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Robert Rival

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Résumé de l'article

En 2004, le compositeur canadien Malcolm Forsyth (1936–2011) a déclaré publiquement que les compositions les plus simples, si sincères, atteignent souvent la plus grande profondeur. Il décrit l'Adagio de son *Double Concerto pour alto et violoncelle* (2004) comme « le grand départ, pour moi, vers ce royaume d'une musique très, très simple et harmonieuse. » Cet article explore la conception qu'a Forsyth de la simplicité par une fine analyse harmonique, motivique et structurale dans plusieurs contextes : l'histoire des révisions de la pièce, ce que Mozart, Schubert et Brahms révèlent de la simplicité musicale, le débat sur la profondeur en musique, le discours sur le « style tardif » et des anecdotes personnelles.

MALCOLM FORSYTH'S DOUBLE CONCERTO: FORGING A NEW SIMPLICITY[1]

Robert Rival

In 1968, at the height of apartheid, South African–born Malcolm Forsyth (1936–2011) immigrated to Canada where, in short measure, he established himself as one of the most important Canadian composers of his generation.[2] Just a few months after hearing the premiere, in 2011, of his last major work, *A Ballad for Canada*, by Canada's National Arts Centre Orchestra (NACO) and its music director, Pinchas Zukerman, Forsyth died of pancreatic cancer. Three years later, during a ten-day, six-city tour of the United Kingdom to commemorate the centenary of the start of the First World War, Zukerman led the NACO, alongside the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and the London Philharmonic Choir, in the work's UK premiere, at Royal Festival Hall.[3]

Only six months earlier, in Ottawa, Zukerman had led the NACO in a performance of another signature work by Forsyth, his Double Concerto for Viola, Cello, and Orchestra (2004, revised 2008), which featured two NACO principals as soloists, violist Jethro Marks and cellist Amanda Forsyth—the composer's daughter and the music director's wife. The composer described the slow, inner movement—which drew critical praise from Bill Rankin and Richard Todd for its serene beauty—as "perhaps the greatest departure for me into [a] realm of a very, very simple music which is where I think the secret of profound music really lies."[4] This article explores Forsyth's conception of simplicity by placing a close harmonic, motivic, and structural analysis of the concerto's slow movement in several contexts: the work's history of revisions; what Mozart, Schubert, and Brahms reveal about musical simplicity; the debate on profundity in music; the discourse on "late style"; and personal anecdotes.

1 This article is a revised and expanded version of a keynote lecture presented to the "Malcolm Forsyth: Perspectives and Legacy" symposium at the University of Calgary on 19 October 2019. I thank Allan Gordon Bell, Ryan McClelland, Julie Pedneault-Deslauriers, and Alexander Rapoport for valuable contributions.

2 For a comprehensive account of his life and music, see Ingraham and Rival (2019).

3 The concert's symbolism, marking the close historical ties between the two nations, was enhanced by the presence of dignitaries, including Prince Charles and Mark Carney, a Canadian, and then governor of the Bank of England. See Robb (2014b).

4 A recording of the CBC Radio 2 broadcast premiere on *Two New Hours* is freely accessible online via cmccanada.org and includes an interview with host Larry Lake. For reviews, see Rankin (2004) and Todd (2014).

Persistent diatonicism and macroharmonic fluctuation

The concerto's Adagio cantabile continues a string of exquisite, subtle, and affecting orchestral slow movements by the composer, which includes "The Dream" from *Atayoskewin* and the cadenza-like first movement, "With gossamer lightness," from the cello concerto *Electra Rising*. The solo viola, unaccompanied, invites the listener into an intimate realm, articulating a three-note motive whose continuously varied repetition saturates the entire movement (example 1).[5] To these utterances the solo cello nods approvingly with sparse pizzicato chords. Shimmering violins and harp add atmospheric vapour. Bassoons, rising sweetly in thirds, punctuate the viola's third entry, gradually revealing a dew-covered field at dawn. A pastoral mood prevails. Periodic yet inexact repetition prevails, like branches swaying in a breeze.

The music gradually swells: the viola climbs into its higher register, the low strings extend the bass, and the horns fill in the middle (m. 22ff). The sun's rising glow illuminates an idyllic landscape. Now the solo cello leads with the motto (m. 25), the viola answering with unobtrusive falling scales. But the cello's presentation of the motive on its low C string sends the viola into a flight of fancy: a new idea, marked "dance-like, lightly," in restlessly rising triplets (m. 33, not shown). The cello soon joins the viola in playful interchange while the orchestra echoes the original three-note motive (m. 42, not shown). The excitement is short-lived: the orchestra withdraws and the soloists sink to depths that their low open C strings afford.

With mesmerizing music like this, which stays the course for long stretches, yet enchants through continual variation, we lose track of the passage of time. If mindless repetition numbs and bores, varied repetition assures alertness while allowing us to retain our bearings. Yet, for all his guile, Forsyth, while suspending time psychologically, cannot actually bring it to a standstill. We thus find ourselves already at m. 44—about 40 per cent through the movement. At the indicated tempo of sixty to the quarter note, from which the movement not once departs, this represents just under four minutes in clock time.

I draw attention to these proportions because Forsyth's sophisticated development of the chief motive, and equally attractive layering and ordering of subsidiary ideas, masks a most remarkable harmonic fact: the music has heretofore not strayed—not even for a single note—from B-flat major. And by that, I mean strictly so, in the sense that there is not the slightest hint of chromaticism. The score, fitted with a key signature, appears rather plain, unencumbered by accidentals. Harmonic progression is governed less by functional tonality than a relatively free movement within the B-flat diatonic collection, recalling pre-tonal Renaissance modality.[6]

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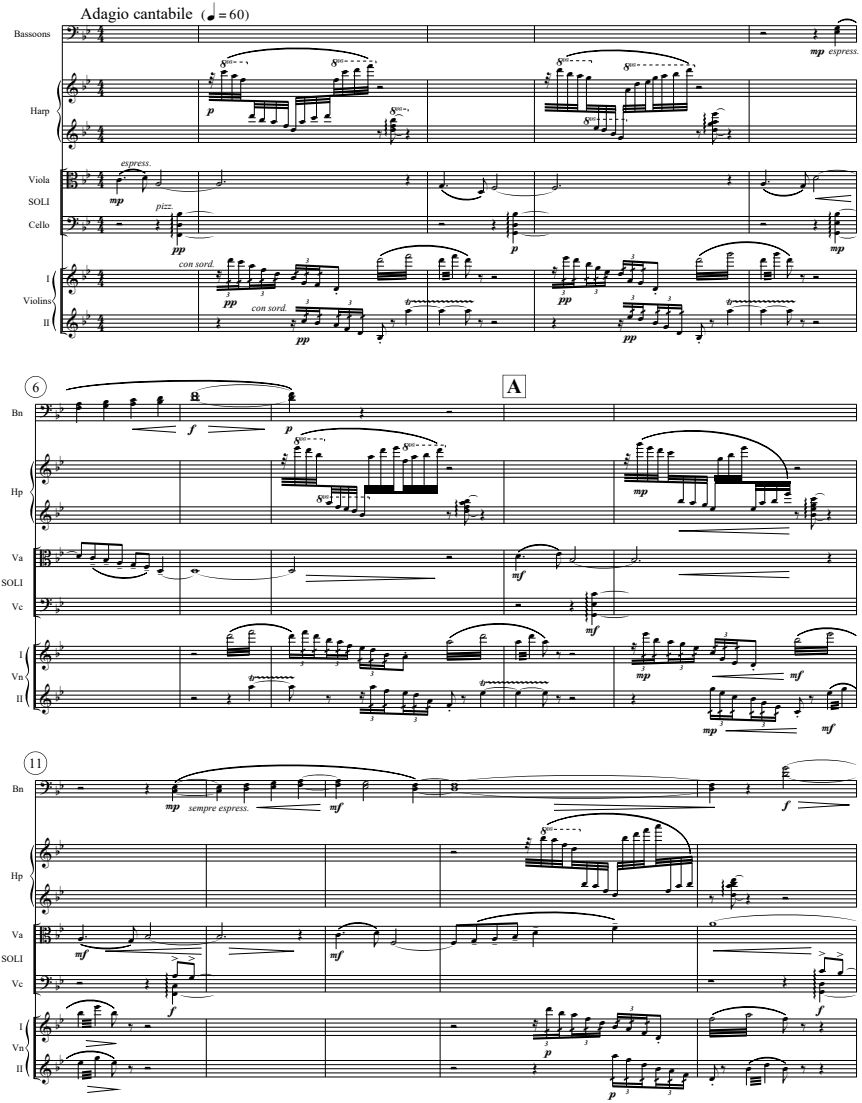
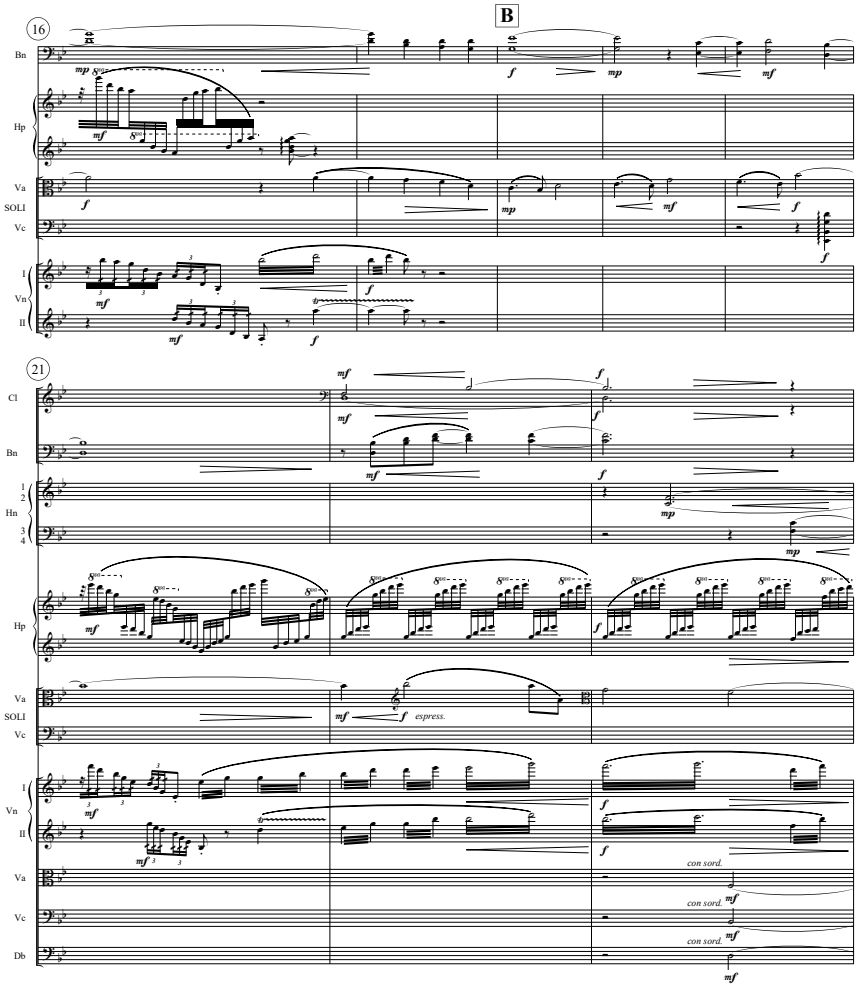
5 Unless otherwise indicated, all examples refer to the revised version (2008).

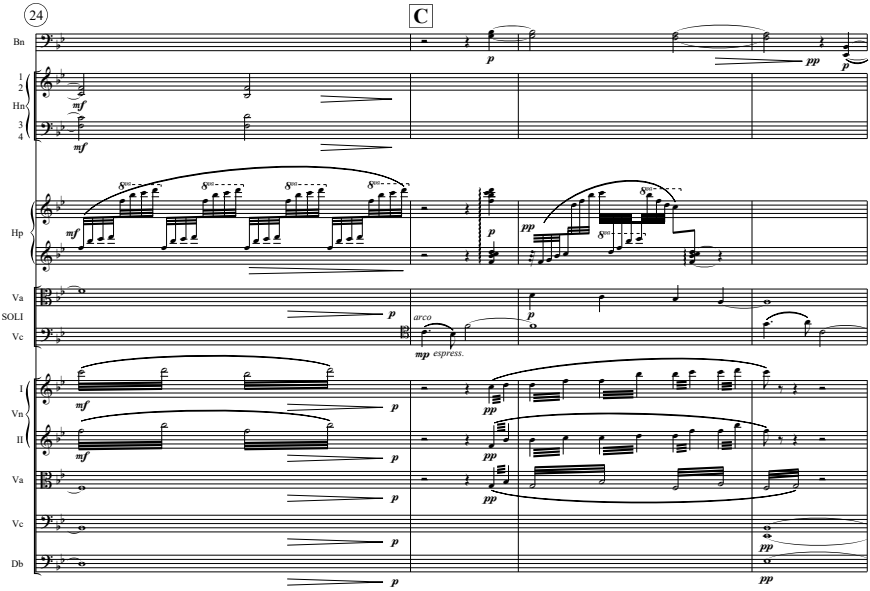
6 Throughout this article, following Dmitri Tymoczko's practice, a collection labelled "diatonic" does not usually imply a tonal centre. As far as the notes go, C diatonic is identical to G mixolydian, D diatonic identical to E dorian, and so on. To put it another way, the collection C diatonic can be described as D dorian, E phrygian etc. C diatonic thus refers to a non-hierarchical collection of notes; the tonal centre may not be C.



Example 1. Forsyth, Double Concerto, ii: mm. 1–27. Reproduced by permission of Counterpoint Music Library Services.



Example 1 (continued)

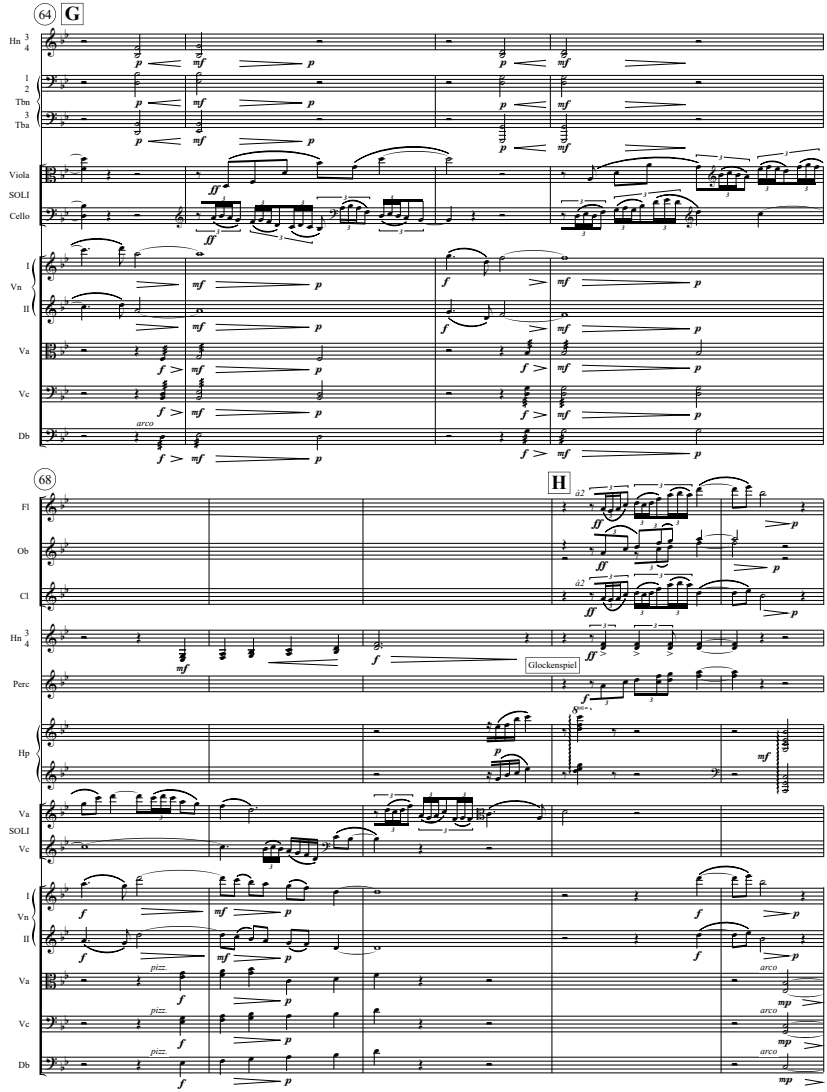


Example 1 (continued)

We might expect a contrasting section to follow. Instead, while m. 44 marks a new beginning, the material and mood remain familiar. The two soloists, intertwined, blend the principal motive with the dance-like triplet figure, suggesting a varied reprise of all that we just heard. More subtle is the concomitant harmonic shift, from B-flat to F major, marked explicitly by the removal of one flat from the key signature. This section extends until m. 64, where a return to a B-flat signature coincides with the sumptuous entry of the violins, in octaves, on the chief motive and in its initial form, thus providing, for the first time, a real sense of reprise and not just of variation. Yet even here Forsyth avoids exact repetition by varying the orchestration.

The preceding twenty measures (44–63, not shown) feature sparse orchestral accompaniment, wisps of harp, strings, and winds on a B-flat major seventh chord (mm. 48–50) and a G minor ninth chord (mm. 52–3) that make use of the richer triadic extensions available within purely diatonic space. At m. 51, the soloists, marked "solemn and subdued," blend statements of the chief motive with the scalar figure in sixths. From mm. 54 to 64, both play in interlocking double-stopped sixths, the scalar figure increasingly ornamented and animated, the resulting rich texture reminiscent of Brahms.

The sharpward foray to F diatonic was brief, and now, with the entry of the violins at letter G (m. 64), supported by the first entry in the low brass, the music slips back to B-flat diatonic (example 2). The music continues to grow in waves, the soloists mostly elaborating the dance-like triplet figure against further statements of the chief motive in the violins. But the scalar motive seeps into the texture, too, and at m. 71 the winds, brightened by the glockenspiel,



Example 2. Forsyth, Double Concerto, ii: mm. 64–72. Reproduced by permission of Counterpoint Music Library Services.

take up the triplet figure in an upward-blowing gust that marks the beginning of the movement's climax. A few more varied gusts blow in the woodwinds, supported by the sonorous brass.

These increasingly forceful surges finally peel away the movement's attachment to B-flat diatonic: at m. 80, A-flats and D-flats signal a dramatic swing flatward to A-flat diatonic (example 3). The flatward lurch gains momentum a few measures later with the addition of a G-flat (m. 83) and then C-flat and F-flat (m. 84), drawing the music into the obscure world of F-flat diatonic.[7] Given the movement's initial and sustained harmonic stasis, this modulation away from B-flat diatonic is as remarkable for its remoteness as for its suddenness. How quickly the idyllic world unravels!

So calamitous is the descent that for a moment the music exits the orbit of diatonicism, the soloists and orchestra lured into the still remoter world of the E/F-sharp whole-tone collection (mm. 85–6). Yet the pull of diatonicism proves too strong: the music swings back to C-flat diatonic, the whole-tone escape resigned to mere harmonic neighbour decoration. The solo cello, mindful of the active part it played in undermining B-flat diatonic, leads a quick and relatively orderly restoration of the tonic collection (mm. 88–9). Harmonic warbling among the flat collections continues for a few measures before an emphatic B-flat pedal asserts itself as of m. 91, anchoring the movement in B-flat diatonic until the movement's close.

Yet whiffs of the earlier departure from B-flat, its sudden arrival notwithstanding, lingers in the movement's coda, like the smell of gunpowder long after a shot is fired. The closing section (mm. 91–110) oscillates between a B-flat major triad enriched by diatonic extensions (in the low strings, bassoons, horns) and a four-note chord {B, C-sharp, F-sharp, A} (in the upper winds). The soloists navigate between, attempting to reconcile the two harmonies.

Scoring, voice leading, and rhythm make it abundantly clear that this four-note chord functions as an on-beat appoggiatura decorating the B-flat tonic (example 4 is a voice-leading reduction of m. 91ff). (B, C-sharp, F-sharp, A) moves neatly, through semitonal voice leading—and almost like an augmented sixth chord—to (B-flat, D, F, B-flat).[8] The upper winds and upper strings play both the appoggiatura notes and their resolutions. Meanwhile the soloists weave the chief motive, and fragments of the dance-like triplet motive, with thread made up of both chords. Despite abundant overlap, B-flat sounds unequivocally as the tonic, coloured by the appoggiatura chord.[9] Considering the

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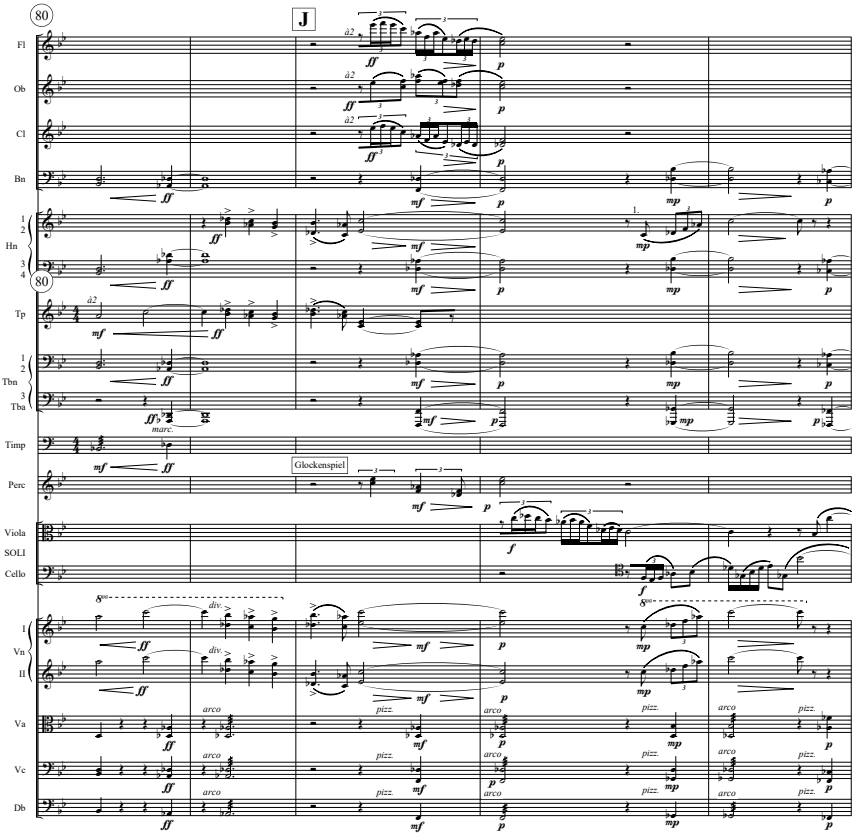
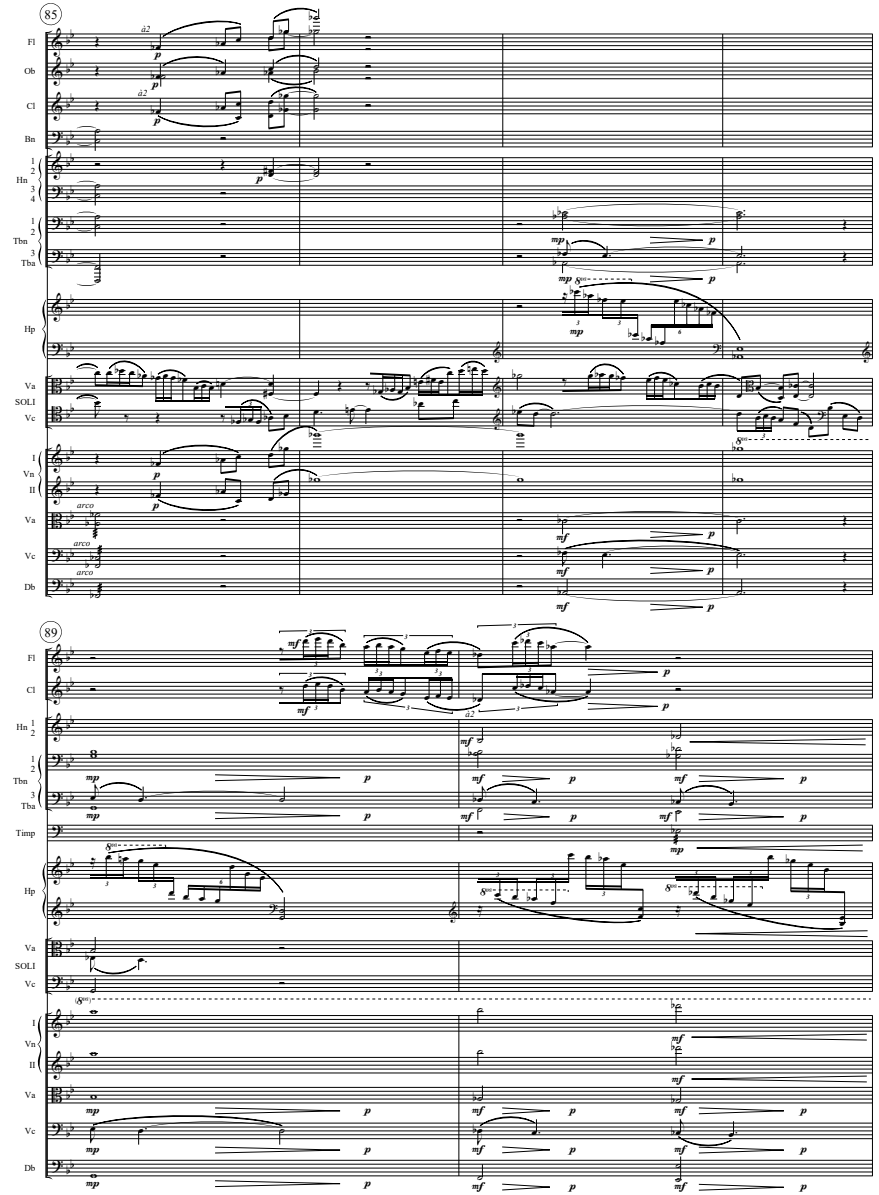
7 Just as incomplete chords, in a tonal context, can strongly imply chordal identity, so, too, can an incomplete collection imply the collection as a whole. C-flat and F-flat continue the pattern of flattening such that the previously flattened pitches linger in memory. True, there is no B-double flat—and even a B-flat in the cello—yet context suggests F-flat diatonic, however impure.

8 The composer's pencil sketches, dated 2003–4, are available at the Malcolm Forsyth fonds, University of Calgary. These include an abandoned first attempt of the second movement that uses a five-flat signature and outlines of the structural proportions of each movement. Notably, Forsyth draws attention to this appoggiatura chord (initially lacking an A) with a cryptic harmonic analysis (IVx) that I have not been able to decipher.

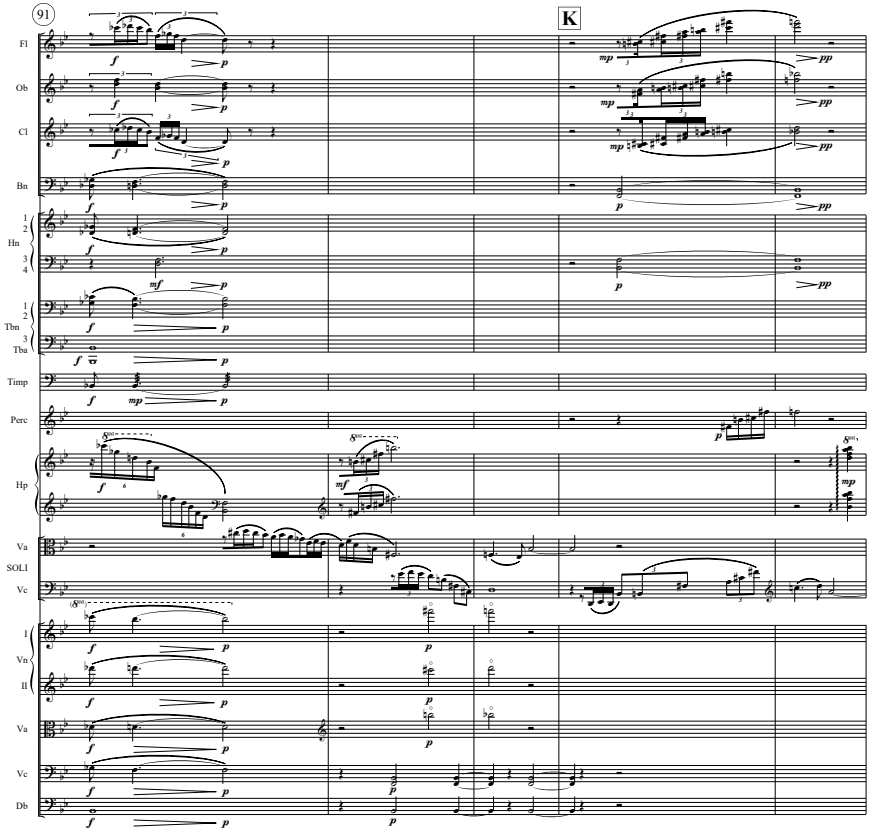
9 The effect here recalls that in the first movement of Forsyth's cello concerto *Electra Rising*, in which a similar sense of harmonic breathing, there between a tonic triad and remote triads, generates



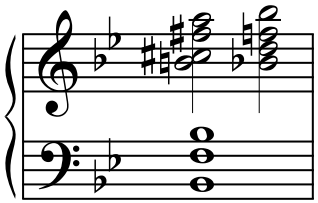
Example 3. Forsyth, Double Concerto, ii: mm. 80–95. Reproduced by permission of Counterpoint Music Library Services.



Example 3. (continued)



Example 3. (continued)



Example 4. Forsyth, Double Concerto, ii: appoggiatura chord over B-flat pedal (m. 91ff).

studious avoidance of any trace of chromaticism across the first three quarters of the movement, the retention of chromaticism across the coda is all the more extraordinary. Only in the final four measures is pure B-flat diatonic restored, the dissonant chromatic appoggiatura finally shaken off.

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a sensation of relaxation and tension. See Rival (2019, 79–107). In the Double Concerto the opposition occurs not between triads but between a tonic triad and a more dissonant appoggiatura chord.

Dmitri Tymoczko argues that one of five features that define tonality is the use of "limited macroharmony." In his words, "macroharmony" is "the total collection of notes heard over moderate spans of musical time" (Tymoczko 2011, 5). For music to feel "tonal," such macroharmonies are generally limited to five to eight pitch classes. In this vein, table 1 sums up the movement's macroharmonic structure. Column widths are depicted roughly proportional to duration, showing starkly just how end-weighted the collection modulations and overall chromaticism are. The table makes plain the direction of collection voice leading across the movement: (1) from B-flat diatonic, a gentle shift sharpward to F diatonic; (2) a return, flatward, to B-flat diatonic; (3) a further flatward descent, precipitously, through A-flat and F-flat diatonic, reaching the abyss with a whole-tone scale; (4) a return to flatside diatonic collections (C-flat); and (5) the restoration of tonic B-flat diatonic coloured by an appoggiatura chord. It is not a far stretch to see the similarity between this macroharmonic progression and the fundamental tonal progression, I–V–I–IV–I, with IV replaced by a more dramatic flatward descent. The restriction of harmonic variety to the closing sections, along with the stickiness of chromaticism until the last four measures, distort what otherwise would be a straightforward harmonic design, prompting several questions: What is the effect of this structural deformation on tonal resolution? Does the ending feel less resolved on account of its denser macroharmony? Or why did Forsyth limit the return to pure B-flat diatonic to only the last four measures?

Table 1. Forsyth, Double Concerto, ii: Macroharmony

Measures	1–43	44–63	64–79	80–90	91–110
Collections	B-flat diatonic	F diatonic	B-flat diatonic	A-flat, F-flat, w.t., C-flat	B-flat diatonic + app. chord
Functional harmony	I	V	I	"IV"	I

The premiere, lessons, and the "basic verities" of music

On 22 October 2004 the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra, led by music director William Eddins, with violist Rivka Golani and cellist Tanya Prochazka, gave the world premiere of the Double Concerto at the Winspear Centre, repeating it the following night. A few days earlier I had arrived in Edmonton to attend this auspicious occasion.

That summer I had engraved the score of the Double Concerto from the handwritten pencil manuscript and produced the complete set of parts, under the close supervision of a composer whose fastidiousness in this domain is legendary. I was now eager to hear the piece come to life. I was also there on business, instructed to document engraving errors that only a live reading brings to light. For a memorable few days I shadowed Forsyth at rehearsals and attended both performances as well as a lively post-concert party hosted

by the composer at his home.[10] During down times I joined him in some of his favourite pastimes: sipping Scotch, watching soccer, and talking music.

Winter arrives early in Edmonton. On the night of the premiere the temperature was below freezing, which may explain why the concerto's slow movement stirred in *Edmonton Journal* critic Bill Rankin's imagination "images of sparkling snowflakes floating in crisp air" (Rankin 2004). Presumably in reference to the outer movements' rhythmic drive, he added, "The melody writing in the movement is first-rate, offering a hint of comfort in the mercurial, crepuscular atmosphere." I recall that many present reported being particularly touched by the concerto's Adagio.

At the time I was not only Forsyth's copyist but also his private composition student, having earlier that year coaxed him out of retirement to give me lessons by telephone—about a half dozen between January and October 2004.[11] Forsyth frequently expressed an abiding concern that newly written music be clear and intelligible to the listener. During my first lesson, for instance, he listed a host of methods to shape or extend a melody or motive, to which one could turn if one got stuck, and that if used with care, could serve as guideposts for the listener. These included changing the phrase structure (from symmetrical to asymmetrical, or vice versa), melodic transposition and inversion, chordal inversion, intervallic augmentation, rhythmic augmentation and diminution, and polyphonic treatment (canon, fugato, stretto). All of these methods of development are found in abundance in Forsyth's scores.

My fourth lesson was the most important in terms of what Forsyth revealed about his aesthetic preoccupations. "What is the *reason* for writing instrumental music?," he began, explaining his interest in reflecting upon the origins of absolute music as distinct from programmatic music. "What has it been?," he mused. "Why write a symphony?" This was the key question for eighteenth-century composers who struggled simultaneously with the emergence of tonality from a world of modes and the transition from dance forms and vocal music to purely instrumental forms (e.g., the symphony). "Why do we write instrumental music *today*?," he asked. The naive answer, he suggested, is because that's what composers do and have done. Mozart, Beethoven, and Sibelius wrote symphonies, so we must, too. But this is an unsatisfying answer, thoughtless, and egocentric. Forsyth deemed the matter unresolved.

He pointed out that since the early 1990s, the resurgence of tonality—what he called the "return to beautiful sound"—demonstrated that "there are certain things that won't go away": the harmonic series, and hence a tonal centre, and the "natural" eight-measure phrase that Forsyth was only then beginning

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[10] Forsyth's annotations, along with my own, appear on the copy of the pre-publication engraved score used during rehearsals with the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra between 20 and 22 October 2004. This score may be consulted in the Malcolm Forsyth fonds.

[11] I carefully documented these lessons, which took place on 22 and 28 January, 12 February, 9 April, 28 June, and in October during my visit to Edmonton, by promptly typing up my handwritten notes for future reference.

to accept. He called these the "basic verities" of music. "Why in the twentieth century did we find it necessary to avoid the eight-bar phrase?," he mused. "But we're not done with tonality and harmony. They are there. We can't negate them." Forsyth admitted to having been influenced by the trend in the first half of the twentieth century to discard the eight-measure phrase and a tonal centre. But now he was rethinking this self-imposed avoidance.

He remained adamant, however, that the solution lay within the realm of absolute music. He advised me, personally, to "stop writing program music" because only "with absolute music did one have to confront the *why*, the basic reason" for writing instrumental music. We live in a culture "so swamped by film music," he went on, that we "can only make sense of music in the context of an image." Yet "logic and development can only come from one place: the notes themselves… . Writing absolute music was like being a refugee: you only have the clothes on your back—now what do you do?"[12]

Continually varied phrase structure

The Double Concerto is unequivocally absolute music: it has no subtitle, unlike, say, the cello concerto *Electra Rising*, and the composer's program notes, included in the revised score, make no reference to an external idea. And as already established, the slow movement not only possesses a tonal centre but relies on pure diatonicism swayed only briefly by modulation and punctuated only little by chromaticism. But what about the Adagio's phrase structure? As it turns out, in this domain, too, Forsyth kept matters rather straightforward—at least initially.

Indeed, the Adagio begins with an eight-measure phrase, one of the "basic verities" of which he spoke (example 1). This sentence-like phrase is neatly divided into two equal parts (4 + 4), with the first part, the presentation, itself symmetrically subdivided (2 + 2). The two-measure basic idea consists of the motto answered by the wisps of harp and violins. Its varied repetition features the motto inverted and intervallically altered. The continuation begins with yet another version of the motto; generating momentum is a new idea, a rising scalar motive in thirds in the bassoons, with its inversion, in diminution, in the solo viola. Unlike a true sentence, the theme ends not with a cadence, but with another wisp, one that blows into m. 9, such that the next phrase enters seamlessly.

Table 2 charts the phrase structure across the movement. Phrasing aligns closely with rehearsal letters, Forsyth's own, suggesting that the unfolding of phrases was no afterthought. Notwithstanding the composer's approval of the

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[12] It may seem incongruous that in the next breath Forsyth drew my attention to Strauss's tone poem *Don Quixote*, a fine example of program music. Forsyth noted that the score "draws on popular music (waltzes, polkas), on military music—it draws on everything—and the juxtaposition of all these themes does not follow traditional rules of counterpoint; the themes just barge in. This is not music conceived at the piano. There are not always chords accompanying each passage." And despite all this, he argued, the piece "holds together by dint of the notes and their development—it stands on its own." Forsyth was persuaded of this because he came to this conclusion without even knowing the work's subtitles. In other words, this was not music in the service of an external idea but music qua music.

basic eight-measure phrase, the *only* such phrase is the very first. Thereafter, asymmetry reigns, despite clear small-measure groupings. Even the codetta's four measures lack internal symmetry due to stretto. Because cadential articulation is so utterly lacking, and most phrases are elided, the ubiquitous motto serves as an indispensable formal marker that helps orient the listener. Phrase subdivisions, therefore, are articulated each time the motto sounds.

Table 2. Forsyth, Double Concerto, ii: Phrase Structure

Letter	Measures	#	Subdivision	Comments
	1–8	8	2 + 2 | 4	Sentence-like
A	9–17	9	2 +2 | 5	Continuation extended by one measure
B	18–24	7	1 + 1 | 5	Compressed presentation; again, extended cont.
C	25–31	7	2 + 3 + 2	Solo vc enters; distinction between pres. & cont. blurred
D^{-1}	32–8	7	2 + 4 + 1	Dance-like idea in solo va a new foil for motto
	39–44	6	1 + 5	Motto sounds in orchestra for first time
E^{+1}	45–51	7	4 + 3	Texture reduced to soloists after orchestral build-up
F^{+1}	52–63	12	2 | 10	Cont. extended with interlocking 6ths in solo va/vc; first clear cadence (F major = V)
G	64–71	8	2 + 2 | 4	Sumptuous (elided) entry of vns on motto (= very opening)
H^{+1}	72–81	10	3 + 3 + 2 + 2	Build to main climax; vns continue to lead with motto; orch. wisps now big washes
J	82–92	11	3 + 2 + 2 + 4	Flatward plunge & whole-tone passage
K^{-1}	93–106	14	2 + 2 + 2 + 2 + 2 + 1 + 3	Heaving/breathing effect: motto in B-flat with weak-measure chrom. appoggiatura
	107–10	4	4	Codetta: motto in interlocking 6ths = "chorale"

The table reveals, strikingly, that phrase structure is highly variable. The second phrase extends the continuation; the third extends it as well, but also compresses the presentation through fragmentation by removing the basic idea's second measure. Further on, the sentence-like structure is further eroded as the distinction between presentation and continuation is erased. No repeating pattern emerges, each subsequent phrase a variation on what comes before. Yet small units prevail, notably twos and threes, and in the closing section (letter K forward), which corresponds to the long B-flat pedal, the periodicity of twos instills a steady, calming effect, synchronized with consonant/dissonant harmony in an inhaling/exhaling relationship.

Simplicity and profundity

"You've been quoted as saying this piece was a new departure for you. How so?," asked Larry Lake, host of the popular Canadian Broadcasting Corporation's contemporary music radio show *Two New Hours*, in an interview that

aired before the Double Concerto's broadcast premiere. Forsyth's reply raises intriguing aesthetic questions:

> I am interested in writing a simpler kind of music. The simplest music—when it's genuine—is invariably the most profound and moving music. I think of some of the simplest pieces ever written, many of them by Schubert. There is nothing to these pieces and yet they transcend the heights of anything which attempts to be complex. I feel very strongly that I want to do this, I want to write music which is simply music to be listened to and felt as such… . I think the slow movement is perhaps the greatest departure for me into this realm of a very, very simple music, a very simple and harmonious kind of music which I think is where the secret of profound music really lies. (Forsyth 2005)

Two questions arise: What makes "simple" music, if genuine, profound?; and What, at any rate, is "simple" music? To the second question Forsyth offers only two clues, however elusive: it ought to be "harmonious" and Schubert wrote many pieces that qualify (I shall return to this below). Regrettably, to the first question Forsyth offers neither evidence nor argument to support his assertion. I therefore turn to those who have considered the fraught matter of music and profundity.

Peter Kivy, the American aesthetician who wrote extensively about the meaning of instrumental music, seems to deny the possibility that any instrumental music, let alone of the simple kind, can be apprehended as "profound."[13] Kivy approaches the question by establishing three criteria that make a literary work profound and then applies them to music: 1) Is the work about something?; 2) Is it about something important to people?; and 3) Is it executed with masterly craft? Kivy concludes that absolute instrumental music fails to meet the first two requirements. Such music is not about anything beyond itself. Consequently, it cannot be about anything important. Yet even though Kivy admits he can find no "rational grounds" to justify thinking about certain music as profound, he clings to the notion intuitively, arguing that craft, particularly in the area of counterpoint, leads him to consider works like the late Beethoven quartets and Bach's Well-Tempered Clavier as profound.

Kivy's ambivalence did not satisfy a number of other aestheticians. A particularly creative defence of profundity in music was advanced by the New Zealand philosopher Stephen Davies, who, by analogy to the game of chess, countered that some instrumental music was profound "in what it reveals about the capacities of the human mind" (Davies 2002, 343). Previously, Jerrold Levinson, among others, had sought to broaden Kivy's definition of "aboutness" to embrace certain emotions or psychological states, a move that Kivy found unconvincing (Levinson 1992).[14] Davies's creative chess analogy impelled Kivy to reconsider the matter. But he identified a logical flaw. Since Davies argues that *all* great chess games are profound, because they are proof of human

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[13] He famously argues the case in the concluding chapter, "The Profundity of Music," of *Music Alone: Philosophical Reflections on the Purely Musical Experience* (1990).

[14] See Kivy's rebuttal (1997, 162–70).

ingenuity, it follows that *all* great absolute music would have to be profound. This, understandably, is unsatisfactory because it means that Beethoven's *Eroica* and Mozart's wind sextets equally meet the criteria of profundity. In other words, the qualifier "profound" had merely been equated with "great" (Kivy 2003, 401–11).

Interestingly, none of these commentators suggest that *simplicity* has anything to do with profundity. Kivy, rather, places great weight on complexity in the form of counterpoint, that most learned of styles. Thus, we cannot count on any of these contemporary aestheticians to provide the missing evidence or argument to support Forsyth's claim. And if we rely upon Kivy's well-reasoned position, then the matter is moot, for no instrumental music may be considered profound—simple or otherwise. I will therefore leave the question, though here addressed, unresolved, and at the risk of opening the floodgates to further controversy, satisfy myself with substituting "eloquent" or "beautiful" for what Forsyth calls "profound."

Schubert's example

Returning to the second question, I understand "harmonious" to mean music that privileges consonance, possibly possessing a tonal centre. The Double Concerto's Adagio easily fulfills these requirements. But what about the connection to Schubert? Consider the first of the Four Impromptus, op. 90 (D. 899), a piece Forsyth possibly had in mind.[15] It leads us on a familiar journey from C minor to C major—but in an unfamiliar way. We might expect a narrative that describes an individual overcoming adversity. We have struggle, to be sure, and the loneliness implied by monody at the outset later assumes warmer strains, but the eventual resolution to C major is contaminated by notes from the minor mode *until the very end*: Schubert smiles at us through tears. How similar to Forsyth's colouring of B-flat with the chromatic appoggiatura chords at the end of his Adagio.

Schubert's theme could not be plainer (example 5). It is a parallel, eight-measure period whose antecedent is even presented without accompaniment. The tune itself unfolds entirely in stepwise motion, restricted to a range of a fifth, harmonized with nothing but the primary triads and sevenths. The melody, moreover, is unified by a three-note motive, rising and falling, that spans a third and is used as a dotted pickup. Like Forsyth's Adagio, the impromptu is dominated by the repetition of the theme, or some variation of it. The opening section consists of five eight-measure periods, each slightly varied in harmony, texture, or rhythmic density. But from the rigid 4 + 4 symmetrical periodic structure, and an unrelenting C minor, Schubert does not flinch.

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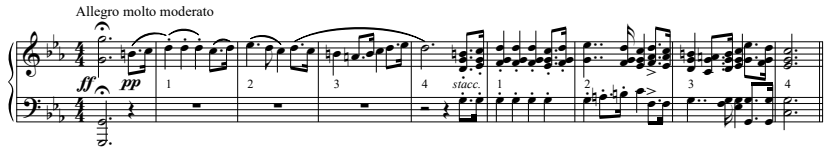
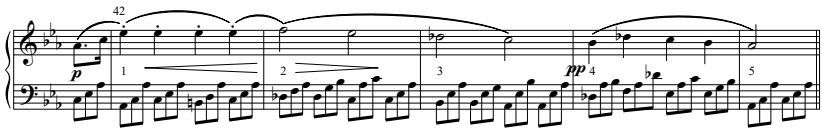
15 Tellingly, Forsyth referred to "pieces" and not "songs," and though he might have been thinking of the piano sonatas, chamber music, or even symphonies, it is likelier he had in mind the shorter character pieces for piano solo, many of which Schubert composed late in life, including the six *Moments musicaux*, the three *Klavierstücke*, and two sets of impromptus, the latter both composed in 1827 only four months apart.



Example 5. Schubert, Impromptu in C minor, Op. 90, No. 1: mm. 1–8.

Then, at m. 42, coinciding with a modulation to A-flat major, Schubert expands the theme intervallically and simultaneously casts it into five-measure phrases (example 6). Because each phrase (at least initially) concludes with an authentic cadence, the effect is a compression of the original eight-measure period into a five-measure phrase rather than an expansion of the four-measure subdivisions.



Example 6. Schubert, Impromptu in C minor, Op. 90, No.1: mm. 42–46.

This play with both phrase length and the chief motive's intervallic design resembles Forsyth's approach to development in the Adagio. The two differ only in the rate and timing of change: Schubert modulates sooner and more frequently; Forsyth varies phrase and motive sooner, and more frequently. In other words, while both are fixated on a single idea, Schubert relies chiefly on harmonic transformation, and Forsyth on motivic transformation and variation in phrase length. But just how much does Forsyth rely on motivic transformation? To answer this question, I turn to another work from the nineteenth century, one similarly obsessed with the very same three-note motive found in Forsyth's Adagio.

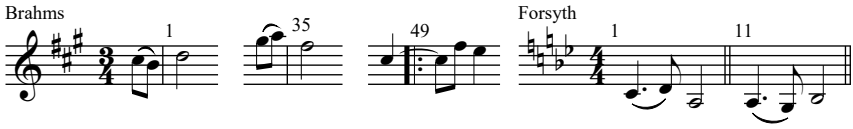
Brahms and motivic transformation

As a result of their refinement, subtlety, and expressiveness, the twenty miniatures that make up the late opp. 116–19 (1892–3) rank among Brahms's most cherished keyboard works. Among these, I am persuaded that Intermezzo in A major, op. 118, no. 2, would have figured in Forsyth's list of works simple yet profound.[16] Its phrasing is symmetrical, its mood serene. Effortless melodiousness is woven into fluid figuration. Like the Schubert impromptu, this

[16] Moreover, Brahms was very much on Forsyth's radar at the time. The Brahms Double Concerto came up in the CBC Radio 2 interview with Larry Lake. In the same year (2004) Forsyth orchestrated two songs by Brahms: op. 72, no. 3, and op. 43, no. 2, for mezzo-soprano and chamber orchestra. In 2011 he composed *Bis for Brahms*, an encore piece for violin and cello, to be performed after the Brahms Double Concerto.

intermezzo begins with a tightly knit, eight-measure, parallel period, though one that modulates to the dominant. Like the Schubert, the period is repeated, modestly reharmonized. Yet Brahms's theme is more diffuse, its contrasting idea a greater departure from the basic idea. The latter consists of a three-note motive—down a step, up a third—whose leap expands to a seventh when repeated.

It takes only two operations to transform Brahms's motive into Forsyth's: inversion and intervallic augmentation of the leap—two more, transposition, metrical shift—if scale degree and metre matter (example 7). The relationship is easily apprehended aurally. Moreover, the continual transformation of the motive in both compositions brings each closer to the other. For instance, excluding scale degree and metrical placement, Forsyth's motive at m. 11 is identical to Brahms's at the start of the intermezzo. Meanwhile, ignoring scale degree, Brahms's motive at the B section in F-sharp minor (m. 49), is identical to Forsyth's—metrically and intervallically—though in retrograde.



Example 7. Brahms, Intermezzo in A major, Op. 118, No. 2 and Forsyth, Double Concerto, ii: principal motives and selected transformations.

Brahms's motive appears everywhere (example 8): in the bass, in inner voices (mm. 35, 49).[17] It is present in transitions and appears poignantly in inversion (m. 35) to close the A section. The motive dominates the tonally contrasting B section, too, where, in a contrapuntal tour de force, it sounds in retrograde, shifted to the strong beat, as the head of a closely spaced canon (m. 49). In retrograde form it leads the ensuing chorale variation in F-sharp major (m. 57); the canon then returns, its voices now inverted.[18]

Table 3 catalogues all entries of Forsyth's motive across the Adagio. The handful of entries involving imitation in stretto, all clustered at the end, have been counted singly.[19] There are forty distinct entries: the motive thus sounds in 37 per cent of the movement's measures. Table 4 shows that these entries comprise ten transformations of the motive's basic intervallic structure—up a second, down a fourth—by means of intervallic augmentation, inversion, and even, in one instance, retrograde.

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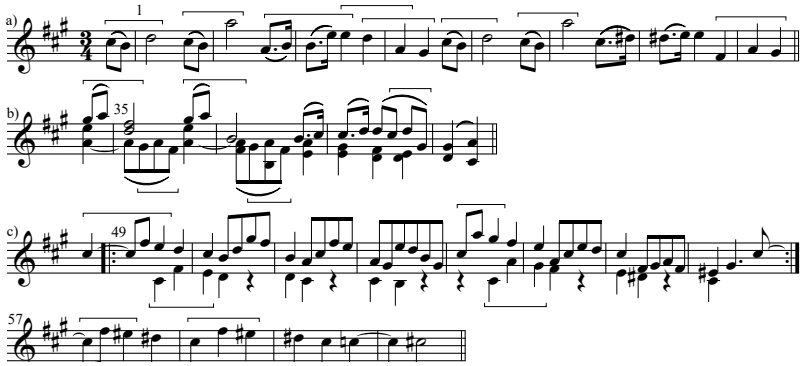
[17] I include variations of the motive that eliminate the change of direction. For a detailed transformational analysis of this intermezzo's A section, see Rings (2011, 185–202).

[18] The reprise of the A section is nearly identical, though the contrasting idea now falling instead of rising. There are no further transformations of the motive. Throughout the intermezzo, phrases are uniformly in fours or twos, the only exception being the retransition into the final A section.

[19] The table does not track the dance-like triplet counter-theme, though it is itself derived from the motive.



Example 8. Brahms, Intermezzo in A major, Op. 118, No. 2: a) mm. 1–8; b) mm. 35–38; c) mm. 49–60.

Table 3. Forsyth, Double Concerto, ii: Entries of Basic Motive with Transformations

m.	Motive	Comments	Instrumentation
1	↑**2**↓**4**		Solo va
3	↓4↑3		"
5	↓2↑5		"
9	↑**2**↓**4**		"
11	↓2↑3	= Brahms: Intermezzo op. 118, no. 2	"
13	↑2↓6		"
18	↓2↑3	Brahms	"
19	↓2↑4	Leap augmented …	"
20	↓2↑5	… and again	"
25	↓2↑5		Solo vc
27	↑2↓6		"
30	↑2↓6		"
32	↓2↑4		"
34	↑4↓3		"
38	↓2↑4		"
39	↓2↑3	Brahms	Vcs
40	↓2↑3	Brahms	Vas, cls
45	↑2↓3	Brahms inverted	Solo va
49	↑**2**↓**4**		Solo vc
54	↑2↓5		"
65	↑**2**↓**4**	= m. 1 (at pitch, tutti reprise of opening, elided entry)	Vns
66	↓4↑3	= m. 3	"
68	↓2↑5	= m. 5	"
70	↓3↑4		Solo va
72	↑**2**↓**4**	= m. 9	Fls, cls, vns

Table 3. (continued)

m.	Motive	Comments	Instrumentation
75	↓2↑3	= m. 11 (Brahms)	Vns
78	↑2↓6	= m. 13	"
82	↓2↑3	= m. 18 (but no longer at pitch) (Brahms)	Vns, hns
93	↓2↑5	Closing B-flat pedal till end, breathing effect	Solo va
95	↑**2**↓**4**		Solo vc
97	↑**2**↓**4**		Solo va
99	↑**2**↓**4**		Solo vc
101	↑**2**↓**4**		Solo va
103	↑**2**↓**4**		Solo vc
104	↑**2**↓**4**	First time in stretto	Solo va + solo vc
105	↑**2**↓**4**	Stretto with …	Solo va
106	↓4↑2	… in retrograde! (only instance)	Solo vc
108	↑2↓3	Again in stretto, in sixths; Brahms inverted	Solo va + solo vc
109	↑2↓3	Brahms inverted	Solo va

Note: The motive's basic intervallic structure—up a second, down a fourth—is shown throughout in bold typeface. Shaded rows indicate that the orchestral tutti at m. 65ff reprises the same sequence of intervallic entries presented by the solo viola at the very beginning.

Table 4. Forsyth, Double Concerto, ii: Catalogue of Basic Motive's Transformations

Rectus	↑2↓3	↑**2**↓**4**	↑2↓5	↑2↓6		↑4↓3
	2	12	1	4		1
Inverted	↓2↑3	↓2↑4	↓2↑5		↓3↑4	↓4↑3
	8	3	4		1	2
Retrograde		↓4↑2				
		1				

Note: The motive's basic intervallic structure is shown in bold typeface. It is shaded, as is the second most frequent transformation, which corresponds to the basic motive in the Brahms intermezzo.

There is no obvious pattern to the succession of transformations—with two notable exceptions. First, the orchestral tutti at m. 65ff reprises the same sequence of intervallic entries presented by the solo viola at the very beginning (see greyed-out entries in table 3). Second, the closing B-flat pedal (m. 91ff) coincides with the restriction of entries to the original form. The solo instruments alternate entries every two measures, reinforcing the regularising inhaling/exhaling effect in the underlying harmony. Table 4 catalogues all the forms of the motive, arranged in increasing size of the first interval. Rectus and inverted/retrograde versions are distributed roughly equally (twenty vs. nineteen). The motive's original form (in bold and greyed out) receives the most entries (twelve) followed by the inverted down two/up three version (eight), which corresponds to the basic motive in the Brahms intermezzo. Notably, the vast majority of entries preserve initial stepwise motion.

While essentially the same three-note motive saturates both Forsyth's Adagio and Brahms's intermezzo, the difference in its treatment is considerable. A

comparison reveals much about Forsyth's aesthetic, and even perhaps something about his notion of simplicity. Forsyth's motive always sounds on a strong beat, almost invariably the downbeat. Brahms shifts his motive rightward: in the F-sharp minor B section, an anacrustic figure becomes a downbeat figure and is further rhythmically transformed in the chorale variation. Forsyth continuously varies his motive's intervallic content and freely moves between rectus and inverted versions. Brahms employs fewer transformations, with each persisting longer, coinciding with formal divisions. Moreover, the retrograde version in the B section is far more radical a transformation than any used by Forsyth. Brahms also leverages imitation extensively, notably the ingenious retrograde canon in the B section (later inverted!) in which the follower is an augmentation of the leader. Forsyth uses imitation sparingly, only in the closing entries.[20]

This analysis of phrase structure and motivic transformation in Forsyth's Adagio, especially when considered in relation to similar procedures in the Schubert impromptu and Brahms intermezzo, shows that what characterizes the movement as "simple" is far from obvious. The music remains subtle and sophisticated, even if we may be able to "simply listen to it as such." But then, each in its own way, the Schubert and Brahms are subtle and sophisticated too, and also notwithstanding their immediate appeal. In other words, it remains unclear what key ingredients—apart from an overriding emphasis on consonance and diatonicism—characterize Forsyth's conception of a new simplicity. Like Schubert and Brahms—and of course, Mozart—if the music is "simple" it is deceptively so.

Revisions, revisions, and more revisions

In October 2008, exactly four years after the Double Concerto's premiere, Forsyth thoroughly revised the outer movements while leaving the inner one essentially intact. What prompted him to undertake these revisions was presumably the prospect of another performance.[21] The composer describes the revisions in a two-page document, included in the published 2008 version, which begins as follows:

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[20] One caveat: the triplet dance-like counter-theme introduced at m. 33 of Forsyth's Adagio, while distinct in character and profile from the chief motive, is nonetheless closely related, the intervallic structure of its individual cells derived from the motive. To the extent that Forsyth extensively combines the motive and the dance-like figure contrapuntally, it may be argued that, on some level, the motive is developed in imitation. However, the net effect sounds more like the combining of two very different ideas. In this regard, Brahms is far more concentrated and direct in his approach to imitation.

[21] On 25 January 2010, with the University of Alberta Symphony Orchestra at the Winspear Centre, again featuring Prochazka as soloist but now alongside Aaron Au and with the composer himself conducting. It is likely, too, that Forsyth anticipated a future performance featuring his daughter, Amanda Forsyth, with Zukerman and the NACO, one that took place only posthumously, on 6–7 March 2014. In an interview ahead of these concerts, Amanda Forsyth claimed that Zukerman (her husband) helped her father revise the concerto. "When I heard the tape of the premiere I had some concerns and Dad reworked it," she explained. "Then he spent some time with Pinchas on the couch in our house going through it with a fine-toothed comb. Pinchas has the conductor side of it so they were just getting things thinned out in the orchestra. They did a lot of work." See Robb (2014a).

> I undertook what I thought would be several minor revisions to the First Movement, having noticed that there were two places where the orchestral tutti swamped one of the soloists. I intended to add a bar at these points, so that I could open up the conflicting statements and have them appear one after the other, rather than simultaneously. I also felt keenly that a more radical rewrite of the Third Movement was necessary but I did not have a clear idea of how I would effect this.[22]

Forsyth expected to leave the second movement "untouched, since it was already very powerful in its effect and clearly orchestrated." Nonetheless, he felt the need to add two measures between letters H–J, in both cases delaying orchestral responses to statements by the soloists. Thus, the extensive revisions to the first and third movements appear motivated by a desire to salvage the work, to make the outer movements *in the image* of the already successful slow one.[23] The only two places that Forsyth originally intended to revise occur early in the first movement: the solo viola entry at letter A (m. 13) and its re-entry at m. 21. Forsyth's solution was to insert a measure before the viola's entry and shift the gushing woodwind and harp gestures into that measure, *before*, rather than *with*, the viola (compare examples 9 and 10). He does the same thing at the subsequent entry. As a result, the viola's entries are now unencumbered by the orchestra. He added a total of nine measures to the movement.

Regarding the first movement, Forsyth reports, "Problems which I had not foreseen as needing alteration quickly surfaced so that before long I found myself in a full-scale rewrite of the entire movement."[24] Perhaps the most striking revisions concern not orchestration in the strict sense but the effect of harmony upon overall sonority.[25] In the 2004 version, bass instruments sound an ostinato-like theme that evolves from a pronounced C-sharp-G-sharp fifth to which are added both minor seventh and major seventh extensions (mm. 5–9). But in the new version, the same instruments play C-G, adding only a B-flat, thus

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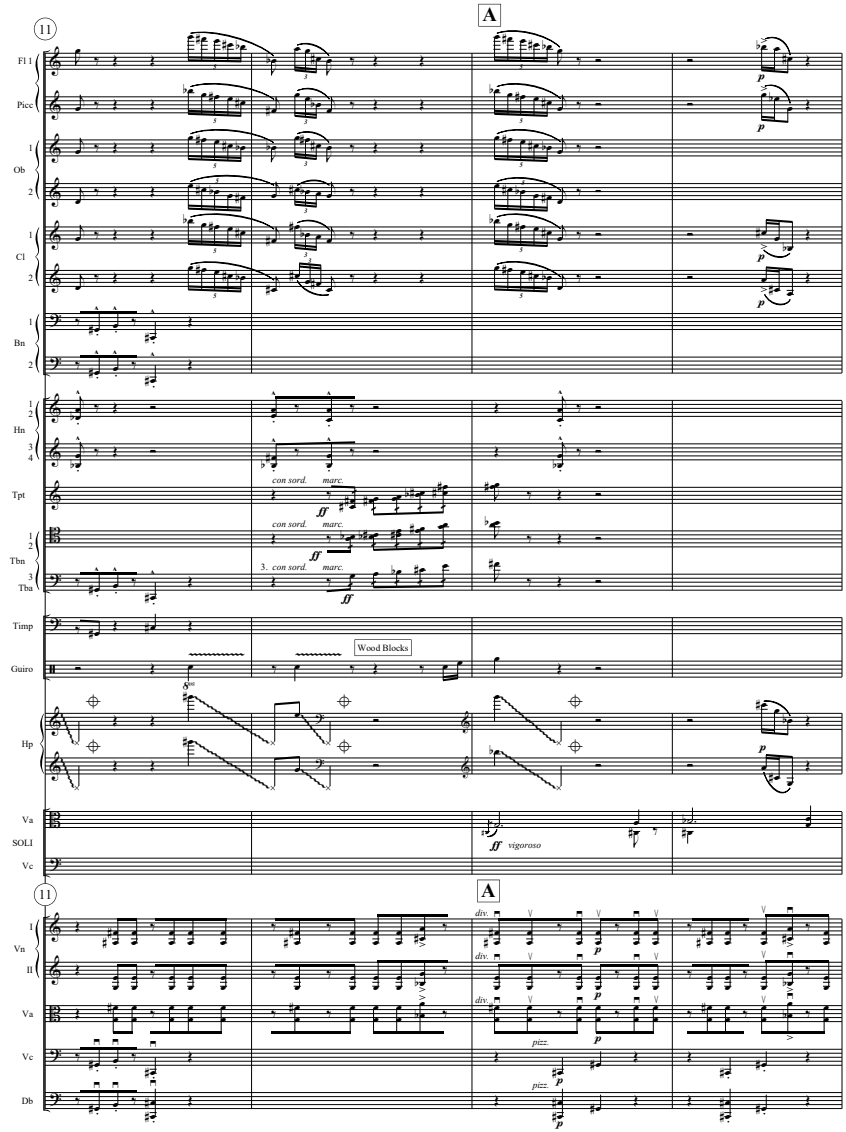
[22] The composer's first-person narrative, mentioning the involvement of no other person, relates the general approach taken in lieu of enumerating an exhaustive list of changes.

[23] It is somewhat perplexing, given Forsyth's obvious and celebrated mastery of orchestration by this late stage in his career, that he should have over-orchestrated the outer movements to such a degree as to require a major overhaul. It could be that although he knew the cello well, he underestimated the viola's comparative difficulty in projecting over an orchestra. Rankin (2004) seemed to think so. "If the piece has a failing, it is due to the viola's register; particularly when accompanied by a subdued orchestra, the melodic line hardly penetrates the listener's consciousness. In its favour, Forsyth's gambit gave a bas-relief effect where the figure rises from the background but doesn't scream for strong personal attention." Forsyth's revisions do help bring the viola to the fore. But as we shall see, to this end, he did not limit himself to changes in orchestration and to the spacing of entries alone.

[24] Thus, he reworked the passage around letter C, "where the orchestra rendered the soloists quite inaudible." Forsyth's basic approach was to concentrate the strength of orchestral interjections into shorter spans, removing the soloists at these moments and thinning out the orchestral texture at the soloists' entries. Thus, when the latter enter just after letter C, gone is all interference from the brass, oboes, tom-toms, and timpani. A more extensive revision involves the substantial pruning of the string ostinato texture between letters H–K: Forsyth aerates the pattern with rests, removes great swaths of it entirely, and reduces the numbers to one to two desks.

[25] When I first got my hands on the revised score and compared it to the original version that I had myself engraved, I was dismayed by what I assumed must have been an unfortunate—and important—typo as early as m. 5!



Example 9. Forsyth, Double Concerto, i (2004 version): mm. 11–14. Reproduced by permission of Counterpoint Music Library Services.

outlining a C7 chord. "This is more intelligible throughout," Forsyth notes, "but particularly so when providing the foundation of the string chord at the beginning." In other words, Forsyth went in with the intent to thin out the orchestra and stayed to mess with the harmony—by simplifying it, rendering it more consonant, and hence producing a more sonorous effect.[26] Example 9 (2004 version) and example 10 (2008 version) also illustrate these revisions.

Rankin, the critic who attended the 2004 premiere, was not kind about the third movement. Judging it "the most problematic," he added that "Forsyth calls for a light and jocular mood, but perhaps because of the generally woody timbres of the solo instruments and an orchestration which mainly resists bold strokes, brassy flourishes, and other effects that rush from the stage to the ear, the overall result felt somehow unfinished. It does begin aggressively, but gradually it ebbs to a feel of withdrawal, even listlessness. I found it hard to catch the musical argument" (Rankin 2004).

Forsyth, whether or not influenced by this assessment, came to a similar conclusion: "The serious revision of this movement was undertaken with some trepidation, but the process soon proved to be very rewarding. A more joyful, playful feeling is the result." Indeed, the overhaul of this movement goes well beyond merely rescuing the soloists from the orchestra: it embraces changes in phrase structure, harmony, and even thematic design. The extent to which Forsyth meets his stated goal, however, is less clear than in the case of the first movement.

"The first correction," explains Forsyth, "was the opening theme, which was cast as a seven-measure asymmetry with scattered dissonances accompanying the cello. A new measure appears as m. 4, making the theme a rounded eight-measure structure, and the accompaniment clarifies the C major tonality, with a clear B major chord as its antipode." In each of the three subsequent varied reprises of the theme Forsyth adds a measure, thus creating a neat thirty-two-measure exposition. He similarly extends the tutti refrain at letter C, though not, as he claims, the one at letter P. Forsyth's revisions are not restricted, however, to phrase length. He enlivens the theme's rhythmic profile with repeated sixteenth notes "to give freer rein to a slightly bouncier style" and, as he notes, he reinforces the C major harmony by reducing the number of dissonant notes. Compare examples 11 and 12.

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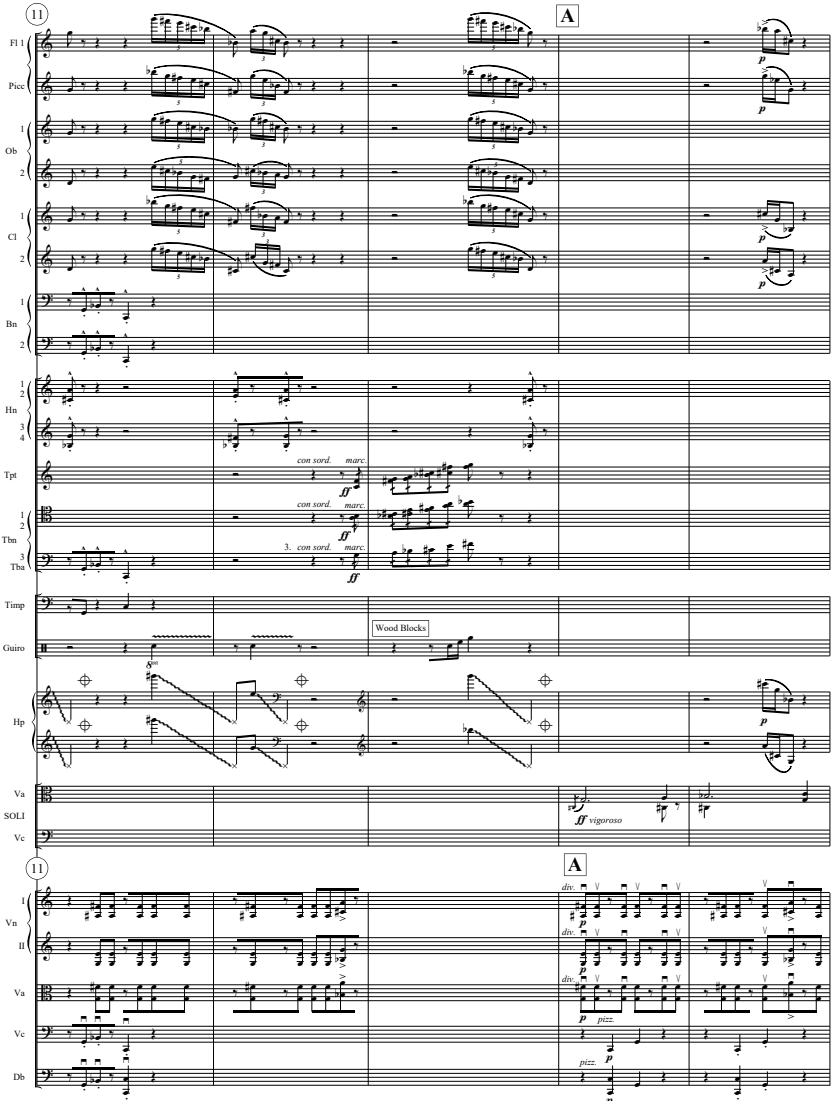
[26] That Forsyth would even consider changing the *bass* to achieve greater consonance is astonishing. Modifying the very harmonic foundation would, in most instances, require bringing down the whole edifice and rebuilding from the ground up. The ease with which Forsyth simplified suggests that the more dissonant bass was in fact a subsidiary idea added *after* the solo parts and string chords had already been conceived. At any rate, Forsyth clearly had second thoughts about how spicy he wanted his harmony. In some passages, he not only altered the notes of the bass counter-theme but also tinkered with the pitches in the solo lines. At letter B, for instance, and again two bars later, he changed the bass G-sharp to G, reducing a clash with the G in the string chord. At B^{+2} he not only removed the downbeat bass note, but changed the notes of the solo viola, while also transposing them up an octave, where they sound more clearly. These new notes clash less with the string chord. Forsyth explains that pitches in the soloists' parts were "altered to provide more cohesion, imitation and tonal agreement between them" and "making them somewhat more consonant than hitherto."



Example 10. Forsyth, Double Concerto, i (2008 version): mm. 11–15. Reproduced by permission of Counterpoint Music Library Services.

However, I wonder if, given his stated goal, he was too cautious. The revised version does not sound as advertised. The inserted measures in the opening are unaccompanied. Instead of producing an audible symmetry they seem to add a hiccup. The sparse harmonic support remains ambiguous, and cadences that would help demarcate phrases are weak or absent. Syncopations and the hemiola continuation also work against a sense of groundedness and cohesion. The eight-measure phrase, it would appear, is no magic bullet: for it to sound truly stable and symmetric requires the close coordination of harmony, rhythm, and thematic unfolding.

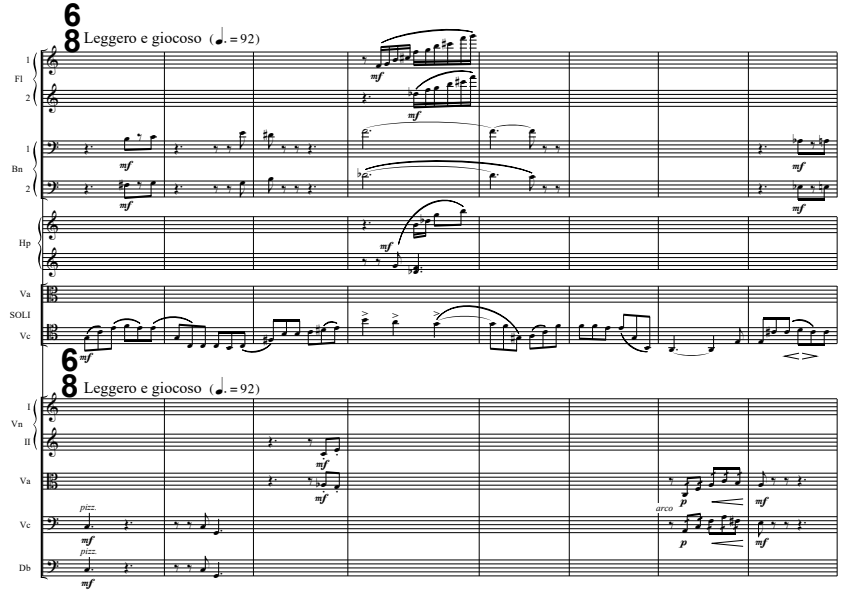
Yet the ultimate success of the enterprise is perhaps less important than the fact that Forsyth undertook it in the first place. He was clearly determined in his attempt to lighten up the finale, as the large number of revisions attests. Tuttis have been beefed up with more doublings and pruned of busier inner parts. He makes more of the rapid-fire sixteenth-note tattoo, reinforcing it in the exposition (m. 57 entry) so that its later appearance, notably in the coda, appears satisfyingly prefigured. In the coda itself, he inserts measures to separate a bass theme from soloist entries so as not to cover them, adopting the same procedure that bore fruit in the first movement. The very ending, with its broadened allargando, heightens what was already an exuberant close. In all, he added twelve measures to the movement.

A copy of the 2008 revised score, with further pencil annotations in Forsyth's hand, reveals that the composer continued to fuss over details during the rehearsals leading up to the 2010 performance.[27] Perhaps his perch on the podium brought into focus further deficiencies. Or maybe he just continued, restlessly, to revise in pursuit of an ideal. The majority of the markings are mundane, identifying typos introduced in the course of revising the score. A small number concern dynamics, invariably marking the orchestra down further, to not cover the soloists. In a few places there are added expression marks (espressivo, feroce, etc.) and articulations.

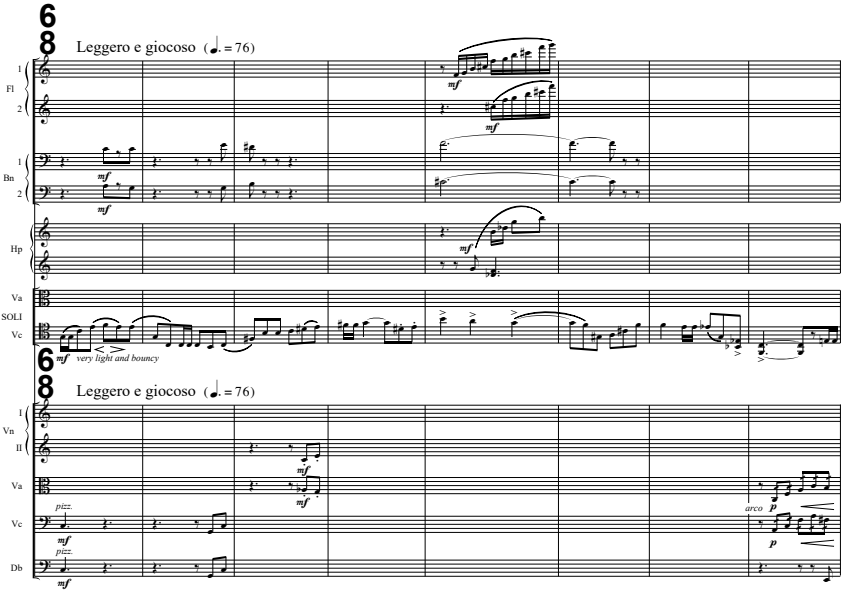
More significant changes occur in the Adagio: at letter G^{+2} and G^{+4}, where tremolo has been removed from the second half of the chord in the lower strings, a clear attempt to further minimize interference with the soloists; between letters H–J, where the alternation between pizzicato and arco in the low strings has been altered. In the finale there are further substantial changes: at D^{-4}, the flute and piccolo moved up an octave for added brilliance during this orchestral refrain; at Q^{-1}, a note change in the bass to make it more consonant; at Q^{+5}, piccolo up an octave; between R–S, a few passages requiring the soloists to play up an octave.

To the extent that we can rely on a single review of the NACO's 2014 performance, the new version, with all these revisions to the revisions, yielded a more satisfying result. "Imaginative and well-crafted," wrote the critic Richard Todd, the Double Concerto "is also distinguished by its unusual combination

[27] I thank Forsyth's publisher, Counterpoint Music Library Services, for allowing me to consult this copy. The publisher, in a private communication, states that for the 2014 performance, NACO was supplied with copies of the score and solo parts that incorporated the composer's pencilled annotations.



Example 11. Forsyth, Double Concerto, iii (2004 version): mm. 1–8. Reproduced by permission of Counterpoint Music Library Services.



Example 12. Forsyth, Double Concerto, iii (2008 version): mm. 1–8. Reproduced by permission of Counterpoint Music Library Services.

of solo instruments. The second movement has passages of extraordinary beauty, while the finale is pleasingly animated" (Todd 2014).

The revisions involve chiefly, though not exclusively, changes in orchestration, a topic that came up frequently during our private lessons. In matters of orchestration, Forsyth was a self-confessed traditionalist, an attitude surely reinforced by his experience as a former professional orchestral trombonist in which role he was acutely sensitive to playability. During our first lesson he recited by memory the second fundamental axiom from Rimsky-Korsakov's orchestration textbook, which he admired: "Orchestral writing should be easy to play; a composer's work stands the best chance when the parts are well written" (Rimsky-Korsakov [1922] 1964, 3).[28]

Forsyth's critique of several of my student scores reveals his single greatest preoccupation: clarity. One opens with an orchestral wash created by the oscillation between two pitches moving in different rhythms in multiple layers over which bright, staccato, and well-spaced pings sound. Forsyth wanted to know what a conductor should bring out and what to blend. Reproaching me for being "non-committal," he called it the "middle-of-road problem": the texture was neither clear enough nor wash enough. He then suggested ways to push it more in one or the other direction.

"Why does a Mozart symphony sound perfect?" he asked. "It's just forte and piano. Because it's written in such a way that nothing fights against the image." Besides his contempt for mezzo forte, Forsyth had in his crosshairs all such middling choices: moderato tempos, i.e., a tempo neither fast nor slow; rhythms neither long nor short; dynamics neither loud nor soft; even quarter notes! He also disliked special effects for their own sake. In another student piece of mine, I include a single Bartók pizzicato at a key juncture. Forsyth found this "unnecessary," telling me it "sounds like an anomaly because it is not developed as a 'feature'" and that a forte pizzicato "is enough." He referred me to Bartók's Fourth Quartet and Berlioz's *Symphonie fantastique* in which snap-pizzicato and col legno, respectively, are developed as "features." Forsyth lived up to his words in matters of orchestration. His approach, economical in resources but committed in effect, informed his revisions of the Double Concerto.

"Late style," simplicity, and Mozart

In 2008, Joseph Straus joined the longstanding debate on the existence and nature of "late style" in music. His provocative article, supported by several case studies of works by Stravinsky, Schoenberg, Bartók, and Copland, argues that "the experience of living with a disability is a more potent impetus for late-style composition than age, foreknowledge of death, authorial belatedness,

[28] Forsyth also held strong opinions concerning major orchestration treatises, which he related to me during our lessons. Kennan, an academic with little practical experience, was "unreliable." So was Adler, filled with erroneous statements. Piston was "reliable," despite the absence of extended techniques, "but that was not what orchestration was about" anyway. Cecil Forsyth "used to be the bible" and his treatment of the strings was "excellent," though that of the winds and brass outdated. Berlioz was "useful but so subjective."

or a sense of historical lateness" (Straus 2008, 6). Acknowledging the surge in interest brought to the topic by the likes of Margaret Notley and Edward Said, Straus catalogues nearly a century's worth of discourse in a table of "late-style characteristics" that occupies an impressive three pages in print (Straus 2008, 8–10).[29] He then groups adjectives frequently used to describe late style into a second table, "six metaphorical clusters of late-style characteristics," whose headings reveal just how wide-ranging are the markers of musical lateness: "introspective," "austere," "difficult," "compressed," "fragmentary," and "retrospective" (12).

None of these categories, however, seem especially pertinent to Forsyth's Double Concerto. Notably, words designating "simplicity" occur remarkably infrequently in both tables. Simplicity, in and of itself, seems therefore insufficient to qualify a work as exemplary of late style. And, as far as disability is concerned, I am unaware that Forsyth suffered from any debilitating physical or mental ailment at the time of the composition and subsequent revision of his Double Concerto.

I therefore prefer to dissociate the evident striving for simplicity in Forsyth's Double Concerto from the discourse of late style, even though it is not uncommon for composers to seek out a simpler style in their maturity. Shostakovich's Viola Sonata, for example, is startling in the sparsity of its textures. On the other hand, Prokofiev's example shows that the impetus toward simplicity may come at any time.[30] For others, simplicity in expression, at least outwardly, accompanied them throughout their lives. Many commentators have described the music of Mozart as housing complexity beneath a veneer of simplicity. "What is crucial is relational richness, and such richness (or complexity) is in no way incompatible with simplicity of musical vocabulary and grammar," notes Leonard Meyer in an exhaustive analysis of the trio from the G minor symphony (Meyer 1976, 693). For Stephan Heuberger, the finale of the piano sonata, K. 570, "under the guise of a harmless children's piece, imparts deep insight into his compositional thinking and a complexity that only reveals itself under very close scrutiny" (Heuberger 2007, 159).[31] Mozart himself, on more than one occasion, took pride in writing music that could please everyone from lay listeners to connoisseurs.[32]

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29 Notley (2006); Said (2006).

30 His mid-career adoption of what he called a "new simplicity" was, of course, motivated by his return to the Soviet Union and a need to indulge prevailing cultural demands, yet he eased into this style with such felicity that most of the masterworks for which today he remains best known were products of a style that Deborah Rifkin characterizes as featuring "sudden chromatic swerves to distant harmonic areas." See Rifkin (2011, 184).

31 "unter dem Gewand des harmlosen Kinderstückes tiefe Einblicke in sein kompositorisches Denken und eine Komplexität vermittelt, die sich erst bei sehr genauer Wahrnehmung eröffnet" (my translation). Sachs (2007) explores similar themes in other works by Mozart while also situating perceived simplicity within eighteenth-century aesthetic discourse.

32 In a letter to his father, dated 28 December 1782, he described his piano concertos K. 413–15: "These concertos are a happy medium between what is too easy and too difficult. They are very brilliant, pleasing to the ear, and natural, without being vapid. There are passages here and there from which the connoisseurs alone can derive satisfaction; but these passages are written in such a way that the less learned cannot fail to be pleased, though without knowing why." See Blom (1956, 204).

The French political scientist Gil Delannoi, who, from an unlikely vantage point, offers fresh insight, argues that central to Mozart's genius is his musical discretion. Among the most significant characteristics of Mozart's work, Delannoi identifies comedy, diversity, auditory acuteness, speed, ambiguity, intensity, simplicity, serenity, humanity, and above all, what he calls "the sober style" (Delannoi 2001, 66).[33] He elaborates:

> The lack of emphasis is discretion itself, in Mozart's own image. But also the culmination of his reflection on form. He knew what he was doing. And when he explored, he did not pursue a course that would distance himself from his own discretion… . Thus, his music never crushes you. Human presence reveals itself in a subtle play with form, and vice versa. A delight in capriciousness comingles with soothing effects. The emotional effect is not only sensitive but sensitizing. Such is Mozart's musical personality: sensibility without sentimentality, emotional vivacity without excessive outpouring, poignant but modest, intimate yet discreet, open but lacking triviality, neither ego nor transcendence. Human without preconceived ideology. (Delannoi 2001, 66)[34]

Could what Forsyth called "simplicity," particularly with respect to his Adagio, have more to do with Mozart's aesthetic thus defined? As we have seen, the sophistication evident in Forsyth's music, despite its immediate appeal, strains the common understanding of what it means to be simple. Many features that Delannoi finds in Mozart's musical personality may also be found in Forsyth's Adagio. Therefore it seems appropriate to bring into the conversation a work by the Viennese master with which it can engage on multiple levels.

The Sinfonia Concertante, a double concerto for violin and viola, is not only a work in the same genre, but also reveals Mozart's deep sensitivity to the viola, the instrument with which Forsyth appears to have struggled.[35] Consider Mozart's approach to thematic design and development in the slow movement. The orchestral violins present an eight-measure sentence whose basic idea consists of a question and response, each built on the same four-note rhythm (example 13). With each repetition of the question, the upward leap expands—from a fourth to a fifth to a sixth—its growing intensity, suggesting dissatisfaction with the reply. Meanwhile the motive, in diminution, murmurs persistently in the tutti violas' accompaniment. The solo violin's entry reprises the phrase, but fills in the melody with ornaments. The solo viola does the same upon its entry, eight

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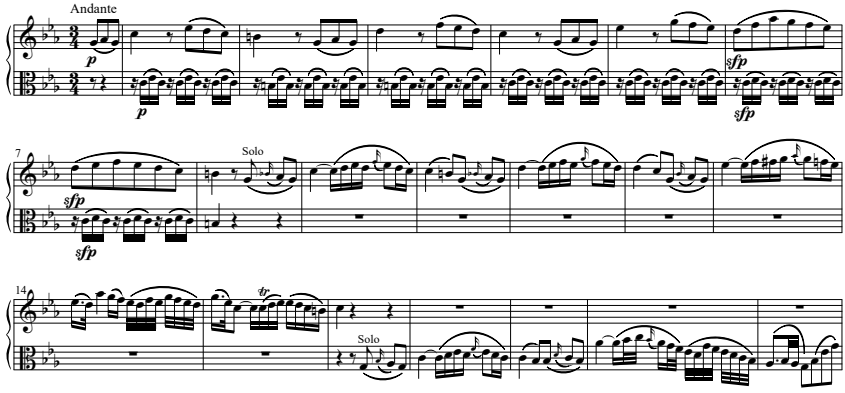
33 "le style sobre."

34 "L'absence d'emphase est une discrétion à l'image de Mozart lui-même. Mais aussi l'aboutissement d'une réflexion sur la forme. Il savait ce qu'il faisait. Et quand il explorait, il ne poursuivait pas dans ce sens si cette voie l'éloignait de sa discrétion propre. […] Ainsi, jamais cette musique ne vous écrase. La présence humaine est divertissement subtil avec la forme, et inversement. Délice fantasque et effet curative peuvent se mêler. L'effet émotionnel n'est pas seulement sensible, il rend sensible. Telle est la personnalité musicale de Mozart : sensibilité sans sentimentalisme, vive émotion sans épanchement, poignant mais pudique, intime mais discret, à vif mais sans anecdote, ni ego ni transcendance. Humain sans idéologie préconçue" (my translation).

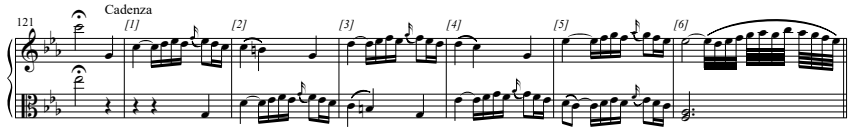
35 Remarkably, Mozart's solo viola part is notated a semitone down so that it may be played on an instrument tuned a semitone up, the brighter timbre intended to pierce through the orchestral violas, themselves divided throughout.

measures later, adding even more elaborate decoration. The soloists continue in this manner, one-upping each other, completing each other's thoughts and comingling them. Restlessness leads to continual reinvention through variation without ever losing an identifiable link to the original theme.

Mozart reserves the most stunning variation, however, for the cadenza that he wrote himself (example 14). Rather than embellish, here he *simplifies* the original motive, stripping it to its essence: a pair of notes outlining a rising interval. Forsyth, in his Adagio, like Mozart in this Andante, continuously transforms his basic idea, thereby cultivating abundance from modest means. As with Mozart, the basic idea retains its identity: variation is neither extravagant nor cerebral. Like Mozart, Forsyth's approach is discreet.



Example 13. Mozart, Sinfonia Concertante, K. 364, Andante: mm. 1–20 (soli).

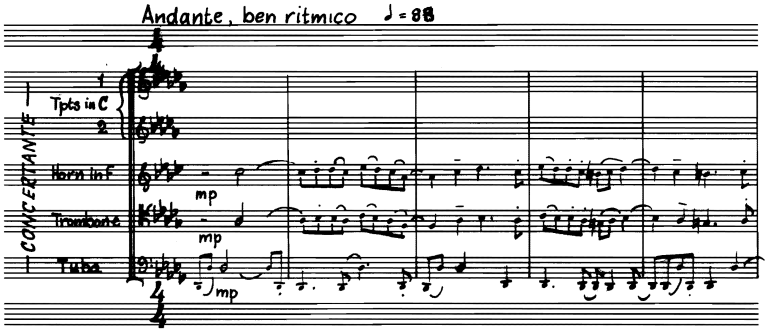


Example 14. Mozart, Sinfonia Concertante, Andante: cadenza, mm. 1–6.

Forging a new simplicity

In 1975, thirty years before the Double Concerto, Forsyth composed *Sagittarius*, a concerto grosso for brass quintet and orchestra commissioned by the Canadian Brass for the Banff Centre for the Arts. The affable mood with which its second movement opens, continues uninterrupted, as does the relentless pedal that grounds the music firmly in diatonic space, challenged only fleetingly by surface chromaticism, and harmonically, only toward the end (example 15). Serenity is assured by a gently lilting rhythm and an attractive melody in

sixths. Few university-employed composers dared write music so harmonious and melodious at the height of North American academic modernism.[36]



Example 15. Forsyth, Sagittarius: Concerto Grosso No. 1, Andante, ben ritmico: mm. 1–5. Score excerpt in the composer's own hand. Reproduced by permission of Counterpoint Music Library Services.

How, then, do we reconcile Forsyth's claim that his Double Concerto, notably the Adagio, forges a new simplicity, with the fact that thirty years earlier he had written an orchestral movement decidedly simpler? For between the two movements, surely the earlier one is a better candidate for "music to be listened to and felt as such." Perhaps in the interval Forsyth moved the goalposts of simplicity. Perhaps he demanded more of simple music. Perhaps he thought that simple music ought to work harder. Or perhaps, like Mozart or late Brahms, he sought a more obvious *external* simplicity that masks *internal* complexity. Late Brahms adopts a simpler shell that obscures the sophistication contained within.

It could also be that only in his twilight years, free of the pressures of academia and having earned sufficient accolades to no longer feel the need to prove himself, Forsyth had the confidence to return to his more youthful, uncensored self. Delannoi offers a perspicacious assessment of the supposed childishness in Mozart:

> Contrary to the cliché of Mozart as child, Mozart is supremely adult. All adults harbour a duality: they grew up keeping the child within, and to this former and buried child is added the one who they continue to be or who they strive to deny. And thus adults, in part, are they who understand that childhood is gone, and at the same time, do not forget that they are still children. Mozart is an adult because he knew this to the fullest. (Delannoi 2001, 67)[37]

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36 "The Dream" from *Atayoskewin* (1984), which opens with an extended diatonic wash, is another early example of the composer's inclination toward simplicity.

37 "Contrairement au cliché de Mozart enfant, Mozart est supérieurement adulte. Tout adulte est double : il a grandi en gardant un enfant en lui-même, et à cet enfant ancien et enfoui s'ajoute celui qu'il continue à être ou s'évertue à nier. Et n'est ainsi adulte, en partie, que celui qui a compris que

In the winter of 2011, composer Allan Gordon Bell met with Forsyth, his former teacher, for what would be the last time, and relates the following about their final conversation: "Creatively speaking, he only had one regret: that he had spent too much time trying to please others, time that he should have spent composing what he really wanted to" (Bell 2019, 20–1). Perhaps in seeking a new simplicity, Forsyth, advanced in age, sought to channel his inner child, free of preconceived notions, yet, like Mozart, by merging youthful innocence with the sophistication and wisdom that come from lived experience.

After the premiere of the Double Concerto on that crisp October night in 2004, and after all the guests had left the party, our conversation turned philosophical. Forsyth advised me to read Rainer Maria Rilke's *Letters to a Young Poet* "to remind ourselves why we do what we do," adding that "simple truths are the most profound." He followed this with a question, "Why compose?," waiting just long enough for the words to enter my ear canal before supplying his own answer: "To hear what it sounds like."

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l'enfance n'est plus et, en même temps, n'ignore pas qu'il est encore un enfant. Mozart est adulte parce qu'il savait cela au plus haut point" (my translation).

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ABSTRACT

In 2004, Canadian composer Malcolm Forsyth (1936–2011) stated publicly that the simplest compositions, if genuine, often achieved the greatest profundity. He described the Adagio from his Double Concerto for Viola and Cello (2004) as "the greatest departure, for me, to this realm of a very, very simple and harmonious music." This article explores Forsyth's conception of simplicity by placing a close harmonic, motivic, and structural analysis in several contexts: the work's history of revisions, what Mozart, Schubert, and Brahms reveal about musical simplicity, the debate on profundity in music, the discourse on "late style," and personal anecdotes.

RÉSUMÉ

En 2004, le compositeur canadien Malcolm Forsyth (1936–2011) a déclaré publiquement que les compositions les plus simples, si sincères, atteignent souvent la plus grande profondeur. Il décrit l'Adagio de son *Double Concerto pour alto et violoncelle* (2004) comme « le grand départ, pour moi, vers ce royaume d'une musique très, très simple et harmonieuse. » Cet article explore la conception qu'a Forsyth de la simplicité par une fine analyse harmonique, motivique et structurale dans plusieurs contextes : l'histoire des révisions de la pièce, ce que Mozart, Schubert et Brahms révèlent de la simplicité musicale, le débat sur la profondeur en musique, le discours sur le « style tardif » et des anecdotes personnelles.

BIOGRAPHY

Robert Rival, composer and scholar, was the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra's resident composer (2011–14). Articles on Shostakovich and Nielsen have appeared in *Twentieth-Century Music* and *Carl Nielsen Studies*. He co-edited *Reflections on Malcolm Forsyth,* the first book devoted to the late Canadian composer. An invited speaker at conferences in the United Kingdom, Denmark, and Canada, he is an adjunct professor of theory and composition, and coordinator of the composition sector, at the University of Ottawa. https://robertrival.com