

BÉLA BARTÓK'S CONCERTO FOR ORCHESTRA

WORLDS CONTENDING:
BÉLA BARTÓK'S CONCERTO FOR ORCHESTRA

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Abstract

Although the Concerto for Orchestra is Bartók's largest orchestral composition and one of the last works, it has received comparatively little attention in the scholarly literature. One reason for this may be the suggestion that it is artistically inferior, a compromise for the sake of financial success and public acceptance. This position is challenged through an examination of the circumstances surrounding the commission of the work, and its relation to Bartók's biography.

The main body of the thesis deals with the music itself in a comparison of the strengths and weaknesses of nine analytical approaches--the extent of serious criticism on the Concerto. Some of these analyses are more successful than others in discussing the work in a meaningful way. More importantly, the interaction of these analytical methods allows for the emergence of a pattern in the music which is not evident to the same degree in any of the individual analyses. The interaction of these diverse approaches to the Concerto, which both confirm and contradict each other at various times, provides a wider analytical perspective through which it becomes possible to suggest that the Concerto for Orchestra is characterized by a dynamic principle of conflict or "Worlds Contending," from the title of a poem by Bartók. Thus, an understanding of the work is heightened by the extension of the analytical perspective.

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Preface

That Bartók has had a profound influence on composition in the twentieth century is a statement on which there is wide agreement. The subject of his style, on the other hand, has remained controversial, often perplexing. Part of the diversity found in Bartók criticism stems from the lack of shared assumptions about his music and, therefore, a single method by which all his music can be analyzed. While some attempts have been made to subsume Bartók's entire oeuvre under one analytical system, none of these approaches have emerged as dominant. Another situation in Bartók criticism is that some of his works have been analyzed numerous times while others have been generally overlooked by music scholars. In his recent Bartók bibliography, András Wilhelm observes that "literature on the string quartets continues to increase in scope, whereas other genres are deemed virtually unworthy of the analysts' attention."¹

The Concerto for Orchestra is one work which suffers from comparative neglect. One reason for this may be the view, expressed in some of the criticism dealing with the Concerto, that this piece constitutes a compromise of Bartók's compositional integrity for the sake of financial success and public acceptance. Ironically, this view is reflected most often in sources which do not devote enough space to a thorough analysis of the work; therefore, the discussions tend to be superficial, descriptive analyses.

There are only eight sources which analyze the Concerto for Orchestra at any length, which is surprising given the stature of the work in Bartók's oeuvre; it is the largest orchestral work, one of the last works, and it occupies a special place in the output since it was the first of Bartók's American compositions, breaking a four-year compositional silence. It has traditionally been a very popular work, partially because of its association with Bartók's temporary recovery from leukemia, and because it seemed to coincide with a renaissance in his career as a musician. Despite criticisms that this work was a product of Bartók's artistic compromise for the sake of money and popularity, I believe that this composition is an important one and has not received the critical attention it deserves.

At the same time, the comparative dearth of material on this composition presents a certain advantage. It enables a comprehensive discussion of the body of critical writings on this work. Because of the diversity of approaches to Bartók criticism, a comparison of these analytical approaches is valuable both as a means of investigating this work in more depth and, also, as a framework for discussing the validity and success of various analytical methods as applied to the music of Bartók. With these ideas in mind, this thesis presents the analytical observations of nine writers (the eight analyses plus the theory of Ernő Lendvai²).

The first section of the thesis consists of an introduction to the work: biographical background, circumstances concerning the composition of the work, and some important critical issues that have surrounded the work. This section functions as background information for the main body of the thesis, which examines the various analytical approaches, including details of specific analytical points made and a critical assessment of each analysis based on its objectives and approach.

In comparing these analyses, my aim is twofold: first, to explore the diversity of analytical methods; and secondly, to employ the advantages of this diversity towards a richer, more comprehensive understanding of the Concerto for Orchestra.

Notes

¹András Wilhelm, "A Bartók Bibliography," New Hungarian Quarterly 22 (1981), 8:50.

²Although Lendvai does not discuss the Concerto at any length, his analytical approach to Bartók is significant.

Part I: Introduction

The concerto is the product of a gloomy period in the composer's life. Bartók has not been well in recent months; nor has he been especially successful (if repeated performances are what make success). And when Dr. Koussevitsky through his music foundation approached him to commission this work, Bartók is said to have felt himself incapable of going through with the project. It may be reading things into the work which are not there, but the feeling of increasing optimism, of increasing strength and vigor is strongly conveyed in this work, and I have more than a suspicion that it is highly personal, even autobiographical music.¹

The sentimental tone of this review of the première of the Concerto for Orchestra has characterized much of the criticism of this composition, often overshadowing musical concerns. Consequently, the romanticization of the Concerto for Orchestra as a symbol of Bartók's improving health and reviving career, and as a tribute to Hungary, has probably contributed to its reputation in some quarters as a composition of artistic compromise. Naturally, the romanticization of the events surrounding the Concerto for Orchestra was inspired by actual events in Bartók's life: his yearning for Hungary and his concern over the political situation; his consequent unhappiness in New York compounded by ill health and financial concerns; the fact that Bartók

had been unable or unwilling to compose anything for four years.

While biographical details should never be permitted to distort an understanding of the music, it *is* important to be aware of the circumstances surrounding the commission, composition and first performance of a work, especially when these details are as significant as they are in the case of the Concerto for Orchestra. The following section will attempt to untangle the circumstances surrounding the Concerto for Orchestra (including the biographical details of Bartók's life in America) from the web of myths that has enveloped it.

A. Biographical Background

Bartók's emigration to the United States in October 1940 was not the result of a hasty decision; nor was it conceived by him as a permanent event. Thoughts of leaving Hungary had been entertained by Bartók as early as 1919 when, after considerable political upheaval, Horthy became regent of the monarchy. In a letter to his mother, Bartók stated:

So long as we remain isolated and continue to find ourselves in what amounts to a state of siege, it will be impossible to do anything. But I have been making what enquiries I can in 3 different countries about the chances of making a living . . .²

But Bartók also had a deep attachment to Hungary and its people and he was especially loath to leave his mother Paula. All these attachments prevented him from executing his plans to emigrate.

In 1938, the political situation in Hungary again became critical. With the annexation of Austria, the Nazis were able to gain greater control over cultural life, including the A.K.M. (the association of composers to which Bartók belonged) and Universal-Edition (Bartók's publisher). Bartók reacted to these events with sorrow and alarm. In a letter from April 13, 1938, he wrote of

the most terrible prospect. That is the imminent danger that Hungary will surrender to this regime of thieves and murderers. The only question is--when

and how? And how I can then go on living in such a country or--which means the same thing--working, I simply cannot conceive. As a matter of fact, I would feel it my duty to emigrate, so long as that were possible.³

This desire to oppose the evils of Nazism which Bartók felt so keenly was, however, counter-balanced by an equally powerful force--apprehension about life in a strange country. The letter continues:

But--even in the most favourable circumstances--to have to earn my living in some foreign country (to start toiling at the age of 58, to begin, say, teaching, and to be wholly dependent on it) would be immensely difficult and would cause me such distress of mind that I can hardly bear to think of it.⁴

Over the next two years, Bartók wrestled with the dilemma created by his conflicting inclinations, making discreet enquiries about emigration while denying rumours that he was to leave Hungary. The "stalemate" was broken, sadly enough, by the death of his mother in December 1939. In his biography of Bartók, Halsey Stevens suggests that, with the death of Paula Bartók, "the greatest tie which bound him [Bartók] to Hungary was broken, [and] there was nothing to prevent Bartók's leaving Europe."⁵ While it is true that a major obstacle to emigration was removed, Bartók was still faced with concerns about the manner in which he was to support himself and about the uncertainties of an unknown land. Bartók's concert tour of the United States in the

spring of 1940 served to relieve some anxiety about the nature of life in the United States.⁶

During the tour, Bartók learned of the existence of a collection of Yugoslavian folk-song recordings made in 1934-5 by the late Milman Parry, a professor at Harvard. Albert Lord, who had assisted Parry on the expedition, was writing a book on the texts, but no one had yet studied the music of these songs. The bulk of Parry's collection consisted of heroic poems, also called epic-songs. Bartók, however, was more interested in the "women's songs," and it was this material which he transcribed and analyzed under the auspices of Columbia University. Columbia was able to finance the project with a grant from the Alice M. Ditson Fund. This arrangement was both financially and personally opportune for Bartók. Through it, he could be assured of a means of financial support; moreover, the Milman Parry collection filled a void which had existed in his own collection of folk-music. In a letter, Bartók revealed his excitement over the project: "material such as this can be found no where else in the world, . . . this is what was so badly lacking to me [sic] over in Europe."⁷

Consequently, Benjamin Suchoff portrays Bartók's emigration in this light:

Although his economic future--in a foreign land--surely must have then seemed precarious, the opportunity of at long last coming into contact with recorded autochthonous Serbo-Croatian musical folklore provided Bartók, now

fifty-nine years old, with the strength to take this bold step.⁸

Shortly after Bartók's trip to the U.S. in the spring of 1940, Boosey and Hawkes began to make arrangements for a lengthier tour during the following winter and to try to secure an academic position for him. Thus, it seemed that sufficient opportunity was available to enable Bartók to leave Hungary for America. The following October, Bartók and his wife left Hungary to live in America for an unspecified period.

Although an aura of permanence was lent to the Bartóks' departure for America in October 1940 by the formality of a farewell concert, there is no indication that their sojourn in the U.S. was intended to be permanent. It seems likely that even Bartók was not certain how long he would remain in the U.S. On different occasions, Bartók referred to the length of their stay as "perhaps for several years,"⁹ "several months,"¹⁰ and "a longer period."¹¹ In his letters from the U.S., Bartók made it clear that he still intended to return to Hungary even though the possibility of such was becoming increasingly remote.

Owing to a variety of 'indescribable' circumstances, our return to Hungary has once more receded into the misty future.¹²

Furthermore, Bartók was elected to the Parliament in Budapest in 1945, possibly on the assumption that his return was imminent with the end of World War II. On the other hand,

this event may have been purely symbolic. Three others were elected on the same occasion: all were exiles.¹³

Having made the decision to become a "voluntary refugee,"¹⁴ as Bartók once described himself, and move to the United States, Bartók was faced with a dilemma complementary to that which he experienced in Hungary. Whereas he had felt compelled by his political conscience (and yet was reluctant for personal reasons) to leave Hungary, once he had settled in America, he found himself longing to return to his country even though such a move was now nearly impossible. In the following letter, Bartók expresses this dilemma:

We have been receiving some extremely depressing news from Hungary: appalling devastations, terrible misery, chaos threatening . . . As I see it, for the time being one cannot even think of returning to Hungary. Nor is there any means of doing so--neither transport nor (Russian) permit. But even if there were means, in my opinion it would be better to await developments. Heaven knows how many years it will be before Hungary can pull herself together in some measure (if at all). And yet I, too, would like to return, for good -----¹⁵

Bartók's letters from the U.S. are peppered with statements of powerless concern such as the following: "we all are very much worried about the situation in Hungary and especially in Budapest, and are cursing the Germans; but this does not give any remedy."¹⁶

It should be stressed that Bartók's homesickness was not simply a longing to return to the Hungary of the 1940s. Just as emigration to the U.S. was not really a satisfactory

solution to his discontent with the political developments in Hungary, Bartók's homesickness would not have been cured by returning to Budapest. The Hungary to which he longed to return had been lost forever by the political developments of the 1930s and 40s. In the U.S., he continued to suffer anguish over the destruction of Hungary (as he viewed it)--but at least his emigration afforded the opportunity of personal safety and staging a form of protest.

Bartók's protest against Fascism had begun ten years earlier when an incident involving Toscanini inspired Bartók to voice his disapproval. In Bologna, on May 15, 1931, Toscanini was attacked by an "unspeakable gang" of young pro-Fascists after having refused to begin one of his concerts with Giovinezza, which would have caused "the concert suddenly to take on a gala or political character."¹⁷ In addition to being beaten, Toscanini suffered the humiliation of being publicly insulted and threatened by the gang, which gathered, later, below his hotel window. The next day, his passport was confiscated and his home was put under surveillance.

Outraged by this event, Bartók submitted the following resolution at a meeting of the New Hungarian Music Society [U.M.Z.E.]:

1. The U.M.Z.E. [New Hungarian Music Society] was deeply shocked and indignant at the news of the grave insult suffered by Arturo Toscanini. The Society assures him of its wholehearted sympathy and

solidarity and offers him its utmost admiration and regard.

2. The U.M.Z.E. views with concern the interference with artistic life by factors outside the arts, factors which do not even respect the worldwide prestige of a Toscanini. The Society therefore believes that the time has come to raise the problem of defensive action.

The U.M.Z.E. addresses a circular letter to all divisions of the I.S.C.M. [International Society for Contemporary Music] and asks the drafting of proposals concerning the integrity and autonomy of the arts, which are to be presented at the convention in July at Oxford. It urges the central presidium to prepare the conference and to contact other musical and, if necessary, literary organizations for their support in the creation of a worldwide organization for the institutional protection of the freedom of art.¹⁸

January 23, 1933 was the last time that Bartók performed in Germany and, in 1937, he forbade broadcasts of his music on radio stations which could be received in Germany and Italy. Perhaps the most poignant evidence of Bartók's deep-seated antipathy to fascism in all its forms is to be found in a clause of his will which reads:

If after my death it should be desired to name a street after me or locate a memorial tablet which bears any relation to me in a public place, then it is my wish that as long as the former Oktogon Tér [square] and former Körönd in Budapest are named after those men whose name they bear at present [Mussolini and Hitler, respectively], and moreover, as long as there is any square or street in Hungary named after these two men, no square, street or public building should be named after me in this country, and no memorial tablet connected with me should be placed in any public place.¹⁹

Given the circumstances of Bartók's arrival in America as a "voluntary refugee," mourning his own country and intimidated and confused by the one in which he found himself, it is not difficult to understand why he was unhappy in New York.

If Bartók's last years were characterized by hardship and illness, it was not true of his entire stay. Even though Bartók and his wife arrived in New York almost two months *before* their luggage and had to cope with the unfamiliarity of a new city and foreign language, Bartók's initial account of life in New York was quite positive. Describing their Forest Hills apartment, he writes:

The streets are wide, we can also see forests, fields and lakes; there is a great deal of traffic, but it is not noisy, only the subway trains rumble every 5 minutes. We have shops and every kind of amenity . . . ²⁰

Later in the letter he confesses:

We had a certain amount of trouble in learning how to use various electric and gas appliances--cork-screws, tin-openers, etc., also with the means of transport; but we manage fairly well now. ²¹

In a letter from April 2, 1941, Bartók writes of the things he had "been unable so far to get used to: human beings ruminating like cows (every second person is chewing gum); railway carriages in semi-darkness; the cheque-book

system."²² But these concerns have an air of levity rather than serious grievance.

By May 1941, however, Bartók had apparently reversed his initially favourable opinion of the Forest Hills flat. In explanation of his move to the Bronx, he claimed that the Forest Hills apartment

was unsuitable in every way. It was a large apartment house, and we were piano-played and radio-blasted from right and left; a lot of noise came in from the street night and day; every 5 minutes we heard the rumble of the subway, which made the very walls shake.²³

The tone of this letter is much darker and Bartók concludes it by the ironic observation that

It is just as well I wasn't over there [Hungary] on March 25th [his birthday], or I should have had to appear everywhere, and that--as you know--is something I dislike. Over here, I had no such worries, for apart from 5 people who cabled me greetings, nobody cared a damn about March 25th.²⁴

Whether it was a source of irritation or concern to Bartók or not (this question will be discussed on pp. 39 ff.), his impact on the American musical scene was less than profound. Initially he was welcomed to the U.S. with enthusiasm: he gave a number of concerts in 1941 including a tour which brought him to St. Louis, Denver, Provo, San Francisco, Seattle, Kansas City and Detroit; on November 25, 1940, he was granted an honorary doctorate from Columbia University; and on January 20, 1941, the Kolisch Quartet gave the world première of his Sixth String Quartet. Also, as

discussed above, special arrangements were made so that Bartók could investigate the Milman Parry collection of Yugoslavian folk-songs, which was located at Columbia University.

It was shortly after the Bartóks moved to their home in the Bronx (May 1941) that their situation worsened. Béla Bartók developed bursitis in his left shoulder in August, and he faced some anxiety regarding his position at Columbia. According to Benjamin Suchoff,

Bartók was under the impression that his Columbia University appointment involved permanence He was not informed that it was to be a temporary research fellowship of a kind usually given to doctoral candidates, nor that it was financed by a special fund that did not permit even renewal, let alone permanence.²⁵

In fact, the position was renewed several times, and Bartók was able to work from March 1941 until December 1942, but there was always a threat of termination at the end of each term.

Concert engagements became much less frequent in 1942, with the result that the Bartóks were faced with serious financial problems. In a letter from May 1942, Bartók writes:

Our situation is getting daily worse and worse. All I can say is that never in my life since I earn [sic] my livelihood (that is from my 20th year) have I been in such a dreadful situation as I will be probably very soon
I am rather pessimistic, I lost all confidence in people, in countries, in

everything
 Until know [sic] we had from Baldwin
 piano company two free pianos, a baby
 grand and an upright. Just today I got
 the news the upright will be taken from
 us. Of course we have no money to hire a
 second piano. So we will have no
 possibility to study two-piano works.
 And each month brings a similar blow.²⁶

Comments such as these have, no doubt, fostered the
 "American guilt" theory. This term, coined by Suchoff,
 refers to the notion that Bartók was mistreated in America
 and that this was a contributing factor to his premature
 death.²⁷ It may also be true, as Paul Henry Lang suggests,
 that Bartók's apparent subsistence in poverty and neglect was
 "to a considerable extent of his own making."²⁸ The
 University of Washington attempted on several occasions to
 lure Bartók with a one-year position as guest lecturer but it
 was an offer which Bartók felt he had to refuse while the
 possibility of working at Columbia remained. Furthermore,
 Ernő Balogh claims that Bartók was offered lucrative
 positions at both Juilliard and Curtis, but did not wish to
 teach composition.²⁹

In April 1942, Bartók's illness worsened but his
 doctors could not pronounce a firm diagnosis, or at least
 Bartók was kept in ignorance. In the article "Bartók's
 Diseases," his son Béla Jr. states that Bartók's illness was
 diagnosed at this time as "atypical mycloid leukaemia,"³⁰ by
 a Dr. Holló, but the following letter suggests that neither
 Bartók nor his physicians could be certain about his condition:

It concerns my health which is impaired since the beginning of April . . . The doctors can't [sic] find out the cause, and as a consequence, can't [sic] even try a treatment. Is not that rather strange?³¹

The stress of Bartók's financial situation and deteriorating health was compounded by the lack of interest shown in his music. In a letter to Wilhelmine Creel, he implied that this neglect was intentional: a "quasi-boycott"³² of his music among American orchestras. By January 1943, it became apparent that he could no longer hope to supplement his income by performing engagements. There were no commissions forthcoming either, but in any case, Bartók was apparently not interested in composing at this time.³³ Instead, his energy was spent on his ethnomusicological work. In addition to his transcriptions of the Milman Parry collection at Columbia, Bartók was finishing a book on Serbo-Croatian folksong (which was connected with his transcription and analysis of the Parry collection) and a collection of 2500 Romanian melodies.

Aside from a series of lectures at Harvard in February and a première performance of the Concerto for Two Pianos and Percussion with the New York Philharmonic (an arrangement of the Sonata for Two Pianos and Percussion) on January 21, there were "no possibilities with concertizing or lecturing,"³⁴ according to Bartók, in 1943. In a letter from December 31, 1942, Bartók assessed his situation as "living from half-year to half-year."³⁵ Béla and Ditta Bartók played

the Concerto (it was Béla's last public performance) with mixed success; according to Halsey Stevens, "the audience was generally receptive, the critics antagonistic."³⁶ Bartók dismissed this significant performance as unimportant, a "family" business, since it was arranged for by his friend Fritz Reiner.

Bartók was not able to fulfill his commitment to Harvard due to his rapidly deteriorating health. He gave a few of the lectures; but in March, he had a complete breakdown and entered the hospital for tests, resulting in the diagnosis of polycythaemia. The certainty of a concrete diagnosis was, apparently, not of much comfort to Bartók. That he had little faith in his doctors is evident in one of his letters in which he writes "they are groping about as in a darkness, try [sic] desperately to invent the most extraordinary hypotheses."³⁷ In spite of the intervention of ASCAP, which subsidized further testing³⁸, Bartók's condition worsened: his temperature remained very high and his weight dropped to 87 pounds.

Given this situation, Koussevitzky's visit to Bartók's hospital room with the offer of a commission does acquire something of the miraculous.³⁹ As the terms of the commission were 1000 dollars (half of which was paid immediately) and a public performance by the Boston Symphony Orchestra, the commission was timely in that it offered both financial support and an opportunity for public exposure. It

also provided incentive, Bartók having composed nothing since the Sixth String Quartet in August, 1939.⁴⁰

Notes

¹Rudolph Elie, "Review of the Concerto for Orchestra," Boston Herald Traveler, 2 December, 1944.

²János Demény, ed., Béla Bartók Letters, trans. Péter Balabán and István Farkas, trans. rev. Elisabeth West and Colin Mason (London: Faber & Faber, 1971), p. 144. [Original in Hungarian]

³Ibid., p. 267. [Original in German]

⁴Ibid. [Original in German]

⁵Halsey Stevens, The Life and Music of Béla Bartók, rev. ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), p. 89.

⁶György Kroó says that this trip probably convinced Bartók to emigrate (G. Kroó, A Guide to Bartók, trans. Ruth Pataki and Maria Steiner, trans. rev. Elisabeth West (N.P.: Corvina Press, 1974), pp. 222-3).

⁷Béla Bartók and Albert B. Lord, Yugoslav Folk Music, vol. 1: Serbo-Croatian Folk Songs and Instrumental Pieces from the Milman Parry Collection, edited by Benjamin Suchoff, with a foreword by George Herzog, The New York Bartók Archive Studies in Musicology, no. 9 (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1978), p. xxii.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Demény, ed., Letters, p. 283. [Original in English]

¹⁰Bartók, Yugoslav, p. xxi.

¹¹Demény, ed., Letters, p. 284. [Original in English]

¹²Ibid., p. 316. [Original in Hungarian]

¹³These were Michael Karolyi, Professor Vambery, and George Boeloeny. See "Budapest Elects Exiles," New York Times, 28 April 1945, p. 6.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 340. [Original in French]

¹⁵Ibid., p. 346-7. [Original in Hungarian]

¹⁶Ibid., p. 343. [Original in English]

¹⁷Harvey Sachs, Toscanini (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1978), p. 211.

¹⁸Benjamin Suchoff, ed., Béla Bartók Essays (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1976), p. 491. Joseph Szigeti provides a more strongly-worded translation in With Strings Attached. He also states in connection with this matter: "What action was taken is not known to me, but what matters to us now is this expression of Bartók's attitude so early in the days of fascism and Nazism." [With Strings Attached: Reminiscences and Reflections, 2nd ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1967), pp. 347-8.]

¹⁹Cited by Todd Crow, ed., Bartók Studies (Detroit, Michigan: Information Coordinators, 1976), p. 146.

²⁰Demény, ed., Letters, p. 292. [Original in Hungarian]

²¹Ibid., p. 293. [Original in Hungarian]

²²Ibid., p. 300. [Original in Hungarian]

²³Ibid., p. 301. [Original in Hungarian]

²⁴Ibid., p. 302. [Original in Hungarian]

²⁵Benjamin Suchoff, "Bartók in America," Musical Times 117 (1976):123.

²⁶Demény, ed., Letters, pp. 320-1. [Original in English]

²⁷See Suchoff, Bartók in America and also "Propaganda vs. Facts: Communists Falsify Bartók's Life in America," Musical America 75 (Oct, 1955): 8, 30, 33. This article attempts to refute alleged Soviet propaganda which suggests that Bartók was not treated well in the U.S.

²⁸Paul Henry Lang, "Bartók at Columbia," High Fidelity/Musical America, 31 (Mar. 1981):38.

²⁹Ernö Balogh, "Bartók's Last Years," Tempo 36 (1955):16.

³⁰Béla Bartók Jr., "Béla Bartók's Diseases," Studia Musicologica, 23 (1981):438.

³¹Demény, ed. Letters, p. 324. [Original in English]

³²*Ibid.*, p. 325. [Original in English] György Kroó makes reference to a letter, written to Kodály in 1941, in which Bartók wrote: "The big orchestras are virtually boycotting me. It is fortunate that I have no spirit for composing anything new and I do not even have time; if I would have a new orchestral work it would be impossible to have it performed." (G. Kroó, "Unrealized Plans by Bartók," Studia Musicologica 12 (1970):23-4)

³³The subject of Bartók's 'compositional silence' will be discussed below.

³⁴Demény, ed., Letters, p. 324. [Original in English]

³⁵Ibid., p. 325. [Original in English]

³⁶Stevens, p. 97.

³⁷János Demény, ed., Bartók Béla levelei (az utolsó két év gyűjtése) [Letters collected in the last two years] (Budapest: Muvelt Nép Könyvkiadó, 1951), pp. 176-8, cited by Halsey Stevens, p. 98. [Original in English]

³⁸According to one source, ASCAP contributed a total of approximately \$16,000 in subsidizing Bartók's medical expenses. (E. Balogh, "Bartók's Last Years," Tempo (Summer 1966), 36:15)

³⁹It should be stressed that, however fortuitous Koussevitzky's commission was to Bartók personally, its being offered precisely at this time in Bartók's life was not as coincidental as it might appear. Koussevitzky was quite concerned at this time about the plight of penniless composers, and he even expressed his views on how they should be supported in a letter to the editor of the New York Times which appeared on May 16, 1943 (sec. 2, p. 5), shortly after the commission was offered. Also, the idea of awarding the commission from the Koussevitzky Foundation to Bartók was suggested by Szigeti and Reiner, two of Bartók's closest friends. This fact was never divulged to Bartók, who would have viewed it as an act of charity and probably would have been refused on that basis.

⁴⁰As mentioned above, Bartók did arrange his Sonata for Two Pianos and Percussion for orchestral performance.

B. Circumstances of the Commissioning, Composition and First Performance

There is no evidence that Bartók ever formally articulated an intention not to compose during the period 1939-43; however, there is a passage in one of Ditta Bartók's letters (written shortly after the Koussevitzky commission was received) that would suggest that he did so informally:

One thing is sure: Béla's 'under no circumstances will I ever write any new work' --- attitude has gone. It's more than three years now ---

György Kroó quotes the letter as follows: "it was Bartók's firm decision not to write any new works under any circumstances" and "that happened over three years ago."² I think this interpretation is misleading. Granted, Ditta's letter is confusing; the quotation marks suggest that this was a statement of Bartók's, and "under no circumstances" implies a "firm decision;" however, there is also the implication that this was only an *attitude*, not a resolution. In fact, Bartók *did* make some attempt at composition during this period, but abandoned his efforts due to his despairing state of mind. This would suggest that Bartók's compositional silence resulted from disability rather than conscious intention.

The following letter (also somewhat ambiguous) has been quoted in support of the view that Bartók was demoralized by the lack of interest in his music, and that he stopped composing for that reason. This portion of the letter follows an account of the financial hardships which Bartók was experiencing. He mentions the publication of some articles (in English) as one of the few remaining sources of income, concluding:

So, with my books and articles I am gradually advancing to the position of an English writer (I don't mean it seriously, of course); I never had an idea that this will be the end of my career! Otherwise, my career as a composer is as much as finished: the quasi boycott of my works by the leading orchestras continues, no performances either of old work(s) or of new ones. It is a shame--not for me of course.³

It is difficult to draw solid conclusions based on this letter. First of all, the phrase "end of my career" is ambiguous. (The letter was written in English, so translation is not an issue here.) It could mean that his career was over, but it could also refer to the latter *part* of the career. Furthermore, did Bartók simply mean that his career as a *performed* composer was ended, since no orchestras were playing his works, or that he would no longer compose at all? If he meant the latter, was this the result of an independent personal decision, or lack of public interest in his music? The argument that he did not compose because he received no commissions is unreliable since he later refused

commissions in order to work on his own compositional projects. What *is* clear from the letter is that Bartók was conscious of the lack of interest in his music. Therefore, his "decision" not to compose may have been bound up with the American attitude towards his music. However, compared to the melancholy tone of most of the letter, Bartók's attitude towards the so-called boycott is perfunctory.

In the following letter to Ralph Hawkes, of the publishing firm Boosey and Hawkes, Bartók tries to explain his inability to compose. While he is not very specific, neglect by the public does not seem to have been a preoccupation:

Therefore, I really don't know if and when I will be able to do some composing work. Artistic creative work generally is the result of an outflow of strength, highspiritedness, joy of life, etc. -- All this [sic] conditions are sadly missing with me at present.⁴

Yet another hypothesis is offered by Paul Griffiths-- that Bartók's work on Yugoslavian folk song "contributed to his withdrawal from composition."⁵ It is certainly true that most of Bartók's attention was focused on his ethnomusicological work during this period; in fact, it was one of the few things about his life in America which he found worthwhile. Despite his health, he devoted a great deal of time and energy to this work, but after only a brief attempt at composition in 1942, he abandoned it due to the fact that he had no stamina for this activity. This suggests

that, whereas Bartók was very industrious and productive in preparing his folk-song collections, he was not capable of the same energy when it came to compositional activity, since he was not in the proper state of mind.

Regardless of the cause or conditions of his compositional silence, the revival of Bartók's interest in composing was an event of great import. Soon after the commission was offered by Koussevitzky, Ditta was able to write to József Szigeti with excitement, reporting that "plans, musical ambitions, compositions are stirring in Béla's mind."⁶ Although Bartók's health did not improve until several months later, he wrote of an association between the commission and his improved physical condition:

My health suddenly improved at the end of August. At present I feel quite well, I have no temperature, my strength has returned . . . Perhaps it is due to this improvement (or it may be the other way round) that I have been able to finish the work that Koussevitzky commissioned.⁷

Bartók's initial response to Koussevitzky's commission was to refuse it on the basis that he would never again be well enough to compose, but he did eventually accept the initial payment of 500 dollars and left New York City for the quiet retreat of Saranac Lake in northern New York state.

Bartók worked on the Concerto for Orchestra from August 15 until October 8, 1943 while he was recuperating at Saranac Lake. It was written in five movements and scored for strings, 2 harps, timpani, percussion, 4 horns, 3

trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba and three each of the woodwinds with doublings on piccolo, English horn, bass clarinet and contrabassoon. The movements are entitled Introduzione, Giuoco delle coppie,⁸ Elegia, Intermezzo interrotto and Finale. Bartók's correspondence reveals little about the compositional process but there are some interesting details from other sources about the genesis of this work.

György Kroó and Tibor Kneif have both claimed that the Concerto for Orchestra originated as a cantata⁹, most likely on the basis of Ditta Bartók's comment that "it was Béla's idea to combine chorus and orchestra"¹⁰ for the Koussevitzky commission. Apparently this idea was rejected by Koussevitzky, who wanted a purely orchestral work that would highlight the talents of his orchestra, the Boston Symphony. This requirement was certainly fulfilled by Bartók's Concerto for Orchestra, in which there are many virtuosic solo passages for the various instruments. The idea of a concerto for orchestra probably resulted from one of the suggestions Ralph Hawkes made in April 1942 to Bartók for new compositions. Hawkes proposed the idea of a modern series of Brandenburg Concertos for string orchestra and various solo instruments. While this instrumentation does not correspond to that of Bartók's Concerto, the Baroque concept of concerto informs the work as much as the nineteenth-century virtuosic concerto principle.

The piece may have had its fundamental beginnings in 1939. In this year, Hawkes and Bartók discussed an idea for a "long orchestral work in the form of a ballet."¹¹ Although he notes that Bartók "did not even outline his ideas"¹² about this work to Hawkes, Kroó claims (for reasons unstated) that these ideas were incorporated in the Concerto for Orchestra. Kroó's assertions seem to be based on findings by László Somfai as described in the following passage:

László Somfai correctly deduced from the letters written to Boosey and Hawkes and found in Budapest that the Ballet frequently mentioned in the correspondence between 1942-43 which was prepared for the New York Ballet Theatre was actually the Concerto [for Orchestra].¹³

Ove Nordwall also suggests that some of the material used in the Concerto for Orchestra was originally written in 1942 for a ballet.¹⁴ Unfortunately, Nordwall can be no more conclusive on this point than Kroó.

Kroó supplements his conjectural evidence concerning his hypothesis that the Concerto was a "realization of Bartók's earlier plan for a "ballet symphonique"¹⁵ with evidence deduced from the Concerto itself: the programmatic titles of some of the movements, the "stage character of the music," and the subsequent interest that choreographers have shown in it.¹⁶ Kroó's conception of the Concerto may also have been influenced by evidence that the New York Ballet Theatre had apparently planned a production of the Concerto in autumn 1944 or in 1945. It was for this purpose that

Bartók transcribed the work for piano in January-February 1944.

Thus, the conceptual parameters of the work which Bartók wrote extend beyond the orchestral work which Koussevitzky commissioned, farther even than the concerto principle which gives the work its name. Given the nebulous evidence of the influences of ballet and cantata, it would be dangerous to overemphasize their impact on the work; however, a few observations can be made in this respect. Kneif suggests that "the 'Elegy' of the third movement could be the core of the cantata version with its cantabile chain of variations performed in rubato style."¹⁷ Another piece of evidence suggesting that Bartók was inspired by song in this work is the appearance in the fourth movement of a Hungarian patriotic song (mm. 43 ff.).

Griffiths' point that "the Concerto is decidedly not a work for dancing"¹⁸ is well-taken, the interest of the New York Ballet Theatre notwithstanding. Nevertheless, dance influences can be found in the stylized, jazz-inspired second movement and in the energetic fifth movement, which has often been described in terms of dance.¹⁹

The première of the Concerto for Orchestra was given over a year after the work was completed, on December 1, 1944 (and repeated on December 2) by Koussevitzky conducting the Boston Symphony Orchestra. Contrary to the information that appears in the printed score, the first performance took

place in Symphony Hall, Boston, not in Carnegie Hall, New York.²⁰ Bartók was able to attend the rehearsals and both performances, which proved to be the last of his public appearances. He had not fully recovered his health and had to obtain medical permission, which was "grudgingly granted,"²¹ to make the trip. Despite any discomfort he may have suffered, Bartók described the trip as

worth while [sic], the performance was excellent. Koussevitzky is very enthusiastic about the piece, and says it is 'the best orchestra piece of the last 25 years' (including the works of his idol Shostakovich!).²²

There are divergent accounts of this anecdote. Ujfalussy claims that Bartók embellished Koussevitzky's original statement from twenty to twenty-five years.²³ According to Citron, it was Koussevitzky who elaborated his own compliment.²⁴ The actual difference of five years is not that significant--it is high praise in either case.

Koussevitzky offered another criticism of the work, which required quite a different reaction from Bartók. In response to Koussevitzky's comments about the Finale of the piece, Bartók wrote an alternate ending in February 1945, which has become the standard version. It is nineteen measures longer than the original.

The first performance of the Concerto for Orchestra has been heralded as the event which stimulated a dramatic surge of interest in Bartók and his music; however, the point is debatable. Rudolph Elie's review of the première records

that the Concerto was "not . . . taken readily to heart by yesterday's audience."²⁵ Nevertheless, the review was essentially positive, calling the work "the composer's masterpiece, which is to say it must also rank among the musical masterpieces of recent years."²⁶ While Elie's appraisal of the Concerto's impact on the public was based, ostensibly, on the "typical Bartókian austerity and severity,"²⁷ Olin Downes' review of the first New York performance attributes the "cordial reception" which it received to "the fact that the score is by no means the nut to crack that other of Bartók's late works have offered;" he calls the Concerto a "wide departure from its author's harsher and more cerebral style."²⁸ The divergence in these two reviewers' impressions of their respective audiences' ability to comprehend the work may simply reflect differences in municipalities and readerships. More importantly, it is impossible to accurately assess how favourably a work was received on the slim testimony of two critics, a fact to which the inconclusive evidence in this case bears witness.

The revival that Bartók enjoyed during the last year of his life may have been instigated less by the performance of the Concerto than by the championship of Bartók by Yehudi Menuhin. In the fall of 1943, shortly after having completed the Concerto for Orchestra, Bartók met Menuhin in New York. Bartók was impressed with the violinist's musicality and his interest in contemporary works, and his admiration was

reciprocated by Menuhin, who performed Bartók's works frequently. In 1944, Menuhin played the Violin Concerto No.2 in Washington, Baltimore, Pittsburgh and London. The statement that "Bartók is the fourth in the procession of the great B's of music,"²⁹ which appeared in the San Francisco Chronicle, was inspired by a performance by Menuhin of the first violin sonata. In the fall of 1943, Menuhin commissioned Bartók to write a work for him, which Bartók composed during the first few months of 1944 while recuperating in Asheville, North Carolina. The première of this work (Solo Violin Sonata) took place a few days *before* that of the Concerto for Orchestra.

Another prominent figure in the renaissance of Bartók's career was the publisher Ralph Hawkes, who tried to promote Bartók in the United States, assist him in the matter of obtaining the royalties that were due him, and who commissioned a Seventh String Quartet. In his memoir, printed in a special issue of Tempo, he denies the notion that Bartók died in absolute poverty and neglect. While he does not prove otherwise, Hawkes defends his position as Bartók's publisher and suggests that Bartók was a victim of the conditions produced by war-time restrictions:

harsh words have been uttered that could be interpreted as indicating that he [Bartók] died utterly penniless and completely neglected. This is not true . . . That his royalties were not large was true enough; on the contrary, they were small. It must be borne in mind at the same time that the war produced a

financial crisis for all Europeans with international business and royalty interests . . . Bartók's royalties from Europe were unobtainable except from England and then only with difficulty. No one without an active knowledge of these acute complications could have any idea what strangulation can be effected by such regulations.³⁰

There is evidence in Bartók's own letters that his financial position was finally secure by December 1944, due largely to Boosey and Hawkes, which had agreed to pay him 1400 dollars yearly for three years. (This was comparable to the yearly salary of a secretary or sales-clerk in 1943.) In addition to this, Bartók was by this time receiving a substantial amount from the sale of music. Since Bartók's financial situation had already improved by December 1944, the cause of this improvement can hardly be attributed to the impact of the Concerto for Orchestra première, which took place in the same month.

While it is true that Bartók received several commissions subsequent to the December 1 performance of the Concerto, two of these were initiated by Ralph Hawkes: the Seventh String Quartet mentioned earlier; and the Viola Concerto, commissioned by William Primrose at Hawkes' suggestion. Both works were begun but left unfinished. Bartók received two other commissions, neither of which he fulfilled. One was for a duo-piano concerto from Ethel Bartlett and Rae Robertson,³¹ and the other was from Nat (Nathaniel) Shilkret for participation in a film score which

was to involve the contributions of Stravinsky, Milhaud, Schoenberg and others.

To say that "from almost complete obscurity, almost complete neglect on the part of performers, Bartók had suddenly become sought after"³² on the basis of these last commissions is an inflammatory view of the situation and of the importance of the performance of the Concerto. As mentioned earlier, two of the commissions were instigated by Ralph Hawkes, who had already been trying to promote Bartók's music for some time. Furthermore, both William Primrose and the Bartlett-Robertson duo were from Britain, where the public may have been more receptive to Bartók's music. (In August 1945, Yehudi Menuhin wrote to Bartók of "a general public in London more than ready and eager to welcome you and your music."³³ In any case, the Concerto was not performed in England until 1946.) It is not my intention to detract from the significance of the first performance of the Concerto for Orchestra, only to demonstrate that it was not the sole cause of the growing interest in his work in 1945.

Notes

¹János Demény, ed., Béla Bartók Letters, trans. Péter Balabán and István Farkas, trans. rev. Elisabeth West and Colin Mason (London: Faber & Faber, 1971), p. 326. [Original in Hungarian]

²György Kroó, "Unrealized Plans and Ideas for Projects by Bartók," Studia Musicologica 12 (1970):23.

³Demény, ed. Letters, p. 325. [Original in English]

⁴Cited in Kroó, Unrealized Plans, p. 25.

⁵Paul Griffiths, Bartók (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1984), p. 73.

⁶Demény, ed. Letters, p. 326. [Original in Hungarian]

⁷Ibid., p. 330. [Original in Hungarian]

⁸This movement was originally entitled Presentando le coppie.

⁹See Kroó, A Guide to Bartók, trans. Ruth Pataki and Mária Steiner, trans. rev. Elisabeth West (n.p.: Corvina Press, 1974), p. 224 and Tibor Kneif, "Zur Entstehung und Kompositionstechnik von Bartóks Konzert für Orchester," Die Musikforschung 26 (1973):42.

¹⁰Demény, ed., Letters, p. 326. [Original in Hungarian]

¹¹Kroó, Guide, p. 222.

¹²Ibid. In a letter from April 25, 1939, Hawkes lists "Ballet Symphonique" among Bartók's current projects,

but adds "as this work has not yet taken shape, we can leave it."

¹³Kroó, Unrealized Plans, p. 13. While many of Kroó's suppositions are fascinating, their accuracy is suspect since they are seldom documented properly. Kroó gives no details about Somfai's deductions nor does he indicate where they can be found.

¹⁴Ove Nordwall, "Bartóks Sonata för violin solo: Förlagets utgåva är bara en etapp," Nutida Musik (1985-86), 2:19.

¹⁵Kroó, Guide, p. 225.

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Tibor Kneif, "Zur Entstehung und Kompositionstechnik von Bartóks Konzert für Orchester," Die Musikforschung 26 (1973):42. Unless otherwise indicated, all subsequent translations are my own.

¹⁸Griffiths, Bartók, p. 175. In its context, this statement is a cautionary adjunct to the evidence Griffiths presents that the Concerto contains material written earlier for a ballet.

¹⁹See the following: Kroó, Guide, p. 231; Halsey Stevens, The Life and Music of Béla Bartók, rev. ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), p. 282; Serge Moreux, Béla Bartók, trans. G.S. Fraser and Erik de Mauny (New York: Vienna House, 1974), p. 197; Vera Lampert and László Somfai, "Béla Bartók," in The New Grove Modern Masters (New York: W.

W. Norton & Co., 1984), p. 74; Jozséf Ujfalussy, Béla Bartók, trans. Ruth Pataki (Boston: Crescendo Publ. Co., 1972), p. 370.

²⁰There was another set of performances in Boston on December 29 and 30, 1944, just four weeks after the première, and the New York première was given a few days later, on January 10 and 11, 1945 by Koussevitzky and the Boston Symphony.

²¹Demény, ed., Letters, p. 342. [Original in English]

²²Ibid.

²³Ujfalussy, p. 375.

²⁴Pierre Citron, Bartók (Paris: Microcosme, 1976), p. 76.

²⁵Rudolph Elie, "Review of the Concerto for Orchestra," Boston Herald Traveler, 2 December 1944.

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Olin Downes, "Bartók Concerto Introduced Here," New York Times, 11 January 1945, p. 18.

²⁹Demény, ed., Letters, p. 344. [Original in English]

³⁰Ralph Hawkes, "Béla Bartók: A Recollection by His Publisher," in Béla Bartók: A Memorial Review (New York: Boosey and Hawkes, 1950), p. 14.

³¹Olin Downes has suggested that the Third Piano Concerto was begun with the duo in mind but that Bartók decided to bequeath it instead to his wife Ditta Pásztory as

a "final message." ("Bartók's Testament," New York Times,
14 October 1945, sec. 2, p. 4.

³²Stevens, p. 103.

³³Dille, D., ed., Documenta Bartókiana, vol. 3
(Mainz: B. Schott's Söhne, 1968), p. 262.

C. Critical Issues Surrounding the Concerto

Popularity

While the association between the commissioning of the Concerto for Orchestra and the amelioration of Bartók's last years (financially, physically and emotionally) may be justified, it should not be allowed to assume the melodramatic proportions that it does in H. W. Heinsheimer's anecdotal account from Fanfare for Two Pigeons:

It was then, in the summer of 1943, that something happened in the room in Doctors Hospital in New York that strangely and mysteriously resembles an event in another sickroom 152 years earlier: the sudden appearance of the "mysterious stranger," who had come to commission the dying Mozart to write the Requiem. This time, in streamlined New York, the messenger was no mystery man. He was a well-clad, elegant gentleman of very aristocratic bearing. His name was Serge Koussevitsky.¹

On the strength of the fact that the work was to be dedicated to Koussevitzky's late wife, Heinsheimer claimed "it was to be a Requiem, after all!"² in his ludicrous attempt to sustain the scenario of Koussevitzky as a modern-day version of Mozart's masked stranger. Concerning the effect of this commission on Bartók's health, Heinsheimer says:

Undoubtedly the learned specialists who attended Bartók in the sickness which two years later consumed what was left of him will have more logical explanations for the incredible recovery that set in almost immediately after Koussevitzky's visit. All we know is that soon they found him to be so much better that they released him from the hospital.³

Heinsheimer's sensationalization of the events surrounding the Concerto is misleading and unfactual. It has also, along with other similar accounts, supported the notion that, due to the circumstances of his life at that time, Bartók composed the Concerto in order that he might gain popularity and revitalize his faltering career. In his review of the English première, Ernest Newman implies that Bartók effected a compromise and that, as a result, the work is artistically inferior.

It is unwise to make up one's mind about a new work of this kind on the basis of a single hearing, but my own first impression was that in making himself more generally accessible Bartók has become rather less Bartók. The concerto is an unending succession of captivating and brilliant things; but do they cohere in the way we have a right to expect from the composer of the quartets and the violin concerto?⁴

Queries such as this one have echoed through the criticism of this work and of Bartók's "American Years." In his book on Bartók, Pierre Citron poses the following question:

Is there, aside from the chronology, an "American period" of Bartók's that corresponds to a different aesthetic or to decadence?⁵

Many have answered this question in the affirmative, basing their conjectures on the circumstantial evidence of his personal life and upholding the contention that Bartók compromised his artistic integrity in a desperate attempt to gain favour with the public in order to improve his financial situation.

The issue of Bartók's rapport with the public was linked with the Concerto for Orchestra from its first performance. As we have seen, Rudolph Elie estimated in his review of the première that the Concerto was not completely successful with the public at that time. One day later, he wrote an article entitled "The Public vs. Bartók: Is There Really a Case?", which offers insight into the contemporary opinion of the public about Bartók's music:

If anyone were to ask the average informed musical person whose music he could get along most successfully without, he would be more than likely to reply "Bartók's" without a moment's hesitation. Even the most advanced musical person to whom Křenek or Schoenberg or Villa-Lobos holds no terrors would--and usually does--hedge on the matter of Béla Bartók.⁶

The reliability of this appraisal is difficult to judge; it is, nevertheless, a fascinating (and surprising) statement. Elie attributed Bartók's unpopularity to the following elements:

Thus the combination of a dissonant idiom, an unfamiliar (if often piquant) melody; a savage, primitive austerity and severity in presenting these materials results in the almost universal coolness

with which Mr. Bartók's music is accepted
in this country.⁷

Predicting Bartók's future reception, Elie reverses his
initial appraisal of the Concerto's impact on the public:

. . . up until the performance of his
Orchestral Concerto I shouldn't have
thought any of his larger works would be
revived. But this really marvelous
composition has at last brought his
previous works into focus so far as the
average musical person is concerned by
tempering the semi-eastern melodic
conception which is his birthright with
the western conception which is our own,
. . .⁸

Thus, several critical issues have been associated with the
Concerto since its first performance: its popular appeal,
and its place as a climactic turning point in Bartók's career
as a composer.

It was not until Olin Downes' review of the New York
première that the artistic merit of the work was questioned.

There might even be the suspicion, with
an artist of less sincerity than this
one, that he had adopted a simpler and
more melodic manner with the intention of
an appeal to a wider public.⁹

Downes raises the possibility in the most tentative language;
but, despite the fact that he rejects his own hypothesis
almost immediately, the suggestion remains.

But that would not be Mr. Bartók's
motive. Nor would the emotional
sequence of this music, and the care with
which it has evidently been fashioned,
support such an assumption.¹⁰

In the years shortly after Bartók's death, the notion that Bartók's American years constituted an "esthetic regression"¹¹ was stated in stronger terms. In discussing public reaction of the musically informed to Bartók's last completed work, the Third Piano Concerto, Scott Goddard states:

This latest style, they grumbled, was his weakest; he had become old in spirit, had lost his eagerness for adventure, was writing easy music. Some went further, suggesting that now he was writing pot-boilers for a livelihood in bad times.¹²

William McNaught presents a similar scenario:

It tells us again what we learnt from the violin concerto of 1944 [sic] and the concerto for orchestra of 1945 [sic]: that Bartók at sixty was setting out to ingratiate himself with the musical public after holding aloof from it most of his life.¹³

Hence, the "wide departure from its author's [Bartók's] harsher and more cerebral style"¹⁴ on which both Olin Downes and Rudolph Elie remarked is associated, because of Bartók's personal circumstances, with compromise and loss of integrity.

That Bartók's American period was characterized by an aesthetic of artistic compromise is refuted by Citron. He raises the point that

There is hardly anything which these four works [written in America] hold in common. . . . One hears of "Bartók for the public" but that is already true of the Violin Concerto and Divertimento and not true of the Violin Sonata. The

contemptuous remarks are based especially on the Concerto.¹⁵

The observation that Bartók's American works have no unifying features undermines the notion, expressed by McNaught and Goddard, that Bartók intentionally and consistently altered his style while in America in order to win public attention.

This notion has also been refuted on the basis that such a compromise would have constituted a drastic alteration in Bartók's personality, which was characterized by unflinching integrity. People who knew Bartók wrote these words about him:

Neither did it occur to him to do anything against his convictions to try and improve his position. He was constitutionally incapable of overcoming his pride by trying to cudgel some of America's star conductors--among them his former compatriots--to put on their programmes a work of his own. I think above all of his uncompromising spirit, of his ability to not budge an inch, not bend in any direction.¹⁶

I felt at once that I was facing someone pared down to the essential core, a man who would scorn anything but the direct and true.¹⁷

I have never known anybody who was so uncompromising and upright . . . and who never shrank from even the hardest consequences.¹⁸

Bartók's attitude towards the public was one of indifference. This is evident in his attitude towards the alleged boycott of his works by American orchestras ("it is a shame--not for me of course"¹⁹) and in the following anecdote. One of his

performances of the First Piano Concerto (in 1928, Berlin with Erich Kleiber conducting)

received a cool reception--there was even some hissing from the audience. When a friend expressed his indignation to Bartók after the concert, the composer replied 'Why are you so indignant? If they buy a ticket for a concert, they have the right not only to express their pleasure but also their displeasure.'²⁰

In his article "Bartók and Popularity," John Meyer concludes that

For Bartók to have deliberately courted favour, it would have meant a remarkable change from all that he had done and been throughout his life.²¹

He also observes that, while popularity is not a reliable indicator of greatness, neither does it preclude artistic merit.

The arguments for the "esthetic regression" theory considered thus far have been based primarily on the fact that the Concerto found favour with the public: no musical reasons were given. Serge Moreux, however, attributes the allegedly flawed nature of the Concerto to "the embarrassing confusion of styles of succeeding sections,"²² thus implying that the work lacks coherence. We saw this observation made also by Ernest Newman. While József Ujfalussy reiterates the "belief that Bartók, in his last years, had been obliged to make concessions to American taste and had betrayed his earlier ideals,"²³ he goes on to argue that:

Like so many of the great masters throughout the history of music, Bartók

communicated his ideas in a variety of genres, sometimes in concentrated form and at other times 'diluted.' He had no wish to be praised as a 'misunderstood' composer and therefore assessed realistically the demand for his music which he satisfied with an appropriate arrangement in genre and form which entailed no intellectual compromise. . . he realized that in a concerto a brilliant instrumental performance and a more relaxed tone in the form of communication were not concessions but characteristics of the genre itself.²⁴

This interpretation is not unfounded since, despite his personal indifference, Bartók was known to be concerned over the public response received by other performers of his works. Andor Foldes recalls an occasion when Bartók suggested to him that he omit the second movement of the Piano Sonata (the "hardest one to digest"²⁵) out of concern that Foldes would receive negative reviews because of the difficulty of the music.

Halsey Stevens presents yet another hypothesis about the Concerto for Orchestra. In opposition to the accusations of Newman and Moreux, he asserts:

the Concerto for Orchestra is a strong, vital work, contemporary in the best possible sense, since in it are amalgamated into a homogenous fabric all the diverse elements which touched Bartók from his earliest creative years to the end of his life.²⁶

(Horst Weber expresses a similar notion [see pp. 96 ff.]²⁷.) Stevens portrays the Concerto as a synthesis of personal expression as well as musical influences:

But beyond all this, and above it, is the superlative integration of every aspect of the composition into a pertinent and personal whole. If it is eclectic to combine oils, pigments, and canvas from recognized sources into an original and personal work of art, then this is an eclectic work and Bartók an eclectic composer.²⁷

Tibor Kneif considers Stevens' argument unacceptable as a result of its "appeal to tonal memento-images,"²⁸ presumably because of the passage quoted above. Indeed, Stevens' analytical comments on the Concerto are too vague and this weakens his argument for the Concerto as a

great work, one of the greatest produced in this century, not because of the startling originality of its materials or the novelty of their treatment, but because the problems it poses are broad and vital ones, solved with the utmost logic and conviction.²⁹

What these problems are and how they are solved, are questions which Stevens does not pursue. His analysis of the Concerto, like the others discussed in this section, is informative but superficial. It is ironic that none of the critics whose polemical ideas have been outlined in this section have explored the Concerto sufficiently to be able support their claims with musical reasons. And yet, it is vitally important to support aesthetic statements about a work with musical evidence. This work is a demanding composition to understand as well as to perform and, therefore, requires more than superficial analytical investigation.

Fourth Movement Quotation

According to György Sándor, Bartók once explained to him that the fourth movement of the Concerto for Orchestra conveys a programme. Ferenc Fricssay has paraphrased it as follows:

A young man confesses his love and serenades his beloved only to be interrupted by a band of rowdy drunkards whistling a couplet. . . . In the tones of the serenade, we can recognize a song that was extremely popular in the period between the two world wars, 'Szép vagy, gyön yörű vagy, Magyarország' (Hungary, gracious and beautiful).³⁰

The characters in this vignette are symbolized thematically: the young man is supposedly represented by the opening theme (mm. 4-12), the beloved by the cantabile theme (mm. 42-61) and the "rowdy drunkards" by the interruption theme beginning at measure 75. Yet another layer of meaning is added by the association of the loved one with Hungary and the rowdy drunkards with German soldiers, transforming this movement into a political allegory.

Given the programmatic aspect, the use of musical quotations in the Concerto is highly significant. Fricssay notes that a patriotic Hungarian song is heard in this movement. This is, in fact, the cantabile theme associated with the beloved country of the young man. The origin of the theme which is associated with the German soldiers is not so easily traced. It has similarities with both the second

theme (first movement) of Shostakovich's Seventh Symphony and the aria "Da geh' ich zu Maxim" from Lehár's The Merry Widow.

According to Bartók's son Péter, his father decided to parody Shostakovich's theme when he heard the Seventh Symphony on the radio,³¹ since he found it banal. Solomon Volkov attributes the banality of Shostakovich's theme to the fact that it "assimilates a popular tune from Lehár's operetta The Merry Widow."³²

In his discussion of the identity of the quotation, W. H. Thijsse notes that Bartók uses only a portion of Shostakovich's march theme--the segment resembling "Da geh'ich zu Maxim" (indicated by a square bracket in Example 2).

DAN. 

I go off to Max . ims, Where

DAN. 

fun and fro . lic beams, With all the girls I chat . ter, I

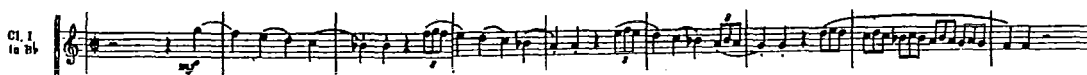
DAN. 

laugh and kiss and flat . ter! Lo . lo, Do . do, Jou . jou, Clo

Example 1. Franz Léhar, The Merry Widow, No. 4 "Maxim's," mm. 33 ff.



Example 2. Dmitri Shostakovich, Symphony No. 7, Schirmer, I: rehearsal no. 19 + 4mm. ff. (violin).



Example 3. Béla Bartók, Concerto for Orchestra, Boosey and Hawkes, IV: mm. 76 ff. (clarinet).

The three themes can be compared as follows. First of all, Shostakovich's theme is in E-flat, not D. Secondly, Shostakovich's version begins on the second degree of the scale, instead of the first. This eliminates the lower neighbour tone just before the final note, which appears in Lehár's version. Bartók utilizes Shostakovich's version of the descending scale-motive, but he repeats it four times, which is closer to Lehár's phrase structure. This would suggest that Bartók was parodying both Lehár and Shostakovich.

Thijsse considers it impossible that Bartók did not know the Lehár theme.³³ This assumption is corroborated by Ujfalussy, who claims that Bartók once "cited The Merry Widow as an example of foreign-influenced shallow musical taste."³⁴ Since Bartók was familiar with the music of The Merry Widow, it is probable that he recognized the Shostakovich theme as a parody and therefore thought of the possibility of burlesquing the Lehár theme himself.

William Austin criticized the interrotto section of the fourth movement as a "topical political harangue,"³⁵ but

the subject, or object, of this "harangue" is not clear. Possibly, Austin recognized the Shostakovich theme and assumed the parody was directed toward the Soviet Union. It may also be argued that this so-called diatribe was directed towards Nazi Germany since Shostakovich's theme was possibly a representation of the Nazi siege of Leningrad. Because this work was written during the siege, and because of Shostakovich's claim that he "wanted to create the image of our country at war, capture it in music,"³⁶ the Seventh (or "Leningrad") Symphony became an extremely powerful symbol of the war: "in the Soviet Union, it [Seventh Symphony] was raised to the status of symbol, and excerpts from it can be heard in many films and plays devoted to the war."³⁷ Wide popularity was achieved in America as well. It was performed sixty-two times in the U.S. during the first year alone.

Gerald Abraham offers the following description of the Seventh Symphony:

A patriotic call to arms, with the wrathful spirit of denunciation characteristic of an anti-Fascist document. Two worlds are opposed to one another in the Symphony. One is a world of thought and feeling, of great passions and noble aspirations . . . The other world is brutal, senseless and implacable. Against the background of constant drumming there are sounds of a martial theme. It is repeated twelve times, not developing, only growing in volume. It advances, yet there is something static about it. Cruel like the mechanism of force, this music arouses a feeling of hatred, it calls for vengeance. It contains nothing naturalistic, no "war sounds." It is a

psychological portrait of the enemy,
ruthless and denouncing.³⁸

The theme that he describes, representing the brutality of the Germans, is the same theme that Bartók uses to symbolize the Nazi soldiers in the fourth movement of the Concerto. Thus, the extra-musical associations of this theme make it just as appropriate a symbol for the German soldiers as the popular Hungarian song "Szép vagy, gyön yörű vagy, Magyarország" is suitable for symbolizing Hungary as the beloved.

One final note should be made in this regard. Those who know the Lehár aria will recall that it belittles patriotic loyalty. Danilo prefers to spend his time at Maxim's, drinking and flirting with young ladies there instead of serving his country in his bureaucratic job. The attitude of Danilo can be directly juxtaposed against that of the young serenader for whom country and beloved are one and the same.

It is impossible to uncover the motives behind Bartók's use of the Lehár-Shostakovich quotation in the fourth movement; however, the symbolic meaning of the Lehár melody as well as that of the Leningrad Symphony combined with the nature of Bartók's programme suggest that its inclusion is not a simple parody.

Notes

¹H. W. Heinsheimer, Fanfare for Two Pigeons (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Co., 1952), p. 119.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., p. 121. The implication that Bartók's health improved immediately on receiving the commission is unfounded. Bartók left the hospital in order to go to a sanatorium in Saranac Lake, New York, for further rest. It was here that his health improved, but not until the end of August (Koussevitzky visited Bartók in May, not in the 'summer' as Heinsheimer states. Heinsheimer continues his account by stating that Bartók recuperated in North Carolina (which he did, but not until the following winter) instead of Saranac Lake. This is further evidence of Heinsheimer's unreliability.

⁴Ernest Newman, "Review of Concerto for Orchestra," Sunday Times (London), 10 March 1946.

⁵Citron, Bartók (Paris: Microcosme, 1976), p. 162.

⁶Rudolph Elie, "The Public vs. Bartók: Is There Really A Case?" Boston Herald-Traveler, 3 December 1944.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Olin Downes. "Bartók Concerto Introduced Here," New York Times, 11 January 1945, p. 18.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Halsey Stevens, The Life and Music of Béla Bartók, rev. ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), p. 283.

¹²Scott Goddard, "Bartók in Perspective," The Listener 12 (Feb. 1948):276.

¹³William McNaught, "London Concerts," Musical Times 87 (Dec. 1946):379. McNaught's reference to the Violin Concerto of 1944 is misleading. If, by this, he intended the Violin Sonata (which was written in 1944), his coupling it with the Concerto for Orchestra is ludicrous because they are completely different, as Citron observed. If McNaught was mistaken about the date (his date for the Concerto for Orchestra is also wrong), the example does not support his argument since the popular Violin Concerto (No. 2) was written in 1937-8, some years before Bartók's sixtieth birthday and his emigration to the U.S.

¹⁴Downes Concerto.

¹⁵Citron, p. 162.

¹⁶Andor Foldes, "Béla Bartók," Tempo 43 (Spring 1957):25-6.

¹⁷Yehudi Menuhin, "Bartók at 100: A Titan Remembered," Saturday Review 8 (March 1981):39.

¹⁸Denijs Dille, "The Life of Béla Bartók, II," in Béla Bartók: A Memorial Review (New York: Boosey & Hawkes, 1950), p. 11.

¹⁹Demény, ed., Letters, p. 325.

²⁰Cited in John A. Meyer, "Bartók and Popularity," Studies in Music 3 (1969):72-3.

²¹Ibid., p. 73.

²²Serge Moreux. Béla Bartók, trans. G. S. Fraser and Erik de Mauny, (New York: Vienna House, 1974), p. 196.

²³József Ujfalussy, Béla Bartók, trans. Ruth Pataki (Boston: Crescendo Publ. Co., 1972), p. 368.

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Foldes, p. 25.

²⁶Stevens, p. 283.

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Tibor Kneif, "Zur Entstehung und Kompositionstechnik von Bartóks Konzert für Orchester," Die Musikforschung 25 (1973):41.

²⁹Stevens, pp. 283-4.

³⁰Ujfalussy, p. 370-1. See also F. Fricsay, Über Mozart und Bartók (Copenhagen: Edition Wilhelm Hansen, 1962), pp. 59-61.

³¹See Stevens, p. 282.

³²Solomon Volkov, Testimony: The Memoirs of Dmitri Shostakovich, trans. Antonia W. Bouis (New York: Harper & Row, 1979), pp. xxxiii-v.

³³See W. H. Thijssse, "Het 'citaat' uit Bartóks Concerto voor orkest," Mens en Melodie 13 (1958):77-8.

³⁴Ujfalussy, p. 371.

³⁵William Austin, "Bartók's Concerto for Orchestra," Music Review 16 (Feb. 1957):39.

³⁶Volkov, p. 154. Shostakovich is also reported to have said that the Seventh Symphony is "not about Leningrad under siege, it's about the Leningrad that Stalin destroyed and that Hitler merely finished off." (Volkov, p. 156). An argument based upon these comments can only be speculative since there is much controversy over Volkov's biographical methods and, consequently, the validity of these statements.

³⁷*Ibid.*, p. 136.

³⁸Gerald Abraham, Eight Soviet Composers (London: Oxford University Press, 1944), p. 30.

Part II: Analytical Approaches

It may be a consequence of some of the attitudes outlined in the section on Critical Attitudes that comparatively little serious analytical attention has been directed towards the Concerto. Because of its important place in Bartók's oeuvre as one of the largest and latest works and because of the issues surrounding it, I believe that this work merits serious critical investigation. The method which I have chosen for this purpose is to examine the various analytical approaches that have been taken towards the Concerto for Orchestra. Not only will this examination consist of a comprehensive survey of the scholarly criticism of the work, the variety of methods available will provide insights into the complexity and diversity of this work. As each method to be discussed is unique, each analysis will be dealt with in the manner most suited to revealing its objectives and procedures. In this way, the methodology will serve the purpose of this study, which is to investigate the richness of the Concerto for Orchestra as expressed through the voices of its analysts.

A. Descriptive Analyses

The Conventional View

William Austin was the first critic to publish an in-depth analysis of the Concerto for Orchestra. In his prefatory remarks to the analysis, which appeared in Music Review in 1957, Austin justified this endeavour by asserting that the Concerto for Orchestra "deserves to be studied with the care that critics have long devoted to the classics"¹ on the basis that its place within the canon of musical masterpieces was secure. Its admission to the ranks of the "standard repertory" seems to have been a result of its popularity in the concert hall. Austin claims "its success has changed the whole relation between the repertory and the avant-garde for the better."²

Austin is vague about this last point. Surely he does not intend to classify the Concerto as an avant-garde work, which it would hardly have been considered in 1944, much less thirteen years later when this analysis was written. It was, however, written by a composer who was considered to be avant-garde in his day. Austin's comment may have been intended to refer to the fact that the Concerto, a work by a so-called avant-garde composer, was embraced by an audience not previously disposed to the avant-garde repertory. We have already seen

this connection made, most vehemently by Serge Moreux, in a context less favourable to the artistic worth of the piece.

If Austin views the work as avant-garde in any way, this attitude is not revealed in his conservative approach to the analysis. His discussion utilizes the vocabulary of nineteenth-century formal principles and functional harmony with all the accompanying attitudes and stylistic expectations. While this approach is not always appropriate, Austin's work provides a solid basis for future analyses and a useful contribution to a basic understanding of the piece.

His method is descriptive; i.e., he proceeds through the work section by section, describing the musical events as they occur. This allows him to be comprehensive in that he says something about every section of the work. Austin succeeds in avoiding the endemic hazards of descriptive analysis by enriching his descriptive comments with formal and harmonic analyses where they are deemed useful. For instance, his discourse on the first thirty-five measures contains comments such as "a barely audible rustling arises in the violins" and "chromaticism . . . squirming unpredictably in a narrow range;"³ however, he also presents a summary of harmonic movement of this passage. After describing the musical events of measures 1-35 as a listener would hear them, he summarizes their significance in terms of harmonic relationships: "now we can recognize the hierarchy of

structural chords and decorative tones in the whole passages [sic], 1-35."⁴



Example 1. William Austin, "Bartók's Concerto for Orchestra," Music Review 16 (Feb. 1957):23.

Also, Austin makes excellent use of musical examples, another rarity among descriptive analyses due to the limitations of format (in a newspaper review) or space (in a book on a larger topic).

There are two major digressions in the analysis in which Austin discusses the composition in terms of expectations fulfilled or denied. One involves the sensitive issue of the quotation in the fourth movement. (See pp. 46 ff. for a discussion of this.) The other major criticism concerns the first theme of the first movement (mm. 76-91), particularly measures 79-81. As Austin observes, this theme is a synthesis of the upward-swinging motive, which effects the transition from the introductory section (mm. 1-76) to the first theme, and a motive crafted out of fourths, which plays a major role in the opening section. The first gesture, formed from these two motives (mm. 76-78) is then inverted, but not strictly, as the theme unfolds. In Austin's view,

the last two notes [of the passage ending m. 81] are surprising: a strict inversion would have given a half-cadence (c g) instead of which Bartók chooses notes

that propel the melody more urgently forward.⁵

Austin attributes this "crafty refinement" to a sacrifice of "spontaneous inspiration to a hypercritical ingenuity"⁶ and he makes further comments about additional structural defects in this prominent theme concluding that "it seems not quite worthy of the work."⁷ Cadential issues seem to be Austin's primary concern. He condemns Bartók's disruption of the sequences in measures 80-81 and 85-86 on the basis that cadences are averted in both cases; however, the emphatic cadential extension of measures 86-91 is perceived by Austin as an unnecessary delay. In Elliott Antokoletz's view (see pp. 156 ff.), this cadential extension is not only logical, it is essential to the development of the work as a whole. But, of course, Antokoletz utilizes a completely different set of criteria.

Despite his fastidiousness in some of the musical matters of this work, Austin exhibits an uncritical attitude in connection with his research into the extramusical aspects of this work. As a result of (apparently) consulting only one source on the subject,⁸ Austin's prefatory comments on the circumstances surrounding the Concerto present a distorted view of these facts and, especially since he relies on Heinsheimer, they adhere to the romanticized view of these events, which was challenged in the Introduction of this thesis. Austin alludes to the familiar fallacies (including Bartók's sudden restoration to health and the attention the

Concerto received at its first performance), and he refers to Bartók's "flood of inspiration at Asheville, N.C.,"⁹ subscribing to the fallacy perpetuated in Heinsheimer's book that the work was written there.

Some of Austin's questions about the interruption in the fourth movement might have been answered with more penetrating research. As mentioned earlier, Austin deals with this issue in a lengthy passage on pages 38-9. After asking "What is the sense of it? [the interruption],"¹⁰ he calls it an "astonishing personal polemic" on a "topical political harangue,"¹¹ attributing the undeniable bitterness of the parody of Shostakovich's theme to Bartók's mistrust of communist Russia. Having little more to rely on than the music itself, Austin is only able to assume that Bartók "let a perverse impulse run away with him and mar one of his finest achievements."¹²

Similarly, the existence of alternative endings is a source of bewilderment to Austin because the reason for such does not reveal itself in the music. The motive for alternative endings was quite clear in the case of the Second Violin Concerto, since one version was a simplified one. There is no such technical difference in the two endings of the Concerto for Orchestra. Austin finds this choice annoying because he "should like to have only the one he [Bartók] preferred, or else, perhaps to have liberty to compromise between the two."¹³ Had Austin known that the

second ending was composed later, at the suggestion of Koussevitzky, surely he would not have hypothesized as he does in this article, that Bartók "prefers to let chance decide just where and when the end occurs."¹⁴

This statement is somewhat hyperbolic, especially since the second ending is always performed and this is logical since it was composed in response to criticism of the first ending. However, if the second ending is in every way preferable to the first, Austin's observation that "to publish these alternative endings is surely strange"¹⁵ is well-taken. He does not, however, pursue this peculiarity. I would contend with Austin's dismissive attitude towards the difference between the two versions. The difference between them is more than "slight" as he suggests, but this is a possibility which is not investigated in this nor in any of the other analyses of the Concerto. (See pp. 174 ff. for a discussion of this question).

Austin's is one of the few analyses to deal with each movement of the Concerto.¹⁶ Thus, as a standard reference analysis, it is quite useful; however, there are two major problems, which have been adumbrated above. Firstly, Austin's dogged adherence to the language and symbols of functional harmony is inadequate in this context. He admits as much in connection with the third movement, measures 118-128: "to interpret such a phrase by conventional theories of composition is to misunderstand the music altogether."¹⁷ But

he simply attributes the incompatibility of the phrase and the theory to the transcendence of the music rather than considering the possibility that the theory is inappropriate. He does not pursue *other* ways of viewing the passage in his efforts to describe it. Again, this passage can be discussed more satisfactorily by means of another method (see pp. 132 ff.).

In order to reconcile the theory and the composition, Austin resorts to harmonic analyses such as the following, which can claim the advantage neither of illuminating the passage in question nor of exhibiting the theoretical system to best advantage.

* If the Flute has so low b, 1st Bassoon will play: and Flute tacet.

C: Y/ii

11

ciii

$$D: \begin{array}{c} \mathbb{V} \\ \mathbb{IV} \end{array} \xrightarrow{\quad} \mathbb{V}_q \quad b: \mathbb{V}/\mathbb{III}; \mathbb{V}$$

* real sound:

Example 2. . Béla Bartók, Concerto for Orchestra, Boosey and Hawkes, IV:mm. 21-37 with Austin, p. 36.

While he manages to provide chords with labels, they often forfeit their claim to any genuine function. The passage analyzed in Example 2 bears no relation to C-major or C-minor but Austin insists on labelling D-chords as C:ii, and c:ii to accommodate the A-flats in measure 23. Granted, the harmonic support provided by harp and strings is somewhat ambiguous; but it reinforces the melodic evidence that this passage is in D. The flute line outlines a D-minor triad, begins and ends on D, and the dominant (A) is given special emphasis in measures 21-2. In measures 22 and 24, the harmonic support is clearly D.

According to Austin, there is a modulation in measure 27 to B-minor. There are several problems with this. Firstly, some of Austin's labellings seem unduly awkward. For instance, the first chord of measure 27, which is a C-sharp seventh chord is labelled as D:V⁹ or b:V of III. Secondly, the progression to b:i in measure 27 is not very strong; Austin does not indicate that it is a second-inversion chord. Moreover, his analysis implies that the passage continues in B-minor when in fact there is an unusual cadence on C in measure 31. B-minor is clearly not the goal of this passage.

Austin's descriptive comments are more interesting than his analyses. Concerning the first-movement passage beginning in measure 363, he suggests that "the parts lose their identity in a mere fourth-chord" and that this chord

"epitomizes the introduction, the allegro theme, and the trombone theme, expressing their tension in harmony rather than melody"¹⁸ is astute, but he seems unable to avoid searching for an explanation in terms of functional harmony. For the section at I:mm. 363-79, he finds so-called resolution in measures 396-401: "the fourth-chord can be interpreted as a functional triad (A: vii) with third lowered and fifth both lowered and raised."¹⁹ If Austin were able to synthesize statements like this into a convincing overall harmonic and formal conception of the work, his use of the traditional harmonic system would be more convincing.

Austin does provide a chart summarizing the formal and harmonic activity of the movement, but the key areas do not seem to correspond to those of traditional sonata-form and he makes no comment on this. We would expect the second key area of the exposition theme to be A-flat whereas there are two areas: D-flat and B. Also, the recapitulation begins in A-minor rather than the home-key.

Ernő Lendvai has also charted the key areas of the first movement. From his analytical perspective, these "untraditional" key areas are related to each other. (See also pp. 114 ff.)

F	tonic	(exposition)	bar 76
D-flat	subdominant	(first part of development)	bar 231
A	dominant	(second part of development)	bar 313
F	tonic	(recapitulation)	bar 386
F	tonic	(coda)	bar 488

Example 3. Ernő Lendvai. Workshop of Bartók and Kodály.
(Budapest: Editio Musica Budapest, 1983), p. 674
(first movement).

D-flat and A are labelled as sub-dominant and dominant respectively through Lendvai's axis system. In this system, the entire circle of fifths is connected by means of major-minor equivalencies and relative keys; ie., C (major, minor) is linked with both A (major, minor) and E-flat (major, minor), which are in turn related to F-sharp, or G-flat. Hence, every pitch has one of the three functions: tonic, dominant, sub-dominant. Thus, if F (A-flat, B, D) is tonic, then D-flat has a sub-dominant function (along with E, G, B-flat) and A has a dominant function (along with C, E-flat, G-flat). Lendvai's chart is not a complete display of sonata-form key areas; nevertheless, it is indicative of an overall conception which is lacking in Austin.

This shortcoming is the second major flaw in Austin's analysis. One of the major criticisms that have been levelled against the process of analysis by music scholars is the tendency of music analysis to do the work of the dissector--revealing the inner organs of a musical composition and rendering it lifeless in the process. While

I believe this analysis has definite strengths, as mentioned above, it does tend to suffer from symptoms of the dissecting tendency. Austin presents a plethora of facts in his analysis, but they are left unexplained. Suffering from the lack of a synthetic impulse, this analysis simply displays the structural components of the work without examining their relationships to each other or uniting them into a cohesive whole.

It may well be argued that this was not his intention; however, the analytical approach which he has chosen assumes that there *is* an important relationship between chords in a passage and key areas in a movement and between formal components such as exposition and development. The fact that these relationships do not reveal themselves in Austin's analysis might suggest that the work is not well-crafted. But other analytical methods can be used to elucidate aspects of the composition which are unrevealed in Austin's approach. This would suggest that Austin utilizes a method in this analysis which does not reveal the salient features of this composition. Because Austin neither pursues these relationships inherent in his analytical method nor ventures *beyond* the method, his analysis is, despite its wealth of detail, a rather superficial study of the Concerto.

A Psychological Analysis

Ten years after Austin's conventional analysis appeared in the Music Review, the same journal published a "psychological" analysis by Gilbert French entitled "Continuity and Discontinuity in Bartók's Concerto for Orchestra." What French called psychological is in fact a brand of "listener-response" analysis, a musical version of the reader-response criticism of the kind practiced by Stanley Fish in which "criticism is no more than an account of the reader's developing responses to the succession of words [notes] on the page."²⁰ In this approach, the reader becomes the writer since he/she must *re-create* the text by reading it. The analogy to music criticism breaks down since there are two re-creators of the musical text, the performer and the listener, and the listener often takes a less active role.

While French is willing to claim the role of authority that comes with Fish's brand of reader, he does not take the delight that Fish does in the rupturing, disorienting, nature of the "text." According to Catherine Belsey, Stanley Fish

is interested in the disruptive text, understood in his case as the text ordered in such a way that the discursive sequence fails to fulfil the expectations it generates, thus challenging the reader to confront problems, difficulties and questions which cannot readily be resolved into an easy and reassuring

harmony. He defines this mode of presentation as "dialectical," in opposition to the "rhetorical" text which "satisfies its readers."²¹

This position is in fact antithetical to French's aesthetic ideal.

French's inclination (implied by the value-laden dichotomy of his title "Continuity and Discontinuity etc.") to reject disturbances in the music as aesthetically undesirable stems from his definition of the "text." In his introduction, he describes music as a "dynamic, direction-filled, life-force motion which is not merely mechanical but living;" in other words, music can only be understood as an "association of one part with another."²² This attitude is rooted in the ideas of nineteenth-century formalist analyst-critics such as Hanslick whose "vision . . . was and is of a perfect, organic relation among all the analyzable parts of a musical masterpiece."²³ Kerman calls this attitude "organicism" and argues that "analysis exists for the purpose of demonstrating organicism."²⁴

French's position is thinly disguised by the posture of tolerance in the following passage:

I do not consider this type of analysis the be-all and end-all of music analysis. One can very definitely derive a magnificent sense of beauty from the third movement of Dvořák's Concerto for cello and orchestra, *despite the awful modulation and split down the middle of it.* (my emphasis)²⁵

Firmly embedded in the ideology of French's analysis is a quest for organicism and coherence which, if not unearthed,

renders the work flawed and one's aesthetic experience marred. Hence, rupture or contradiction is unacceptable in French's aesthetic position.

Although organicism is subscribed to widely among musicians,²⁶ it is not an inviolable position, especially in the twentieth century, which has produced a great deal of music that celebrates contradiction and fights closure. However, as Kerman has suggested, the rise of analysis in the nineteenth century was closely linked with the ideology of organicism, since analysis was used as a tool for exposing the organic structure of a composition.

Much contemporary literary criticism has not subscribed to the ideal of organicism. Critics have suggested that the structure exists in the *interpretation* rather than the artifact:

the object of critical attention is the structure of the reader's experience, not any 'objective' structure to be found in the work itself--Everything in the text--its grammar, meanings, formal units--is a product of interpretation, in no sense 'factually' given.²⁷

While it may be extreme to suggest that there is no inherent structure in *music*, it may be argued that there is no single structural principle in music. Kerman observes this when he notes that there is music which

may really not be "organic" in any useful sense of the word, or its organicism may be a more or less automatic and trivial characteristic. Its aesthetic value must depend on other criteria.²⁸

This, I would argue, is the case with the Concerto for Orchestra; therefore, French's analytical approach is based on certain aesthetic assumptions which do not obtain in this work. This, compounded by his methodology, renders his analysis extremely subjective.

While French admits to a degree of subjectivity, it has much deeper roots than he realizes. He pledges to balance the "subjectivity that enters in in [sic] the listening, and the unquestionable objectivity derived through constant reference to . . . the score."²⁹ How can one separate the subjectivity of "listening" from the process of interpreting a score? To rely once again on an analogy with literary criticism, this would be as if the literary critic were to claim objective balance by supporting the subjectivity of his interpretation (reading) with the "objectivity" of the words on the page. Naturally, the critic can find support for his interpretation in the text since the way he/she interprets the text depends on what he/she *finds* in the text; but, once the text has been manipulated to support a particular point of view, it is hardly objective. In appealing to the "unquestionable objectivity" of the score, French is simply legitimizing his subjective judgements as supported fact.

As it is, French's dependence on the concrete facts of the score is not great. His comments about the score are mainly concerned with dynamic and tempo markings and

instrumentation, with the occasional term such as stretto and inversion. No harmonic analyses are given; therefore, the language dealing with harmonic events in the work (when it occurs) is vague. Of the trumpet duo (mm. 100-101) of the second movement, French says:

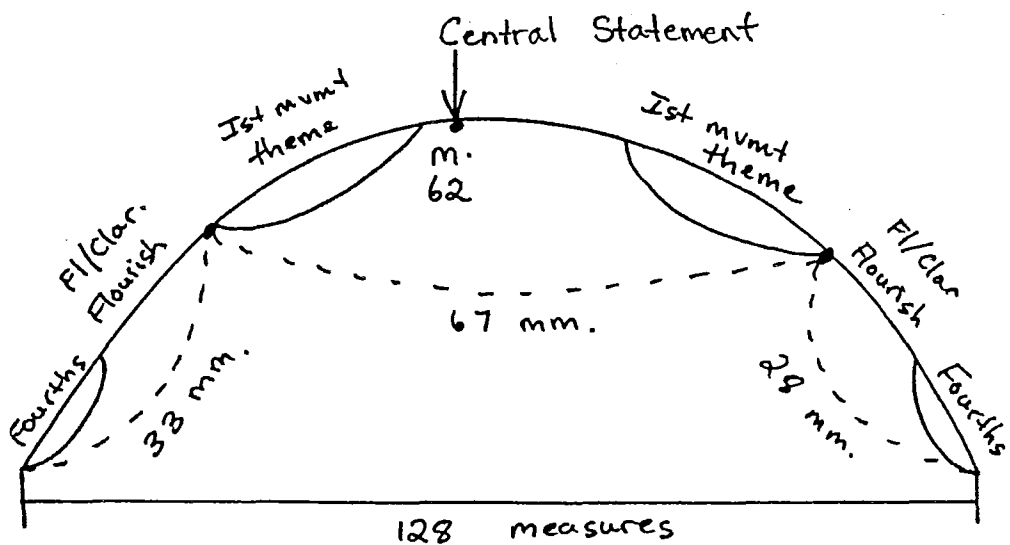
There are just enough notes not fitting into the harmonic chords . . . that the breve pause indicated can absorb the otherwise weak change to part two of this section.³⁰

Whatever French intended to communicate about this passage is unclear.

In certain passages where the harmonic language is particularly elusive, French declines any comment about the harmonic activity. For example, he refers to the passage in the third movement described by Austin as transcendent, defying harmonic analysis, as "the greatest faux pas of the entire work, the stylistically completely dissociated appearance of an old theme."³¹ It is often difficult to argue with French since terms like "stylistically completely dissociated" are ambiguous; but this is a ridiculous objection. The reappearance of old themes is often a vital part of formal construction and it is so in this case. The reappearance of this theme is completely logical, even necessary, as the fulfillment of the arch-form of this movement.

The third movement begins with the fourths-motive borrowed from the first movement. Following this section is

an atmospheric series of flute and clarinet flourishes (mm. 10-18), which are then stated in augmentation and stretto at measure 22. At measure 34, the central portion of the movement begins, which consists of a series of variations on thematic material from the introduction to the first movement. It is not a literal statement of material from the first movement; however, the connection is clear because of the regular four-phrase structure and prominence of major and minor seconds. Also, it is flanked by more literal statements from the first movement (from mm. 39-47 and 51-58). After the central section, the woodwind flourishes of minor thirds and minor seconds return (m. 99) and the movement concludes as it began--with the transcendent statement of the fourths-theme. The proportional structure reinforces the formal shape of this movement as indicated in the Example below:



Example 4. Proportions are approximate only.

The central section is 67 measures long, approximately double that of the first section, which is 33 measures, and the third section, which is 28 measures. The central statement of the third movement begins at measure 62, approximately half-way through--there are 128 measures in total.

It is ironic that French condemns the Concerto for its formal incongruities. One of the greatest problems of French's analytical approach is its inadequacy for discussing form. In an attempt to stem the threat of critical anarchy which his brand of criticism poses, with its definition of the text as the sum of all its critical interpretations, Fish appeals to the notion of "interpretative strategies,"--ways of approaching literature that are shared by readers. By using these strategies, critics can prevent the possibility that their criticism will be completely idiosyncratic and only readable by the author. French rejects one set of the "interpretative strategies" of music, what he calls the "late nineteenth-century type of analysis which discusses works in terms of sonata-allegro, rondo and other traditional forms, relating key to key, and tagging the many techniques used for variation."³²

In actual fact, French has not freed himself from thinking about music in a late nineteenth-century mode, even though he does not take advantage of its familiar

terminology. His failure to grasp the form of the third movement has been observed. In his discussion of the first movement, French criticizes the brevity of the recapitulation in spite of his claim to avoid traditional forms. But he does not seem to conceive of measures 231-466 as a development section (as is generally done), which would account for the "short cut-off developments, so many climaxes with no preparation . . . ,"³³ in short, the ephemeral, transitory nature of the development. French does not replace the conventional tools of analysis (interpretive strategies) with a suitable alternative: hence, his nebulous terms and obfuscatory logic.

Although French does not define his terms adequately (e.g. "psychologically orientated flow"), one can assemble a profile of his ideas by examining his language throughout the analysis. It has been suggested that French's perception of music is defined by organicism; the parts must be assembled in order to produce a coherent whole. Consequently, his stylistic objections to the work arise when events are "jarring" to the listener or when there is a so-called "lack of integrity." Disorienting sections such as the development section just described interfere with the listener's instinctive search for continuity since "the effects on the listener are disintegrating."³⁴

This attitude is carried to such extremes that even surprise is an undesirable quantity in French's

psychological perception. According to French, music must proceed seamlessly, obeying the precepts it has established, and avoiding all but the smallest levels of contrast and variety. I will concede the Concerto contains seemingly incompatible elements and aural surprises but I cannot subscribe to the view that it is, because of this, an "unsuccessful work as far as larger form is concerned."³⁵

French's opinion about the Shostakovich quotation in the fourth movement differs, as with the end of the third movement, from Austin's. Whereas Austin asked the question "What is the sense of it?"³⁶ and stated that "the interruption is an utterly different mode of communication from that of the rest of the work,"³⁷ French manages to discover a rhythmic and melodic connection of the interruption section with the first section:

My judgment is that it [interruption section] is quite integrated. Complete continuity continues rhythmically from the prior section. But more important, I believe there is a melodic continuity as well. The first seven notes of the Shostakovich theme parallel an inversion of the first notes of the second theme, or the last half of the first theme.³⁸

Once again, French does not succeed in making his point clear. It is not clear what he means by rhythmic continuity, as there are several metrical changes (from 5/8 (3+2) to 8/8 (3+3+2) to ♩) and the predominant rhythmic activity in this section is quarter notes, accelerating to triplet eighths,

compared with groups of two and three eighths in the preceding section.

French does make an interesting point regarding the "melodic continuity" of the cantabile theme (mm. 43 ff.) and the interruption theme (mm. 75 ff.) But it is ironic that, after all his criticisms of the Concerto's incongruities, French finds the fourth movement to be "quite integrated;" this is one section that Bartók clearly intended to be jarring. A further irony is that French's comments do not reveal the most important thing about this continuity--its programmatic significance.

Like Austin, French was not aware of the programme connected with the fourth movement (see pp. 46 ff. for a discussion). Since it has been suggested that the interruption theme (mm. 75 ff.) may symbolize the political and artistic domination of Hungary by Germany and the cantilena theme (mm. 42 ff.) the purity of ideal, patriotic love (more specifically, Hungary itself), it is especially significant to view the interruption theme as an inversion of the cantilena theme. By means of this inversion, the programme is reflected through musical process as well as in the symbolism of the themes, although, since both of these themes use pre-existing material, their similarity was not engineered by Bartók. This makes their relationship even more remarkable. Thus, while French makes an interesting observation about the inversion in the fourth movement, his

narrow analytical perspective prevents him from revealing its full significance.

That I view French's analysis as unsuccessful has, no doubt, become evident. It is an interesting approach, but French's application of it suffers from two major problems: 1) his blindness to his own subjective aesthetic position and the degree to which his subjectivity infuses the work; 2) his refusal to articulate his ideas in terms that are generally understood and agreed upon by musicians. Austin also made comments of the listener-response variety, but he also approached the work in a more objective manner by using formal and harmonic analytical techniques. Consequently, his critical comments of the "I like, I don't like" variety are not as autocratic; they offer an opinion instead of legislating one.

Notes

¹William Austin, "Bartók's Concerto for Orchestra,"
Music Review 18 (Feb. 1957):21.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., p. 22-3.

⁴Ibid., p. 23.

⁵Ibid., p. 24.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Ibid., p. 25.

⁸Elsewhere in the article, Halsey Stevens' biography of Bartók is mentioned, but Austin cites only the Heinsheimer source.

⁹Austin, p. 21.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 38.

¹¹Ibid., p. 38-9.

¹²Ibid., p. 39.

¹³Ibid., p. 47.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶The other analyses which discuss all movements do so from a specialized perspective (i.e. orchestration or folk-music). French's approach is too idiosyncratic to afford a reliable overview of the movement.

¹⁷Austin, p. 35.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 27-8.

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Terry Eagleton, Literary Theory: An Introduction (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983), p. 85.

²¹Catherine Belsey, Critical Practice (London: Methuen, 1980), pp. 32-3.

²²Gilbert G. French, "Continuity and Discontinuity in Bartók's Concerto for Orchestra," Music Review 28(1967):122.

²³Joseph Kerman, "How We Got into Analysis, and How to Get Out," Critical Inquiry 7 (Winter 1980):315.

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵French, p. 122.

²⁶In his historical sketch of organicism in musical analysis, Kerman includes such figures as Hanslick, Forkel, E.T.A. Hoffmann, Schenker, Tovey, Reti, Schoenberg. Janet M. Levy discusses the issue in "Covert and Casual Values in Recent Writings about Music," Journal of Musicology 5 (Winter 1987):3-27.

²⁷Eagleton, p. 85.

²⁸Kerman, p. 320.

²⁹French, p. 123.

³⁰Ibid., p. 127.

³¹Ibid., p. 129.

³²Ibid., p. 122.

³³Ibid., p. 126.

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵Ibid., p. 134.

³⁶Austin, p.38.

³⁷Ibid., p. 39.

³⁸French, p. 130.

B. Thematic Analyses

Platonism in Music

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The third approach to be considered is that of Tibor Kneif in an article entitled "Zur Entstehung und Kompositionstechnik von Bartóks Konzert für Orchester." It consists of three parts. The first section is music-historical, the second, analytical, and the third, critical, that is to say, it is an interpretation of the analytical findings according to Kneif's hypothesis of Platonism in Bartók's music. The combination of these three modes of investigation produces a scholarly, thoughtful study on the subject.

Kneif presents the background information in the first section sympathetically, but without the sensationalism that is often an ingredient. The quality of his work does not suffer from the quantity of material amassed--Kneif presents by far the most information about the Concerto of any single source, covering details about the commissioning and first performance. In this section, Kneif puts forward an interesting theory about the source of Bartók's creative energy--conflict with his environment:

Bartók's mental energy had earlier been drawn from a constant tension of challenge and confirmation. Resistance to the environment was an element of life for him.

Kneif also gives a summary of the critical response to the work in the years following the composition. While this information is not explicitly relevant to his subsequent discussion in the article, the history of what has been thought about a composition is an important part of its background, especially of this work.

The main historical issue that Kneif discusses is the contention, which we considered earlier, that Bartók made an artistic compromise in composing the Concerto. Kneif quotes Serge Moreux as the principal exponent of this point of view. The antithetical view of Halsey Stevens is also presented. As we saw earlier, Kneif rejects Stevens' concept of the Concerto as a personal testament. Unlike Stevens, Kneif does not eschew "microscopic dissection;"² therefore, his penetrating analysis reveals some very interesting observations about the Concerto.

Rather than providing an entire map, Kneif presents an inset diagram of the work: the introduction to the first movement and the recurrence of its material in the third movement. By doing this, Kneif puts his finger directly on the locus of the entire work, exploring one of Stevens' "broad and vital" compositional problems. He suggests that the confrontation and reconciliation of the two contrasting

motives of the first eleven measures constitute such a compositional problem and its resolution.

Kneif is among many analysts who remark upon the contrasting motives which are linked together in measures 1-11. They are then reiterated in two swelling restatements (mm. 12-21 and 22-34). The cell which gives rise to the first motive (mm. 1-5) is the interval of a fourth, and the second motive (mm. 6-11) is characterized by the interval of a second. While it assumes the role of dialectic opposition, the second motive can also be conceived of as a *product* of the first motive in which the major second is the connective material between the fourths. The interval of a second (in its inverted form, as a seventh) also plays a fundamental role in *linking* the two motives (m. 6), so that the flute motive at measure 30 (C-C-C-sharp-C) can be viewed as an expression of the tension between the two primary motives (C-sharp-C in measure 6 and F-sharp-F in measure 16). As Kneif expresses it, "the two end points of the already traversed circle of fifths between C-sharp and C are drawn together in one single motive in the first measure of the solo flute."³ The open end of the scissor-like flute motives in measures 11 and 21 also contains the minor second/major seventh tension.

The tension which undoubtedly exists between these end points is not simply intervallic. Kneif demonstrates that an axial tension also exists between C-sharp and C in measure 6. Conceding that B constitutes the opposite pole of

the first motive intervallically (it is farthest away from C-sharp), Kneif claims that the most "exposed" note of this motive is A on the basis that it is the farthest away (within the motive) from C-sharp in the sub-dominant direction on the circle of fifths. As further proof of the function of A as a sub-dominant pivot, Kneif suggests that the pull of the sub-dominant is continued in an imaginary line in the treble (in opposition to the tonic pull of the bass-line back to C-sharp) from A to D, G and finally C, which is articulated by the violins in measure 6. Thus, the C-natural in the treble (violins) creates some kind of "sub-dominant" tension against the tonic C-sharp in the bass (double basses).



Example 1. Tibor Kneif, "Zur Entstehung und Kompositionstechnik von Bartók's Konzert für Orchester," Die Musikforschung 26 (1973): 43.

Clearly, this is not "sub-dominant" in the sense of functional harmony because there is no harmonic *progression* involved; in Kneif's explanation, sub-dominant and tonic influences occur simultaneously, not successively. Possibly, Kneif uses the term sub-dominant only to refer to a particular domain of the circle of fifths; indeed, it is evident that Kneif is more interested in the circle of fifths

than in harmonic progressions involving the sub-dominant. He views the dominant/sub-dominant relationship in question as an opposition, which initiates the "continued conquest of the circle of fifths."⁴ This takes place over the course of the three periods. The first motive is expanded intervallically in its successive statements to cover one, then two additional fourths, thereby exposing further the circle of fifths. Because Kneif does not define his terms nor elaborate his ideas, this peculiar but fascinating hypothesis is a little bewildering. It is interesting to note, however, that A also has a subdominant function according to the axis-system of tonality as developed by Ernő Lendvai (see the section at page 66 ff.) because of the relation of A to F#.

Kneif also demonstrates the rhythmic heightening that occurs over the three periods necessitated by the increasing length (number of fourths) in each statement of the first motive.

1.
 cis fis h a e

2.
 cis fis h e d a h

3.
 cis fis h e a d c g a e h

Example 2. Kneif, p. 45.

Thus, the growth-impulse that clearly characterizes this passage is not simply a one-dimensional phenomenon (i.e.

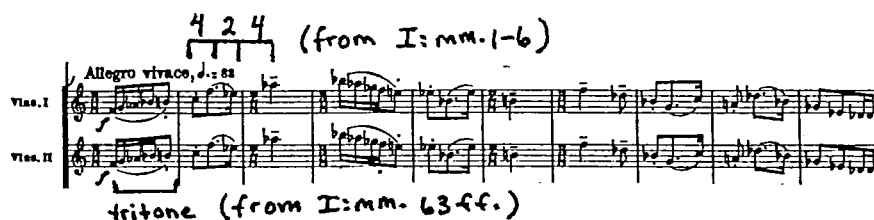
covering a greater tonal range). It is three-pronged: melodic, through the expansion of the tonal range; harmonic, by means of progression through the circle of fifths; rhythmic, through the diminishing time values. With this heightening, the motivic material becomes increasingly autonomous, although Kneif does not consider even the most defined statement of the material (measures 51-57) to be a full-fledged theme.⁵

In fact, some of the statements of the theme are *quite* self-sufficient. Perhaps Kneif adopted this position in order to sustain his theory of Platonism; if one theme were clearly more developed than the others, it might revoke the idea of all themes being a version of an unstated "ideal" theme. But Kneif's own definition of musical Platonism preempts this eventuality, because elsewhere he claims that the more defined statements of the theme are no closer to the original theme than less melodic variations.

The transition connecting the introduction to the main part of the first movement is constructed out of a tritone which is simply reiterated melodically at the same pitch for thirteen measures. The instability of this interval, compounded by the unrelieved repetition, finds a kind of resolution in measure 76, the first theme of the main section of the movement.

Kneif discusses the formation of the tritone motive, which functions like a gigantic anacrusis to the main theme,

but does not explore the relationship between the transition and the main theme of the movement. This theme (mm. 76 ff.) recalls the opening fourths-motive (mm. 1-6), with major seconds being the "joints" of the construction.



Example 3. Béla Bartók, Concerto for Orchestra, Boosey and Hawkes, I: mm. 76-85 (violins).

The first and fourth measures of this theme, derived from the tritonal transition, might initially seem anomalous amongst these fourths and seconds until one notes that they can be conceived of as filled-in statements of the fourth-plus-second motive. In this way, they are perfectly integrated with the rest of the theme. Likewise, the initially disorienting transition becomes meaningful as a linear statement of the two intervals which define the introduction (and the entire movement), an ideal summarizing motive. Although Kneif does not pursue these ideas in his analysis, they support his notion of the compositional problem of the work: the juxtaposition of fourths and seconds.

The following diagram is Kneif's outline of the form of the first movement, showing the fundamental opposition of the fourth and second intervals expressed now in formal terms as the opposition between the first and second themes of sonata-allegro form, the first theme (Hauptthema) being constituted mainly of fourths and the second theme (Nebenthema) of seconds.⁶

Hauptthema (T. 76-148)	Nebenthema (T. 149-230)	Hauptthema (T. 231-271)	Hauptthema (T. 272-312)	Hauptthema (T. 313-396)	Nebenthema (T. 396-487)	Hauptthema (T. 488-521)
S	L	S	L	S	L	S
Exposition		Durchführung			Reprise	

Example 4. Kneif, p. 46.

At this point, Kneif moves to the third movement to discuss the melodic development of the introductory material from the first movement. As we have seen, the third movement is a chain of variations in the shape of an arch, with most of the melodic material derived from the first movement. Statements of the theme based on fourths open and close the third movement and the central section is based on measures 30-34 of the first movement, flanked by re-statements of measures 39-47 and 51-58. Kneif perceives a new weight distribution in this movement because the seconds-inspired thematic material (I: mm. 30-34) assumes the greatest importance, as opposed to the fourths-inspired theme (mm. 76 ff.), which dominated the first movement.

According to Kneif, the opening statement of the third movement is an "almost note-perfect" retrograde inversion of the opening bars of the first movement:



Example 5. Kneif, p. 47.

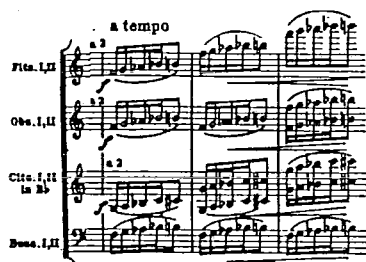
This is a very interesting observation, although it requires some manipulation of the actual musical material. Firstly, the opening C-sharp of the first-movement sequence is omitted in order to compensate for the different number of pitches in the two sequences. Furthermore, there is a digression in the third-movement sequence from the intervallic pattern established in the first-movement sequence. The intervallic movement between degrees 3-2 and 2-1 of the third-movement sequence is altered so that degree 2 is a minor second lower and degree 1 a minor second higher than expected. (If the pattern were followed, degrees 2 and 1 would be G-sharp and C-sharp respectively.)

Despite these anomalies, inversion appears to be an operative principle in this movement. As well as the inversion of the opening statement and of the relative importance of fourths- and seconds-inspired themes, the major seventh (fourteenth) linking the motives in measures 6, 16

and 29 of the first movement is inverted to a minor second in the analogous passage of the third movement (m.4).

As a consequence of the reductive direction of inversion (larger intervals to smaller ones), there is a corresponding impulse towards constriction in the size of intervals in general throughout the course of the third movement. For instance, the pattern established in measures 5-9 of perfect fourths and minor seconds is transformed into patterns of minor thirds and minor seconds in measure 10. The perfect fourth/minor second pattern (mm. 5-9) is, itself, a constriction of the opening sequence. Likewise, the oboe line (mm. 10 ff.) wavers within the interval of a minor third, and is nearly silenced at the end of the movement. Here, the theme appears in the piccolo, confined only to a major second (m. 123-8).

Symptomatic of this constrictive tendency is the predominance of closed melodic configurations, such as circles, as opposed to linear shapes in the first movement. Compare the tritonal transitional motive of the first movement (Example 6), which appears often in it, with a characteristic gesture of the third movement (Example 7):



Example 6. Concerto for Orchestra, I: mm. 91-93
(flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon).



Example 7. Concerto for Orchestra, III: mm. 10-11 (flute).

Rather than allowing the principles of inversion and constriction to govern his discussion of the movements, Kneif discusses the third movement in terms of its variation of melodic material from the first movement. Therefore, his implicit inferral that the laws which govern the first movement are inverted in the third movement is left unexplored, but the operation of these principles is a point which is, I believe, vital to an understanding of the third movement.

Kneif probably refrained from pursuing the implications of his own observations because it would have involved deflecting the focus away from his primary interest: melodic variation and his theory of Platonism. In the third section of the article, Kneif concludes that Bartók's "theme and variation" technique is actually "variations without a

theme," or musical Platonism, in which only the concretizations of an imagined theme are heard:

. . . the varied shapes all represent approximate reflections of a musical idea, which is referred to in each shape but which itself never actually appears.⁶

Although Kneif claims that there is no connection between musical Platonism and its philosophical counterpart, he sometimes describes his theory in philosophical terms. As opposed to Goethe's notion of the Urphänomen as merely existing in its particular expressions, Kneif asserts that Bartók's Platonism involves the dualism of both imaginary idea and concrete objectivity. Because the variants are not always necessarily autonomous themes, they refer constantly to an ideal model; hence, a reciprocity between concrete statement and idea. When referring to the variations, Kneif also uses the term "pale shadows,"⁷ whose link to Platonic philosophy is unmistakable.

Kneif accounts for eight variations of such a theme in the first and third movements of the Concerto:
 Introduzione: mm. 30-34, 35-50, 51-58; Elegia: mm. 29-33, 34-44, 45-53, 62-83 and 86-92. While he notes that some of these statements are more essential, and others more specific or individualistic, this hierarchy does not, according to Kneif, indicate relative degrees of proximity to the Urthema. Each statement is an individual expression of the essence of the proto-theme. Although the eight variations cannot be conceived of in relation to this theme (as it is never

actually sounded), they are unified nonetheless, through the intervallic predominance of seconds and through similar phrase structure.

As a result of the phrase construction and the falling contour of the lines (especially in III: 62-83), Kneif hypothesizes that these variations were inspired by folk-song.⁸ Kneif also draws on Bartók's involvement with folk-music to justify the idea of musical Platonism. Observing that Bartók conceived of folk-music as an expression of certain primal archetypes, which are then varied in an infinite number of ways, Kneif suggests that Bartók imitated this creative process in his own music.

Finally, Kneif uses Platonism in Bartók's music to support his argument that Bartók belongs to the Romantic tradition. Because Platonism implies transcendence, he asserts that it is aesthetically attractive to the Romantic sensibility. It is not surprising, then, that variation technique is a favourite form of the Romantics. Kneif posits that, through Bartók's use of Platonism, his Romantic characteristics as a composer are revealed and he places Bartók in a historical context as the heir to Schumann, claiming that:

It seems that the most consistent and precise expression of this romantic variation technique is to be found in Bartók, who no longer allows the theme to sound at all, but has it sublimated to that idea, which dominates with regard to the fully composed patterns and does not

allow its unfolding to full musical reality at all.⁹

The conclusion of this article is rather unsatisfying. From providing very detailed information about the Concerto in Part II, Kneif proceeds to discuss it in Part III in a mode which is almost completely abstract, re-mystifying what was de-mystified in Part II. What is especially disappointing is the fact that, while Kneif skirts vital issues in order to concentrate on his theory of Platonism, he does not pursue it to its logical conclusion. No doubt, the eight transformations are linked by a proto-theme, or original theme, but, like Bartók, Kneif never allows his "theme" to be explicitly stated!

I would venture to state explicitly what lies implicit in Kneif's article: that the proto-theme is based on the *idea* of the interval of the second; more specifically, the "contrast of small-interval structure and broader fourth melody."¹⁰ This suggestion does not contravene Kneif's definition of Platonism as "reflections of a musical idea"¹¹ rather than an actual *musical* construct. In fact, the notion that the proto-theme is constituted of the idea of the second-interval in contrast to the fourth-interval satisfies the conditions of Kneif's musical Platonism on several counts. Since it is an abstract idea, the proto-theme is not and *can* not ever be stated completely in musical terms; by the same token, its abstract nature precludes the event that any one of the eight transformations be any closer to it;

each of the transformations expresses the idea of "small-interval structure" to equal degrees. Furthermore, it seems logical to conceive of the proto-theme as something different in essence than its concrete musical expressions, as an abstract idea rather than a musical one. Inevitably, Platonism as Kneif defines it is not an uncommon occurrence in composition, which often consists of articulating a compositional *idea* into *sound*.

The Technique of Interpolation

Published in the same year as Kneif's analysis (discussed above), Horst Weber's "Material und Komposition in Bartóks Concerto for Orchestra" shares certain features it. Both articles are in three sections, both concentrate on the first and third movements, and both concern themselves with the compositional "problem" posed by Bartók in the introduction to the first movement. They do not perceive the same "problem" but that is of little consequence.

Weber does not, however, subscribe to Kneif's idea of Platonism. In fact, he refutes the hypothesis, suggesting that Kneif's theory of Platonism in Bartók's music is "one-dimensional."¹² It seems the term "one-dimensional" refers to Kneif's contention that the eight transformations of the theme exist on a lateral basis, or plane;¹³ whereas Weber has a hierarchical view of their proximity to an original theme.

Weber labels only three of the variations, but these names reveal his hierarchical conception:

Vorform [Proto-form] (I: mm. 30ff.)

Originalgestalt [Original shape] (I: mm. 39ff.)

Variation (I: mm. 51ff.)

In answer to Kneif's statement that the theme at I:m.39 is not well-enough defined to constitute a theme in comparison to the following statement, Weber observes that it is almost a requirement of variation-themes that they be comparatively general in order to allow for subsequent development.

Weber also criticizes Kneif's conception of Bartók as the heir to Schumann (and, consequently, as a late figure of Romanticism) and yet he devotes a good part of his own analysis to demonstrating the influence of Strauss on Bartók's compositional style. Of course, by doing this, Weber also places Bartók in the Romantic tradition.

The major part of Weber's article is devoted to analytical comments about the Concerto, concentrating on the first and third movements. Weber views the introduction to the first movement (mm. 1-76) as the formulating of certain principles by which the entire work will be generated at every level. These principles are exhibited in the opening eleven-bar segment of the first movement: the 'Theme' [Thema] (mm. 1-6) is a modal construct, the 'Sound-field' [Klangfeld] (mm. 6-10) is based on whole-tone harmony and the 'Flute-figure' [Flötenfigur] (m.11) is chromatic. With

reference to these three passages, "it seems as though at the beginning of the introduction Bartók envisioned the current situation of contemporary composition and represented it through various musical thoughts."¹⁴ The unfolding of the Concerto is, therefore, an attempt to "assimilate these differing style elements to each other . . . and thereby to attain a homogeneous musical idiom."¹⁵ This statement could be an ironic comment on the lack of success which Bartók achieved, because Weber refers to Bartók's style elsewhere as *heterogeneous*. On the other hand, the *process* of assimilation to homogeneity is no doubt more vital than the actual achievement of the goal.

Indeed, Weber confirms this indirectly in discussing this process, which he calls interpolation (p. 772). This is defined as a process in which sections that belong together are separated from each other through the interpolation of contrasting sections; conversely, contrasting sections are linked together. In this way the disparate elements of the work are united; however, "as a compositional method, interpolation conceals in itself the admission that a synthesis of the differing elements is not possible."¹⁶ Consequently, while the goal of the composition is the assimilation of its diverse components (homogeneity), this is categorically impossible.

Throughout the course of the analysis, Weber gives several examples of how the principle of interpolation is

utilized--on the level of the theme, the movement and the work as a whole. Let us recall the three "styles" of composition--Theme, Soundfield, and Flute-figure--and consider how they are interpolated in the main theme of the first movement (mm. 76 ff.). 'Theme' is represented in this theme by the fourth-steps of measures 77-8 and 80-81, 'Sound-field' by measures 81 ff., which supposedly recall the whole-tone harmony of measures 6-11, and 'Flute-figure' by the chromatic tritone gestures in measures 76 and 79.

Although both Kneif and Weber may be said to view the Introduction as a generator of the motivic material of the movement, especially that of measures 76 ff., Weber's representation of this theme has little in common with the view of theme-formation inherent in Kneif's approach. Weber views the main theme at measure 76 as a mixture of compositional styles, which appeared in the introduction as representative of the main streams of contemporary composition. Based on Kneif's view of melodic development, the major theme would be considered an autonomous construct inspired by the same general *principle* exhibited in the first motive of the introduction (mm. 1-6)--fourth intervals separated by seconds. (Kneif does not make this specific observation; nor does he state that the main theme at measure 76 is also organically related to the first motive (mm. 1-6) by virtue of its architectural shape: initial rising gesture, complemented by an inversion resulting in an arch shape.)

At the level of the movement, the juxtaposition of contrasting elements occurs in a format which is designed for that very task: sonata-allegro form. The first theme of this sonata-allegro movement is, according to Weber, a hybrid of all three elements of the introduction; however, Weber argues that this main theme is also differentiated, as primarily representing 'Theme,' from the second theme (mm. 149ff.), which has allegiances to 'Soundfield.' But when Weber outlines the dichotomy between the first and second themes in the following passage, his argument deteriorates. Weber draws on a likeness to 'Flute-figure' as evidence in his case for the second theme's affinity with 'Sound-field.'

. . . whereas the first theme appears as a distinctive rhythmic-melodic pattern with a characteristic interval-structure, melodic gesture is lacking in the second theme [155 ff.]; following the flute melody of mm. 30 ff., the changing of two tones becomes almost thematic, the falling figure towards the end (mm. 170 ff.) recalls the sextuplet of the "Flute-figure" (m. 34). The harmony stagnates in the second theme just as in the "Sound-field".¹⁷

The difference between these modes of composition becomes increasingly blurred throughout the analysis.

Blurring of 'Sound-field' and 'Flute-figure' also occurs in Weber's description of the third movement: the faltering oboe melody in measures 10 ff. which recalls the 'Flute-figure' in the introduction is cited as an example of the 'Sound-field' influence. There is no evident justification for the fusion of these two styles of

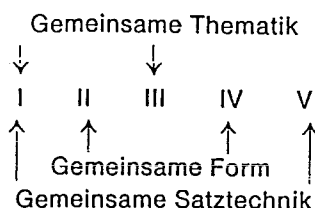
composition. On the basis of Weber's article, it would be more likely for the 'Flute-figure' and 'Theme' to be associated because, in a chart of the first three statements of each of the compositional styles, Weber designates that these two components both "modulate" to polychromaticism:

Abschnitt I:	„Thema“ modale Diatonik	Klangfeld Ganztonharmonik	Figur Chromatik
Abschnitt II:	„Thema“ modale Diatonik	Klangfeld Ganztonharmonik	Figur polymodale Chromatik
Abschnitt III:	„Thema“ polymodale Chromatik	Klangfeld tonale Struktur	Melodie polymodale Chromatik

Example 8. Horst Weber, "Material und Komposition in Bartóks Concerto for Orchestra," Neue Zeitschrift für Musik 134 (1973): 771.

Weber makes only brief references to the other movements of the Concerto. According to him, the interpolation principle is most evident in the fourth movement where a "Csárdás-reminiscence" literally interrupts the "dancing oboe melody" and "nostalgic song of the viola."¹⁸ In other words, the "Csárdás-reminiscence" is an interpolation. The fifth movement bears evidence of the interpolation principle because of its attempt to combine both chain-form and sonata-allegro form, as representing folk and concert-music, into one. It is this attempt which prompts Weber to call the fifth movement "music about music."¹⁹

The operation of interpolation on the work as a whole is expressed succinctly by the following chart:



Example 2. Weber, p. 772.

The thematically similar first and third movements are interpolated by the second movement, which is linked to the fourth by their common formal conception as dance movements. Likewise, the three inner movements separate the two outer movements, which make use of similar compositional techniques, devices such as inversion, stretto, fugato. Weber does not make reference to the function of the three compositional styles at this level.

In the third section of the analysis, Weber substantiates his theory about the technique of interpolation by drawing on historical evidence of Bartók's development as a composer. Citing such disparate influences as Strauss, Debussy, Schoenberg and folk-music, Weber concludes that the technique of interpolation was a means by which Bartók could deal with the conflicting compositional trends which he encountered in his lifetime.

The most fundamental artistic contradiction that Bartók encountered was between folk-music and art-music. Weber suggests that Bartók turned to folk-music as a means of emancipating art-music from "the autocratic rule of the traditional major-minor system,"²⁰ more specifically the

German art-music tradition. Weber also suggests that this emancipation had political overtones, in that breaking away from the stronghold of the German-Austrian artistic tradition symbolized rebellion against their political domination of Hungary. Again, folk-music was an ideal vehicle since, through it, a style of music distinct from that of the German tradition could be created.

Weber goes on to point out that folk-music was not a completely satisfactory alternative to the old system of major-minor tonality; thus, "the argument with the old harmonic system continued in Bartók's temporary inclination towards atonality, which was not accomplished through folklore at all, but through tendencies of "western" art-music."²¹ Ultimately, Bartók was not prepared to embrace the solution of art-music (atonality) since it was fundamentally opposed to folk-music in which, Bartók asserted, atonality was inconceivable. Weber concludes that

Bartók's stylistic development is characterized by this tension between the ultimately emotional commitment to the folk-music of his homeland and the reflection of compositional problems which the musical tradition had bequeathed.²²

And, Weber explains, this tension is expressed in Bartók's music through the technique of interpolation in which these conflicting influences are juxtaposed, resulting in a homogeneous compositional style. Although this hypothesis about Bartók's music is based to a degree on biographical

information, it is a valid one since it is supported convincingly by the music in contrast to other "biographical" discussions of the Concerto.

Notes

¹Tibor Kneif, "Zur Entstehung und Kompositions-technik von Bartóks Konzert für Orchester," Die Musikforschung 26 (1973): 40.

²Halsey Stevens, The Life and Music of Béla Bartók, rev. ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), p. 283.

³Kneif, p. 45.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid., p. 49.

⁶In the following diagram, S refers to schnell (fast) and L to langsam (slow).

⁷Kneif, p. 51.

⁸J. Breuer and J. Downey also make these observations.

⁹Kneif, p. 51.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 49.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Horst Weber, "Material und Komposition in Bartóks Concerto for Orchestra," Neue Zeitschrift für Musik 134 (1973):771.

¹³Kneif's phrase (p. 51) is "auf derselben Ebene". In his article, Weber says "auf einer Ebene liegt," p. 771.

¹⁴Weber, p. 768-9.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 770.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 772.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 770.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 772. What Weber refers to as Csárdás-reminiscence is in fact the parody of the theme from Shostakovich's Seventh Symphony and Franz Lehár's The Merry Widow.

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Ibid., p. 773.

²²Ibid.

C. Folk Music

A Lexicographical Approach

There is no need to belabour the point that folk-music was a vital musical influence in Bartók's life. His folk-song-collecting expeditions in eastern Europe are well-known, as are his convictions, expounded in his writings, about the significance of folk-music in developing a national compositional style. In his Harvard Lectures of 1943, Bartók outlined two components which had facilitated the emergence of the new art music in Hungary:

a thorough knowledge of the devices of old and contemporary Western art music for the technique of composition; and, second, . . . the newly-discovered rural music material of incomparable beauty and perfection: for the spirit of our works to be created.¹

Thus, as Weber suggested, both Western art-music and Hungarian folk-music were important components of Bartók's musical language. As we have seen, Bartók was occupied almost exclusively during his American years with ethnomusicological work: a collection of Romanian folk-songs, a book on Serbo-Croatian folk-song and the transcription of the Milman Parry collection of Yugoslavian

folk-songs. Because the Concerto for Orchestra is also a product of this period, it is imperative that the influence of folk-music on it be examined.

One of the most difficult problems involved in this endeavour is that Bartók's use of folk-music is not facile; direct quotation of folk-song is only a superficial symptom of the pervading presence of folk material in Bartók's music. Indicative of this is the fact that passages containing no primary folk-music material are, nevertheless, often described as folk-like. The fifth movement of the Concerto is one example. Bartók alludes to the degree to which folk-music is implicated in his music in the following passage:

It is the character of peasant music, indèscribable in words, that must find its way into our music. . . . Peasant motives (or imitations of such motives) will only lend our music some new ornaments, nothing more.²

This complexity is acknowledged by John Downey in the introduction to his book La musique populaire dans l'oeuvre de Béla Bartók:

We know, generally, that there exists in Bartók's works a particular liaison between folk-music and his own composition, but, actually, the influence of one on the other was not until now clearly defined in our understanding.³

The goal of his study is to investigate the ways in which Bartók was able to distill the essence of various folk-musics and incorporate them into his own compositional language, a process which Bartók himself did not discuss.

Downey does not restrict his study to any specific portion of Bartók's oeuvre; nor does he focus exclusively on the folk-music of Bartók's native country. The first section of his study outlines the characteristics of the folk-musics of Hungary, Romania, Slovakia, the Arabian region of Biskra, the Ukraine, Bulgaria, Serbo-Croatian Yugoslavia and Turkey including melodic, rhythmic, metrical, and formal elements as well as information pertaining to scales, cadences, and ornamentation; even special features such as the Hungarian parlando-rubato style. This panoramic outline facilitates a discussion of the Bartókian oeuvre based on these diverse influences.

Despite his objective to verify the relationship between the actual folk melodies that Bartók collected and the music he composed, Downey's discussion of Bartók's music (including the Concerto for Orchestra) is little more than a labelling of melodic, rhythmic and formal folk elements. Here are some examples of his findings: the theme beginning at measure 90 of the second movement of the Concerto is seen to be influenced by Serbo-Croatian music because the theme is played by two trumpets at the interval of a major second (a prominent interval in Serbo-Croatian music); the oboe melody (mm. 10-18) of the third movement is Arabian-influenced because of its scale, limited range and the circling of the melody around a central point; and the technique in the fifth

movement whereby short motifs are repeated over reiterated chords is purported to be of Romanian inspiration.

Because it is oriented towards the subject of folk music rather than a specific composition (the Concerto is only one of many works discussed), Downey's analysis does not necessarily cover the salient features of each movement--only those in which folk music is involved. Furthermore, the lexical nature of Downey's approach does not lead to a profound study of how the music really *works*. Despite the intention stated in his introduction to pursue the liaison between folk and composed music, Downey does not fulfill this objective. He locates the source of influence (albeit more complex than melodic quotation), but neglects to explore the transformation process.

An example of this shortcoming can be found in his treatment of the fourth movement. Downey begins by commenting on the unusual scale of the opening theme (mm. 4-12), which he implies is foreign to European folk-music. Nevertheless, he claims that the theme has a particularly Hungarian flavour (because the fourth phrase contains a greater number of beats than the first three) and then comments on its similarities to a *Slovak* melody, which he quotes in the text. Some points of similarity are the alternation of 5/8 with other metres (3/8, 3/4) and the prominent role played by the tritone, but Downey does not actually compare the two scales. As this example

demonstrates, Downey neglects to pursue the relationship between actual and "composed" folk-music; nor does he integrate his findings into an overall conception of Bartók's use of folk-music.

As a lexicon of folk elements, this work is useful; however, the information it uncovers is simply presented, not critically examined. Downey's investigation is so broad, embracing all folk influences in Bartók's entire output, and his treatment of it is so general, that his findings simply corroborate what was already assumed--that Bartók drew on many kinds of folk music in his compositions. What Downey's study does contribute is detailed evidence of this assumption, and this is valuable. But Downey seems content to discuss the "ornamental" role of folk-music, the use of "peasant motives (or imitations of such motives),"⁴ rather than probing into how folk music is assimilated into Bartók's musical language.

Performance Practice: Parlando-Rubato

Another type of discussion of the Concerto based on folk-music is that of János Breuer who, because his topic is more specialized, is able to discuss the Concerto with respect to the influence of folk-music in a much more detailed manner. Breuer's article is further defined by his primary interest in performance practice.

Breuer's central point concerns the rhythm of the trumpet melody of the slow introduction (mm. 39-47), a transformation of which occurs in the third movement. Citing examples of folk-song rhythms from Bartók's own book on Hungarian folk-songs, Breuer demonstrates that the rhythm of the trumpet melody is closely related to rhythms of Hungarian folk-music. He also discusses the parlando-rubato style of Hungarian music in which a group of notes of equal value is not executed in a metronomically exact manner; certain notes are lengthened and shortened, resulting in a more fluid line. Although there are no markings on the first appearance of the trumpet melody (I: mm. 30 ff.), the tenuto and phrase markings on the recurrence of the theme in the third movement (m. 34), suggest Bartók's plastic parlando-rubato conception of this theme.⁵



Example 1. Béla Bartók, Concerto for Orchestra, Boosey and Hawkes, III: mm. 34 ff. (violins).

Only when the trumpet melody is executed in the parlando-rubato style is its inherent vitality revealed, because this flexible trumpet melody is then set against steady eighth-notes which accompany it in the bass (mm. 39 ff.). The performance of the accompanying eighths in strict

time represents tempo giusto, another style in Hungarian folk-music.

Sections of the slow introduction of the first movement are governed by either one of these two performance modes; only in the trumpet melody (mm. 39 ff.) do these two styles occur together. It is for this reason, according to Breuer, that the trumpet melody functions as the pivotal center of the slow introduction. Like Kneif and Weber, Breuer conceives of the introduction as a unification of contrasting elements, but in his discussion, this principle of contention is epitomized by the contrasting parlando-rubato and tempo giusto styles.

Breuer's analysis is also unique among those considered in this thesis in that his critical comments are inevitably directed to the various recordings of the work rather than the actual composition. Failure of a performance to reveal the fundamental principle of tension--the parlando-rubato within the tempo giusto--results, in his opinion, in an unsuccessful execution of the work. According to Breuer, the Hungarian musician instinctively executes this trumpet melody in the parlando-rubato style, which is so prevalent in Hungarian music. In actual fact, only two of the four recordings (all conducted by Hungarians) are deemed satisfactory by Breuer.⁶ It is peculiar and annoying that Breuer gives musical examples of only the *unsatisfactory*

versions of the passage, not those of the recordings which he endorses.

Breuer's argument implies that the piece can be performed successfully only if the parlando-rubato style is employed where appropriate. But Bartók gives no articulation markings, at least in the first appearance of the theme, to indicate the proper performance style to the uninitiated performer. Furthermore, parlando-rubato is not a style easily imitated by classically-trained musicians. One cannot argue that Bartók assumed that this piece would be played by Hungarian orchestras, since we know he wrote the work specifically for an American orchestra. And yet, the work *does* benefit from a certain vitality when performed as Breuer advocates.

Along with the issue of national performance practice, Breuer's critique of recordings raises a new question regarding criticism of the Concerto. None of the other analyses offer bibliographical information about recordings consulted even though the recording(s) may have played a major role in the formation of an aesthetic opinion. In his analysis, French alludes to the variability of recordings when referring to "the subjective limitations . . . presented by one or another interpretation of the work on record."⁷ But even French, whose analysis relies heavily on recordings because of its emphasis on the listening process, does not indicate which recording(s) he consulted. If the

recordings differ as much as Breuer suggests, French's criticisms may have more relevance to certain recorded performances than to the composition itself.

The topic of folk-music informs Breuer's article on the Concerto in quite a different way than it does Downey's book; this is partially due to the difference in objectives of the two studies. Folk-music is the focus of Downey's work; therefore, the discussion of the Concerto is merely illustrative of the central objective to trace the liaison between folk music and Bartók's composition. In contrast, Breuer's primary interest is to examine the Concerto, which he does with the aid of his insight into Hungarian folk music. It is almost certain that, being Hungarian himself, Breuer's interest in folk-music stems from a quite different source than that of Downey, which in turn affects the manner in which the topic emerges in his writing. While it is not the raison d'être of Breuer's article, folk-music infuses the observations that he makes about the Concerto and the way that he conceives of the work.

Nevertheless, Breuer's insights about folk-music are directed specifically toward the Concerto for Orchestra and not, therefore, applicable to Bartók's method of composing generally, the liaison between Bartók's collected folk-music and Bartók's composed music to which Downey refers. Ernő Lendvai, another Hungarian musicologist, explores this liaison more rigorously than either Downey or Breuer.

Golden Section Proportion

Ernő Lendvai's "golden section system" is founded on the premise that "the words of Bartók's musical language stem from the deepest layer of folk music"⁸ and that the essence of this music was integrated by Bartók into a compositional system which obeys the laws of the golden section principle. One of the most attractive aspects of Lendvai's theory is its treatment of the Bartókian oeuvre as a whole, not as a collection of disparate styles:

An astonishing result of my studies on Bartók relates to the unity of style in his music, which is at least as organic as that of, say, Bach or Mozart: "Bluebeard's Castle," "Music for Strings, Percussion and Celeste," and the "Concerto for Orchestra" permit analysis by the same means.⁹

Although Lendvai has not, to my knowledge, published an analysis of the Concerto, nor relied with any consistency on examples from the Concerto in his other writings, I believe that his approach merits consideration in this thesis because of its importance in Bartókian analysis and, in this chapter, because of its conception of the assimilation of folk-music into Bartók's compositional language.¹⁰

It is no doubt an oversimplification, but not inaccurate, to summarize Lendvai's theory of Bartók's music as a system of dualism in which two opposing, yet complementary, factions exist in a yin/yang type of relationship. Perhaps this construct is most concisely

defined by the following excerpt from a table of antonyms formulated by Lendvai in explanation of the operation of the two systems in Sonata for Two Pianos and Percussion.¹¹

Golden section system

Acoustic system

chromaticism	diatony
closed world	open world
circular pattern of melody	straight pattern of melody
rhythm with strong ending	rhythm with weak ending
uneven metre	even metre
symmetries	asymmetries
organic	logic
feminine symbols	masculine symbols
finite: circular motion	infinite
geometric nature	mathematical nature

The contrast of these two systems results from the fact that they receive definition from two antithetical principles: the golden section system which is organic (physiological) and geometric; and the acoustic system which is based on logic (physics) and mathematics. The musical adjuncts of these systems are 1) the pentatonic music of the peasant class, which is considered to be a product of nature, and 2) the rationalized, composed music of Western civilization, which is based on the intervals of the overtone series as revealed by the science of physics. The complexity of Lendvai's theory cannot be accommodated in this chapter; therefore, the following discussion will be devoted to an examination of the portion of Lendvai's theory which deals with folk-music: the golden section system.

Golden section is a proportional principle, numerous examples of which can be found in the natural, organic worlds, in which a length is divided in such a way that the ratio of the smaller part to the larger part is identical to that of the larger part to the whole. This proportional principle can also be expressed as a numerical sequence, called the Fibonacci series, in which each number is equal to the sum of the previous two. The ratio of two contiguous numbers in the series is the most accurate expression in whole numbers of golden section proportion.

According to Lendvai, this principle pervades every aspect of Bartók's composition to the extent that

golden section is a no less significant constituent element in Bartók's creation of form, melody and harmony than overtone harmonization and construction in periods embracing eight or four bars in the Viennese classical style.¹²

But Lendvai does not suggest that the utilization of golden section principles by Bartók was intentional or conscious, and whether it was or not makes no difference to the success of Lendvai's theory. Lendvai's contention that Bartók was innately drawn to golden section proportion relies on two arguments: 1) that the permeation of Bartók's music by the laws of the golden section was a consequence of his immersion in the folk music of Eastern Europe and 2) that this folk music is based on golden section principles by virtue of its identity as an organic product of nature.

The notion that folk-music is a phenomenon of the natural world was one to which Bartók himself subscribed:

. . . peasant music is the outcome of changes wrought by a natural force whose operation is unconscious; it is impulsively created by a community of men who have had no schooling; it is as much a natural product as are the various forms of animal and vegetable life.¹³

Therefore, it could be argued that this music, as a product of nature, is governed by the same principle that is found in the structure of the sunflower, the pine cone, even the cochlea of the human ear: golden section proportion.

Indeed, this does appear to be the case. If the first five terms of the Fibonacci series are expressed in terms of intervals (where 1=semi-tone, 2=whole-tone and so on), the results are as follows; minor second, major second, minor third, perfect fourth, minor sixth. The pentatonic scale as defined by Lendvai¹⁴ is characterized by these intervals, which also dominate Bartók's compositional language, both melodically and harmonically. Conspicuously absent from this collection of intervals are the major third, perfect fifth, major sixth, which are characteristic of the music of major-minor tonality in Western culture. These intervals would, according to Lendvai's system of dualism, be present in connection with passages inspired by the acoustic system, but Dénes Bartha proposes that they are, for the most part, avoided by Bartók.¹⁵

In defense of his hypothesis that the pentatonic folk music of Eastern Europe is a natural phenomenon governed by the organic golden section principle, Lendvai advances the argument that the cochlea of the ear is constructed on golden section principles; therefore, the golden section intervals (+2, -3, P4, -6) are "natural" ones.

Clearly, the physiological apparatus of our ears (with the logarithmic structure of the cochlea) is such as to make so-la-so-mi (2, 3, 5), congenial at the earliest stage, of which the primitive levels of folk music and the simplest nursery songs provide unequivocal evidence. In such primitive melody cultures, the sense for major tonality and functional attraction are completely unknown. Harmonic thinking arises from a quite different source, from the overtone system, which could have come into its own exclusively with instrumental music.¹⁶

Thus, because of its identity as a natural phenomenon, the folk-music of Eastern Europe is informed by the golden-section principle so that, in assimilating this music, Bartók internalized the proportional laws of the golden section principle.

To return to the specific details of the theory, it will be recalled that, when expressed numerically, the intervals of pentatony corresponded exactly to the numbers of the Fibonacci series. This is the only *direct* link between folk-music and golden section proportion, but this link, along with Bartók's comment about folk music as a natural phenomenon, is a solid piece of evidence for the assumption

upon which Lendvai's theory depends: that Eastern European folk music is an expression of the golden section principle. In his numerous analyses, Lendvai has found a wealth of evidence of the operation of the golden section principle in Bartók's music in melodic, formal and harmonic spheres. Lendvai's comments about rhythm have been less extensive and will not be considered here.

By counting measures or even note values, the geometric mean (point of golden section) can be determined and, in some works, corresponds to major articulation points. This is the case in Sonata for Two Pianos and Percussion:

. . . golden section of the first movement indicates the centre of gravity in the movement: the beginning of the recapitulation. (Since the movement consists of 443 bars, and $443 \times 0.618 = 274$, recapitulation sets in precisely in the 274th bar!)¹⁷

This is not the only way in which the golden section can be applied to formal construction. Performing "nearly a thousand geometrically satisfactory measurements," Lendvai "demonstrated that every unit of the Sonata for Two Pianos and Percussion, from the whole of the work to the tiniest cells, is divided according to the rule of golden section."¹⁸ In the Dance Suite, the thematic material is built on progressively larger golden section cells: the first movement is constructed of major seconds (2), the second movement of minor thirds (3), the third movement of perfect

fourths (5) and in the fourth movement, the cells combined produce a minor sixth (8).

The same principle of cellular development is utilized harmonically so that themes are accompanied by vertical representations of golden section intervals which expand sequentially through the series. When Bartók utilizes traditional chords (triads), they often appear in an inversion which allows golden section intervals (P4, -3, -6) to sound rather than the sonorities that characterize major-minor tonality (+3, P5).



Example 2. Ernő Lendvai. "Duality and Synthesis in Bartók's Music," New Hungarian Quarterly 3 (1962): 98.

There is evidence of the golden section principle operating in the Concerto for Orchestra which Lendvai does not mention. For instance, the motive first stated in measures 1-6 is repeated twice, becoming progressively broader. In the first statement, a span of two fourths is covered. The second statement expands to cover three fourths, and the third statement covers five fourths.

These are the major points of Lendvai's theory: that Bartók subconsciously emulated the essence of folk-music--golden section proportion--in his own compositional

language. The contrast between this approach and Downey's is substantial. Lendvai's writing is more adventurous, and therefore more controversial; consequently, it has received much criticism, most vociferously from Roy Howat.¹⁹ Despite any weaknesses of Lendvai's approach and/or any in the validity of his presumptions, his hypothesis allows for a unique insight into the liaison between folk-music and composed music. His theory delivers the mandate established by Downey to investigate this liaison because, by establishing folk-music as a product of nature, Bartók's composed music is intimately linked with his "collected" music, not because of any iconic similarity, but by the generating principle which informs them both. Because of this, Lendvai's approach is able to account for the perplexing situation that Bartók's music is felt to be folk-inspired even when direct quotation is not employed.

Notes

¹Benjamin Suchoff, ed., Béla Bartók Essays (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1976), p. 363.

²Ibid., p. 341.

³John Downey, La musique populaire dans l'oeuvre de Béla Bartók (Paris: Centre de documentation universitaire, 1966), p. 34.

⁴Suchoff, ed., Essays, p. 341.

⁵Breuer discusses motives for the markings in the article. (J. Breuer, "Egy Bartók-dallam nyomában," Muzsika 14 (1971), 8: 26-9, 9:37-9, 10:25-7)

⁶Breuer does not provide recording numbers. The conductors he mentions are: András Kórodi, György Lehel, György Solti, and Antal Doráti.

⁷Gilbert French, "Continuity and Discontinuity in Bartók's Concerto for Orchestra," Music Review 28 (1967): 122.

⁸Ernő Lendvai, "Duality and Synthesis in Bartók's Music," New Hungarian Quarterly 3 (1962), 7:92.

⁹Lendvai, Duality, p. 92.

¹⁰The following discussion of Lendvai's theory will be drawn from "Duality and Synthesis in the Music of Béla Bartók." For a more recent and lengthier exposition of his views, see The Workshop of Bartók and Kodály (Budapest: Editio Musica Budapest, 1983).

¹¹Lendvai, Duality, pp. 112-3.

¹²Ibid., p. 93.

¹³Béla Bartók, The Hungarian Folk Song, ed. Benjamin Suchoff, trans. M.D. Calvocoressi (Albany, N.Y.: S.U.N.Y. Press, 1981), p. 3.

¹⁴Lendvai's use of pentatonic refers to what he calls mi pentatony (mi-so-la-do-re). In this pentatonic scale, minor rather than major thirds and sixths predominate. According to Lendvai, "peasant songs belonging to the deepest layer of folk-music have a mi-pentatonic character" (Workshop of Bartók and Kodály, p. 12.)

¹⁵Dénes Bartha, "La Musique de Bartók" in La Résonance dans les échelles, ed. E. Weber (Paris: 1983).

¹⁶Lendvai, Duality, p. 110. This argument is highly contentious. While Lendvai may consider the overtone series to be un-natural in that it is based on a *physical* law rather than a physiological one (i.e. structure of the cochlea), other theorists, most notably Schenker, have seized on the existence of the overtone series as evidence that the octave, major third and perfect fifth are *natural* sonorities.

¹⁷Lendvai, Duality, p.93.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹See "Review-Article: Bartók, Lendvai and the Principles of Proportional Analysis," Music Analysis 2(1983): 69-93. Howat suggests that Lendvai's calculations are unscientific and his system too arbitrary.

D. Orchestration

Orchestration, a compositional element that has not thus far not been considered in any of the analyses, is the primary focus of J. Volek's article "Über einige interessante Beziehungen zwischen thematischer Arbeit und Instrumentation in Bartóks Werk: Concerto für Orchester" [On some interesting relationships between thematic material and instrumentation in Bartók's work Concerto for Orchestra]. It is obvious from the title of the work alone that orchestration should be a vital element in the study of this piece. But Volek goes further than dealing with orchestration as a component of the work; he suggests that the orchestra is actually the "theme" of the Concerto for Orchestra.

Following a lengthy discourse on the nature of orchestration, Volek advances the opinion that the first movement of the Concerto can be conceived of neither as sonata-form nor as rondo-form, although it seems to have elements of both. Even a combined form is eventually disqualified. Similar misgivings are held in regard to the second and fourth movements, which correspond, but not exactly, to ternary forms.

Rather than viewing this non-conformity to traditional formal patterns as a measure of the lack of integrity in the work, Volek entertains the possibility that the structure of the movements and the work as a whole are governed in some way by orchestration. Acting on this assumption, Volek proceeds to demonstrate how the Concerto is structured with respect to orchestration or Besetzung, which he defines as a process whereby instruments and instrument-groups take on certain functions and are assigned certain melodic and rhythmic characteristics, and even certain intervals, as in the second movement.¹

The article is divided into two sections, the first dealing with "transformation" and "transposition," developmental techniques that rely on the resources of instrumentation rather than motivic variation or modulation. The second section deals with the structural role of orchestration within each movement and in the work as a whole.

Volek points out that the process of instrumentation is inseparable from the conception of a theme. Since every theme is characterized by a particular orchestration, one can speak of the three main themes of the first movement of the Concerto as music "of" the strings (mm. 76 ff.), the woodwinds (mm. 154 ff.) and the brass (mm. 316 ff.). Throughout the course of a work, these themes are developed through reiteration in contrasting instrumentations:

Here it is not only a matter of a direct alteration of timbres, but the motive that is taken over goes right through an effective veil of detachment; [it] comes under the influence of different, heterogeneous orchestration and, more often than not, changes because of it and becomes assimilated.²

Transposition is the process and transformation the result of this orchestrational form of development. Although Volek defines his terms in this way at one point, his usage of them is not consistent with his own definition. Firstly, he does not maintain the distinction between process and result; and secondly, the term transformation is often used in contexts which imply its more general meaning.

Volek's first example of instrumental development (transformation) is of measures 6-11 of the first movement. Whereas many critics have labelled this gesture as antithetical to the opening fourth-step arch, Volek regards this wedge-like passage as a "transposition" of the first five measures. But, although it is not simply a question of re-orchestration, he does not explain how they are connected. While the two motives may be linked at some level, Volek suggests that the original motive is *contrasted* with its own transpositions. Volek also provides examples of transformation as it occurs in the third movement. The details of these examples will not be discussed here; however, it is interesting to note that, according to Volek, transpositions of the opening theme from the first movement are governed by the principle of inversion and diminution; the

same principle of inversion and tendency towards constriction were made apparent in Kneif's article.

In the second part, Volek discusses each movement in terms of its orchestration and the structural use of orchestration in the work as a whole. He views the Concerto for Orchestra as possessing a symmetrical balance provided by its orchestration: the first and fifth movements feature the orchestra as a body of instruments, stressing the strengths of the orchestra as a whole [plenum]; the second and fourth movements feature the orchestra in chamber groups because of their emphasis on solos or duets; the third movement is a combination of these two approaches--the orchestra as a whole and as individual components. Thus, the Concerto possesses a structural balance due to the orchestrational methods employed.

Symmetry is also created in the Concerto as follows. The second and fourth movements are dominated by woodwinds, whereas the most important thematic material of the first and fifth movements is given to the string and brass sections. In addition, the string theme of the first movement (mm. 76 ff.) initiates the main section of the movement and the brass have a less-important closing theme (mm. 514 ff.).³ The relationship between the two groups is reversed in the fifth movement so that the string theme acts as a preparation for the weightier brass fanfares.

In discussing this article, one cannot overlook Volek's observations about the programmatic use of orchestration:

Therefore, orchestrations and transpositions contain not only technical, formal variety and opposition but also broad and deep stylization--somewhat boldly expressed--also a hidden genre-characterization, which is capable of creating an evocative line of ideas, thoughts and emotions by means of content rather than form.⁴

Although this statement is vague, Volek does make more specific comments about the programmatic use of orchestration. The atmosphere of levity in the second movement is achieved, according to Volek, due to the lack of an essential role for the strings in the orchestration of this movement. This levity is even placed in a specific context, again suggested by the orchestration: the scene opens in a small theater with a "tone-curtain" portrayed by the snare-drum rhythm (mm. 1-8). The entry of the characters in pairs follows and the brass chorale at measure 123 is the intermission.

"Ideas, thoughts and emotions" figure prominently in Volek's treatment of the third movement, particularly in his discussion of the final fourteen bars. Volek describes this passage as follows. Spanning measures 112 to 118 is a "sweet, Lohengrinesque 'rainbow.'"⁵ This is interrupted by the horn in measure 119, which sounds a dissonant two-note motive. As if to rectify this disturbance, a portion of the

"rainbow" passage is reiterated in measures 120-22, followed by an adjusted statement of the horn motive (F-sharp to G-sharp in m. 123). Two bars later, dissonance again intrudes in the horn (A-G), but:

this last, mild dissonance cannot,
however, suppress the bright illumination
of the moment, in which also the iron law
of dissonance in the Elegy changes in a
trembling way into a pure chord of
longing for reconciliation and balance.⁶

This "chord of longing for reconciliation and balance" is established in measure 122, which Volek considers to be the zenith of the movement, a "moment of light in the realm of darkness."⁷ Volek describes the nadir, which occurs in measure 98, as a "true plunge into the depths of despair."⁸

Here Volek is no longer discussing the Concerto under the rubric of orchestral structural principles; it is descriptive analysis. It is also one of many examples in the article in which Volek digresses from his own topic, definition or method. Despite the lack of focus, Volek's comments are very interesting. What is disappointing in his discussion of this section is that he does not elaborate on what he calls the "iron law of dissonance." Does "reconciliation" actually occur in this passage and, if so, what is the nature of it?

As we have seen, this passage has posed problems for several critics: its elusive harmonies prompted Austin to call it transcendent; French thought the passage to be "the greatest faux pas of the entire work."⁹ Volek's fanciful

description also acknowledges the colourful, haunting effect of these chords, but he comes no closer to explaining it. At this point, I would like to embark on a digression of my own in an attempt to analyze this passage further using the method of Polymodal Chromaticism developed by Ernő Lendvai.¹⁰

In this system, the relativity of chords in functional harmony is replaced by the relativity that operates in solmization. Furthermore,

the symbols of relative solmization each designate a musical CHARACTER, and if we recognize: which sign represents light or darkness, which is accompanied by a rise or a descent, . . . we shall have conquered something of the realm concealed behind the notes.¹¹

For example, the major chord represented by do-mi-so can be modified to a minor chord by flattening mi to ma. Likewise, la-do-mi can be made major by sharpening do to di. Hence, major and minor chords have different qualities depending on the context, and can be expressed either as do-mi(ma)-so or as la-do(di)-mi. The presence of di creates a brighter sound and, with ma, the sound darkens. When di and ma are used together, a "polar tension" is the result. Fa and ti, so-called sensitive notes, "carry some sort of "functional" tension--and within the 7-degree system these render the dominant-tonic attraction possible."¹² (Si and re have analogous functions in the minor key.) Conversely, ta and fi are "static colour-elements" and represent balance

because they are the characteristic elements of acoustic overtone harmony.

Consequently, if A=do in the passage beginning at measure 112, the sudden feeling of elevation in measure 115 occurs because A-sharp=di in this context. Similarly, the A-minor chord in measure 118 is particularly sombre because C=ma. This sombre mood is heightened by the addition of the horn-call F-G (si-ta) to the A-minor chord in the next measure; ma + ta produces a "sorrowful or languid character."¹³ The restoration of mi (m. 122) is initiated by a pentatonic cadence (so-la-mi) in measures 120-22 in the first violin part. But, before it is completed (m. 122), polymodal tension is created in measure 121. Ma is sustained in the cello line against fi in the double bass, creating a complex apotheosis: passionate, because of ma but also elevated because of fi. The statement of mi (C-sharp) in measure 122 seems to dissolve this tension as ma and fi resolve to do and so respectively, and ti (in the viola) rises to do. But the tension is not dissipated, only maintained in equilibrium, because the pentatonic cadence (la-mi/F-sharp--C-sharp) in measure 122 implies pentatonic 6/4 harmony (C#-F#-A),¹⁴ whereas the actual sounding notes are E, A, C-sharp; that is, A-major in second inversion. Thus, the cadence is neither unequivocally pentatonic nor diatonic.

The balance is indeed delicate and is nearly upset in measure 123 with the tentative F-sharp-G-sharp (la-ti) in the horn and B (re) in the piccolo. G-sharp and B suggest the dominant (E-major), which sounds simultaneously with its tonic (A) until the horn again splinters the "sound-field" with A-G (do-ta). This causes a rupture of the balance, so that re (in the piccolo) vibrates in a tremolo-figure involving di and ma, which constitute polar tension. By this time, the A-major chord in the strings has ceased to sound and the final sound event is an echo in the timpani of the pentatonic la-mi cadence from measures 121-22.

Analysis by means of Lendvai's method of Polymodal Chromaticism allows for a more detailed articulation of the expressive chromaticism of the passage which prompted Volek to use the term "rainbow." It also attempts to explain the issue of reconciliation and in this passage; a kind of reconciliation is established between pentatonic and diatonic systems, but it is established through an equilibrium, which is tenuous at best.

Volek's article is quite lengthy and can be convoluted at times. Furthermore, his point is often difficult to grasp because of technical problems such as insufficient measure indications and unclear use of terms. Despite these shortcomings, Volek's approach is refreshingly unique and some interesting ideas emerge from it. Unlike the other analysts, Volek acknowledges the limitations of his own

approach, confessing that it is not adequately equipped to deal with every aspect of the Concerto. Because of his flexible attitude towards analysis and his willingness to search for an *appropriate* mode of discussing the Concerto, Volek's study exposes a symmetry and structure that did not emerge in other studies based on more traditional methods.

Notes

¹J. Volek, "Über einige interessante Beziehungen zwischen thematischer Arbeit und Instrumentation in Bartóks Werk: Concerto für Orchester," Studia Musicologica 5(1963): 560.

²See Volek, p. 565.

³This theme first appears in measure 74 but its most significant statement occurs at measure 556 at the conclusion of the movement.

⁴Volek, p. 571.

⁵Ibid., p. 580.

⁶Ibid., p. 581.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Ibid., p. 580.

⁹Gilbert French, "Continuity and Discontinuity in Bartók's Concerto for Orchestra," Music Review 28 (1967):129.

¹⁰Bartók also used this term in the Harvard Lectures [B. Suchoff, ed., Béla Bartók Essays (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1976), pp. 354-92.] but Lendvai's use of the term is different than that of Bartók.

¹¹Ernő Lendvai, The Workshop of Bartók and Kodály (Budapest: Editio Musica Budapest, 1983), p. 96.

¹²Ibid., p. 465.

¹³Ibid., p. 202n.

¹⁴Pentatonic harmony refers here to chords which harmonize pentatonic melodies. According to Lendvai, these chords invariably appear in 6/4 position, rather than root position which is more common for chords of major-minor tonality. The root of these pentatonic chords is the *bottom* note, not the *lowest* note when the chord is rearranged in thirds. In fact, in a pentatonic context, this "root" position of the pitches is the most dissonant; whereas, in major-minor tonality, root position is the norm and the 6/4 position requires resolution. Consequently, the chord (from bottom) C#-F#-A could function either as stable C#-pentatonic or as unstable F#-minor (second inversion) in major-minor tonality, depending on the context.

E. Symmetrical Pitch Collections

The final analytical approach to be considered is found in Elliott Antokoletz's The Music of Béla Bartók: A Study of Tonality and Progression in Twentieth-Century Music. Like Downey's study, Antokoletz's book does not deal with the Concerto alone. It discusses many of Bartók's works in order to illustrate Bartók's transformation of folk-music into an alternative harmonic language based on symmetrical pitch relations. Antokoletz states in the preface that the pieces used were chosen both for their ability to illustrate the basic principles of the theory and with consideration for equal representation of the various genres of Bartók's oeuvre.

The problem of how to approach Bartók's music is one of the fundamental considerations directing the inquiry of this thesis. It is one that Antokoletz is also keenly aware of and which he attempts to address through the development of his theory. Observing that

there has been no theory, comparable to that of the traditional tonal system, to draw together all pitch formations in his [Bartók's] music under one unified set of principles,¹

Antokoletz states that the purpose of his study is to demonstrate that Bartók's music is based on "an all-

encompassing system of pitch relations"² and that this system is characterized by *equal* division of the octave (symmetry), as opposed to *unequal* division (asymmetry), on which the major-minor system of tonality is based. Antokoletz is interested not only in locating and labelling these symmetrical pitch collections but also in examining the "progressive" relationships of these collections to each other and the work as a whole: how these collections are formed and how they function in the overall structure of the composition, as an alternative to the relationships in major-minor tonality.

In consulting Bartók's sketches, Antokoletz found that many of the symmetrical formations in Bartók's music appeared in the sketches as diatonic folk modes; therefore, Bartók's compositional process as viewed by Antokoletz often consists of an expansion of the raw material of folk modes (asymmetrical patterns) into abstract *symmetrical* pitch collections.

This mode of thought is reflected in the format of the book:

chapters are categorized according to principles moving from traditional (folk) characteristics through increasingly abstract pitch formations.³

The Concerto is discussed in two of the eight chapters:

"Interaction of Diatonic, Octatonic and Whole-Tone Formations" and "Generation of the Interval Cycles." That these are the two final chapters of the book (with the

exception of the conclusion) is interesting in light of Antokoletz's organizational scheme. It would imply that Bartók's compositional procedure in the Concerto relies more on abstract principles than on actual folk material.

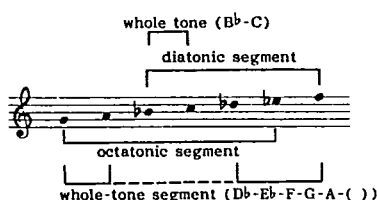
Before embarking on a discussion of these chapters, it will be necessary to provide some background to Antokoletz's theory and definitions of his terminology. The notion of symmetrical versus asymmetrical constructions is explained by Antokoletz as follows:

In traditional tonal music, composers worked according to a system in which the octave was divided into unequal parts. The fundamental division was derived from the perfect fifth, . . . In turn, the perfect fifth of the triad was unequally divided into major and minor thirds.⁴

Bartók's music, conversely, is based on "equal subdivision of the octave into the complex of interval cycles."⁵ The octave can be divided evenly by every interval, except the perfect fifth (or its inversion, the perfect fourth); therefore, there is one interval 1 cycle⁶ (chromatic scale), two interval 2 cycles (whole-tone scales), three interval 3 cycles (diminished-seventh chords) and so on. Since the octave cannot be divided equally by the perfect-fifth/perfect-fourth, its interval cycle has a longer periodicity--several octaves rather than one octave. The interval 5/7 cycle⁷ is the circle of fifths. Thus, by arranging pitches of diatonic modes as segments of the circle of fifths, the asymmetric collection is symmetrized.

Non-diatonic sources (found, again, in folk music) can also be symmetrized by the extension of the symmetrical segments within the larger (asymmetrical) non-diatonic pitch collections. The symmetrical segments within these larger collections can be either diatonic, octatonic or whole-tone patterns, as illustrated in the following example:

231 Non-diatonic mode found in Hungarian peasant music, with divergent overlapping modal segments



Example 1. Elliot Antokoletz, The Music of Béla Bartók (Berkeley, Calif: Univ. of Calif. Press, 1984), p.205, ex.231.

Thus, Bartók formulated symmetrical pitch-collections from both diatonic and non-diatonic folk-music sources: by re-ordering the pitches from diatonic collections into interval 5/7 cycle segments;⁸ and by developing or extending symmetrical segments found in non-diatonic collections. In the Concerto for Orchestra, these symmetrical collections (diatonic,⁹ octatonic and whole-tone scales) are used both as a means of generating thematic material and as formal structural devices.

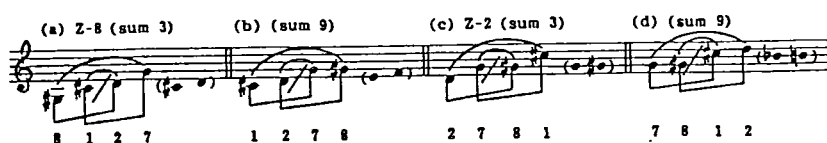
It was observed above that symmetrical formations consist of cycles of intervals, which divide the octave (or larger period) in equal divisions. The generating interval

of these cycles is an important component of symmetrical pitch relations because of the decrease in importance of other structural elements:

Due to the free use of the modes, which led to a weakening of the hierarchical pitch relations inherent in the traditional dominant-tonic progressions, greater emphasis had to be placed on the intervallic properties of both the harmonic and melodic constructions as a means of establishing local and large-scale structural coherence. The new means of providing coherence in an idiom based on equalization of the semitones is primarily found in the intervallic pitch-cell.¹⁰

In his book, Antokoletz refers in particular to three symmetrical intervallic pitch-cells: cell X, cell Y and cell Z. The first two cells are microcosms of larger symmetrical collections: cell X is a four-note segment of the interval 1 cycle (chromatic scale); cell Y, of the interval 2 cycle (whole-tone scale). Cell Z, on the other hand, is constructed of *two* intervals: interval 1 (minor second) and interval 5 (perfect fourth), e.g. D-G-G#-C#. The fact that it is "based on two tritones, . . . enables Z to be permuted around either of two axes of symmetry . . ."¹¹ Since the total cycle of the cell (one octave) is divided equally into two equal parts, there are two axes of symmetry, depending on how the fourths and semitones are arranged.

75 Permutations of cell Z-8/2 around either of two axes of symmetry



Example 2. Antokoletz, p. 72, ex. 75.

Therefore, cell Z can be expressed either as two perfect fourths separated by a minor second or as two minor seconds separated by a perfect fourth.

The Concerto is examined from two perspectives, corresponding to the topics of the two chapters in which it is discussed. In chapter 8, entitled "Interaction of Diatonic, Octatonic, and Whole-Tone Formations," Antokoletz outlines his basic point as follows:

In the Concerto for Orchestra, diatonic, octatonic, and whole-tone formations are either independently developed or elided to form hybrid pitch-collections at prominent structural points.¹²

In the first movement, the interaction of the formations is one of juxtaposition--diatonic against octatonic motives:

The first theme of Movement I (m. 76), . . . is based on two contrasting motives . . . Motive a (F-G-Ab-Bb-B) is a five-note segment of an octatonic scale, while motive b (C-F-Eb-Ab) is an ambiguous four-note segment of either an octatonic or diatonic scale.(Ex. 310)¹³

310 *Concerto for Orchestra, Movement I, mm. 76-91*

76
Allegro vivace, $\text{♩} = 88$

Vlns. I
Vlns. II
Vle.
Vcs.
D. Bs.

Example 3. Antokoletz, p. 255, ex. 310.

Diatonic and octatonic segments of the second and fourth movements are formed by eliding and overlapping as demonstrated in the following example:

313 *Concerto for Orchestra, Movement II, mm. 17-19*

17

Horns I
Horns II

complete octatonic (A♭-B♭-C♭-D♭-E-F♯-G-A)
octatonic motive a
diminished 7th
dominant 7th
diatonic motive a
octatonic (A♭-B♭-C♭-D♭-E-F♯-A)
octatonic (G♭-A♭-B-C♭-D-E-E♭-G)

Example 4. Antokoletz, p. 257, ex. 313.

The fifth movement "extensively develops the diatonic and octatonic figurations and themes that were juxtaposed or elided in the preceding movements."¹⁴

Because the thematic material of the Concerto is generated by segments of the symmetrical formations expressed in short motives, the entire work can be viewed as cyclical, since these motives appear at transpositions and in slight modifications in every movement. Theme B from the fourth movement (mm. 42-50) appears in an expanded form at the end of the fifth movement:

321 *Concerto for Orchestra, Movement V, mm. 594-98*
 IV: Theme B

The musical notation shows a single melodic line on a five-line staff. Above the staff, several brackets and labels indicate specific intervallic and scale-based relationships:

- A bracket labeled '594' spans the first two measures.
- A bracket labeled 'diatonic' spans the first measure.
- A bracket labeled 'whole tone' spans the first two measures.
- A bracket labeled 'diatonic' spans the second measure.
- A bracket labeled 'whole tone' spans the third and fourth measures.
- A bracket labeled 'diatonic' spans the fourth measure.
- Below the staff, three brackets indicate scale types: 'octatonic' for the first two measures, 'octatonic' for the third measure, and 'octatonic expanded' for the fourth measure.

 The notation includes various note values, including eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests.

Example 5. Antokoletz, p. 263, ex. 321.

Motivic material from the first movement is present as well:

The initial phrase of this theme (mm. 559-63) may be considered a transformation of motive b from Movement I (see mm. 77-78), since it is based on the original pitch content of the latter (C-Eb-F-Ab).¹⁵

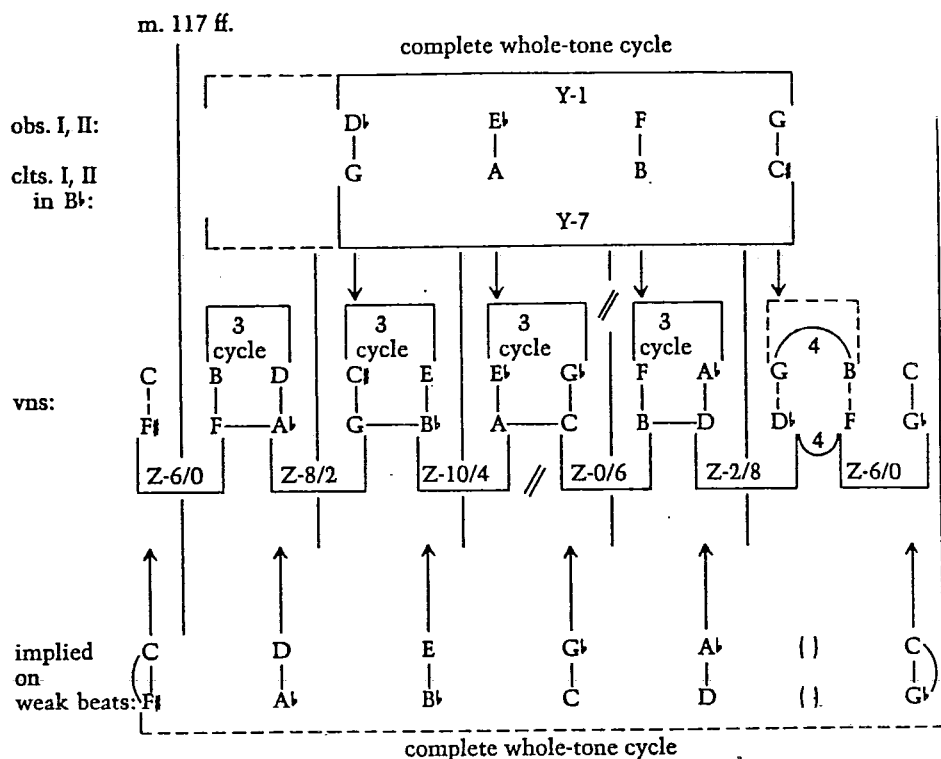
Antokoletz establishes that the fanfare section (mm. 482-558) of the fifth movement acts as a focus for the developmental activity of this movement. In this section, all three types of pitch formations appear in their complete forms, but by measures 559-72 (what Antokoletz calls the closing-theme

group), diatonic constructs are dominant. The octatonic motive a from the first movement is reinterpreted in the alternative ending within a diatonic context. The diatonic fanfare from the opening of the fifth movement (mm. 1-4) is re-stated in the ascending scales of measures 621-25. The woodwinds and strings unfold the Lydian portion of the motive (mm. 1-2) while the horns unfold the Mixolydian portion (mm. 3-4). The combination of their lower tetrachords contains the diatonicized motive a (F-G-A-B \flat -B) from the first movement, a transformation which was foreshadowed in I:m. 488. Thus, the fifth movement develops and resolves the juxtaposition of various symmetrical constructs.

In chapter eight, "Generation of the Interval Cycles," motives a and b (from movement I) are examined from another perspective: as autonomous intervallic constructions rather than as segments of a larger cycle. Antokoletz makes many of the same points about thematic unity as Kneif and Weber. For example, he observes that motives a (m. 76) and b (mm. 77-8) have in common interval 2, which is then combined with interval 1 to produce motive a and interval 5 for motive b. Theme 2 (mm. 155 ff.) is a fusion of a variant of the intervallic structure of motive a and the rhythmic structure of motive b. Perhaps more significant is the fact that Theme 2 is characterized by interval 2, which is the intervallic link between motives a and b.

Development is achieved "by cyclical extension of their intervallic properties [those of motives a and b]."¹⁶ An example of this process occurs at mm. 258 ff. where "a sequential extension of motive b in each of the canonic voices gives as an interval-ratio 5:2 ordering,¹⁷ G-C-Bb-Eb-Db-Gb-E-A, of a complete octatonic scale (G-A-Bb-C-Db-Eb-E-Gb)."¹⁸ This 5:2 collection is considered a reinterpretation of the 2:1 ordering of motive a because both interval-ratio collections 5:2 and 2:1 can be formed by "two interlocking interval 3 cycles (G-Bb-Db-E and C-Eb-Gb-A)."¹⁹

The intervallic properties of these motives generate complex networks of interval-cycles.

373 *Concerto for Orchestra, Movement I, mm. 117-21*

Example 6. Antokoletz, p. 308, ex. 373.

The three tritone boundaries established by motive a (m. 75, 76, 79) are separated by intervals 2 and 1, which also constitute the intervallic content of motive a. Antokoletz identifies these tritone boundaries as partially responsible for generating the interlocking cycles shown in Example 6. (See pages 306-7 for a more complete explanation.) Likewise, the interval-cycles generated by motive b in measures 134-48 reflect its intervallic properties. These are the interval 5/7 and interval 2/10 cycles.

The fifth movement has a developmental role in the sphere of the generation of interval cycles as it did in the

area of symmetrical formations: "all these interval ratios [established in Movement III] . . . are fully developed in the closing scale passages (mm. 482 ff.) of Movement V."²⁰ Beginning in III:m. 5, a series of cyclic patterns emerges. The first is cell Z with an interval ratio of 5:1. The ratios of these cycles become consecutively smaller--4:1, 3:1 etc.-- until measure 33, at which point "all the interval ratios between 5:1 (cell Z) and 1:1 (cell X) have been systematically unfolded."²¹

These interval ratios are developed, then, in the fifth movement, beginning at measure 482, the same section in which development of the diatonic and octatonic formations takes place. In this section, the sequence of the interval ratios is reversed so that they become increasingly *larger*, culminating in 5:1 (cell Z) in measures 583-84; "thus, cell Z serves both as a focal point and as a basic structural formation in generation of the interval cycles."²² It functions as a point of departure in the third movement and as a culmination point in the fifth movement. But the statement of cell Z at measures 583-84 is only of penultimate significance because the tritone, which forms the boundary of cell Z (and many other constructions in the work), is extended still further to interval 7 or the perfect fifth in measures 585-86.

Antokoletz is careful to stress the importance of cell Z in the Concerto. In addition to the structural

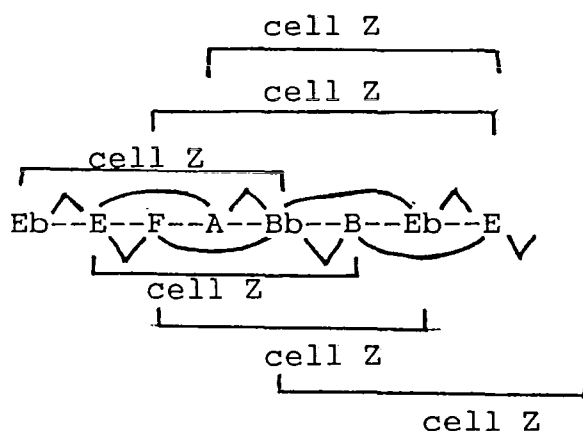
function of cell Z mentioned above, the intervallic properties of interval 5 (perfect fourth) and interval 6 (tritone) are exploited at many places in the Concerto. As we have seen, motive a spans the interval of a tritone; and motive b is characterized by two perfect fourths separated by a major second. Thus, these two motives could be said to express two of the intervallic properties of cell Z (perfect fourth, tritone).

The structural presence of the fourth-interval has been widely acknowledged: William Austin made reference to the distinctive fourth-chords in his analysis; and the sequence of fourths which appears at the beginning of the first movement and again in the third has been noted by almost every analysis. The significance of the tritone has not been as widely explored, but, in connection with his theory of intervallic cycles, Antokoletz makes some insightful comments about its thematic and structural contribution. In the first movement, measure 51, the tritone first appears "as a prominent thematic element, serving as the boundary interval of the initial chromatic phrase in vn I (mm. 51-52) and also prominently placed in vn II (Ex. 371)." ²³

371 *Concerto for Orchestra, Movement I, mm. 51-52, vns*

Example 7. Antokoletz, p. 307, ex. 371.

In measure 58, the tritone is stated linearly (Eb-A) and develops into a transition-motive between the introduction and first theme of Movement I (mm. 63-75). Motive a of the first theme is formed by a transposition of this motive one whole tone higher. The inversion of motive a in measure 79 involves yet another transposition of the tritone motive; the last note of motive a (B) is transposed down a minor second to B-flat, which is the first pitch of the inverted motive. These three "tritone boundaries" form "a succession of three tritone cycles (Eb-A, F-B, and E-Bb) [which] are separated by interval 2 and interval 1, respectively, a reflection of the intervallic alternations in motive a of the theme. [at m. 76 ff.]"²⁴ These three tritone-boundaries (Bb-E, F-Cb, Eb-A) define the three statements of motive a in measures 123-27. Because these three tritones are interlocking, they form interval cycles and generate Z cells.



Example 8. This diagram shows the three tritone figures (arranged sequentially) and the Z cells that emerge. ^ =semitone; v =perfect fourth.

Measures 117-21 contain a series of "vertically stated tritones . . . that serve as basic structural elements in the generation of a complex of interlocking interval cycles (Ex. 373)."²⁵ (See Example 6)

There are other instances which Antokoletz does not mention in which the appearance of the tritone is also significant. An important structural use of the tritone occurs in measures 93-98 of the third movement. This is a transitional passage back to the motive with which the movement began. Like the tritonal transition passage in the first movement (mm. 58-75), this motive is a linear chromatic statement of the tritone; but this time, it is only stated twice and is slightly ornamented. It also descends instead of ascends.

The tritone is used thematically also. In the fourth movement, the first theme is, like motive a, based

on the tritone. In this case, the tritone is divided into a major second (2) and major third (4) instead of perfect fourth (5) and minor second (1). During the "interruption" section, the tritone is employed in the tuba as a distortion of the traditional V-I authentic cadence (mm. 102-03), prompting a shattering of the theme as the violins respond with their own statement of the tritone in measure 103. A few measures later, the tuba begins a restatement of the theme in A-major, a tritone-transposition of the original E-flat.

While one could criticize Antokoletz's analysis for its failure to discuss certain aspects of the piece, the objective of the book must be considered; Antokoletz's discourse is ultimately guided by the theory rather than the composition under discussion.²⁶ Therefore, if he does not discuss a vital aspect of the Concerto, it is because the theory would not be further elucidated by it.

As a matter of fact, Antokoletz's analysis is surprisingly thorough, and his observations parallel those made in the other analyses with surprising frequency. For instance, Antokoletz's discussion of the juxtaposition of diatonic and octatonic pitch formations in the first movement is similar to Weber's theory about the various modes of composition which are introduced at the beginning of the first movement and which interact throughout the movement; and, although he has quite a different way of expressing it,

Antokoletz, like Kneif, views the third movement as being governed by a basic principle of contraction. Furthermore, Antokoletz explains how folk-music influenced Bartók's composition, not in a superficial way, but as an impetus to new and unique methods of composition.

Although Antokoletz's discussion of the Concerto is not lengthy, he manages to synthesize many of the observations that were made individually in the other analyses. Antokoletz is able to achieve this primarily because of his comprehensive view of Bartók's compositional technique. As he states in his preface, Antokoletz recognizes the problem of terminology and analytical method in Bartók criticism and attempts to provide a solution. The absolute necessity of developing an appropriate mode of analysis can be illustrated by comparing the approaches of Antokoletz (who searches for a suitable analytical method) and Austin (who utilizes a familiar but unsuitable one) to a particular passage in the Concerto.

In discussing the allegro theme of the first movement (mm. 76-94), Austin observes that the first measure of this theme is comprised of "a transposition of the *ostinato* motive [mm. 63-75]" and that the second and third measures "recall the introductory motive [mm. 1-6]."²⁷ Antokoletz also makes the distinction between these two motives, and he discusses how these motives interact with each other and how they are developed. Austin did not

discuss how the components of the Concerto related to each other, quite possibly because they did not interact in ways which his analytical method was capable of demonstrating.

According to Antokoletz, the two motives of the allegro theme are juxtaposed to each other because of their identity as contrasting pitch formations--diatonic and octatonic. It is interesting to recall that Weber also viewed the allegro theme as consisting of contrasting structural components. The two modes of composition governing the passage under discussion were Flute-figure (chromaticism) in measure 76 and "Theme" (modal-diatonic harmony) in measures 77-8.²⁸ Unfortunately, Weber did not pursue this idea very far, whereas Antokoletz explores how the opposition of these elements is developed. In his view, development begins already in measure 79, where the inversion of motive a is slightly altered to form a partially diatonicized statement of the originally octatonic motive. This is achieved by altering G of the octatonic form to G-flat in the inverted statement, which produces an "F-Phrygian [diatonic] segment (Bb-Ab-Gb-F)."²⁹

Austin does not discuss this departure in measure 79 from the exact inversion of measure 76. What concerns him is the deviation in measures 80-81, which he describes as "surprising: a strict inversion would have given a half-cadence C-G) instead of which Bartók chooses notes that propel the melody more urgently forward."³⁰ Likewise,

Antokoletz chooses not to comment on measures 80 ff. However, his analysis allows for an explanation of the avoidance of a cadence on C in measure 80 and the "delayed" cadence in measures 86-90, which Austin calls "overingenious and not sufficiently expressive."³¹

Antokoletz describes the passage at measures 86-91 as follows:

the pitch content of motive b is expanded in both the motivic and chordal material to a complete diatonic collection, the cadence establishing the priority of the F-Phrygian permutation (F-Gb-Ab-Bb-C-Db-Eb).³²

This development is foreshadowed in measure 79 where the originally octatonic motive a is partially diatonicized to produce an F-Phrygian segment (Bb-Ab-Gb-F). Since this precedes the more complete F-Phrygian collection in measures 86 ff., Antokoletz views this diatonic-octatonic motive (m. 79) as a link between the *octatonic* motive a (m. 76) and the *diatonic* extension of motive b (mm. 86 ff.). Likewise, this diatonic expansion foreshadows the outcome of the opposition of diatonic and octatonic formations in the entire work.

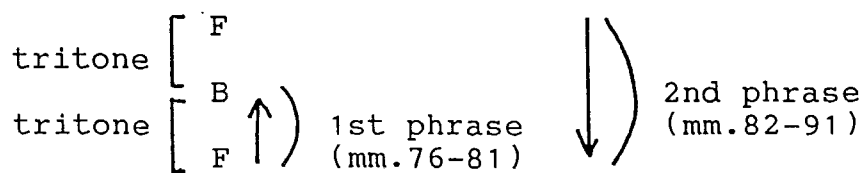
In the closing-theme group of the fifth movement (mm. 558 ff.),

the context is now predominantly diatonic; that is, of the three sets [diatonic, octatonic and whole-tone], only diatonic scales appear in their complete forms, and these prominently initiate and close the section.³²

Thus, the cadential "delay" in measures 86-91 is not an "over-ingenious" aberration as Austin suggests; it is vital to the development of the movement and of the entire work.

Likewise, the avoidance of strict inversion in measure 79, which would have produced a C-cadence, is a foreshadowing of the emergence of F-Phrygian in measures 86 ff.

While Antokoletz's conception of measures 76-91 suggests why Bartók did not adhere to strict inversion, he does not account for the specific deviation which *does* occur. I would like to suggest that the cadence in measures 80-81 is completely logical in terms of Antokoletz's analytical approach. It was observed earlier that the tritone was an interval of structural importance in the work. The cadence on B in measure 81 is an example of this prominence because it occurs a tritone above the starting pitch of the phrase. The second phrase (mm. 82 ff.) is separated from the first, again by the interval of a tritone, as it begins on F, an octave above its starting pitch in measure 76. The second phrase concludes on the same pitch on which the allegro theme began. Thus the two phrases of this theme can be represented as follows.



Example 9.

Furthermore, the particular cadential deviation in measures 80-81 accounts for the seemingly unrelated thematic material in measures 82-85. Instead of moving up a major

second and down a perfect fourth (which would have been an exact inversion), the inversion of motive b in measures 80-81 moves *up* a perfect fourth and down a major third (spelled as a diminished fourth). The third is a prominent feature of the following phrase, providing a contrast to the previous thematic material in which fourths and seconds were the most important intervals. In fact, the passage from measures 82-85 consists almost entirely of major and minor thirds. There are only two exceptions (aside from the tritone jump which initiates the phrase): a rising perfect fourth and a falling major second--intervals from the original motive b (mm. 77-78). A *rising* major second precedes the development of motive b in measures 86 ff., which is more than a *cadential* extension; it contains motivic development as well because the inversion attempted in measures 80-81 is fulfilled in measures 86-91--this passage contains both the original and (strictly) inverted forms of motive b. Thus, measures 80-81 could be viewed as a deviation from the expectations established in measure 77, which are finally realized in the cadential extension of measures 86 ff.

This comparison demonstrates the divergent analytical conclusions that can result depending on the method that is used. As Antokoletz stated in his preface, the lack of a suitable analytical method is a major problem in Bartók criticism. The Austin example is an illustration of this point because Austin sometimes deals with the anomalies in

his analytical approach by criticizing the aesthetic value of the composition. But, as we have seen, many of these criticisms are refuted by examining the work according to another method. Thus, a composition that appears to be flawed in some way, as in the analyses of French, Austin and the other descriptive analysts, can become an example of a complex, highly sophisticated compositional method when discussed within a different analytical framework.

Notes

¹Elliott Antokoletz, The Music of Béla Bartók: A Study of Tonality and Progression in Twentieth-Century Music (Berkeley, Calif: Univ. of Calif. Press, 1984), pp. xi-xii.

²Ibid., p. xii.

³Ibid., pp. xiii-xiv.

⁴Ibid., pp. 67-8

⁵Ibid., p. 68.

⁶Where it is desirable for brevity or accuracy, Antokoletz refers to intervals in numeric values, where 1=semi-tone, 2=whole-tone and so on. Hence, the term interval 1 cycle refers to a recurring cycle of minor seconds.

⁷Because the perfect fourth and fifth are complementary intervals, the "descending" segment of the circle of fifths can be expressed as an ascending series of fourths and the ascending segment as a descending series.

⁸Symmetrical division by this interval results in a special cycle: the circle of fifths.

⁹Unless otherwise specified, diatonic collections are assumed to be symmetrical through their connection to the interval 5/7 cycle.

¹⁰Antokoletz, p. 78. The reader is directed to the following note on page 16: A cell is defined by [George] Perle (in Serial Composition, p. 9) as a group of pitches

that "may operate as a kind of microcosmic set of fixed intervallic content, statable either as a chord or as a melodic figure or as a combination of both."

¹¹Ibid., p. 71.

¹²Ibid., p. 254.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 267.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 265n. Although Antokoletz specifically writes "initial," he ignores the first three measures of this theme.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 309.

¹⁷This notation refers to a sequential series of two intervals (5 and 2 in this case).

¹⁸Ibid., p. 310.

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Ibid., p. 300.

²¹Ibid.

²²Ibid., p. 303. The expansion process begins with a 4-note 1:2 segment at measure 482; 1:3 appears at measure 498; 1:4 at measure 573; 1:5 is stated only briefly at measures 583-4, and not in its original sequence.

²³Ibid., p. 306.

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Ibid., p. 306-7.

²⁶See, however, the review of this book by Paul Wilson in The Journal of Music Theory 30 (Spr. 1986):113-121.

²⁷Austin, "Bartók's Concerto for Orchestra," Music Review 16 (Feb. 1957):24.

²⁸Weber included a third influence, Soundfield (whole-tone harmony) in mm. 81 ff.

²⁹Antokoletz, p. 254.

³⁰Austin, p. 24.

³¹Ibid., p. 25.

³²Antokoletz, p. 254.

³³Ibid., p. 265.

Part III: Worlds Contending

In Sound and Sentiment, Steven Feld analyzes the sound expressions of the Kaluli people as a means of understanding their culture and aesthetics by utilizing several potentially contradictory analytical approaches. Rather than viewing these differences as irreconcilable, Feld is inclined to view them as "mutually revealing."¹ Feld goes on to say that

while this will be taken as a muddy and inelegant conclusion by those who believe in the exclusivity of theoretical constructs, . . . I have freely drawn upon what is useful in each. I believe that a proper analysis of the Kaluli materials demands elaborating patterns and utilizing whatever is necessary to the task; for this I have not chosen a single paradigm but rather have explained what needs explaining, bringing everything necessary into the argument.²

While the subject matter varies considerably, this thesis on Bartók's Concerto for Orchestra has, like Feld's study, drawn on a variety of analytical approaches, both corroborating and conflicting with each other. As Feld was able to weave a pattern of meaning from the vast amount of data he collected, which arose from the plurality of methods he used, I believe the diversity of analytical approaches to the Concerto for Orchestra reveals something about the composition that does not necessarily become evident in any individual analysis.

In the process of comparing the analyses of the Concerto, a recurring theme emerges, in some cases more forcefully than others. The underlying principle of the Concerto is, I would suggest, one of tension created by the unification of opposites. While it may be argued that a great deal of music depends upon the creation of a certain amount of opposition, the extent to which conflict and contrast infuse the Concerto on every level reinforces this hypothesis. To illustrate my point further, I will review the analyses to demonstrate how they reveal the operation of conflict in the Concerto.

Like many of the points that emerge from Kneif's article, the notion of contrast is not articulated as such in his analysis, but it is there nonetheless. Kneif's main hypothesis is that a so-called musical Platonism operates in the Concerto so that many variations appear of a theme which is never stated. It was my contention that this Platonic theme is in fact the *idea* of the second-interval as opposed to the broader fourth-interval. Kneif discusses the contrast between fourths and seconds in connection with the introduction to the first movement in which the motive of measures 1-6 is distinguished by fourths and the motive of measures 6-11 by seconds. He claims that the confrontation and reconciliation of these two motives is one of the primary compositional problems of the work.

The contention of musical material functions again in the first theme of the first movement (mm. 76 ff.) because it is constructed of two contrasting motives: the first (m. 76) is characterized by seconds, the second by fourths (mm. 77-8). As this theme is developed, the interval of a fourth becomes more prominent than the interval of a second; therefore, on a larger level, the first theme is contrasted with the second theme (mm. 149 ff.), which is based on a distinctive, rocking seconds-motive. Kneif notes that, while the fourths-motive dominates the first movement, the third movement consists mainly of variations based on the seconds-motive. Thus, the conflict of perfect fourths and major seconds operates at the level of motive, theme, theme group, and movement.

The notion of contrast is also fundamental to Weber's concept of the Concerto. He suggests that the introduction to the first movement presents three styles of composition in measures 1-11 and that they influence the rest of the work on various levels. These three motifs represent conflicting styles of contemporary composition, an issue which, as Weber observes, preoccupied Bartók's own thoughts about composition. Bartók was particularly troubled over the development of twelve-tone composition since, because of his deep involvement with folk-music, he could not reject tonality altogether. Weber also hypothesizes that symptoms of the compositional dilemma that Bartók faced emerged in his

own compositional technique. In this technique, which Weber calls interpolation, stylistic elements are juxtaposed with one another and homogeneous sections are separated from each other. While the aim of this technique is to produce a homogeneous whole, Weber suggests that this goal is, in fact, impossible to achieve; thus the juxtaposition of diverse musical events highlights their contrasting properties, which can never be reconciled.

It will be recalled that some critics objected to the Concerto on the basis of its "embarrassing confusion of styles,"³ as Serge Moreux expressed it. It may well be that this stylistic plurality was an objective of Bartók's rather than a shortcoming. Many of these critics also suggested that the eclectic style of the Concerto for Orchestra could be attributed to an attempt by Bartók to ingratiate himself with the public. Weber accounts for the eclectic style of the Concerto by suggesting that the conflicting elements of Bartók's style intensified during his years in the United States and that the diverse styles of the Concerto are not absent from his other works--it is just that the contradictions are more apparent in this composition.

It is difficult to deny that the Concerto contains some kind of conflict of musical material when one considers that Kneif, Weber, Antokoletz, Breuer and Volek all arrive at similar conclusions from completely different points of view. In his analysis, Antokoletz also discusses the first theme of

the first movement (mm. 76 ff.) as an opposition: in this case between diatonic and octatonic pitch formations (what Weber labelled modal-diatonic and chromatic compositional styles).

Breuer describes the dynamic tension of the first movement as a contrast between parlando-rubato and tempo giusto. The conflict provided by this source is most intense at measures 39 ff. where the freer parlando-rubato style of the trumpet line is juxtaposed against the steady tempo giusto-style string accompaniment. Opposition between the two styles exists, however, throughout the first and third movements. Breuer also mentions the opposition created between the two motives, composed of fourths and seconds respectively.

Yet another source of contrast is provided, as illustrated by Volek, through orchestration. In his article, he suggests that the first and fifth movements employ the orchestra as a whole; whereas, in the second and fourth movements specific instruments are featured in chamber or solo contexts. The third movement uses these two orchestral possibilities in combination. The five movements are also contrasted in terms of the various groups that figure prominently in each. Woodwinds carry the majority of the thematic material in the second and fourth movements, with strings and brass having less important roles; in the second movement, the strings have no thematic role whatsoever, and

in the fourth movement, the brass are consigned to "sound-effects" in the interruption section. Strings and brass are vital, nevertheless, in the first and fifth movements; however, their functions and relative importance are reversed. In the first movement, strings are more essential whereas the most powerful thematic material of the fifth movement is set for the brass instruments.

Volek's specific theory about orchestration in the Concerto points to a more obvious source of contention in this work--that resulting from the concertant principle. In his programme-note on the Concerto, which was printed in the program of the première performance, Bartók says: "the title of this symphony-like orchestral work is explained by its tendency to treat the single instruments or instrument groups in a "concertant" or soloistic manner."⁴ The terms concertant and concerto have had various meanings, not always clarified by the context. It is no different in this case.

According to Claude Palisca, concertare means "to coordinate or unite in a harmonious ensemble a heterogenous group of players or singers, or both."⁵ Palisca goes on to point out that

many modern writers make much of the idea of opposition and contention in the concerto, invoking a bellicose image of instruments and voices attacking and counterattacking. It is doubtful that such an idea existed in the minds of seventeenth-century composers.⁶

Whether it existed in the *seventeenth-century* mind is not, however, the issue at hand. The fact is that Bartók, as a modern figure, probably thought of the concertant principle at least partly in terms of opposition and contrast. Although it was not an essential characteristic of the earlier concertos, soloistic virtuosity became a primary feature of the nineteenth-century concerto. While it appears from the note quoted above that Bartók named the piece for its virtuosic treatment of the instruments, there is evidence that the older meaning of concerto--contrast, either in the sense of "attack and counter-attack" or the more benign sense of the harmonious blending of heterogeneous forces--was intended.

Ralph Hawkes suggested to Bartók that he write a modern series of Brandenburg Concertos and it has been suggested that some of the material Bartók sketched for this project may have been used in the Concerto for Orchestra.⁷ Whether or not this was the case, certain aspects of the piece do recall the ripieno/concertino textural contrasts of the concerto grosso. Observe, for example, the contrast created by the juxtaposition of the passage beginning at measure 248 of the first movement, which gradually increases in orchestral density to measure 271, with the sparse statement of the theme at measure 272, set for clarinet, with violin and viola accompaniment.

Furthermore, the forces of the orchestra are pitted against each other beginning at measure 231 of the first movement, where the contrasting motives of the first theme are

divided between strings and brass. These terse statements are answered by a weighty response from the full orchestra in measures 232-236. At measure 242, the orchestral contrast is expressed consecutively, instead of simultaneously, in blocks of orchestral colour. The ascent by whole-tone (from m.242) to the climax at measure 248 is articulated by the entire orchestra in three distinctive motives, each played by a different instrumental family. The whole tone scale is embellished in the strings by statements of the tritone motive from the first theme, articulated on each pitch of the scale.



Example 1. Béla Bartók, Boosey and Hawkes, Concerto for Orchestra, I: mm. 242-5 (strings).

Juxtaposed against this, the wind section utilizes the same technique in inversion and imitation.

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Example 2. Concerto for Orchestra, I: mm. 242-5
(piccolo, flutes, oboes, clarinets, bassoons).

The brass section is represented by the horns, which play the scale in unornamented notes. Further contrast is provided by both horns and strings, which are divided and play in imitation within the section.

Example 3. Concerto for Orchestra, I: mm. 242-5 (horns).

While the second movement is often cited as an example of the virtuosity required by this work, it should also be stressed that this is a concerto for *orchestra*. While the five duets do demonstrate the virtuosity of the members of the wind section, they also emphasize the contrast of orchestral timbres. The duet-texture is then contrasted with the denser

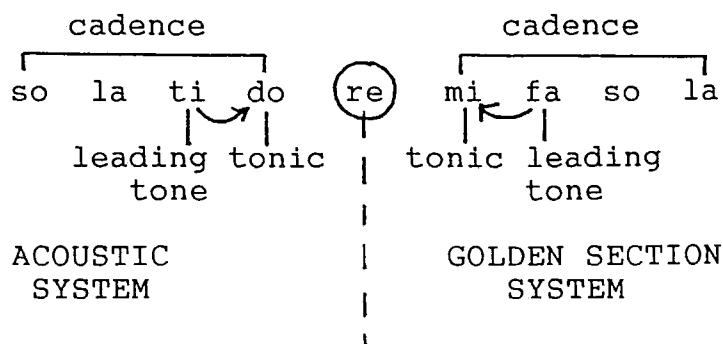
five-part harmony of the brass chorale. A similar contrast of instrument-families occurs in the fourth movement in which the outer sections, played by strings and woodwinds, are sharply contrasted with the "trio," in which the brass section is prominent. The examples in which the concerto principle operates in the Concerto for Orchestra are far too numerous to be given in this study; however, the examples presented demonstrate some of the dynamism created by the operation of the concertant principle in this work, yet another example of the ubiquitous presence of contrast and contention in the Concerto for Orchestra.

Opposition is also an essential component of Ernő Lendvai's theory about Bartók's music. Although the discussion of his theory in this thesis (see pp. 116 ff.) was concentrated on the aspect which concerned folk-music, Lendvai's main hypothesis is that Bartók synthesized into a dualistic compositional style the two primary musical traditions by which he was most influenced. In the introduction to the most recent of his English publications, Lendvai expresses his position forcefully:

Bartók's tonal system is DUAL. In my analytical studies, I have used the terms "Bartókean chromaticism" and "Bartókean diatony" to describe the two characteristic aspects of his music. I refer to the former as the PENTATONIC, the latter as the ACOUSTIC (OVERTONE) system. They represent the two sides of the same coin: presuppose and exclude each other--constituting contrast in unity.⁸

Lendvai's hypothesis is polemical and, while criticism of his work is certainly justified, I feel that his theory is worth considering.

I would like to provide an example from the Concerto of Lendvai's notion of the pentatonic vs. acoustic dynamics of Bartók's music. A few points should be made, however, about the nature of the contrast of the two systems. The relationship between pentatony and the overtone or acoustic system is particularly vital because of the fact that they are *complementary* systems. For instance, those intervals which are not found in one scale are present in the other; together, the two scales account for every pitch of the chromatic scale. Similarly, the most stable chord in the acoustic system (triad in root position) has a function of dissonance in the golden section system, whose characteristic chord is a triad in second inversion. When positioned around re (the "symmetry centre"), certain structural features (eg. tonics, cadences and leading tones) of one system can be considered mirror opposites of those of the other.



Example 4.

See also p. 117 for a partial list of the opposite characteristics of the two systems.

The passage I would like to discuss is the alternative ending of the fifth movement. In his comments on the existence of two endings to the fifth movement, Austin said "either version is more than satisfactory, and the difference between them is slight in the perspective of the work as a whole."⁹ I disagree. The second version *is* different; after all, it is nineteen measures longer. Furthermore, the difference is significant, *especially* "in the perspective of the work as a whole."

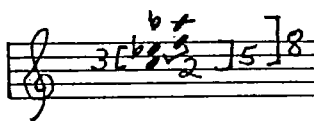
In the first version, an ascending piccolo run (m. 602) leads to a cascade of descending thirds in the woodwinds and upper strings, which leads to the final pitch, F. The bass support ascends by step from B-flat. The cadence is modal, the final tonic (F) being approached from E-flat a major second lower.

In the second version, the pattern of descending thirds is developed, again leading to F (at m. 610). The cadential pattern (from m. 609) is repeated, but, in the third repetition (mm. 613-14), the motive is altered and progresses to C, instead of F. This initiates a powerful tutti statement in horns, trumpets and trombones of a minor third figure from one of main themes of the movement. Immediately following is the cadential figure (mm. 621-25), which, unlike that of the first ending, *ascends* to F.

The most important difference between the two endings is that there is a powerful embodiment of contrast in the second version, which summarizes the contention between acoustic and golden section systems that operates throughout the work. Not surprisingly, the conflict between these systems is first evident in measures 76 ff. of the first movement--a passage which, as we have seen, contains contrast on many levels. The two motives (m. 76 and mm. 77-8) are contrasted as diatonic vs. octatonic pitch formations; chromatic vs. modal scales; intervallic relationships (fourths vs. seconds); and, later, by orchestration.

These two motives also symbolize acoustic and golden-section properties. Characteristics of the acoustic system are present in measure 76 in the melodic outline of the first half of the F-scale with both the flattened and sharpened fourth. The flattened fourth belongs to the scale as it is used in Western harmony but the sharpened fourth is also appropriate since it belongs to the "acoustic" scale, Lendvai's term for a scale with major third, sharpened fourth and flattened seventh degrees. This scale is complementary to the one consisting of golden section intervals. Measures 77-8 are characteristic of the golden section system because the intervals, perfect fourths and major seconds, are Fibonacci-series intervals (5, 2). (Strictly speaking, the first motive also contains intervals from the series (1, 2), but, as they are also present in the other system, they are

not especially characteristic of the golden section system.) Fourths are the primary intervals of pentatony (according to Lendvai) and, therefore, characteristic of the golden section system. Another feature of the motive in measures 77-8 which identifies it as a golden section motive is the fact that its total range spans a minor sixth, or, represented by semi-tones, 8--the next Fibonacci number after 5. Thus, the cellular construction of this motive can be represented as follows:



Example 5.

The conflict between the two motives in measures 76-78 is developed in the first movement, but not resolved. This can be seen to be the case in the final cadence of the first movement, in which the two motivic figures precipitate two conflicting cadential patterns: authentic and plagal. The "acoustic" motive, in woodwinds and strings (mm. 520-1), now spans a fifth, still an "acoustic" interval, and is supported in the lower instruments (bassoon, celli and basses) by authentic (V-I) root movement. The golden section motive, more elaborate than that of measures 77-8, but still based on perfect fourths and major seconds, is played by the brass instruments (mm. 514-521). Here, the cadential figure is

plagal (IV-I). It is significant, given the predominance of the perfect fourth in this movement, that the final tonic is approached from both above and below by the interval of a fourth. This also gives evidence of the way the two systems are related to each other by mirror-inversion.

A similar kind of cadential tension is created at the end of the third movement. The melodic cadential figure in measures 120-2 (sol-la-mi) is typically pentatonic. But, while the expected harmonic support would be a pentatonic 6/4 chord (C#-F#-A), the result in m. 122 is a diatonic 6/4 chord: E-A-C#. Despite the ambiguity of this chord, it suggests A major, and this is underlined by the chromatic cello line, which descends to A in measure 122. The tonal meaning of this cadence is obscured further by the horn and piccolo. After the strings have ceased to sound, a plagal C-sharp resolution is again suggested tentatively by the timpani.

The fifth movement commences with a juxtaposition of the two systems, as the "acoustic" horn motive of measures 1-4 is answered by the equally forceful fourth-chords in the strings. There are two primary theme-groups in this movement: one is based on the opening "acoustic" fanfare motive (mm. 148 ff.); the other is pentatonic (mm. 201, trumpet). Note that the orchestral forces are divided in the same way in the fifth movement as in the first: brass for the golden section theme, and strings and woodwinds for the

"acoustic" theme. Another distinctive interval of the golden section theme is the minor third (as in V:mm. 204 ff.) and it is this portion of the motive which is dramatically reiterated in the second ending of the fifth movement. This occurs in mm. 616-620.

Example 6. Concerto for Orchestra, V: mm. 616-625 (horn, trumpet, trombone, tuba, percussion, strings).

According to Lendvai, the tonic of a pentatonic melody can be determined as follows: where there are two pitches, the tonic is the one lying either a minor third below or a major second above. Thus, in this context, pentatonic-C is established as a tonic in mm. 616-20,

reinforcing the movement to C in measure 615. This affirmation of C-tonic conflicts with the establishment of F in measures 609-13--the figure with which the first ending concluded. Despite the vigour of the pentatonic brass motive in measures 616-20, the *final* cadence re-affirms F, not C. The plagal cadence on C in measures 619-20 precipitates the final cadential flourish and triumph of F.

Thus, the final bars of this work effect a solution to the conflict established throughout the composition. Although the "acoustic" cadence is the final one to occur, the golden section cadence (mm. 616 ff.) is more forceful; thus, a kind of balance is achieved between the two, much like that of the third movement (see pp. 134 ff.). The first ending contains neither the trenchant conflict nor the satisfactory resolution that the second ending provides and is, for these reasons, inferior to the later version.

These are some musical reasons supporting my hypothesis that the Concerto for Orchestra is governed by a principle of contrast. Also, there is much biographical evidence that conflict was a condition in which Bartók thrived and Weber even suggests that Bartók's compositional style grew out of contradictory influences that he encountered. Kneif argues that conflict was the source of Bartók's artistic energy and spiritual well-being; and, in his article on Bartók's personality, B. Pethö speaks of

Bartók's "polarization and antagonism of inside world and the search for a solution by artistic means."¹⁰

We have seen, also, that Bartók was fraught with anxiety about the political situation in Hungary during the time he was composing the Concerto and that he was torn between protesting against Fascism and returning to his homeland. The political conflict between Hungary and foreign powers is epitomized in the programmatic fourth movement. The destruction caused by war is symbolized by the inversion of the cantilena/Hungary theme, which initiates the interruption theme. The latter theme represents German soldiers and all that their presence signifies--political and artistic domination executed by force. But the strength of the first world is affirmed by the victorious return of the serenader after the musical violence done by the interruption theme. This triumph is tempered, however, by the fragmented statements (mm. 127 ff.) of the serenader's original theme (mm. 5 ff.). The return of this theme is described as follows by F. Fricssay.

The grotesque charade of violence is past, the poor serenader remains behind with his battered instrument, tries once again to strike up his song but he gets no further than the Introduction, only little parts of his song recur, as if his voice would interrupt the crying and with 3 small piccolo-notes, which could be falling tears, this lovely movement ends.¹¹

While this interpretation is excessively melodramatic, there is no doubt that this movement represents to some extent the

conflict of political factions and ideological worlds which occupied Bartók's mind and conscience.

As we have seen, the principle of conflict and contradiction infuses this composition on many levels. Not only does it operate musically; there is evidence of conflict as a trait of Bartók's personality and in the programmatic content of the fourth movement. There is even evidence to suggest that the notion of conflict influenced the aesthetic conception of the work.

"Worlds Contending" is an unfinished poem written by Bartók¹² in which three countries vie for the attention of the sun. Bartók apparently wrote the poem with the idea of composing two choral works, which, along with Cantata Profana, would represent the three musical worlds of Hungary, Romania and Slovakia. The latter two pieces were never written; however, we know that Bartók's original idea for the Koussevitsky Foundation was to compose a choral piece--a cantata, according to Kroó and Kneif. It is quite possible that Bartók may have incorporated some of his ideas for the planned cantatas in the Concerto for Orchestra.

The evidence from various spheres (musical, biographical, programmatic, aesthetic) compels the supposition that the Concerto for Orchestra is governed by a conflict-principle. There are, however, three analyses which have not figured in the conclusions drawn about the principle of conflict in the Concerto. But the fact that these

analyses have not contributed to the argument does not mean that they undermine the hypothesis. It is not surprising that these three analyses (Downey, Austin and French), none of which discuss the conflicting, contradictory nature of the Concerto, are also the least successful in discussing the music.

As I suggested in the section on folk-music, Downey's outline of folk-music in the Concerto can hardly be called analytical. The notion of contrast in the work may be inherent in his comments but, since he never synthesizes his ideas about the Concerto, this point does not materialize. Austin's analysis also suffers from the "dissecting" tendency in which details are presented but not organized in an overall conception. As we have seen by comparing his comments to Antokoletz's, Austin's method does not reveal the relationships, particularly those of contention, that exist in this piece.

Even more inappropriate is the method that French employs. The idiosyncracies of this approach are heightened by the fact that French's aesthetic position is antithetical to the one that ostensibly governs the Concerto for Orchestra. The "jarring" moments and surprising elements of the Concerto which French criticizes are, quite possibly, symptoms of the composition's underlying principle rather than compositional flaws. While French is willing only to recognize characteristics of organicism as aesthetically

valuable, the Concerto does not provide a consistently tidy, unified construct, resolving all tensions. As we have seen, even Bartók's resolutions, when they occur, are not free of contradiction.

In a sense, French does reveal the conflict that exists in the Concerto, but this conflict is interpreted as artistic weakness instead of the aesthetic orientation of the work. Likewise, Moreux, Citron and Ujfalussy seize on the stylistic plurality and formal eclecticism of the work as evidence of Bartók's artistic compromise. But when this work is viewed as a paradigm of "Worlds Contending," these qualities of the work become not its failings but its assets.

Notes

¹Steven Feld, Sound and Sentiment: Birds, Weeping, Poetics, and Song in Kaluli Expression (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1982), p. 227.

²Ibid.

³Serge Moreux, Béla Bartók, trans. G. S. Fraser and Erik de Mauny (New York: Vienna House, 1974), p. 196.

⁴Béla Bartók, "Explanation to Concerto for Orchestra," in Béla Bartók Essays, ed. Benjamin Suchoff (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1976), p. 431.

⁵Claude Palisca, Baroque Music, second edition (Englewood Cliffs, N.J: Prentice-Hall, 1981), p. 66.

⁶Ibid.

⁷See György Kroó, A Guide to Bartók, trans. Ruth Pataki and Mária Steiner, trans. rev. Elisabeth West (n.p.: Corvina Press, 1974).

⁸Ernő Lendvai, The Workshop of Bartók and Kodály (Budapest: Editio Musica Budapest, 1983), p.9.

⁹William Austin, "Bartók's Concerto for Orchestra", Music Review 18 (Feb. 1957), p. 47.

¹⁰Bertalan Pethö, "Bartók's Personality," Studia Musicologica 23 (1981), p. 453,

¹¹Ferenc Fricssay, Über Mozart und Bartók (Copenhagen: Edition Wilhelm Hansen, 1962), pp. 59-61, quoted in F. Bónis, "Quotations in Bartók's Music," Studia Musicologica 5 (1963): 377-8.

¹²Printed in Béla Bartók Letters, Demény, ed., p.

349-50.

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