of Music—where she studied with Ned Rorem and David Loeb—and earned her M.A. (in 1992) and Ph.D. (in 1994) “from the University of Pennsylvania, where she studied with George Crumb” and James Primosch.\textsuperscript{21} She freely admits that her higher education did not come

\textsuperscript{16} Jennifer Higdon, e-mail message to author, August 20, 2009. Information concerning who gave the masterclass came from: Michael Anthony, “Composing an ode to the oboe; Prolific composer Jennifer Higdon muses on writing her latest concerto, a premiere by the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra,” \textit{Star Tribune} (Minneapolis, MN), September 24 2005, 2F.
\textsuperscript{19} Jennifer Higdon, e-mail message to author, August 20, 2009.
\textsuperscript{21} Higdon’s teachers were listed as Ned Rorem and George Crumb in: Lucy Miller Murray, “Jennifer Higdon’s Full Palette,” \textit{Philadelphia Music Makers} 7, no. 2 (Summer 2008): 35.
easily to her. As Karen Rile reports, Higdon had to “apply to Penn’s graduate program three times before she was accepted [and] needed two tries to get out.”\textsuperscript{22} In that period between her artist diploma at Curtis and graduate school at The University of Pennsylvania, Higdon “studied with Penn Music Professor Jay Reise . . . who gave her free, informal lessons and loads of encouragement.”\textsuperscript{23} She was appointed to a position at The Curtis Institute almost immediately following the completion of her doctorate and now holds the Milton L. Rock Chair in Composition Studies there.

Today she is regarded as one of America’s leading voices in composition, having garnered numerous awards and commissions. According to her website, she has received an abundance of commissions including those from The Philadelphia Orchestra, Chicago Symphony, Atlanta Symphony, National Symphony Orchestra, Minnesota Orchestra, Brooklyn Philharmonic, Pittsburgh Symphony, Indianapolis Symphony, Dallas Symphony, Oregon Symphony, St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, pianist Gary Graffman, Tokyo String Quartet, and eighth blackbird.\textsuperscript{24} Higdon has been the featured composer/composer-in-residence at many festivals—including Tanglewood, Vail, Norfolk, Winnipeg, and Cabrillo; with several orchestras—the symphonies of Pittsburgh, Green Bay, and Philadelphia, among them; and at the Mannes College of Music. She has also been the recipient of awards from the Guggenheim Foundation, the American Academy of Arts & Letters (two awards), the Pew Fellowship in the Arts, Meet-the-Composer, the National Endowment for the Arts, and ASCAP. Her works have been:

- performed extensively in the United States and abroad, including performances at the White House, Weill Hall, Merkin Hall, Alice Tully Hall, Carnegie Hall, and by orchestras including the Cleveland Orchestra, London Philharmonic Orchestra, BBC Orchestra, Royal Scottish National Orchestra, American Composers Orchestra, Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra, and Cincinnati Symphony. In 2004, the Atlanta Symphony

Higdon’s instructors at these same two schools (The Curtis Institute of Music and The University of Pennsylvania, respectively) included David Loeb and James Primosch in: Ronda Benson Ford, “A Door to Extended Techniques: Five Analyses and Composer Interviews From the National Flute Association’s High School Soloist Competition” (D.M.A. dissertation, The University of Southern Mississippi, 2005), 6.


released the recording *Higdon: Concerto for Orchestra / City Scape*, which won a Grammy™ award in 2005. In fall of 2006, NAXOS released a CD of Higdon's chamber works and Cedille released eighth blackbird's *Strange Imaginary Animals*, which includes Higdon's work *Zaka*. The latter won a Grammy™ award in 2008.\(^\text{25}\)

Higdon awaits the premiere of the concerto *On a Wire* for the Chicago-based ensemble eighth blackbird, with the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra 3 June 2010 and is in the process of composing her first opera for the San Francisco Opera.\(^\text{26}\)

**STYLE and WORKS**

Like many self-taught American composers who came before her, Jennifer Higdon has been labeled by some a musical maverick. Yet, she is also paradoxically heralded for writing extremely accessible, quasi-tonal works and actively engages audiences in post-concert discussions in order to encourage them to draw their own opinions, even confused and/or dissenting ones.\(^\text{27}\) This dichotomy exists too in her own actions as she can at one point brush aside centuries of tradition with comments such as: “I actually never suggest anyone analyze anything”\(^\text{28}\) (in regards to music theory) but then persistently struggle to gain the acceptance by, and eventually graduate from, two of the most prestigious musical programs—The Curtis Institute of Music and The University of Pennsylvania—under the watchful eyes of some of the most respected and intellectual mentors—George Crumb and Ned Rorem among others.


\(^{26}\) Information regarding the premiere of Higdon’s concerto for eighth blackbird was found on the composer’s website: Ibid, (accessed 12/22/09). The specifics concerning Higdon’s commission from the San Francisco Opera were gleaned from: Jennifer Higdon, interview by author, February 5, 2009, Omni Severin Hotel lobby: 40 West Jackson Place, Indianapolis, IN.


\(^{28}\) Jennifer Higdon, phone interview by author, July 16, 2009, Philadelphia, PA/Tallahassee, FL.
Higdon’s rather unusual background has had a strong influence on her compositional style. She freely admits having struggled in her collegiate theory classes because she lacked the foundation in standard practices. As a result, she consistently describes herself as being an instinctual composer whose primary guide is her ear. In other words, she composes what sounds appealing to her without concern for the rules and regulations taught in the conservatories and schools of music in the Western world. In fact, she has even gone so far as to say that she has no idea about theoretics and what’s in the piece at all. I don’t think about it because it interferes with the composing. I kind of follow instinct and my ear. I figure that’s what the theorists are for. They’re there to do the analyzing so I let them, I let them take care of that [and] I just kind of move on to the next piece. Each one of my pieces is different enough too that it’s kind of a hazardous thing trying to even go back and analyze these things. It interferes with what you’re writing at the moment.  

Although the bulk of Higdon’s early works were written for various chamber ensembles—as evidenced by her works list below—she has of late received an increasing number of commissions for larger ensembles. This has allowed her to experiment with new timbral possibilities—largely influenced by her time with George Crumb—and contrapuntal complexities that are inherently more limited with smaller groups.

Higdon has a predilection for disjunct melodies whose large leaps tend to propel the line upward. She enhances this feeling of openness by utilizing ascending scalar passages. Brenda Rossow Phillips has observed that Higdon also has a tendency to write many flourishes within these overarching contours that oftentimes resemble written-out ornaments. This not only gives her melodies consistent vibrancy, but also a sense of restlessness by way of their inherent energy.

This feeling of nervousness is undoubtedly enhanced by her treatment of rhythm. The lines she employs in her slower tempi oftentimes tie over the bar line thus neutralizing a strong sense of pulse. She also consistently alters the subdivision of the beat within her melodies creating an improvisatory feel. With these techniques her lines at times resemble exercises one might expect to find in advanced etudes for percussion. She also frequently alternates meters in her never-ending attempts to “not sound square” in her works. 

29 Hilary Hahn, interview by author, June 6, 2009, The Music Center at Strathmore dressing room, North Bethesda, MD.
31 Jennifer Higdon, phone interview by author, July 16, 2009, Philadelphia, PA/Tallahassee, FL.
musical efforts taking place in the percussion section of her high school band, she writes very prominent membrano- and idiophonic parts in her orchestral works that not only propel the movements forward, in the case of faster tempi, but are also used for unique tonal colors—as in the *crotales* on the timpani drum head that help open the first movement of her *Violin Concerto*. Her fast movements oftentimes utilize ostinato-based figures as well. This resulting strong sense of pulse—even when the meters alternate frequently—make these movements exciting and, simultaneously, more appealing to the audience.

No doubt influenced by her study of the flute—an instrument that only rarely produces anything beyond a single-line texture—Higdon does not have much use for conventional harmonies. Instead, she views her pieces in a poly-vocal fashion where multiple lines occur to simultaneously create independent statements and a singular, unified voice. Although regarded largely as a tonal composer, the sense of restlessness referred to earlier impacts the perception of her works’ tonality as well. Higdon has a penchant for creating rising sequences within her contrapuntal lines that ascend, usually, by a half step. Though traditional modulations do not occur as a result of this motion, this is a very common way that she shifts her tonal centers within movements. In addition, as Brenda Rossow Phillips observes, her work’s “tonal center is skewed by her use of bitonality. Higdon regularly uses the technique of playing two chords simultaneously that are a major second apart. To diminish the dissonant effect these chords produce, Higdon will often omit the third of a chord.”

### WORKS LISTED ALPHABETICALLY

**Amazing Grace**  
**Instrumentation:** flute choir (version A)  
string quartet (version B)  
**Year completed:** 2003  
**Duration:** 7 minutes

**Autumn Music**  
**Instrumentation:** woodwind quintet  
**Duration:** 13 minutes

---

Autumn Reflection
Instrumentation: flute, piano
Duration: 5 minutes

Autumn's Cricket
Instrumentation: string quartet
Year completed: 1987
Duration: 30 minutes

Bentley Roses
Scoring: mezzo soprano, flute, piano
Texts: James Whitcomb Riley
Movements:
Old Fashioned Roses
The Rose
To the Roses
A Rose in October
Duration: 13 minutes (4 songs, which may be performed independently)

blue cathedral
Instrumentation: orchestra
2 (2nd also picc), 1 + Eng. hn, 2, 2
4, 3, 3, 1
hp
pn/cel
timp, 3 perc
strings
Year completed: 1999
Duration: 11 minutes

Bop
Instrumentation: saxophone quartet
Duration: 1 minute

breaking
Scoring: soprano, piano
Duration: 3 minutes

Celebration Fanfare
Instrumentation: string orchestra
Year completed: 2003
Duration: 3 minutes
Celestial Hymns
Instrumentation: clarinet, violin, viola, cello, piano
Duration: 11 minutes

Ceremonies
Instrumentation: organ, brass
Movements: 7 (3 for solo organ)
Duration: 32 minutes

Ceremonies Suite
Instrumentation: solo organ
Duration: 12 minutes

City Scape
Instrumentation: orchestra
2 + picc, 2 + Eng. hn, 2 + b. cl, 2 + contra
4, 3, 3, 1
hp
timp, 3 perc
strings
Movements:
SkyLine (duration: 7 minutes)
river sings a song to trees (duration: 17 minutes)
Peachtree Street (duration: 6 minutes)
Year completed: 2002
Duration: 30 minutes
Note: Movements may be ordered and performed individually

Concerto for Orchestra
Instrumentation: orchestra
3 (3rd also picc), 3, 2 + b. clar, 2 + contra
4, 3, 3, 1
hp
pn/cel
timp, 3 perc (timp also plays percussion in 1st mvt)
strings
Year completed: 2002
Duration: 35 minutes
Concerto 4-3
Instrumentation: string trio (soli of two violins and double bass), orchestra
2, 2, 2, 2
4, 3, 3, 1
timp, 2 perc
strings
Year completed: 2007
Duration: 25 minutes

Dark Wood
Instrumentation: bassoon, violin, cello, piano
Duration: 10 minutes

DASH
Instrumentation (4 scorings):
clarinet, violin, piano (version A)
flute, clarinet, piano (version B)
flute, soprano saxophone, piano (version C)
soprano saxophone, violin, piano (version D)
Duration: 5 minutes

Deep in the Night
Scoring: SATB chorus
Duration: 6 minutes

Dooryard Bloom
Instrumentation: baritone solo, orchestra
2, 2 (2nd also Eng. hn), 2, 2
2 hn, 2 trpt
hp
2 perc
strings
Text: Walt Whitman
Year completed: 2004
Duration: 23 minutes

An Exaltation of Larks
Instrumentation: string quartet
Year completed: 2005
Duration: 14 minutes

Falling Deeper
Scoring: voice, piano
Text: part of a collection of Valentine songs written over the years
Duration: 2 minutes
**Fanfare Ritmico**
*Instrumentation:* orchestra
3 (3rd also picc), 3, 2 + b. clar, 2 + contra
4, 3, 3, 1
hp
pn
timp, 4 perc
strings
and as a wind ensemble (arranged from orchestra)
*Year completed:* 2002 (wind ensemble version), 1999 (orchestral version)
*Duration:* 6 minutes

**Gilmore Variation**
*Instrumentation:* solo piano, based on the "Goldberg" Variations by J.S. Bach (BWV 988)
*Duration:* 3 minutes

**Hop & Toe Dance**
*Scoring:* soprano, piano
*Duration:* 2 minutes

**Impressions**
*Instrumentation:* string quartet
*Year completed:* 2003
*Duration:* 26 minutes

**In Our Quiet**
*Scoring:* soprano or mezzo soprano, piano
*Duration:* 4 minutes

**The Jeffrey Mode**
*Instrumentation:* flute, piano
*Duration:* 5 minutes

**Kelly's Field**
*Instrumentation:* concert band
*Year completed:* 2006
*Duration:* 6-7 minutes

**Rhythm Stand**
*Instrumentation:* young concert band
*Year completed:* 2004
*Duration:* 3 minutes
Legacy
Instrumentation (2 scorings):
flute, piano (version A)
violin, piano (version B)
Year completed: 1999 (violin and piano arrangement completed 2003)
Duration: 8 minutes

Light
Instrumentation: orchestra
2, 2, 2, 2
4, 3, 3, 1
timp, 2 perc
strings
Year completed: 2006
Duration: 4 minutes

Light Refracted
Instrumentation: clarinet, violin, viola, cello, piano
Duration: 20 minutes

Loco
Instrumentation: orchestra
2 + picc, 3, 3, 2 + contra
4, 3, 3, 1
pno
timp, 3 perc
strings
Year completed: 2004
Duration: 8 minutes

Lullaby
Instrumentation (8 scorings):
mezzo soprano, flute, piano (version A)
2 flutes, piano (version B)
flute quartet (version C)
soprano saxophone, flute, piano (version D)
2 alto saxophones, piano (version E)
soprano saxophone, alto saxophone, piano (version F)
soprano, alto saxophone, piano (version G)
flute, clarinet, piano (version H)
Duration: 3 minutes
$Machine$
**Instrumentation:** orchestra
1 + picc, 2, 2, 2
4, 2, 3, 1
timp
strings
**Year completed:** 2002
**Duration:** 2 minutes

$Morning Opens$
**Scoring:** soprano, piano
**Duration:** 3 minutes

$Mountain Songs$
**Instrumentation:** flute choir
**Duration:** 8 minutes

$Notes on Love$
**Instrumentation:** soprano, flute, piano
**Duration:** 24 minutes (8 songs, which may be performed individually and/or in any combination)

$Oboe Concerto$
**Instrumentation:** oboe solo, orchestra
2 (2nd also picc), 1 + Eng. hn, 2, 2
2 hn, 2 trpt
1 perc
strings
**Year completed:** 2005
**Duration:** 17 minutes

$O magnum mysterium$
**Scorings:**
SATB chorus, 2 flutes, 2 crystal glasses, chimes (version A)
SATB chorus, organ (version B)
SATB chorus, a cappella (version C)
**Duration:** 6 minutes

$On the Death of the Righteous$
**Instrumentation:** SATB chorus, orchestra
3 (3rd also picc), 2, 2, 4
4, 5, 3 picc trpt., 3, 3, 1
timp, 1 perc
strings
**Text:** John Donne
**Duration:** 12 minutes
"Peachtree Street" from City Scape
Instrumentation: orchestra
2, 2, 2, 2
4, 2, 2, 1
timp, 2 perc
strings
Year completed: 2002
Duration: 6 minutes

Percussion Concerto
Instrumentation: percussion solo, orchestra
3, 3, 3, 3
4, 3, 3, 1
hp
pn/cel
timp, 3 perc
strings
Year completed: 2005
Duration: 23 minutes

Piano Concerto
Instrumentation: piano solo, orchestra
2 (2nd also picc), 2, 2, 2
4, 3, 3, 1
hp
timp, 2 perc
strings
Year completed: 2006
Duration: 30 minutes

Piano Trio
Instrumentation: violin, cello, piano
Year completed: 2003
Duration: 15 minutes

Quiet Art
Instrumentation: string octet (4 violins, 2 violas, 2 cellos)
Year completed: 2006
Duration: 8 minutes

A Quiet Moment
Scorings:
TTBB chorus (version A)
SSAA chorus (version B)
SATB chorus (version C)
Duration: 3 minutes
*rapid fire*
**Instrumentation:** solo flute  
**Duration:** 6 minutes

*Red*
**Scoring:** bass-baritone and piano  
**Text:** Eric Owens  
**Duration:** 3 minutes

"*river sings a song to trees*" from *City Scape*
**Instrumentation:** orchestra  
2 + picc, 2 + Eng. hn, 2 + b. cl, 2 + contra  
4, 3, 3, 1  
hp  
timp, 3 perc  
strings  
**Year completed:** 2002  
**Duration:** 17 minutes

*running the edge*
**Instrumentation:** 2 flutes, piano  
**Duration:** 6 minutes

*Sanctus*
**Scoring:** SSAATTBB chorus (text in English and Latin)  
**Duration:** 4 minutes

*Sax Sonata*
**Instrumentation:** alto saxophone, piano (Version B of *Sonata for Viola and Piano*)  
**Duration:** 22 minutes

*Secret & Glass Gardens*
**Instrumentation:** solo piano  
**Duration:** 8 minutes

*Scenes from the Poet's Dreams*
**Instrumentation:** piano quintet (piano left hand, string quartet)  
**Year completed:** 1999  
**Duration:** 24 minutes
Shine
Instrumentation: orchestra
3 (3rd also picc), 2 + Eng. hn, 3 (3rd also b. clar), 3 (3rd also contra)
4, 3, 3, 1
hp
pn/cel
timp, 3 perc
strings
Year completed: 1995
Duration: 12 minutes

Short Stories
Instrumentation: saxophone quartet
Duration: 25 minutes

Sing, Sing
Scoring: SATB chorus
Duration: 3 minutes

The Singing Rooms
Instrumentation: solo violin, SATB chorus, orchestra
2, 2 (2nd also Eng. hn) 2, 2
4, 3 (1st also picc. trpt) 3, 1
hp
timp, 2 perc
strings
Text: Jeanne Minahan
Year completed: 2007
Duration: 33 minutes

"SkyLine" from City Scape
Instrumentation: orchestra
2 + picc, 2 + Eng. hn., 2 + b. cl, 2 + contra
4, 3, 3, 1
timp, 3 perc
strings
Year completed: 2002
Duration: 7 minutes

Sky Quartet
Instrumentation: string quartet
Year completed: 1997 (revised 2001)
Duration: 24 minutes
**Smash**
*Instrumentation (2 scorings):*
- flute, clarinet, violin, viola, cello, piano (version A)
- flute, clarinet, violin, cello, piano (version B)
*Duration:* 5 minutes

**The Solid Rock Song**
*Scoring:* voice, piano
*Duration:* 2 minutes

**Soliloquy**
*Instrumentation (6 scorings):*
- cello, string orchestra (version A)
- clarinet, string orchestra (version B)
- clarinet, string quartet (version C)
- English horn, string quartet (version D)
- English horn, string orchestra (version E)
- flute, string quartet (version F)
*Year completed:* 1989 (arranged for clarinet and string quartet in 2004)
*Duration:* 7 minutes

**somewhere i have never travelled, gladly beyond**
*Scoring:* SATB chorus, vibraphone, piano
*Text:* e.e. cummings (poem used by permission of Liveright, the e.e. cummings Estate)
*Duration:* 5 minutes

**Sonata for Viola and Piano**
*Instrumentation:* viola, piano
*Year completed:* 1990
*Duration:* 22 minutes

**Song**
*Instrumentation:* solo flute
*Duration:* 5 minutes

**Soprano Sax Concerto**
*Instrumentation:* soprano saxophone solo, orchestra
2 (2nd also picc), 1 (also Eng. hn), 2, 2
2 hn, 2 trpt
1 perc
strings
*Year completed:* 2007
*Duration:* 17 minutes
Southern Grace

*Scoring*: SATB chorus

*Movements*:
- Fiddlin'
- Wildwood Flower
- Swing
- My True Love's Hair
- The Fox
- Riddle Song
- Sourwood Mountain
- Amazing Grace

*Duration*: 24 minutes

Southern Harmony

*Instrumentation*: string quartet

*Year completed*: 2003

*Duration*: 15 minutes

Spirit

*Instrumentation*: orchestral brass, percussion

4, 3, 3, 1
timp, 3 perc

*Year completed*: 2006

*Duration*: 5 minutes

Splendid Wood

*Instrumentation*: marimba ensemble (3 marimbas; 6 players)

*Duration*: 11 minutes

Steeley Pause

*Instrumentation*: 4 C flutes

*Duration*: 4 minutes

"String" from *Concerto for Orchestra*

*Instrumentation*: string orchestra

*Year completed*: 2002

*Duration*: 30 minutes

String Poetic

*Instrumentation*: violin, piano

*Year completed*: 2006

*Duration*: 18 minutes
**String Trio**  
**Instrumentation:** violin, viola, cello  
**Year completed:** 1988  
**Duration:** 17 minutes

**Summer Shimmers**  
**Instrumentation:** piano, woodwind quintet  
**Duration:** 6 minutes

**This Singing Art**  
**Scoring:** SATB chorus, chimes, organ  
**Duration:** 5 minutes

**Threaded**  
**Scoring:** mezzo soprano, piano  
**Duration:** 2 minutes

**To Home**  
**Scoring:** soprano, piano  
**Duration:** 3 minutes

**To The Point**  
**Instrumentation:** string orchestra  
**Year completed:** 2004  
**Duration:** 4 minutes

**Trio Song**  
**Instrumentation:** 2 flutes, cello  
**Duration:** 3 minutes

**Trombone Concerto**  
**Instrumentation:** trombone solo, orchestra  
2, (2nd also picc) 2, 2, 2  
4, 2, 2, 1  
pp  
timp, 2 perc  
strings  
**Year completed:** 2005  
**Duration:** 15 minutes

**Trumpet Songs**  
**Instrumentation:** trumpet, piano  
**Duration:** 11 minutes
**Violin Concerto**
*Instrumentation:* violin solo, orchestra
2 (2nd also picc), 2 (2nd also Eng. hn), 2, 2
4, 3, 3, 1
hp
timp, 2 perc
strings
*Year completed:* 2008
*Duration:* 33 minutes

**Voice of the Bard**
*Scoring:* TTBB chorus
*Text:* William Blake
*Duration:* 4 minutes

**Voices**
*Instrumentation:* string quartet
*Year completed:* 1993
*Duration:* 18 minutes

**Wedding Hymn**
*Instrumentation (4 scorings):*
soprano, flute, piano (version A)
2 flutes, piano (version B)
flute, clarinet, piano (version C)
soprano saxophone, violin, piano (version D)
*Text:* Sidney Lanier
*Duration:* 5 minutes

**Wind Shear**
*Instrumentation:* orchestral winds and horns
3, 3, 2 + b. clar, 2 + contra
4 hn
*Year completed:* 2000
*Duration:* 3 minutes

**wisssahickon poeTrees**
*Instrumentation:* flute, clarinet, violin, cello, piano, percussion
*Duration:* 20 minutes

**Zaka**
*Instrumentation:* flute, clarinet, violin, cello, piano, percussion
*Duration:* 15 minutes
**Zango Bandango**

*Instrumentation:* flute, clarinet, violin, cello, marimba, piano

*Duration:* 4 minutes

**ZONES**

*Instrumentation (2 scorings):*
percussion quartet, CD (version A)
percussion quintet, CD (version B)

*Duration:* 17 minutes

---

**DISCOGRAPHY**

An impressive number of Higdon’s works have already been recorded by leading performers (sometimes under her supervision) in addition to those she has recorded herself as a virtuoso flutist. It should also be noted that she has been a self-published composer for quite some time and all of the works listed above (unless otherwise noted) are available from her company Lawdon Press, based in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, which she runs with longtime partner Cheryl Lawson.³⁴ Regarding this business move, Higdon explains: “It was a fantastic decision. It would have been the biggest mistake…to have gone with a publishing house. Actually, I have one arrangement with a publishing house but the fact of the matter is there’s no point in being with them.”³⁵

Higdon believes that unless a composer is extremely unorganized, not self-motivated, uncomfortable with deadlines (self-imposed as well as otherwise) and generally unable to manage themselves, it would be far better for their career and legacy to publish their works themselves. Only then can a composer maintain the copyrights to their own works and have full control of its dissemination and potential profit.³⁶

---

³⁴ Jennifer Higdon, phone interview by author, July 16, 2009, Philadelphia, PA/Tallahassee, FL.
³⁵ Higdon, phone interview, July 16, 2009.
³⁶ Jennifer Higdon, interview by author, February 5, 2009, Omni Severin Hotel lobby: 40 West Jackson Place, Indianapolis, IN.
Recordings by Title:

**Autumn Music**
Performers: Moran Quintet  
Album Title: "Postcards from the Center"  
Year of Release: 1998  
Record Label: Crystal Records - CD754

**Autumn Reflection**
Performers: Jennifer Higdon (flute), Hugh Sung (piano)  
Album Title: "rapid.fire"  
Year of Release: 1995  
Record Label: I Virtuosi - IVR 501

**Autumn Reflection**
Performers: Christina Jennings (flute), Rodney Waters (piano)  
Album Title: "Winter Spirits"  
Year of Release: 2001

**Autumn Reflection**
Performers: Jeffrey Khaner (principal flute, The Philadelphia Orchestra), Hugh Sung (piano)  
Album Title: "American Flute Music"  
Year of Release: 2002  
Record Label: Avie - AVI 0004

**Autumn Reflection**
Album Performers: Susan Glaser (flute), John Novacek (piano), Todd Palmer (clarinet), The Lark Quartet, Stephen Taylor (oboe), Marc Goldberg (bassoon), Joseph Anderer (French horn), Kyu-Young Kim (violin), Ptnarry Shin (cello), Christopher Oldfather (piano), Ingrid Gordon (percussion), William Purvis (conductor)  
Album Title: "Summer Shimmers"  
Year of Release: 2008  
Record Label: Koch International Classics - B001CW7M9M

**blue cathedral**
Performer: Atlanta Symphony Orchestra (Robert Spano, cond.)  
Album Title: "The Rainbow Body"  
Year of Release: 2003  
Record Label: Telarc CD-80596

**City Scape**
Performer: Atlanta Symphony Orchestra (Robert Spano, cond.)  
Album Title: "Jennifer Higdon: City Scape and Concerto for Orchestra"  
Year of Release: 2004  
Record Label: Telarc CD-80620
Concerto for Orchestra
Performer: Atlanta Symphony Orchestra (Robert Spano, cond.)
Album Title: "Jennifer Higdon: City Scape and Concerto for Orchestra"
Year of Release: 2004
Record Label: Telarc CD-80620

DASH
Performers: Verdehr Trio
Album Title: "International Connections"
Year of Release: 2006
Record Label: Crystal Records - CD946

DASH
Album Performers: Susan Glaser (flute), John Novacek (piano), Todd Palmer (clarinet), The
Lark Quartet, Stephen Taylor (oboe), Marc Goldberg (bassoon), Joseph Anderer (French horn),
Kyu-Young Kim (violin), Pitynarry Shin (cello), Christopher Oldfather (piano), Ingrid Gordon
(percussion), William Purvis (conductor)
Album Title: "Summer Shimmers"
Year of Release: 2008
Record Label: Koch International Classics - B001CW7M9M

Deep In The Night
Performers: The New York Concert Singers (Judith Clurman, cond.)
Album Title: "A Season's Promise"
Year of Release: 2001
Record Label: New World Records - 80592

Deep In The Night
Performers: The Philadelphia Singers
Album Title: "The Best of Christmas on Logan Square"
Year of Release: 1998

Dooryard Bloom
Performers: Nmon Ford, baritone, with the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra (Robert Spano, cond.)
Broadcast Network: NPR’s Performance Today
Year of Recording & Premiere Broadcast: 2006

Imagine
Performers: Potomac Fever
Album Title: "Sometimes I Wish..."
Year of Release: 2000
**Impressions**  
Performers: Cypress String Quartet, Anne Akiko Meyers, Alisa Weilerstein, Adam Neiman, Nick Kitchen, Melissa Kleinbart, Hsin-Yun Huang, and Mina Smith  
Album Title: "Jennifer Higdon: Piano Trio / Voices / Impressions"  
Year of Release: 2006  
Record Label: NAXOS 8.559298

**The Jeffrey Mode**  
Performers: Jennifer Higdon (flute), Hugh Sung (piano)  
Album Title: "rapid.fire"  
Year of Release: 1995  
Record Label: I Virtuosi - IVR 501

**Legacy**  
Performers: Laurel Ann Maurer (flute), Joanne Pearce Martin (piano)  
Album Title: "Legacy of the American Woman Composer"  
Year of Release: 2000  
Record Label: 4 Tay - 4018

**Legacy**  
Album Performers: Susan Glaser (flute), John Novacek (piano), Todd Palmer (clarinet), The Lark Quartet, Stephen Taylor (oboe), Marc Goldberg (bassoon), Joseph Anderer (French horn), Kyu-Young Kim (violin), Pitnarry Shin (cello), Christopher Oldfather (piano), Ingrid Gordon (percussion), William Purvis (conductor)  
Album Title: "Summer Shimmers"  
Year of Release: 2008  
Record Label: Koch International Classics - B001CW7M9M

**Lullaby**  
Performers: Jennifer Higdon (flute), Hugh Sung (piano)  
Album Title: "rapid.fire"  
Year of Release: 1995  
Record Label: I Virtuosi - IVR 501

**Mountain Songs**  
Performers: Flutes Unlimited  
Album Title: "Music in Our House"  
Record Label: The Women's Chorus of Dallas

**Mountain Songs**  
Performers: James Madison University Flute Choir  
Album Title: "Sounds and Colors"  
Record Label: FC 356
My True Love's Hair
Performers: Anna Crusing Women's Choir (Jane K. Hulting, cond.)
Album Title: "Spaces Between the Stars"
Year of Release: 2000

O Magnum Mysterium
Performers: Handel and Haydn Society Chorus (Grant Llewellyn, cond.)
Album Title: "All is Bright"
Year of Release: 2005
Record Label: Avie - AVI 2078

Percussion Concerto
Performers: Colin Currie (percussion soloist), with the London Philharmonic Orchestra (Marin Alsop, cond.)
Album Title: "Marin Alsop Conducts MacMillan, Adès, and Higdon"
Year of Release: 2008

Piano Trio
Performers: Cypress String Quartet, Anne Akiko Meyers, Alisa Weilerstein, Adam Neiman, Nick Kitchen, Melissa Kleinbart, Hsin-Yun Huang, and Mina Smith
Album Title: "Jennifer Higdon: Piano Trio / Voices / Impressions"
Year of Release: 2006
Record Label: NAXOS 8.559298

A Quiet Moment
Performers: Potomac Fever
Album Title: "Sometimes I Wish..."
Year of Release: 2000

rapid.fire
Performer: Jennifer Higdon (flute)
Album Title: "rapid.fire"
Year of Release: 1995
Record Label: I Virtuosi - IVR 501

rapid.fire
Performer: Patti Monson (flute)
Album Title: "Conspirare: Chamber Music for Solo Flute"
Year of Release: 2000
Record Label: CRI - CD867
**rapid.fire**
Album Performers: Susan Glaser (flute), John Novacek (piano), Todd Palmer (clarinet), The Lark Quartet, Stephen Taylor (oboe), Marc Goldberg (bassoon), Joseph Anderer (French horn), Kyu-Young Kim (violin), Pitnarry Shin (cello), Christopher Oldfather (piano), Ingrid Gordon (percussion), William Purvis (conductor)
Album Title: "Summer Shimmers"
Year of Release: 2008
Record Label: Koch International Classics - B001CW7M9M

**running the edgE**
Performers: Claudia Anderson (flute), Jill Felber (flute), John Piirainen (piano)
Album Title: "Lesbian American Composers"
Year of Release: 1998
Record Label: CRI - CD780

**running the edgE**
Performers: ZAWA! (Claudia Anderson & Jill Felber)
Album Title: "ZAWA! Landmark Duos for Flutes"
Year of Release: 2002
Record Label: Neuma Records - 450101

**Soliloquy**
Album Performers: Susan Glaser (flute), John Novacek (piano), Todd Palmer (clarinet), The Lark Quartet, Stephen Taylor (oboe), Marc Goldberg (bassoon), Joseph Anderer (French horn), Kyu-Young Kim (violin), Pitnarry Shin (cello), Christopher Oldfather (piano), Ingrid Gordon (percussion), William Purvis (conductor)
Album Title: "Summer Shimmers"
Year of Release: 2008
Record Label: Koch International Classics - B001CW7M9M

**Sonata for Viola and Piano**
Performers: Michael Isaac Strauss (viola), Hugh Sung (piano)
Album Title: "rapid.fire"
Year of Release: 1995
Record Label: I Virtuosi - IVR 501

**Sonata for Viola and Piano**
Performers: Michael Isaac Strauss (viola), Hugh Sung (piano)
Album Title: "I Virtuosi, Volume 1"
Record Label: I Virtuosi - IVR 505

**Song**
Performer: Laurel Zucker (flute)
Album Title: "Inflorescence II-Music for Solo Flute"
Year of Release: 2003
Record Label: Cantilena Records
**Song**
Album Performers: Susan Glaser (flute), John Novacek (piano), Todd Palmer (clarinet), The Lark Quartet, Stephen Taylor (oboe), Marc Goldberg (bassoon), Joseph Anderer (French horn), Kyu-Young Kim (violin), Pitnarry Shin (cello), Christopher Oldfather (piano), Ingrid Gordon (percussion), William Purvis (conductor)
Album Title: "Summer Shimmers"
Year of Release: 2008
Record Label: Koch International Classics - B001CW7M9M

**Steeley Pause**
Performers: Claudia Anderson, Julianna Moore, Jill Felber, Karen Yonovitz (flutes)
Album Title: "American Flute"
Year of Release: 1994
Record Label: Centaur - CRC 2203

**Steeley Pause**
Performers: Pat Spencer, Jayn Rosenfeld, Jennifer Higdon, Stephanie Starin (flutes)
Album Title: "rapid.fire"
Year of Release: 1995
Record Label: I Virtuosi - IVR 501

**Steeley Pause**
Performers: Pat Spencer, Jayn Rosenfeld, Jennifer Higdon, Stephanie Starin (flutes)
Album Title: "I Virtuosi, Volume 1"
Record Label: I Virtuosi - IVR 505

**String Poetic**
Performers: Jennifer Koh (violin), Reiko Uchida (piano)
Album Title: "String Poetic"
Year of Release: 2007
Record Label: Cedille B0015P2FMA

**Summer Shimmers**
Album Performers: Susan Glaser (flute), John Novacek (piano), Todd Palmer (clarinet), The Lark Quartet, Stephen Taylor (oboe), Marc Goldberg (bassoon), Joseph Anderer (French horn), Kyu-Young Kim (violin), Pitnarry Shin (cello), Christopher Oldfather (piano), Ingrid Gordon (percussion), William Purvis (conductor)
Album Title: "Summer Shimmers"
Year of Release: 2008
Record Label: Koch International Classics - B001CW7M9M
Voices
Performers: Nicholas Kitchen (violin), Melissa Kleinbart (violin), Hsin-Yun Huang (viola), Wilhelmina Smith (cello)
Album Title: "rapid.fire"
Year of Release: 1995
Record Label: I Virtuosi - IVR 501

Voices
Album Title: "An American Sampler: New Music from NACUSA"
Record Label: ERM 6662

Voices
Performers: Cypress String Quartet, Anne Akiko Meyers, Alisa Weilerstein, Adam Neiman, Nick Kitchen, Melissa Kleinbart, Hsin-Yun Huang, and Mina Smith
Album Title: "Jennifer Higdon: Piano Trio / Voices / Impressions"
Year of Release: 2006
Record Label: NAXOS 8.559298

wissahickon poeTrees
Performers: Network for New Music (Jan Krzywicki, cond.)
Album Title: "Dream Journal"
Year of Release: 2002
Record Label: Albany Records (Troy 488)

Zaka
Performers: eighth blackbird
Album Title: "Strange Imaginary Animals"
Year of Release: 2006
Record Label: Cedille 9000 094

Zaka
Album Performers: Susan Glaser (flute), John Novacek (piano), Todd Palmer (clarinet), The Lark Quartet, Stephen Taylor (oboe), Marc Goldberg (bassoon), Joseph Anderer (French horn), Kyu-Young Kim (violin), Pitharry Shin (cello), Christopher Oldfather (piano), Ingrid Gordon (percussion), William Purvis (conductor)
Album Title: "Summer Shimmers"
Year of Release: 2008
Record Label: Koch International Classics - B001CW7M9M
Recordings by Album:

**All is Bright**
Performer: Handel and Haydn Society Chorus (Grant Llewellyn, cond.)
Higdon Work Performed: *O Magnum Mysterium*
Other Album Contents: Dietrich Buxtehude's "In dulci jubilo" (BuxWV 52); Peter Cornelius' "Die Konige" (Weihnachtslieder (6), Op. 8, no. 3); Franz Xaver Gruber's "Silent Night"; Herbert Howells' "A spotless rose" (Carol-Anthems (3) for Chorus: no. 2); Charles Ives' "A Christmas Carol"; William Matthews' "A Babe is Born" (Op. 53) and "Sir Christemas"; Michael Praetorius' "Es ist ein' Ros' entsprungen" (Musae Sioniae); Daniel Pinkham's "Sweet Music"; Ned Rorem's "While all things were in quiet silence" (Motets (7) for the Church Year); JanPieterszoon Sweelinck's "Hodie Christus natus est"; Virgil Thomson's "O my Deir Hart"; Tom Vignieri's "Hodie Christus natus est"; William Walton's "King Herod and the cock," "Make we joy now in this fest," and "What Cheer"; Eric Whitacre's "Lux aurumque"; and anonymous/traditional settings of "Coventry Carol," "Deck the Hall," and "Ther is no rose of swych vertu."
Year of Release: 2005
Record Label: Avie - AVI 2078

**American Flute**
Performers: Claudia Anderson, Julianna Moore, Jill Felber, Karen Yonovitz (flutes)
Higdon Work Performed: *Steeley Pause*
Other Album Contents: Aaron Copland's *Duo*, John Harris Harbison's *Duo for Flute and Piano*, Katherine Hoover's *Sound Bytes*, Shirish Korde's *Tenderness of Cranes*, Lowell Libermann's *Gargoyles, Op. 29* (solo piano), and Rodney Rogers' *April Hello*
Year of Release: 1994
Record Label: Centaur - CRC 2203

**American Flute Music**
Performers: Jeffrey Khaner (principal flute, The Philadelphia Orchestra), Hugh Sung (piano)
Higdon Works Performed: *Autumn Reflection*
Other Album Contents: Eldin Burton's *Sonatina*, Aaron Copland's *Duo*, Lowell Liebermann's *Sonata*, Walter Piston's *Sonata*, and Beryl Rubinstein's *Sonata*
Year of Release: 2002
Record Label: Avie - AVI 0004

**An American Sampler: New Music from NACUSA**
Performers: University of Northern Iowa Concert Chorale (Bruce Chamberlain, cond.)
Higdon Work Performed: *Voices*
Other Album Contents: Jeremy Beck's *Never Final, Never Gone* (chorus and piano), Robert Carl's *Liberty* (2 pianos & percussion), Nancy Bloomer Deussen's *Trio for Violin, Clarinet and Piano*, Charles Dvorak's *Seven Bagatelles for Piano*, Stefania M. de Kenessy's *Sunburst, Op. 33* (solo piano), and Richard Nanes' *Sonnet #9 in G Major* (solo piano)
Record Label: ERM 6662
The Best of Christmas on Logan Square
Performers: The Philadelphia Singers
Higdon Work Performed: Deep In The Night
Year of Release: 1998

Conspirare: Chamber Music for Solo Flute
Performer: Patti Monson (flute)
Higdon Work Performed: rapid.fire
Other Album Contents: Martin Bresnick's Conspiracies, Robert Dick's Afterlight, Harold Meltzer's Rumors, Steve Reich's Vermont Counterpoint, and Kaija Saariaho's NoaNoa
Year of Release: 2000
Record Label: CRI - CD867

Dream Journal
Performers: Network for New Music (Jan Krzywicki, cond.)
Higdon Work Performed: wissahicken poeTrees
Other Album Contents: James Primosch's Dream Journal (2 pianos, 2 percussionists, & electronic sound), Bernard Rands' Concertino for Oboe and Ensemble, and Augusta Read Thomas' Passion Prayers (cello & 6 instruments)
Year of Release: 2002
Record Label: Albany Records (Troy 488)

Inflorescence II-Music for Solo Flute
Performer: Laurel Zucker (flute)
Higdon Work Performed: Song
Other Album Contents: Daniel Akiva's Three Pieces for Flute Solo, Robert Baksa's Soliloquy (Krishna's Song), Ingolf Dahl's Variations on a Swedish Folk Tune and Eight Variations, Philip Glass' Serenade for Solo Flute, Andres Jolivet's Incantation pour flute en ut Pour que l'image devienne symbole, Oliver Knussen's Masks, Op. 3 (flute & glass chimes), Lowell Liebermann's Eight Pieces for Flute, Marin Marais' Les Folies d'Espagne, Astor Piazzolla's Six Tango Etudes, Francis Poulenc's Un Joueur de Flute Berce les Ruines, Gary Schocker's Solosuite, Toru Takemitsu's Itinerant, and Alec Wilder's The Geiger Suite
Year of Release: 2003
Record Label: Cantilena Records (UPC#66022-2)

International Connections
Performers: the Verdehr Trio: Elsa Ludewig-Verdehr (clarinet), Walter Verdehr (violin), and Silvia Roederer (piano)
Higdon Work Performed: DASH
Other Album Contents: Gernot Wolfgang's Reflections, Bright Sheng's Tibetan Dance, Stephen Chatman's Trio, and Wolfgang Rihm's Gesangstück
Year of Release: 2006
Record Label: Crystal Records - CD 946
I Virtuosi, Volume 1
Performers: Jennifer Higdon (flute), Jayn Rosenfeld (flute), Pat Spencer (flute), Stephanie Starin (flute), Michael Isaac Strauss (viola), Hugh Sung (piano)
Higdon Works Performed: Sonata for Viola and Piano, Steeley Pause
Other Album Contents: David Berends' Fifteen Exceptions for Piano, Elizabeth Lauer's Five Flower Rags, Alan Seale's Child of the Moon, and Chris Wind's stillwood
Year of Release: 1996
Record Label: I Virtuosi - IVR 505

Jennifer Higdon: City Scape and Concerto for Orchestra
Performer: Atlanta Symphony Orchestra (Robert Spano, cond.)
Higdon Works Performed: City Scape and Concerto for Orchestra
Other Album Contents: none
Year of Release: 2004
Record Label: Telarc CD-80620

Jennifer Higdon: Piano Trio / Voices / Impressions
Performers: Cypress String Quartet, Anne Akiko Meyers, Alisa Weilerstein, Adam Neiman, Nick Kitchen, Melissa Kleinbart, Hsin-Yun Huang, and Mina Smith
Higdon Works Performed: Piano Trio, Voices, and Impressions
Other Album Contents: none
Year of Release: 2006
Record Label: NAXOS 8.559298

Legacy of the American Woman Composer
Performers: Laurel Ann Maurer (flute), Joanne Pearce Martin (piano)
Higdon Work Performed: Legacy
Other Album Contents: Vivian Fine's Emily's Images, Libby Larsen's Aubade (solo flute), Marie Barker Nelson's Songs of the Moon, Gladys Nordenstrom's Rondo, Claire Polin's First Flute Sonata, Gwyneth Walker's Theme and Variation
Year of Release: 2000
Record Label: 4 Tay - 4018

Lesbian American Composers
Performers: Claudia Anderson (flute), Jill Felber (flute), John Piirainen (piano)
Higdon Work Performed: running the edgE
Other Album Contents: Ruth Anderson's SUM (State of the Union Message), Eve Beglarian's Wolf Chaser, Madelyn Byrne's Winter, Lori Freedman & Marilyn Lerner's Barbie's Other Shoe, Paula Kimper's I Want to Live, Annea Lockwood's I Give You Back, Linda Montano's Portrait of Sappho, Pauline Oliveros' Poem of Change, and Nurit Tilles' Raw Silk (A Rag)
Year of Release: 1998
Record Label: CRI - CD780
**Marin Alsop Conducts MacMillan, Adès, and Higdon**
Performers: Colin Currie (percussion soloist), with the London Philharmonic Orchestra (Marin Alsop, cond.)
Higdon Work Performed: *Percussion Concerto*
Other Album Contents: James MacMillan's *The Confession of Isobel Gowdie* and Thomas Adès' *Chamber Symphony, Op 2*
Year of Release: 2008

**Music in Our House**
Performers: Flutes Unlimited
Higdon Work Performed: *Mountain Songs*
Record Label: The Women's Chorus of Dallas

**Postcards from the Center**
Performers: Moran Quintet
Higdon Work Performed: *Autumn Reflection*
Other Album Contents: Bernhard Heiden's *Quintet for Woodwinds*, Peter Lieuwen's *Savannah*, and Katherine Murdock's *Postcards from the Center*
Year of Release: 1998
Record Label: Crystal Records - CD754

**The Rainbow Body**
Performer: Atlanta Symphony Orchestra (Robert Spano, cond.)
Higdon Work Performed: *blue cathedral*
Other Album Contents: Samuel Barber's *Symphony No. 1*, Aaron Copland's *Suite from Appalachian Spring*, Christopher Theofanidis' *The Rainbow Body*
Year of Release: 2003
Record Label: Telarc CD-80596

**rapid.fire**
Performers: Jennifer Higdon (flute), Hsin-Yun Huang (viola), Nicholas Kitchen (violin), Melissa Kleinbart (violin), Jayn Rosenfeld (flute), Wilhelmina Smith (cello), Pat Spencer (flute), Stephanie Starin (flute), Michael Isaac Strauss (viola), Hugh Sung (piano)
Higdon Works Performed: *Autumn Reflection, The Jeffrey Mode, Lullaby, rapid.fire, Sonata for Viola and Piano, Steeley Pause, Voices*
Year of Release: 1995
Record Label: I Virtuosi - IVR 501
A Season's Promise
Performers: The New York Concert Singers (Judith Clurman, cond.)
Higdon Work Performed: Deep In The Night
Year of Release: 2001
Record Label: New World Records - 80592

Sometimes I Wish...
Performers: Potomac Fever
Higdon Works Performed: Imagine, A Quiet Moment
Other Album Contents: Helmuth/Barnfield's Sometimes I Wish, Jester Hairston's arrangement of In Dat Great Gittin' Up Mornin', Dean X. Johnson's arrangement of Deep River, Jeff Bowen's arrangements of Bei Mir Bist du Schon, Rum and Coca-Cola, and Boogie-Woogie Bugle Boy, Robert T. Boaz's arrangements of Lean on Me, It's Your Love, Verdi Cries, A Friend to Me, That Don't Impress Me Much, and We Shall Be Free, Kirby Shaw's arrangement of What'll I Do?, and Sean Mills' arrangement of Zombie Jamboree.
Year of Release: 2000

Sounds and Colors
Performers: James Madison University Flute Choir(Carol Kniebusch Noe, cond.)
Higdon Work Performed: Mountain Songs
Record Label: FC 356

Spaces Between the Stars
Performers: Anna Crusis Women's Choir (Jane K. Hulting, cond.)
Higdon Work Performed: My True Love's Hair
Year of Release: 2000
Strange Imaginary Animals
Performers: eighth blackbird
Higdon Work Performed: Zaka
Other Album Contents: Gordon Fitzell's *violence and evanescence*, Steve Mackey's *Indigenous Instruments*, David Gordon's *Friction Systems*, and a dance remix of all the pieces on the album by Dennis DeSantis
Year of Release: 2006
Record Label: Cedille 9000 094

String Poetic
Performers: Jennifer Koh (violin), Reiko Uchida (piano)
Higdon Work Performed: String Poetic
Year of Release: 2007
Record Label: Cedille B0015P2FMA

Summer Shimmers
Performers: Susan Glaser (flute), John Novacek (piano), Todd Palmer (clarinet), The Lark Quartet, Stephen Taylor (oboe), Marc Goldberg (bassoon), Joseph Anderer (French horn), Kyu-Young Kim (violin), Pinarry Shin (cello), Christopher Oldfather (piano), Ingrid Gordon (percussion), William Purvis (conductor)
Higdon Works Performed: Zaka, Legacy, rapid.fire, Soliloquy, Summer Shimmers, Autumn Reflection, Song, and DASH
Year of Release: 2008
Record Label: Koch International Classics - B001CW7M9M

Winter Spirits
Performers: Christina Jennings (flute), Rodney Waters (piano)
Higdon Work Performed: Autumn Reflection
Year of Release: 2001

ZAWA! Landmark Duos for Flutes
Performers: ZAWA! (Claudia Anderson & Jill Felber)
Higdon Work Performed: running the edgE
Other Album Contents: Frederic Chopin's *Nocturne in D flat major, Op. 27 No. 2*, Anne Deane's *Dreams Awake* (flute, alto flute, & piano), Ross Edwards' *Ecstatic Dances*, Jeremy Haladyna's *Aluxes!* (2 piccolos & piano), Richard Lavenda's *Liquid Dialogues* (2 alto flutes & 2 flutes - 2 players), and Jules Mouquet's *Pan et les Oiseaux*
Year of Release: 2002
Record Label: Neuma Records - 450101
CHAPTER 3

A HISTORY OF HIGDON’S VIOLIN CONCERTO

Conception

Begun in March of 2008, Jennifer Higdon’s Violin Concerto took approximately six months to compose. It was written immediately after the completion of Concerto 4-3, a piece she created for the genre-bending, violin-violin-bass trio Time For Three. Although the composition of these two works did not overlap, writing the Violin Concerto was interrupted by performances of Concerto 4-3 with the Philadelphia Symphony Orchestra. Despite these delays, Higdon sent the movements to Hahn as she completed them, the last of which was delivered in August of 2008.

Hahn made virtually no suggestions to Higdon for ways to improve or change the piece. As it originally appeared in Tim Smith’s article for the Baltimore Sun, Higdon states: "Hilary's technique is so superior that all things are possible. You can daydream anything, and Hilary can execute it. I sent Hilary each movement as I finished it to see if she had any requests. She didn't. She just said, 'It's my job to learn the piece.'"

Each movement was composed as an autonomous unit from start to finish before the next one was begun. The second movement, Chaconni, was composed first between March and June of 2008. This was followed by the third movement, Fly Forward, which Higdon finished in July of 2008. The first movement then, 1726, was the last one conceived. It was begun in July of 2008 and completed in August of the same year. Composing out of order is common for

---

1 Jennifer Higdon, phone interview by author, July 16, 2009, Philadelphia, PA/Tallahassee, FL.
2 Jennifer Higdon, interview by author, February 5, 2009, Omni Severin Hotel lobby: 40 West Jackson Place, Indianapolis, IN.
3 Jennifer Higdon, phone interview by author, July 16, 2009, Philadelphia, PA/Tallahassee, FL.
5 Jennifer Higdon, interview by author, February 5, 2009, Omni Severin Hotel lobby: 40 West Jackson Place, Indianapolis, IN.
6 Higdon, interview by author, February 5, 2009.
7 Jennifer Higdon, phone interview by author, July 16, 2009, Philadelphia, PA/Tallahassee, FL.
Higdon. As suggested in Reitz’s dissertation, “anxiety is [Higdon’s] underlying principle for writing the opening movement last. She places much emphasis on the significance of an initial movement. Higdon remains somewhat nervous that the first movement, if not composed correctly, may spoil the remainder of the work.”

The piece was jointly commissioned by the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra, Mario Venzago, Music Director; Toronto Symphony Orchestra, Peter Oundjian, Music Director; Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, Marin Alsop, Music Director; and the Curtis Institute of Music, Roberto Diaz, President & CEO. The commission was made possible with the generous support of LDI, Ltd., and the Lacy Foundation; the Randolph S. Rothschild Fund; as well as the commissioning orchestras. The Concerto’s relationship with Indianapolis began when Hahn was touring in Europe with Mario Venzago, then Music Director of the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra, who “put the bug in Hahn’s ear for this collaboration.” The ISO hoped to appear on Carnegie Hall’s Great American Orchestras Series and felt like they would have a better chance of being selected if they could offer the premiere of a new work involving musicians with the combined talents and prestige of Higdon and Hahn. This was, however, not to be, as the series passed them over in favor of other orchestras. To help with the financial burden a project of this magnitude imposed on the ISO, Higdon and the agent that she was working with at the time, set about to find more orchestras to serve as co-commissioners.

One of those ensembles was the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, whose relationship with Hahn was cemented years earlier, as it had accompanied the homegrown violinist at her major-orchestra debut. In addition, the BSO and its music director, Marin Alsop, had established a good working relationship with Higdon, having programmed her music a number of times in the

---

recent past. At some point, there was even a push to have the BSO be the lead commissioning orchestra and, as a result, give the premiere itself. This did not materialize as funding could not be found in a timely fashion.

Influences

As with all mature works, the inspirations for Higdon’s *Violin Concerto* are simultaneously obvious and subtle. Here presented are the most important influences including those that sprung immediately to the surface as well as others that operated on a more subconscious level.

Hilary Hahn

Although completed in August of 2008, the idea for the work had been festering for a long time. Hilary Hahn—the work’s eventual dedicatee—was a student in Higdon’s twentieth-century music history class at The Curtis Institute of Music between 1995-96; soon after the class concluded, they began discussing the possibility of collaborating in the future. Sometime later, Hahn had the pleasure of performing Higdon’s *Dark Wood* in the Curtis Alumni Concert—a performance that turned out to be its first because the originally scheduled premiere had been postponed. Hahn thought that worked out well because “a premiere should be . . . just a performance . . . and then the piece is suddenly in the world.” After that performance, Hahn and Higdon began working more actively on the idea of collaboration. Getting funding required more time, as did scheduling, but the collaborative venture was on its way to becoming a reality at that point.

---

14 Hilary Hahn, phone interview by author, February 7, 2009, Indianapolis, IN/Fishers, IN.
15 Jennifer Higdon, interview by author, February 5, 2009, Omni Severin Hotel lobby: 40 West Jackson Place, Indianapolis, IN. Hilary Hahn, phone interview by author, February 7, 2009, Indianapolis, IN/Fishers, IN.
17 Jennifer Higdon, e-mail message to author, April 19, 2010. The commissioning ensemble, St. Luke’s Chamber Players, did eventually, and officially, premiere the work.
18 Hilary Hahn, phone interview by author, February 7, 2009, Indianapolis, IN/Fishers, IN.
Once the commission itself had begun, Hahn and Higdon met a number of times to discuss the specifics of the work. Higdon was interested in which concerti Hahn had played through the years and what specific challenges, especially in regards to balance, they might have presented to her as soloist.\(^{20}\) This latter concern, undoubtedly played a large role in the compositional and editorial processes. As Higdon recalled, Hahn told her “right off the bat…that she wanted a major work.” Higdon went on to say that “you can't always plan what a major work will be. It's pretty intimidating.”\(^{21}\) What Hahn wisely withheld from the conversations was that she didn’t just want a major work with regards to length, but also a transformative work that would come to define how the instrument could be composed for in the future.\(^{22}\)

Hahn had just recorded the Schoenberg \textit{Violin Concerto}\(^ {23}\) and caught reviewers’ attention when she and Higdon began talking about how Higdon should approach this new piece, “what statement it should make,”\(^ {24}\) as Hahn expressed it. “I knew it was important,” Hahn added, “to have these pieces that no one has ever heard before that relate to the past of classical music, but that just completely redefine the instrument. I appreciated that in the Schoenberg,” where “he wasn’t thinking, whether or not this was going to be doable. He just wrote what he wanted.”\(^ {25}\) Hahn found that approach to be pivotal in shaping Schoenberg’s piece as unique for the violin: “I had to . . . relearn all my concepts of violin playing because the notes were patterns that I did not know. I had to get it in my head; once I did, it made all of the sense in the world.”\(^ {26}\) She wanted Higdon to compose a piece that was “equally challenging to what we already know and would


\(^{22}\) Hilary Hahn, interview by author, June 7, 2009, Joseph Meyerhoff Symphony Hall dressing room, Baltimore, MD.

\(^{23}\) Hilary Hahn (violin) with the Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra, Esa-Pekka Salonen (conductor), Arnold Schoenberg (composer) and Jean Sibelius (composer), \textit{Schoenberg \& Sibelius violin concertos: Hilary Hahn}, Deutsche Grammophon B0010858-02, 2008.

\(^{24}\) Hilary Hahn, interview by author, June 7, 2009, Joseph Meyerhoff Symphony Hall dressing room, Baltimore, MD.

\(^{25}\) Hahn, interview by author, June 7, 2009.

\(^{26}\) Ibid.
establish a possibly new way of writing for the violin.”27 That explains what Hahn really meant when she stated that she wanted a major piece.28 Hahn was willing to play whatever Higdon wrote, no matter how challenging. She wanted Higdon to use her “imagination about violin writing” and not to be constrained by “what’s been done before” or by the considerable talent and effort that might be required for the piece to be performed successfully.29

Beyond the dedication itself, Jennifer Higdon has made it clear on a number of occasions that her Violin Concerto was inspired by the playing of and friendship with Hilary Hahn.30 To state it simply, the work is meant to be a vehicle through which Hahn can show her tremendous abilities on the instrument.31 In fact, each movement is intended to highlight one particular aspect of her playing. The first movement, 1726, is built for Hahn’s remarkable ability to stretch her left hand to great intervals. The second movement allows her to display her lyrical playing and noteworthy tone and the final movement puts her fast, virtuosic, almost mechanically-precise abilities on display.32 Interestingly, after having composed this extremely quick and demanding finale movement, Higdon feared that her new work wouldn’t challenge the gifted Hahn enough. The monstrous first movement, then, was her response.

**Samuel Barber/Arnold Schoenberg/Charles Ives/Dmitri Shostakovich**

When preparing for the commission, Higdon surrounded herself with many recordings from the vast violin concerto repertoire.33 The one that she listened to the most was Hahn’s rendering of the Samuel Barber Violin Concerto with the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra and

---

27 Hilary Hahn, interview by author, June 7, 2009, Joseph Meyerhoff Symphony Hall dressing room, Baltimore, MD.
28 Hahn, interview by author, June 7, 2009.
29 Ibid.
32 Jennifer Higdon, phone interview by author, July 16, 2009, Philadelphia, PA/Tallahassee, FL.
Hugh Wolff conducting.  Higdon admits that the most obvious influence comes from the Barber’s finale movement on this disc. Although Higdon and Barber’s tonal languages are different, the two works obviously share “a super fast, super short last movement.” The influence is not lost on the public, it would seem. One reviewer, David Patrick Stearns, stated that Higdon’s *Concerto* “seems to be shoring up the Barber *Violin Concerto*’s weak link—its third movement, which fulfills the traditional virtuoso side of the concerto more out of duty than inspiration. Alike in concept and manner, Higdon's third movement has much more stuffing and a more prolonged air of purpose.” Glyn Môn Hughes mused that it is “at times, reminiscent of Holst, with some Barber thrown in.” For Hahn, the influences run deeper.

I don’t know what I’m hearing because I did the first reading sessions at Curtis and I’m so entrenched in that school with my training. My teacher…was in Barber’s graduating class; Barber wrote the *Quartet* for my teacher’s quartet. To me it is all so connected to that school and to the sound of that school that I don’t know whether I’m hearing a compositional thing or just my own associations. Some of the chords sound very lush, very ‘Curtis’ to me.

From a performance standpoint, Hahn points out two distinct differences between the Higdon and Barber concertos’ third movements. Although both are perpetual motion movements, Higdon’s is a little more forgiving (in at least one way) as it gives the soloist a few more precious beats of rest than does the Barber. Another difference is in regards to the treatment of rhythm and meter. Both have a predilection for off-beat accents, but Higdon’s work takes this

---

36 Higdon, phone interview, July 16, 2009.
39 Hilary Hahn, interview by author, June 7, 2009, Joseph Meyerhoff Symphony Hall dressing room, Baltimore, MD.
off-kilter approach even further by alternating between groups of four and six notes (sometimes by way of changing meters) to aid in driving the work to its conclusion.\textsuperscript{40}

The Barber Violin Concerto was not the only one of Hilary’s recordings that had an effect on Higdon. She was apparently also fond of Hahn’s rendition of the Arnold Schoenberg Violin Concerto with the Swedish Radio Symphony and Esa-Pekka Salonen.\textsuperscript{41} As Higdon later admitted in an interview with Hahn:

\begin{quote}
I had just listened to your Schoenberg recording . . . that . . . had all of these great harmonics in it. The opening of my Concerto starts with harmonics . . . . It was kind of like a leap of inspiration from your performance of the Schoenberg.\textsuperscript{42}
\end{quote}

Hahn agreed with this general association when she observed:

\begin{quote}
The way the notes in the high positions in this piece . . . follow the sequences is more like Schoenberg to me than anything else. [But] the Schoenberg has a lot more double and triple stops; there’s a lot more polyphony. Everyone talks about tone rows in the Schoenberg, but I don’t hear tone rows. I hear multiple voices staggered. Very simple voices and very simple melodies [are] switching back and forth, not necessarily simultaneously as double stops in the Schoenberg. If you follow it linearly . . . [there appears to be a] disjunct melody that is all over the place. But if you look at it melodically, it’s just really doing something very normal. When I first started working on this piece by Jennifer, I was trying to figure out where the phrases were and where the melodies were because I was starting from scratch, and I immediately went back to [the] way I had learned the Schoenberg and it really worked. It’s the only other piece, the only other violin concerto I’ve played, where the polyphony is implied; it is staggered. And so, there’s the way that she treats the high positions as single notes that’s similar to the way [Schoenberg] treats single notes, and there’s [the] staggered melody [that is also similar].\textsuperscript{43}
\end{quote}

Although not confirmed by the composer, there is also a striking similarity between the section found beginning at the four-and-a-half minute mark in the first movement of the previously mentioned recording of the Schoenberg Violin Concerto and in measures 318-329 of the Higdon

\textsuperscript{40} Hilary Hahn, interview by author, June 7, 2009, Joseph Meyerhoff Symphony Hall dressing room, Baltimore, MD.
\textsuperscript{41} Hilary Hahn (violin) with the Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra, Esa-Pekka Salonen (conductor), Arnold Schoenberg (composer) and Jean Sibelius (composer), Schoenberg / Sibelius violin concertos: Hilary Hahn, Deutsche Grammophon B0010858-02, 2008.
\textsuperscript{43} Hilary Hahn, interview by author, June 7, 2009, Joseph Meyerhoff Symphony Hall dressing room, Baltimore, MD.
Concerto’s first movement where the soloist (in both cases) is asked to alternate between *arco* and *pizzicato* notes many times in close succession. They are by no means identical, of course, but an argument can be made for the existence of another sub-conscious homage here to the Schoenberg Concerto. The two concerti in question also share a predilection for wildly disjunct melodies in the first movements’ solo parts as alluded to in Hahn’s previous statement.

Hahn feels like there is another concerto that serves as a kindred spirit to the Higdon—Dmitri Shostakovich’s *Violin Concerto No. 1 in A minor, op. 77*. The most striking resemblance concerns Shostakovich’s *Passacaglia* and Higdon’s *Chaconni* movements that, in addition to the formal similarities, do share some characteristics regarding slow harmonic motion. That aspect is discussed in more detail in chapter five of this treatise.

Although there is not a particular piece that is cited as being influential, the general style of Charles Ives has also had an impact on Higdon’s Concerto. As Hahn puts it:

> I was learning three Ives sonatas and this Concerto (memorizing) at the same time. I had never done this kind of rhythmic . . . thing with . . . other instruments [before]. In the Ives it is very similar to this in the sense that, when you have two lines going at the same time, they don’t line up until a certain very specific point. And you have to know how they’re not lining up in order for it to not line up [or] otherwise you start . . . trying to match and . . . it’s not supposed to match. I think it was really good that I was doing those things at the same time. . . . If I hadn’t been doing the Ives I would not have known where it was coming from.

During this process, Hahn inquired about this possible connection, and Higdon did confirm its existence, stating that she admired Ives’s use of rhythm and line.

**Zach De Pue/Time For Three**

Just before beginning the commission for the Violin Concerto, Higdon was putting the finishing touches on a piece for the Philadelphia-spawned group Time For Three, which includes violinists Zachary De Pue and Nicolas Kendall as well as bassist Ranaan Meyer. The composition was later titled *Concerto 4-3*. Higdon’s history with the members of Time for

---

44 Hilary Hahn (violin) with the Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra, Esa-Pekka Salonen (conductor), Arnold Schoenberg (composer) and Jean Sibelius (composer), *Schoenberg / Sibelius violin concertos: Hilary Hahn*, Deutsche Grammophon B0010858-02, 2008.

45 Hilary Hahn, interview by author, June 7, 2009, Joseph Meyerhoff Symphony Hall dressing room, Baltimore, MD.

46 Hahn, interview by author, June 7, 2009.

47 Ibid.
Three, like with Hahn, included a stint at the Curtis Institute of Music where they were all students, but her relationship with violinist Zach De Pue even predated these events. Higdon was a composition student of Zach’s father, Wallace, at Bowling Green State University, where she witnessed, from time to time, a much younger Zach running through the halls of the music building.

Although the composer attempts to truly set aside one work as she moves to the next, there are some similarities between the two that go beyond Higdon’s tonal language that naturally pervade her entire output. Two such moments occur in the Violin Concerto’s last movement (measures 113-121 and the cadenza), where a predilection for open strings and pseudo-shuffle rhythm conjure characteristics of bluegrass that exist often within the work of Time for Three and indeed help to define that group.

What is present in the aforementioned examples is not what you would expect to hear in the collective outputs of bluegrass originators Bill Monroe, Earl Scruggs, or Lester Flatt. However, today’s bluegrass music, as it is being performed by the likes of David Grisman, Bela Fleck, Mike Marshall, and scores of others (and that is sometimes referred to as newgrass), can be extraordinarily chromatic and much more stylistically diverse than those renderings of their predecessors. Contemporary bluegrass music can draw on a number of different folk music traditions from Brazilian choros, middle-eastern maqams, Jewish klezmer and other traditional musics to Indian ragas and it is this type of fusion that presents itself, albeit sparingly, in Higdon’s Violin Concerto.

As coincidence would have it, Time for Three member Zach De Pue had recently become the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra’s new concertmaster (starting in September of 2007), and would appear as such for the world premiere of Higdon’s new work for Hahn. With this knowledge in hand during the compositional process, Higdon’s penchant for principal and

---

49 Jennifer Higdon, interview by author, February 5, 2009, Omni Severin Hotel lobby: 40 West Jackson Place, Indianapolis, IN.
50 Jennifer Higdon, phone interview by author, July 16, 2009, Philadelphia, PA/Tallahassee, FL.
reduced section soli had a more personal inspiration and resulted in, among other things, a number of prominent concertmaster solos.\textsuperscript{52}

**Premiere Preparation**

Once the work was finally in Hahn’s possession, it took her a mere four months to learn and memorize, despite the fact that she had to pick it up and put it down on a number of occasions in order to attend to more pressing concert programs. As she put it: “that’s really long for me. Even putting it down and picking it up . . . that’s really long for me. I ended [up] having to not memorize this piece while I was memorizing the Ives [sonatas] because it was such a new way for my brain to function that I couldn’t keep track of anything anymore. I had to take it one composer at a time; it’s enough to learn three Sonatas by the same composer.”\textsuperscript{53}

The first time Higdon’s *Violin Concerto* was presented outside of her studio and Hahn’s practice room was 10 and 11 September 2008 when Higdon employed the Curtis Institute Symphony Orchestra (with David Hayes as conductor) for a five-hour reading session that allowed them to test out the new work without the pressure of an impending performance.\textsuperscript{54} The two days in question proved extremely fruitful for both performer and composer. Hahn was able to not only perform the work in a pseudo-public setting but was also able to experience how her solo part interacted with the orchestral desks for the first time. Despite a piano reduction being available to her, according to Higdon, Hahn claims to have never asked for nor received one.\textsuperscript{55} She was in possession of a score, but had not availed herself of rehearsing with a pianist in reduced form.\textsuperscript{56} With or without the piano reduction, neither of them could have known exactly how the orchestration would turn out or what problems might lurk in the complex layering of the

\textsuperscript{52} Jennifer Higdon, phone interview by author, July 16, 2009, Philadelphia, PA/Tallahassee, FL.

\textsuperscript{53} Hilary Hahn, interview by author, June 7, 2009, Joseph Meyerhoff Symphony Hall dressing room, Baltimore, MD. The program Hahn is referring to was for a tour with pianist Valentina Lisitsa that included the 1\textsuperscript{st}, 2\textsuperscript{nd} and 4\textsuperscript{th} sonatas by Ives, Bartók’s *Romanian Folk Dances*, seven of the *Hungarian Dances* by Brahms, and Ysaye’s 4\textsuperscript{th} and 6\textsuperscript{th} sonatas for solo violin as well as his *Rêve d’enfant* all of which she played by memory—as she always does for appearances as soloist or recital partner. Hilary Hahn (violin) and Valentina Lisitsa (piano), *Thomasville Entertainment Foundation Concert Program* (Thomasville Cultural Center Auditorium, Thomasville, GA), February 17, 2009.

\textsuperscript{54} Jennifer Higdon, e-mail message to author, September 22, 2009.

\textsuperscript{55} Jennifer Higdon, e-mail message to author, August 20, 2009. Hilary Hahn, phone interview by author, February 7, 2009, Indianapolis, IN/Fishers, IN.

\textsuperscript{56} Hahn, phone interview, February 7, 2009.
work until this reading. It was during and just after this session that many changes to the score took place. A discussion of the full scope of these changes appears later in this chapter.

Rehearsals began with the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra 3 February 2009 and continued for the next four days, leading up to and including the day of the world premiere performance of the Violin Concerto. Approximately seven hours of rehearsal time were given the work for preparation during those days. Needless to say, the amount of time that Maestro Venzago allotted was significantly more than typical concerto preparations. Nevertheless, Hahn commented:

   It wasn’t even enough. We could have used [a] couple more rehearsals. It’s just never enough when no one knows what’s going on. That’s the nature of a premiere; no one has done it before, and no one knows what’s going on, and everyone is trying to figure it out, and the more you can get it to be second nature, the better. It was reassuring to have the time to run it a few times in the later rehearsals just to be able to do it again and again. Normally with orchestra I get one rehearsal in which we can repeat it a couple times in a working situation. So if it’s a half-hour concerto, I’ll get [approximately] an hour and a half of rehearsal if I’m lucky—maybe an hour and fifteen for the first rehearsal. The second rehearsal is a play-through with a couple of touch-ups and then the concert. So, that’s kind of minimal and it’s good that we didn’t have that. I don’t think we could have done it with less time.

When asked about the rehearsal time allotted, Maestro Venzago stated that if you combine a new work with “very standard repertoire then you have perhaps more time than you would have for a conventional concerto or piece.” Although it is not always financially possible to do so, most premiere performances would benefit from this approach, as the ISO did in this case.

The author had the pleasure of interviewing a handful of Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra members the day of the premiere and, understandably, they voiced a number of concerns regarding that night’s performance. Louise Alexander, ISO second violinist, felt that “the strings, whenever [Hilary is] low and [they are] marked pianissimo, [were] just playing too loud. Mario just has to stand up there and yell for five minutes before we will actually play

---


58 Hilary Hahn, phone interview by author, February 7, 2009, Indianapolis, IN/Fishers, IN.

59 Mario Venzago, interview by author, February 4, 2009, Hilbert Circle Theatre office, Indianapolis, IN.
really quietly and that’s weird because . . . if we are told, we usually quiet down.”**60** Needless to say, balance was a common issue throughout the rehearsals and at times during the premiere itself.

In addition to this, general rhythmic integrity (especially in the work’s third movement) was oftentimes a concern. As Ms. Alexander put it:

Normally what happens when a soloist comes in, they just lay it down. They are so comfortable with it, and it’s so there that we just follow them, and because it’s so there, they have a little more latitude. Whereas, with Hilary, because it’s new to her, she needs us to be with her exactly. If there’s any kind of . . . jiggle, it’s very jarring for her. Although I could be wrong; it could be just that we’re not following her or we’re playing too loud or Mario is not conducting well, I don’t know.**61**

Some of the ISO musicians also felt that Ms. Hahn lacked the necessary flexibility for collaboration. Roger Roe contributed: “In my book, she’s just very demanding. She’s like ‘No, that’s late. That’s behind me. I’m playing 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 . . . that’s it.’ She pushes right on the edge a lot. I’m not going to say she’s rushing, but there are times when she’s on the front side.”**62** Ms. Alexander concurs:

It sounds great. But, to us, it feels like it’s pushing. [As we rehearsed] the end of the 3rd movement, Mario said to the brass, ‘remember we rehearsed that again and again’ and the trumpets were behind; and so, to us it felt like she was speeding up. She probably wasn’t, but to us, it felt like she was. Then Mario said, we’re moving forward for these two bars, and it fell together fine. But that goes back to what I was saying before. It’s not a piece she’s familiar with. To me, it seems like if she was playing Tchaik [the Tchaikovsky Violin Concerto], there would be more of a give-and-take with the orchestra, but I think just because she’s got so much to play, she’s got it organized in a certain way . . . I even wonder if that’s why she was making so many mistakes on previous days . . . because she was getting frustrated that we weren’t rhythmically under her exactly, and it jostled her.**63**

Indeed, a great deal of rehearsal time was spent trying to literally get the musicians together. No doubt these moments would have been handled more efficiently had the work been more familiar to some, if not all of the participating parties. As is stood, though, considerable time was used to

---

60 Louise Alexander (Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra 2nd violin), Roger Roe (ISO acting principal oboe), Sheldon Person (ISO viola), Samuel Banks (ISO 2nd bassoon), interview by author, February 5, 2009, The Taste of Tango: 36 E. Washington St, Indianapolis, IN.

61 Ibid.

62 Ibid.

63 Ibid.
simply determine what the problem was before the implementation of corrective measures could even be taken.64

Another issue that consistently presented itself throughout the ISO’s rehearsals was the noticeably different approaches to the Concerto by its premiere conductor and soloist. Sheldon Person states:

I think one of the problems we’ve had this week is that the two artistic leaders on the program have very different personalities artistically—my impression is that they are very diametrically opposed, in regards to the technical execution, sort of the yin and yang, and there’s been some tension in that respect. They have a very different way of working from start to finish. But I think that’s independent of the piece, and I think we might have the same problem if we were playing the Brahms Concerto. I can’t say for sure, but that’s my instinct.65

Samuel Banks adds:

It’s a very evocative piece, and Mario is an evocative conductor. He never does anything robotically. He never does things just metronomically. And the piece can’t be played metronomically. It’s too interesting and it’s too musical, and to put it in that kind of strait-jacket would make it a boring accompaniment. But the flip side of that is that there are moments where we’re slightly behind her, and she’s so pristine and precise with her playing that it’s hard for an entire symphony orchestra of 90 musicians to play with that same precision that she has. We are all trying to play it precisely, but there are 90 slightly different versions of what precise is, dictated by the instruments we play and where we sit on the stage and also what we hear coming from her instrument. She’s been rehearsing this piece for much more than three days. We’ve been rehearsing it for three days, so we’re still learning. It’s not like we could listen to her previous performances of this piece or buy the Sony Classics Recording of it. We don’t have a sense, still, of where it’s going to be really moving forward.66

Although recorded materials from this point forward will theoretically be available to all presenting orchestras, this source that has become so relied-upon by twentieth and twenty-first century musicians could offer no such aid here.

---

65 Louise Alexander (Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra 2nd violin), Roger Roe (ISO acting principal oboe), Sheldon Person (ISO viola), Samuel Banks (ISO 2nd bassoon), interview by author, February 5, 2009, The Taste of Tango: 36 E. Washington St, Indianapolis, IN.
As was customary for her to do, Hahn addressed the ISO at the conclusion of their final rehearsal together. She took the time to not only thank them for all of their work but to also share her hope that their combined efforts would bring the swift ascension of the Higdon *Concerto* into the standard repertoire. Although he appreciated the sentiment, when Roger Roe heard this statement he couldn’t help but think:

‘Who else is going to play it?’ You know, it’s incredibly difficult; and, I hope that too, because I do think it’s a wonderful piece, but I felt like that was tied into the sense that, if I don’t get this performance really great, then people won’t realize what a good piece this is. She is convinced of this piece, and she wants other people to be convinced of it too. So the best way to do that is to be really demanding and make sure that we have a great, great performance.

As he went on to explain, the ISO has played “world premieres . . . with Mario where he’s hated the piece, and those are very different. There’s a real sense of we’re just going to get through it.” Fortunately for the debut of Higdon’s *Violin Concerto*, Mr. Venzago not only exhibited a clear amount of respect for the work but also seemed to feel a certain amount of ownership regarding it and attempted to instill a similar sense of responsibility for its premiere with the ISO musicians.

**Premiere**

Remnants from record snowfalls littered the streets of Monument Circle in Indianapolis, and were forced into impressive piles as patrons strolled into the lobby of the Hilbert Circle Theatre 6 February 2009. A program set to include Weber’s *Overture to Der Freischütz*, Schumann’s *Fourth Symphony* (an apparent signature piece of Maestro Venzago), and the world premiere of Jennifer Higdon’s *Violin Concerto* awaited them. On the podium stood Mario Venzago in his eighth season as the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra’s Music Director and

---

67 Hilary Hahn, interview by author, June 7, 2009, Joseph Meyerhoff Symphony Hall dressing room, Baltimore, MD.  
68 Hilary Hahn (violin soloist), Mario Venzago (conductor), Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra, *Orchestra Rehearsal* (Hilbert Circle Theatre, Indianapolis, IN), February 6, 2009.  
69 Louise Alexander (Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra 2nd violin), Roger Roe (ISO acting principal oboe), Sheldon Person (ISO viola), Samuel Banks (ISO 2nd bassoon), interview by author, February 5, 2009, The Taste of Tango: 36 E. Washington St, Indianapolis, IN.  
70 Alexander, interview by author, February 5, 2009.  
71 Mario Venzago, interview by author, February 4, 2009, Hilbert Circle Theatre office, Indianapolis, IN.
Principal Conductor. He “has held the positions of Principal Conductor of the Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra, and also Music Director of the Basel Symphony Orchestra, the Basque Euskadi National Orchestra in Spain, the Graz Opera House, the Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie in Frankfurt/Bremen and the Heidelberg Opera. He was named Conductor Laureate of the Heidelberg SO in 2006.” In addition, Mr. Venzago has appeared internationally with the Berlin, London, Munich, Dresden, and Strasbourg philharmonic orchestras; the Leipzig Gewandhaus and MDR Leipzig; the Vienna, Tonhalle, Zurich, Munich Bavarian Radio, City of Birmingham, and NHK (Tokyo) symphony orchestras; as well as the Northern Sinfonia, Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France, Komische Opera, and Orchestre de la Suisse Romande. In North America, Mr. Venzago has appeared with the Boston, Philadelphia, Toronto, New Jersey, and Baltimore symphony orchestras as well as the National Arts Centre Orchestra of Ottawa.

After Weber’s appropriately dramatic overture had finished resonating, the evening’s soloist, Hilary Hahn, strode to center stage wearing a brown and copper floor-length dress carrying an Ouchard bow and 1864 Jean-Baptiste Vuillaume violin. The instrument, which she has played since she was fourteen and which she refers to as being “really a part of [her] as a musician,” is outfitted with a Pirastro “Gold Label” E string and Dominant A, D, and G strings—her usual set.

All concerns regarding the audience’s response to a completely unfamiliar, not to mention extremely contemporary, work were washed away with the work’s final chord and the subsequent applause which called for numerous curtain calls for not only the soloist, but also for Venzago and Higdon—who had sneaked out between the second and third movements to be prepared to join them on stage—as well. The applause was rousing enough that Ms. Hahn

---

72 Hilary Hahn (violin soloist), Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra, Mario Venzago (conductor), *Lilly Classical Series/Program Eleven Concert Program* (Hilbert Circle Theatre, Indianapolis, IN), February 6, 2009.
75 Hilary Hahn (violin soloist), Mario Venzago (conductor), Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra, *Lilly Classical Series/Program Eleven* (Hilbert Circle Theatre, Indianapolis, IN), February 6, 2009. Hilary Hahn, phone interview by author, February 7, 2009, Indianapolis, IN/Fishers, IN.
76 Hahn, phone interview, February 7, 2009.
obliged the audience with an encore consisting of the “Sarabande” movement from Bach’s *D minor Partita*.\(^{77}\) When asked the following morning about how she thought the premiere went, she stated:

I think it went really well, [although] it’s a different kind of premiere arrangement than I’ve had in the past [because I didn’t have] a performance in a low-key place first. [In that case,] you sort it out, [you] get it into your system and everything [before] you do the official premiere. [However,] when you have an orchestra commission, and they’re actually investing in it, then they really want to be a part of the premiere. . . . A premiere to them isn’t just the premiere but the actual first performance, the one that everyone is looking at. And, if you have all of this attention and excitement building up to the official premiere, you don’t know what . . . is going to happen onstage. So it’s a little bit more nerve-wracking to do it that way. [Therefore,] it was a little bit scarier yesterday than my previous premiere experiences have been, but I thought it went really well considering that we wound up pretty much on the same beat most [of the time] and it was well received and there was a lot of excitement around the performance. So that’s . . . always heartwarming to see with something you’re involved with from the start.\(^{78}\)

Although there were only a handful of reviews of the premiere, all participating parties were largely praised for their efforts in the existing articles. Jay Harvey, reporter for the *Indianapolis Star*, wrote:

The freshest aspect of the new work is not that it invents a new musical language or a new form: It's in three movements, with a fast-slow-fast distribution, and it finds itself at home, though with an outsize restlessness, in the world of tonality. What seems to be new is the music’s swerve away from both the heroic and the collegial models of the soloist's role. The soloist seems to be forging an identity out of a volatile environment, and it's unlikely any concert violinist going could steer as steady and resplendent a course through such challenges as Hahn did.\(^{79}\)

Making reference to Mr. Harvey’s contribution, R. James Tobin’s eye-witness account reported that “the audience, which the *Star* reviewer called ‘hearteningly large’ but at which the

\(^{77}\) Hilary Hahn (violin soloist), Mario Venzago (conductor), Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra, *Lilly Classical Series/Program Eleven* (Hilbert Circle Theatre, Indianapolis, IN), February 6, 2009.

\(^{78}\) Hilary Hahn, phone interview by author, February 7, 2009, Indianapolis, IN/Fishers, IN.

empty seats concerned some acquaintances with whom I spoke, gave the *Concerto* a tumultuous ovation.”

Reviewer Tom Aldridge stated:

Higdon handles the modern orchestral style with a mastery that eludes a majority of her colleagues. All too many new works: (1) contain too few tonal references or common chords, (2) fail to balance the various ensembles such that one section (often the percussion) tends to predominate or the soloist is drowned out and (3) represent a compendium of compositions that are either revealed only by musicians studying their scores or containing repetitive figures that ‘groove’ the listener in. The unity/diversity factor so audibly prevalent in great works from earlier centuries is all too often absent. Everything new that Higdon incorporates is tasteful and in balance such that the entire orchestra remains articulate, containing many tonal references while sharing special sonic colors modern orchestras can provide (for example, Higdon's use of knitting needles as percussion sticks).

Although not flawless, the premiere was certainly a success. Perhaps because of a slightly less focused approach, however, the second night’s effort did not go quite as smoothly. Shortly into the *Concerto’s* final movement, the soloist and orchestra had to stop and start again due to an uncharacteristic memory slip by Ms. Hahn. As she recalled:

I got lost, the first time . . . I took the wrong turn . . . and I didn’t have the feel of what the orchestra was doing as innately as I do now. When it’s innate, you hear what they’re doing and you just jump to the right thing. But I didn’t have that. So, I didn’t have, actually, even the sound of the piece because I didn’t have any recordings of it. That’s why I couldn’t get out of the ditch I very quickly dug for myself, [which] blew up with dynamite. In one instant, you’re in one place and then you’re in another and you can’t get back.

Following a brief apology to the audience by Ms. Hahn, the final movement began again, but their difficulties had not yet ceased. As she explained “The second time there was something

---

82 Hilary Hahn, interview by author, June 6, 2009, The Music Center at Strathmore dressing room, North Bethesda, MD.
weird. . . . I think I fumbled one of my solo [cadenza] parts"\textsuperscript{83} and, as a result, Maestro Venzago brought in the orchestra a couple of bars early.\textsuperscript{84}

I didn’t have my bearings to find my way out of that either, but we couldn’t stop again. So . . . I [said to myself], ‘what I’m doing is not working. I can’t keep playing this because the further I get into this, the more lost I get because it’s not right. So I’m just going to have to go for this guess and if it doesn’t work out, I have no idea what I’m going to do…we’re going to have to stop again.’ So I jumped to the part that I thought everyone was at, and it was right. I guess that was one thing that did sink in [from] the rehearsals. Certain parts become automatic; you [just] don’t know what they are until your conscious knowledge is challenged. I think had we all had more experience with it, then we would have been calmer.\textsuperscript{85}

Despite these bumps in the road, the work held its own and still proved effective, so much so that after the customary bows for the soloist, orchestra, conductor and Ms. Higdon, Hahn was repeatedly called back, resulting in two encores—the “Preludio” movement of Bach’s \textit{E Major Partita} and Schubert’s \textit{Erlkönig} (arranged for violin by Heinrich Wilhelm Ernst) serving as endnotes to the half.\textsuperscript{86}

\section*{Alterations}

As previously mentioned, Higdon and Hahn were able to read the \textit{Concerto} in September of 2008 with the Curtis Institute Symphony Orchestra which, as James Reel reported in \textit{Strings Magazine}, “allowed the composer to adjust the weight and color of the orchestra against the violin.”\textsuperscript{87} Hahn explains how they “adjusted the orchestration a lot from the time we first read it at Curtis. We really thinned it out. And, I think that made for a much more unique concerto in a way. . . . there are elements of the orchestration that are very unique. . . . You know it all, it all

\textsuperscript{83} Hilary Hahn, interview by author, June 6, 2009, The Music Center at Strathmore dressing room, North Bethesda, MD.

\textsuperscript{84} Hilary Hahn (violin soloist), Mario Venzago (conductor), Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra, \textit{Lilly Classical Series/Program Eleven} (Hilbert Circle Theatre, Indianapolis, IN), February 7, 2009.

\textsuperscript{85} Hilary Hahn, interview by author, June 6, 2009, The Music Center at Strathmore dressing room, North Bethesda, MD.

\textsuperscript{86} Hilary Hahn (violin soloist), Mario Venzago (conductor), Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra, \textit{Lilly Classical Series/Program Eleven} (Hilbert Circle Theatre, Indianapolis, IN), February 7, 2009.

somehow fits together in a different way than it did when we first read it, and I think that is going to be a unique defining aspect of the Concerto.”\textsuperscript{88} They clearly achieved this goal as evidenced by Tobin’s review of the premiere.

This is very much a concerto for violin and (large) orchestra, in that the woodwinds, brass, percussion and other strings all have interesting things to say; often at the same time, the line of the soloist is presenting something else. The good news is that the different voices can be heard without drowning one another out, which is one of the exciting things about this piece. The work is unquestionably complex but, unlike Higdon’s \textit{Concerto for Orchestra}, the texture is not dense.\textsuperscript{89}

Unfortunately for this purpose, a “Curtis read-through” score is no longer in existence. Higdon explained how those parts were “dumped . . . as a precaution. It’s really dangerous to keep multiple copies around. . . . I have limited space to prevent an accident from happening where something accidentally gets shipped out to an orchestra. . . . We usually destroy them because it’s just, it’s impossible to keep them all separated.”\textsuperscript{90} One can be sure that although Hahn did not want to put her editorial stamp on it,\textsuperscript{91} she did ask for a couple of changes prior to the premiere.

In one of the interviews with the author, Hahn explained how she wished for a little bit of polyphony in the second movement via double-stops but knew not to add them herself because Higdon is “so specific about her notes [that] I couldn’t just write something random. It had to be something very specific [that] I could never have guessed. I would never have ever been able to do what she had in her head. So, I just asked Jennifer to put a couple of double stop lines in.”\textsuperscript{92} Higdon added a new voice to the soloist’s score at this stage, in lieu of simply extracting a pre-existing part from another instrument.\textsuperscript{93} This manifested itself in measures 113-117, 205-208, and 212-214 of the second movement (\textit{Chaconne})—the double stops in 128-131 already

\textsuperscript{88} Hilary Hahn, phone interview by author, February 7, 2009, Indianapolis, IN/Fishers, IN.
\textsuperscript{90} Jennifer Higdon, phone interview by author, July 16, 2009, Philadelphia, PA/Tallahassee, FL.
\textsuperscript{92} Hilary Hahn, interview by author, June 6, 2009, The Music Center at Strathmore dressing room, North Bethesda, MD.
\textsuperscript{93} Jennifer Higdon, e-mail message to author, April 19, 2010.
existed. In addition, Hahn requested that one set of double stops originally found in her part be shared with one of the violin sections. The F-natural pedal point that currently exists in the first violin part (first stand only) of measures 165-180 in the work’s first movement was originally scored to be handled by the soloist alone. In this case, Hahn would have been asked to sustain the pedal F-natural on the d-string while simultaneously executing left-hand *pizzicati* on pitches ranging from G-natural (below middle C) up to E-natural (a half-step below the pedal) on the g-string. Hahn admits that “it would have been doable, but it would have sounded so calculated and difficult that in most cases it would not have sounded as it was intended to. I wanted to make sure that whatever we ended up with was something that multiple people could play.” In addition to making this section more technically accessible, these changes brought about a *pizzicato* melody that can be more easily heard and one whose tone and timing is now easier to control.

The work underwent another set of adjustments during the rehearsals for and just after the premiere weekend in Indianapolis. A list of these alterations can be found below in Table 3.1. Other than a few misprinted pitches, the vast majority of these concern dynamics or orchestration—primarily for balance as opposed to *timbral* reasons. The most significant of these post-Indianapolis alterations regard the third movement’s removal of the tuba in virtually all but the *tutti* sections.

### Table 3.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Movement</th>
<th>Measure(s)</th>
<th>Alterations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I: 1726</td>
<td>24-33</td>
<td>Harp, remove harmonics (same at 329-339)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>115</td>
<td>Trpt. 2, change dynamic to PP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>118</td>
<td>Trpt. 1 &amp; 3, change dynamic to PP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>119</td>
<td>Hn. 1 &amp; 3, Trpt. 1, change dynamic to MF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>142</td>
<td>Trpt. 1, add FLAT to E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>165</td>
<td>Change tempo back to Quarter = 82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>203</td>
<td>Perc. 1, add F quarter-note to first of measure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>204</td>
<td>Trpt. 2 &amp; 3, change dynamic to PP, add “Bag over Bell”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

95 Hilary Hahn, interview by author, June 7, 2009, Joseph Meyerhoff Symphony Hall dressing room, Baltimore, MD.
96 Jennifer Higdon, e-mail message to author, February 10, 2009.
### Table 3.1 Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Movement</th>
<th>Measure(s)</th>
<th>Alterations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>I: 1726</strong></td>
<td>205</td>
<td>Trpt. 2 &amp; 3, change dynamic to PPP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>236</td>
<td>Vc., change dynamic to MF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>257</td>
<td>Picc, change dynamic to F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>257</td>
<td>Harp, change dynamic to MF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>268</td>
<td>Trpt. 1, add FLAT to D on &amp; of 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>274</td>
<td>Vln. 2, first notes of measure should be A-natural and E-natural, (not C &amp; G)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>334</td>
<td>Solo Violin, 3rd beat, change A# to F#</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>II: Chaconni</strong></td>
<td>78</td>
<td>Tbn. 1 &amp; 2, add “con sord. – cardboard”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>81</td>
<td>B. Tbn., add “con sord. – cardboard”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>121</td>
<td>Vln. Lower Part, last note should be a D-natural (not D#)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>127</td>
<td>Vc., Remove “stagger removal of mutes”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>136</td>
<td>Vc., add “senza sord.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>154</td>
<td>Vln. 1 &amp; Vc, add “sul tasto”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>159</td>
<td>Vln. 2, change dynamic to PP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>160</td>
<td>Vla, Vc, change dynamic to PP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>163</td>
<td>Fl. 1, change dynamic to MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>166</td>
<td>Fl. 1, change dynamic to F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>166</td>
<td>Bsn. 1, change dynamic to F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>180</td>
<td>Vln. 2, D# should be 8va</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>190</td>
<td>Perc. 2, remove 3rd quarter-note of meas.; make a rest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>191</td>
<td>Perc. 2, remove half-note on 2, make a rest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>200</td>
<td>Fl. 1, Cl. 1, Cl. 2, Bsn. 1, Bsn. 2, remove all dynamic changes in this measure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>201</td>
<td>Cl. 1, Cl. 2, Bsn. 1, Bsn. 2, remove PP in this measure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>202</td>
<td>Vln. 1, Vln. 2, Vc., Cb., add “flautando”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>214</td>
<td>Fl. 1, Fl. 2, Cl. 1, Cl. 2, Bsn. 1, Bsn. 2, change dynamic to PP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>III: Fly Forward</strong></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Perc. 2, Glock, change dynamic to PP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14-24</td>
<td>Tuba, Tacet meas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Hn., 2 &amp; 4, change dynamic to MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>19 &amp; 20</td>
<td>Trpt. 2, Tacet meas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Bsn. 1 &amp; 2, change dynamic to MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Tbn. 1, Tacet meas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>29</td>
<td>Bsn. 1 &amp; 2, change dynamic to MF and Cresc. On 4th beat to F on downbeat of 30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Perc. 1, change dynamic to F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>31</td>
<td>Cb., remove “arco”, and change dynamic to FF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>32</td>
<td>Cb., remove MF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>34</td>
<td>Cb., remove “pizz”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>34-51</td>
<td>Tuba, Tacet meas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>39</td>
<td>Cl. 1, change dynamic to MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>46</td>
<td>Vln. 1, Vln. 2, Vla, change dynamic to MF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Movement</td>
<td>Measure(s)</td>
<td>Alterations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III: <em>Fly Forward</em></td>
<td>52</td>
<td>All Strings, change dynamic to P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>53</td>
<td>Timp, change dynamic to PP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>54</td>
<td>Cl. 1, change dynamic to MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>56</td>
<td>Ob. 1, change dynamic to MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>77</td>
<td>Ob. 2, change dynamic to PP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>77</td>
<td>Perc. 2, Glock, change dynamic to PP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>77-96</td>
<td>Tuba, Tacet (leave m. 88’s cue in)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>78</td>
<td>Cl. 2, change dynamic to PP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>79</td>
<td>Ob. 1, change dynamic to PP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>82</td>
<td>Cl. 1, change dynamic to PP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>90</td>
<td>Ob. 1, change dynamic to PP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>91</td>
<td>Ob. 2, change dynamic to PP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>129</td>
<td>Timp., change P on &amp; of 3 to PP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>136-143</td>
<td>Bsn. 1, Tacet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>153-169</td>
<td>Tuba, Tacet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>154</td>
<td>Cl. 1, Cl. 2, change dynamic to P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>162</td>
<td>Trpt. 3, Tacet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>162</td>
<td>Hn. 2 &amp; 4, change first dynamic to P and 2nd dynamic to MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>166</td>
<td>Cl. 1 &amp; 2, change dynamic to P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>173</td>
<td>Bsn. 1 &amp; 2, add MP on 8th note on &amp; of 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>174</td>
<td>Bsn. 1 &amp; 2, change dynamic at beginning of measure to MF; add cresc. on beat 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>175</td>
<td>Bsn. 1 &amp; 2, add FF to low D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>183</td>
<td>Bsn. 1 &amp; 2, change dynamic to MP &amp; add Cresc. to last beat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>183</td>
<td>Vln. 2, change dynamic to P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>184</td>
<td>Bsn. 1 &amp; 2, add eighth-note, pitched, F on down-beat with the dynamic of FF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>191</td>
<td>Fl. 1, Fl. 2, add decresc. marking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>192</td>
<td>Fl. 1, Fl. 2, Ob. 1, Ob. 2, change dynamic to MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>192</td>
<td>Trpt. 1, 2, 3, change dynamic PP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>192</td>
<td>Timp, change dynamic to P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>193</td>
<td>Vln. 1, Vln. 2, Vla., change dynamic to MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>196</td>
<td>All Horns, change dynamic to P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>197</td>
<td>Fl. 1, Fl. 1, Ob. 1, Ob. 2, remove F and stretch cresc. marking from beat one through the measure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>197</td>
<td>All Trpts., remove MF and stretch cresc. marking from beat one through measure</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The work did not remain static from this point either. Unfortunately, these subtle changes are also lost due to the fact that Higdon, did them straight on the computer. I know when I was in Toronto I was doing them . . . in the hotel room off of my rehearsal score . . . because I had to get those parts out to Liverpool. They’re small changes, none of them are major orchestration things. They are things, like literally going from a piano marking to a pianissimo. Actually up until the recording session there was still more adjusting going on. But that was more dynamics. I think I did [approximately] four or five versions of the last movement. I pulled the dynamic down in the pizzicati, I removed the tuba out of most of the last movement . . . there was tweaking . . . all the way up to the recording.\footnote{Jennifer Higdon, phone interview by author, July 16, 2009, Philadelphia, PA/Tallahassee, FL.}

Now that all of the official regional premieres have passed, one might assume that all of the alterations have ceased as well. As Higdon stated, though, “maybe not. If . . . this piece moves to the other orchestras next year and there’s still a problem spot, I will go ahead and adjust it. It might not need more adjusting because this piece has had quite a bit of that.”\footnote{Higdon, phone interview, July 16, 2009.} Perhaps Higdon’s Violin Concerto (2008) will have a similar fate as many of Igor Stravinsky’s works, in that there will eventually be a number of different versions available to the public, but the author believes that it will remain largely unchanged from this point forward.
CHAPTER 4

A PERFORMANCE GUIDE

How to Begin

Given that Higdon’s Violin Concerto is still in its infancy and only one violinist to date has performed it, there really is just one expert who can honestly give suggestions as to how to begin working on the piece. In an interview with James Reel for Strings Magazine, Hilary Hahn advised others to “just get the music and start chipping away at it. A contemporary piece is no different from a standard piece when you learn it. When I first learned the Brahms Concerto, I had to figure out as many things as I do for the new things I do now. It makes you define yourself as a musician within the parameters of a piece, especially if there aren’t many recordings of it.”\(^1\) At the moment, the challenge of working on Higdon’s Concerto without a recording still exists—this subject is discussed more in Chapter 6. Performers will not be asked to deal with this hardship forever, though. Before one assumes that Hahn’s nonchalant response gives the impression that Higdon’s Concerto is easily learned, she goes on to say: “I wouldn’t advise starting a piece you don’t know and planning a performance two months after you get the music. It takes time for everything to come together and for things to become less difficult—things you thought were a snap [can become] insurmountable. That’s the process with every piece.”\(^2\)

From extreme intervallic leaps to lightning-fast sixteenth-note passages, the work clearly calls for a gifted soloist. However, there is nothing truly revolutionary about the way Higdon approaches the instrument here. Again quoting Ms. Hahn from Reel’s article: “I don’t think there’s anything in this piece that requires any technique to be built to play it. It’s challenging, but I don’t think the technique takes over; it just serves the music.”\(^3\)

---

2 Reel, “Hilary Hahn Plays Higdon: Violinist premieres new violin concerto,” (accessed July 12, 2009). According to: James Egelhofer, e-mail message to author, May 19, 2010. Hahn was originally misquoted in Reel’s article as: “are now insurmountable…”
Not to make light of the work’s second and third movements, which present their own difficulties, Hahn’s statement mostly rings true. Your average violinist, however, will have to rethink how their hand operates in many of the sections contained within the first movement.

**Fingerings**

As mentioned earlier, Higdon admired the flexibility of the fingers of Hahn’s left hand, going so far as to state: “how far they can actually reach in terms of intervals is kind of surreal.” When asked by the author what technique, method, or etude book brought about this ability, Hahn explained that it is something that has she has always possessed as a result of her double-jointed hands/fingers. To achieve similar results, an expanded, fingered-octave set-up (at one point, a double-stop fingered twelfth [second and fourth fingers]) will need to be employed, at times, to handle the large leaps in addition to utilizing many standard extensions throughout the movement. Otherwise, one can create some of the disjunct melodies with sweeping shifts; but, to avoid too many successive large shifts that will bring about a smeared, seasick effect, crossing over to lower strings in higher positions will be the desired course of action.

As Ms. Hahn stated, and almost everyone will agree, fingerings for stringed instruments are “super personal.” Having said that, though, the author will offer some suggestions to this end.

One phrase that utilizes many of the techniques described above takes place in the first movement, measures 20-23 (see Example 4.1). Starting in third position, the soloist is forced back to first for the A below middle C and neighboring notes. On the second note of the septuplet in measure 21, a shift to fifth position (first finger on the a-string) will allow for an easy cross to the e-string for the high E-natural. After returning to the a-string for the remainder of that bracket, an extension to the high G-natural will make the perfect fifth interval down to the C-natural (two octaves above middle C) connected as dictated by the slur. A shift to eleventh position (first finger on B-natural) and a small extension, two notes later for the D-natural follows. Shifting to second finger on the a-string for the grace-note avoids barring the fifth interval and allows for a strong third finger (slightly extended, again) F-sharp. Next, one should

---

4 Jennifer Higdon, phone interview by author, July 16, 2009, Philadelphia, PA/Tallahassee, FL.
5 Hilary Hahn, interview by author, June 7, 2009, Joseph Meyerhoff Symphony Hall dressing room, Baltimore, MD.
6 Hahn, interview, June 7, 2009.
cross over to the a-string for the F-natural, collapsing the third finger to its “regular” position on the e-string for the E-natural and then shifting back a minor third (to twelfth position) on the a-string for the D-natural. After two more pitches in this position, one should shift back to fourth position to catch the dotted-eighth, B-flat. A whole-step extension up will allow the player to reach the subsequent E and F-naturals, which should be followed by a shift down to second position (first finger on G-natural on the e-string) for the next five notes. Then, a player should reach back a half-step for the B-natural, but otherwise remain in second position until the third note of measure 23, where a half-step stretch down brings the player back to first position for the rest of the excerpt.

Throughout the work, there are many instances where the composer prefers the sounds of open strings. One such place where it is not practical to oblige is measure 88 in the first movement (see Example 4.2). Here, one must utilize the d- and a-strings to avoid glissandi.

Example 4.2 (I: 1726, m. 88)\(^8\)

---


effects between shifts; that is, unless a player’s hand can stretch a major eleventh that includes first-position notes.

A particularly dastardly figure presents itself in measures 105-106 (see Example 4.3). One should begin in second position for the B-natural octave before shifting on the d-string to fifth position (by the third note); then, one should play a fingered-octave to the next B and shift on the e-string for the high C (three octaves above middle C). After playing the subsequent B with the third finger, a player should use the half-step to shift down (also with third finger) to the A-sharp. Next, one should cross over to the a-string for the B-natural and use a collapsed hand position so the high G-sharp on the e-string (that would normally fall on the second finger) is executed with the third finger. That should be followed with a “low” second finger on the a-string, “regular” first and “low” two on the e-string before shifting down to third position for the next two notes. Then, a player should shift back to second position for four notes before shifting down (again on the e-string) to half position for the remainder of beat two. The succeeding four beats can be easily handled in first position. As a result of sequencing, this same fingering set can be transposed for the following twelve beats and other moments like it later in the movement (i.e.: mm. 243-244).

Given the speed of the B sections, measure seventy-two and other moments like it must be played as fingered octaves (see Example 4.4) to maintain the necessary clarity.

Similarly, a fingered-sevenths approach must be utilized in the movement’s cadenza (see Example 4.5) as in measures 285, 286, 289, 290 and 292-296.

---

In the second movement, measures 65-71 (see Example 4.6), the author recommends remaining on the e-string as much as possible, only conceding to use the a-string for a few notes that find themselves on the lower end of a seventh interval. Beginning in fifth position, one should cross over to the a-string for the second note of the measure and extend a half-step up to the high E-natural with the third finger. Then stay in sixth position until the last two notes of 66, which should be executed after a down-shift to third position (first and second fingers). A shift to fifth position should follow immediately for the downbeat of 67 with the third finger and a cross to the a-string (with first finger) for the F-natural before extending a half-step up to G-natural. After tying over the bar line, one should shift up to second finger on the C-natural (three octaves above middle C) and stay in eleventh position until the second half of beat two where a half-step shift down to B-natural with the second finger anchors the soloist temporarily in tenth position. Then, the fourth finger should be extended by a whole step to reach the E-natural, but otherwise the performer should stay in tenth position until the last note of beat one where the player should reach back a whole step to the G-natural. The final sixteenth-note of beat two will have the soloist reach back again, this time with the second finger by a third interval, before shifting back to third position for the last note of the measure. A whole-step extension with the fourth and third finger for the next two notes will allow the rest of the hand to remain in third until the fourth note of the septuplet briefly brings the hand back to second position.

---

Example 4.6 (II: *Chaconni*, mm. 65-71)\(^\text{12}\)

In measures 125-128 of the second movement (see Example 4.7), the author recommends shifting into third position on the last beat of the first bar and shifting up on the a-string to fifth position by the second note of 126. After changing to the e-string, the soloist should shift up to ninth position and remain there (crossing over to the a-string for the first three notes of beat three) before extending the second finger to tenth position on the high B-natural. After staying in tenth for the remaining beat of 126, the soloist should shift again to eleventh position for the first beat-and-a-half of 127. The last half of beat two should be in second position but with an

---


extension back to the first E-flat. On the last half of beat four, one should shift back to first position for the first two notes, then up to third for the A-natural, and again ascend to fifth position for the C-natural. A soloist should shift up to ninth position for the second note of 128 and use fingered octaves for the triplet figure (similar to the first movement’s measure 72).

With a plethora of step-wise material, individuals looking to perform the work will have many options regarding fingering the third movement. However, two sections that employ open strings for a pseudo-fiddle sound will be initially puzzling. For the first such place, the third movement’s measures 114-120, the author offers the following solution (see Example 4.8).

Example 4.8 (III: Fly Forward, mm. 114-120)

Coming from third position as previously attained in measure 113, a player should shift down on the third note to first position and remain there until the second half of beat three. Here, one should shift up to fifth position on the a-string for the next beat-and-a-half to maintain the open e-string double stop. In measure 115, one should shift back to third and then back to first by the fourth note. Then, he or she should stay in first until the last note of 115 where a shift up on the

---

a-string to fourth position will make it possible to accommodate the large interval in the double
stop. By the last note of beat one, the soloist should shift back to third position and by beat three
proper, a movement down to first position will facilitate the rest of the measure. A player should
utilize the double open strings for the last note of 118 to shift up on the d-string to fourth or fifth
position for beat one of 119. Beat two of this measure should begin in third position before
shifting to first for the last two sextuplets. Immediately thereafter, the soloist should shift up on
the g-string to fourth or fifth position for the remainder of the beat. A quick shift down to first
position for the first three notes of the fourth beat necessitates a big shift up to fifth position for
the fourth note of the sextuplet capped off with a whole-step extension to the B-natural. From
here, a player should cross over to the d-string (still in fifth position) for two notes before
returning to first position for the rest of the excerpt. One should keep in mind that the fourth
note of beat two and second note of beat three found in measure 120 are the only exceptions to
the open-string rule.

In addition to these suggestions, Hahn describes two types of shifts that should be
employed—functional and expressive.

If I want to draw out attention to one particular note, I slide into it. And also sometimes
the slides are technical, but I can usually hide them when they’re purely technical. In
some parts I felt like there were so many things going on at one time that if I did play it
perfectly, cleanly, without any kind of an expressive shift then it would all start to run
together for people because there’s so much to track. People who haven’t heard it before
may not know what to track, so you have to be really clear in a situation like that. I can
always find a fingering to cross strings, but there were some places that I felt could use a
dramatic push. In that case, I would slide into it, so you may see some shifts and stuff in
the fingered version. It’s not [what] should be done; [it’s just] how I injected that
dramatic element into the piece. It could be played very cleanly and sound a little
sterile.\(^{15}\)

These expressive shifts will be outlined in more detail in the upcoming performer’s edition
discussed in Chapter 6.

\(^{15}\) Hilary Hahn, interview by author, June 7, 2009, Joseph Meyerhoff Symphony Hall dressing
room, Baltimore, MD.
**Bowings**

What the composer perhaps lacked in idiomatic writing for the violin soloist’s left hand, she seems to have made up for in the right. Put another way, the bowings are largely appropriate as printed. There are a few places, though, where the author believes a change would be helpful. For example, one should retake the bow between the first two notes in measure 33 so that they are both executed with a down-bow. Also the triplets on beat four in the first movement, measure 36 should be hooked together—having started the phrase in measure 35 on an up-bow—so that the *decrescendo* in the following measure can happen more naturally. Having come from a down-bow in measure 46 in the first movement, the second sixteenth-note in measure 47 (right after the tie) should be hooked down-bow as well. One measure later (48), beat two should be hooked on a down-bow.

Continuing with the first movement, measure 65, beat two should be hooked on a down-bow. One should retake the bow between the first two notes of measure 110 so that the crescendo in the latter part of the measure happens more easily. In 115 the soloist should take two down-bows within the first beat so that the running triplets do not feel backwards. Throughout most of the movement, the author suggests following the natural *agogic* accents of the music with the bow by having beats one and three land on a down-bow with two and four being handled by up-bows. Two exceptions to this rule occur in measures 129 and 130 of the first movement where the eighth-note pick-up to the second beat of 129 should be up-bow and the triplet pick-up to beat four in measure 130 should also be an up-bow. There are two options concerning the running eighth-notes that populate measure 133-141: 1) proceed with the slur as printed in the last beat of 133 and execute the sixteenth-notes with a “backwards bow” until measure 140, beat four when the B and C slur together; or 2) break the slur [three and three] in the last beat of 133 and play the remaining phrase as printed.

Having started measure 180 of the first movement down-bow, the soloist will benefit from hooking the low A-flat appearing on beat three of measure 187 with an up-bow. With a down-bow whole-note in measure 207, the second sixteenth-note of 208 should be hooked down as well. Continuing with the same line, measure 210, beat three should be hooked up-bow to connect with the previous beat two. If the soloist begins measure 223 up-bow, he or she should also consider hooking in the last two notes of beat one of measure 224—a similar option to measures 133-141 presents itself in measures 256-268. In the cadenza, the author recommends
taking the optional slur on beat four of measure 305. Due to the separate sixteenths that occur this time in measure 311, one should retake the bow just after beat two so that the grace-note can have a down-bow as well. All of the quick changes to *pizzicati* notes that occur in the last section of the movement will be more easily traversed if measure 318 begins up-bow; and, from there, the soloist consistently uses up-bows for every note that precedes a *pizzicato*. Also, measure 336 will suit the bow better if beats three and four are hooked together on an up-bow.

In movement two, the player should hook in a down-bow on beat four of measures 48 through beat one of 49. Not long after the *accelerando*, in measure 84, the second half of beat two should be hooked on an up-bow with the second sixteenth-note of beat three. With the phrase starting at the last triplet of beat two in measure 104 with a down-bow, measure 108 should have its up-bow slur broken on the and-of-three and the subsequent notes should all be slurred down leading to an up-bow on the down-beat of 109. Starting down-bow in measure 157, the and-of-one in measure 161 should be hooked with the second sextuplet of beat two. Still in the second movement, measure 168 should see its sextuplet on beat one slurred all the way to the first note of beat two.

Most of the bowing issues in the third movement can be solved by carrying an already existing slur one note longer so that the subsequent sixteenth-notes are not “backwards bowed.” Examples of these include measures 7 (beat two), 8 (beat two and the end of beat four), 11 (beat four), 90 (beat four), 92 (the end of beat four), 115 (beat four), 116 (beats two and four), 118 (beat four), and 119 (beats two and four). One of these is illustrated in Example 4.9, below. In addition, one should consider slurring the first two sixteenth-notes of beat four in measure 29 so that the first *fortissimo* chord can be on a down-bow. Hooking the last two eighth-notes of measure 45 will ease the transition back to sixteenth-notes in measure 46. An up-bow should be executed in measure 103 to bring the right hand closer to the string for the succeeding *pizzicato*. Continuing with the third movement, the last two notes of measure 112 should be hooked on a down-bow so that the upcoming sixteenth-notes in measure 114 can start on a down-bow. Similar to measure 29, the first two sixteenth-notes on beat four of measure 183 should be slurred down.
Other Concerns

The composer occasionally calls for parallel sevenths and/or ninths in the solo part. One such place is in the first-movement cadenza marked “with ferocity.”\textsuperscript{17} To prepare both the hand and ear for such sections, Hahn recommends practicing scales in both of those intervals. As she put it:

The intervals are unusual and you don’t want people to think you’re fudging. I am probably one of the only people who does scales in sevenths and ninths, anyway, because I feel like it’s important to know all the intervals and to recognize when they’re in tune. If you don’t know them as part of your daily musical language, which you wouldn’t unless you do them in scales or whatever, then it would be hard to tell if they’re in tune or not.\textsuperscript{18}

With a work whose rhythmical subdivisions constantly change and where syncopations abound, practicing with a metronome—whether it be clapping, singing or playing along—is essential to success. According to a comment made by Higdon to the author, Hahn took this approach to a new level by literally wearing her metronome out by the premiere weekend. She

\textsuperscript{17} Higdon, \textit{Violin Concerto: Study Score, Indianapolis Premiere}, 2008.
\textsuperscript{18} Hilary Hahn, interview by author, June 7, 2009, Joseph Meyerhoff Symphony Hall dressing room, Baltimore, MD.
had to borrow a substitute from Higdon as she felt the need to continue to use it up to and including the day of the premiere.\textsuperscript{19}

When the author inquired about the playability of certain Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra members’ parts, the reaction was always favorable. The premiere’s second bassoonist, Samuel Banks, stated: “They’re challenging, but idiomatic.” Roger Roe offered: “There’s certainly nothing in it that’s awkward on the oboe.”\textsuperscript{20} Violist Sheldon Person elaborated:

It’s very idiomatic. There’s nothing too challenging to the part at all. As far as 21st-century writing goes, it’s pretty conservative. There’s nothing in the cracks; there’s nothing rhythmically crazy. Personally, I think playing a Bartók \textit{Violin Concerto} is much more challenging. It seems well-organized and well-thought-through. It seems like she’s in control—to her credit. New composers often don’t really know what they want and things get so complicated that the effect they’re looking for becomes obscured in the complexity of what’s happening. It’s Idiomatic, it’s great.\textsuperscript{21}

With the exceptions of some novelties in the percussion section—\textit{crotal\`es} on the timpani head struck with knitting needles, for example—there is nothing in the orchestral desks that requires superhuman abilities or altered instruments.

\textbf{Rehearsal Technique}

When putting the \textit{Concerto} together with an orchestra, despite the many orchestration adjustments over time, the most consistent issue is still balance. It was on the mind of both performer and composer before it was even written, it proved an issue during the premiere weekend, and it will more times than not, remain a problem in the future.\textsuperscript{22} As R. James Tobin stated, “This is very much a concerto for violin and (large) orchestra, in that the woodwinds, brass, percussion and other strings all have interesting things to say, often at the same time the

\textsuperscript{19} Hilary Hahn (violin soloist), Mario Venzago (conductor), Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra, \textit{Orchestra Rehearsal} (Hilbert Circle Theatre, Indianapolis, IN), February 6, 2009.
\textsuperscript{20} Louise Alexander (Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra 2\textsuperscript{nd} violin), Roger Roe (ISO acting principal oboe), Sheldon Person (ISO viola), Samuel Banks (ISO 2\textsuperscript{nd} bassoon), interview by author, February 5, 2009, The Taste of Tango: 36 E. Washington St, Indianapolis, IN.
\textsuperscript{21} Alexander, interview by author, February 5, 2009.
line of the soloist is presenting something else.”23 With careful instruction from the conductor and soloist as well as an exhibition of poise by the accompanimental performers during the performance, the scoring has made it possible for the soloist to be heard throughout.

Beyond that, there are countless rhythmical issues that crop up between not only the soloist and orchestra, but also between members of the orchestra. Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra member Roger Roe elaborates:

[When you] ask an orchestra to play 4/4, 6/8, 2/4, 1/4, 4/4, 6/8, 2/4, 1/4 and in the 6/8, a lot of 2 against 3, it’s hard and it’s not going to happen easily or quickly. I think as a solo wind player one of the challenges in this is to play unusual rhythms—to play rhythms that we’re not used to playing in a way that’s still melodic and beautiful and expressive, and I think personally that’s my big challenge, to make it sound like I’m not counting as I play. In the second movement especially, we have all those wind-choir things where there are two different voices playing in rhythms that sometimes match up (but usually don’t) and are very complicated, and when there are three or four people playing this voice and three or four people playing that voice, it’s a challenge to try to cue. [For example,] this is the triplet pickup and this is the eighth-note pickup and this is the sixteenth and we have to be all together and it shouldn’t be together with the other part that’s playing, so it’s very complicated to do that in a way that sounds organic, sounds like something other than I’m cuing for the second flute that’s playing with me and the first bassoon, and this is an eighth-note. So that’s the real challenge: to try to get those rhythms to lock into place without making it sound ‘countie.’24

One of Higdon’s trademarks (and on display in her Violin Concerto) is the use of numerous principal solos and reduced-section soli. Although the section soli here are rarely difficult on their own terms, the coordination of the various rhythmic subdivisions that Mr. Roe just attested to can be an issue. Even when the subdivisions are the same, the sheer complexity of the rhythms can present difficulties between sections or principals. One such moment occurs in measures 110-114 of the second movement between the concertmaster and principal cello. Beyond that, the concertmaster solos can be challenging in their own right and extremely exposed at times (as in measures 146-148 of the second movement where they are in a considerably higher range than the solo part), having been written specifically for Higdon’s friend and colleague Zach de Pue. In this way, Higdon requires similar levels of virtuosity and

24 Louise Alexander (Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra 2nd violin), Roger Roe (ISO acting principal oboe), Sheldon Person (ISO viola), Samuel Banks (ISO 2nd bassoon), interview by author, February 5, 2009, The Taste of Tango: 36 E. Washington St, Indianapolis, IN.
lyricism of many members of the orchestra, occasionally casting the audience’s auditory gaze away from the soloist.

Performance

Once the concert is set, the author strongly suggests performing from memory, as Hahn has always performed the work.

I just play so much better [in a solo context] without [the part] in front of me because I can focus on the music and on the flow of things and not be dictated to by the music that I looked at when I first learned it. It’s like I can’t get past my first impressions of the piece in front of me because that’s how I started. It can’t develop, until it’s so much a part of me that I don’t reference it on the stand.25

As anyone who has memorized a concerto can attest to, while having the work in your mind, ear, and fingers when practicing alone is one thing, being able to maintain your course while other instruments join you can oftentimes be a completely different animal. Along this line, it is highly recommended for the soloist of this work to spend some time studying the full score before the first rehearsal with orchestra. Taking it further, one should acquire a piano score and a willing pianist to rehearse so that they will not be hearing the accompanimental parts for the first time with orchestra. “I learned from that,” Hahn said. “I think next time I’ll ask for a piano reduction in addition to a score. I think that would have been very helpful. It’s been a long time since I’ve done a concerto premiere, though, so I learned a lot in the course of this.”26

Nothing seasons a work quite like experience. When asked after the premiere if she feels completely confident with the work, having successfully performed it from memory, she stated:

No, you don’t get to that point until you’ve performed it a few times and—especially with a concerto—until you’ve performed it with different groups and you see what the common factors are between groups and you see what really is natural with a piece and what deserves a little bit more attention and tweaking every single time. And there’s nothing wrong with it needing tweaking. That’s something you encounter with every piece and that’s what allows you to interpret.27

Clearly the more times one can perform a work, the more comfortable the soloist will become and the more effective it will most likely be for the audience. Again quoting Hahn: “When you perform something, everything changes even if you’ve been working with that same group. You

25 Hilary Hahn, phone interview by author, February 7, 2009, Indianapolis, IN/Fishers, IN.
26 Hahn, phone interview by author, February 7, 2009.
27 Ibid.
can rehearse it until the cows come home; then, you get on stage and it feels like a new piece.”  

In other words, one should expect the unexpected with every performance but especially when on stage performing a work that is new for both the orchestra and soloist.

---

28 Hilary Hahn, phone interview by author, February 7, 2009, Indianapolis, IN/Fishers, IN.
CHAPTER 5

THEORETICAL ANALYSIS

Jennifer Higdon’s *Violin Concerto* (2008) follows the traditional three-movement-concerto form (fast-slow-fast) and calls for an orchestra consisting of two flutes (2nd doubling piccolo), two oboes (2nd doubling English horn in F), two clarinets in B-flat, two bassoons, four horns in F, three trumpets in C, three trombones, one tuba, one harp, timpani [doubling 2 crotales: C# (lowest C#) and G (highest G) can be taken from the “percussion one” set], two percussionists [percussion one: suspended cymbal, Chinese cymbal, 1 rute, chimes crotales, marimba (five-octave); percussion two: sizzle cymbal, suspended cymbal, bass drum, glockenspiel {both percussionists use Knitting Needles—see part for size range}], and strings. The approximate duration of the work is thirty-five minutes.\(^1\) The first movement, *1726*, quarter note=82, suggests a programmatic theme, which is discussed later in this chapter. The second movement, *Chaconni*, quarter note=52, settles into its typical triple-meter frame following a six-measure introduction in four/four time. The third movement, *Fly Forward*, quarter note=152-160, alternates between four/four and six/eight in a quasi *sesqui altera*-manner bringing the work to its rousing conclusion.

**MOVEMENT I: 1726**

The work’s first movement, titled *1726* and initially calling for a tempo of quarter note=82, spawns programmatic and practical results from its previously enigmatic title. Programmatically, the number represents the address (1726 Locust Street in Philadelphia, PA 19103)\(^2\) of the Curtis Institute of Music where the composer, Jennifer Higdon, and dedicatee, Hilary Hahn, originally met. Curtis was also the location for an early reading session by Hahn, Higdon, and the Curtis Institute Symphony Orchestra.\(^3\) It was during this reading session and shortly thereafter that many of the alterations discussed in Chapter 3 took place.

---

3 Hahn, phone interview by author, February 7, 2009.; Jennifer Higdon, interview by author, February 5, 2009, Omni Severin Hotel lobby: 40 West Jackson Place, Indianapolis, IN.
From a practical standpoint, the number 1726 acts as a sort of intervallic guide to the melodic material contained within the movement—leaning towards unisons, sevenths, seconds (including ninths by way of octave displacement) and sixths. Higdon does not completely restrict herself to these intervals, as Lou Harrison did in his *Concerto for Violin with Percussion Orchestra*, but they do shape a great deal of her melodic movement in the work. As she explained, “I kept it in the back of my mind but I never overtly thought about it. There’s kind of an emphasis on some of the leaps on those intervals, but other than that I wasn’t consciously thinking of it. If I had a choice between possible intervals . . . I would opt to use maybe a seventh.”

Although thematic material is developed and recurs—the form is A (measures 1-53) B (measures 54-164) A (measures 165-215) B (measures 216-282) cadenza (measures 283-317) A (measures 318-end)—the movement appears to be through-composed rather than adhering to any classical form as Venzago suggests. In studying for the premiere, Maestro Venzago approached the movement as if it were in sonata form. Traditionally the A material in sonata form would be strong and assertive, while the B theme would contrast this with more lyrical material. In this case, the order is switched. This alone does not shut the door on the sonata form hypothesis, as there are similar precedents. The lack of traditional tonal relationships, however, calls into question its sonata-like structure. As one writer for the *Washington Times* observed: “It employs motifs rather than melodies and eschews traditional development. It's driven instead by a kind of emotional logic, a stream-of-consciousness narrative in notes rather than words.” Indeed Higdon’s writing here is extremely *ostinato*-based, tending to layer many contrapuntal lines on top of each other. In her continuing efforts to “not sound square,” however, Higdon rarely

---

5 Jennifer Higdon, phone interview by author, July 16, 2009, Philadelphia, PA/Tallahassee, FL.
6 Mario Venzago, interview by author, February 4, 2009, Hilbert Circle Theatre office, Indianapolis, IN.
allows these *ostinati* to repeat exactly. Instead, the patterns are varied both rhythmically and melodically.

The work begins with a series of delicate harmonics from the soloist before being joined in measure 6 by glockenspiel and *crotales*—both of which are struck with the large end of knitting needles—which add to the pristine texture (see Example 5.1). Higdon continues to explore unexpected colors in a short, two-measure interlude (briefly turning from a 4/4 to 3/4 time signature) where a *crotale* is placed upside-down on the head of the timpani, and then struck with a mallet while the timpanist flexes the pedal in a strict eighth-note pattern giving an eerie “wah-wah” timbre. Measure 13 sees the original harmonic motive passed to the concertmaster, allowing the soloist to engage in a slowly moving, g-string melody, while the wind-chime-like percussion instruments continue with their *ostinati*—this time with a slightly longer phrase. The soloist’s melody then bursts forth in measures 20-23 for a mini-cadenza. Measure 24 sees the return of the original texture achieved in 13, whose participants now vary

---

9 Jennifer Higdon, phone interview by author, July 16, 2009, Philadelphia, PA/Tallahassee, FL.  
their rhythmic and melodic patterns as the violin solo continues to expand the range and complexity of its melody (see Table 5.1).  

As the violin soloist soars to what will be one of many high C-naturals, the texture changes in measure 35 with the entrance of the remaining string players executing expansive and metallic perc. moments.  In m. 12, *crotales* on timp. effect that carries through m. 14.  A return of the opening perc. motive that extends through m. 18.  An expanded return of the opening perc. Motive.  Expanded perc. part

### Table 5.1 (I: 1726, mm. 1-33)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>mm. 1-5</th>
<th>mm. 6-10</th>
<th>mm. 11-12</th>
<th>mm. 13-18</th>
<th>mm. 18-19</th>
<th>mm. 20-23</th>
<th>mm. 24-28</th>
<th>mm. 29-33</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>solo violin</td>
<td>opening harmonic motive</td>
<td>expanded harmonic motive</td>
<td>largely conjunct, lyrical melody</td>
<td>faster, more disjunct mini-cadenza-like melodies</td>
<td>elements of both the lyrical and <em>cadenza</em>-like melodies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>metallic perc.</td>
<td>Opening perc. Motive</td>
<td>In m. 12, <em>crotales</em> on timp. effect that carries through m. 14</td>
<td>A return of the opening perc. motive that extends through m. 18</td>
<td>an expanded return of the opening perc. Motive</td>
<td>expanded perc. part</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vln. I solo</td>
<td>takes over opening harmonic motive from violin solo through m. 18</td>
<td>continues 5 measure opening harmonic motive</td>
<td>continues 5 measure opening harmonic motive</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The dream-like quality of the section is further enhanced by not only the restless and seemingly improvised solo violin part, but also by Higdon’s consistent avoidance of downbeats in all instruments except the percussion, celli, and bass. All the while, ascending quintal harmonies.

---

the concertmaster continues developing a harmonic motive that is now presented to the listener as if a distant memory.\footnote{Jennifer Higdon, \textit{Violin Concerto: Study Score, Indianapolis Premiere} (Philadelphia, PA: Lawdon Press), 2008.}

With little notice, the B section commences with a doubling in tempo (from quarter-note=82 to quarter-note=164) and a clear change in character. The soloist’s nervous and highly syncopated melody is enhanced with string \textit{pizzicati} and the marimba, whose subdivisions suggest a rhythmic study. Throughout the movement, but most apparent in the B material, Higdon writes in a pseudo-diatonic fashion that, if nothing else, focuses on a definite central pitch from section to section—here we begin with A-flat.\footnote{Higdon, \textit{Violin Concerto: Study Score, Indianapolis Premiere}, 2008.}

The first of many call-and-response sections begins in measure 66 where the soloist’s motives are answered by various combinations of woodwinds. Here the pulse is no longer in doubt as all parties cease tying over the bar lines and, instead, remain true to the meter. As these utterances become shorter and alternate at a quicker pace, the tension builds to a short, but explosive two-measure \textit{tutti} section (measures 78-79). Not long after the soloist’s frenetic return—now with a tonal center of G-flat—another imitative period begins (measure 82)—this time in conversation with the first violin section. Motives reminiscent of measure 66 are at first employed before developing into a series of seventh-interval, descending \textit{glissandi} that resemble two electric guitarists dueling more than passages on the classical instruments for which they are scored. Over the succeeding four bars (measures 94-97), the soloist is asked to follow graphic notation to create an effect described as: “bowed tremolo, fast and furious . . . vary dynamics widely and wildly ending at the very top of the range”\footnote{Ibid.} that pushes the orchestra into another \textit{tutti} section with a tonal center of A.

A developmental section begins in measure 105 that, by way of motivic sequences, moves the tonal center up chromatically from B to C (by measure 107) and then to C# (by measure 109). It then climbs by a whole-step to D# (in measure 110), chromatically to E (measure 111, though one could argue that G# is just as important at this juncture) before the final shift moves the tonal center to A (by measure 115). A two-measure \textit{tutti} section in measure 123 allows the soloist to rest for a moment before launching into more call-and-response—this
time with the concertmaster and principal clarinet—which is followed by a shift to E (by measure 125) before a subsequent chromatic shift to F (by measure 129).\textsuperscript{17}

A series of sixteenth-notes, which is largely parallel sevenths and ninths, occupy measures 134-141. The conclusion of this series ushers in the first substantial \textit{tutti} section of the

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
 & m. 165 & m. 170 & m. 175 & m. 180 & m. 185 & m. 190 \\
\hline
solo violin & 5 measure pattern consisting of a rising \textit{pizz}. melody ending in F sustained \textit{arco} & lyrical melody \\
\hline
first stand vln. I & sustained \textit{arco} F & joins the rest of the section for \textit{pizz}. reminiscent of opening motive & \\
\hline
Piccolo & Lyrical melody with a predilection for seventh intervals & \\
\hline
vl. I altri & 10 measure pattern of muted \textit{pizz}. reminiscent of opening motive & repeats 10 measure pattern of muted \textit{pizz}. & \\
\hline
vl. II solo & beginning in m. 179: sustained \textit{arco} F taken from violin solo & continues sustained \textit{arco} F with added E-flats mm. 185-188 & continues sustained \textit{arco} F with added E-flats mm. 191, 192 & 2nd half of 10 measure pattern & continues sustained \textit{arco} F with added E-flats & E-naturals in mm. 195-199 \\
\hline
Cello & rising \textit{pizz}. Melody taken from violin solo & \\
\hline
metallic percussion & transposed motives taken from mm. 6-10 (also mm. 13-17) & \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\caption{(I: 1726, mm. 165-195)}
\end{table}

movement—all of which centers on F-natural—whose driving energy and thunderous writing carries the work towards the return of the A section in measure 165.\textsuperscript{18} A veil of mystery is achieved here as similar characters and timbres are reintroduced, though with different motives. As Table 5.2 displays, five- or ten-measure \textit{ostinati} are employed over droning F-naturals.


Higdon once again passes her motives from place to place as the concertmaster’s drone is handed to, then expanded by, the principal second. All the while, the soloist’s initial *pizzicato* melody is picked up by the first violin section (measure 175), allowing the soloist to explore yet another

---

slow, lyrical melody that complements that which had already begun in the piccolo (starting measure 170—see Example 5.2). Once again, Higdon calls on the soloist to become more agitated with his or her melody via increasingly complex rhythms and larger melodic leaps—a trend that moves the work into the area of D-flat by measure 200.  

Here the quintal harmonies—similar to those in measure 35—return as a sense of restlessness permeates the airwaves before the assured B material reappears in measure 216. Although rarely exact repetitions, the motives employed throughout the secondary B section have correlates from earlier in the movement, as described in Table 5.3, below.

| B sections |  
| --- | --- |
| The melodic material that begins in the measures on the left correlate with those on the right |  
| m. 54, Tonal center: A-flat | m. 216, Some imitative work w/ concertmaster, Tonal center: A-flat/F |
| m. 66, Imitative solo w/ w.w., Tonal center: A-flat | m. 228, Imitative solo w/ w.w., Tonal center: G-flat |
| m. 78, Tutti section, Tonal center: F | m. 241, Tutti section, Tonal center: F-sharp |
| m. 80, Imitative solo w/ strings, Tonal center: G-flat | m. 243, Imitative solo w/strings, Tonal center: G |
| m. 94, Tutti section w/ wailing, graphically notated solo part, Tonal center: A | m. 257, Sixteenths that are akin to the graphic notation in m. 94, Tonal center: A |

At the conclusion of this version of the B section, Higdon’s seventh- and ninth-laden cadenza crashes in. Appropriately labeled “with ferocity,” the soloist must literally attack the instrument to achieve the desired results.

In measure 318, A material returns (with a tonal center of G) as Higdon asks the soloist to play an amalgamation of the earlier harmonic motive (originally found in the opening five measures), the rising *pizzicato* melody (first appearing in measure 165), and, at times, the underlying pedal tone. All the while, the second stand of second violins maintains a pedal G-natural that remains through measure 337. Beginning at the end of measure 325, the viola section aids the soloist with harmonics before the soloist indulges in a lyrical melody derived

---

from measure 13’s utterances. This time, however, the rhythmic intensity is achieved much sooner than in previous, more searching moments. The metallic percussion instruments enter with their slightly developed motive, and the first violin section takes over the harmonics motive completely that both replicate (until the last beat of measure 338) their contributions from measures 24-33. Similarly, material derived from measures 35-53 follow suit (from measures 339 to the end) with quintal harmonies, and the final, fragmentary utterances of the opening harmonic motive appear in the first violin altri section to conclude the movement.

**Movement II: Chaconne**

For the second movement, Higdon found inspiration in the 18th century *chaconne*. In this case, she deals with two different *chaconnis* (thus the pluralized movement name) whose progressions were determined entirely by her ear. As she put it:

> When I wrote the second movement I was just trying to find a chord progression that was interesting sounding. . . . Whenever you’re creating a piece, you’re just trying to create a sound world that makes sense. And I often will make a slightly different sound world, going from movement to movement. I was looking for a softer sound, so those intervals [referring to thirds, fourths and fifths] . . . produce a softer sound.22

Although the *chaconne* typically is a triple-meter dance, Higdon’s first *chacoonne* is in 4/4 time. By measure 7, when the second *chacoonne* presents itself, we have settled into the traditional 3/4 meter. The first progression, however, utilizes twenty-four total beats that could, coupled with the ambiguous rhythms found in the accompaniment, be heard as six measures of 3/4 time. The first *chacoonne* begins with quintal harmonies—reminiscent of the first movement’s measure 36—in the lower instruments pitted against root-position triads in the higher voices who, almost exclusively, move in contrary motion. At first, the bass notes ascend while the treble instruments descend. That is, until the middle of measure 4 when they both ascend to the progression’s climax in measure 6 (see Example 5.3). If one were to attempt a harmonic analysis, he or she would be left with: G (added C)/D; dm7/E; em/F; dm7/G; G/A; am/B; F (added B)/C; dm7/G; em7 (added A); am7 (added D); am7/B; am7 (added D)/E; dm7 (added B)/C; dm/A; G (added A); dm/F; am (added B); B-flat (added C)/F; C maj 7; dmin13; C; G7 (added F); bdim (added E); dm7/C (added B); dm/E ; F9 (added B); em7/A; dm7/E; dm7 (added G); em/F; dm7/G; am7 (added D) progression. Clearly, Higdon was not thinking about each chord representing a

---

22 Jennifer Higdon, phone interview by author, July 16, 2009, Philadelphia, PA/Tallahassee, FL.
singular voice but, rather, two distinct harmonic fronts—one treble and one bass—occurring simultaneously via chord planing.

Example 5.3 (II: *Chaconni*, mm. 1-6)

![Example 5.3 (II: Chaconni, mm. 1-6)](image)

The second *chaconne* employs fairly standard triadic harmonies in B-flat whose simplicity allows for free-ranging melodies to give a hint of added tone-harmonies (see Example 5.4). At first these are exhibited in measure 7 (with pick-ups in measure 6) by the principal cello before being joined by counter-melodies in the English horn (starting in measure 10) and, later, principal oboe (by measure 18). This melody then dove-tails to the principal clarinet (the overlapping of which begins at the end of measure 22), which is similarly coupled with the principal viola (pick-ups to 25) and then principal flute (measure 27). The soloist enters in measure 35 with another rich, slow-moving (and largely step-wise motion) melody complemented with a counter-melody in the principal oboe (derivative of measure 18). The soloist’s range and melodic leaps begin to grow through measure 41 and they are joined, once

---

again, by counter-melodies passed from the principal trumpet (measures 44-47) to principal clarinet (pick up to measures 48-50) to principal cello (measures 50-53) and English horn.

**Example 5.4 (II. Chaconne, mm. 7-14)**

(measures 54-60). Additionally, the concertmaster joins the soloist’s melody an octave below (from measures 53-57) for support.

The character and meter of the first chaconne reappear in measure 61. Here, though, it is scored for the strings that exhibit different rhythms and whose upper voices now begin their parallel triadic descent a fourth higher than in the opening measure (see Example 5.5). The progression, which previously was six measures in length, is now cut to four, as the second chaconne emerges (in measure 65) ahead of schedule.

A tonal shift to E occurs in measure 78 (though it had begun moving there a measure earlier) whose exploratory melodies and gradual accelerando create a sense of development and unrest. The eventual unwinding of the soloist’s melodic figures (through measures 99-103) eases

---


the movement back to the first chaconne by measure 104—here recalling measure 61 more than the opening appearance in regards to range and scoring. For the first time, the soloist is free to explore more meandering melodies in the midst of the first chaconne’s harmonies executed by reduced string soli sections.\(^{27}\)

Although the meter has not switched back to 3/4, the second chaconne re-enters in measure 110 centering the pitch again on B-flat and pitting the soloist’s g-string melody against a counter-melody found in the concertmaster and principal cello performed two octaves apart (measures 110-114). The soloist’s line continues to search as counter-melodies join from the principal horn (measures 118-121), principal clarinet (measures 122-131), principal flute (measures 122-126 which is closely related to the counter-melody found in the concertmaster and principal cello’s part from measures 110-114 and again from measures 130-131), second clarinet (measures 126-131), principal bassoon (measures 127-130), principal trumpet (measures 127-132), and piccolo (measures 129-130). Another shift away from the second chaconne progression occurs in measure 127 as the pitch center climbs to D-flat and the soloist’s part

\[\text{Example 5.5 (II. Chaconni, mm. 61-64)}^{28}\]

\[\text{Example Image}\]


87
becomes increasingly agitated by way of quicker subdivisions, a more dramatic melodic contour, and the inclusion of double-stops.\(^{29}\)

The tonal center moves to G by measure 132 for the onset of the first expansive \textit{tutti} section of the movement. A motivic sequence raises the center to A-flat by measure 134, C-sharp/D-flat by measure 137, down to C-natural in 140 before resolving to G in 143 to usher in the return of the first \textit{chaconne}.

This restatement is more akin to the opening period in regards to pitch and scoring but, here Higdon alters many rhythms to include stretching out the original six-measure progression to nine. The soloist’s ever-searching contrapuntal line is joined for three measures (beginning in measure 146) by another concertmaster solo that at first echoes the soloist’s music (albeit in a higher range) before creating its own line. A trio of voices (soloist, concertmaster, and principal cello) engage in a brief and simultaneous conversation in measures 149-151, which are juxtaposed with the fragmented utterances of the first \textit{chaconne} progression in the woodwinds.\(^{30}\)

Measure 152 sees the return of the second \textit{chaconne}, B-flat tonal center and a g-string melody from the soloist. The English horn plays a counter-melody against the soloist (from measures 152-160) and by 154, the concertmaster and principal cello share another line two octaves apart that lasts through measure 159. By measure 160, the principal oboe takes over where the English horn left off, playing an independent melody until 168. Adding to the contrapuntal layering, the principal flute joins in at measure 163 (a line that continues through 169) and the first bassoon adds two-plus measures (from measure 166 to the downbeat of 168) before they all, along with soloist and many of the strings, push towards a tonal center of E in measure 170.\(^{31}\) One can’t help but wonder if Hahn’s request for a “major” concerto, as she put it,\(^ {32}\) began manifesting itself at this point in the compositional process. Higdon’s writing becomes uncharacteristically predictable here, as she seems to be attempting to suck the very marrow out of her earlier musical ideas and inspirations. Although the movement does achieve a

---


\(^{31}\) Ibid.

certain meditative quality with these developing repetitions, perhaps the movement, and *Concerto* as a whole, would have been served better from a shortened, leaner approach?

The subsequent *tutti* section (measures 170-196) conveys a sense of majesty and triumph despite its, at times, dissonant underpinnings found largely in the lower register. The various sections find new alliances—flute, piccolo, and both violin sections; oboe and clarinets; English horn, violas and sometimes harp; bassoons, cellos, bass and tuba; horns, trumpets and trombones with rogue calls from occasional principal players—as the fight for the listener’s attention ensues. As before, the frenetic energy eventually subsides, and a Copland-esque moment of serenity (reminiscent of the opening of his work *Quiet City*) emerges in measures 194-195 with still chords, a trumpet solo, and a tonal center having recently been moved to C-sharp.\(^{33}\)

*Chaconne* I material returns in measure 196—this version is related to measure 61. The soloist enters once more on a low A, indulging in yet another step-wise-driven melody that slowly unwinds over shifting 5/4 and 4/4 bars. The concertmaster contributes an imitative melody in measure 200 for its last exchange with the soloist of the movement.\(^{34}\)

An unexpectedly quick shift to the first *chaconne* progression (with the original B-flat centricity) sneaks into measure 202 as the soloist begins a final ascent from the familiar starting point—A below middle C. By the end of the measure, the first flute and principal bassoon quote material taken from measures 110-114 previously executed by the concertmaster and principal cello. Here, though, it is presented as a wistful remembrance of things past. As the soloist continues a gradual ascent to the concluding E-natural (three octaves above middle C), Higdon layers both *chaconne* ideas on top of each other (measures 214-218) for the first and last time.

**Movement III: Fly Forward**

The work’s third movement, *Fly Forward*, is another programmatic title for which Higdon is well-known. In this case, she was inspired by the media blitz leading up to the 2008 Beijing Olympics.\(^{35}\) Countless images of sprinters crossing the finish line with chests straining forward and arms dangling behind made her want to write a movement to emulate this explosive

---


\(^{35}\) Jennifer Higdon, interview by author, February 5, 2009, Omni Severin Hotel lobby: 40 West Jackson Place, Indianapolis, IN.
energy. In essence, she wanted to “see Hilary fly forward crossing the finish line”\textsuperscript{36} by the end of the work.

Although Venzago approached the movement as if it were a “hidden rondo,”\textsuperscript{37} careful analysis reveals this not to be true. A standard rondo would have a primary theme that comes back after episodic materials, but here we have periods that just recur one time and not in the traditional order—what would typically appear as: ABACABA is, instead: ABCBDACA Coda. Furthermore, that which Higdon reintroduces isn’t distinguishable enough to ever claim a true return has occurred. What the listener is left with is a feeling of familiarity but not actual repetition. From a cyclical approach, one could view it as Higdon asking the performer to travel the same path a few times but picking different motivic materials for them to play each lap.

The movement begins with stinging brass and chime hits juxtaposed against the solo violin’s small ranging but highly syncopated melody that serves as introduction. By measure 7, the first of many ostinato-based sections begins maintaining the original tonal center of B. Measure 20 introduces the second ostinato where Higdon’s alternations between 6/8 and 4/4 measures become most obvious to the listener. The solo violin’s lines are supported by syncopated bass notes in the harp and contrabass parts and, later, bouncing eighth-note pizzicati in the lower strings—a fairly consistent approach throughout the movement.\textsuperscript{38}

B material commences in measure 34 with a tonal shift up a whole-step to C-sharp, though some rhythms reminiscent of measure 20 are still employed. “Licks” perhaps inspired by bluegrass and/or influenced by Higdon’s recent composition \\textit{Concerto 4-3},\textsuperscript{39} appear in measures 36-38 and 41-42. Measure 47 begins another ostinato set contained within the B section having just reached (by way of a half-step shift) a tonal center of D. Here a sequencing figure continues to push the tonal center up to E-flat.\textsuperscript{40}

\textsuperscript{36} Jennifer Higdon, phone interview by author, July 16, 2009, Philadelphia, PA/Tallahassee, FL.
\textsuperscript{37} Mario Venzago, interview by author, February 4, 2009, Hilbert Circle Theatre office, Indianapolis, IN.
\textsuperscript{39} Jennifer Higdon, interview by author, February 5, 2009, Omni Severin Hotel lobby: 40 West Jackson Place, Indianapolis, IN.
The movement’s C section begins in measure 53 with the soloist continuing *moto perpetuo* figures against diminished string triads whose *crescendos* give the sonic appearance of a fast-moving train rapidly approaching—a technique that the soloist employs throughout later sections including measures 57, 59, 61, and 62. Off-beat *pizzicati* in the strings and similarly syncopated eighths in the oboe and percussion bring a new drive to the movement in measures 64-68. Dramatic, not to mention, syncopated octaves in the solo violin part begin the next *ostinato* period of the C section in measure 69.41

Two measures of driving triplets (that utilize the open a-string) followed by another two of descending sextuplets veer the movement to its return of B material (see paradigmatic analysis in Table 5.4). Here, in measure 77, the *ostinato* originally appearing in measure 34 is embellished in its eleventh measure (measure 87) with high C-sharp trills helping to outline the C-sharp centricity of the section. By measure 91, motives resembling measure 47 return but here there is an altered, upward sequence that drives the tonal center from D to D-sharp/E-flat (measure 93), up another half step to E (measure 95) before changing every half measure—F (measure 97), F-sharp (measure 97, beat two), G (measure 98) and G-sharp (measure 98, second half)—before reaching A in measure 99 (see Example 5.6).42

Measure 100 begins a pseudo-developmental section labeled here as D material. Replete with string swells (similar to the opening/measure 53), open-string *pizzicato*, and call-and-response episodes between the soloist and concertmaster/principal cellist as well as the soloist and string quartet, the tonal center is A but is pushed to D by the beginning of the movement’s full *cadenza* (measure 113).43 Despite its, at times, chromatic motion the *cadenza*, with its predilection for open strings, smacks of the Tennessee fiddle music that populated Higdon’s childhood radio listening experiences.44

Although comprised of different rhythms, measure 121 heralds the return of what was previously introductory A material—measures 1-6. The soloist begins this section (with a tonal

---

43 Ibid.
Example 5.6 (III: *Fly Forward*, mm. 91-99)\(^{45}\)

---


---

center of A) relatively slowly before gradually picking up steam and by measure 129, there is a return to C material as the motives contained within are transposed up a half-step (with the exception of measure 144) from measure 53’s material (see paradigmatic analysis in Table 5.4). Measures 130-135 also utilize more interplay between soloist and the first stand of first violins. By measure 145, the listener is presented with a repeat of measure 69’s (with the exception of measure 152) and the tonal center that previously had been E (from measures 129-144) now shifts to F and then F-sharp (by measure 149).

Measure 153 apes materials taken from measure 16—here transposed down a third—and gradually becomes varied allowing for sequence-driven tonal shifts to B-flat (measure 155) then B-natural (measure 157). This pseudo-modulation allows measures 161 and 162 to match exactly with their earlier counterparts (measures 18-19). Returning material continues to appear at measures 163-165 matching earlier music found in measures 20-22. Immediately following this, though, the original pattern is expanded upon and the much appreciated one beat of rest that appeared previously (in measure 23) of the soloist’s part is now filled with more sixteenth notes. Higdon also writes different double-stops in the middle part of measure 169 than had appeared previously (see paradigmatic analysis in Table 5.4). Furious sixteenth-notes and sextuplets from the soloist and woodwinds in measure 174 drive the movement to its short, seven-measure tutti section (measures 175-181).

Between measures 175-188, the orchestra and soloist struggle over tonal centers. The *tutti* section in measure 175 provides a sense of D Major, but the soloist pushes the tonality back to the B minor-like center that occurred in the early 160s. When the orchestra stubbornly reenters with a similar D Major center, the soloist concedes and the subsequent kinetic, fiddle-like sixteenths and syncopated accompaniment bristle with energy as the work eventually concludes with a resounding D Major diatonic statement.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A material</th>
<th>mm. 1-6</th>
<th>mm. 7-19</th>
<th>mm. 20-33</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intro; Beginning of A section</td>
<td>Intro; Beginning of A section</td>
<td>Intro; Beginning of A section</td>
<td>Intro; Beginning of A section</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tonal center: B</td>
<td>ostinato begins</td>
<td>ostinato continues</td>
<td>ostinato continues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tonal center: B</td>
<td>Tonal center: B</td>
<td>Tonal Center B</td>
<td>Tonal Center B</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>mm. 121-127</th>
<th>m. 128</th>
<th>mm. 153-162</th>
<th>mm. 163-187</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>different notes but same character as A section</td>
<td>same character as A section</td>
<td>sequence from m. 16 elaborated</td>
<td>expanded, different notes, rests filled in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tonal center: A</td>
<td>Slow, then gradually picks up</td>
<td>tonal center: A to B-flat to B minor</td>
<td>m. 175: tutti tonal center D major-like</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tonal center: A</td>
<td>Tonal center: A</td>
<td></td>
<td>m. 182 solo: tonal center B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>184 tutti: tonal center D major-like</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B material</td>
<td>C material</td>
<td>D material</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mm. 34-46</td>
<td>mm. 47-52</td>
<td>mm. 100-112</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B section begins</td>
<td>Tonal center: D to D#/E-flat</td>
<td>Development</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tonal center: C#</td>
<td>m. 53-68</td>
<td>Cadenza (Bluegrass elements)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>m. 57 motive in strings</td>
<td>Tonal center: A/D</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tonal center: E-flat</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mm. 77-90</td>
<td>mm. 91-99</td>
<td>mm. 113-120</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ostinato adds C# trill</td>
<td>Different with upward sequence</td>
<td>Coda-like</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tonal center: C#</td>
<td>Tonal center: D to D# to E to F to A</td>
<td>Tonal center: D Major</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>mm. 129-144</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Up a half step (except m. 144)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tonal center: E</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>mm. 145-152</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tonal center: F to F#</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>mm. 188-end</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Coda-like</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tonal center: D Major</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 6

THE FUTURE OF THE WORK

The Premiere Recording

Following the Concerto’s United Kingdom premiere—28 May 2009 with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra (Vasily Petrenko, conductor at Philharmonic Hall, in Liverpool, England)—Hahn, Higdon, and company set about documenting the work in recorded form. Although put to tape in Philharmonic Hall, it is considered a studio recording given its lack of audience (beyond Higdon, the engineers and other staff) and use of multi-track recording/modern-day editing processes. The event took place over one-and-a-half days\(^1\) and amounted to twelve hours of recording.\(^2\) As Hahn recalled, “we had four sessions, the fourth was a cadenza session. The other three sessions were three hours each with a fifteen-minute break.”\(^3\) Higdon admitted that the time allotments were luxurious when compared to dealing with union-constrained, American orchestras.\(^4\) When asked if the recording process altered her perception of the work, Hahn replied:

> If you listen to a recording of a performance, the mics are out in the hall; that’s not how it sounds really. But when you have the mics all placed on every instrument, you can actually tell what’s going on . . . the focus is what you’re going to leave for posterity . . . there’s a lot more sense of permanence and a lot more insistence on accuracy . . . . [We spent] a day-and-a-half recording it. Probably, it equaled all of the rehearsal time I had up until that point [and in this case] . . . with the same group . . . [and] conductor . . . who really had it all in his head. He basically memorized the score, and he knew exactly what he was hearing, and when something didn’t sound right, he knew exactly what was going on and he could correct it. I also played it in Luzerne with him a couple of weeks before we recorded it. That made a big difference because he was able to isolate each instrument in the orchestra and give them their proper placement. It helped me to . . . get the whole concept really a lot tighter than I had been able to before.\(^5\)

---

\(^1\) Hilary Hahn, interview by author, June 6, 2009, The Music Center at Strathmore dressing room, North Bethesda, MD.

\(^2\) Jennifer Higdon, phone interview by author, July 16, 2009, Philadelphia, PA/Tallahassee, FL.

\(^3\) Hilary Hahn, interview by author, June 6, 2009, The Music Center at Strathmore dressing room, North Bethesda, MD.

\(^4\) Jennifer Higdon, phone interview by author, July 16, 2009, Philadelphia, PA/Tallahassee, FL.

\(^5\) Hilary Hahn, interview by author, June 6, 2009, The Music Center at Strathmore dressing room, North Bethesda, MD.
The finished product is set to be released by Deutsche Grammophon on 26 May 2010 in Japan and 21 September 2010 in the United States. It will be paired with her recording of the Tchaikovsky *Violin Concerto in D* accompanied again by the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra (Vasily Petrenko, conductor) that had previously been recorded in the Fall of 2008.

When asked if recording Higdon’s *Concerto* was particularly difficult, Hahn responded:

No, because there [are] so many orchestra parts in this piece . . . every time I would start to get tired, it would be time to do a tutti anyway. So I would go into my dressing room and take a little break. [Higdon] writes a lot of substantial orchestra parts without the soloist playing. It was actually some of the most comfortable, productive recording sessions I’ve ever had. So, it felt really good and it was really good to have Jennifer there for the recording. From what I’ve heard, some composers get hung up on things in recording sessions and can’t let go because they hear it a certain way and they’re feeling the permanence of it [all]—but Jennifer was just there to help.

The recording described above is intended to be the premiere recording but given its delayed release date, there is a chance that another could precede it. Hahn, in particular, is apprehensive about this possible scenario due to the outside chance that a live recording of the work achieve primacy of place. Higdon, by contrast, is more secure about Hahn’s ownership regarding the premiere recording as evidenced by these comments:

There’s no way that anyone else could step in and record this piece even before then. It would take them too long to learn it, to get an orchestra engaged. Because the major orchestras have already . . . programmed for the next season or two. . . . I would hold that anyway. For Hilary to have the premiere recording . . . that would be understood to be her right.

Although Hahn is excited about the prospect of other violinists playing the work, she is cognizant of the impact a composition’s first statement to the public-at-large can make. She fears that if a soloist were to tour with it who is not as dedicated to the score as she is, his or her

---

6 James Egelhofer, e-mail message to author, May 19, 2010.
8 Hilary Hahn, interview by author, June 6, 2009, The Music Center at Strathmore dressing room, North Bethesda, MD.
9 Hilary Hahn, interview by author, June 7, 2009, Joseph Meyerhoff Symphony Hall dressing room, Baltimore, MD.
10 Jennifer Higdon, phone interview by author, July 16, 2009, Philadelphia, PA/Tallahassee, FL.
marginal performances could taint the audience’s opinion of the work and, thereby, negatively influence its dissemination.\textsuperscript{11}

All of this brings about an interesting issue regarding the primacy of place of a new work. Certainly most, if not all, performers have felt a certain amount of ownership towards pieces that were written and/or dedicated to them. How these initial performers have approached the piece has also historically had a lasting influence but never more so than in today’s globally-connected, twenty-first century reality. Today, a performer’s stamp on a work can be much more immediate as recorded versions can be disseminated around the world as soon as they are created. Without a doubt, this leads to an inextricable connection between the performer and the work itself (for better or worse). The remaining question, for which only time has the answer, is whether or not this aids or hinders the growth of the piece?

**Performer’s Edition**

The violin solo part of Jennifer Higdon’s *Violin Concerto* (2008) will perhaps include all of Hilary Hahn’s fingerings and bowings soon. The real treasure here will be her fingerings, primarily because, as she explained to the author, the bowings already offered by the composer needed virtually no alterations.\textsuperscript{12} Hahn explained:

\begin{quote}
I think there’s not that much choice in the 3\textsuperscript{rd} movement with how to bow it; there are just all those separate notes . . . of course, when you have chords, you’re always free to do multiple downs. I think that’s not changing the bowings at all. Where it’s all connected I just did what’s written, except [for] a couple of places where you have to do an extra note on the bow just to make it work out.\textsuperscript{13}
\end{quote}

Going into more detail regarding the philosophy of altering bowings here, Hahn added:

\begin{quote}
If I alter a bowing . . . it’s just to get the effect that she wrote even stronger . . . I feel like if I write in the different bowings, it will make a big deal out of it and people looking at those bowings will think ‘it’s supposed to be this way instead of that way’ but no, for me, the way I play, this bowing works to get [the] effect that she wrote [in her] bowing.\textsuperscript{14}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{11} Hilary Hahn, interview by author, June 7, 2009, Joseph Meyerhoff Symphony Hall dressing room, Baltimore, MD.
\textsuperscript{12} Hahn, interview, June 7, 2009.
\textsuperscript{13} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid.
Although the author suggests some alternative bowings in the fourth chapter of this treatise, a similar approach was employed to attempt to remain true to the composer’s original articulations and ideas regarding phrase lengths.

Once Hahn’s markings are made public, all willing parties will be privy to her bowings and fingerings. What won’t be indicated, though, are the differences in the types of shifts she employs—technical or expressive. For help in this arena, one should reference Chapter 4 of this treatise.

Exactly when the performer’s edition will be ready to publish is currently a bit of a mystery. Hahn states that she is “doing a version for Jennifer to print and she’ll have all my fingerings . . . pretty soon. . . . I’ll probably put in a couple of optional ones for those who may not have specific things that my hands have . . . like reaches and what not.”

Indeed, Ms. Hahn has delivered on her promise and has given her fingerings to Higdon. As of this publishing, however, they have not been implemented by Lawdon Press into a part that may be purchased by the public at large. To capture the excitement the work had created after its premiere, Higdon insisted on not waiting for Hahn’s written contributions to begin the publishing process and made a clean version immediately available. As Higdon stated, “It may be that we never even get [Hahn’s fingerings and bowings] in; that’s an actual possibility. My guess is it’s going to be years. I have too . . . many more pressing deadlines and projects.”

**Upcoming Performances**

Beyond the first offerings in Indianapolis in early February of 2009, Hahn toured with the work giving performances: 11 March 2009 with the Toronto Symphony Orchestra (Peter Oundjian, conductor) at Roy Thomson Hall in Toronto, Ontario for its Canadian premiere; 19 May 2009 with the Luzerne Symphony (Vasily Petrenko conductor) at Luzern Konzertsaal in Luzerne, Switzerland for its European debut; 28 May 2009 with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra (Vasily Petrenko, conductor) at Philharmonic Hall, in Liverpool, England serving as its UK premiere; and 4-7 June 2009 with the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra (Marin Alsop, conductor) at Meyerhoff Symphony Hall (June 6th was at The Music Center at

---

15 Hilary Hahn, interview by author, June 7, 2009, Joseph Meyerhoff Symphony Hall dressing room, Baltimore, MD.
Strathmore) in Baltimore, Maryland for its so-called East Coast premieres.\textsuperscript{17} The \textit{Concerto} naturally became more comfortable for Ms. Hahn over time, and her interpretations henceforth demonstrated a level of confidence not previously seen.\textsuperscript{18} In addition, the orchestras since 6 February 2009 have had the advantage of literally following the Indianapolis Symphony’s lead by way of the premiere performance’s recording. As Hahn put it, “it’s a whole different ballgame [now]. That’s really the difference between a premiere and a follow-up.”\textsuperscript{19}

Hahn seems to have assumed a certain amount of responsibility in regards to the longevity of the work. As Higdon put it: “Yes . . . she’s great about that kind of thing. The recording process will go a long way toward making that happen. . . . Once something comes out as a recording it’s amazing how much it gets picked up. It . . . shows you the importance of recording even though the industry is struggling.”\textsuperscript{20}

As stated in an article originally appearing in \textit{Strings Magazine}, Hahn explains that “she frankly expects to be performing the old standards more often than the Higdon, because that’s what orchestras want. . . . It’s always easier to program the more standard works. Orchestras are getting jumpier about ticket sales, with good reason, so in the next few years we’ll be seeing a lot more standard repertoire because that’s the strategy a lot of organizations use when they’re not sure what direction to take.”\textsuperscript{21}

When asked about how much influence she can have on an orchestra regarding programming the \textit{Concerto}, she offered:

I can only push a piece as far as there’s room to push it. . . . If there’s something that I need to schedule for a certain time, I’ll tell my management. . . . when and how much I would like to play it and they’ll go and find places for me to play it. So, when we’re looking, I absolutely have say . . . [but] when [the orchestras] approach me . . . [and] they want a specific piece and I can’t do it then I tell them, and they go and find someone else. If they’re generally approaching me, [however, and] . . . there’s a piece that I’ve been

\textsuperscript{18} Hilary Hahn (violin soloist), Mario Venzago (conductor), Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra, \textit{Lilly Classical Series/Program Eleven} (Hilbert Circle Theatre, Indianapolis, IN), February 6, 2009. Hahn, \textit{Lilly Classical Series/Program Eleven}, February 7, 2009.
\textsuperscript{19} Hilary Hahn, interview by author, June 6, 2009, The Music Center at Strathmore dressing room, North Bethesda, MD.
\textsuperscript{20} Jennifer Higdon, phone interview by author, July 16, 2009, Philadelphia, PA/Tallahassee, FL.
wanting to play for that season but we haven’t managed to schedule it somewhere, then
I’ll ask the later booking orchestras if they can fit it in.\footnote{22}

She continues to program it (when the orchestra is willing) including, at the time of this
publishing: 7-9 January 2010 with the Nashville Symphony and Giancarlo Guerrero, conductor
(at Schermerhorn Symphony Center in Nashville, Tennessee); 21-23 January 2010 with the
Detroit Symphony Orchestra and Leonard Slatkin, conductor (at Orchestra Hall in Detroit,
Michigan); and 13-16 May 2010 with the Dallas Symphony Orchestra and Jaap van Zweden,
conductor (at the Morton H. Meyerson Symphony Center, in Dallas, Texas).\footnote{23} There is even
more interest in the work in addition to these confirmed bookings. Higdon states:

I know [the] Curtis [Orchestra] is scheduled to do it at some point. . . . They were going
to do a tour with it. . . . So, it’s definitely got some . . . life of its own. There are a couple
of music festivals that I am attending in the next couple of years where they were also
asking about it but they haven’t gotten as far [as] . . . programming yet. It’s a long
process. . . . It’s amazing how long it actually takes.\footnote{24}

When customizing a work for a particular performer, a composer may inadvertently stunt
its dissemination by making it too unique to the dedicatee. When that particular performer is
supremely gifted (especially technically), it might be a genuine concern that the piece will
(metaphorically at least) die with the performer. History has shown us, though, that no matter
how difficult to impossible a composition might appear to the violin public-at-large when it is
first presented, technique always catches up. Perhaps not immediately, but gradually over time,
the so-called secrets to unlocking the technical challenges of any work get sorted out and
absorbed by the collective consciousness. For example, when Niccoló Paganini’s 24 Caprices
were first offered in published form and found their way into the hands of curious violinists,
many thought they were a joke propagated by mischievous musicians. When the great Italian
virtuoso began displaying these awe-inspiring techniques in concert after concert, the works
previously thought impossible suddenly needed to be reconsidered. After two centuries, the

\footnote{22} Hilary Hahn, interview by author, June 7, 2009, Joseph Meyerhoff Symphony Hall dressing
room, Baltimore, MD.

\textit{Philadelphia Inquirer} (PA), June 10, 2009,
http://www.philly.com/inquirer/columnists/david_patrick_stearns/20090610_Ladies__night_near

\footnote{24} Jennifer Higdon, phone interview by author, July 16, 2009, Philadelphia, PA/Tallahassee, FL.
*Caprices* still do present formidable challenges to even the most serious violinist but they are surmountable, so much so that they have become standard repertoire for University-aged pupils. As standards change, so too do perceptions followed swiftly by reality. Said another way, the perception of reality can become reality. When asked about the longevity of her *Violin Concerto*, Higdon states: “I actually have had violinists asking me about . . . when it is going to be available . . . and basically after Baltimore we are . . . releasing it. I know we have been getting orders from some of the music distributors. . . . People must be pretty interested in it one way or the other.”25 Hahn feels similarly about the piece’s life when she states rather matter-of-factly that “It’s already in the repertoire.”26 When asked how far she is willing to go in order to ensure that statement, she responded:

My job goes to a certain point. Play it, and do my best with it, and get word out about it. I’ve been lucky enough to have been able to record it. There isn’t a lot of space for . . . [new] pieces to be performed . . . recorded and released on a major label. . . . And so I think my whole job . . . [is] to create a situation where [the audience] can listen with a completely open mind and really enjoy it and reach their own conclusions. At a certain point it’s out of my hands . . . literally. . . . So other people have to do their jobs too. . . . And I know Jennifer has people who . . . like to . . . stay on top of her repertoire, so I know that this piece already has people who will play it. We’re very much looking at the publishing process as a chance to make sure that it does get out there to everyone. She’s been great about sending scores out to people who are interested and, following up. So, I think . . . it’s already in the repertoire because people already know about it and . . . are talking about it in a way that refers to it as . . . a major piece. It’s just a matter of the situations all working out for it to be played by other people at some point.27

Among the violinists that Hahn refers to as being “faithful” to Higdon’s works are Jennifer Koh and Leila Josefowicz, who have both been in contact with Higdon about performing the work in the near future and who both have familiar ties to the Curtis Institute of Music.28 ISO musician Samuel Banks offered:

I’m not really concerned about the longevity of the piece. I think it’s written in a really interesting language. It’s very hard and I think Hilary has just tackled it phenomenally to begin with. If another violinist wants to make it happen, then they will; they’ll tackle those challenges as well. Hilary sets the bar extremely high for the second performance, whoever is going to get the spirit to climb that mountain. But I’m sure—it’s really a

---

26 Hilary Hahn, interview by author, June 7, 2009, Joseph Meyerhoff Symphony Hall dressing room, Baltimore, MD.
27 Hahn, interview, June 7, 2009.
musically rewarding piece to play in the orchestra and listen to all of the colors going around. [Higdon’s] very consistent in her language, and I think a lot of people, audience members and musicians, find it a very appealing kind of language, kind of a return to some of the romantic twentieth-century composers that existed in America. I was thinking of some of the great concertos that have been written in America in the last couple of years and I think it’s . . . in that same vein. And it’s really just thrilling to be listening to it. I think it merits being played frequently. Not every season for every orchestra, but I think there’s something for any audience in the world to gain from this piece. For me, it’s my favorite work of Higdon that I’ve heard. . . . I’d buy the recording.  

Having already released her exclusive rights in June of 2009 to the performance of the Concerto—a move that Higdon refers to as being “unusual...because normally you don’t even send it out if someone has exclusivity”  

—Hahn is convinced that there will be more performances, including those in the hands of others, to follow. Once again quoting from the Strings Magazine article, Reel states: “With no disrespect to the composer, Hahn says she is eager to send Higdon’s Concerto off into the world on its own. ‘I look forward to the time when this Concerto is out there in the standard repertoire,’ she says, ‘and I’ll like it not needing me to play it, because that will mean it has its own life and I’ve done my part’.”

Given that clairvoyance exists exclusively beyond the realm of logic, one cannot be sure what the future holds for Jennifer Higdon’s Violin Concerto (2008). If the performances at the end of the premiere run in Baltimore  

are any indication, however, and violinists with similar abilities and orchestras exhibiting adventurous spirits are in abundance, it will continue to inspire and invigorate audiences for many years to come and secure its rightful place in history.

29 Louise Alexander (Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra 2nd violin), Roger Roe (ISO acting principal oboe), Sheldon Person (ISO viola), Samuel Banks (ISO 2nd bassoon), interview by author, February 5, 2009, The Taste of Tango: 36 E. Washington St, Indianapolis, IN.
30 Jennifer Higdon, phone interview by author, July 16, 2009, Philadelphia, PA/Tallahassee, FL.
32 Hilary Hahn (violin soloist), Marin Alsop (conductor), Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, Marin Alsop and Hilary Hahn (Joseph Meyerhoff Symphony Hall, Baltimore, MD), June 7, 2009. Hilary Hahn (violin soloist), Marin Alsop (conductor), Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, Marin Alsop and Hilary Hahn (The Music Center at Strathmore, North Bethesda, MD), June 6, 2009.
APPENDIX A

MARIO VENZAGO INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

Mario Venzago, interview by author, February 4, 2009, Hilbert Circle Theatre office, Indianapolis, IN.

Text appearing after “MV” spoken by Mario Venzago
Text appearing after “MBHW” spoken by M. Brent H. Williams

MBHW: “How do you think things are going thus far?”

MV: “Oh very well. Oh I think this is one of the best prepared first performance[s]. And, it is a very difficult piece for the violin. And now she starts to play by memory and that’s not easy so this rhythmical…especially the second movement where you don’t really feel the beat, it’s all, it’s a comment about beats. I don’t know how she can memorize this. This is outstanding.”

MBHW: “I have to admit whenever I saw her put the stand down today I was very surprised. The polyrhythms throughout are amazing. It’s almost like it’s a study in rhythms.”

MV: “And you have as, I would not say behind, but as an interior, in the…when you look into the piece then you always have this chaconne it’s moving like a caravan, it is fantastic, always going. This tonal pavanne or chaconne what it is, ostinato or it could also be a passacaglia. This is the idea, I think.”

MBHW: “It’s amazing having that framework.”

MV: “Yes, this is the framework and everything is based on that. But see, she flies around and, it is fantastic. I always I appreciate the composition, the material, let’s say the composition material that she has chosen is so violinistic in a way and in the opening there are all these harmonics. It’s always. [plays opening chords on piano] The strings and then the percussion
with the first wrong note. Then she with the ‘c’. So, in a way, it’s an archetype of harmonic possibility of the violin, it is really the body of the violin. It is so well written.

MBHW: “I like hearing you say that. That’s a really succinct way of putting it I think. You were mentioning earlier how you feel very well prepared for this, more so than, you were implying anyway, more so than perhaps other new works that are brought out for the first time. I was wondering, do you normally schedule this much rehearsal time for a totally brand new work?”

MV: “Normally, the situation is with the rehearsal time is that you can’t do it. If you combine the piece with a very standard repertoire then you have perhaps more time than you would have for a conventional concerto or piece. But, it’s very rare that you can, this is an exception, and it should be the rule but it’s not the rule. I think everybody knows the piece now. She wanted to play it many times, and that helped even. To play it and to play it and to discover and to understand. I think the second movement is quite difficult to understand because it is a long movement, it’s really long. It has it’s like a Bruckner movement. And to understand how to structure it when there is a kind of recapitulation or when the slower part comes again, how it’s built. And I think the architecture because it is very evident, when you know. When you don’t know it is enigmatic but I think it is very well constructed.”

MBHW: “I totally agree. How much…this question isn’t intended to put you on the spot, but given the technical challenges of this work, how much preparation time would you estimate that you spent with this score versus, say, a piece that perhaps is more standard but that you just have never conducted before? Something that had been performed and recorded.”

MV: “You mean, my personal preparation?

MBHW: “Exactly.”

MV: “I can read very quick the music. So I can read this score I can read prima vista. So it does not take me a lot of time to have an impression. But then, it’s a first performance, so you have to
ask every note ‘is that the right note? Is there a mistake?’ She’s very perfect and. ‘Or is the dynamic, will that work?’ So you have to come prepared like the composer ‘Is that what he expects to hear?’ Therefore the preparation is a little bit different, because you don’t trust the score. This is absolutely not negative. So that’s…This is the first performance. I don’t trust, I have to hear everything, you have to have played everything and then we can be sure. Oh yes, that is exactly how it is. Do we have to make changes for to bring out what she wanted. She is such an experienced composer so I think everything worked. So we had only had to correct a little bit the details. We had to understand that a fortissimo during when Hilary is playing is not an abstract fortissimo with an objective value. It has to be played in relation to her solo so it’s less loud than it is perhaps in the symphony. And that we had to learn, we had to know where she is in the very low register so that even the piano is perhaps a triple pianissimo. We did not have to write in that. This is an experience we had to make with this. Back to my personal preparation it’s in a way so well written but what I always try to find are the periods. This is a four, or five-bar or seven bar phrase. And she has very tough phrasings. There are in the second movement a lot of five-bar periods. Three, four, five bars…Three and two, that’s very seldom. Because normally you have four bars, four bars, four bars and she has based on a different structure on different periods. It’s very clearly. Or when she wants to have a breath or she wants to stretch out something then she adds a bar. So, to understand what that means that and to form. Of course you have an introduction and the fast part and then you have a kind of second theme again referring on the introduction. But the form is a very classical form and this you have to find otherwise you can’t conduct the piece. And the form of course is not so obvious like in a Haydn symphony or in a Mozart concerto but it’s quite easy and how she, this kind of foliation. This Chaconne idea even in the beginning after five bars a new aspect of the theme and when the harmonics goes into the orchestra and the concertmasters plays it. This is this is genius, I think this is absolutely genius. The same music goes on and the soloist can go to a different aspect. And so you have a kind of little variations in the introductions. It’s the Chaconne idea is also there. And then you have quite for the main, for the faster part, it is quite classical. With a first theme and a second theme and the trip comes I would say this is the second theme. So it is quite classical so you have to find out that.”

MBHW: “I agree, it’s not immediately apparent.”
MV: “And it’s not so, you can’t look at a book.”

MBHW: “Just speaking of the irregular phrase lengths, the last movement has a lot of mixed meters. She’s going back and forth between tons of different time signatures. At times even within bars she seems to be implying two different time signatures, not even necessarily when there is a polyrhythmical stance. The measure I’m thinking of that repeats quite often especially is the [singing]… you know the dotted-eighth, dotted-eighth, quarter, eighth-note. To me it has a… are you familiar with the term sesqui altera? The Spanish… you see it a lot in Spanish and Latin American folk musics.”

MV: “This is dance music. It is absolutely. [sings rhythms from the third movement] For sure it is based on a dance idea. Or even, you have to syncopate. It’s not jazzy. It’s not, you say, ‘This is an American concerto so it will have some jazz elements’ no not at all. It’s the classical traditional dance elements.”

MBHW: “I agree, even with all the syncopations and the polyrhythms I’ve never really gotten a feel for jazz. There are a couple of places though, and I’ll see if you agree, in the third movement that have almost a Bluegrass, for eight measures here, like her mini-cadenza that she has and a couple of other spots that utilize an almost fiddle approach.”

MV: “I agree to that totally. But this is also coming from dance music. And it has a little bit of Stravinsky.”

MBHW: “Absolutely. I feel that way about a lot of her music, actually.”

MV: “Yeah. And what I even like very much, this rhythmical things. It is quite tough, if you look at the pizzicati the pizzicati are never on one two, three, four. And even when the rhythm is changing they are not doing evident things, they are always going against it. It is very complex. That is why it took us a certain time to not be heavy. It is so complex, you are stressed and so you count. I like this very much how she has treated these dance elements and syncopate elements
not being jazzy. Of course it has a certain groove the piece has. You feel you feel what’s going on I think she plays this gorgeously with these accents. And it’s also a perpetuo mobile it goes and goes. The form, I would even say, it’s a kind of rondo. Even there it is a hidden classical form behind, it comes again it comes again this main theme but always, sometimes a half-step up the accompaniment or the violin a half-step up and the accompaniment how it was she plays with that. But in a way, the perpetuo mobile is organized as a hidden classical rondo. Comes and comes. It also makes sense because I rondo is mostly danced.”

MBHW: “Absolutely. Just as far as the history is concerned, when did you first become involved with this project? When did Jennifer or Hilary or whoever it was first contact you?”

MV: “I’m not sure when the project really started. Because Jennifer was Hilary’s teacher in Baltimore, and I think it was a long-term desire of both. And I was on tour with Hilary with the Michelsen Bruch Orchestra, the Swedish National Orchestra. One evening we were at a table in Oslo. I asked her about her projects and she mentioned…I said there is one American composer I really, really highly esteem and that’s Jennifer Higdon. And she said, ‘Of course, that’s my teacher.’ And then she wrote it. I don’t know how encouraging my enthusiasm was to that project and I wanted also to interest the Gossamer Orchestra to have a part of this commission but now it’s only in America and we have to bring it to Europe, it’s important. So at that table I really understood that I have a little bit to push my organization to make happen such things. Tony Tolokan our Director of Artistic Planning, he phoned and we had to raise the money and we found the money. And so, from then on, I knew and we knew that we wanted to move forward the project. I think it went quite quick from that point because at that point, at that discussion in Oslo nothing was written. It was just the idea. So, I don’t know what Jennifer had on her desk, perhaps hidden. But it came very quick out. I saw the score for the first time when I was last time here in November. I don’t know when the piece is finished, I don’t think it has even a date there.”

MBHW: “I don’t think she gave a date. When I asked her earlier I think she said sometime in late August, she was pretty sure.”
MV: “That could be because in November, I saw the finished score. And then she had a pre-, let’s say a pre-premiere, she had a sight reading with the Curtis students. And then she changed some things, and I got immediately the ‘right score’ and my score has the copyright 2008. And now we are?”

MBHW: “2009.”

MV: “So that means, that means that the score that I saw for the first time is not even that score. This is a newer score with all the corrections.”

MBHW: “So the original score you had might have been before the Curtis reading?”

MV: “But, I didn’t took home, I only had read through once. Oh, this is interesting, and it is so well written. So the last time, I took or they sent me, I don’t know how, this is a brand new score. This is my own copy, I will not give it back.”

MBHW: “Have you programmed any of her music before?”

MV: “Yah yah, we have a relationship to Jennifer Higdon, we did her Blue Cathedral and we did her Percussion Concerto. We will do her piece written for Time for Three with Zach. And I would very much like to have a long relationship with her because she’s an incredible composer.”

MBHW: “And I think premiering her work has a certain endearing quality.”

MV: “Oh yay, of course, but everyone wants to premiere her works because this is such a challenge and such a chance and such a thrill. If she wants us to play all of the pieces, I am very much willing. She has a wonderful Concerto Grosso and Blue Cathedral is a magic piece, a magic piece.”
MBHW: “Do you think that your patrons, the concertgoers, do you think that they realize the significance of an event like this?”

MV: “I would say the more regular concertgoers they realize perfectly and that a star like Hilary plays this music means it can’t be a cheap thing. So this is the authority she plays it and she has taken responsibility but she shows with her authority as one of the greatest violin stars. This is music I think you should hear and I have practiced, learned and even commissioned. That means something. I think there are a lot of people they come especially for this first performance. It is a thrill, they want to be witness of such a moment. And they will go around and tell, ‘Oh, this violin concerto, I have been at the premiere!’ So, that makes them proud. Of course we have people who are not aware what’s going on that level. They see we have a star, we have a modern concerto fine let’s listen. This is also fine. I don’t think we have people that say, ‘Oh modern music, I don’t want to come.’ That could be the case without Hilary. But with Hilary, I don’t think that there is one single person who would say such a thing. So I think it’s combined very well. The program is good, the timing is good, Hilary, the PR we have made I think it should work.”

MBHW: “If you were to pick just a handful of moments in the piece that you’re most worried about for the performance, what would they be and why? I know that mainly the rehearsals seem to have been making, as we were talking about, the subtle changes in the balance situations, but are there any specific moments like that that you’re most worried about or perhaps rhythmical issues?”

MV: “I’m if I’m worried and I’m not really worried. Let’s say, where I will very much focus on is in the last movement with these little tempo changes. If you’re not totally precise with her it does not give this, the dance character. It’s too difficult for the violin that she can stop or hold back so there I have to really be aware. It’s quite tough for the conductor because when you hear her note, you are too late. You have in a way to anticipate without dragging her or without pushing her. Because the orchestra needs a little bit more time to react. So you have to be a little bit even ahead. That could cause that the soloist thinks you want to push. So I wanted to give her the impression ‘I don’t push you, I drag you.’ So, therefore we had to find till we feel
both comfortable. But, I will very much focus on that. I will focus a lot of balance but the most focus I will give is on these, what I call the periods. That the music goes, ends, really starts that we build really these smaller forms for to fulfill the full, bigger forms. That will be a focus that I will really try to make. The old people would say, ‘Phrase the piece.’ Because that’s nothing else but phrase, it is like in an Italian opera, ‘Please phrase.’ That will be, but worried, I am not worried. Sometimes I am worried because my view is so bad. I hope I can see all of the notes.”

MBHW: “You didn’t seem to be having any trouble with that today.”

MV: “You never know. Every concert is a risk.”

MBHW: “Well, I know that you have…”

MV: “You are a violin player?”

MBHW: “I am indeed.”

MV: “What are you playing at the moment?”

MBHW: “Soloistically, the next piece I’m playing is the Lou Harrison *Concerto for Violin and Percussion Orchestra*. I don’t know if you know it or not?”

MV: “Oh, yah yah.”

MBHW: “Jennifer and I earlier were just talking about how you guys are utilizing some knitting needles in the percussion section, and the group that I’m playing with is doing the same thing.”

MV: “Oh, great!”

MBHW: “I had never heard of that before talking to this particular percussion director and then within two days Jennifer was mentioning using it here, so maybe it’s more common than I
realize. Not being a percussionist I’m not sure if that’s true, but anyway that’s the next piece that I’m working on.”

MV: “Have you played, let’s say, Classical/Modern pieces like the Berg Violin Concerto or Schoenberg Violin Concerto?”

MBHW: “I’ve never played either of those. I’ve read the Berg but I’ve never worked on it. The most recent piece that I’ve played in that area, I guess, is the Prokofiev No. 1. That has some very dense moments to it as well.”

MV: “There are quite a lot of new concertos for the violin now.”

MBHW: “I’m surprised, to be honest, with the size of our repertoire as it is already.”

MV: “There is one big animal in Europe that is Pierre Boulez, he is now writing for years and years and he already has got the money for Anne Sophie Mutter a violin concerto.”

MBHW: “Really? I hadn’t heard that.”

MV: “It should be premiered next year in Salzburg. It was a never finishing project.

MBHW: “I hadn’t heard anything about that. That’s interesting.”

MV: “That’s very interesting. There is a fantastic violin concerto by Kurt Weill. It’s only for winds…winds and violin and I think double bass like, it’s like the Stravinsky for piano, winds and double bass. It’s a great concerto. It’s fantastic.”
APPENDIX B

ISO MEMBERS INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

Louise Alexander (Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra 2nd violin), Roger Roe (ISO acting principal oboe), Sheldon Person (ISO viola), Samuel Banks (ISO 2nd bassoon), interview by author, February 5, 2009, The Taste of Tango: 36 E. Washington St, Indianapolis, IN.

Text appearing after “LA” spoken by Louise Alexander
Text appearing after “RR” spoken by Roger Roe
Text appearing after “SP” spoken by Sheldon Person
Text appearing after “SB” spoken by Samuel Banks
Text appearing after “MBHW” spoken by M. Brent H. Williams

RR: The comments were removed by request of the speaker (Roger Roe) on 4/22/10

MBHW: “Well sort of. Since there are more of you here and this isn’t a one-on-one situation, I was going to treat this more as just kind of a conversation where I’ll throw some topics out and, you know just have you guys answer them, obviously to me but also amongst yourselves. In other words, I don’t have nearly as detailed a script as I did for the other interviews or will have for the other interviews in the case of future endeavors. So, if you don’t mind, to start off we’ll start by talking about what, I guess, experiences you have had with her music in the past, if any, and how you think those works are related in any way to the current Concerto. And you’ll have to excuse me. This isn’t a very wide pan so I’m going to have to like turn it as we go, so I apologize, but anyway, who wants to start off?”

RR: The comments were removed by request of the speaker (Roger Roe) on 4/22/10

SB: The comments were removed by request of the speaker (Samuel Banks) on 4/21/10

RR: The comments were removed by request of the speaker (Roger Roe) on 4/22/10
MBHW: “Exactly. How do they relate at least in your . . . .”

RR: The comments were removed by request of the speaker (Roger Roe) on 4/22/10

LA: “Yea, did she write it for Hillary?”

MBHW: “That’s very astute. Yea, that’s one of the big things we talked about yesterday; it was that really the specific inspiration for the work was to make a major showpiece for her.”

RR: The comments were removed by request of the speaker (Roger Roe) on 4/22/10

MBHW: “I asked her that very question. I asked her if she was worried about it being accessible, if she was in a way kind of stifling the longevity of the work by making it so difficult because Hilary is clearly not human and there are lots of things that, you know, that I can’t—I don’t want to speak for you—but . . . .”

LA: “Exactly. Alien, I would agree.”

RR: The comments were removed by request of the speaker (Roger Roe) on 4/22/10

MBHW: “Yes.”

RR: The comments were removed by request of the speaker (Roger Roe) on 4/22/10

LA: “Wasn’t the Evelyn Glennie concert Higdon?”

SB: The comments were removed by request of the speaker (Samuel Banks) on 4/21/10

MBHW: “Are there any specific composers that you can think of?”
SB: The comments were removed by request of the speaker (Samuel Banks) on 4/21/10

MBHW: “Any particular movements in the Higdon piece that are more ‘Barbery’ (if that’s a word) than others?”

SB: The comments were removed by request of the speaker (Samuel Banks) on 4/21/10

MBHW: “I agree. In fact, that’s one of the things that she and I talked about was how, when this commission originally came about, she had been listening to Hilary’s recording of that piece and the one that was coupled with the Meyer *Concerto*, I don’t know if you have that disk or not. I agree, I don’t think it is lifted, but I definitely think there was at least some inspiration, based not just on that piece, but on Hilary’s performance of that.”

RR: The comments were removed by request of the speaker (Roger Roe) on 4/22/10

MBHW: “I’ll ask her. I hadn’t really . . . .”

RR: The comments were removed by request of the speaker (Roger Roe) on 4/22/10

SP: “Shostakovitch, Prokofiev, I think as well. Just the textures of sound . . . .”

MBHW: “Are you thinking of the violin concertos—like for Prokofiev, one or two or both?”

SP: “One [for Prokofiev] and the big Shostakovitch *Violin Concerto*; a lot of the furious stuff reminds me of the Shostakovitch, like in the last movement.”

LA: “Have you played her work before?”

SP: “No, I haven’t, so I have to defer on that. I haven’t played anything by her before.”

MBHW: “So you haven’t played anything by her before?”
SP: “No, I haven’t.”

LA: “Sheldon just came.”

MBHW: “Oh. Excellent. Very cool.”

LA: “I agree with everybody else, what they’ve said already. The only thing I think I’ve played of hers is the Percussion Concerto. I wasn’t here for Blue Castle—okay, Blue Cathedral—but I thought the Percussion Concerto was more accessible than the Violin Concerto. I remember thinking it was more tonal, more, I don’t know. But maybe Sam is right about the percussion thing, but to me, it seems very much like Colin Currie, the guy we played the Percussion Concerto with was more flamboyant, more like that kind of thing. This feels more cerebral, but I think that’s due to the fact that you’ve got Hilary playing, which is all kind of . . . .”

RR: The comments were removed by request of the speaker (Roger Roe) on 4/22/10

LA: “No I don’t find it not tonal . . .”

SP: “It’s less melodic than the Barber.”

LA: “Yeah. No, I’m not saying that it’s not tonal, but my recollection of the Percussion Concerto is more that an audience member, a layperson that didn’t listen to a lot of modern music would find it more pleasing, whereas the Violin Concerto, an audience member who hasn’t heard her works before, I’m not quite sure what they will make of it.”

MBHW: “That was going to be one of the questions I was going to ask. How do you anticipate that this audience, since you know your patrons much better than I, how do you expect them to react to this work, perhaps in comparison to her other works that have been here or maybe just generally speaking how are they going to take it in? Are they going to walk away and realize what happened, or do you think that . . . ?”
LA: “We have weird—I can never tell what they are going to be into. Sometimes we play something that I think they will really enjoy, and it’s like, you know [imitates mild applause], and sometimes we play stuff that I’m wondering what it’s going to be like and they go crazy at the end. I think it’s more likely that they are going to really be into it, personally.”

SB: The comments were removed by request of the speaker (Samuel Banks) on 4/21/10

RR: The comments were removed by request of the speaker (Roger Roe) on 4/22/10

LA: “Even if they don’t really get the piece.”

RR: The comments were removed by request of the speaker (Roger Roe) on 4/22/10

LA: “I hope we have a good audience. I haven’t heard anything about ticket sales.”

RR: The comments were removed by request of the speaker (Roger Roe) on 4/22/10

LA: “Yeah.”

MBHW: “I’ve actually heard that your earlier Saturday time tends to be the more popular.”

LA: “Yeah, people really like it.”

MBHW: “This is the first orchestra I’ve ever known that has had a performance this early in the day that wasn’t on a Sunday.”

LA: “Our audiences like it because they can go out to dinner afterwards. They don’t necessarily like driving downtown at night because everybody lives where your sister lives—in Chicago, so far in the north country . . .”
MBHW: “Well, what—this is just kind of a general question for whoever wants to answer it first. What specific difficulties do you anticipate for tonight, in regards to the work, whether it be balance or rhythmical, or what?”

LA (With others): “All of the above. All of that.”

SP: “That was it. Next question? Those are the two challenges.”

MBHW: “Specifically, where do you think the balance issue really crops up the most, or rhythmically, where do you think you guys are having the most trouble locking in together? I mean, I think I know the answer, but I’d still want to . . . .”

LA: “The last movement; it’s going to be an edge-of-our seats definite type of situation. And unfortunately balance. I feel like the strings, whenever she’s low and we’re marked pianissimo, we’re just not playing . . . It’s so, it’s like—you know, Mario just has to stand up there and yell for like five minutes before we will actually play really quietly and that’s weird because this orchestra usually isn’t—I mean, if we are told, we usually quiet down.”

RR: The comments were removed by request of the speaker (Roger Roe) on 4/22/10

LA: “But we’re doing the same thing with Schumann. We’re covering Zach in the solo, I can’t hear a single note that he’s playing. I don’t understand why we rehearsed it yesterday, it was beautiful and we were playing super quiet, but today in the dress we were playing loud again. That’s not my perception that we don’t normally…I know he told us to play pianissimo, but . . .”

RR: The comments were removed by request of the speaker (Roger Roe) on 4/22/10

LA: “We had a really bloody dress rehearsal this morning to with the Schumann. Not on the Higdon.”

RR: The comments were removed by request of the speaker (Roger Roe) on 4/22/10
LA: “Those are the two real problems, I think, definitely. I think we’re covering her. And then rhythmically, it’s like… My personal take on it actually is that because it is new to her, normally what happens when a soloist comes in, they just lay it down. They are so comfortable with it, and it’s so there that we just follow them, and because it’s so there, they can, they have a little more latitude. Whereas, for Hilary, because it’s new to her, she needs us to be with her exactly. If there’s any kind of like jiggle, it’s very jarring for her. So that’s my sense of why it feels like that. Although I could be wrong; it could be just that we’re not following her or we’re playing too loud or Mario is not conducting well, I don’t know.”

RR: The comments were removed by request of the speaker (Roger Roe) on 4/22/10

SB: The comments were removed by request of the speaker (Samuel Banks) on 4/21/10

MBHW: “Do you agree with Louise that she, just because this is such a new work, that she perhaps lacks a little bit of flexibility on her part?”

SB: The comments were removed by request of the speaker (Samuel Banks) on 4/21/10

LA: “She’s also learned her part in a way that sometimes she’s moving forward, which is great, except, like Sam said, when there is eighty-seven of us on stage there is. . . . Maybe I’m wrong.”

SB: The comments were removed by request of the speaker (Samuel Banks) on 4/21/10

MBHW: “There are a number of orchestras actually that are picking it up.”

LA: “With her, right?”

MBHW: “Yeah. Yeah, yeah, absolutely.” [Chuckles]

SB: The comments were removed by request of the speaker (Samuel Banks) on 4/21/10
MBHW: “I was going to wait for this question to the end, but I know you [motioning to Sam] have to go. What is your overall impression of the work?”

SB: The comments were removed by request of the speaker (Samuel Banks) on 4/21/10

MBHW: “At least one of those three is her most popular work.”

SB: The comments were removed by request of the speaker (Samuel Banks) on 4/21/10

MBHW: “Do you feel like her bassoon parts are idiomatic or not?”

SB: The comments were removed by request of the speaker (Samuel Banks) on 4/21/10

MBHW: “So while we’re on the subject, we might as well continue with the overall impression question.”

RR: The comments were removed by request of the speaker (Roger Roe) on 4/22/10

MBHW: “So how idiomatic would you say that her part for you in this case is?”

RR: The comments were removed by request of the speaker (Roger Roe) on 4/22/10

MBHW: “When you look at each individual part and especially when you look at the whole score, it just looks like a study in rhythms. Just on a … visually speaking, it’s very etude-like. Like you were saying, it’s hard to imagine how you can be as precise as you need to be and still be melodic, but you guys are doing a fantastic job.”

RR: The comments were removed by request of the speaker (Roger Roe) on 4/22/10

LA: “And vice versa.”
RR: The comments were removed by request of the speaker (Roger Roe) on 4/22/10

LA: “What does Higdon play?”

MBHW: “The flute. That brings the string players into the mix. First of all, overall impression, and how idiomatic is her writing for strings?”

SP: “It’s good. It’s very idiomatic. It’s easy to play and I find the part, there’s nothing too challenging to the part at all. As far as 21st-century writing goes, it’s pretty conservative. There’s nothing in the cracks, and there’s nothing rhythmically crazy. Personally, I think playing a Bartók violin concerto is much more challenging. It seems well-organized and well-thought-through. It seems like she’s in control of her writing—to her credit. New composers often don’t really know what they want and things get so complicated that the effect that they’re looking for becomes obscured in the complexity of what’s happening. Idiomatic, it’s great. As far as my overall impression of the piece, I’m not yet quite as enthusiastic as Sam. I feel like today was the best it’s been all week. I’m hoping it will be better again tonight. But I feel like the problem with any new piece is finding the soul of it so that you can play music and not just execute what’s on the page.”

MBHW: “Do you think as an orchestra that you’re starting to get that aspect figured out?”

SP: “Yeah. Just to go back one question. I think one of the problems we’ve had this week is that the two artistic leaders on the program have very different personalities artistically—my impression is that they are very diametrically opposed, the way that the artistic left-brain stuff and the right-brain stuff are, in regards to the technical execution, sort of the yin and yang, and there’s been some tension in that respect. That’s been, that’s contributed to the sense of not-togetherness that we’ve had so far, but I think it’s starting to smooth itself out.”

MBHW: “Do you think they’re kind of finding a middle ground perhaps?”
SP: “I think they have to. For it to work at all, they have to. But I think that’s independent of the piece, and I think we might have the same problem if we were playing the Brahms Concerto. I can’t say for sure, but that’s my instinct.”

LA: “It would be less of a problem with a Brahms Concerto. We all know where—we could follow Hilary without her part for the Brahms Concerto. We could just be with her. We already know the part. It’s in our heads. We’d know where time is taken; we know where soloists want to speed up. All of it is already in us. I think the orchestra, it was better today, but I think we’ve been suffering because of this push and pull between them. It makes it hard for us, not that Mario hasn’t been with her.”

MBHW: “On a related note, the battery in her metronome actually died today, and she had to borrow Jennifer’s for the rest of the afternoon.”

LA: “So she’s still using the metronome today. That makes it even worse for Mario because he’s absolutely not metronomic.”

MBHW: “Maybe I shouldn’t have said that.”

SP: The first part of this quote was removed by request of the speaker (Sheldon Person) on 5/18/10. “I thought today was the most captivating performance that we’ve had. To me, it felt like there was a musical statement that’s starting to take shape. Hopefully, tonight we’ll take another step in the right direction.”

MBHW: “Was there any specific banter you caught between Hilary and Mario?”

LA: “Yes, yes. [everyone laughs] I wouldn’t call it banter.”
SP: “I’m not sure if I should say this.”

MBHW: “And you don’t have to. I couldn’t hear it, but I assume it was for public consumption. It was just out of earshot.”

SP: “I think this is also independent of the piece. I think this is a part of our working through as musicians and sometimes personalities click together instantly and sometimes things are a little lumpy. There are days like that and it’s like that in chamber music and in orchestras. Sometimes things click instantly, and sometimes you have different processes.”

MBHW: “Part of the reason why I’m so interested in this is because they’ve worked together before . . . .”

LA: “Did he do the Sibelius with us, with her?”

SP: “No, Larry did that.”

LA: “Oh okay. I couldn’t remember. But they have worked together before?”

MBHW: “She toured in Europe; they did some tour with some orchestras.”

SP: “He accompanied her for the Beethoven.”

MBHW: “Maybe; I’m not really sure.”

LA: “So that must have been a positive that she came here to work with him again. If she hated him, she would have said ‘no’.”

MBHW: “Exactly. She would have re-routed the premiere, I’m sure.”

RR: The comments were removed by request of the speaker (Roger Roe) on 4/22/10
LA: “She was really mad this week.”

RR: The comments were removed by request of the speaker (Roger Roe) on 4/22/10

LA: “And balance also.”

RR: The comments were removed by request of the speaker (Roger Roe) on 4/22/10

LA: “Which sounds great. But, to us, it feels like it’s pushing. Remember at the end of the 3rd movement, Mario said to the brass—remember we rehearsed that again and again, the end of the last movement, and the trumpets were behind; and so, to us it felt like she was speeding up. I don’t know if you actually had the metronome on or not; she probably wasn’t but, to us, it felt like she was. I haven’t practiced that part with the metronome, so I couldn’t tell you. Then Mario said, we’re moving forward for these two bars, and it fell together fine. But that goes back to what I was saying before. It’s not a piece she’s familiar with. To me, it seems like if she was playing Tchaik, there would be more of a give-and-take with the orchestra, but I think just because she’s got so much to play, she’s got it organized in a certain way and if we’re not under her supporting—I even wonder if that’s why she was making so many mistakes on previous days is because she was getting frustrated that we weren’t rhythmically under her exactly, right with her, and it jostled her, and then she screwed up.”

SP: The comments were removed by request of the speaker (Sheldon Person) on 5/18/10.

LA: “And then you can imagine for her, because she certainly seems a perfectionist, you would imagine that probably would make her really upset. I couldn’t tell if she was upset with us or with herself for missing stuff.”

MBHW: “I would definitely say her overall demeanor has improved over the week. The first rehearsal I came to, she did not look happy.”
LA: “Were you here on Tuesday?”

MBHW: “No, I couldn’t come on Tuesday. Wednesday was the first day I was here.”

RR: The comments were removed by request of the speaker (Roger Roe) on 4/22/10

LA: “We had a nice rehearsal on Tuesday together.”

MBHW: “Wednesday was the first day I was here, and she didn’t look very pleased.”

LA: “She wasn’t happy.”

MBHW: “And part of it I thought was just because, you know, obviously she was concentrating to an amazing level, and she still was using her music at that point, but she was incredibly stoic though, and she seems to have loosened up in a lot of ways. Obviously, losing the music helped. She’s moving more now—not to a Joshua Bell-level or anything, thankfully—but she seems to be loosening up a bit more. But, yea, when I first got here, I was . . . .”

LA: “She was like a statue.”

RR: The comments were removed by request of the speaker (Roger Roe) on 4/22/10

SP: The comments were removed by request of the speaker (Sheldon Person) on 5/18/10.

MBHW: “Did you feel like there was some tension between her and you guys?”

SP: “Not to overstate the fact.” The middle part of this quote was removed by request of the speaker (Sheldon Person) on 5/18/10. “This was not some sort of high drama.”

LA: “Do you feel like she had tension with the orchestra or just with Mario?”
SP: The comments were removed by request of the speaker (Sheldon Person) on 5/18/10.

LA: “Than yelling at us? She can’t yell at us.”

SP: The comments were removed by request of the speaker (Sheldon Person) on 5/18/10.

RR: The comments were removed by request of the speaker (Roger Roe) on 4/22/10

LA: “Except that this is so much more difficult, because her part is so hard and she’s up there all by herself playing the hardest part. When we do a modern piece together as an orchestra, it’s like, it’s fine. We learn it together, and if we were playing a Higdon orchestra piece, it wouldn’t be like this. But the fact that there’s the tension of what she’s doing and we’re trying to fit in with her, you know I think that . . . .”

RR: The comments were removed by request of the speaker (Roger Roe) on 4/22/10

LA: “If it had like a keyboard touch, that kind of thing? You know an orchestra doesn’t play like that.”

RR: The comments were removed by request of the speaker (Roger Roe) on 4/22/10

MBHW: “I definitely know that they had a reading session with the Curtis Orchestra a while back, but it was just one reading; it was like a 5-6 hour event; but, beyond that, perhaps she has been practicing with a pianist.”

RR: The comments were removed by request of the speaker (Roger Roe) on 4/22/10

SP: “Also, I think she has a certain professional and artistic ownership of this piece. I don’t know whether or not she’s had pieces written for her before of this magnitude, but I think there’s a sense that this is her piece, and there’s a sense of responsibility; but also, her professional reputation is sort of tied up in this work in a way that it’s not with the Tchaikovsky Concerto.”
MBHW: “I totally agree.”

SP: “So I think there’s a sense of anxiety going into that, wanting to get it right because if it’s not, then this is the piece—it’s not that this is my interpretation of the piece. It’s sort of a sense that this is a definitive moment.”

MBHW: “And in a way it is.”

SP: “I can understand that. I can sympathize with that to a degree, and her anxiety.”

RR: The comments were removed by request of the speaker (Roger Roe) on 4/22/10

MBHW: “Have you guys ever had works that were written for you and you feel a similar sense of ownership to it?”

LA: “We had—I can’t remember what it was called—it was written by an older black guy from IU—David Baker.”

RR: The comments were removed by request of the speaker (Roger Roe) on 4/22/10

LA: “I think we did feel a sense of responsibility. It was an exciting project. It wasn’t as difficult technically as this, I don’t think.”

RR: The comments were removed by request of the speaker (Roger Roe) on 4/22/10

LA: “But it’s always exciting to have something written for you, and you’re the first people to play it. We have another world premiere of Gabriela Lena Frank that we commissioned. I think this month—it’s sold out.”

MBHW: “I saw that on your website. She’s Peruvian?”
MBHW: “Even if the orchestral parts weren’t necessarily written specifically for you guys, in a way, do you still feel some ownership to this piece because you’re part of the premiere itself; I mean, to a lesser degree presumably than Hilary, but do you feel a similar kind of ownership?”

LA: “But we weren’t the sole commissioner for the piece, right?”

MBHW: “No, no, it’s been co-commissioned by a handful of other orchestras; but, like I said, I’m not even sure exactly how the timeline works out in regards to when the orchestral parts were written versus when you guys took the lead in the commissioning end of things I’m not really sure what the order of operations there was, but do you [Louise] feel a similar sense of ownership?”

LA: “I wouldn’t say ownership. That doesn’t really resonate with me, mostly just because I know that next week, the week after, this year, it’s going to be played by a whole bunch of different orchestras . . . .”

MBHW: “Well, maybe responsibility might be a better word.”

LA: “Yea, that’s a better word for me. I feel like Hilary feels a sense of ownership for the piece, and I do feel like we have a responsibility, but the responsibility partly has been created by what’s gone on between Mario and Hilary too—that she’s brought a certain attitude to the stage, he’s brought a certain attitude to the stage this week, and that instills in us that the people in front of us really want this to be phenomenal. So then we feel a greater sense of responsibility. It could have just been like any other piece, really, where we wouldn’t have been sitting around talking about it. But even if it was a world premiere, if Mario was really not into the piece or we had a violin soloist who was kind of blasé about it, then I think everybody would be ‘Oh, cool,
we’re doing a world premiere,’ but there wouldn’t be this ‘I hope this goes really well tonight.’ I think most of the orchestra feels like, like it’s a little scary, and we’re hoping that it clicks and it does really come off.”

SP: “Has there been any talk in the works of her wanting to record it?”

MBHW: “Yes, in fact, I think she told me—I don’t know if it’s set in stone—but in May, they are tossing around the idea of recording it with, um, I want to say the Royal Liverpool Orchestra…?”

LA: “The Liverpool Philharmonic.”

MBHW: “Maybe. And that’s one of the things that was erased from my interview with her, so I’ll have to ask her that question again to clarify, but I’m pretty sure that’s what she’d said. Maybe they are just in the midst of talks; it may not in fact happen with that orchestra, who knows. Also, she has a relationship with Telarc, so they are the ones pushing to make the project happen. But yes, hopefully by the end of this semester even, there probably will be some recording of it.”

SP: “Not with us.”

MBHW: “Maybe so, you never know?”

LA: “Oh, I think we know.”

MBHW: “It’s still possible; I have no idea.”

LA: “That would change the sense of ownership. If we were like, we’re doing the world premiere and we’re recording it and this is going to be pressed as a live recording . . . .”

RR: The comments were removed by request of the speaker (Roger Roe) on 4/22/10
MBHW: “Did that fall through, the Carnegie project?”

RR: The comments were removed by request of the speaker (Roger Roe) on 4/22/10

MBHW: “You guys sort of alluded to the fact that there was a lot of rehearsal time spent with this work, and I know you’ve clearly rehearsed this concerto more than a standard concerto, but compared to other brand-new works you guys have played before, how does it compare, in terms of rehearsal time?”

LA: “A lot more rehearsal time.”

MBHW: “More than even those works?”

RR: The comments were removed by request of the speaker (Roger Roe) on 4/22/10

LA: “Because Hilary, not only was she demanding, but she’s also like a really big name, so I mean we don’t want to have a situation where Hilary is here, and we look like idiots to Hilary.”

RR: The comments were removed by request of the speaker (Roger Roe) on 4/22/10

LA: “Which is why we had to play through the Schumann twice.”

RR: The comments were removed by request of the speaker (Roger Roe) on 4/22/10

LA: “He’s crazy about the Schumann piece. It’s ridiculous, he just wants to play it again and again.”

MBHW: “It’s one of his signature works.”
LA: “Apparently. I put that together in the dress rehearsal when we played through the whole piece and—no, he stopped us in the first movement—and said: ‘This is not acceptable. This is totally unacceptable.’ I thought it sounded pretty good.”

RR: The comments were removed by request of the speaker (Roger Roe) on 4/22/10

LA: “I didn’t realize you guys had that trio the whole time, that’s awesome.”

RR: The comments were removed by request of the speaker (Roger Roe) on 4/22/10

LA: “We have two very separate things.”

RR: The comments were removed by request of the speaker (Roger Roe) on 4/22/10

MBHW: “Thank you guys so much.”

LA: “Thank you.”

MBHW: “I’ve enjoyed the conversation.”
BIBLIOGRAPHY

Books


Dissertations/Theses


Periodicals

Anthony, Michael. “Composing an ode to the oboe; Prolific composer Jennifer Higdon muses on writing her latest concerto, a premiere by the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra.” *Star Tribune* (Minneapolis, MN), September 24, 2005, Metro Edition.


**Internet Sites**


Finch, Hilary. “RLPO/Petrenko at Philharmonic Hall, Liverpool: Jennifer Higdon’s music is accessible but, as the British premiere of her Violin Concerto showed, it’s not exactly easy.” *Times Online* (London, UK), June 1, 2009. 
http://entertainment.timesonline.co.uk/tol/arts_and_entertainment/music/live_reviews/article6400069.ece (accessed July 3, 2009).


Scores


Live Performances and Rehearsals

Hahn, Hilary (violin soloist), Marin Alsop (conductor), Baltimore Symphony Orchestra. *Marin Alsop and Hilary Hahn*. June 6, 2009, The Music Center at Strathmore, North Bethesda, MD.

Hahn, Hilary (violin soloist), Marin Alsop (conductor), Baltimore Symphony Orchestra. *Marin Alsop and Hilary Hahn*. June 7, 2009, Joseph Meyerhoff Symphony Hall, Baltimore, MD.

Hahn, Hilary (violin soloist), Mario Venzago (conductor), Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra. *Lilly Classical Series/Program Eleven*. February 6, 2009, Hilbert Circle Theatre, Indianapolis, IN.

Hahn, Hilary (violin soloist), Mario Venzago (conductor), Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra. *Lilly Classical Series/Program Eleven*. February 7, 2009, Hilbert Circle Theatre, Indianapolis, IN.

Hahn, Hilary (violin soloist), Mario Venzago (conductor), Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra. *Orchestra Rehearsal*. February 3, 2009, Hilbert Circle Theatre, Indianapolis, IN.

Hahn, Hilary (violin soloist), Mario Venzago (conductor), Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra. *Orchestra Rehearsal*. February 4, 2009, Hilbert Circle Theatre, Indianapolis, IN.

Hahn, Hilary (violin soloist), Mario Venzago (conductor), Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra. *Orchestra Rehearsal*. February 5, 2009, Hilbert Circle Theatre, Indianapolis, IN.

Hahn, Hilary (violin soloist), Mario Venzago (conductor), Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra. *Orchestra Rehearsal*. February 6, 2009, Hilbert Circle Theatre, Indianapolis, IN.

Hahn, Hilary (violin soloist) and Valentina Lisitsa (piano). *Thomasville Entertainment Foundation Concert*. February 17, 2009, Thomasville Cultural Center Auditorium, Thomasville, GA.
Recordings


Hahn, Hilary (violin) with the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra, Mario Venzago (conductor), and Jennifer Higdon (composer). *Violin Concerto: Premiere Performance Recording*. Indianapolis, IN: Hilbert Circle Theatre, 6 February 2008.


Koh, Jennifer (violin), Reiko Uchida (piano), Jennifer Higdon (composer), Carl Ruggles (composer), Lou Harrison (composer), and John Adams (composer). *String Poetic: a 21st century perspective*. Cedille Records CDR 90000 103, 2008.

Meyers, Anne Akiko (violin), Alisa Weilerstein (cello), Adam Neiman (piano), Nicholas Kitchen and Melissa Kleinbart (violins), Hsin-Yun Huang (viola), Wilhelmina Smith (cello), The Cypress String Quartet: Cecily Ward and Tom Stone (violins), Ethan Filner (viola), Jennifer Kloetzel (cello), and Jennifer Higdon (composer). *Higdon: Chamber Music*. Naxos 8.559298, 2006.

Liner Notes and Program Notes


Hahn, Hilary (violin soloist), Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, Marin Alsop (conductor). *Marin Alsop and Hilary Hahn Concert Program*. Music Center at Strathmore, North Bethesda, MD, June 6, 2009.

Hahn, Hilary (violin soloist), Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra, Mario Venzago (conductor). *Lilly Classical Series/Program Eleven Concert Program*. Hilbert Circle Theatre, Indianapolis, IN, February 6, 2009.

Hahn, Hilary (violin) and Valentina Lisitsa (piano). *Thomasville Entertainment Foundation Concert Program*. Thomasville Cultural Center Auditorium, Thomasville, GA, February 17, 2009.

**Interviews**

Alexander, Louise (Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra 2nd violin); Roe, Roger (ISO acting principal oboe); Person, Sheldon (ISO viola); Banks, Samuel (ISO 2nd bassoon). Interview with Author at The Taste of Tango: 36 E. Washington St., Indianapolis, Indiana (5 February 2009).

Hahn, Hilary. Phone interview by author. February 7, 2009, Indianapolis, IN/Fishers, IN.

Hahn, Hilary. Interview by author. June 6, 2009, The Music Center at Strathmore dressing room, North Bethesda, MD.

Hahn, Hilary. Interview by author. June 7, 2009, Joseph Meyerhoff Symphony Hall dressing room, Baltimore, MD.

Higdon, Jennifer. Interview by author. February 5, 2009, Omni Severin Hotel lobby: 40 West Jackson Place, Indianapolis, IN.


Venzago, Mario. Interview by author. February 4, 2009, Hilbert Circle Theatre office, Indianapolis, IN.

**Email Correspondence**

Egelhofer, James. E-mail message to author. May 19, 2010.

Higdon, Jennifer. E-mail message to author. February 10, 2009.

Higdon, Jennifer. E-mail message to author. August 20, 2009.

Higdon, Jennifer. E-mail message to author. September 22, 2009.

Higdon, Jennifer. E-mail message to author. April 19, 2010.
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Max Brenton Harkey Williams (M. Brent Williams) has enjoyed a varied career as a soloist and chamber musician in seven different countries and as a member of sixteen professional, four festival, and three collegiate symphony orchestras. He is currently the Assistant Concertmaster of the Tallahassee Symphony Orchestra (FL) and Principal Second Violin of the Valdosta Symphony Orchestra (GA) all the while completing his DMA in violin performance (4/10) as well as the “Music of the Americas” graduate certificate (5/08) at The Florida State University. Williams has performed concerti with Sinfonia Gulf Coast (FL), the Opera Teatro di Lucca Chamber Orchestra (Lucca, Italy), Albany Symphony Orchestra (GA) and Valdosta State University Percussion Ensemble (GA) and is scheduled to perform Mozart’s Sinfonia Concertante with the Valdosta Symphony Orchestra (GA) in the fall of 2010 in addition to becoming the concertmaster of the Albany Symphony Orchestra (GA). He received his MM in 2002 from FSU as a teaching assistant/assistant to the director of the chamber music program and his BMA from the University of Oklahoma (1998) where he was a recipient of the Doris Bratton Scholar Award, Gail Boyd de Stwolinski Award and OU Scholars Award.

A dedicated chamber musician, Williams’s current ensemble, enhakē, was the Grand Prize Winner of the Yellow Springs Chamber Music Competition (2009), First Prize Winner of the International Chamber Music Ensemble Competition (2008), received the Judges’ Special Recognition Prize at the Plowman Chamber Music Competition (2008), was awarded the James and Lola Faust Chamber Music Scholarship (2009), was a semi-finalist at the Concert Artists Guild Competition (2009) and also received the American Composers Forum’s Encore grant in addition to multiple Musical Associate Grants from FSU. With enhakē, Williams has held residencies at the OK Mozart festival (2008-present), Texas A & M University, University of Costa Rica, Bach Institute of Music (San Jose), National Superior Institute of Music (Moravia) and Mesa State College in addition to performances on the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill Newman Series, Appleton Museum Chamber Series (Ocala, FL) and Friday Musicale concert series (Jacksonville, FL). enhakē performed the ICMEC Winners’ concert at Carnegie Hall’s Weill Recital Hall (2008) and will return 3 May 2010 to perform a recital entitled “American Portrait” which will include the premiere of Libby Larsen’s Rodeo Reina del Cielo—a piece written for the group. Upcoming season highlights include: a performance at the Seoul
Arts Center (South Korea) as part of the Pan-Music Festival, a tour of Brazil (Rio de Janeiro and Porto Alegre) as well as concerts across the United States. As the chamber group in residence for the Tallahassee Youth Orchestras, they regularly conduct educational outreach programs to various secondary schools in the Tallahassee area and have commissioned new works from noted composers: Edward Knight, Steve Hicken, and Sy Brandon.

Williams’ principal teachers have included: Beth Newdome, Dr. Gary Kosloski, Byron Tauchi, Michael Ma, Dr. Janna Lower, Wayne Crouse, Eliot Chapo, and Chris Wu in addition to having received coachings from Donald Weillerstein, Charles Castleman, Fred Sherry, Stanley Ritchie, Janet Sung, Sally O’Reilly, and Margo Garrett.

He has been a lecturer of Violin and World Music at Valdosta State University (GA) since 2008 where he performs with the Azalea String Quartet (faculty ensemble) and is the director/founder of VSU’s Pan-American Ensemble (the university’s first, full-fledged world music ensemble). He has also been on the faculties of the Chapel Hill Chamber Music Workshop (NC), Blue Lake Fine Arts Camp (MI) and Florida State University Summer Music Camp in addition to being the former Director of the Tallahassee Youth Orchestra Symphonic Strings and Co-Director of TYO’s Fiddlers (FL). Williams’ live performances have appeared on many NPR stations including WBLV (MI) and KRTS (TX) and he has recorded for the Naxos, Koch and Emeritus labels (classically) as well as for Barsuk, Pias America, Alchemist, Nub and Engine Shed records (for non-classical projects).