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Notes on a New Piano Concerto in F Major, and the Works that Inspired It

by

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Introduction

I have long been an admirer of the films of Quentin Tarantino. One of the trademarks of his style is the relentless appropriation of homages from films that have profoundly influenced him. The practice is so persistent and often explicit that many critics assert it is tantamount to plagiarism. Though there are few direct quotations of other works in my concerto, a catalogue of the often extremely specific ways I have modeled individual passages after those of other composers would be a long one indeed. A few examples: the retransition of the first movement's development (beginning at m. 185) in the wrong key closely parallels the similar passage in the retransition of the first movement of the Piano Concerto No. 27 in B-flat (K. 595) the closing cadence (beginning at m. 109) following the slow movement's fugue was inspired both by the orchestral closing of Pamina's aria "Ach, Ich Fühl's" and the stammering piano writing that precedes the cadenza in the slow movement of the Piano Concerto No. 9 in E-flat (K. 271); the dramatic deceptive progression facilitated by the iii chord at m. 269 of the rondo was taken directly from Mozart's Ave Verum Corpus motet (K. 618), the rondo's second couplet (beginning at m. 109) is modeled in many respects after that of the rondo of Piano Concerto No. 23 in A.

Though Tarantino's practice and mine differ somewhat, the driving force behind them seems to me the same: an extremely conscious and irrepressible admiration for the works that serve as my artistic inspiration, and the desire to somehow become a part of those great works through the composition of an original piece in the same vein.

In the spring of 2010 while driving to a music theory class at the University of California, San Diego, I was listening to a recording of Mozart's final piano concerto: K.

595, composed 1791, the last year of his life. Mozart, as we are all aware, died at the age of thirty-five. Considering Mozart's rate of composition and his affinity for the genre, is there any doubt that we would today have a Mozart Piano Concerto No. 28 had the composer lived a few years longer? I don't think so. Further, if Mozart could be resurrected today, in 2012, for just enough time to write a twenty-eighth piano concerto, do we have any reason to believe that he would be incapable of doing so? Certainly not. I therefore concluded that there are still more Mozart piano concerti to be written, or at least that there is no inherent reason why it should be impossible to write more concerti in his style, even in today's world, which is the only world we have.

This latter point in particular is echoed in Glenn Gould's remarkable essay "Forgery and Imitation in the Creative Process". Gould argues that a work should be judged from a rigorously formalist perspective, divorced entirely from its historical and biographical contexts. If he were to somehow write a sonata in the style and of the quality of Haydn, it should be considered no less highly than a work by Haydn himself. Of course, Gould notes, this can never be the case, as audiences and critics alike by nature approach music with an intensely teleological prejudice.

My advisor Neely Bruce has composed a piece that is sufficiently relevant to merit some discussion: an eighteenth-century style opera-like work titled *Flora*. Hank Hoffman writes: "When considering the commission, Bruce says he decided 'it's a very avant-garde thing to do.' How is the composition of an 18th century-style opera avant-garde? Bruce squares this circle by referring to the tenets of information theory,

particularly as expounded by the late French theoretician Abraham Moles."[1] The composition of eighteenth music is also avant-garde for the simple reason that no one is doing it. Paradoxically, in a world in which the general academic musical population is interested overwhelmingly in experimental and atonal music, the individual who writes traditional Western classical music might be said to be the more avant-garde composer.

This is connected with my tremendous interest in artistic conventions. According to Paul Fussell, author of *Poetic Meter and Poetic Form*,

> "When people speak of literary conventions, they do so to suggest that it is time for the conventions to be overthrown.… The way art works is to transfer the experience of one sense or psychological dimension to that of another, and it can perform this act of transference only by means of elaborate and relatively fixed conventions which have been found appropriate to a given kind of art.… Conventions are so inseparably a part of the act of art that we are not really presented with a choice of using them or not: the only choice we are offered is that of using them skillfully or clumsily, significantly or meaninglessly."[2]

Like Fussel I am not a believer that the perceived lack of originality in established conventions is a reason to avoid employing them. In addition to the fundamental conventions of Western tonality, Mozart has a collection of stock phrases (too many to number, but most frequently employed in precedential progressions), which surface continuously, and which I have not hesitated to adopt in my own work.

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[1] Hank Hoffman, "'Flora,' or, Neely Bruce's life of joy in music," *The Arts Council of Greater New Haven* (May 2010), <http://www.newhavenarts.org/news/artspaper/May%2010.html>.
[2] Paul Fussell, *Poetic Meter and Poetic Form*, revised edition (New York: Random House, 1979), 173-175.

In spite of my general adherence to the principles eighteenth-century composition, I have not been afraid to occasionally practice what some have called "creative anachronism" when I believe that the result will be effective. In the rondo, for instance, I retune the timpani in the second couplet, a practice technologically impossible in Mozart's day. I also employ the sostenuto pedal at the end of the second movement, and the concert is filled with pitches that fall outside the instruments' range, particularly the piano's. Mozart and Beethoven alike were extremely interested in instrumental innovations, and I am certain would have taken advantage of these modern luxuries in the same ways that I do. I include a sort of explicit joke on my creative anachronism at m. 183 of the rondo, in which the modern piano's top pitch, C8, appears. Mozart was fond of using the extreme top and bottom pitches available to him on his piano, and so am I: these pitches just happen to be very different.

A summative word on the philosophical principles behind the composition of this concerto is best left to Sir Donald Francis Tovey, "The original composer is nowhere more triumphantly unconventional than when he chooses an old device because he knows its meaning, and applies it rightly, in the teeth of all popular criticism and current notions as to originality and genius."[3] I have written a piano concerto in the style of Mozart and other eighteenth-century composers because I believe the style is still relevant today, and that there is more that a modern composer can contribute to these traditional genres. Without further ado, I will begin an analysis of the concerto itself.

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[3] Donald Francis Tovey, "The Classical Concerto," in *Mozart: Piano Concerto in C major, K. 503; The Score of the New Mozart Edition, Historical and Analytical Essays*, ed. Joseph Kerman (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1970), 143.

Movement I: *Allegro*

One commentator has remarked that the greatest weakness of my concerto is that since beginning the piece I have advanced as a composer so dramatically that the more sophisticated material I have written recently stands at times in contrast to my early work on the piece. This astute and somewhat complimentary criticism is perhaps most evident in the opening and foundational material of the first movement, which I wrote two years ago while studying at UCSD as a sophomore. The material is relentlessly diatonic, almost martially "beaty" (to use the word of the aforementioned commentator), and melodically impersonal. I was aware of these facts even at the time of composition, but I was drawn to the somewhat Beethovenian idea (see the opening of his Piano Concerto No. 1 in C, Op. 15, for example) of employing extremely straightforward, naïve, and perhaps even stupid material as the opening of a work, for the purpose of developing said material to its fullest extent. We are all aware of course, that simple material lends itself best to this sort of intense development – one need look no further than Beethoven's Symphony No. 5 in c minor, Op. 67 to confirm this. Rosen describes the opening of Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 25 in C (K. 503) in similar terms: "…in the first movement this material is not even sufficiently characterized to be called banal. An opening phrase built as a series of blocks from an arpeggio cannot be called even a cliché. It is conventional, highly so, but in no pejorative sense: it is merely the basic material of late eighteenth-century tonality, the bedrock of the style."[4]

The first movement is, in my opinion, the weakest of the three, and this is in part because I found it extremely challenging to reconcile these inexperienced sketches

[4] Rosen, 251.

(which I did not abandon due to a sense of duty to my younger self, and because they became the foundation on which I developed my ideas of the other two movements) with the more stylistic and Mozartean material I have written since. I will presently examine the nature of this opening thematic material and the ways I attempted to exploit it.

Many of Mozart's piano concerti feature principal themes that are never properly played by the soloist, whose roles in such cases include accompanying the theme with passagework, and responding antiphonally with more incidental material.[5] The effect produced by thus excluding the soloist from the concerto's principle theme is the intensification of the natural antagonism between soloist and orchestra. I supposed this would likely be the case upon my first hearing of Brahms's Piano Concerto in d minor, Op. 15, and was surprised and impressed by the dramatic power of the soloist undertaking a theme of such weight in the recapitulation. I decided that I would follow this model in my own concerto: the soloist would not play the principle theme until it at last does so spectacularly and unexpectedly in the recapitulation. The idea is not totally foreign to Mozart, who does this to a lesser extent in the aforementioned K. 503: the soloist takes a considerably greater part in the principal theme in the recapitulation than in the exposition (though not at all to the extent of Brahms).

These sorts of themes are typically of an inherently orchestral, and usually less lyrical character, so I sought to employ also the technique of insistent motivic development so fundamentally associated with Beethoven, but practiced with great success in certain works of Mozart and Haydn. This idea is also found on occasion in Mozart's concerti, most notably in his Piano Concerto No. 21 in C (K. 467), the opening

[5] These include No. 13 in C (K. 415), No. 20 in d minor (K. 466), No. 22 in E-flat (K. 482), and No. 25 in C (K. 503).

theme of which appears in transition and closing sections extensively. I was careful to follow Mozart's model here: the main theme must appear often enough so as to impart its special significance, without becoming grating and tiresome to listeners.

Before continuing further, it is necessary to examine the theme itself. It consists of four notes descending stepwise from the tonic. Like the first subject of Bach's c-sharp minor fugue in Book I of the WTC (BWV 849), it has two rhythmic forms, one in which a half note falls on the downbeat, and a second I which a quarter rest on the down beat is followed by a quarter note. I attempted to achieve insistence while avoiding monotony by making use of a variety of functional roles for the theme. Because of its simplicity, it served as an ideal bass for the second theme. It also appears in augmented and diminutive forms in the exposition and recapitulation's closing sections, as well as in the development.

One of the fundamental dramatic and architectural principles of the first movement concerto form is that the ritornello must not contain any decisive modulation to the second tonal area (e.g. the dominant) established in a sonata-form exposition. The idea, it would seem, is that the piece simply cannot move forward and accomplish its prescribed objectives without the assistance of the soloist. The result is typically an extensive initial period (far longer than would be found in the exposition of an ordinary sonata form movement) in the tonic, creating in listeners an acute sense of expectation that cannot be abated until the soloist enters. Because the ritornello not does contain the pivotal modulation that defines an exposition, the term "double exposition" sometimes applied to concerto forms is highly misleading. The ritornello is, in fact, more closely

formally allied to the slow introduction, which, according to Caplin, by nature occupies "the realm of the anticipatory, [and the] uncertain…".[6]

Beethoven does not always adhere to this principle of a static ritornello, most notably in his Piano Concerto No. 3 in c minor, Op. 73, which quickly moves to E-flat (and even presents the second theme in this key). While it is difficult to wish this concerto other than it is, I share Rosen's dissatisfaction with effect created by the deviation from "the Mozartean ideal of a double presentation, static and dynamic, of the material – the orchestral one introductory and stable, the soloist's in a more dramatic sonata exposition."[7] By the great Piano Concerto No. 4 in G Major, Op. 58, Beethoven has developed a number of means to introduce tonal variety without undermining the soloist's exposition. These include most notably a visit to the chromatic mediant key of B Major, and a highly unstable modulating second theme.

Mozart has other, more straightforward means of achieving the same end. Perhaps the most common is his introduction of a minor theme in concertos such as No. 18 in B-flat, No. 21 in C, No. 22 in E-flat, No. 27 in B-flat. Usually beginning in the dominant minor, these themes are universally particular to the soloist (though they may feature light orchestral accompaniment), helping the piano to establish against the orchestra its own special identity though hitherto unheard tonal regions. I adopted this Mozartean practice at m. 101 in the exposition and m. 243 in the recapitulation. My Beethovenian spin on the practice, however, consisted of moving to the key a half step above the dominant minor (namely, c♯minor), rather than the tonic minor, in the recapitulation.

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[6] Caplin, 205.
[7] Rosen, 390.

Movement II: ***Andante***

The second movement's conception is the result of my attempt to simultaneously reconcile a few interests. It began with my desire to write a minor-key slow movement, and to expand the concerto's tonal territory beyond F Major. For this reason I selected not the nearest key of d minor (vi in F), but the more distant g minor (ii in F). (The choice of keys, on both large and small scales, has been highly important in the composition of this concerto, and will be discussed in greater detail momentarily.) I then recognized that if the g minor slow movement were to end with a Picardy third, its final chord would act as a V/V in F Major, resulting in a potentially effective segue to the third movement (which would, of course, need to begin with a dominant harmony).

The Picardy third is a Baroque convention, and one that I personally associate predominantly with the fugues of J. S. Bach. I therefore considered the ways in which a fugue might be incorporated into the movement's finale. It is often remarked that Mozart's greatest contributions to classical forms were not acts of radical, *ex nihilo* invention, but instead the elegant synthesis of existing models, made possible by his intimate knowledge of the prevailing forms, their commonalities and disparities, and their latent possibilities. With this in mind, I carefully considered which conventions of the classical concerto might best lend themselves to a persuasive union with a climactic fugue.

The cadenza, with its traditional placement at the end of movements, came to mind immediately, but I was drawn specifically to the written-out faux-cadenzas of the slow movements of Beethoven's second and third concerti (Op. 19 and Op. 37, respectively). The fully-notated nature of these highly expressive and deliberately

unvirtuosic passages allow for certain remarkable effects foreign to typical cadenzas, most notably integration with the orchestra. The effect of the cadenza, I further mused, is not at all unlike that of the final cadential passages sometimes found at the end of fugues: examples include the c minor fugue from the first book of the Well-Tempered Clavier (BWV 847), and Mozart's C Major fantasy and fugue (K. 394). These final passages feature devices including tonic pedals, shifts to slower tempo indications, and the abandonment of contrapuntal texture in favor of a final statement of the subject, with often colorful harmonic accompaniment.

These considerations led me to an original architectural idea: a concerto slow movement that ends with a written-out solo piano fugue as its cadenza, and the final cadence of which is reached via a gradual reintegration with the orchestra, manifesting in a tonic pedal and a final Picardy third.

Such a gesture, of course, requires precedent that must be carefully and deliberately established throughout the movement: most obviously, the movement needed to introduce the fugal subject(s). In keeping with my aforementioned aesthetic of a certain unity or fluidity between the concerto's three movements, I sought to expand the *Allegro*'s interest in important and concise motives. Though the first movement's principal opening motive makes a few appearances in the second and third movements at important moments, it seemed necessary to me to introduce markedly new material.

My intense admiration for the finale of the Jupiter Symphony (K. 551) led to the next development in my conception of the slow movement's form, namely, the decision that the fugue should develop not one but several motivic subjects. There are six total, the identities and first appearances of which will be noted presently: (1) the main theme at m.

1, (2) the flute and oboes' rhythmic motive at m. 2-3, (3) the rhythmic motive that dominates the transition to the mediant at m. 19, (4) the second theme at m. 30, (5) the "pre-dominant theme" at m. 33, and (6) the closing theme at m. 42. Though certainly not a sextuple fugue, the four-voice cadenza integrates each of these motives in special ways, which culminates with the combination of the first, the fourth, a diminution of the fifth, and the sixth motives together at once in four-part counterpoint.

Pieces that contain a climactic fugal finale do not simply introduce such a brazen device without warrant: a focus on counterpoint (and usually, the beginnings of contrapuntal imitation and combination) must first assert itself in the preceding material. For examples I looked again to the Jupiter Symphony, and to the quadruple fugue in the final movement of Neely Bruce's *The Bill of Rights: Ten Amendments in Eight Motets*. In the former example, a fugal finale is perhaps the inevitable consequence of the movement's intense employment of counterpoint. Imitation and combination of the movement's five highly motivic themes appear at every structural turn, and the number and flexible prevalence of these themes ironically create an impression of Haydnesque monothematicism, for the individual themes are less strictly tied to the specific formal functions of primary theme, subordinate theme, closing theme, &c. In *The Bill of Rights*, too, the strict quadruple fugue is a sort of peak-shift of the fuguing tunes that have featured prominently in the preceding movements.

It was therefore important to me to address three concerns in the introduction of these motives. First, to gradually assert the importance of counterpoint in their relationship with one another; second, to treat the motives in a variety of ways in order to avoid monotony and compartmentalization; and third, to (unlike the Jupiter symphony)

preserve the Mozartean ideal of distinct themes tied to specific functional roles, which I see as more necessary to the dramatic principles of the concerto than to the symphony. I will presently describe my approach to these problems with respect to each motive.

The first motive is simply the distinctive opening of the primary theme, a lengthy and continuous melodic phrase which conforms with Caplin's definition of the sentence.[8] The second is strictly accompanimental, and nonthematic though associated with the primary theme, and featured prominently in the recapitulation's transition. The third has a simple contrapuntal conception: it is passed imitatively between the winds and the piano's bass, culminating in a stretto of sorts that begins at m. 23. The forth is highly fragmentary and coupled contrapuntally with a rhythmically-identical response, forming a phrase of irregular length and structure. The fifth motive, with its predominant harmony, repeatedly thwarted efforts to close cadentially, and gradually increasing orchestration, has an anticipatory effect that ushers in the soloist in the exposition. The sixth is the opening of the closing theme, which like the third is treated imitatively, culminating briefly in four-part polyphony. A few other notable moments invite the sorts of techniques associated with fugues: the fragmentation respectively of the eighth note and thirty-second note features of the principle theme in the tutti passages at m. 54 and 103, the short false entrances of the principle theme in the retransition at m. 56, and the combination of the fourth and fifth motives in the circle of fifths sequence at m. 78.

The results of the highly self-aware and fastidious approach I have described to the second movement's contrapuntal conception were, in my opinion, highly effective. It seems to me at once the most academic and the most affecting of the three movements.

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[8] Caplin, 35.

Because of the lack of a true development in the movement, it seemed to me fitting that the recapitulation's transition section (beginning at m. 65) venture briefly to some distant key, and develop some of the movement's motives (indeed, Caplin describes how the recapitulation's transition often functions a "secondary development",[9] a device that seemed to me especially warranted within this sonata without development form). The motives that here receive attention are the second motive mentioned above, and a seventh motive not featured in the fugue, and based on the piano's three sets of triplets that first appear at m. 15). In order to prepare the unexpected Picardy third ending in G Major, in this transitional passage I chose to emphasize the relative key of e minor. This lends the passage two equally important, but paradoxically opposed roles: while it is the most tonally distant passage in the movement (and, as vii, the minor key of the leading tone in F Major, among the most distant in the whole concerto), it at the same time serves to temper the potential instability of the parallel major ending (G Major and e minor, of course, share the same key signature). Such a device may strike some as too theoretical or intangible to produce any real effect upon listeners, but in a musical style so heavily ruled by tonality, such relationships are paramount. Rosen remarks, for instance, that the previously-discussed deceptive cadence to ♭VI in the first movement of Mozart's Concerto No. 17 in G (K. 453) "prepares the role that the minor mode is to play in the movement."[10] I myself was convinced of the efficacy of the effect when Maestro Angel Gil-Ordóñez, who will conduct my concerto's slow movement on 21 April 2012 with soloist Andrew Chung, remarked during a recent rehearsal that he considered the passage to be the movement's climax. This is precisely as intended. Rosen notes that "Modulation

[9] Caplin, 165.
[10] Rosen, 223.

in the eighteenth century must be conceived as essentially a dissonance raised to a higher plane, that of the total structure,"[11] and at almost the exact middle of the movement, this passage behaves like a dissonance that is not truly resolved until the movement's final G major chord.

One commentator suggested including a seventh in this final chord, in order to make its role as a secondary dominant to the Rondo more explicit. After some consideration I rejected this idea. A seventh would transform this final chord, conceived, as I just described, as an important consonance within the movement, into a dissonance. The result would not simply be a heightened fluidity between the movements, but a lack of independence within them. As stirring as I find the slow movement of Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 5 in E-flat, Op. 73, listening to it is always a fundamentally dissatisfying experience for me, because by demanding such explicit tonal (and even thematic) resolution from the third movement, it is incapable of standing on its own. It also seemed to me that a seventh would make the chord's secondary function a bit too obvious, perhaps to the point of heavy-handedness. And since, as we shall soon see, the dominant harmony that begins the rondo is not explicitly stated but implied melodically by an anacrusis, the seventh would not receive the true resolution it would demand.

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Movement III: *Rondo: Allegretto spiritoso*

Caplin has accurately observed that "The majority of rondos in the classical repertoire are written in *sonata-rondo form*."[12] Indeed, of the twenty rondo finales among

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[11] Rosen, 26.
[12] William E. Caplin, *Classical Form: A Theory of Formal Functions for the Instrumental Music of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 235.

Mozart's piano concerti, nineteen are aptly described as sonata-rondos.[13] Because a standard rondo's first couplet, like a sonata exposition, establishes a secondary tonal area (typically V in major and III in minor) which usually coincides with the presentation of a new theme, the influence of the sonata principle is so powerful in the classical style that to leave this theme unresolved would create a palpable sense of incompleteness.

The distinction between rondos and sonata-rondos, however, is not always an easy one to make. The third movement of K. 413, the only aforementioned rondo I have not indicated a sonata-rondo, presents in its second couplet (at m. 106) a Tutti theme that the piano answers in the subdominant; when the theme appears again after the third refrain, the piano instead responds in the tonic. Though there is no recapitulation of the dominant material from the first couplet (which Caplin defines as a condition necessary to the sonata-rondo), the sonata principle is clearly at work here, albeit to a lesser extent. Contrariwise, we hear in the first couplet of K. 449 (at m. 64) material that sounds like a second theme but never appears again. Instead, this couplet's closing material (including striking passages featuring hand-crossing) is recapitulated, and this seems sufficient reason for us to apply the appellation of sonata-rondo.

I endeavored to exploit for dramatic purposes an additional ambiguity inherent in the sonata-rondo form; namely, does the recapitulation occur within the second or third

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[13] The list of piano concertos with rondo finales follows (asterisks indicate sonata-rondos): No. 6 in B-flat (K. 238)*, No. 7 for Three Pianos in F (K. 242)*, No. 8 in C (K. 246)*, No. 9 in E-flat (K. 271)*, No. 10 for Two Pianos in E-flat (K. 365)*, No. 11 in F (K. 413), No. 12 in A (K. 414)*, No. 13 in C (K. 415)*, No 14 in E-flat (K. 449)*, No. 15 in B-flat (K 450)*, No. 16 in D (K. 451)*, No. 18 in B-flat (K. 456)*, No. 19 in F (K. 459)*, No. 20 in d minor (K. 466)*, No. 21 in C (K. 467)*, No. 22 in E-flat (K. 482)*, No. 23 in A (K. 488)*, No. 25 in C (K. 503)*, No. 26 in D (K. 537)*, and No. 27 in B- (K. 595)*. Not included in this list is the Rondo for Piano and Orchestra in D (K. 382), whose form, in spite of its name, more closely resembles that of variations than a rondo.

couplet? The latter case tends by necessity to assume the form of a seven-part rondo, since the dramatic energy of the rondo form typically demands a final refrain at its conclusion. The Mozart concerto repertoire features numerous examples of both the second- and third-couplet refrain forms, though it is interesting to note that the earlier works are all cast in the latter mold.[14]

Caplin identifies another relevant feature of the rondo form: "The establishment and confirmation of a subordinate key in a rondo are often less emphatic than they are in a sonata… In short, the tonal conflict of home and subordinate keys – so often dramatized in sonata form – tends to be tempered in rondo form."[15] With this in mind I developed the idea to consciously and aggressively counteract this tendency of tempering in order to intensify the tonic-dominant conflict of the first couplet to the same degree typically seen in sonata expositions, only to delay the necessary recapitulation of this material until the last possible moment. I employ a number of techniques to this end.

The subordinate theme (which first appears at m. 66) is lengthy, and begins with a strict sentence, where Mozart's rondo subordinate themes are typically short and formally loose. There is some loosening of the theme in its orchestral response at m. 74, but the culmination in a prolonged the I^{6}_{4} at m. 85 (a device more often found in sonata allegro movements) and the emphatic coda theme at m. 90 serve to heighten the confirmation of the dominant beyond the levels of a typical Mozart rondo.

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[14] Mozart concerto sonata-rondos that feature a second-couplet refrain include No. 18 in B-flat (K. 456), No. 19 in F (K. 459), No. 20 in d minor (K. 466), No. 21 in C (K. 467), No. 23 in A (K. 488), No. 26 in D (K. 537)*, and No. 27 in B-flat (K. 595). Those that feature a third-couplet refrain include No. 6 in B-flat (K. 238), No. 7 for Three Pianos in F (K. 242), No. 8 in C (K. 246), No. 9 in E-flat (K. 271), No. 10 for Two Pianos in E-flat (K. 365), No. 12 in A (K. 414), No. 13 in C (K. 415), No 14 in E-flat (K. 449), No. 15 in B-flat (K 450), No. 16 in D (K. 451), No. 22 in E-flat (K. 482), No. 25 in C (K. 503).
[15] Caplin, 233.

The second couplet, as in most of Mozart's rondos, bears many of the qualities of a development. It begins with a modal shift to f minor in the tutti repitition of the principal rondo theme, a device which I have never encountered elsewhere but can hardly believe I am the first to have used. Continually shifting tonalities, focus on minor keys, and a somewhat increased virtuosity are all employed. I should note that in keeping with my personal ideals of inter-movement unity (especially with respect to tonality), I made sure to spend time in the supertonic key of g minor (the key of the slow movement). This gives way at m. 139 to a fresh and entirely irrelevant theme in the subdominant, played alternately by solo winds and the piano. I have inherited the placement of a subdominant theme in this position in a rondo directly from Mozart: its function is to balance the "sharp-side" dominant first couplet with new, "flat-side" subdominant material, in order to lend the entire movement a greater balance.

The recapitulation is initiated with a moment that I find quite remarkable: the alteration of a passage which first appeared at m. 23. The progression in its original form is as follows: C: IV^6 - iv^6 - $vii^{\circ\frac{4}{2}}$ - vi, wherein by the time of the diminished chord the bass's A♭ is reinterpreted as a G♯ (and the chord is therefore better called a $vii^{\circ 7}$/vi). In the passage's reappearance at m. 217, the bass's A♭ is treated literally and the violas' B♮ is instead interpreted as a C♭, resulting in a resolution to I^6 in E♭ Major (♭III in C Major, ♭VII in the principal key of F Major). The idea, of course, is to venture briefly to the most distant, volatile territory of the entire movement (recall the functionally similar transition in the second movement's recapitulation) in order to make the return to the home key of F Major all the more insistent.

Closing Remarks

I have often remarked that my ambitions to compose as an undergraduate a concerto in the style and of the quality of Mozart's is not unlike a foreigner setting out to write a play as good as those of Shakespeare after having studied English for four years. I feel that I have, for the reasons described above, met my goal in numerous respects, but fallen short of it in others. There is, of course, no reason why the piece must now be called a definitive finished product (many composers continue to revise their works throughout their lives), so I am determined to continue to refine this new concerto, even after its submission and premiere.

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