Concerto for Piano Duet

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in Music
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Abstract

My *Concerto for Piano Duet* (ca. 23 minute duration) was born out of my passion for the concerto medium and my love of piano performance. It is composed in eleven miniature movements, joined thematically by use of the 0-3-4 motive. In addition to the solo piano duettists, a number of movements include obligato soloists from various sections of the orchestra. My musical aesthetic in this composition features expressive melodies and horizontal/linear writing with a predilection for harmonic outcomes resulting from independent lines in counterpoint with each other. I chose the piano duet instead of piano solo due to lack of substantial piano duet concerto literature composed to date. In the written portion of my dissertation, I briefly explore the history of the piano duet medium and highlight some reasons why there has been a lack of interest in composing piano duet concerti. I include a list of all known piano duet concerti in my appendices.

**Keywords:** concerto, piano duet, counterpoint, polyrhythm, miniatures, orchestra, Kujawiak, Klangfarbenmelodie, contemporary classical music, virtuosity.
Summary For Lay Audience

I composed *Concerto for Piano Duet* (ca. 23 minute duration) partly because the piano duet has historically been an unpopular choice for a soloist in a concerto. My dissertation provides some historical background on the piano duet, the concerto, and the piano duet concerto genres. I also dive into the specifics of my piece and what I think makes it interesting. My *Concerto for Piano Duet* is comprised of eleven short movements which can be described as miniatures. They all have unique features that set them apart from each other while also upholding certain thematic relationships which serve as connective tissue throughout the work.
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Chapter 1

1 Introduction and Historical Background

My ca. 23 minute *Concerto for Piano Duet* showcases the virtuosic and sonic attributes of the piano duet medium in a concerto setting. I begin my dissertation with a brief historical context of the duet medium, followed by Chapter 2, which discusses the relationship of the piano with orchestra. Chapter 3 outlines some unifying compositional elements throughout the concerto. Chapter 4 dives into each movement specifically, outlining unique features and is followed by the conclusion of this document, Chapter 5.

Music written for piano duet is often perceived as being inferior to music for solo piano, particularly throughout the twentieth century. Some writers describe piano duets as music of a “lowly estate”\(^1\) bringing “total expressiveness within the grasp of the home music-maker.”\(^2\) Musicologist Barbara Strahan attributes this negative perception of the piano duet genre to its beginnings in the 1760s, when it was used extensively in domestic music and for pedagogical purposes.\(^3\) Strahan admits that most of the stylistic traits of piano duets composed near this time were influenced by its pedagogical and domestic use and thus undesirable for the concert hall.\(^4\) She also believes that excessive use of the piano duet medium in arrangements of popular instrumental pieces has had an effect on its negative perception as a valid art form for the concert stage.\(^5\)


\(^4\) Ibid., 27.

\(^5\) Ibid., 25.
recordings of original arrangements of orchestral or other instrumental works were not available, and one of the most satisfying ways to recreate such music was in piano duet form. In defence of the artistic merits of the piano duet, Strahan quotes musicologist Eric Sams describing Mozart’s F major Sonata, K497, as an “almost uncomfortably great piece of domestic music”, which Strahan believes already marks a “departure from established norms” of the genre.

Piano duet team Dallas Weekley and Nancy Arganbright write that piano duets have been around just as long as piano solos, and the first composers of piano solos (i.e. W.A. Mozart, F.J. Haydn, J.C. Bach, and M. Clementi) were also composers of piano duets. Weekley and Arganbright also reference a study conducted by musicologist Alexander Weinmann, in which the findings reveal that between 1760 and 1860 the number of piano duets published in Vienna was nearly equal to that of piano solos. Although the substantiality of works was not compared in this study, the results nevertheless illustrate the demand and interest for the genre at its early stages. The Anderson and Roe duo remains optimistic about the genre. They note a spike in popularity of the piano duet in recent years, since approximately the beginning of the twenty-first century. Anderson and Roe attribute this observation to the growing number of specialized piano duet ensembles which concertize and commission new works regularly, and to various advances in media technology such as Youtube, which make the visual “spectacle” of the duet medium more accessible to audiences and contemporary composers alike.

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6 Anderson and Roe preface to Mcgraw/Fisher/Fisher
7 Strahan, 28.
9 Ibid., 16.
11 Ibid., 12.
these phenomena are helping the medium break free from the negative stereotypes mentioned previously.\footnote{Ibid., 14.}

An effective way to help advance duet repertoire is to take advantage of the virtuosic capabilities of the medium. What better idiom could be suited for this then the solo concerto, in which virtuosity is a requisite component? The duet concerto as a sub-genre has been neglected by composers and performers since the beginning of the concerto as an accepted idiom. The duet repertoire guide, *Piano Duet Repertoire, Second Edition – Music Originally written for One Piano, Four Hands* by Cameron McGraw, edited by Christopher C. Fisher and Katherine L. Fisher, lists only eighteen concerti for this medium, spanning from 1787 to 2014. A supplemental internet search yields an additional seven concerti for this medium that are not found in McGraw’s publication, totalling twenty-five known concerti for piano duet and ensemble (see Appendix). The staggeringly low number of piano duet concerti in the repertoire, coupled with almost no scholarship written on the subject reveals a profound neglect for the medium, despite some of the concertos in the catalogue I made being composed by high profile composers, such as Carl Czerny, Sir Malcolm Arnold, and Alfred Schnittke.

### Chapter 2

#### 2 Relationship of Primo and Secondo, and Piano to Orchestra

While writing my *Concerto* I encountered multiple challenges, many of which are a product of composing for piano four-hands. Some of the challenges pertained to pedalling, hand and body proximity, balancing roles of soloist and ensemble within the duet itself, balancing
orchestral textures with the soloists, and creating a duet part that is idiomatic for the genre. Additionally, I tried to write the duet so that the players do not sound like a slightly elaborated solo piano part or a two-piano piece.

Piano duo team Eugene and Elisabeth Pridonoff stress that pedalling is of “paramount importance” in duet playing.\(^{13}\) According to them, the players must strive for weeks or months to discern and master the intricacies and “harmonic implications” of the lower part in relation to the “melodic clarity” of the upper part, in order to make tasteful choices regarding pedalling.\(^{14}\) At times a section can be so complex in harmonic and melodic content, that the performers may feel that the best solution is to omit the pedal entirely, when it should be employed.\(^{15}\) It is essential that pedal markings are to be written with specific directions in the score, so that ad lib pedalling is kept at a minimum; “in duet playing, the need for specificity is essential”.\(^{16}\) Another aspect of piano duet pedalling worth noting is that one of the players must abandon the use of the pedal, effectively taking away something that is instinctual for pianists.\(^{17}\) Ultimately, pedalling of piano duet repertoire mostly impacts the performance interpretation, but may also influence certain choices made by the composer. The composer should do one of two things to make pedalling as much of a non-issue for duet performers as possible: either create a harmonic soundscape that promotes intuitive pedalling, or remove pedalling entirely from certain sections for a secco sound. My *Concerto* explores both of these methods, favoring more the secco approach which


\(^{14}\) Ibid., 62.

\(^{15}\) Do Young Kim, “A Structural Analysis and Selected Aspects of Performance of “Gazebo Dances” for Piano Four Hands by John Corigliano” (DMA Diss., University of North Texas, 2008), 48.

\(^{16}\) Pridonoff and Pridonoff, 62.

compliments my musical style especially in the dance-like sections and rhythmically driven percussive Secondo parts. Additionally, I let the performers decide how they pedal my music since everyone has different pedalling preferences and some performers are more proficient technically in pedalling than others.

Hand and body proximity issues could mean the difference between an awkward, unappealing performance, or a brilliant display of pianism. The Anderson and Roe Piano Duo have written that the physical aspect of duet playing is part of the appeal of the medium, and can generate exciting feedback from the audience. They also state that this quality is partly responsible for the growing interest in the piano duet in recent years. When writing a concerto for piano four-hands, a certain choreography should be kept in mind to achieve a synchronized effect. Parts should also avoid colliding and provide space and time enough for tricky maneuvers such as hand crossings if they are to be executed effectively and seamlessly.

An appealing quality of the duet concerto is the malleability of soloistic roles. The duet is traditionally perceived functioning as a single unit, with the Primo part taking the primary role. However, I have considered other options in my Concerto such as: in some sections I gave a double concerto treatment to the players, with both solo parts equally prominent (see Mvt. V, mm. 41-90); in other areas, either of the soloists assume an accompanying role while their counterpart is more prominent in the foreground (see Mvt. X mm. 1-4, Primo has a more prominent role with sixteenth-notes vs. Secondo’s accompanying figurations); I also built upon the latter scenario and created duets with either Primo or Secondo and an instrument(s) from the orchestra, while the less prominent piano part accompanies with orchestra or alone (see Mvt. IX

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18 Mcgraw/Fisher/Fisher, 12.
19 Mcgraw/Fisher/Fisher, 14.
20 Haddon and Hutchison, 141.
mm. 1-10, Secondo RH has melody, Piccolo and French Horn join with melody or countermelody, Primo accompanies with rest of wind ensemble). No matter how I divide the parts, however, there still remains a certain interdependency between Primo and Secondo, as they do share a single instrument;\textsuperscript{21} interdependency is one of the most salient features of my \textit{Concerto} and was a guiding force throughout the compositional process.

The issue of balance was considered, particularly for the reason that the piano duet medium has been used extensively in the nineteenth and early twentieth century to recreate orchestral works in a home setting. It might occur to some composers that since the duet has this capability of imitating orchestral textures, a concerto for piano duet might seem redundant. I view this as an advantage; a way for a single piano to have the ability, should I choose, to better compete with the sound of the orchestra than a single player could. Since the nineteenth century, composers of piano concerti recognized the dramatic potential that a powerful piano solo could have on the audience and performer. Using the full potential of four-hand texture creates dramatic moments, especially in cadenza-like sections, and can generate more simultaneous notes than a solo piano part (i.e. more sound); this coupled with the visual capabilities of the piano duet as mentioned previously allows for exciting passagework in my piece.

The instrumentation of my \textit{Concerto} consists of 1 piccolo, 1 flute, 1 oboe, 1 B-flat clarinet, 1 bass clarinet, 1 bassoon, 1 French horn, 1 B-flat trumpet, 1 trombone, 1 tuba, and string orchestra (minimum 4 4 3 3 2). The nature of the piano duet ensemble allows the piano part to cover a larger register span simultaneously, on average, than a single piano player (i.e. to allow room for all four hands, they are spaced out between the registers, causing more actively sounding registers at one time). As a result, special consideration was placed on the interaction and voice

\textsuperscript{21} Ibid., 141.
leading of orchestral parts that are found in the same register as each hand in the piano duet part, to minimize obstructed musical lines. At times the orchestra or piano serve to enhance a particular sound by such techniques as doubling, or to deliberately “interfere” with the other. I took extra care to avoid muddled or awkward sounding areas resulting from oversaturation of a certain register or ineffective voice crossings.

Finally, Idiomatic writing was top-of-mind for me when writing the four-hand part. In this regard, the inspiration behind this project is largely fueled by the sonic properties of piano duet music, as well as the immense gratification gained from collaborating with another musician at the keyboard. In addition, I believed that the composition must also exhibit soloistic properties that are fitting for a concerto setting; perhaps a challenging feat for some who envision the piano duet as a domestic art. This piece aimed to break these boundaries and exploit the exciting and spectacular capabilities of the piano duet genre and concerto idiom. In order for this to be possible, I took care to arrange the parts to avoid unnecessarily awkward positions. A doctoral dissertation by Do Young Kim (2008) examines certain issues in a piano duet written by composer John Corigliano. In his discussion, Kim lists some examples of awkward writing, such as: the Secondo’s right hand playing above the Primo’s left; scalar passages at fixed intervals (e.g. a sixth) unnecessarily split between the players, causing the Secondo player to reach far into the Primo’s range in order to play his or her notes.\(^\text{22}\)

At the onset of writing this duet concerto, I realized that it would need to sound different than a solo piano concerto. For this reason, I avoided excessively long solo sections by either Primo or Secondo (frequent solo sections might cause the audience to question the necessity of both players). For textural variation, at times three-hand textures occur instead of four. Also,

\(^{22}\) Kim, 46.
using a single voice for each of the four hands, especially when all four voices are rather
dextrous, creates a distinguishable sound from solo piano while keeping the texture relatively
thin (an example of this can be found in Mvt. XI, mm. 105-111).

Chapter 3

3 Unifying Elements Within the Concerto

In this chapter, I will illuminate key characteristics that help define my compositional style.
Some examples will be presented that will serve as a spring-board for discussion in later chapters
which outline unique and relevant features from each movement chronologically in more detail.

3.1 Rhythm

The Concerto features a diverse rhythmic profile, ranging from simple chorale style
homorhythm as in the winds in Example 3, to sophisticated cross rhythms as illustrated in
Example 1. The Concerto will also make use of certain conventional devices, such as rhythmic
augmentation and diminution, hemiola, syncopation, canon, and perpetual motion. Example 1,
taken from movement five, demonstrates syncopation in both piano parts, as well as some
virtuosic cross-rhythms and note combinations between Primo and Secondo, and between
Secondo and the wind ensemble. The challenge for secondo is to navigate the accented notes in
the right hand and the irregular number of notes per measure with the accents they are hearing
from both primo and the wind ensemble which intentionally do not align. Example 6 contains the
previously mentioned diminution, hemiola, and syncopation rhythmic techniques, as well as
mazurka and waltz rhythms within the span of a few measures; this is a quick-paced scherzando
episode from the second movement designed to highlight the versatility and virtuosity of the ensemble.

Example 1. Suski *Concerto for Piano Duet*, Mvt. V, mm. 47-52. Syncopation and cross-rhythms between Primo and Secondo.
A broad range of rhythmic devices is a hallmark of my compositional style. This is compatible with the miniature movement format I chose for this concerto and allowed me to feature a select combination of rhythmic techniques that characterizes each movement. In most cases, the prevalent technique is presented at the beginning of the movement. Movements seven and eight both use perpetual motion as their driving force, and the opening measures of both of these movements were composed with the intent of creating a sense of restlessness that grows in intensity throughout the movement.

Example 2, Suski Concerto for Piano Duet, Mvt. III, mm. 1-6. Pedal point melody, see cello part.

In certain sections of my piece, rhythmic patterns are taken from archaic dance forms such as waltz, mazurka, polonaise, and kujawiak. Dance forms and Polish folk tales have always been part of my musical upbringing and I was once part of a Polish folk song and dance ensemble. One musical element that I took away from my experience is the importance of syncopation and rhythmic stress that helps propel music and avoid stagnation. Syncopation is present in every movement and is the most important rhythmic device I use in this piece.

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23 **Kujawiak**: dance form originating from the western part of the Mazovia region in Poland, characterized by long phrases, rich embellishments (Czkanowska-Kulinska, p.91). Often containing a shift in tempo from slow first section to quick, symbolizing sleeping and hunting (Czkanowska-Kulinska, p.195). ¾ time.
More rhapsodic passages are also included in this concerto, where the underlying meter or pulse is nebulous. In one instance, to help achieve this and to give a sense of breadth, long pedal tones are used. In Example 2, the pedal point is part of the melody, breaking away from its function and joining the other notes of the melody when the ensemble is resting, creating an antiphonal relationship between the two forces. This movement shifts from compound-duple meter in the previous movement to simple-triple meter while keeping the tempo of the pulse the same, creating a sense of deceleration. The reverse happens at the end of this movement, having the opposite effect.

3.2 Harmonic Landscape

The Romantic ideal of prolonging resolutions and cadences is a crucial element of my harmonic designs. Just as my rhythmic profile features diverse techniques, my soundscape also features a diverse set of sonorities. References to traditional harmonies are present, such as major, minor, and augmented triads, seventh chords, and extended dominant or half-diminished-seventh chords in the manner of the late romantic period (e.g. Bruckner, Mahler, R. Strauss), although often my composition features non-traditional resolutions. A large portion of the harmonic language of the *Concerto for Piano Duet* is based on linear, conjunct voice-leading principles, sometimes following the common functional harmonic practices of triadic doubling and resolution of tendency tones (i.e. tritone, or assigning a leading-tone function to certain notes), and other times offering unconventional solutions (i.e. not resolving tones). Chords of resolution may be reached through alternate interpretations of traditional voice-leading practices.

Example 3, taken from the ninth movement demonstrates both conventional and unconventional resolution practices of the dominant-seventh chord, the use of sequence, and
harmonies achieve through combining independent lines. The Secondo part in mm. 50-51, a sequential progression, is an example of this.

Example 3. Suski Concerto for Piano Duet, Mvt. IX, mm. 48-54. Sequence, irregular dominant seventh resolutions.

When composing this section, I wanted the listener to hear the harmonic rhythm of the Secondo part as one harmonic prolongation per measure. The seventh chord is at its purest traditional form at the onset of the measure and transforms, or degrades, as the measure progresses with the addition of chromatic extension tones, leaving only the seventh of the dominant left on the page by the end of the measure. Because of the quick tempo of this passage and low register on the piano, the original dominant seventh remains in the ear until there is a clear harmonic change in the next measure. During the sequence, the seventh of the dominant does not resolve but continues to climb until m. 52 where it finally resolves downward. However, here is an instance of alternate interpretation of traditional voice-leading because it does not resolve by step to the third of the next chord; it resolves by minor third to the root of another dominant seventh chord. The leading tone of the dominant seventh, in the left hand at the
beginning of the measure, resolves upward by semi-tone as governed by traditional harmonic practice. This is more of a false resolution as the original dominant seventh harmony is still sounding and there is no V-I resolution that ensues, therefore it is anticipating something that is does not materialize, creating a sense of prolonged resolution. This fragment is taken from the end of a section of this movement that finally offers the listener a sense of arrival and resolution. During the harmonic turmoil in the piano mentioned above, the winds are the counterpart. The harmonic progression in the winds themselves is the product of 1:1 counterpoint, and combining them with the piano part creates a harmonic outcome that is generated by the linear combination of two independent musical bodies. Although the combination of notes from both of these musical bodies is quite dissonant, the use of registral spacing, the colour combination of high winds and low piano, and the homorhythmic texture of the winds, creates a result that is not as abrasive as it would be if all notes were in close proximity (closed position) on the piano, for instance. Both the winds and piano are climbing upward at different intervallic rates; this amplites the steep upward sequential pattern in the piano. They both arrive simultaneously on a diatonic texture based on the C Ionian mode in m. 53, creating a sense of anticipated resolution. C Ionian is my preferred term instead of C major because I am not outlining the C triad with any cadences but merely making use of notes that belong in that collection and sometimes alluding to C major with added tones.

Tertiary relationships between chords are also explored in this concerto, shifting between harmonies related by a common tone. Example 4 demonstrates a harmonic progression based on a combination of tertiary relationships and common tones. Measures 30-32 contain chords shifting roots by a third, then progressing through closely related chords to the end of the phrase. The phrase begins on a D minor sonority with added suspensions, and ends on a G major triad in
second inversion with open fifths on D suggesting a polychord. The chords used in this passage can be found in many traditional tonal settings, however arriving on a second inversion chord during a final cadence, while also suggesting polytonality, is non-traditional. The phrase is set up to always modulate to IV (modal mixture), creating ambiguity around its tonal origin. In an alternate interpretation, the phrase could begin on minor v of G major and resolve to the tonic with a prominent presence of sharp-four in the melody.

Example 4, Suski *Concerto for Piano Duet*, Mvt. XI, mm. 32-37. Tertiary relationships between chords in secondo and irregular harmonic chord progression ending on IV with a polychord.

Instrumentation is of primary importance in the spectral movement, particularly when dealing with blending timbres in vertical sonorities (e.g.: when recreating the overtone profile of a certain instrument, as in Gérard Grisey’s *Partiels*, in which he bases the work on a spectrum analysis of E2 played by a trombone). Some spectral techniques are used to derive harmonic material in this work and are discussed in the chapter dealing with movement 6.

My reason for using the afore mentioned harmonic practices in my musical expression is to cultivate a harmonic language that is relevant to contemporary trends in art music. In my search for fresh perspectives on tension and release, I explore the effects of added dissonant tones to chordal structures and use traditional counterpoint and voice-leading practices to generate chord progressions. I strive to maintain recognizable tonal fragments, sometimes in form of triadic harmonies, other times as skeletal structures for phrases or sections. Tertiary relationships and
chord progressions with shared common tones are traditional techniques that compliment my harmonic language. This may help create a sound that appeals to a wide audience, which I believe has always been an admirable quality of concertos which have a focus on soloist virtuosity.

### 3.3 Texture

The Concerto makes use of various textures, such as monophonic, homophonic, polyphonic, micropolyphony, homorhythms, heterophony, and rhythmic ostinatos – the whole gamut! One aspect of spectralism that is of particular interest to me is the attention to timbral qualities and the blending of instrumental colours to create sonic events. This was employed not only in vertical sonorities of my concerto, but also horizontally in melodies inspired by Klangfarbenmelodie. Arnold Schoenberg believed that the instrumentation of a piece is no less important than pitch content and rhythm, and “has its own structural function”.\(^{24}\) Examples 6 and 7 demonstrate important techniques that are used throughout the concerto.

Example 5, from the third movement, begins with a homophonic texture in the B-flat trumpet and bassoon (m. 36). The melody, originally heard in the second movement, begins in the trumpet. This choice of instrumentation has a structural importance here because it serves as a reflection of the previous movement where trumpet was featured as the obligato soloist. The backward reflection to previous movements is an integral part of the form for the first five movements of the concerto. This passage may also be interpreted as a form of imitative counterpoint, because of the disjunct properties of the melody and the strong resemblance of the accompaniment (bassoon) to the melody. By the fourth bar the bass clarinet doubles the bassoon to strengthen the sudden *forte* and to introduce a new colour to the accompaniment; the clarinet

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Example 5, Suski Concerto for Piano Duet, Mvt. III, mm. 36-49. Evolving textures.
emerges in the next bar as a by-product of this union, and thus by m. 40 the accompaniment has grown from only bassoon, to bassoon, bass clarinet, and B-flat clarinet. While this is occurring in the accompaniment, the melody is also undergoing a transformation.

In m. 39, the flute and, subsequently, piccolo are doubling the trumpet note with trills at unison and the octave. The function of this is two-fold: first, the flute and piccolo are acting as a buffer or distraction for the listener to create a seamless transition for when the oboe continues the melody in m.40, splitting the melodic line as can be described by Klangfarbenmelodie; and secondly, this serves as a point of departure for the flute and piccolo to form their own independent line against the original melody now heard in the oboe part. The texture is therefore enriched to three forces; two melodies and an accompaniment comprised of three voices. At m. 43 another shift occurs; the clarinet has emerged from the accompaniment role to doubling the oboe melody at a parallel major third, enriching the vertical sonority of the melody with new overtones. The bass clarinet is dropped and celli and violas are added to the mix with light staccato interjections. The melodic line is split one more time between oboe and trumpet in mm. 44-46, then back to oboe in mm. 47-49. All the while this passage is still meant to sound light, and this is achieved by the choice of instrumentation (mostly winds), avoiding chordal textures, as well as making use of staccato.

Example 6 is taken from a scherzando segment of Mvt. II and contains complex textural elements; this chaotic effect is desired for this section, and is a large contributor to its scherzando personality. This section is both polyphonic and polyrhythmic. There are rhythms derived from the waltz and mazurka, as well as hemiolas, and diminution for textural effect. In mm. 49-52 the instruments playing the waltz rhythm are considered accompaniment, while there are multiple melodies occurring at the same time, in the piccolo, bass clarinet, and bassoon.
Example 6, Suski *Concerto for Piano Duet*, Mvt. II, mm. 49-56. Complex texture progression.
All of the elements, both rhythmic and melodic, are fighting for the listeners attention. Furthermore, in m. 52 the piano interrupts the winds to establish an antiphonal texture; adding to the competitive nature of the polyphony in this section. One thing to note during the antiphony is that there is some overlap in instruments to help maintain continuity of sound and to create ensembles with the piano. In mm. 52-54 the piano, which has a melodic function, is accompanied by the trumpet and bassoon, which also have a melodic function and the two elements create polyphony; this forms an instrumental trio, or quartet of instrumentalists. When the strings interject in m. 55, the unified direction and strong participation on all main beats creates a homorhythmic effect, which makes for a strong antiphonal response to the piano in the preceding measures.

3.4 Motives and Melody

In my musical aesthetic, melody writing is vital. Melody is one of the aspects of music that I enjoy most, particularly when performing works by other composers. My performance background helped shape my compositional style in all aspects, and melody writing is no exception. In this composition, I utilized certain ideals such as the bel-canto style of the early romantic era, improvisatory embellishments heard in baroque music, quirky and calculated musical riddles from neo-classical composers of the early twentieth century, dry and abrasive percussive treatments of the piano, and also simple folk tune-like melodies. Often times, my process for composing melodies comes during an improvisational session on the piano using pre-conceived short melodic fragments; I find this to be an intuitive process that helps tap into ideas that are on a deeper, subconscious level that have been shaped by my entire musical experience to date.
Example 7, Suski Concerto for Piano Duet, Mvt. I, mm. 1-8. Important motives that will be developed in future movements.
A melodic fragment that remained with me during the whole process of composing this work is the 0-3-4 motive, and is present in some form in every movement. In fact, it undergoes a transformation throughout the course of the concerto, finally emerging in the eleventh movement as 0-1-3-4, which can be seen as two interlocked 0-3-4 motives, one right side up and the other upside down (observe Example 4). Example 7 shows the beginning of the first movement. The opening melody of the solo violin from mm.1-8 contains four important elements that are developed throughout the concerto, in order of importance they are: the first three notes, 0-3-4 (both the rhythm and intervallic relationships are developed); the 0-2-5-7 motive in the piano; the arpeggiation in m. 2; and the tritone relationship between beat 4 in m. 6 and beat 1 in m. 7. In Example 6, mm. 50-52 of the third movement in the bass clarinet, we can observe the first four notes of the opening melody from the first movement (which contains the 0-3-4 motive), transposed and rhythmically altered to be used as accompaniment figurations. This motive also occurs in mm. 48-49, as well as in mm. 55-56. Example 5 demonstrates how arpeggiation and the 0-2-5-7 motive are used in the third movement. The trumpet melody (mm.40-43), as well as the bassoon accompaniment, are built upon the 0-2-5-7 motive, and the trumpet melody reaches its peak and end of phrase using the arpeggiation. The melodic tritone originally heard in mm. 6-7 of Example 7 is utilized in the previously mentioned pedal point melody from Example 2 and can be observed in the celli in m. 3; the tritone is integral to the melodic structure of this movement.

Let’s look back to Example 5 and investigate the use of melody near the end of the third movement. The trumpet introduces the melody using thematic material derived from the previous movement. It is a capricious melody, and mostly features disjunct motion. This melody is passed to the Oboe in m. 44; here it is now more expressive and features more instances of conjunct
motion. Tonally, the first of the two melodies in this example begins in E minor and ends in E-flat Major, creating a relationship between the tonalities on the common third of the tonic. The second melody remains mostly in E-flat major, with some altered notes. The note alterations to the second melody include lowering scale degrees 3, 6, and 7 by a semi-tone to reference the parallel (natural) minor key. In one instance, scale degree 2 is also lowered by a semi-tone (m.46), although it does not function as the Neapolitan; its purpose in this context is to outline a tritone in succession with the dominant note (B-flat) of E-flat major, effectively weakening B-flat’s dominant function. In my musical language, the addition of chromatic notes in otherwise diatonic melodic settings is a helpful technique that imparts an expressive quality to the phrase.

3.5 Form and Obligato Roles

The *Concerto for Piano Duet* is comprised of eleven movements ranging from approximately one to three and a half minutes in duration. The overall structure is held together by a distinct arch that reaches its peak at movement 6. This is not a climactic peak, but a distinct shift in character. Leading up to the sixth movement, each movement features a reflective moment on the material of the previous movement, in a way looking to the past. Movement six occurs, having no resemblance to its previous movements, and creates a change henceforth. From movement seven on, each movement looks ahead to the next. In terms of character, the movements past number six tend to have a more brisk tempo and more consistently involve the piano (for comparison, movement three does not include any piano whatsoever); see Example 8. There are two cadenza-like moments, one in the fourth movement, and the other in the tenth; similar to standard concerto practice found in many works composed up to, but not limited to,
the middle of the twentieth century, where it is not uncommon that there are two cadenzas, one near the beginning and the other near the end.25

Example 8, Suski *Concerto for Piano Duet*, overview of movements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>I</th>
<th>II</th>
<th>III</th>
<th>IV</th>
<th>V</th>
<th>VI</th>
<th>VII</th>
<th>VIII</th>
<th>IX</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>XI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3:55</td>
<td>2:05</td>
<td>1:38</td>
<td>1:46</td>
<td>2:46</td>
<td>1:47</td>
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<td>1:22</td>
<td>1:05</td>
<td>1:00</td>
<td>3:27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prophetic (P)/ Reflective (R)</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>R</td>
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<td>N/A</td>
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<td>P</td>
<td>R</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Important features</td>
<td>- 0.3-4 motive introduction</td>
<td>- Overture of themes for the whole work</td>
<td>- Str. solo mostly</td>
<td>- No piano</td>
<td>Piano cadenza with full ensemble interrupting midway through, cadenza resumes at the end</td>
<td>- Perpetual motion</td>
<td>- No aritaca ending</td>
<td>No Strings</td>
<td>Solo piano, cadenza</td>
<td>- Recap of whole piece - 0.1-3-4 motive in full swing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall Tempo Fast/Fast Slow</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>S/F</td>
<td>S/F</td>
<td>S</td>
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An interesting feature of my *Concerto* is the changing obligato role between certain instruments in the orchestra (see Example 8) in different movements of the work. Most movements feature one or more soloists that compete for the main stage against the soloists proper, the piano duet. Perhaps this could be viewed as synergistic relationship, rather than competitive. This was inspired by Shostakovich’s first piano concerto, where the trumpet assumes an obligato role throughout. I often look to the music of Shostakovich for lessons in texture and thematic development; particularly the latter. His eighth string quartet is especially illuminating in how he transforms the DSCH motive in every movement, and how he directly quotes passages from his Cello Concerto No. 1. This was my inspiration for writing my piece *In Microcosm* for string quintet, with the goal of later transforming that piece into the *Concerto for Piano Duet*, basing both works on the 0-3-4 motive.

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25 E.g.: Mozart Piano Concerto No. 12 in A Major, KV 414 (cadenzas in Mvt.’s I, II, and III); Prokofiev Piano Concerto No. 2 in G minor, Op. 16 (cadenzas in Mvt.’s I and IV); Khachaturian Piano Concerto in D-flat Major, Op. 38 (cadenzas in Mvt.’s I and III).
3.6 Idiomatic Writing for the Piano

A significant factor that helped influence my choice to write the *Concerto for Piano Duet* is my experience as a pianist. I had the good fortune to study piano duet repertoire for a year under Dr. Leslie Kinton for one of my wife’s DMA milestone recitals. I was also lucky enough to be granted the opportunity to perform Ravel’s *Piano Concerto in G* with the UWOSO. This was a great honour for me, and after studying various concerti from the piano repertoire over the years and performing with second piano as orchestra, it was an exhilarating experience to be able to perform as a soloist with a real orchestra. So, I decided to take the fun filled experiences of both of these chapters of my piano career and combine them into one!

Writing idiomatically, or pianistically, is very important to me when writing for the piano. This could mean the difference between an enjoyable learning experience for someone tackling my piece in the future, or a chore and potentially off-putting encounter for them. This is not to say that I cannot fully express my musical self due to constraints of making it pleasurable to play on the piano, but rather that I search for solutions that please my creative vision and desire to write idiomatically for the instrument. Similarly, in my orchestral writing my goal was to create a score that would be compelling to play for the instrumentalists as well as for the conductor. I tried to achieve a balance between challenging ensemble and solo writing, particularly for the obligato instruments, and interesting accompaniment figurations for when the solo pianists are at the foreground.

3.7 Opening Considerations

There are infinite options to consider when composing the beginning of a concerto. In his presentations at the 1997-98 Harvard Charles Eliot Norton Lectures entitled *Concerto*
Conversations, Joseph Kerman discusses the many ways a composer can begin a concerto, and the importance of an effective first presentation of the soloist. He begins by discussing the option of the solo introduction. Kerman believes this causes the audience to contemplate the question “introduction to what?”, and thus generates a suspense that must be reconciled by the entrance of the orchestra; an example of this is Rachmaninov’s Piano Concerto No. 2. According to Kerman, a solo introduction that is too lengthy risks the potential for an anticlimactic effect if an adequate orchestral entrance is not provided. Anticlimax is less common when the introduction is in the orchestra followed by the entrance of the soloist, as the solo instrument naturally attracts the attention of the audience. More common than the introduction is the “direct approach”, where the main theme is given straight away to the soloist. Kerman notes that this could be done either by the soloist themselves, as in the Schoenberg Piano Concerto and Beethoven’s Piano Concerto No. 4, or with a brief orchestral setup, a “discreet cough”, as in Rachmaninov’s Piano Concerto No. 3 or Bartók’s Piano Concerto No. 3. Yet another way to begin a concerto is for the soloist to introduce a “special texture”, while the orchestra has the melody; as is in the case of Ravel’s Piano Concerto in G, where the piccolo has the melody and the piano has an interesting and captivating texture as accompaniment. Kerman’s main objective for delineating multiple opening possibilities is to illustrate the importance of a captivating solo entrance in a concerto.

27 Ibid., 3.
28 Ibid., 5.
29 Ibid., 5.
30 Ibid., 5.
31 Ibid., 5.
32 Ibid., 6.
33 Ibid., 6.
As I mentioned earlier, virtuosity is a vital component of the concerto genre. Kerman even writes that “a concerto without virtuosity would not be worth the name”. The introduction to the *Concerto for Piano Duet* may not necessarily exhibit virtuosity, as in the case of Beethoven’s *Piano Concerto No. 4* or Rachmaninov’s *Piano Concerto No. 2*. The opening of my concerto features a full piano duet texture with the goal of creating a captivating and striking moment. Alfred Schnittke achieves such an effect in the introduction to his *Concerto for Piano Four Hands and Chamber Orchestra* when he begins solo piano with a thin texture, gradually building to a *fortissimo* full four-hand event approximately twenty seconds in. In many parts of the concerto, however, virtuosity is present. My concerto explores various ways to achieve virtuosity that is not only aurally but also visually noticeable by the audience. In the concerto idiom, the importance of the audience noticing virtuosity should not be undervalued, and should be used as a device to generate various degrees of energy and excitement at certain moments in the work to create a satisfying experience for listeners and performers. Some examples of virtuosity that may go unnoticed by most audience members are: appropriate use of pedalling during complex harmonic passages, difficult voicings of chords, and navigating tricky divisions of parts, such as hand crossings. While the appropriate application of all these techniques is necessary in the performance of this composition, it will not be enough to rely solely on such demands to fulfil the virtuosic requirements of the concerto idiom. Examples of virtuosity that is audible and visually satisfying to the audience can be, but are not limited to, rapid passages exhibiting finger dexterity, complex rhythms, synchronized reaching into the other players register, and sustained full texture fortissimo passages. Ideally, virtuosic elements should emerge out of the process of developing motives or form and serve to support important musical ideas. On the other hand,

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34 Ibid., 22.
when a moment in the piece requires simplicity to best articulate a musical idea, this should not be clouded by overabundant virtuosic writing for the sake of virtuosity. Example 9, from Mvt. XI, shows a section where the right hand of the Secondo part engages in a duet with violin solo; the piano part is simple, however in the context of the whole concerto, with the amount of virtuosic passages under both pianists’ belts, it is a refreshing passage where the performer can focus on achieving sublimity in phrasing together with the violinist.

Example 9, Suski *Concerto for Piano Duet*, Mvt. XI, mm. 84-97. Non virtuosic solo passage in the piano.
Chapter 4

4 Relevant Features of Each Individual Movement

In this section I will analyze the movements in greater depth and outline specific features that are unique to each movement.

4.1 Mvt. I, 3'55"

The first movement is the longest movement of the entire piece, and I consider it to be an overture to the concerto. It is an overture because it is prophetic in nature, containing most of the main themes for future movements, whether in the foreground or background layers. It was a difficult movement to write because of the importance I placed on making a memorable opening, as governed by my research above. This placed an enormous amount of pressure on writing this part of the Concerto; perhaps this could have been avoided had I not taken too much to heart the information I gleaned from my research. Finally, after labouring over many different openings I wrote, I decided to scratch everything yet again and begin simply with the solo violin, as I do in my piece In Microcosm. What ensued is a 3’50” melodic expansion on the opening 35” of In Microcosm. See below, in Example 10, mm. 1-14 of my piece In Microcosm; the basis of the first movement of my Concerto.

I began to dissect the opening melody of In Microcosm, reimagining the original in orchestral and solo piano passages in the shape of motivic extensions which themselves created formal sections within the movement. Eventually, the movement only held a minor resemblance to the original motive, of which glimpses return here and there like ruins scattered along an
ancient landscape. In Example 7 we can see the eight measure development in the Concerto of the first four measures of *In Microcosm* (Example 10).

Example 10. Suski *In Microcosm* (2019), mm. 1-14. This section is the basis for Movement I in Suski *Concerto for Piano Duet*.

This opening intentionally causes a slight sense of confusion and perhaps leads the listener to question why a concerto for piano duet begins with a violin soloist; I trust that my research into
concerto openings paid off. To help put the listener at ease, I created an antiphonal texture between piano and violin to immediately introduce the piano using motivic extension. I wanted this movement to elicit the participation of the whole orchestra before branching off into smaller ensembles in future movements, and so after the antiphonal exchange, the orchestra quickly becomes part of the texture and by the ninth bar we reach an orchestral tutti.

**Example 11, Suski *Concerto for Piano Duet*, Mvt. I, mm. 82-101. Motivic development.**
Example 11 shows mm. 82-84 from Mvt. I of my *Concerto*; the cascading motive in the violin solo is taken directly from *In Microcosm* mm. 4-5. This example shows how a short melodic fragment is transformed into a section of its own through motivic elaboration. This passage continues beyond the scope of Example 10 and merges into a virtuosic display of orchestral ensemble playing which eventually culminates in a recap of the original theme. In this section we see the cascading motive developed on multiple levels; first, inspired by the technique of *Klangfarbenmelodie*, I split this motive between Primo, B-flat clarinet, oboe/piccolo to be as one continuous accompaniment with shifting colouristic effects; and second, in the background layer we are simultaneously hearing a variation and fusion of both the cascading motive and the rhythm of the original motive in the pickup to measure 1 with some rhythmic diminution applied. The variation of the cascading motive precedes the arrival of the proper cascading motive itself. This is a phenomenon that occurs because the source material was composed before the movement itself, and in the process of composing out the movement, sometimes variations of source material occur before the theme, adding to a sense of continuity resulting from the similarity of thematic material. In Example 11, we also see the transformation of the arpeggiation found in the original melody into an accompaniment figuration.

The overall form of this movement is through-composed, developing on material similar to the snowball effect. However, at m.123 there is a sense of recapitulation reminiscent of sonata form and at this point the movement progresses through a denouement. This is achieved through a reduction of virtuosity and thinning of orchestral texture until a small ensemble remains at the end of the movement creating a short codetta based on the original theme. This can be interpreted as an acknowledgment of traditional sonata form that is featured in the first movements of many
concertos up until the late the nineteenth century, and even into early twentieth among some composers.  

4.2 Movement II, 1’45”  

The trumpet is the obligato instrument for this movement, with help also from the bassoon at m. 28. The main theme in this movement is derived from the 0-2-5-7 motive found in the first movement, with a decidedly more rhythmic and energetic component to contrast the character of the first movement. The accompaniment is an extended arpeggiation. Orchestral textures throughout are rapidly shifting to help promote forward motion and anticipation.  

When composing this work, I was not particularly interested in creating tonal centers, but rather experimenting with harmonies and creating harmonic events that would make the listener ponder on vertical sonorities without being anchored to functional chordal structures for extended periods of time. However, I did find that even after briefly establishing a tonal center, my ear would remain tethered to it enough so that after wading through various key areas, a return was sometimes a necessary way to help close a section or melodic idea; this potent tonal association is an effective tool that I made use of in a limited capacity throughout the Concerto. This movement makes use of this tonal association, but is able to break the tether along the way and end in a different tonality (see Example 12).  

Example 12, Suski Concerto for Piano Duet, Mvt. II, implied harmonic progression.  

35 E.g.: Rachmaninov’s Piano Concerto No. 2 in C minor, Op. 18 Mvt. 1 (ca. 1901).
The diatonic quality of the main theme naturally establishes a tonal center in the listener's ear; to help dilute this effect, I used a chromatic harmonic accompaniment. Below is a condensed diagram of the implied harmonies by the melodies and certain voices in the accompaniment during the second movement. Because of the nature of the melody, I found it necessary to return to the original key for the trumpet and bassoon solo in m. 28. The trumpet solo in m. 28 marks the return to the opening material and instrumental treatment, which in turn serves as a departure point both thematically and harmonically. The arrival of the tonal area of D in the section starting at m. 28 helps close this section of the movement and prompts the listener to look forward to new thematic transformations. Although this movement ends on an A major tonality, its dominant function is weakened after the expanded time between the last occurrence of D; and also because of the chromatic ascent towards A from A-flat in m. 69.

Example 13, Suski *Concerto for Piano Duet*, Mvt. II, mm. 69-72. Polonaise rhythm to recap the melody from the previous movement.

The movement ends with a polonaise treatment of the theme from the first movement (Example 13). As was mentioned in the section on form, this movement belongs to the set of movements that look back on previous movements to create a sense of continuity and impart a familiarity of themes in the listener’s ear. In preparation for the next movement being mostly
composed for solo strings, the winds took a more prominent role in this movement so that the
texture of the string solo movement would be more contrasting.

4.3 Movement III, 1’35”

The low energy at the beginning of this movement is achieved in part through use of long
pedal tones that are an integral part of the melody, which last for approximately a minute before
the tempo increases. The long pedal tones, as well as phrases ending and beginning on common
tones, suggests a slower harmonic rhythm than the other movements. This long melody is passed
seamlessly between instruments of the string ensemble, an ideal upheld in many different
contexts within the concerto. I quote material from Mvt. II at the end of this movement
( reflective quality). The staccato triplets in the bassoon and trumpet in m. 36 give the illusion of
an increase in tempo, but only because the first part of this movement was rhapsodic and
expansive in part due to the use of long tones and quick note flourishes. This section is headed
by a trumpet and bassoon duet reminiscent of the duet in the previous movement between the
same instruments; see Example 5. This is an example of using instrumental choices for the
purpose of strengthening structure.

Due to the elongated and sustained nature of the melody, I felt it necessary to include
some contrasting elements to maintain interest. For this I added the staccato and pizzicato
figurations in all other instruments of the ensemble not participating in the pedal tone melody to
create movement around the sustained pedal tones. When the pedal tones finally move to create
phrases, I found it necessary to move to the background; this also created an antiphonal texture
that is complimentary to the style of this Concerto. The contrasting nature of the figurations and
long notes also creates tension; where the long notes are trying to pull the listener back while the
quick notes are trying to push forward. This tension is released in m. 36 when the movement takes off with the trumpet and bassoon duet (Example 5).

This movement does not include any piano. The reason for this is to prepare the listeners for a piano cadenza in the following movement; perhaps the absence of piano is also creating some tension within the listener as they anticipate its arrival.

4.4 Movement IV, 1’50”

This movement features the first piano cadenza of the Concerto. It begins with the cadenza, which is interrupted by the orchestra as it was building toward a climax. After the orchestral interjection, it is permitted to resume uninterrupted until the end of the movement. This effectively creates two cadenzas in this movement alone, the first in mm. 1-23, and the second in mm. 44-80. The opening section builds upon the material that was the opening piano interjection in the first movement; the reason for this choice is that the piano entrance in this movement is itself an interjection since there was no piano included in the previous movement. See Example 14 below and compare with the 0-2-5-7 motive in the Secondo part of Example 7, m. 1.

The piano part in this movement relies on syncopation for rhythmic propulsion, and features virtuosic displays (as would be expected in a cadenza). During the piano passagework, I tried to avoid resting or arriving on downbeats to help intensify the suspense and forward drive generated by syncopation. In the first cadenza, a relatively strong downbeat arrival is not felt until m. 20 in the RH of the primo part. The effect of this was intentionally muted by placing this strong downbeat arrival midway through the phrases in the primo LH and secondo part, which themselves are syncopated counterparts to the primo RH. Finally, in m. 25 both primo and secondo arrive on a strong downbeat with the support of the orchestra; the strength of this
downbeat, however, is also slightly subdued due to three consecutive meter changes in mm. 22-24, which effectively alter the listener’s grasp of downbeat.

Example 14, Suski *Concerto for Piano Duet*, Mvt. IV, mm. 1-6. 0-2-5-7 motive.

The texture of this movement is heavily contrapuntal, especially in the piano part. In many sections of both piano cadenzas the counterpoint is for textural effect, to help build dense and sophisticated sound structures. At the beginning of the first cadenza, there are two voices, then three in m. 2, four in m. 3, five in m. 5, then back to three voices in m. 6-7, at which point the texture begins to build gradually toward the inevitable climactic entry of the orchestra. If this was a fugato section, then we would be more inclined to expect a more consistent amount of voices for longer periods of time. An example of fugato-style counterpoint in this movement can be found in the second cadenza from mm. 51-70, where more structured techniques are used such as sequence and imitation (Example 15; the numbers “7-5-2-0” near certain notes illustrate the pitch class relationships of those motives). The section reaches its climax on the downbeat of m. 70, where the primo RH erupts in a flurry of notes in the high register to help mark the event.
The denouement features more contrapuntal writing in a descending linear motion on a variation of the cascading motive discussed earlier, until all voices reach a mutual point of rest on the note G. The end of this movement dovetails with the beginning of Mvt. V.

Example 15, Suski *Concerto for Piano Duet*, Mvt. IV, mm. 51-66. Use of sequence and 0-2-5-7.
4.5 Movement V, 2'55"

The start of the fifth movement begins with the octave gesture in the bass, set up at the end of the fourth movement. The difference here is that the octave gesture is quicker on the first note (sixteenth-note vs. eighth note of the previous movement) and it occurs a semi-tone higher, on G-sharp. This rhythmic and pitch change is meant to jolt the listener, signalling a progression into a new formal area. This is also referenced in the final movement, which I included to help solidify this brief gesture’s significance. Just as the movements leading up to the center point, movement VI, reference the material from their preceding movements, this movement has a broader treatment of this function and references material from all movements before it. I felt it was necessary to include all the themes in this movement, summarizing for the listener so that they may be less likely to forget the building blocks of this concerto before it takes on a different shape in the second half.

This movement is through-composed with three distinct sections. The overall intent is acceleration and motion toward more tonal and rhythmic dissonance; the end of the movement features complex polyrhythms and cluster chords. See sfz chord at end of Example 16.

Example 16, Suski *Concerto for Piano Duet*, Mvt. V, mm. 45-47. Polyrhythms and cluster chords.

Pianistically, this movement journeys through various musical styles. The opening is rhapsodic and improvisatory, with some challenging and physically satisfying syncopations and quick note flourishes. The primo and secondo parts are engaging in a flirtatious counterpoint
which is satisfying itself solely by existing; the parts having no qualms, and not riddling each other or competing for the audience. This is achieved through four independent lines, one for each hand in the ensemble, that have little resemblance to each other. Furthermore, they are closed phrases that only rely on themselves to fulfil any antecedent and consequent functions. The long tones in the bass also help with the docile character of this section.

The middle section (mm. 21-40) showcases a familiar piano concerto gesture, the trill. Who doesn’t like a good piano concerto trill-off? Some concertos that come to mind are Prokofiev’s second concerto, second movement; Ravel’s piano concerto in G, first movement cadenza; Shostakovich Piano Concerto No. 1, second movement. Trills on the piano are a very desirable gesture for me, they offer a chance for the piano to fluctuate between two tones; perhaps the closest a piano can get to vibrato. When sustained, trills on the piano are a virtuosic feat as the player must be comfortable enough with their technique to avoid tension over extended periods of time and also maintain a consistent tone. To add a layer of difficulty to my trill section, I included an inner melody for both players to alternate playing while also trilling in the same hand. All the while, this section needs to be played with limited pedalling so as to not over-amplify the bass tones, and at a pp dynamic so that the main melody in the orchestra is not overshadowed.

Finally, the third section (mm.41-90) is where the pianists get to shine once more as soloists with impressive, borderline percussive sounding passages à la Ginastera and Prokofiev. The secondo begins with the solo; it is no secret that more often than not the primo gets to solo in this concerto, so this is a welcome opportunity for the secondo. The secondo has an ad-lib section and must accelerate over the course of six bars; after six bars the player must present an audible pulse for the rest of the ensemble to be able to follow along. The difficulty here is that
the secondo has fifteen notes to fit in every 3/4 bar, with off-setting accents midway through the bar. To help with this, I have given the lowest note in every bar as the downbeat for the first section. The secondo is the driving force in this section of the movement; at the ends of some phrases there is a bar of rest, after which the secondo has to begin right away alone in brisk tempo with a rhythmically altered and more complex version of the pattern it just played. At the end of this section the instrumentation thins out to only piano trills which culminate on a single B-flat, the starting note of the next movement. This is a refreshing end to a highly dissonant and chromatic movement.

4.6 Movement VI, 2’

Example 17, Suski *Concerto for Piano Duet*, Mvt. VI, mm. 4-5 Secondo. Inverse harmonic series.

This movement has a distinct opening on a unison B-flat. The orchestral sound is broken by a Primo solo using notes for the harmonic series of B-flat, followed by an answer in the Secondo with an inverse (or upside down) harmonic series which imparts dissonance to this “tuning session”; Example 17 denotes the inverse harmonic series partial numbers over the respective notes.
Example 18, Suski *Concerto for Piano Duet*, Mvt. VI, mm. 6-11. Aggregate chords.

The piano continues with a solo that is important to the overall structure of the piece. Mm. 6-12, although fairly brief, is a variation on a rhythmic/melodic fragment that is first heard in m. 5 of the second movement (descending chords, with a distinct rhythmic profile), and is also the basis for the final piano cadenza (Mvt. X); the second movement and penultimate movements. Although all three are based on the same motive, they are completely different from each other. In this movement, these six bars are based on a set of aggregate 12-tone chords. This is a unique feature of this passage in the context of this concerto, and I thought it contrasted well with the spectral element of the opening of this movement. The boxed notes in the Primo part of Example 18 show the rhythmic motive that is also found in Mvt.’s II and X. The intervals written
above the chordal structures show the intervals that serve as building blocks for each of the 12-tone aggregate chords.

This section culminates on a unified B-flat before the entry of the obligato oboe solo, where an audible sense of regularity in the rhythm of the melody and accompaniment begins to occur. I wanted to obscure the progression of time in this movement with a slow pulse in the piano to accompany a quick moving and heavily ornamented oboe solo, while members of the orchestra sustaining chosen notes out of the oboe melody. The piece that inspired me for this section is Bach’s Partita No. 2 in C minor, BWV 826, I. Sinfonia; specifically the Andante section of the sinfonia where the RH plays a capricious melody over simple eights in the LH. Bach’s melody seems to wander as it pleases, spanning over a fairly large register while the LH is keeping a steady pulse, offering gentle counterpoint to the RH melody with some interesting passages here and there while offering harmonic support.

The oboe begins with a melody based on the 0-2-5-7 motive and gradually adds extra notes to the mix. My goal was to have a rhythmically and pitch-wise free sounding melody over a more structured accompaniment, and to do this I relied on chromatically altering notes within the melody as one would with cross-relations in tonal music. I hearken back to Bach’s Partita No. 1; as I was learning to play this piece I began to notice several instances of cross-relations between voices and within melodies in the Andante section of the sinfonia (see Example 19). The example below is one of many in the Andante section of the Sinfonia, and while there are some examples of cross-relations like this in other movements and sections, the frequency with which they occur in this movement is higher than in others. My goal was to take this aspect that I admire about this movement, along with the improvisational “wandering” characteristic of the melody incorporate it in the sixth movement of my concerto. Example 20 shows how the oboe
melody is chromatically shifting between resting points on G, A-flat, A, F-sharp; my aim was to create unexpected resolutions to chromatically altered notes. A-flat is the arrival note in m. 28 which establishes an expectation in the listener’s ear, this is countered by the A in m. 29 followed by the G in that same measure; both notes hovering around the A-flat by a semi-tone.

Example 19, J.S. Bach *Partita No. 2 BWV 826, I. Sinfonia*, m. 10. Cross-relations.

Example 20, Suski *Concerto for Piano Duet*, Movement VI, mm. 26-30. Suski version of cross-relations.

4.7 Movement VII, 1’50”

The unifying element of this movement is the use of perpetual motion and quick orchestral texture shifts. I thought a good motive to use for an energetic movement like this would be the arpeggiating motive from the first movement, coupled with the 1-2-5-7 motive to create a Mannheim Rocket-esque theme. The short staccato articulation infuses additional energy to the upward ascent. We can also observe appearances of the melodic content from the piano in
m. 1 of the opening movement as early as in m. 2 of this movement in the secondo LH. The primo LH also features a variation on the cascading theme in m. 4.

The piano treatment throughout this movement is dry and mechanical, not unlike a toccata, offering contrast to the rhapsodic and melodic writing in previous movements but also building upon the Ginastera/Prokofiev piano writing from the latter part of the fifth movement. This movement was influenced by the Toccata movement in Prokofiev’s Piano Concerto no. 5, which happens to be the shortest movement in that concerto. It is the third out of five movements and features themes from the first movement with a more brisk tempo treatment and an overall dry instrumentation in the piano and orchestra parts. I took these ideals and used them in this movement, as discussed above.

A new motive introduced in this movement is the repeated note pattern, first heard in m. 13 in the RH of the primo part, and then subsequently more developed and for several measures at a time starting in mm. 19 and 31. This motive foreshadows the next movement; as discussed in the section on Form, and this is the first movement in which foreshadowing of following movements is a feature.

4.8 Movement VIII, 1’40”

This movement is also a perpetual motion movement that is approached attacca from mvt. VII. It is substantially different than Mvt. VII in texture and thematic and harmonic content, with only the repeated note pattern as a similarity between the two. Texturally, there is more emphasis on chordal structures and sustained tones. The piano is more stylistically related to romantic and post romantic virtuosity, with more pedal use, variations of such playing techniques as Lisztian octaves (see m. 6) and alternating note patterns between the hands (mm. 9-10 of this movement) as you may find in a Rachmaninov concerto (Example 21); not to mention a
superficial connection the listener may make to Schubert’s Erlkonig, in which a repeated note motive is also present throughout the entire movement.

Example 21. Rachmaninov Piano Concerto No. 3 in D minor, Op. 30, mm. 187-188. Alternating note pattern that can be found in Suski Mvt. VIII, mm. 9-10.

![Musical Example 21](image)

There is more an overt allusion to triadic harmonies in this movement which aligns with the overall romantic aesthetic of this movement. The movement progresses through a series of keys that are reflected by the constant presence of the repeated note motive: C-sharp, D, E-flat, and finally ends on C-sharp. The tonal areas rise chromatically to mimic the bass motion at the end of the fourth movement into the beginning of the fifth (Example 22). The melodic structure is obscure and syncopated at first, slithering in the basses and gradually moving upwards to the celli. Finally, the full string ensemble plays a final iteration of a more structured melody in homorhythmic texture over an orchestral tutti.

Example 22, Suski Concerto for Piano Duet, Mvt. VIII overall tonal progression.

![Musical Example 22](image)

4.9 Movement IX, 1’10”

Movement IX assumes a major tonality due to the diatonic nature of the melodic line, this provides a good contrast to the previous movement. The overall structure is ternary, with
significant alterations to A’ with regards to length and instrumentation. I wanted to create a noticeable contrasting middle section and achieved this through percussive piano writing featuring the cadenza motive of the next movement as a departure point; following this, the texture becomes similar to that of Prokofiev’s Toccata in D minor, with some techniques including cross-overs and upward sequential climbing that are characteristics of that piece.

Overall this movement has a neo-classical approach with features such as the succinct formal structure, and tight orchestral writing, many times in homorhythmic texture or “oom-pah” patterns with traditional instrumental choirs (winds vs strings vs brass). My favourite characteristic of this movement, and not derived from the classical period, is the frequent changes of meter which serve to help prolong phrases by shifting the downbeat stress (found in mm. 6, 14, 19, 24, 30, 38, 46, and 55). This movement moves the downbeat by as little as a sixteenth note to as much as a quarter note; I challenged myself to write phrases that would still be felt naturally during such rhythmic modulation, and at the risk of sounding self-congratulatory, I am satisfied with the result.

4.10 Movement X, 1’

The final cadenza of the concerto prominently features the “hidden” rhythmic motive (Example 23) that has been lurking in the background at various times during the concerto, as discussed earlier, and is ready to pounce into the attention of the listener. This short cadenza has at least four contrasting building blocks: the expansive chords, the toccata sixteenth notes which progress in imitative counterpoint giving a sense of micropolyphony, the chordal tremolo, and the slow and prophetic section projecting the main theme of the finale movement. It is meant to highlight, once more before reaching the end, the extremes in textural capabilities of this
ensemble. My goal was to create an impressive sonic event while structuring this movement out of the previously mentioned elements taken from various sections of the concerto.

Example 23. Suski *Concerto for Piano Duet*, Mvt. X, m. 1. Rhythmic motive that was foreshadowed in previous movements.

4.11 Movement XI, 3’27”

The finale movement functions as a recap of significant events of the concerto and carefully balances textures of highly virtuosic elements with contrapuntal sections, as well as making room for the theme. The introduction culminates at the grand arrival of the 0-1-3-4 motive, a transformation of the 0-3-4 motive, which has been anticipated throughout the concerto.

The introduction is substantial as it builds from long sustained notes to a full contrapuntal texture which aims to present multiple past themes at once while maintaining clarity. The goal is for the listener will associate the long and sustained notes with the ones from the beginning of
the sixth movement, and also the long ascending bass line in the piano from the second cadenza of the fourth movement.

When the main melody arrives in m. 30, it takes the form of a dance in 3/4 time inspired by the Polish dance Kujawiak. This dance form usually begins at a slower tempo, and is characterized by longer phrases and rich embellishments; tempo alterations [acceleration] are common in this type of dance. The treatment of this melody in the piano is also folk inspired, with both hands in the primo part seemingly playing in unison while each hand has minor variances to the melody. This creates a heterophonic texture where multiple lines are playing a slightly different versions of the same melody in unison. This effect interests me because it starts as a seemingly homophonic melody, with various undercurrents which at times cause polyphonic pockets, blurring the lines between homophonic and polyphonic textures.

Before the final tempo acceleration and subsequent return of the main theme, the violin solo obligato returns with the unifying main theme from the first movement in a quiet duet with a single hand of the Secondo piano part. After this the piano has one more virtuosic solo display from mm. 98-111. After the tutti statement of the main theme of this movement, the piano closes the concerto with a pensive and subdued statement of the theme; similar to the ending of the epic Liszt Piano Sonata in B minor, S. 178.

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Chapter 5

5 Conclusion

The *Concerto for Piano Duet* showcases the virtuosic and sonically captivating attributes of the piano duet medium in a concerto setting. It also aims to further restore popularity to the piano duet, and demonstrate the artistic merit and potential of this medium. It is more versatile to program than a concerto for two pianos, in that only one piano needs to be supplied and prepared for the concert hall (and for rehearsal). This piece can also work with a chamber orchestra to render it more accessible to a wider range of professional ensembles, and even civic orchestras. The miniature movement format that I chose for this piece works well with the concept of developing themes throughout the entire concerto, allowing for quick character shifts while being part of an overarching formal structure. Writing this large-scale work made me think outside the box and question all my artistic decisions, through which process I have grown as a composer.
Appendix A: Bibliography


Appendix B: List of Piano-Duet Concerti

Abeille, Johann Christian Ludwig (1761-1838), Germany
  *Grand Concerto (D)*, Op. 6 (1793)

Arnold, Malcolm (1921-2006), England
  *Concerto for Pianoforte Duet and Orchestra*

Brant, Henry (1913-2008), Canada/U.S.
  *Ceremony*, triple concerto for violin, oboe, soprano, alto, tenor, bass, divided orchestra, and piano four hands (1954)

Britten, Benjamin (1913-1976), England
  *Noye’s Fludde*, Op. 59, for solo voices, string quartet, amateur string orchestra, recorders, bugles, percussion, and four hands (1957)

Czerny, Carl (1791-1857), Austria
  *Concerto (C)* for piano four hands and orchestra, Op. 153 (1831)

Donkin, Christine (b. 1976), Canada
  *Concerto for Piano Duet (2012)*

Frölich, Franz Joseph (1780-1862) Germany
  *Concerto for Piano Four Hands and Orchestra (D) (1814)*

  *Concerto for Piano (Four Hands) and Orchestra* (1986)

Gutchë, Gene (pseud. of Romeo E. Gutsche) (1907-2000), Germany

Imbrie, Andrew (1921-2007), U.S.
  *Concerto for Piano Duet and Orchestra (1955-56)*

Jacob, Gordon (1895-1984), England
  *Concerto for Three Hands* (1969)
  *Rhapsody for Piano Three Hands and Brass* (1970)

Koželuh, Leopold (1747-1818), Czechoslovakia
  *Concerto (B-flat) a Quattro mani per il clavicembalo ó fortepiano*, violin 1, violin 2, due oboi ò flauti, due corni (b-flat), due viole obl. E basso (1787)

Manookian, Jeff (b. 1953), U.S.
  *Concerto for Piano Duet and String Orchestra* (2014)
McCabe, John (1939-2015), England
   *Concertino For Piano Duet and Orchestra* (1968)

Mul, Jan (1911-1971), Netherlands
   *Concerto voor piano vierhandig* (1962)

Osieck, Hans (b. 1910), Netherlands
   *Suite Concertante*, for piano four hands and orchestra

Raats, Jaan (b. 1932), Estonia

Rutter, John (b.1945), England
   *Beatles Concerto* (1977)

Schnittke, Alfred (1934-1998), USSR/Germany
   *Concerto for Piano (four-hands) and Chamber Orchestra* (1988)

Senft, Luigi (Late eighteenth century)
   *Concerto (D)*, for piano four hands, two violins, viola, and bass (1770)

Smolanoff, Michael, U.S.
   *Concerto for Piano Four Hands, Strings and Percussion*

Sydeman, William (b.1928), U.S.
   *Concerto for Piano Four Hands and Chamber Orchestra* (1967)

Vogler, Georg Joseph (1749-1814), Germany
   *Concerto for Piano Four Hands and Orchestra* (1794)

Williams, David Russell (b. 1932), U.S.
   *Concerto for Piano Four Hands and Orchestra (Buoyantly; Ponderously; Brightly)* (1963-1964)
Concerto for Piano Duet
Edgar Robert Suski

Piccolo
Flute
Oboe
B-flat Clarinet
Bass Clarinet
Bassoon
Horn in F
B-flat Trumpet
Trombone
Tuba
8, 8, 8, 6, 4

*Score is displayed in concert pitch, with the exception of octave transposing instruments.
Concerto for Piano Duet

Andante ($q = 86$)

Piccolo
Flute
Oboe
Clarinet in B
Bass Clarinet
Bassoon
Horn in F
Trumpet in B
Trombone
Tuba

Piano 1

Piano 2

Solo con bravura e rubato

Violin I
Violin II
Viola
Cello
Double Bass

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Allegretto giocoso (♩ = 120)

Piccolo

Flute

Oboe

Clarinet in B♭

Bass Clarinet

Bassoon

Horn in F

Trumpet in B♭

Trombone

Tuba

Piano 1

Piano 2

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Cello

Double Bass
X - Cadenza

Presto (\text{\textit{\#90}})

Pesante (\text{\textit{\#80}})

Ritorno a \textit{\textit{\#80}}
Misterioso ($\varpi = 120$)

Piccolo

Flute

Oboe

Clarinet in Bb

Bass Clarinet

Bassoon

Horn in F

Trumpet in Bb

Trombone

Tuba

Piano 1

Piano 2

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Cello

Double Bass