AN ANALYSIS AND PERFORMANCE CONSIDERATIONS FOR JOHN HARBISON'S CONCERTO FOR OBOE, CLARINET, AND STRINGS

by

KATHERINE BELVIN

(Under the Direction of D. RAY MCCLELLAN)

ABSTRACT

John Harbison is an award-winning and prolific American composer. He has written for almost every conceivable genre of concert performance with styles ranging from jazz to pre-classical forms. The focus of this study, his Concerto for Oboe, Clarinet, and Strings, was premiered in 1985 as a product of a Consortium Commission awarded by the National Endowment of the Arts. The initial discussions for the composition were with oboist Sara Bloom and clarinetist David Shifrin. Harbison's Concerto for Oboe, Clarinet, and Strings allows the clarinet to finally be introduced to the concerto grosso texture of the Baroque period, for which it was born too late.

This document includes biographical information on John Harbison including his life and career, compositional style, and compositional output. It also contains a brief history of the Baroque concerto grosso and how it relates to the Harbison concerto. There is a detailed set-class analysis of each movement and information on performance considerations. The two performers as well as

the composer were interviewed to discuss the commission, premieres, and theoretical/performance considerations for the concerto.

INDEX WORDS: John Harbison, Concerto for Oboe, Clarinet, and Strings, clarinet concerto, oboe concerto, Baroque concerto grosso, analysis and performance

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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my parents, Greg and Mary Ann Danner as well as my husband, Cory. This was all possible because of your support throughout my education. I am so thankful for everything you have done for me.

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I would like to thank my family for their support throughout my education. Thank you to my major professor, D. Ray McClellan, for being my mentor and helping me through this degree. I would like to also thank the rest of my committee members and faculty from the University of Georgia, University of Cincinnati, and Tennessee Technological University. Thank you to John Harbison and David Shifrin for allowing me to interview them and helping me with this dissertation. Special thanks to Sara Bloom for all of her time and effort in the collaboration for this project. I would also like to thank my dad for all of his help with editing and copying the musical examples.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

LIST OF MUSICAL EXAMPLES

Page

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

John Harbison is an award-winning and prolific American composer. He has written for almost every conceivable genre of concert performance with compositions ranging from jazz to pre-classical forms. In the late 1970s Harbison showed his first interest in writing concertos. The first two were his piano and violin concertos, and a decade later he returned to the genre and wrote concertos for viola, oboe, cello, and flute. Harbison also composed his two "concerti grossi" around this time, the Concerto for Double Brass Choir (1988) and the focus of this study, his Concerto for Oboe, Clarinet, and Strings (1985).[1]

Harbison was born in Orange, New Jersey on December 20, 1938. He came from a musical family and was improvising on the piano by age five. By the age of twelve he had started his own jazz band. His earliest musical influences were from jazz and Bach. Together with Stravinsky they have remained his chief musical influences. He has written that the Bach cantatas were as formative to his development as Beethoven quartets are for most musicians.[2] Harbison did his undergraduate work at Harvard University and

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[1] http://www.schirmer.com/Popup.aspx?moduleDefid=100040&ComposerID_0=627, (accessed August 5, 2009).

[2] David St George. "Harbison, John." In *Grove Music Online*. *Oxford Music Online*, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.proxy

earned an MFA from Princeton University. His teachers include Roger Sessions, Walter Piston, Boris Blacher, and Earl Kim. After completing a junior fellowship at Harvard, Harbison joined the faculty of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He has also taught at California Institute of the Arts, Boston University, was a Lecturer in Music at Duke University, and a composer-in-residence at Reed College. At MIT Harbison was named Class of 1949 Professor of Music, the Killian Award Lecturer in 1994, and Institute Professor (the highest academic distinction MIT has to offer to resident faculty) in 1995. He serves as president of the Aaron Copland Fund for Music, furthering the work of younger composers. Harbison's other awards include the Heinz Award for the Arts and Humanities (1998), the Distinguished Composer Award from the American Composer's Orchestra (2002), the Harvard Arts Medal (2000), the American Music Center's Letter of Distinction (2000), the Kennedy Center Friedheim First prize (for his Piano Concerto in 1980), a MacArthur Fellowship (1989), four honorary doctorates, and the Pulitzer Prize (1987).[3]

As a conductor, Harbison has worked with a number of leading orchestras and chamber groups including the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, Scottish Chamber Orchestra, Cantata Singers in Boston, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Boston Symphony, and Emmanuel Music in Boston. He has been a composer-in-residence with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Pittsburg Symphony, Songfest,

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remote.galib.uga.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/47252 (accessed September 24, 2009).

[3] http://www.schirmer.com/Popup.aspx?moduleDefid=100040&ComposerID_0=627, (accessed August 5, 2009).

as well as the Tanglewood, Marlboro, and Santa Fe Chamber Music Festivals, and the American Academy in Rome. Harbison's compositions have been performed by the world's leading ensembles including the Metropolitan Opera, Chicago Lyric Opera, New York Philharmonic, Boston Symphony, Chicago Symphony, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Lincoln Center Chamber Players, and others.[4]

To date Harbison's principal works include four string quartets, five symphonies, his cantata *The Flight Into Egypt* (which earned the Pulitzer Prize in 1987), and three operas (including *The Great Gatsby*, which was commissioned and premiered to great acclaim in 1999 by the Metropolitan Opera).[5] Some of his most frequently played chamber works include the Piano Quintet and the Wind Quintet. Of the concertos the most important is for violin, which was written for his wife and violinist Rose Mary Harbison.[6] Other career highlights include *Four Psalms,* which was written in honor of the 50th Anniversary of the State of Israel, and was premiered by the Chicago Symphony in 1999. *Abraham*, a six-minute work for chorus and orchestra, was performed at the Papal Concert of Reconciliation in the presence of Pope John Paul II in 2004. He has written several works for band or wind ensemble including *Olympic Dances, San Antonio,* and *Three City Blocks.* Harbison has written a large number of works

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[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid.

[6] David St George. "Harbison, John." In *Grove Music Online*. *Oxford Music Online*, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.proxyremote.galib.uga.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/47252 (accessed September 24, 2009).

for chamber ensembles, vocal and choral works, and solo instrumental works. The works that employ solo oboe include his Concerto for Oboe*, Snow Country* (orchestral version), and *Amazing Grace.* There are no works that employ only solo clarinet. Harbison uses both the oboe and clarinet in many of his smaller chamber works for two to six players.[7]

As Harbison's career has evolved the manner of his musical expression has also changed. The works from his earliest period show the influences of serialism and Stravinskian neo-classicism. Jazz is also influenced his early works, such as the *Duo* for flute and piano. Harbison went through a period of intense serialism before finding his own distinctive voice.[8]

The initial discussions for Harbison's Concerto for Oboe, Clarinet, and Strings were with oboist Sara Bloom and clarinetist David Shifrin, who were part of the commissioning consortium. Sara Bloom (with clarinetist Charles Russo) gave the premiere of the piece in its orchestral form at the New College Music Festival in Sarasota, Florida. David Shifrin (with oboist Allen Vogel) gave the chamber music premiere at the Chamber Music Northwest in Portland, Oregon. Harbison created the chamber version by using a string quintet and no divisi

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[7] http://www.schirmer.com/default.aspx?TabId=2420&State_2874=2&workId_2874=24167 (accessed August 5, 2009).

[8] David St George. "Harbison, John." In *Grove Music Online*. *Oxford Music Online*, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.proxyremote.galib.uga.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/47252 (accessed September 24, 2009).

parts. The subsequent performances of the piece used student soloists as well, which was part of his intention for the piece.[9]

The following descriptions are found in Harbison's program notes for the concerto. Within the concerto the oboe, clarinet, and strings are treated as equal partners. The first movement is declamatory, the second movement is contemplative, and the last is frenetic. As the composer stated "each movement sustains one affect, in the Baroque manner, and it was one of my pleasures to introduce the clarinet, born too late for the heyday of the concerto grosso, into that texture."[10] The first and last movements maintain a high rhythmic intensity throughout. The middle movement is contrasting with a much slower tempo and cadenza-like material alternating between the oboe and clarinet. One astute writer referred to the piece as "scenes from a marriage…this metaphorical marriage between solo winds and strings contains quarrels, precarious balances, comic relief, misunderstandings, and eventual unanimity."[11]

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to provide a context for understanding John Harbison's Concerto for Oboe, Clarinet, and Strings. The study provides

[9]http://www.schirmer.com/default.aspx?TabId=2420&State_2874=2&workId_2874=24167 (accessed August 5, 2009).

[10] Ibid.

[11] Ibid.

biographical information on the composer, the origination of the composition, and analysis and performance considerations for the concerto.

Need for the study

As a composer, John Harbison, is one of America's most distinguished musical figures. Over thirty theses and dissertations have already been written on the composer and his music; however, only two of these focus on his concerto writing with information on both his violin[12] and oboe concertos.[13] This study on his Concerto for Oboe, Clarinet, and Strings will benefit even more musicians by introducing them to a different type of work by Harbison.

This study provides an introduction to Harbison's life and work and the background of this concerto in particular. It also provides a resource for oboe and clarinet players concerning performance issues, as well as aspects of analysis and the history of the concerto grosso form that may benefit other musicians as well. The information on Harbison and the concerto is general enough in nature to have a broad application, but the more detailed performance

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[12] Matheson, James Hollis. "Falling and Gliss, and, Variation Form and Technique in the Music of John Harbison". D.M.A. Diss., Cornell University, 2001. In *Dissertations & Theses: A&I* [database on-line]; available from http://www.proquest.com (publication number AAT 9995157; accessed September 24, 2009).

[13] Fronckowiak, Ann. "The Oboe Concerto of John Harbison: A Guide to Analysis, Performance, and the Collaboration with Oboist, William Bennett". D.M.A. Diss., The Ohio State University, 2006. In *Dissertations & Theses: A&I* [database on-line]; available from http://www.proquest.com (publication number AAT 3238163; accessed September 24, 2009).

and analysis considerations is geared more towards the performer or theorist/composer.

Review of Literature

There are many articles written by and about John Harbison that are currently available. Articles on his wind music include William Davis in the *NACWPI Journal* discussing Harbison's *Quintet for Winds*. Jerome Markoch's '"Analysis: Music for 18 Winds' by John Harbison" was written for the *Journal of Band Research*. On Harbison's life and musical output articles were written by Mike Seabrook in *Tempo,* and Mark Swed in *Chamber Music*. Harbison himself has written four articles. "Facing Rock Reality" and "Symmetries and the 'New Tonality'" were written for the *Contemporary Music Review*. He also gave a series of talks at Tanglewood, which were published in serialized form in two issues of *Perspectives of New Music* in 1985.

There have been many theses and dissertations written about John Harbison and his music, although none treat the Concerto for Oboe, Clarinet, and Strings. Six dissertations included doctoral recitals featuring the performance of a Harbison composition. Other documents include information on many of John Harbison's compositions including his symphonies, piano works, Violin Concerto, *Requiem*, *Mirabai Songs*, *Olympic Dances*, *Three City Blocks*, *The Most Often Used Chords*, *The Great Gatsby*, and *The Flight into Egypt*. The dissertations that also include oboe or clarinet works are: "The Oboe Concerto of John

Harbison: A guide to analysis, performance, and the collaboration with oboist, William Bennett," written by Ann Fronckowiak'[14] "John Harbison's Quintet for Winds," by Ann Marie Dempsey Sargent'[15] and a dissertation by James Hollis Matheson that is divided into two volumes, "Falling and Gliss" and "Variation Form and Technique in the Music of John Harbison," using his *Variations* for violin, clarinet in A, and piano.[16]

Methodology

Information on both John Harbison and his music is available through published texts written by himself and others. Information on his childhood, education, career, and compositions may be found through his publisher, Associated Music Publishers, Inc., and website, www.schirmer.com. The publisher provides a biography, reviews, articles, work lists, upcoming

[14] Fronckowiak, Ann. "The Oboe Concerto of John Harbison: A Guide to Analysis, Performance, and the Collaboration with Oboist, William Bennett". D.M.A. Diss., The Ohio State University, 2006. In *Dissertations & Theses: A&I* [database on-line]; available from http://www.proquest.com (publication number AAT 3238163; accessed September 24, 2009).

[15] Sargent, Ann Marie Dempsey. "John Harbison's Quintet for Winds: An Analysis for Performance". D.M.A. Diss., The University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 2000. In *Dissertations & Theses: A&I* [database on-line]; available from http://www.proquest.com (publication number AAT 9980684; accessed September 24, 2009).

[16] Matheson, James Hollis. "Falling and Gliss, and, Variation Form and Technique in the Music of John Harbison". D.M.A. Diss., Cornell University, 2001. In *Dissertations & Theses: A&I* [database on-line]; available from http://www.proquest.com (publication number AAT 9995157; accessed September 24, 2009).

performances, and links. There is a scholarly article in Oxford Music Online about Harbison's life, career, and compositions. Other online references include http://web.mit.edu/music/facstaff/harbison.html and http://www.classical-composers.org/comp/harbison. Additional published texts include articles written in different music journals and newspapers.

The discussion on analysis deals with the overall form of the composition as well as the harmonic language used. This includes the octatonic, whole tone, hexatonic, and diatonic sets and subsets that are used, and in what way these sets relate to each other. The analytical approach to pitch-class sets and their relationships is based on Joseph N. Straus's, *Introduction to Post-Tonal Theory.* Background information on Baroque music and the concerto grosso was taken from the following sources: *The Concerto* by John Culshaw, *The Baroque Concerto* by Arthur Hutchings, *A History of the Concerto* by Michael Thomas Roeder, and *The Concerto* by Abraham Veinus.

The composer was also asked about the history of the composition and his ideas on analysis. This interview included (but was not limited to) questions regarding the inspiration for the composition, as well as Baroque elements, tonal implications, and his harmonic language for each movement. Performance considerations for the concerto are discussed based on information obtained by interviewing the performers who commissioned the piece, Sarah Bloom (oboe) and David Shifrin (clarinet). These interviews included (but were not limited to) questions on the musical collaboration with Harbison, the initial performances, difficult passages in the music, and contemporary techniques.

Organization

Chapter one of this document contains introductory material including biographical information on John Harbison and his music, purpose of the study, need for the study, literature review, and methodology. More specific information is provided regarding his Concerto for Oboe, Clarinet, and Strings. Chapter two contains information on the history of the concerto grosso including instrumentation, form, and compositional technique/compositions from the Baroque period. Also, the Baroque and concerto grosso elements found in the Harbison concerto. Chapter three focuses on the set-class analytical observations of Harbison's Concerto for Oboe, Clarinet, and Strings. Chapter four includes interviews from the composer and performers, performance considerations, historical significance, suggestions for future research, and conclusions.

CHAPTER 2

A HISTORY OF THE CONCERTO GROSSO AND ITS INFLUENCE ON THE CONCERTO FOR OBOE, CLARINET, AND STRINGS

During the last third of the seventeenth century composers began to experiment with a type of instrumentation that became characteristic of the concerto grosso. The concerto grosso was the first large-scale instrumental form to embody the general principles of concerto writing. The instrumentation of a concerto grosso was such that the orchestra was divided into two unequal choirs of size and strength, each acting as a unit. The concerto grosso, or large concerted unit, is the main orchestral mass. It typically uses the two violin sections, the viola section and the cello-continuo complex, with several players on a part. The concertino, or small concerted unit, is a solo unit with a single performer per part. This is often two violin parts and a continuo part. In each unit the bass complex is called the continuo, using at least a keyboard instrument (harpsichord) for the realization of the figured or unfigured bass, and a melody instrument (cello) for the support of the bass line. These are normal elements found in a concerto grosso by Corelli, although wide variations in the composition of both *grosso* and *concertino* commonly occur.[1] Harbison's Concerto for Oboe, Clarinet, and Strings exhibits the instrumentation found in a concerto grosso with

[1] Abraham Veinus, *The Concerto* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1964), 12-13.

the small unit being the solo oboe and clarinet and the large unit being the string ensemble.

As a musical form the concerto grosso is founded upon the interplay of the two contrasting choirs. This interplay between choirs brought into play a whole new category of orchestral effects. The grosso was a heavier, louder, and more deliberate body of sound, whereas the concertino was lighter, softer and more agile in its sound. The continual shift from choir to choir produced changes in dynamics, weight, and movement.[2] Harbison also uses the two contrasting choirs for different orchestral effects throughout his concerto.

The establishment of the concerto grosso as an important Baroque genre was largely due to the compositions by composers Scarlatti, Torelli, and Corelli. The compositions of Corelli would also act as a model for the future. Arcangelo Corelli (1653-1713) realized his full capability at the time of many significant musical developments. Historian Michael Roeder made the following assessment of his achievement: "In Corelli's case, the full understanding and exploitation of the concertato style, the emerging independence and importance of instrumental music, the pinnacle of violin making, the peaking of the bel canto style, and the maturation of the tonal system—his music is bound to summarize and define an epoch in the history of music."[3] Few Baroque composers were able to focus their attention so single-mindedly on one type of composition as Corelli. His attention to every musical detail may be the reason for his small

[2] Ibid., 13.

[3] Michael Thomas Roeder, *History of the Concerto* (Portland, Oregon: Amadeus Press, 1994), 26.

published output, but these works were of great significance. Corelli's concerto grosso compositions grew out of his application of the concertato principle in the trio sonata. They were issued in six sets: Opus 1, Twelve Trio Sonatas (1681); Opus 2, Eleven Trio Sonatas and one Chaconne (1685); Opus 3, Twelve Trio Sonatas (1689); Opus 4, Twelve Trio Sonatas (1695); Opus 5, Twelve Solo Sonatas and one set of variations on *Follia* (1700); and Opus 6, Twelve Concerti Grossi (1714). When Corelli's concertos are performed with orchestra there are two levels of contrast. The first is between the concertino and the orchestra, and the second is found within the concertino. As in some chamber concertos, the first solo violin dominates the texture, hinting at the future solo concerto.[4] Harbison uses this technique in the second movement of his concerto, giving the violin solo material along with the oboe and clarinet.

The concerto is a dramatic form and its origins are found not in instrumental music but in one of the most dramatic of all musical forms—the operatic aria. The dramatic intensity seen in opera music is also seen in concerto writing. Usually composers intensify the slow movement of a concerto, creating the sense that it is the high point in the composition. Such drama is shown in at least two aspects of the concerto: the element of virtuosity and the element of contrast. The contrast occurs between the strength of one body of sound and another (volume), and between one type of sound and another (tonal distinction). This idea of contrast also occurs in Harbison's concerto with the two choirs playing at different volumes because of their size and different tonal

[4] Ibid.

distinctions because of their instrumentation. These factors of virtuosity and contrast can exist together and also independently of one another. Whatever the type of individual application may be they remain basically dramatic. Some passages do not add to the quality or progression of the musical material, but instead are dramatic interruptions introduced for virtuoso or technical reasons. Virtuosic, figurative displays appear in the concertino, although Corelli more often depended upon the simple contrasts of loud and soft or large and small ensembles.[5]

The clarinet was born too late for the Baroque concerto grosso. The oboe on the other hand, could contribute to the genre in the Baroque period. Acoording to John Culshaw, the Baroque-era writer, Mattheson gave a specific reason for the oboe's significance: "Mattheson describes it in 1713, when Handel was writing magnificent sonatas and concerti for the instrument: The oboe, next to the German flute, resembles most the human voice…" [6] Although oboes had been used in Venetian operas since 1692, Albinoni's concertos of Op. 7 were some of the first for a solo woodwind instrument to be published. The inclusion of concertos for one and two solo oboes was unusual for early-Baroque Italian composers, who often gave the oboe trumpet-like parts because of its trumpet-like timbre. Once it was firmly established in orchestras the oboe functioned like a violin and often doubled the violin parts. Solo passages for the instrument are more sharply defined and no longer used for a decorative effect. Albinoni's early

[5] John Culshaw, *The Concerto* (London: Max Parrish and Co Limited, 1949), 10-12.

[6] Ibid., 99.

solo oboe concertos are in the style of the bel canto vocal idiom with which he was familiar. Instead of the arpeggiated violin style, the oboe parts have step-wise motion and small leaps.[7] The scoring in his concertos is inventive for the Baroque oboe. Another technique in the slow movements of his solo concertos involves pitting the oboe against the first violins in dialogue or placing it atop a richly scored string orchestra to accompany the lyrical melody in the solo instrument. In the finale of Op. 9, No. 3, the two oboes are used like horns in an F Major hunting style, similar to the third movement of Bach's Brandenburg No. 1.

Another well-known composer, Alessandro Marcello, wrote his oboe concerto in D minor and it is closely modeled on Vivaldi's concertos with the writing for oboe more idiomatic. The solo passages are often accompanied only by continuo and in the slow movement a lyrical oboe solo is accompanied by repeated eights on the upper strings, which is similar to Vivaldi's Op. 3, No. 9.[8]

With the composers Vivaldi, Handel, and Bach the concerto grosso reached the peak of its development. Antonio Vivaldi (1678-1741) was born and educated in Venice and became one of the city's leading composers. His instrumental and sacred vocal music was composed for the Ospedale della Pieta, a home for illegitimate and orphaned girls. His job called for a constant supply of new music. Roeder asserts that, "although Vivaldi was also a prolific composer of vocal music, his fame today rests primarily on a small portion of his

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[7] Roeder, *A History of the Concerto,* 43.

[8] Richard Maunder, *The Scoring of Baroque Concertos* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2004), 58-63.

more than 500 concertos."[9] Almost two-thirds of his concertos are for a single solo instrument. 230 were written for violin, 28 for cello, 15 for flute, and 20 for oboe.

Vivaldi followed in the footsteps of composers Torelli and Albinoni in terms of organization of the concerto. Dramatic intensity, rhythmic vitality, varied texture, and spontaneous-sounding melodic ideas are distinctive qualities in Vivaldi's concertos. Most of his concertos are in the three movement fast-slow-fast structure with a fairly flexible variation of keys between movements. His opening movements are in ritornello form, highlighting the soloist and providing unity through the recurring thematic material in the orchestra. The basic design is an alternation of sections for orchestra alone and sections with the solo voice and orchestral accompaniment. The soloists in Vivaldi's concertos had more significant roles than ever before. The solo instruments play highly decorative passages with light accompaniment contrasted with the thematic tutti sections, which augments the dramatic role of the soloist. Before Albinoni and Vivaldi, the middle movement was short and viewed as a transition between the outer two movements. Drawing from the more dramatic form of opera these Venetian composers intensified the slow movement of the concerto, which was usually not in ritornello form. Instead, many middle movements are built on long, lyrical lines in the manner of an adagio operatic aria. Final movements are usually similar to the opening movements in a Baroque concerto, but lighter, more playful, and usually in a faster tempo. Vivaldi tended to feature the soloists both individually

[9] Roeder, *A History of the Concerto,* 45-46.

and in succession, yet commonly placing more emphasis on the first solo violinist. [10]

George Frideric Handel lived and worked most of his life in England. Most of his concerti grossi are divided into two sets. The first set, Op. 3 consists of six orchestral concertos for winds and strings, also called the Oboe Concertos. The second set is Op. 6 and contains twelve concertos for strings. Handel develops the concerto grosso form by varying the number of movements and styles in which they are cast. His concertos range from two to six movements. As a means of securing instrumental variety, he used the device of varying the concertino-ripieno relationship from movement to movement within a concerto.[11] His relationship between the *ripieno* and *concertino* seems to either broaden or restrict the use of the individual. It is possible then to find movements in Handel's concerti grossi that are in the nature of the solo concerto.[12]

Like the genres of cantata, passion, toccata, chorale, and fugue, the concerto grosso reached its peak of development with Johann Sebastian Bach. His six Brandenburg concertos date from Bach's Coethen period (1717-1723) when he served as conductor of an eighteen-piece orchestra. These concertos exhibit a great variety in instrumentation and inner structure. The First Brandenburg Concerto was scored for two horns, three oboes, bassoon, violino piccolo, two violins, viola, cello, and basso continuo. In the Second Concerto

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[10] Ibid., 48-55.

[11] Veinus, *The Concerto,* 24-26.

[12] Culshaw, *The Concerto,* 16-18.

Bach used a concertino quartet with flute, oboe, violin, and trumpet. His Fourth Concerto was a concertino of two flutes and violin and the Fifth Concerto used a concertino of violin, flute, and harpsichord. The Third and Sixth Brandenburg Concertos were scored entirely for strings, although neither shows the conventional combination of concertino trio and ripieno quartet. Bach manipulated the concertino groupings in all of the concertos in a free manner. He treated the concerto grosso's instrumentation with more systematic variety than his predecessors. The contrasting of instrumental combinations within the choirs became distinctive in the history of the form. With respect to the relationship between the concertino and ripieno choirs, Bach adopted Vivaldi's method of competition between solo instruments rather than Corelli's method of each choir as an indivisible unit.[13]

John Harbison's Concerto for Oboe, Clarinet and Strings shares a number of characteristics with individual Baroque compositions and the concerto grosso genre in general. The three-movement structure and divided instrumentation is directly reminiscent of the Baroque period. Other concerto grosso characteristics include form, rhythm, texture, and style of the composition. As Harbison stated, "it was one of my pleasures to introduce the clarinet, born too late for the heyday of the concerto grosso, into that texture."[14]

The instruments are divided into two unequal choirs, the smaller choir being the oboe and clarinet, and the larger choir being the string ensemble. The

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[13] Veinus, *The Concerto,* 26-31.

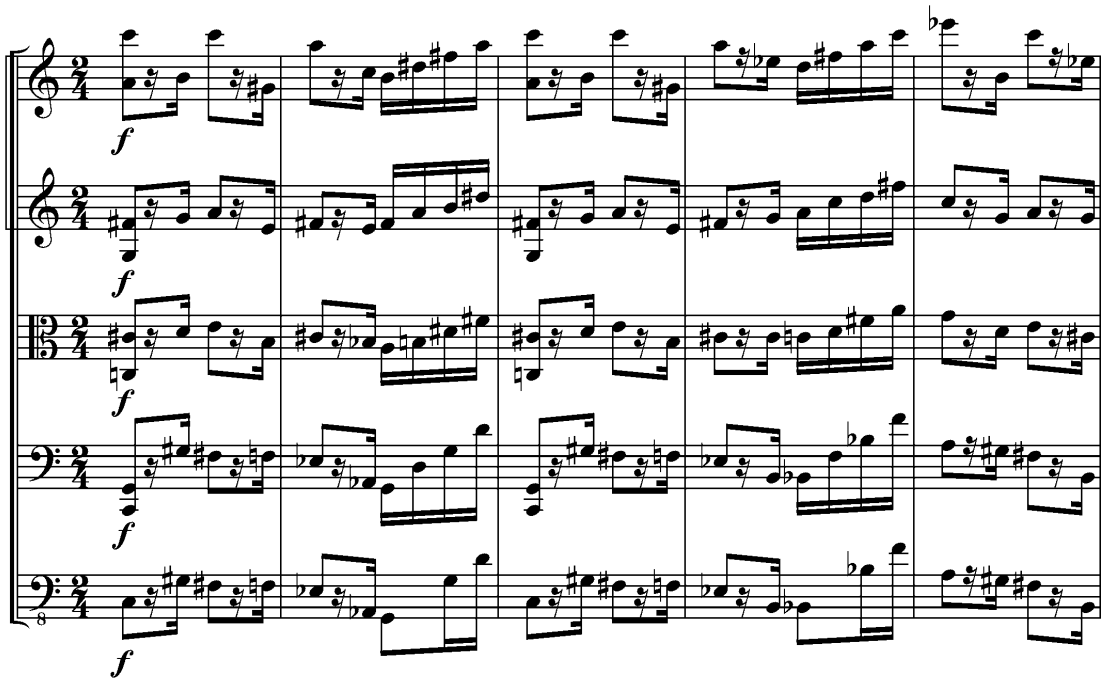
[14]http://www.schirmer.com/default.aspx?TabId=2420&State_2874=2&workId_2874=24167 (accessed August 5, 2009).

smaller unit of the oboe and clarinet are only one to a part, where the larger body of strings is played with several players on a part. The difference from the Baroque instrumentation is that the string section also includes a cello and bass part along with the 2 violins and viola. Like composers Torelli, Albinoni, and Vivaldi, Harbison uses the traditional three movement fast-slow-fast compositional scheme.

Like previous compositions from the Baroque period the opening movement of the Harbison concerto is in Ritornello form. The form was adapted for the instrumental concerto, typically in the first movement. The basic design is an alternation of sections for orchestra alone and sections with solo voice and orchestral accompaniment.[15] In the first movement of the Harbison we see this alteration of sections with the ritornello played by the strings alone and the solo sections for oboe and clarinet with string accompaniment. Traditionally, Ritornello form also has a recurring theme that returns throughout the movement. Although the ritornello in the Harbison does not repeat exactly, the string tutti sections are similar in rhythm and character. The ritornello, which is usually played by the tutti, contains the vigorous, decisive thematic material in the movement.[16] The initial ritornello typically uses simple, precise motives that are triadic or scalar, or a combination of the two. The first four measures of the initial triadic ritornello of the Harbison are seen in Example 1 below. In m. 44 the violins and viola have a B major seventh chord on beat 2 while the cello and bass

[15] Roeder, *A History of the Concerto,* 48-49.

[16] Ibid.



Example 1: First Movement, mm. 43-47

are playing a G major seventh chord. In mm. 46 and 48 the violins and viola have a D major seventh chord on beat 2 while the cello and bass play a B-flat major chord. Vertically looking at mm. 47 and 49 beat 1 is an A half-diminished seventh chord and beat two is an F-sharp half-diminished seventh chord. In m. 50 the violins and viola have a D major seventh chord on beat 1 and a B major seventh chord on beat 2, while the cello and bass have a B-flat chord on beat 1 and a G major chord on beat 2. In mm. 51, 53, and 55 the violins and viola have a C Major augmented chord while the cello and bass have an E-flat major chord. The final string ritornello is similar using some triadic motives. In mm. 206 and 208 the second violin part has a G Major seventh chord without a fifth and the viola has an E diminished triad. In m. 212 the first and second violin parts and the viola part have a B minor seventh chord on beat 1 and a C-sharp minor

seventh chord on beat 2. In the same measure the cello part has a C-sharp minor triad on beat 1 and a D Major triad on beat 2. In m. 224 the upper three string parts have an F-sharp half-diminished seventh chord while the two lower parts have a F-sharp Major triad. The first violin part and the viola part have an F-sharp diminished seventh chord while the second violin part has an A half-diminished seventh chord in m. 225. In m. 232 the first violin part has a F-sharp half-diminshed seventh chord, the second violin part has a F-sharp minor seventh chord, and the viola part has a C Major augmented seventh chord.

Another aspect of the Baroque concerto is the element of virtuosity. Some passages are dramatic interruptions introduced for virtuosic or technical reasons, as opposed to merely harmonic or formal reasons. In the Harbison some of the string sections have this quality of being a virtuosic interruption instead of a continuation of the music. Virtuosic, figurative displays often appear in his concertino, as well as the simple contrasts of loud and soft or large and small ensembles, that were typical of Baroque works.[17] These ideas play out in the Harbison concerto as well. The oboe and clarinet parts contain virtuosic, figurative displays when playing together and separately. For example, the beginning of the first movement starts with the clarinet playing the more virtuosic figure and the oboe playing more of an accompanying role with its figure. The section beginning at m. 104 shows the oboe and clarinet part being partners with the virtuosic figures where the strings are now playing the accompanying role. The pronounced entrance and dynamic markings at each of the string interludes

[17] John Culshaw, *The Concerto,* 10-12.

contrasts from the smaller ensemble and softer dynamics of the oboe and clarinet. This continual shift from choir to choir continues throughout the movement. For example, the opening of the piece begins with the clarinet and oboe playing at a forte volume but when the strings begin in m. 43 the contrast is immediate because of the size, louder dynamic level, and homorhythmic material.

In the first movement of Corelli's Concerto, Op. 6, No. 1 the violins alternate a sixteenth-note arpeggiation figure that also becomes common in later Baroque concertos. There is another example of sixteenth-note figuration in the first movement of his Op. 6, No. 12, including rapid repetitions of one pitch before changing to the other chord tone and also rapid oscillation between two chord tones. At times, one tone will act as a pivot point to other tones throughout a measure.[18] This kind of arpeggiation is also seen somewhat in the string parts of the first movement of the Harbison. The section beginning at m. 43 (see Ex. 1) and another example of arpeggiation is seen in the strings starting at m. 142. These figurations in fast common time became a standard in Baroque concertos. "This feature creates a relentless rhythmic drive, combined with sequences that are often intensified by dissonance, it packs a sense of urgency and emphatic thrust toward major cadence points."[19] This rhythmic pattern became a major characteristic of Italian instrumental music and is an important way that Corelli prefigured the future development of the solo concerto. In the same Corelli

[18] Roeder, *A History of the Concerto,* 28-33.

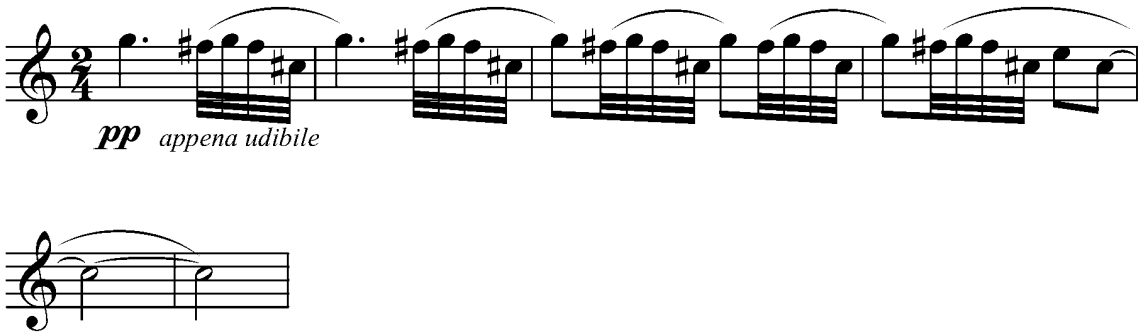
[19] Ibid., 33.

concerti grossi in the final movement the ripieno orchestra never plays the same material as the solo violins, which intensifies the independence of the solo parts.[20] Although Harbison has said that all of the parts are equal, the clarinet and oboe parts are independent from the strings, in that they play material that is similar and the strings do not play that same material throughout the first movement. Harbison uses many of the ideas that Corelli established to become standard characteristics of the mature Baroque concerto style.

During the Baroque period composers experimented with a new major-minor tonal system, which gradually replaced the older modal system. More modern works could be conceived on a larger scale with clearly defined moments by means of tonality.[21] Because of the complex harmony in the Harbison concerto it is difficult to always hear an underlying pitch center. However, there are some brief sections in this movement in which a pitch center is emphasized, usually when a certain pitch is repeated or used as the foundation of the harmony. For example, at the beginning of the movement the clarinet gives G as the pitch center by repeating the motive through m. 10 and again from mm. 33-39. This also comes back at the end of the movement at m. 226.
This clarinet motive is shown in Example 2 below. The G pitch center sustains until the end with a pedal tone in the second violin part and then the clarinet part. Other times the string section will create a pitch center by building a chord and the bass note will be the foundation of the harmony.

[20] Ibid., 32-33.

[21] Ibid., 22-23.



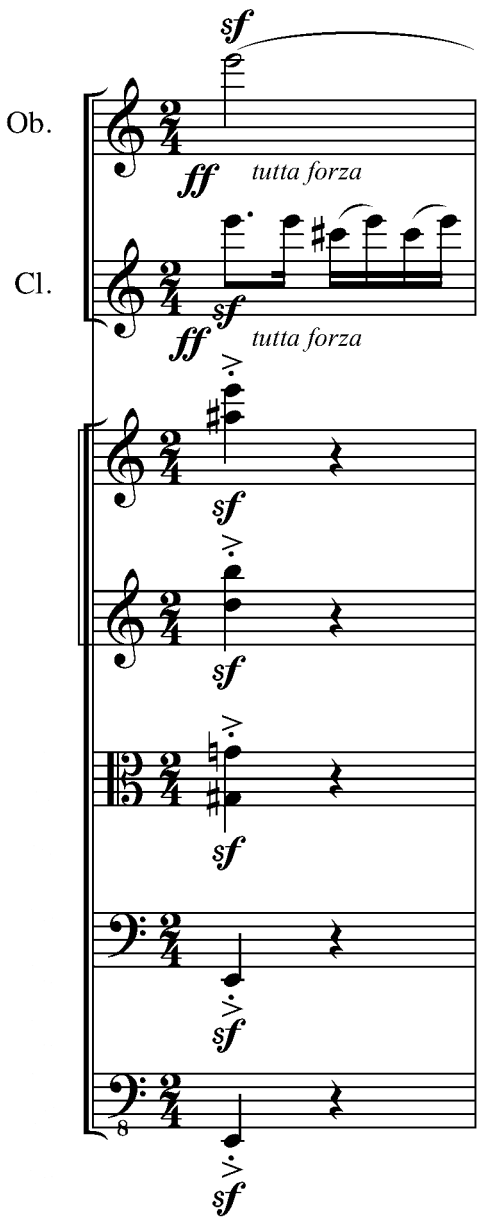
Example 2: First Movement, mm. 1-6[22]

This occurs in m. 180 with E being the pitch center created by the string chord and also the oboe and clarinet melody above it (see Ex. 3).

Many middle movements in Baroque concertos are built on long, songlike lines in the manner of an adagio operatic aria. Looking at Bach's solo concertos, one finds an emphasis on strong melodic lines, cantilenas, and violin-dominated lyrical slow movements that was clearly inspired by the Venetian composers, Albinoni and Vivaldi. The second movement Andante from Bach's Violin Concerto in A Minor features one of the characteristic cantilenas written for violin concerto middle movements. In the bass there is an ostinato pattern providing the foundation for the richly ornamented and fluid solo part. The inner parts are reduced to playing on the beat chords so the listener's attention is focused on the outside moving parts.[23]

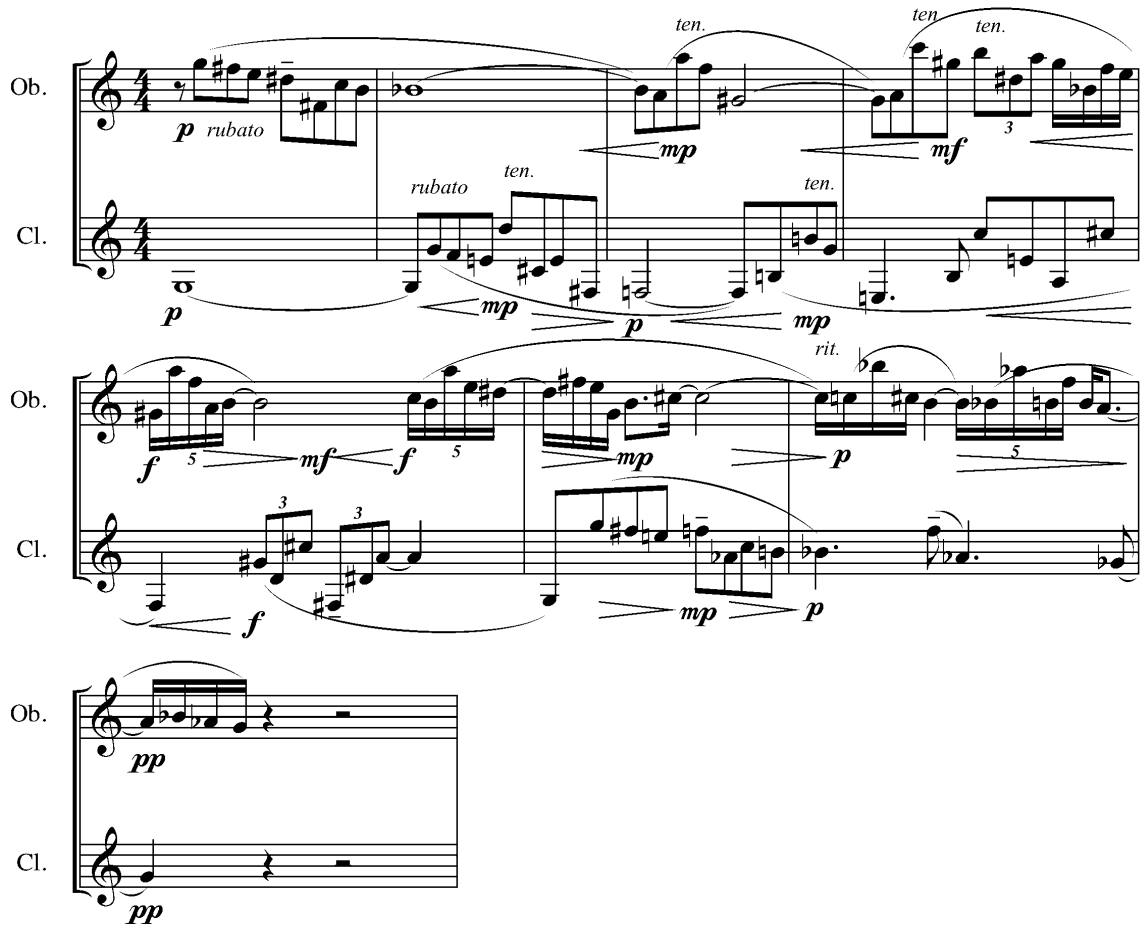
[22] The clarinet parts are notated at sounding pitch in the musical examples.

[23] Ibid., 79.



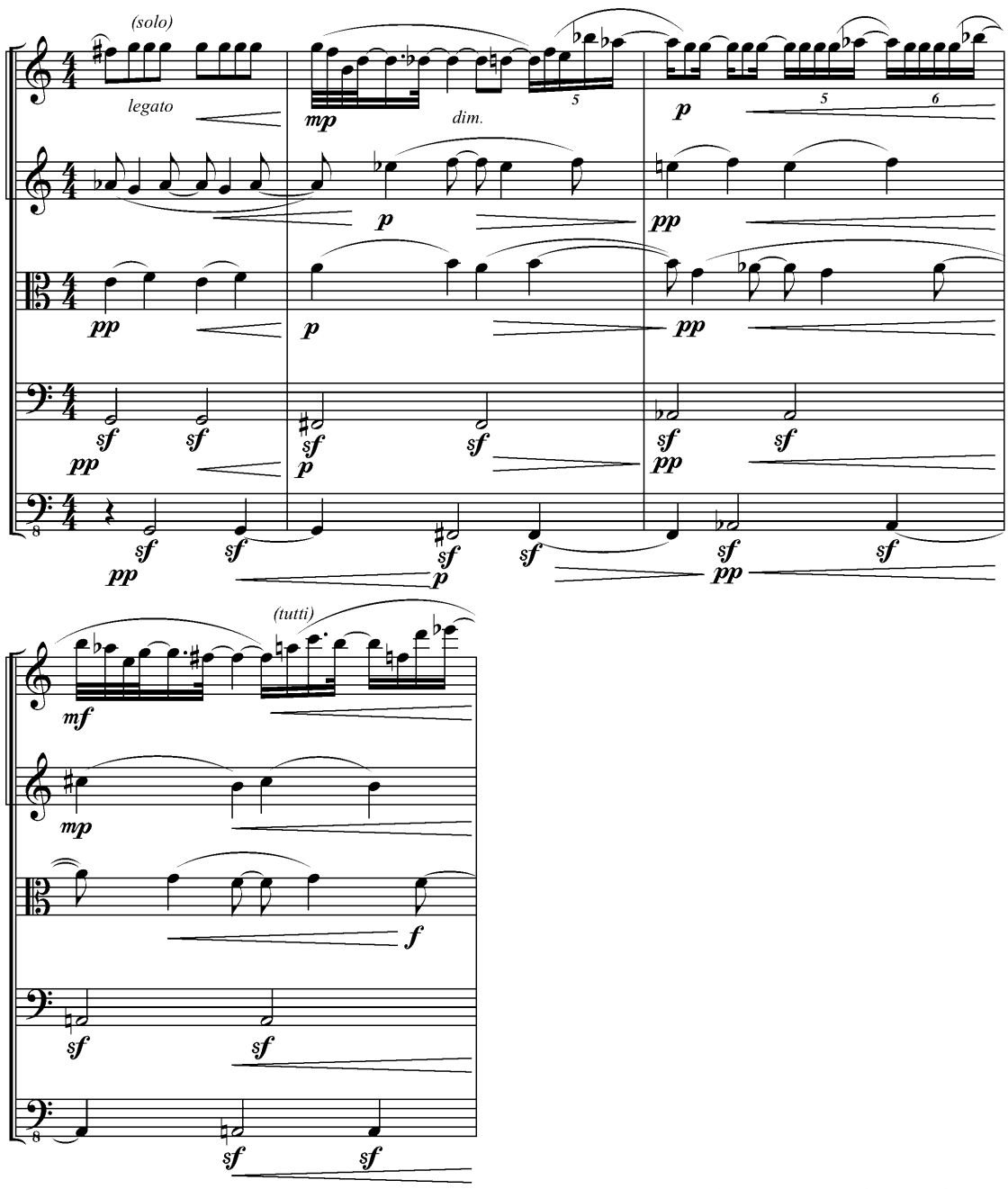
Example 3: First Movement, m. 180

Harbison uses many of these Baroque qualities in the middle movement of his concerto. The oboe and clarinet have more significant and ornamented solo roles, starting and ending the movement alone (see Ex. 4).



Example 4: Second Movement, mm. 1-8

Also, the first violin is made to be a solo instrument and dominates the strings in the sections starting at m. 8 and m. 40 (Ex. 5). The violin solos complement the oboe and clarinet and are also decorative, technical passages.



Example 5: Second Movement, mm. 40-43

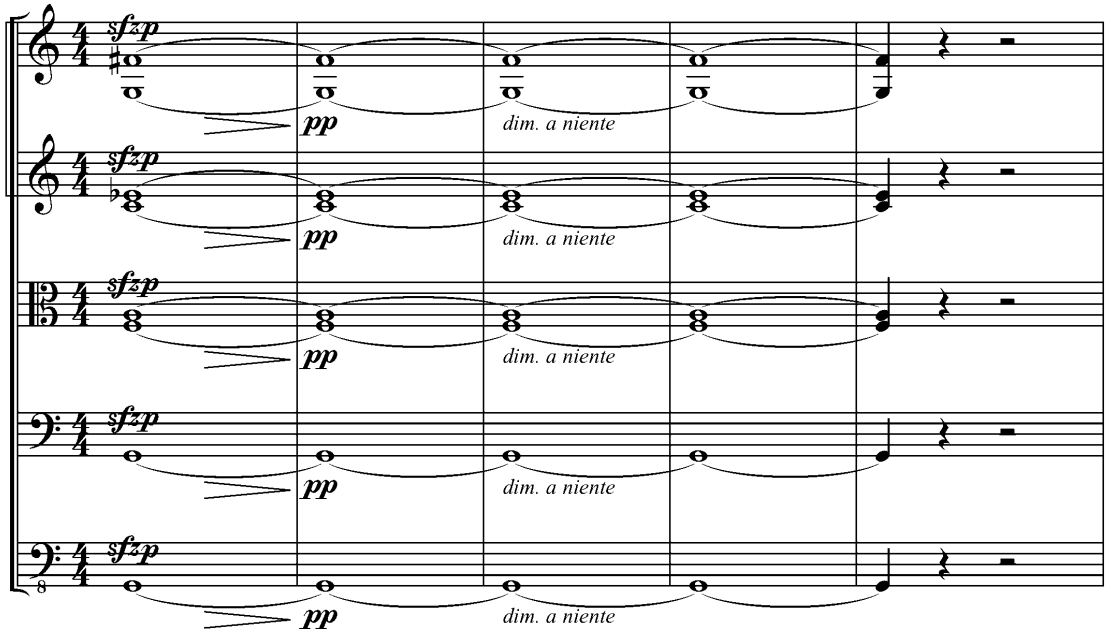
The opening oboe and clarinet rubato section returns in m. 22 with the viola and cello taking over the lyrical melody. Except for this section and the final string section starting at m. 43, the inner parts are reduced to playing simple

accompaniment so the attention is on the moving solo lines. Harbison also gives the solo instruments some freedom with different tempo and style markings such as *rubato, tenuto, ritard, cantabile, cedendo, legato, piu sostenuto, meno mosso, and animando poco a poco,* which makes the movement have a cadenza-like feel. There are also many dynamic markings spanning from triple piano to forte. The character of this movement is softer and more delicate than the outer two movements, which reach louder dynamics and have more vigorous rhythms.

From a more tonal standpoint one notes that this movement begins and ends with G as the pitch center. The clarinet fermata ending the first movement is the same as the opening pitch in the oboe and clarinet of the second movement. G is heard as the pitch center in other places throughout the movement, such as the violin solo in mm. 40-43 (Ex. 5). The most obvious point is the G pedal from m. 52 to the downbeat of m. 56. Above the pedal the two violin parts and top note of the viola part make an F-sharp diminished seventh chord. This is shown in the string section below in Example 6.

In the Baroque period final movements are similar in construction to the opening movements, but are usually lighter and more playful. The tempo is also usually quicker in the final movements, making it shorter than the other two movements.[24] This is all seen in the third movement of the Harbison. The tempo is marked Furioso, with 132 beats per minute, compared to the first movement's Declamando, at 108 beats per minute. It is also over a minute and a half shorter than the first movement.

[24] Roeder, *A History of the Concerto,* 53.



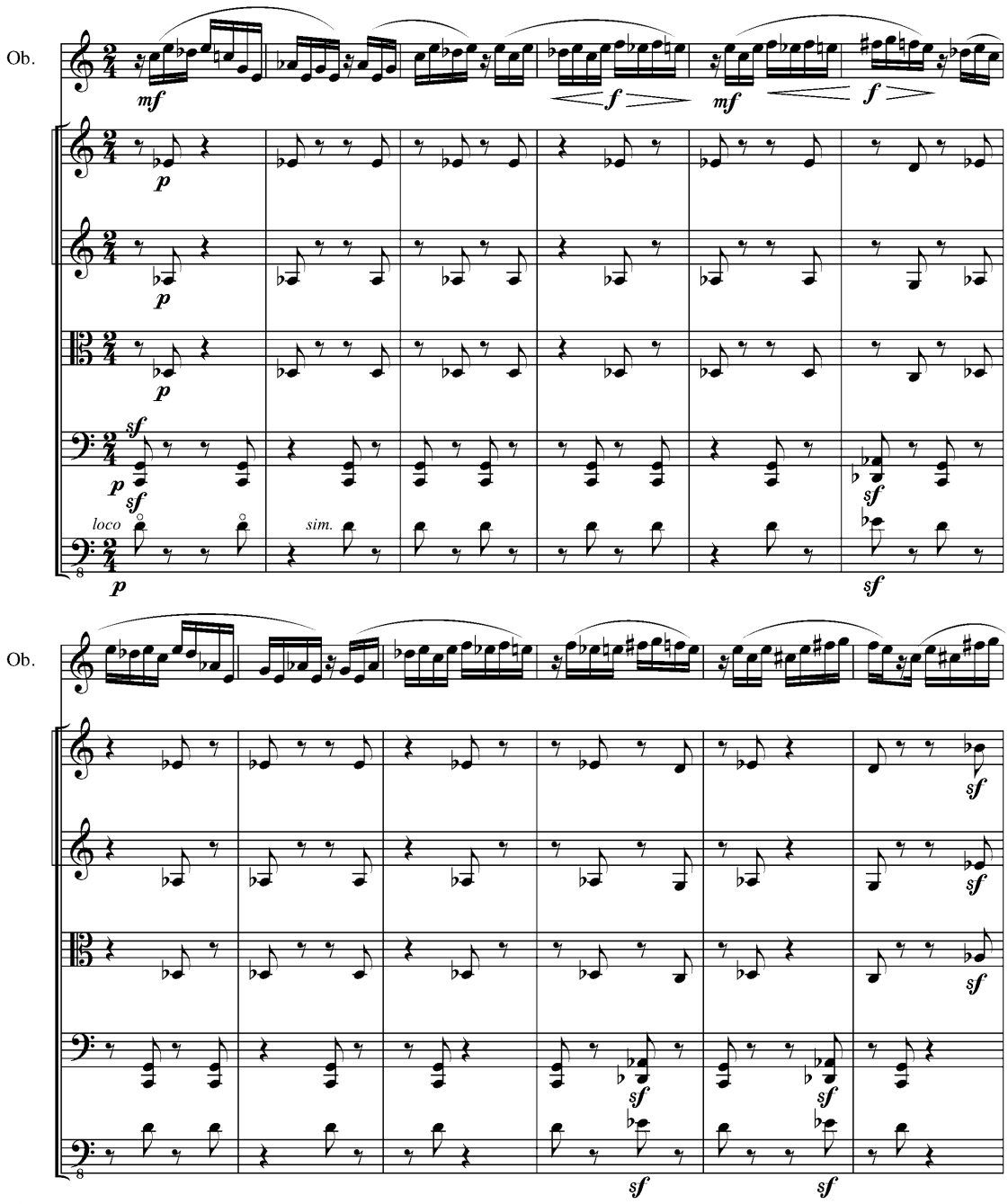
Example 6: Second Movement, mm. 52-56

This last movement does have playful qualities such as the gestures in the oboe and clarinet from mm. 49-70 and mm. 127-138. The alternate fingerings and repetitive nature of the figures make it sound playful over the heavier texture of the strings. Also, the overall texture and dynamic range throughout the movement makes it sound lighter in nature compared to the declamatory statements in the first movement, and the serious, cadenza-like qualities of the second movement.

Looking at the third movement from a more tonal standpoint we can see C as the pitch center starting at m. 7 through m. 18. With C in the cello line and the oboe melody playing first a C Major triad and then the interval of a third from C to E throughout this section (see Ex. 7). In m. 19 the same thing occurs this time with the cello switching to G as the pitch center and the clarinet melody playing a

G major triad and then the interval of a third from B to G. From mm. 32 through 38 C is heard again as the pitch center as the lowest note in the cello and bass parts. Also, the first and second violin parts repeat the interval of a major third from C to E.

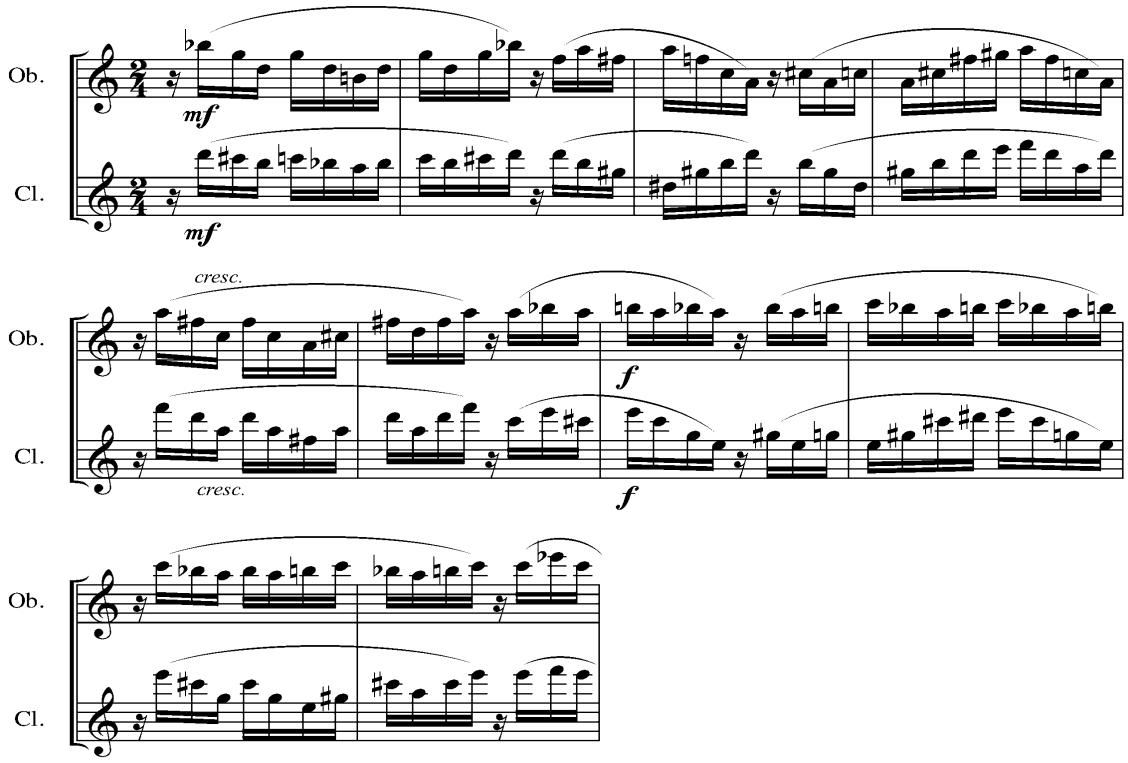
The string melody from mm. 49 through 87 goes through several modified key areas. Throughout this section Harbison uses different seven-note collections. For a few measures it is C major, excluding the B-flat on the downbeat. Going into m. 53 it changes to C, D, E, F-sharp, G-sharp, A, and B, which is an acoustic collection, in the first violin and viola parts. In mm. 59 through 63 he moves to a five sharp acoustic collection with the pitches C-sharp, D-sharp, E-sharp, F-sharp, G-sharp, A, and B in both violin and cello parts. Starting in m. 64 the strings move to E-flat major until m. 70. From mm. 71-76 the strings have the notes of C major again, excluding the C-sharp in the viola part. In m. 77 the strings move to another acoustic collection containing the pitches C-sharp, D-sharp, E, F-sharp, G, A, and B. In mm. 83-87 he moves back to the acoustic collection with five sharps, C-sharp, D-sharp, E-sharp, F-sharp, G-sharp, A, and B, with the exception of the G naturals in the bass part. These collections have several common pitches with each other, making it easier to move from one pitch collection to another.



Example 7: Third Movement, mm. 7-18

Harbison also switches from major to minor chords in the oboe and clarinet parts from mm. 151 to 163 (see Ex. 8). The oboe moves from G minor to G major and back to G minor in mm. 151-152. The next two measures move

from F Major to F-sharp minor and to F-sharp diminished. From mm. 155-156 the oboe moves from F-sharp diminished to F-sharp minor and then to D Major. The clarinet part has chords a few measures after the oboe moving from an E7 chord to D minor in m. 154. In mm. 155-157 the clarinet moves from D minor, to D major, back to D minor, and to C Major. The next three measures move from C-sharp minor to C-sharp diminished and then to A Major in m. 160. This alternation of major and minor chords is seen below in Example 8. The oboe part has a few more chords in mm. 161-163 moving from C minor to C Major and C-sharp minor.



Example 8: Third Movement, mm. 151-160

The Baroque elements in this concerto including the form, texture, motivic material, and tonal aspects show Harbison's influence from the Baroque period and composers of that time. In the next chapter observations on the harmonic

analysis are shown using examples from all three movements of the concerto. Harbison combines the Baroque generation's concerto grosso form with twentieth-century harmonic language in his Concerto for Oboe, Clarinet, and Strings.

CHAPTER 3

AN ANALYSIS OF THE CONCERTO FOR OBOE, CLARINET, AND STRINGS

Common-practice tonality is defined by the following characteristics: Key-with a particular note being defined as tonic, Key relations, voice leading, Diatonic scales, triads, and functional harmony. It is possible for music to have only a few or just one of these attributes. Music like this has a connection to common-practice tonality without actually being tonal. Post-tonal music often makes use of diatonic, octatonic, whole-tone, and hexatonic referential collections. Also, post-tonal music frequently makes use of triads, although they are usually combined in nontraditional ways.[1] In John Harbison's Concerto for Oboe, Clarinet, and Strings the harmony is made up of sonorities from these collections and more traditional tertian harmonies.

Composers of post-tonal music use certain sets as sources for their pitch material in a composition. Many large sets are available, but four in particular are most attractive to some composers and theorists: the diatonic, octatonic, whole-tone, and hexatonic collections. There are also many traditional sonorities that are a part of referential collections.[2] In Harbison's Concerto for Oboe, Clarinet, and Strings many of these occur. The trichords: [026], which is a

[1] Joseph N. Straus, *Introduction to Post-Tonal Theory* (New Jersey: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2005), 130-31.

[2] Ibid., 140.

dominant seventh chord without a fifth or a half-diminished seventh chord without a third; [036] a diminished triad; [037] a major or minor triad; and [048], an augmented triad. The tetrachords: [0248], which is a dominant seventh chord with an augmented fifth; [0268] a French augmented sixth chord or a dominant seventh chord with a diminished fifth; [0358] a minor seventh chord; [0258] a dominant seventh chord or a half- diminished seventh chord; and [0369], a fully diminished seventh chord.

The octatonic collection has been a favorite in post-tonal music, especially in the music of Bartok and Stravinsky. The collection in its entirety is 8-28 [0134679T] and is highly symmetrical, both transpositionally and inversionally. It maps onto itself at four levels of transposition and also four levels of inversion. There are three octatonic collections including: $OCT_{0,1}$ [0, 1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, 10]; $OCT_{1,2}$ [1 ,2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 10, 11]; and $OCT_{2,3}$ [2, 3, 5, 6, 8, 9, 11, 0]. The Octatonic subsets include seven trichords, thirteen tetrachords, seven pentachords, six hexachords, and one septachord.[3]

Another collection that is seen frequently in post-tonal music and in Harbison's concerto is the whole-tone collection. Set class 6-35 [02468T] has the highest possible degree of symmetry, both transpositionally and inversionally. There are two whole tone collections, WT_0 [0, 2, 4, 6, 8] and WT_1 [1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 11]. Because of its lack of half steps the whole-tone collection has a very non-

[3] Ibid., 144.

tonal sound. Subsets of this collection are not as numerous as the octatonic collection and include: [02468], [0246], [0248], [0268], [024], [026], and [048].[4]

Another collection seen in the Harbison concerto is the Hexatonic collection. Like the other referential collections it occurs frequently in post-tonal music. Set-class 6-20 [014589] is both transpositionally and inversionally symmetrical at three different levels. There are four members of this set class including: $Hex_{0,1}$ [0, 1, 4, 5, 8, 9]; $Hex_{1,2}$ [1, 2, 5, 6, 9, 10]; $Hex_{2,3}$ [2, 3, 6, 7, 10, 11]; and $Hex_{3,4}$ [3, 4, 7, 8, 11, 0]. The subsets of this collection include [01458], [0145], [0347], [0148], [0158], [014], [015], [037], and [048]. Among these subsets are some more traditional formations such as the major seventh chord, major or minor triad, and the augmented triad. So, it is possible for composers to write music that is hexatonic but also has a somewhat tonal feel.[5]

All three movements of Harbison's concerto show similarities of pitch organization. In every movement we see examples of familiar tonal set classes, as well as sets from the octatonic collection, the whole tone collection, and the hexatonic collection. Many familiar sonorities are also used as octatonic and whole-tone subsets in all three movements, including the trichords [026] and [037], as well as the tetrachord [0258]. The trichord [036] is heard in both the first and second movements. The tetrachords [0358], [0369], and [0268] are employed in the first and third movements and [0235] is seen in the first and second movements.

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[4] Ibid., 147.

[5] Ibid., 149.

Several subsets from the octatonic collection [0134679T] are heard in all three movements. These include the trichords [013], [014], [036], and [037]. The tetrachords [0258], [0358], [0347], [0134], [0137], and [0147] are also used in all three movements. Other larger subsets of the octatonic collection employed in every movement include [01346], [01347], [01367], [013467], and [013469]. The trichord set [016] as well as the tetrachords [0136[, [0146], [0167], and [0235] are used in the first and second movements. The tetrachord set [0369] and the pentachord set [01469] are seen in both the first and third movements. The hexachord set [013479] is used in the first and second movements of the concerto and the septachord set [0134679] is seen in the second and third movements.

Subsets from the whole-tone collection [02468T] are also heard in all three movements. The trichord sets [024] and [026] as well as the tetrachord set [0246] are seen in every movement. The sets [048] and [0268] are used in the first and third movements of the concerto.

Examples of the hexatonic collection [014589] and its subsets are employed in all three movements of the concerto. The trichords [014] and [015] are seen in every movement. The tetrachord sets [0148] and [0158] are used in the first and third movements. The pentachord set [01458] is seen in the second and third movements. The full collection [014589] is heard in both the first and third movements of the concerto.

Each movement also has examples where many of these sets are related by transposition. There are some instances of sets related by

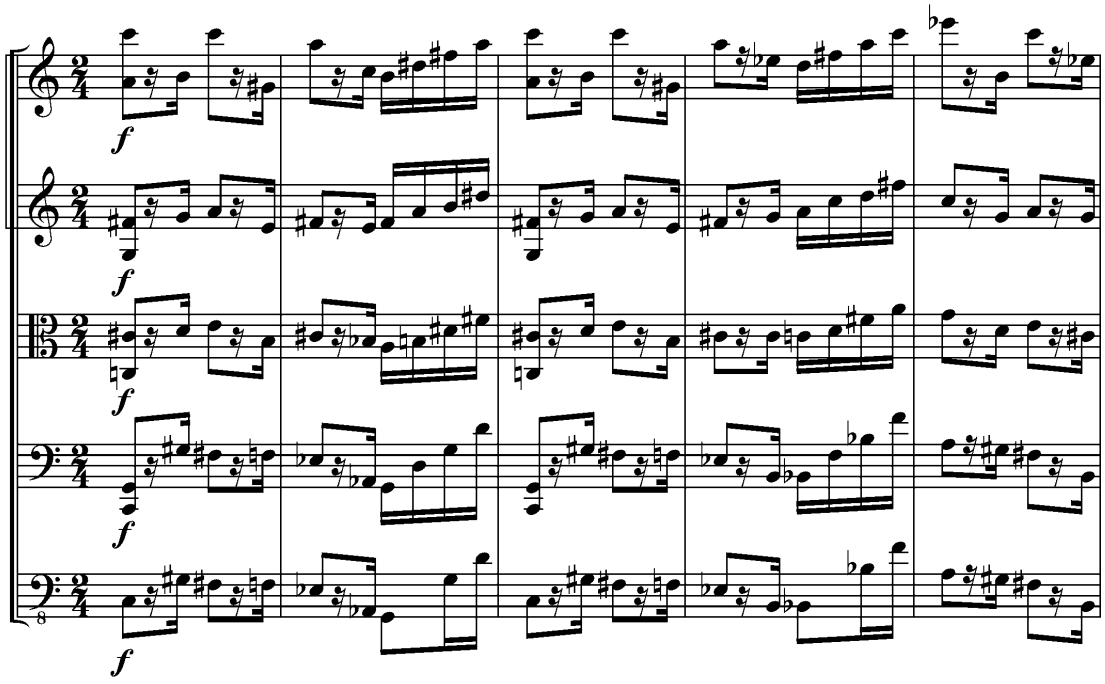
transposition that recur in other movements. The trichord sets [012] and [013] are seen in both the second and third movements. [036] is used in the first and second movements. In all three movements the tetrachord set [0123] is seen related by transposition. In the first and second movements the tetrachord sets [0136] and [0258] are related by transposition. The tetrachord sets [0147], [0148], [0137], and [0358] are used in the first and third movements. In the first and third movements the pentachord set [01478] is seen related by transposition. There are a wide variety of transposition levels found in each movement and in all three movements there are several examples of sets being related by T9.

Subsets of the octatonic collection in the first movement of the Harbison include [026], [036], [037], [0268], [0258], [0358], and [0369]. Many of the other subsets employed throughout the movement are octatonic. Because this movement is so long and the octatonic subsets are numerous we can look at the octatonic examples in a specific section. One section in particular that contains mostly octatonic sets is the string section beginning at m. 43 (see Ex. 8). The octatonic subsets in this section include [01367], [0147], [0258], [0347], [0136], and [0137].

The whole-tone sets are not as prevalent as the octatonic sets but are seen incorporated throughout the movement, usually within a more octatonic section. An example of this is shown in the same string section at m. 43. The tetrachord sets are mainly octatonic but move to the whole tone set [0248] in mm. 44, 45, and 47. [02468] and [0248] are seen in m. 51 and [0248] in mm. 53 and 55. Several other subsets are also used in different parts of the movement.

The set in its entirety [02468T] is seen in the second violin in m. 210, [026] in the first violin in m. 217, and [024] in the oboe in mm. 160-161.

The same section that contains these octatonic and whole-tone subsets also includes the hexatonic collection. The tetrachord sets used throughout the section beginning at m. 43 are [0148] and [0158]. Example 9 below shows the beginning of this string section from mm. 43-47 containing the octatonic, whole-tone, and hexatonic subsets. The hexatonic set in its entirety [014589] is heard in the strings in mm. 85-88. Other subsets that are seen throughout the movement include [014] in mm. 63 and 74 and [048] in mm. 96 and 98. Now that the octatonic, whole-tone, and hexatonic sets and subsets have been discussed separately we can consider the relationships between all of the sets in a given section.



Example 9: First Movement, mm. 43-47

During the same string section from mm. 43 to 60 that we talked about the individual subsets of each different type of collection, we can also see how the same vertical sets relate to each other. Many of the examples in this section are related by transposition at T3, T8, T9, or T11. When a pitch-class set is either transposed or inverted its pitch content will change entirely, partially, or not at all. The tones that are held in common between two different members of the same pitch-class set can provide important information on musical continuity. As an alternative, the absence of common tones may show the contrast between two different members of the same pitch-class set.[6] Starting in m. 43 between beat 1-a[7] (G, G-sharp, B, D) and beat 2-a (E, F, G-sharp, B), the set [0147] is transposed at T9. The common tones are B and G-sharp. In m. 44 beat 1-a (E, G-sharp, B-flat, C) to m. 46 beat 1-a (G, B, C-sharp, E-flat), the set [0248] is related by T3. In m. 44 beat 2-e (D, E-flat, G, A, B) to m. 46 beat 2-e (F, F-sharp, B-flat, C, D), the set [01468] is related by transposition at T3. There is one common tone between the two sets of D. In m. 44 beat 2-and (F-sharp, G, B, E-flat) to m. 46 beat 2-and (A, B-flat, D, F-sharp), the set [0148] is related by T3. There is one common tone between the sets of F-sharp. In m. 50 beat 1-and (A, B-flat, D, F-sharp) to beat 2-and (F-sharp, G, B, E-flat), the set [0148] is related at T9. The one common tone between the sets is F-sharp. Beat 1-a (F, F-sharp, A, C) to beat 2-a (D, E-flat, F-sharp, A) of this same measure, the set [0147] is related by T9. There are two common tones of A and F-sharp between the sets.

[6] Ibid., 79.

[7] I am labeling sub-divided beats by: beat 1-and for eighth notes and beat 1, 1-e, 1-and, 1-a for sixteenth notes, etc.

In m. 51 beats 2 (C, E, G, G-sharp) to 2-e (G-sharp, C, E-flat, E), the set [0148] is related by T8. There are three common tones between these sets of C, E, and G-sharp. In m. 52 beat 1 (C-sharp, F-sharp, G, B-flat) to beat 2 (C, F, F-sharp, A), the set [0147] is related by T11. There is one common tone of F-sharp between the sets. In the same measure beat 1-a (A, B-flat, E, G) to beat 2-a (G-sharp, A, E-flat, F-sharp), the set [0136] is related by T11. The common tone between the sets is A. In m. 53 between beat 1 to beat 1-e the set [0148] is related by T8. As seen before the three common tones are C, E, and G-sharp. In m. 53 beat 2 (F-sharp, G, B-flat, C-sharp) to m. 54 beat 1 (F, F-sharp, A, C), the set [0147] is related by T11. The one common tone between the sets is F-sharp. In the same measure beat 2-a (A, B-flat, E, G) to beat 1-a (G-sharp, A, E-flat, F-sharp), the set [0136] is also related by T11. There is one common tone of A between the sets. In m. 54 the set [0136] between beat 1-a and beat 2 is related by T8 with no common tones between the sets. In m. 55 beat 1 to beat 1-e the set [0148] is again related by T8 and the three common tones are C, E, and G-sharp. In m. 59 between beat 2-and and beat 2-a the set [0157] is related by T3 with no common tones. The number of common tones between sets show either how they are similar or their amount of contrast to each other. During this particular section F-sharp was a recurring common tone between the different sets.

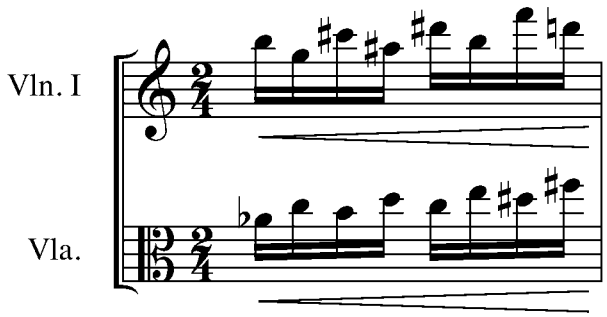
Another interesting aspect of this section is that if you look at the string parts linearly to get tetrachords, many of the same ones are seen that were in the vertical analysis. For example, [0137] at m. 43 in the bass part, [0136] in the

viola part at m. 47, and [0157] in the cello and bass parts at m. 48. [0258] occurs on beat 1 and 2 of the violin 1, violin 2, and viola parts in m. 50. Other sets that recur include [0148] in the first violin, [0248] in the second violin, [0147] in the cello, and [0158] in the bass at m. 51, [0347] in the first violin in m. 52, [0148] again in the viola in m. 53, [0347] in the first violin again in m. 54, and lastly in m. 59 the first violin has [0136] on beat 2, [0135] in the second violin on beat 1, [0125] in the viola on beat 1, and [0147] in beats 1 and 2 of the cello. Although the sections mentioned above only had the string parts in detail, there are many other examples throughout the movement with the oboe and clarinet parts as well.

Many of the sets mentioned above are seen and repeated throughout the movement, which creates recurring patterns. Harbison wrote an article for the *Contemporary Music Review* called "Symmetries and the New Tonality," which explains his idea that symmetrical divisions and orderings within a piece of music could lead to a flexible and non-traditional new tonality. Harmonic symmetry within a piece becomes a reference point for all harmonies in the piece, which are defined aurally by their degree of deviation from exact symmetry. The idea of symmetrical chords can provide the same sense of grounding that the triad provides for the tonal system in music.[8] In just the first movement of this concerto there are several recurring set classes that exhibit inversional symmetry, including [048], [0268], and [0369].

[8] John Harbison, "Symmetries and the 'New Tonality,'" *Contemporary Music Review* 6:2 (1992): 71-79.

In several different post-tonal styles of composition such as neoclassicism, neotonality, and minimalism familiar major and minor triads are used as basic harmonies. The triadic motives discussed in the previous chapter in some of the string ritornello sections are common harmonic successions. Triadic transformations connect triads of different qualities in post-tonal music.[9] Throughout this composition Harbison also uses the intervals of major and minor thirds. Thirds are used as part of the melodic motives in the oboe and clarinet parts and as scalar motion in the strings. In m. 142 the first violin and viola parts have major and minor thirds and move in contrary motion, which is shown in Example 10 below.

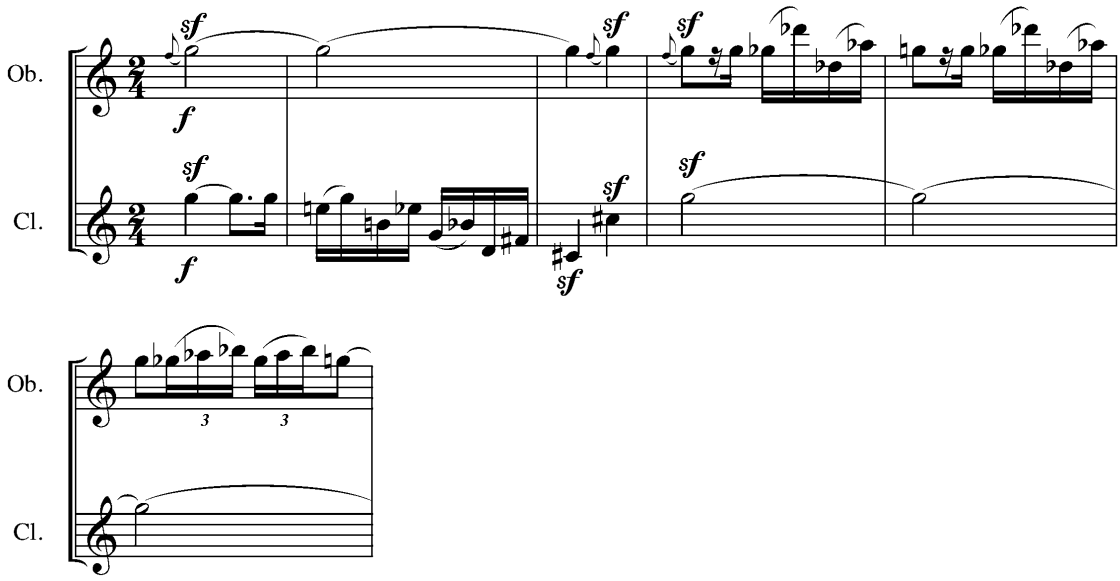


Example 10: First Movement, m. 142

In mm. 150-151 Harbison uses only minor thirds in the first violin part. In the section from mm. 152-175 the oboe and clarinet parts have intervals of thirds and fifths in their melodic lines. In Example 11 below the clarinet part uses both major and minor thirds while the oboe part uses the interval of a perfect fifth. The clarinet part has all major and minor thirds again from mm. 180-185.

[9] Straus, *Introduction to Post-Tonal Theory*, 158-59.

The last tutti string section starting at m. 188 also uses the intervals of thirds and fifths as well as some triadic motives like the first string ritornello. In mm. 198 and 201 the first violin and bass parts have perfect fifths while the second violin and viola parts have major thirds.



Example 11: First Movement, mm. 152-156

Harbison describes the second movement of the Concerto for Oboe, Clarinet, and Strings as contemplative. The movement begins and ends with the two solo instruments playing alone with cadenza-like material. Like the first movement we also see traditional sonorities, octatonic, whole tone, and hexatonic subsets. Some of the same sets seen in the first movement are also related by transposition in the second movement.

The second movement also includes traditional subsets that are seen in the first movement. The trichord [026] is first seen in the oboe part in m. 4, beat 3. The set [037] is seen in the clarinet gesture in m. 3, beat 3-and to the

downbeat of m. 4. [036] is seen several times throughout the movement, such as m. 5, beats 3 and 4 in the clarinet part, m. 21, beat 3 in the clarinet part, and m. 53, beats 3 and 4 again in the clarinet part. In m. 53 between beats 3 and 4 [036] is related by transposition at T10. The set [0258] is seen in the oboe part in m. 59, beats 3 and 4.

There are many octatonic subsets seen throughout the movement. They include [0258], [0347], [0134], [0136], [0147], [0137], [0167], [01346], [01347], [013467], [013469], [013479], and [0134679]. Several of these sets are related by transposition. Like the first movement the most common level of transposition is T9. [0136] is seen in the strings in both mm. 37 and 39 and is related by T9 with two common tones, A and C. The set [0347] is seen in the clarinet part in m. 59. From beats 3-and to beat 4 it is related by T9 with two common tones, C and A-flat. From beats 4 to beat 4-and [0347] is related again by T9, this time with the common tones of F and A.

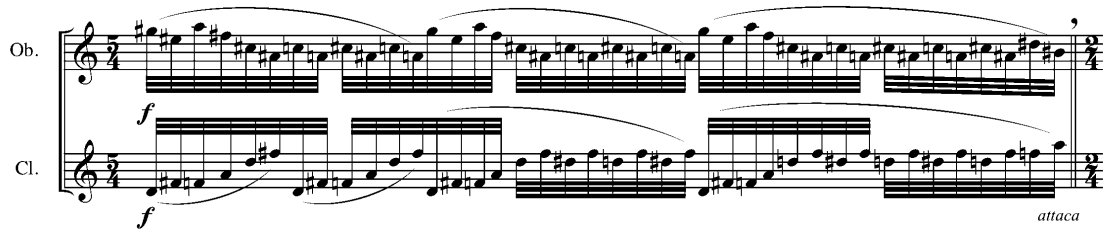
The whole tone and hexatonic collections are not as prevalent in this movement. The whole tone subsets seen in this movement are [026], [024], and [0246]. There are several instances of the tri-chord subsets from the hexatonic collection [014], [015], and [037].

As in the first movement there are certain sections that contain more sets related by transposition. In this movement there are many examples of trichords and tetrachords in the clarinet and oboe material from m. 53 to the end. While transpositions at T9 and T6 (which were also common in the first movement) are found, T5 and T10 are also prominent in this movement. Sets related at T9 are

often small octatonic sets, such as [013] and [0347]. These sets will also usually have more common tones. In contrast, relationships by T5 and T10 are usually found among more chromatic collections, like [0123], and will not have as many common tones. Starting in m. 53 from beat 3 (B, C, C-sharp, D) to beat 4 (A, B-flat, B, C), the set [0123] is related by T10. There are two common tones between the sets, B and C. In m. 53 in the clarinet part from beat 3 (B-flat, E, G) to beat 4 (A-flat, D, F), [036] is related again by T10. In m. 54 in the oboe part from beat 1 (F-sharp, G, A) to beat 3 (B, C, D), the set [013] is related by T5 with no common tones. In the oboe part in m. 54 beat 4 (A, B-flat, B, C) to the clarinet part beat 4 (D, E-flat, E, F) of the same measure, [0123] is related again by T5 with no common tones. Measure 55 of the oboe part, beat 2 (G, A-flat, F) to beat 4 (E, F, D), [013] is related by T9. There is one common tone of F between the sets. In m. 59 of the clarinet part from beat 3-and (B, C, E-flat, A-flat) to beat 4 (A-flat, A, C, F), the set [0347] is related by T9. There are two common tones, C and A-flat. From beat 4 (C, F, A-flat, A) to beat 4-and (A, D, F, F-sharp), the set [0347] is again related by T9. There are also two common tones of F and A.

The last section of this movement is a cadenza for the two solo instruments. Starting in m. 53 over the G pedal chord the oboe and clarinet play sixteenth notes, sextuplet figures, and thirty-second notes. As seen in the first movement, Harbison uses a pattern of major and minor thirds in this section. In m. 55 beat 4 through m. 57 minor thirds are seen in both parts, mostly the last two notes of each beat. In m. 57 each beat in the oboe part is made up of minor thirds, as well as beat 1 in the clarinet part. In the final measure of the

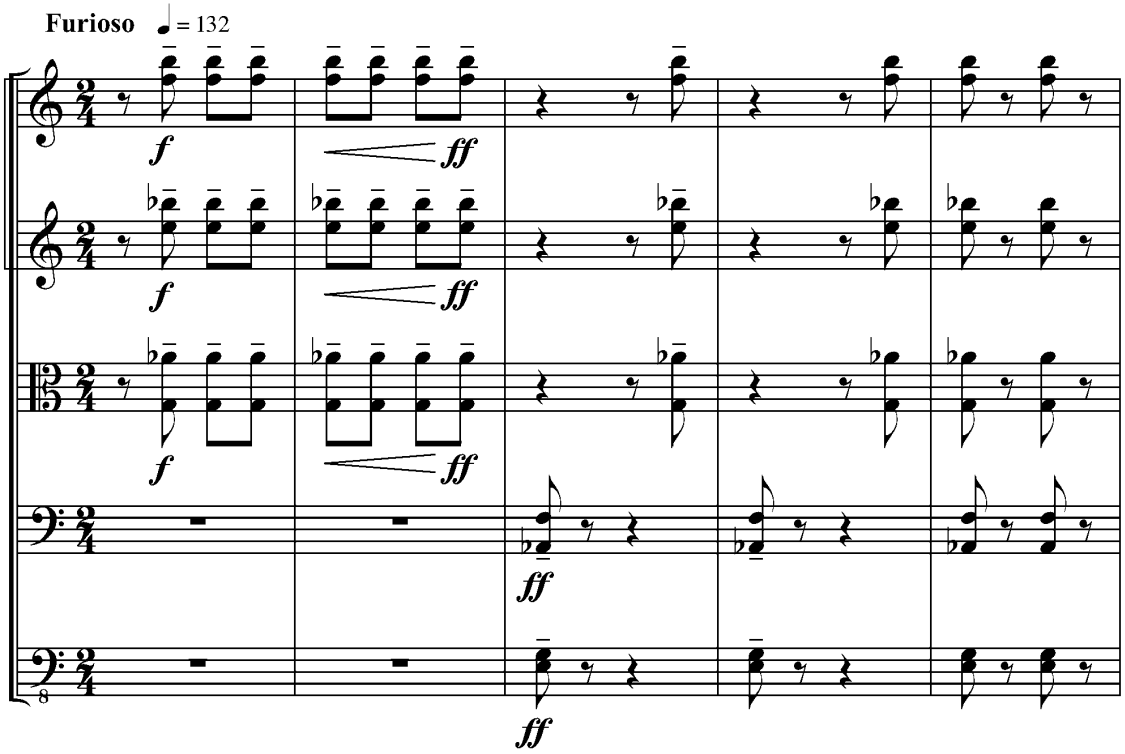
movement the oboe part alternates between the minor thirds G-sharp to E-sharp, A to F-sharp, C-sharp to A-sharp, C to A, and in the last beat D-sharp to B-sharp. The clarinet part in m. 60 alternates between the major thirds E to G-sharp and G to B in beats 1 and 2. Starting in beat 3 the minor third E-sharp to G-sharp is added and in the last beat the major third G to B. This ambiguity of major and minor thirds is shown in Example 12 below. The movement is attacca going straight into the final movement of the piece.



Example 12: Second Movement, m. 60

The final movement of the concerto begins with a statement in the strings that recurs several times throughout the movement. This string motive is shown in Example 13 below. This beginning motive from mm. 1-5 creates the octatonic subsets [0134] and [013467]. This motive recurs in mm. 43-48, mm. 105-110, and mm. 169-174. The larger set [013467] is used in mm. 175-178. The other octatonic subsets heard in this movement include the tetrachord sets [0147], [0137], and [0347]; the pentachord sets [01346], [01367], and [01347]; the hexachords [013467] and [013469]; and the septachord [0134679]. [0147] is used quite a bit in the oboe, clarinet, and string parts in mm. 95-102. The set [0137] is seen several times in the string parts from mm. 138-156. [0347] is seen in the oboe and clarinet parts several times related by different transpositions

from mm. 151-161. The pentachord sets [01346] and [01367] are both used in the strings in m. 136 and m. 143. [01347] is seen a few times throughout the movement in the string part in m. 161, beat 2 and in the oboe part from m. 179 to the end. The remaining sets [013469] and [0134679] are employed several times throughout the movement. The hexachord set is used in the strings in m. 171, beat 1 and mm. 174-178 and the septachord set is seen in m. 112, mm. 115-116, and mm. 169-171 in the strings.



Example 13: Third Movement, mm. 1-5

The traditional sets used in this movement include [026], [037], [0369], [0358], [0258], and [0268]. The trichords [026] and [037] are seen several times throughout the movement. One example of them together is in the string part in m. 162. [037] is heard on beat 1 and [026] is on beat 2-and. The trichord [037] is

used quite a bit in the string section from mm. 159-168. The set [0369] is seen in the oboe and clarinet part in the alternate fingerings section from mm. 49-70. The same four pitches are used in both parts (C-sharp, E, G, and B-flat). The same set with the same pitches is used again in the oboe and clarinet parts in mm. 126-137. The tetrachord [0358] is seen several times, such as in mm. 97-102 in the cello and bass parts. [0258] is heard a couple of times in the string including mm. 132-133 and [0268] is also seen in m. 132 on beat 2.

The whole-tone sets in this third movement include [024], [048], [0246], and [0248]. The trichord [024] is seen in the string parts in beat 1 of m. 40 and beat 2 of m. 134. [048] is in the string parts on beat 1 of m. 38 and then in the clarinet part in m. 94. The tetrachord [0246] is seen in the viola part in m. 58 and [0248] is seen on beat 2 of m. 140. The sets [026] and [0268], which are also traditional sets, are heard several times in the movement.

The hexatonic collection is used quite a bit in the third movement. The set in its entirety [014589] is seen in the clarinet part in mm. 116-117. The pentachord subset [01458] is heard several times in the oboe part throughout the movement, such as m. 81, mm. 83-84, mm. 85-87, and mm. 115-117. It is also used in the string parts on beat 2 of m. 136 and on beat 1 of m. 162. [0158] is seen in the string part on beat 2 of m. 142, beat 1 of m. 158, and beat 1 of m. 163. The trichord [015] is used several times in the strings toward the end of the movement including beat 1 of m. 132, beat 2 of m. 134, and in m. 182. The set [048], which is also part of the whole tone collection, was referenced above. The tetrachord sets [0148] and [0347] and the trichord sets [014] and [037] are heard

most throughout this movement, usually related by T4, T8, or T9. The set [0347] is seen from m. 151 to beat 1 of m. 152 in the oboe part and from m. 155 to beat 1 of m. 156 of the clarinet part with the relation of T9. It is heard again in the oboe part from m. 160 to beat 2 of m. 161 with a relation of T8 from the previous [0347] in the clarinet part. [0148] is seen in the oboe part in m. 90 and then m. 94 related by T4. It is heard again in the oboe part in m. 120 and also in the string part on beat 1 in m. 127, again related by T4.

Another section with examples of sets related by transposition occurs starting in m. 53. The diatonic subsets used in this section are the trichords [013], [026], [037], [027], and the tetrachord [0257]. Many of the examples are related by transposition at T9 or T7. [013] is seen in the violin two part of mm. 49-50 and again in the viola part in mm. 53-54 with the relation of T9. A is the one common tone between the two sets. [027] is heard in the cello part in mm. 49-50 and in the first violin part in mm. 53-54 also with the relation of T9. [026] is seen in m. 51 of the second violin part and in mm. 56-57 of the viola part with the relation of T9. [027] is heard again in m. 57 of the first violin part with the relation of T7 from the first violin set in mm. 55-56. In mm. 59-63 [027] is heard again in the first violin part with the relation of T9. In mm. 59-61 of the cello part [013] is seen with the relation of T9 from the set in m. 55 of the viola part. [026] is seen in m. 63 of the cello part with the relation of T7 from the viola set in mm. 56-57. [037] is heard in m. 64 of the string section with the relation of T9 from the strings in beat 1 of m. 59. [013] is seen in m. 65 of the first violin and bass part with the relation of T9 from mm. 59-61 of the cello part. In mm. 65-68 [027] is heard in

the second violin and viola parts with the relation of T9 from the set in the second violin part of m. 59. [027] is seen in m. 69 of the second violin and viola parts with the relation of T7 from he previous example. Lastly, [0257] is heard in m. 70 of the second violin part with the relation of T9 from m. 63.

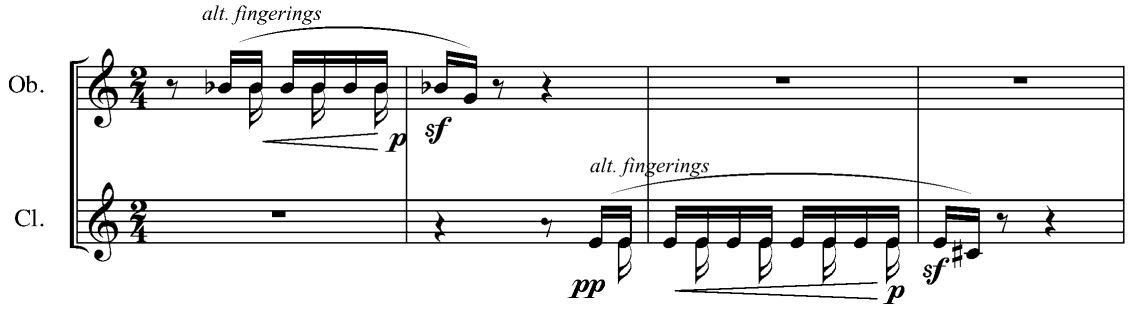
The pentachord set [01458], which was mentioned earlier as a subset of the hexachord set, is seen several times under transposition throughout the movement. Transposition levels T4 and T8, which hold hexatonic collections invariant, exhibit the most common tones. In contrast, T2, T6, and T10 have no common tones when dealing with hexatonic subsets. [01458] is heard in the oboe part in m. 81 and again in mm. 83-84 with the relation of T4. There are four common tones between these sets. In the clarinet part in mm. 115-116 [01458] is related by T6 from the oboe set in the same measure with no common tones. The set is seen again in mm. 116-117 of the oboe part with a relation of T10 from the previous oboe set with no common tones. [01458] is next heard in the clarinet part in m. 120 with a relation of T8 from the oboe set in mm. 116-117, again with four common tones. In beat 1 of m. 129 in the string section [01458] is seen with a relation of T6 from the previous clarinet set in m. 120 with no common tones. On beat 2 of m. 136 the strings [01458] is seen with a relation of T8 from the previous string set in m. 129 with four common tones. In beat 1 of m. 156 in the string section [01458] is seen with a relation of T10 from the set in m. 136 with no common tones. The final example of [01458] is heard on beat 1 in m. 162 of the string section, with the relation of T10 from the previous string set and no common tones.

There are several examples of transpositions with larger sets in the second half of the movement. The pentachord set [01368] is seen in the string section in m. 81 and in m. 88 on beat 2 with the relation of T4. [01368] is heard again in the strings on beat 1 of m. 93 with the relation of T2 from the previous set in m. 88. The set is used again on beat 1 in m. 96 of the string part again with the relation of T2 from the previous set in m. 93.

There are also several hexachords, one septachord, and one octachord set that are related by transposition in this movement. The hexachord set [023579] is heard in the string section on beat 2 of m. 37, beat 2 of m. 77 and m. 80, mm. 85-86, beat 2 of m. 95, and on beat 2 of m. 163. [012345] is seen in the oboe part from m. 147 to beat 1 of m. 148 and again in the clarinet part from m. 151 to beat 1 of m. 152. [013579] is heard in the string section on beat 1 of m. 154, beat 1 of m. 160, and beat 2 of m. 162. The septachord set [0124579] is heard in the string section in m. 74 and on beat 2 of m. 93. The octachord set [01234689] is seen in the strings on beat 1 of m. 155 and beat 1 of m. 161.

In his interview Harbison uses the oboe and clarinet motive at the beginning of the third movement as an example of his use of major and minor thirds in his compositional technique. The ambiguity of major and minor is used in several sections in the third movement. One example starts in m. 110 in the clarinet and oboe parts. Each figure uses a minor third followed by a major third. First the oboe plays E-flat to C and E-natural to C while the clarinet plays F-sharp to A and F-sharp to A-sharp. In mm. 112-113 the figure is repeated in both parts a whole step lower. In mm. 123-124 the figure is expanded with A-sharp to F-

sharp and A-sharp to G in the oboe part, and C to E and C-sharp to E in the clarinet part. The string section also plays minor thirds in this section while the oboe and clarinet parts are resting. The first violin part has B-flat to G, the second violin has E to C-sharp, the viola part has G to E, the cello part has F-sharp to D-sharp, and the bass part has A to F-sharp. Starting in m. 126 is the second alternate fingerings section with minor thirds again in the oboe and clarinet parts. This time both the oboe and clarinet have the interval from B-flat to G and E to C-sharp, which is shown below in Example 14 below.



Example 14: Third Movement, mm. 126-129

As in the first movement the string section uses major and minor thirds with scalar motion in thirds and triadic motives. One example of this is in the first and second violin parts starting in m. 32 and later in the movement in m. 97. In m. 139 the material in the oboe and clarinet parts is very similar to the section in m. 7, with both the rhythm and pitches. The opening string tutti comes back in m. 169 followed by alternating major and minor thirds in the oboe and clarinet parts.

John Harbison's Concerto for Oboe, Clarinet, and Strings is an interesting piece to look at from an analysis standpoint. The majority of the harmonic analysis comes from ideas on extended or post-tonality. The formal analysis on

the other hand goes all the way back to the Baroque period and the concerto grosso genre. Although a lot of time has passed since then, Harbison uses his compositional influences to create a unique piece for the oboe and clarinet to have in their repertoire.

CHAPTER 4

INTERVIEWS AND ANALYSIS/PERFORMANCE CONSIDERATIONS

In studying a twentieth century composer and performers I have been fortunate to obtain interviews with John Harbison and with Sara Lambert Bloom and David Shifrin, the performers who were involved with the work from its inception. My essential questions for the composer were the following: how was the concerto received at its premieres, how would you describe your harmonic language in the concerto, what is the one Baroque affect seen in each movement of the concerto, and how does this composition compare to some of your other pieces that employ clarinet or oboe? Another set of questions was devised for the two performers including: what did you ask Harbison to do in commissioning the piece, what was your initial response to the composition and how did you feel after you worked on it and performed it, and in performing the work what are the most difficult passages in the oboe part/clarinet part and why? Before proceeding with the transcripts I will present short biographies of the two performers. At the conclusion of the interviews I will offer my own summary of what they contribute to our knowledge about the Concerto.

Sara Lambert Bloom received her Bachelor of Music degree from Oberlin College in 1966 and her Master's degree from Yale University in 1968. She was Professor of Oboe and Chamber Music at the Cincinnati College-Conservatory of

Music from 1983-1996. Following a thirty-five year career as a professional oboist, teacher, chamber music coach and advisor, and published author and essayist, Sara Bloom's second act includes establishing a career as a residential and commercial mortgage broker with Transcontinental Lending Group. A resident of South Portland, Maine, Sara continues to pursue her love of the arts in a variety of ways. Such as bringing music to one room schools in Maine as Co-Director of Maine Initiative for Creative and Collaborative Expression, serving on the Advisory Committee made up of former trustees of Chamber Music America in New York, and most recently accepting the re-appointment by Governor Baldacci to represent the Performing Arts on the Maine Tourism Commission through 2012. A 2009 graduate of Emerge Maine, an innovative non-profit organization that recruits, inspires, and trains Democratic women leaders for public service, Sara has recently assumed the position of Chair of the Product and Workforce Development Committee of the Maine Tourism Commission, currently assigned the task to complete an analysis and make recommendations to the Governor for the development of statewide comprehensive training in tourism, the state's number one industry.

The release of *Robert Bloom: The Story of a Working Musician* in July 2009 is the latest piece in her work archiving the materials of her late husband, the celebrated oboist Robert Bloom. Among the many accolades received to date, it has been written: "The service that Mrs. Bloom has rendered to our art, and by extension, to our culture is beyond measure."

Her two CDs are available at Amazon.com: *Music from Cranberry Isles* (1990) and *Sara Lambert Bloom: Premiere Chamber Works* (1994).[1]

David Shifrin is one of only two wind players to have been awarded the Avery Fisher Prize since the award's inception in 1974. Mr. Shifrin is in constant demand as an orchestral soloist, recitalist, and chamber music collaborator. He has appeared with the Philadelphia and Minnesota Orchestras as well as the Dallas, Seattle, Houston, Milwaukee, Detroit, and Denver symphonies among others in the United States, and internationally with orchestras in Italy, Switzerland, Germany, Japan, Korea, and Taiwan. In addition, he has served as principal clarinetist with the Cleveland Orchestra, American Symphony Orchestra, Honolulu Symphony, Dallas Symphony, Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra, and the New York Chamber Symphony. As a sought after chamber musician, Mr. Shifrin collaborates frequently with such distinguished ensembles and artists as the Guarneri, Tokyo, and Emerson String Quartets, Wynton Marsalis and pianists Emanuel Ax and Andre Watts. An artist member of the Chamber Society of Lincoln Center since 1989, Shifrin served as its artistic director from 1992 to 2004. David Shifrin began teaching at Yale School of Music in 1987 and was appointed Artistic Director of the Chamber Music Society of Yale and Yale's annual concert series at Carnegie Hall in September 2008. He has also served on the faculties of The Julliard School, University of Michigan, Cleveland Institute of Music, and the University of Hawaii. He was

[1] Biography provided by Sara Lambert Bloom.

awarded an honorary professorship at China's Central Conservatory in Beijing in 2007.

Mr. Shifrin's recordings on Delos, DGG, Angel/EMI, Arabesque, BMG, SONY, and CRI have gotten consistent praise and awards. He has received three Grammy nominations- for a recording with the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center of the collected chamber music of Claude Debussy, the Copland Clarinet Concerto, and Ravel's Introduction and Allegro. His recording of the Mozart Clarinet Concerto was named Record of the Year by Stereo Review. Shifrin continues to broaden the repertoire for clarinet by commissioning and championing the works of twentieth and twenty-first century American composers.

In addition to the Avery Fisher Prize, Shifrin is the recipient of a Solo Recitalists' Fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Distinguished Alumnus Award from the Music Academy of the West. At the outset of his career, he won top prize at the Munich and Geneva International Competitions. Mr. Shifrin resides in Conneticut with his wife and four children.[2]

[2] http://www.cmartists.com/artists/david-shifrin.htm (accessed October 16, 2009).

TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW WITH JOHN HARBISON

October 16, 2009

11:00 A.M., EST

KB: Are you currently doing any teaching or conducting any ensembles?

JH: *Yes, I am acting music director at Emmanuel Music in Boston, which is a chorus and orchestra that mainly does Sunday services. Bach cantatas every week and also chamber concerts and orchestral concerts. So, it's a full time conducting position. I'm teaching at MIT, just at this point coaching two or three groups a term. I think when I'm done with the Emmanuel music at the end of May I'll be teaching somewhat more at MIT.*

KB: I have read a couple of articles on the importance of contemporary music and early music to your compositions. Can you talk about how you apply those styles to your writing?

JH: *It depends on the piece, but I started conducting choruses a long time ago, and particularly German 17th-century music (Schutz) and then later Bach and I did find things in that choral writing that I was able to make use of. The large scale form of the piece, also certain kinds of use of the word rhythm to get a lot of the sort of motivic substance. And, I guess the other early music that I have been interested in at certain points is much earlier- around the time of Ciccone or*

Landino. I like certain aspects of the part writing and even the harmonic processes used.

KB: Do you consider your compositions to be atonal or a type of extended tonality?

JH: *I guess I think of them more as extended tonality.*

KB: How did you go about composing the *Concerto for Oboe, Clarinet, and Strings* after being asked by the consortium of musicians with the National Endowment for the Arts Commission?

JH: *Well, I think one of things I started with was an idea of a kind of modular piece. A piece that could be played with the quintet-sized orchestra as well as with the larger string orchestra. And, that did have a lot of influence on the kind of solo to tutti role that really comes up in the piece. The tutti in the first movement plays pretty much as a unit, a rhythmic unit. It doesn't interweave much with the soloists. I also had an idea that the two instruments would have material that would be to some degree independent and that they would become less solo as the piece went along. That was just an overall idea for the way to think of the piece. After the piece was played a friend of mine said that, particularly because his heritage is Mozart concertos where there was always one movement that was in a contrasting meter. He said the peculiarity of the*

piece was that it was all in duple metrical scheme. Which I hadn't noticed, but I think it is also part of that very sort of quite forthright kind of character this piece seems to have.

KB: Sara Bloom mentioned the idea of a consortium was somewhat new at that time, had you done many compositions like this before?

JH: *I think it was new, but I had also certainly been in discussion at that point. There was a piece also with the Association of Saxophonists I wrote for quite a bit later. I knew this was something that was starting to gather quite a lot of steam. And actually, subsequently have been involved in that sort of situation a number of times. It's obviously very good for the piece to get a chance to hear both versions.*

KB: Were you already familiar with the playing of Sara Bloom or David Shifrin?

JH: *Yes, in somewhat of a long distance way. Not absolutely in the room with it. But, yes in both cases I did know their playing. And of course they didn't play the piece together initially. Often in cases like that I would also think of the players on those instruments that I worked with on a weekly basis. It's always helpful to know to have a sound image you really do have from memory. There were a couple of Boston players, for instance, that I would have been working with very regularly whose playing style I would have also been referencing.*

KB: How was the concerto received at its premieres?

JH: *I don't remember that really well. It was a student orchestra that Paul Wolf conducted in Sarasota. I remember more instances around the performance. I remember when I arrived there were 60 mph winds blowing through the parking lot and I got off the bus and my jacket blew away across the parking lot. And a very large truck rolled over it and for the rest of the time down there I had a tire track across the back of my jacket. Which was actually sort of a nice way to remember that event. But, I'd have to say the reception of the piece, the many years it has been around, It has been performed lots of times in numerous ways. There seems to be, for reasons I can't really pick, a lot more enthusiasm for the piece in recent times. There was a performance here by a very young orchestra, which has been playing the last couple of seasons in Boston, with a big audience and the piece really seemed to grab the audience. In a way maybe it's been maturing in the right way. It does seem to go over better the longer it stays around.*

KB: As far as finding Baroque elements in the concerto, in the first movement I have found the rhythm and triadic motives of the strings and somewhat ritornello form to be reminiscent of the Baroque. What do you consider the Baroque elements of the concerto?

JH: *Yes, that certainly is one. Also, the last movement is based on what they called in the Baroque, an all over motive. That is to say there is only one essential thematic source. Everything in the last movement is really the same tune. Which I take to be something very typical of the way Baroque concerto movements originated.*

KB: What is the one Baroque affect seen in each movement of the concerto? (I believe you answered the first and last movements above).

JH: *In the second movement it is the sort of aria form where the instruments of the orchestra are really quite subordinated. I think the difference that I hear when I listen to it now is the accompanying texture is often above the players rather than below, in register. Whereas in a Baroque concerto there would really be the main accompaniment would be the grounding of the bass. There is very little bass in the second movement, which I think becomes the sound of the movement. There is a very kind of frozen sound in the orchestra. It is not a warm accompaniment. The accompaniment is somewhat disengaged. I think all the way through the piece one of the ways I was thinking was there isn't an abundance of different melodic ideas. There really is a sense of working from a single source kind of thing. Which is what I think you notice when, in a Bach cantata movement for instance, that the actual work that he does on the shaping of the piece is always at the beginning. Sort of finding out what the basic tune will do. And I remember that was pretty much the way I was seeing the piece.*

KB: What is your concept of the solo instruments in this concerto?

JH: *Well, I wasn't thinking about this at the time. But, in general with my wind writing, is sort of in that time of my composing going back to the opera I wrote in the 70's,* The Winter's Tale*. I really like the solo properties of the high registers of the wind instruments. I've always wondered whether that's because I had one orchestration class while I was in college, taught by Walter Piston, and he brought in these demonstrators. When the English horn player would say, would you like to hear the upper notes? He would look horrified and say oh no, they're useless. So, I guess I liked the idea of using a lot of the useless notes of the wind instruments. We never heard the upper register of the bass clarinet, in those demos but I knew it existed because I was listening to Eric Dolphy, jazz bass-clarinetist. But, I'm pretty sure that's why I liked writing in the upper octaves of the wind players. I don't do that as much anymore, I think I got over it.*

KB: As for the harmonic language of the piece, I have done a set class analysis and found traditional, octatonic, whole-tone, and hexatonic sets and subsets that occur in each movement. Then I have shown how these sets are transposed and transformed throughout the composition. How would you describe your harmonic language in the concerto?

JH: *Well, actually much later when I was teaching and doing an analysis with some pretty advanced students. I ended up looking at the opening of the*

Symphony of Psalms*, Stravinsky. I found discrete phrases in that piece more like you described. Each one would choose a given premise and then without really any particular rationale just move to another one. And, I think that's probably what goes on in a lot of my music. That there will be within the characterization of a phrase or a section of the piece, there will be a kind of assumption of harmonic or linear. It's not likely to be global and fixed for the piece, but just really for the situation. That piece* Symphony of Psalms *has right at the beginning a couple of absolutely diatonic sections, octatonic pattern phrases, and really high chromatic moments. All of that even before the chorus comes in.*

KB: Do you view the harmony as vertical sonorities or as a result of the contrapuntal line?

JH: *There is a vertical sort of aural assumption about what fits but with that there are going to be lots of simultaneous sounds, which are going to result from part writing. But that's something that you notice in all kinds of tonal music. Beethoven, for instance, who is just such a pure triadic composer, when the voices are moving the up and down the sonorities can be very cluster like. If you analyze the chords.*

KB: Are there elements of the piece inspired by other styles or genres in music besides the Baroque?

JH: *There's no doubt in my mind when I listen to my music from twenty to thirty years ago that like many musicians I hear the mark of the pieces I knew best when I was about twelve, thirteen, fourteen years old. So, if you knew those pieces you would I'm sure pick out traces in just about anything I've ever written. Because I was at a stage where I knew those pieces from memory. But, if I tell you what they are… you would know too much.*

KB: In my analysis I have also discussed major and minor thirds, different triads and chords found, and pitch centers in certain areas. Does tonality play an important role in the piece and how would you define that?

JH: *Yeah, the ambiguity of the major and minor third is a big factor in the piece, particularly in the last movement. Since, that is the thing that defines both character and location in tonal music. It is something I have remained interested in, in a very different way actually more recently. Particularly in recent times I have been interested in inversion and the degree to which literal inversion creates a very strong play between the major and the minor that has a systematic basis. I would say that still seems to me a really fundamental acoustical fact. It tells a lot about the way we hear. The little tune that starts the third movement even though it moves fast, I don't hear the play of major and minor thirds as ornamental, but I hear it as motivic.*

KB: As far as performance considerations what do you consider the most difficult for the ensemble as a whole, as well as in the oboe and clarinet parts?

JH: *Well, I would say the biggest factor, certainly there are passages that have always been difficult, but the biggest factor has always been tempo. Finding the most effective tempo and also the character of the second movement, which has not been so easy to find. If it has the right tempo and right character the environment for the soloist, which is fairly cold, can set them off and make their own expressive life much more effective. I would say that performance difficulties in terms of separating a good performance from a not as good performance usually has to do with the absorption of the character rather than the technical issues. And, actually the character that is the specific mood or intent of the piece is often dependent in some way on the tempo.*

KB: How does this composition compare to some of your other pieces that employ clarinet or oboe?

JH: *Well, in a broad way I guess it relates to particularly the Passacaglia movement of the Oboe Concerto. Which the relationship of the solo voice to the orchestra is a little bit more elaborate, but certainly some of the sources are similar. Also, I did the clarinet piece, the chamber piece Variations. That piece is completely engaged with the issue of the, what is a minor third relationship between the two canonic voices. The relationship in that piece with a series of*

many, many canons it becomes, just because of that choice, octatonic, like the Concerto for Oboe, Clarinet, and Strings. I guess in that way there is some connection in terms of the way the two pieces sound.

KB: Is there anything else you would like to say about the composition that I have not touched on?

JH: *I guess probably the thing I mentioned. The mystery of why the piece seems to be more communicative now than it was twenty something years ago. It's always puzzling to me. It's not just that people play it more securely, it's that people are listening differently.*

TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW WITH SARA LAMBERT BLOOM

October 3, 2009

10:30 A.M., EST

KB: Had you worked with John Harbison before this collaboration?

SLB: *No, I didn't. I knew some of his pieces and heard some of his other writing for oboe and loved it.* Snow Country*, for example. It was a new idea for the National Endowment to commission a piece in 1983. Five or six of us had to agree on the composer, so it was a consensus on who to select. We received $21,000 from National Endowment and this was one of three works. Consortium is just a great idea and we were pioneers with these pieces.*

KB: Can you explain the two premieres of the piece, yours in its orchestral form and David Shifrin's single instrument version?

SLB: *In a consortium it doesn't matter which oboe or clarinetist does the first performance. I was performing that summer at the Sarasota music festival so I did the orchestral version with clarinetist, Charles Russo. David Shifrin did his chamber music premiere with Allen Vogel.*

KB: What did you ask Harbison to do in commissioning the piece?

SLB: *I was very loose with asking him to do things, the composer can be more creative that way. All we said was that it had to have an oboe and clarinet. We were all performing in orchestras and chamber series so we asked for both versions. He made it possible for the chamber version to use a string quintet, and not to write divisi for any one voice. I remember he called me around Christmas and said he was about to go and write this piece. It was hard to write while teaching. So, I like to have the image of him in seclusion writing this piece. I think he wrote it in a month.*

KB: How were the initial performances of the concerto perceived?

SLB: *Immediately seen as a great, virtuosic piece in the repertoire, in my experience anyway.*

KB: What was your initial response to the composition and how did you feel after you worked on it and performed it?

SLB: *I loved it. I thought it was quite virtuosic writing. It was challenging. The oboe is not usually asked to play that high or that rapidly. The Oboe concerto written for William Bennett has the same challenges - the rapid virtuosity and also the lyrical virtuosity in the slow movement. I recorded it in 1993 and it got fabulous reviews because of that. Anytime I played it, it was immediate love from the audience and critics.*

KB: Harbison says this piece was intended for student performers. Do you consider this piece extremely advanced, or can it be played by students as well as professionals?

SLB: *I had a student play it at the Los Angeles festival. Sure, for very advanced, proficient students. When I was teaching maybe by the junior year or graduate school I would use it to push technique and facility. Sometimes I would choose the Martinu Oboe Concerto, but this is also one of those pieces.*

KB: What would you describe as the most difficult part for the ensemble as a whole?

SLB: *The transition from the second to the third movement is what we had to practice most when doing it without a conductor. Every movement plays itself, but that transition was the most discussed. I was most excited to play it without a conductor, had to use all of our senses: sight, sound, and I love that challenge. That's what you can do with the chamber music version.*

KB: In performing the work what are the most difficult passages in the oboe part and why?

SLB: *Probably people would say the last really high passage is tricky. I had to make up some fingerings to make that work. But really the difficulty is in the slow*

movement because it's very intricate and the long lines. It takes a lot of virtuosity to spin such a long line. I would say the comparison is playing a Bach aria, you can feel Bach in that second movement. Which is a compliment because Harbison is so influenced by Bach. It takes thought and some work to do it justice. If you have a great clarinetist it makes it more possible.

KB: There are sections in the third movement where it requires alternate fingerings. Can you tell me if that's difficult for oboe?

SLB: *No, it's not difficult. It's fun. It depends on your reeds what alternate fingerings would work. You are just trying to make a different sound and that really depends on your reed. It's very individual. So, I wouldn't say there is one specific fingering to use.*

KB: Does this piece compare to any other piece in the oboe's repertoire?

SLB: *It's twenty years before – A piece by Richard Donovan called Music for Six. He was the dean of Yale School of Music when Hindemith was there. It is for oboe, clarinet, trumpet, violin, cello, and piano. It's the grandfather of this piece - similar to the Harbison in the level of virtuosic wind/string/piano playing.*

TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW WITH DAVID SHIFRIN

October 9, 2009

11:00 A.M., EST

KB: Had you worked with John Harbison or knew of his music before this collaboration?

DS: *I had known of John Harbison as one of America's leading composers and was familiar with his wind quintet and Variations for clarinet, violin, and piano.*

KB: Can you explain your single instrument version premiere of the piece?

DS: *We played the work as a septet for oboe, clarinet, and string quintet (two violins, viola, cello, and bass). The idea was to be able to perform the work on a chamber concert or a string orchestra concert. As I recall, the string quintet version worked well with the strong players we had at Chamber Music Northwest.*

KB: How were the initial performances of the concerto perceived?

DS: *The work was well received by the audience and the performers. First performances are always a challenge with no history or precedent to draw on, but John's notation is very clear. The parts are difficult, but idiomatic. In*

addition, we had the advantage of being able to ask questions by phone during the preparations.

KB: Harbison says this piece was intended for student performers. Do you consider this piece extremely advanced, or can it be played by students as well as professionals?

DS: *I do not remember the part about student performers. But, nowadays I think it would be completely playable by students, since the level of playing is so high everywhere.*

KB: What would you describe as the most difficult part for the ensemble as a whole?

DS: *In the chamber music version, I think the most difficult challenge was getting the right sound and balance - for the strings to sound full and strong without forcing and for the oboe and clarinet to blend and/or contrast with the string sound when necessary.*

KB: In performing the work what are the most difficult passages in the clarinet part and why?

DS: *I do recall some tricky passages with quick register changes.*

KB: There are sections in the third movement where it requires alternate fingerings. Can you tell me if that is difficult for clarinet?

DS: *This is not terribly difficult, once you decide which fingerings you will use that are effective.*

KB: Does this piece compare to any other piece in the clarinet's repertoire?

DS: *This is a fairly unique piece, given the instrumentation.*

KB: Is there anything I have not touched on about your relationship with the composer or other soloists or in performing the piece?

DS: *Only that I am happy to be reminded of this wonderful work and it gives me the incentive to look for opportunities to program it again.*

Summary of Main Points and Suggestions for Further Study

Both performers agreed that Harbison's Concerto for Oboe, Clarinet, and Strings has very idiomatic writing for the instruments. However, there are several aspects of difficulty for both the clarinet and oboe. Mr. Shifrin mentioned in his interview there were "tricky" register changes in the clarinet part, seen mostly in the first movement of the concerto. One example of this is the section starting at m. 63 where both solo instruments are required to play sixteenth notes and intervals as wide as two octaves.

In her interview, Sara Bloom mentioned that the most difficult aspect for the oboe in this concerto is the long lines of the second movement. Both Sara Bloom and John Harbison compared this movement to a Bach aria. Tempo selection, breathing, phrasing, and an excellent legato are very important in establishing the proper character of this slow movement. In addition to the oboe and clarinet, the first violin has a soloistic role throughout the movement. Although the movement is slow, the solo voices have fast note values including sixteenth notes, sex-tuplet figures, and thirty-second notes. The unison writing between the two solo instruments will certainly present intonation challenges. (See mm. 14-16 where the clarinet plays a sounding high D ending on pianissimo and in m. 16 the oboe also picks up the same pitch).

Mrs. Bloom also mentioned in her interview that some performers may view the biggest technical challenge for the oboe being the last high passage of the piece. This is the section near the end of the third movement starting at m.

139, where the oboe and clarinet play sixteenth notes, mostly in unison. With the movement marked Furioso and the tempo at 132 beats per minute, this makes for a very rapid, technical passage. In addition, both of the parts move upward into the high altissimo range for the instruments. The oboe part goes up to F6 above the staff, which is very high for the instrument and may require some unconventional fingerings. This section is also difficult for the clarinet, going up to written high C7 and C-sharp7 (sounding B-flat6 and B-natural6). Like the oboe part this requires some unconventional fingerings and is higher than the normal range of the clarinet. In this movement there are also two sections that Harbison marks in the score to use alternate fingerings. Some alternate fingerings are useful for technical reasons. In contemporary oboe and clarinet music they can be used to increase the variety of tone color and speed of passage work.[3] In m. 126 there are tremelos written in the clarinet part, where the effect is accomplished by adding and raising fingers in the right hand. The resulting sound is similar to string tremolos with the addition of a slight pitch variation as the fingers are lowered.[4]

John Harbison's Concerto for Oboe, Clarinet, and Strings is a unique addition to the oboe's and clarinet's repertoires. The instrumentation allows it to be both a soloistic concerto for each instrument and a chamber work. The Baroque and concerto grosso elements of the piece combined with the post-tonal harmonies make it a very exclusive piece. Although the oboe has many

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[3] Geoffrey Burges and Bruce Haynes, *The Oboe* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2004), 286.

[4] D. Ray McClellan, Personal communication. October 12th, 2009.

important concertos from the Baroque period, the clarinet was still in its infant stages of development during this style period. This concerto is the clarinet's introduction to the concerto grosso texture it was born too late to have enjoyed.

If there is any future research done on Harbison's Concerto for Oboe, Clarinet, and Strings it could focus on a more detailed look at performance techniques for the oboe, clarinet, and string parts. For the analysis I took the approach of set-class theory, but there are other ways the piece could be segmented and analyzed. The people interviewed for this project were a part of a larger consortium of musicians, so others could be asked about their involvement with the commission. It would also be interesting to compare this concerto to other pieces of Harbison's, such as his Oboe Concerto or his *Variations* for clarinet, violin, and piano.

In looking at John Harbison's work list we see such a prolific and varied compositional output. He has added much to the world of contemporary music including: works for orchestra, wind ensemble, large instrumental ensemble, soloist and large instrumental ensemble, smaller chamber groups, solo works, solo keyboard works, and his music for voice including over seventy works for opera, choral, voice with orchestra, and chamber/solo works.[5] Harbison's Concerto for Oboe, Clarinet, and Strings is like nothing else in the clarinet's repertoire. His past influences and modern compositional style create a contemporary and post-tonal concerto with qualities reminiscent of the Baroque period incorporated throughout the work. This makes the concerto a unique and

[5]http://www.schirmer.com/Popup.aspx?moduleDefid=100040&ComposerID_0=627, (accessed August 5, 2009).

valuable addition to both the oboe and clarinet's repertoire. By interviewing the performers who commissioned and premiered the concerto, it is obvious that it is a well-written and challenging piece to play and perform. It requires a talented musician to play both the very fast and high virtuosic passages in the outer movements, as well as the lyrical virtuosity needed to play the long lines in the aria-like slow movement. In speaking with the composer it was interesting to hear his thoughts on the start of the piece and about his past experiences and musical influences, which then help influence his compositional style. Mr. Harbison believes the Concerto for Oboe, Clarinet, and Strings is getting played more often and is more communicative today than it was twenty years ago, mainly because people are now listening differently. I hope this continues and that more people are introduced to this unique piece of music, as well as other works by John Harbison.

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APPENDIX A

LETTERS FROM SARA BLOOM

October 4, 2009

Dear Katie,

Here are some contributions to your thesis research; particularly I thought that you might enjoy framing the enclosed copy of the handwritten title page to display at your oral presentation (if you are required to make one).

Also, the liner notes of the CD may make a nice visual. I emailed you one of the nice reviews the CD received--you could probably find more through an online search.

So, just to review as accurately as I can recall, I formed the consortium and wrote the NEA grant in 1982 while we were still living in New Haven, where I was founding director of the Wall Street Chamber Players and the International Chamber Soloists, a series I created in NYC. We were awarded $21,000 to commission 3 new works in Jan 1983, when former oboist Adrian Gnam was Director of the Music Program of the NEA. I'm not sure if Adrian was the brains behind the consortium idea at the NEA, but I know that it was one of the first such programs in America and we were among the pioneers. (I think Adrian conducts right there in Macon if you want to speak with him as well.) In the last few years I contributed money to a consortium headed by Boston oboist Peggy Pearson to commission an oboe work by Yehudi Wyner and this past year to a consortium headed by bassoonist Richard Cramey (U of Arkansas) to commission Bill Douglas to write a work for fl-ob-bsn-piano (even though I am no longer playing).

The three works we commissioned were:

String Trio (1983) by Paul Chihara, who was the recommendation of James Buswell, violinist

A work of undetermined instrumentation by John Harbison (to include an oboe and a clarinet)

A work for oboe, French horn and string quintet by Andre Previn, who gave us a letter of commitment for the application but then wrote every year saying that he was quite enthusiastic about the invitation but was too busy. Finally the clarinetist David Shifrin, by then Artistic Director of the Chamber Music Society at Lincoln Center as well as Chamber Music Northwest, and I determined to let this idea go and switch composers.

Yehudi Wyner recommended his former Yale pupil, Alvin Singleton, who fell in love with Bryan's poetry and wrote *Sing to the Sun* for oboe, clarinet, viola, piano, percussion, children's chorus, and poet/narrator on the poetry of the great octogenarian African American poet Ashley Bryan in 1995. This was the most performed and recorded work of the 3, receiving premieres at Chamber Music Northwest, Lincoln Center Chamber Music Society, in Cincinnati and in Bar Harbor; it was recorded by Chamber Music Northwest (included on their 25th anniversary CD), and in Atlanta and Houston, always with Ashley Bryan as narrator of his own poetry but using various musicians. I performed it only once (in Cinci in a residency with Alvin and the dancer/actor Michael Williams) at Cincinnati Day School but never recorded it.

I give you this detail to make the point that the consortium commissioning idea is an incredible vehicle that maximizes grant money and can also be organized without a granting organization, just by getting musicians together to contribute!

Prior to commissioning John Harbison I never met him nor had I performed his works, but he was the unanimous choice of all the consortium members. I knew and loved his recently composed *Snow Country* for oboe and string quintet and of course his landmark woodwind quintet (1979).

John was brought to the Sarasota Music Festival for a week's residency in June 1985 when Charles Russo and I performed the orchestral version premiere. I also met and worked with John when Joel Hoffman and I brought him to Cincinnati as our guest artist for the first summer session of Music X. He did not participate in the recording session of 1993.

John wrote the work in Jan 1985 at his home in Wisconsin, telling me that he worked best when he alternated composing with teaching. He chose the exact instrumentation and it was his idea to write a concerto that could be performed both with orchestra and as a chamber work (essentially by not writing any string voice divisi).

This piece was probably a step towards John's composing the masterful *Concerto for Oboe* for William Bennett, Prin Oboist of the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra, in 1991. (Bill was a pupil of my late husband, Robert Bloom, at Yale BA and Juilliard M Mus.)

I will list names and contact info for the other oboists and clarinetists involved with the commissioning of the *Concerto for Oboe and Clarinet* on the enclosed title page.

As far as challenges to an oboist, a work like this requires a reed loose enough to "break" acoustically quickly enough to navigate the passagi but sophisticated enough to do the gorgeous lyrical writing justice. Too often oboists who can pull off quick passage work have emptied out their reeds of most resistance and then are left with generic melodic playing that is not nuanced or shaded with a range of colors and speeds of sound.

Re other difficulties: the rapidity and high tessitura of the last passages and the do-wop effects require alternate fingerings, but that is just fun to work out. I found the virtuosic melodic writing of the slow movement and its cadenza the most challenging, in the way that a Bach aria is challenging. But then again, it is heartening to read the reviews, calling these passages "highlights," so the work was well worth it.

The "grandfather" of this piece was the work titled *Music for Six*, composed by the Yale composer Richard Donovan. It was premiered c. 1965 by the six major faculty members of the Yale School of Music whose playing it was intended to celebrate: Robert Bloom, oboe; Keith Wilson, clarinet; Robert Nagel, trumpet; Broadus Erle, violin; Aldo Parisot, cello; and Ward Davenny, piano. As I told you in our conversation, Donovan was the Dean of the Yale School of Music, responsible for Hindemith's appointment there, and was himself a wonderful composer and teacher. (He was Yehudi Wyner's teacher, a parallel to Harbison studying at Harvard and Princeton) I hope to release a CD of the live premiere of that 40+ year old work to inspire that level of virtuosic wind/string/piano performance (unconducted) and to inspire composers to write to that level, as I feel that Harbison also achieved in his *Concerto for Oboe and Clarinet*.

Re it being an appropriate repertory piece for students during my era: in the 1970s the pieces that were selected to push the advanced student oboist to the final polish of musicality and technique were Concerti by Mozart, Vivaldi, Vaughn Williams, Strauss, Martinu, then the newer works by Corigliano, Harbison (oboe concerto), Dorati, and others. This work also serves that goal well. William Wielgus, a member of my DMA class at CCM, performed the work at the LA Philharmonic summer program for advanced students in the late 1980s prior to his appointment to the oboe section of the Washington National Symphony. It certainly deserves a high ranking in wind repertoire in general and I am so pleased to participate in your doctoral thesis work, knowing that you will contribute to the continued appreciation of this great work.

Please don't hesitate to follow up with any questions you may have and all good wishes for your successful completion of the doctorate and your transition to a full time life as a musician.

October 16, 2009

Dear Katie,

I am so pleased to learn that you have completed interviews with David Shifrin and John Harbison. For the record, here are some points of reference for anyone interested in further comments from the principals of this project:

1. Charles Neidich is the clarinetist who recorded the work with me for Centaur. He is a member of the faculty at Juilliard and several other schools; his phone # is: (212) 781-0820 which he shares with his wife Ayako, also a fine clarinetist.

2. Javier Arias, the cellist of the Amernet String Quartet, is also a very articulate person who could share his thoughts re the joys and challenges of the piece, particularly the string writing, and also discuss how it is to perform the work without conductor. Javier is a member of the faculty at Florida International University: ariasj@fiu.edu.

3. Paul Wolfe was Artistic Director of the Sarasota Music Festival when John Harbison was invited as composer in residence there during the week that we premiered the orchestral version, which Paul conducted. I'm sure Paul would be willing to discuss the piece as well as give his insights about John, about the joys and challenges of the orchestral writing and, being a violinist, about the specifics re the string writing. Additionally, Paul would be a good source of general information about audience receptivity, about John's work with students, and other related topics. Paul is retired from that position but still a very vital part of the musical scene in Florida and Maine. His phone number in Sarasota is: (941) 355-0766.

4. William Wielgus, the second oboist of the Washington National Symphony in DC, could speak about his experience performing the work as a student; while enrolledd in the DMA program as a member of my oboe class at the Cincinnati College Conservatory of Music, Bill won a competition at the LA Philharmonic Institute one summer and was invited to perform the Concerto at the Festival in the late 1980s.

In addition to your interviews with me, David Shifrin, and John Harbison, speaking with another clarinetist, a conductor, a string player, and a student oboist would round out your research beautifully for anyone looking to delve deeper into the origins of what one of the reviewers of my CD called "a substantial work by one of America's best living composers," going on to say in his review for the American Record Guide: *The opening of Harbison's Concerto for oboe, clarinet and strings is unforgettable. Even better is the long-lined, melismatic lyricism of the central Larghetto which lingers in the memory as the highest high point" of the group of premiere chamber works I recorded for this

release.

All good wishes for the successful completion of your dissertation, for the successful completion of your doctorate, and for the successful launch of your fulltime professional career in music!

Best regards, Sara Bloom
207.266.8089

APPENDIX B

REVIEWS FOR JOHN HARBISON'S CONCERTO FOR OBOE, CLARINET, AND STRINGS

HARBISON: *Snow Country*; *Chorale Cantata*; Concerto for Oboe, Clarinet, and Strings Dawn Upshaw, Lorraine Hunt, Metamorphosen Chamber Orchestra *et al.*

The 1984 Concerto for Oboe, Clarinet, and Strings is far more rhythmically lively in its outer movements, and I find myself admiring Harbison's capacity in fast music to create real harmonic motion and to use reams of notes that all feel right (i.e., none are gratuitous surface for textural purposes only).[1]

JOHN HARBISON: Due Libri dei Mottetti di Montale; Concerto for Oboe, Clarinet, & Strings; Piano Sonata No. 1; Mirabai Songs – Lorraine Hunt Lieberson, mezzo-soprano/ Georgine Resick, mezzo-soprano/ Peggy Pearson, oboe/ Jo-Ann Sternberg, clarinet/ Robert Shannon & Warren Jones, piano/ Greenleaf Chamber Players/ Metamorphosen Chamber Orchestra/ Scott Yoo, conductor – Bridge 9200, 71:48

The Clarinet and Oboe Concerto is a three-movement work that, in true Baroque style, retains only one basic emotional tone in each movement. Harbison states in the notes that it was a great pleasure for him to bring the clarinet, an instrument that missed the Baroque by just a few years, into this sort of style. Each instrument, and the orchestra, is a true independent partner, and the interaction of the three in this 15-minute work is carefully crafted and delightful to hear.[2]

Music of John Harbison, Volume 1

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[1] Harbison: *Snow Country*; *Chorale Cantata*; *Concerto for Oboe, Clarinet, and Strings*; Dawn Upshaw, Lorraine Hunt, Metamorphosen Chamber Orchestra *et al,* by Robert Carl, *Fanfare* (May-June 1999).

[2] http://www.bridgerecords.com/pages/catalog/9200.htm (accessed October 14, 2009).

The three movements of the "Concerto for oboe, clarinet, and strings" are high-profile character pieces and Peggy Pearson and Jo-Ann Sternberg, accompanied by the Metamorphosen Chamber Orchestra, conducted by Scott Yoo, perform with conviction and high spirits. Bridge's sound quality is consistently transparent and vivid.[3]

Ensemble shows exuberance from the start: The Boston Globe

John Harbison's 1985 Concerto for Oboe, Clarinet, and Strings played to the ensemble's strengths by filling in what Copland leaves blank: Harbison's meters course with wall-to-wall activity. The two soloists carry on a dense dialogue of tangled counterpoint; the orchestra belies any accompanimental role with loquacious vigor. It's a terrific piece, reveling in its own information overload. Oboist (and longtime Harbison advocate) Peggy Pearson and clarinetist Denexxel Domingo were excellent, feeding off each other's virtuosic insistence, while the performance mined the music's monolithic qualities for dark-hued drama.[4]

Discovery Ensemble on Phoenix: The Boston Phoenix

This was followed by John Harbison's exhilarating 1985 Concerto for Oboe, Clarinet, and Strings, with oboist Peggy Pearson (who later appeared in the orchestra in Mozart's Jupiter Symphony) going toe-to-toe with the gifted young clarinettist Denexxel Domingo. The concerto begins "Declamando" and ends "Furioso," but the slow middle movement is caressing, erotically tender. (I once referred to this concerto as "scenes from a marriage.") It's an irresistible piece and got a breathtaking performance.[5]

Harbison "Bout of Un-relatedness" Between Two Chestnuts: Boston Musical Intelligencer

In our ordinary concert experience, a concerto is a dialogue, the soloist or solo group exchanging musical information with the accompanying orchestra; but etymologically, from its Latin roots, a concerto is really a struggle, or at least a contest. John Harbison's Concerto for Oboe, Clarinet, and Strings, composed in 1985, answers to the second description, a "bout of un-relatedness" as he put it, between the two solo instruments individually, and between the paired

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[3] Music of John Harbison Volume 1 from Bridge Records, by Stephen Eddins, *All Music Guide.*

[4] Ensemble shows exuberance from the start, by Matthew Guerrieri, *The Boston Globe,* (Jan 2009).

[5] Anniversaries and other occasions, by Lloyd Schwartz, *The Boston Phoenix,* (Jan 2009).

instruments and the “unwelcoming” strings. The result, at least to this listener hearing the work for the first time, was a work in which individual instrumental sound was de-emphasized in favor of an overall texture in which the blend is inescapably spicy.

One could not call this an expressive work; indeed, and by contrast, the most expressive and richly melodic writing was in the orchestral accompaniment during the Larghetto, while the oboe and clarinet were silent bystanders. In the outer movements there was plenty of activity for soloists playing together, and much of this was in the high register, pushing even higher; the middle register of both instruments was heard less often, and the overtone-rich low registers hardly at all. The orchestra for its part offered a variety of supporting textures: an alla marcia-like dotted pattern in the first movement that became a steady beat of single notes, like an impending crisis, in the second; then, a succession of fortissimo chordal shouts from the first movement reappeared with greater vigor in the third, with the rapid passagework of the solo instruments fighting at every step. What organized the total sound was harmony: though this music is intensely chromatic at nearly every moment, one never totally lost a background sense of diatonic C major at important junctures. In the slow movement, there was even a welcoming G pedal as in a classical concerto, introducing a cadenza for the two soloists; and at the end of the work, the cadenza formula expanded to include a bluesy dominant chord on G with B flat and B together, before the final dissonant tonic on C.

There are established repertories, not large ones, of concerti for oboe or clarinet, but very few concerti for two different woodwinds. Right now I think of Richard Strauss’s Duet Concertino for Clarinet and Bassoon, a thoroughly 19th-century piece written in 1947. Harbison’s double concerto is of an entirely different stripe, a well-balanced and exciting misalliance that symbolizes the heterogeneity of our concert life today — and that works very well indeed.

Peggy Pearson has been one of Boston’s most beloved oboists for many years, and she met the challenge of not-always-grateful partnership in this concerto with fleet fingers and brilliant tone. It was a pleasure to be introduced to an outstanding clarinetist, Denexxel Domingo, who played his demanding part fearlessly and with matchless skill.[6]

American Record Guide, 1995

A superlative program of new music for an ancient double reed, beautifully performed by Sara Lambert Bloom and friends.-a very welcome group of eight first recordings and it's all just music (thank goodness) with lots of lively ideas and inventive instrumental combinations superbly performed. The opening of Harbison's Concerto for oboe, clarinet and strings-a substantial work by one of America's best living composers-is unforgettable. Even better is the long-lined,

[6] Harbison “Bout of Un-relatedness” Between Two Chestnuts, by Mark de Voto, *The Boston Musical Intelligencer* (Jan 2009).

melismatic lyricism of the central Larghetto, which lingers in the memory as the highest high point.[7]

[7] The American Record Guide, (September/October, 1995).