A STUDY OF GIANNI CARLO MENOTTI’S
CONCERTO FOR VIOLIN AND ORCHESTRA

by

LAURA ANNE TOMLIN

(Under the Direction of Dorothea Link

and Levon Ambartsumian)

ABSTRACT

Gian Carlo Menotti’s Concerto for Violin and Orchestra (1952), although written
and premiered in the early 1950s, has been an unduly neglected work due to a number of
circumstances, but one that has recently been gaining in popularity. The purpose of this
document is to provide a comprehensive guide to the Violin Concerto in the hope that it
will help capture the attention of those unaware of its existence and ultimately aide in the
concerto’s acceptance into the violinist’s standard repertoire. The Violin Concerto’s
historical context is examined in relationship to its compositional style and possible
sources of inspiration, and to its neglect in the past and recent surge in popularity in the
violin world. A formal and theoretical analysis of Menotti’s concerto, as well as a
discussion of its technical challenges from the standpoint of the performer, will provide
insight into its composition and interpretative issues.

Despite its traditional form, Menotti’s Violin Concerto is an unusual piece in
many respects, among which are its intriguing possible biographical components.
Composed in 1952 for violinist Efrem Zimbalist, the work, on first hearing, can seem a
bit disjointed with elements obviously derived from, or at the very least influenced by, other works. However, on closer examination of the work and of its intended performer, these elements appear to be intentional. For these reasons, in addition to its appeal simply as a composition, Menotti’s Violin Concerto is worthy of further study.

INDEX WORDS: Gian Carlo Menotti, Violin Concerto, Laura Anne Tomlin, The University of Georgia, DMA Document
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CONCERTO FOR VIOLIN AND ORCHESTRA

by

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by

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Purpose

Gian Carlo Menotti’s Concerto for Violin and Orchestra (1952), although written and premiered in the early 1950s, has been an unduly neglected work due to a number of circumstances, but one that has recently been gaining in popularity. The purpose of this document is to provide a comprehensive guide to the Violin Concerto in the hope that it will help capture the attention of those unaware of the concerto’s existence and ultimately aide in its acceptance into the violinist’s standard repertoire. The Violin Concerto’s historical context is examined in relationship to its compositional style and possible sources of inspiration, and to its neglect in the past and recent surge in popularity in the violin world. A formal and theoretical analysis of Menotti’s concerto, as well as a discussion of its technical challenges from the standpoint of the performer, will provide insight into its composition and interpretative issues.

Despite its traditional form, Menotti’s Violin Concerto is an unusual piece in many respects, among which are its intriguing possible biographical components. Composed in 1952 for violinist Efrem Zimbalist, the work, on first hearing, can seem a bit disjointed with elements obviously derived from, or at the very least influenced by, other works. However, on closer examination of the work and of its intended performer, these elements appear to be intentional. For these reasons, in addition to its appeal simply as a composition, Menotti’s Violin Concerto is worthy of further study.
Methodology

The document’s first chapter consists of an introduction and biography of Gian Carlo Menotti in relationship to his Violin Concerto’s historical context. The second chapter presents the composition’s history including its known performances and recordings. Chapter three contains an analysis of the music, both formal and theoretical, organized by movement. The theoretical analysis consists of traditional harmonic analysis, as well as Schenkerian-based linear analysis. For the more dissonant sections, particularly parts of the exposition and recapitulation of the first movement, post-tonal techniques, such as set theory, proved to be a more satisfactory analytical method. The fourth chapter examines the technical and pedagogical issues of the Violin Concerto from the violinist’s standpoint with their implications for performance decisions.

Sources consist of books and articles on Menotti’s life, which also include general discussions about his compositional style and, more specifically, about the writing of the Violin Concerto. Liner notes, reviews of recordings, and reviews of performances are also referenced. These are supplemented with the biographies of the performers and a number of articles discussing their relationship with the Violin Concerto and Menotti. The orchestral score will be used for analysis. The writings of theorists Joseph Straus and Allen Forte are referenced. An excellent model for the analysis of Menotti’s music is Elizabeth Lena Smith’s 2005 doctoral dissertation in theory from Florida State University.

Background

Gian Carlo Menotti (1911-2007) is first and foremost known as a composer of operas and is credited by some as having developed “the” American opera. Born on

However, according to his friend and longtime partner, composer Samuel Barber, Menotti’s and Barber’s original intent never was to compose operas. Their strict Germanic training under Rosario Scalera at the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia, where they first met as students in the late 1920s, had conditioned them to resist “frivolous” opera composition except possibly those in the vein of the serious, grand opera style of Richard Wagner. As Menotti related to Samuel Chotzinoff in 1963, “because Scalero’s indoctrination of German polyphonic music had taken only too well with me, I had come to detest opera.”

As fate would have it, Menotti’s first opera, *Amelia al ballo* (1936), a comic opera written by Menotti on a whim after an extended residency in Vienna in 1935 with Barber, was premiered at Curtis in 1937 and taken up in 1938 by the Metropolitan Opera, where it became an immediate success. This led to a commission by the National Broadcasting Center for a second opera, *The Old Maid and the Thief* (1939), again, a comic opera and,

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again, a success. His third opera, *The Island God* (1942), a more serious, grand-style work, was poorly received and the only opera which Menotti withdrew. Menotti explained his mindset at the time, again to Chotzinoff:

“The only way I can account for that fiasco – it was worse than a fiasco, it was a disaster – is that my old German indoctrination came to the surface again. I suffered an illusion of grandeur when I wrote it... Yet, you know, it had a certain value for me. In it I tackled a subject too heroic for my kind of music. It was then I realized that the first duty of an artist is to know his limitations. My vein was not heroic. *The Island God* taught me that I was no Wagner.”

Menotti’s next commission led to his first international success, *The Medium* (1945), and his reputation as an opera composer was established; his fate was sealed. “How, suddenly, at the age of twenty-three I found myself writing *Amelia,*” Menotti wrote, “is a mystery that I still cannot explain. But one thing is certain: After that, all the plans for my musical future had to be drastically revised.”

As an opera composer Menotti achieved many “firsts.” He was the first to write an opera specifically for radio. Commissioned by NBC, *The Old Maid and the Thief* (1939) premiered to favorable reviews and was considered a great achievement in radio, exposing many Americans to opera for the first time.

Menotti was also the first to compose an opera expressly for television, namely his Christmas opera *Amahl and the Night Visitors* (1951), also commissioned by NBC. Televised on Christmas Eve 1951, it was broadcast annually for many years and again introduced many Americans to opera. The opera also works well as a dramatic stage work and has been performed by many amateur and professional groups throughout the

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2 Ibid., 68.

world. A second opera for television, *The Labyrinth* (1963), was written expressly for the camera lens in such a way that it only works in broadcast mode.

Additionally, Menotti was the first to write highly popular operas produced on Broadway instead of in the “elitist” opera house. His opera *The Medium* had a run of 212 performances on Broadway in 1945, and *The Consul* ran for about eight months in 1950. In the words of Ken Waschlin: “Gian Carlo Menotti took opera out of the opera houses and gave it back to the general public…”\(^4\) Ned Rorem, in a 1991 article in *Opera News*, commented on Menotti’s operatic success and subsequent influence: “Thanks solely to the example of Menotti’s success in the 1940s, dozens of operas spouted forth from other composers hoping to hit the jackpot. The effort persists after five decades, and it’s safe to state that Menotti, whatever his own final worth, violently altered the nature of lyric theater here, and by extension, throughout the globe.”\(^5\)

Finally, Menotti was one of the first composers to commit his operas to film. The 1951 film version of *The Medium*, which Menotti himself directed, was also a critical success. Not only did it win an Oscar nomination and prize at the Cannes Film Festival, it was selected as a “classic to preserve” by the British Film Institute.\(^6\)

Menotti was especially talented as a librettist, providing the libretti for each of his operas, as well as for a number of operas by other composers, most notably Samuel Barber’s *Vanessa* and *A Hand of Bridge* and Lukas Foss’ *Introductions and Good-Byes*.

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A skillful director as well, Menotti insisted, after a poor experience with the production of his first opera *Amelia al ballo*, on directing the premieres of all his subsequent dramatic works, twenty-eight in all. His reputation as an innovative director also prompted other composers to invite him to produce and direct their works, most notably Igor Stravinsky for a production of his opera *Rake’s Progress* with the Hamburg State Opera in Germany in 1967.

Among the many honors bestowed upon Menotti are the 1950 Pulitzer Prize in music and the Drama Critic’s Circle Award for best play for *The Consul* (1950). A second Pulitzer Prize (1955), the Drama Critics’ Circle Award for best play, and the New York Music Critic’s Award for best opera were awarded for his opera *The Saint of Bleecker Street* (1954). He was also the recipient of the Kennedy Center Award for lifetime achievement in the arts (1984), and “Musician of the Year” by *Musical America* (1991).

In 1958 Menotti founded The Festival of Two Worlds, now known as the Spoleto Festival, in Spoleto, Italy. In 1977 he expanded the festival to the United States and directed the new Spoleto Festival USA at its location in Charleston, South Carolina, until 1993. Both festivals continue today and are known worldwide as showcases for contemporary artists, both performing and visual, as well as for the masters of the past.

Throughout his long life (he died in Monaco on February 1, 2007, age 95), Menotti continued to compose instrumental works as well as choral and other vocal works outside of opera. In his words, “…in a funny way I consider *Amelia* my good-luck piece. At the same time it was my *bête noire*, my doom, because its success condemned
me to write opera, whereas I really love to write instrumental music.” In a review in *Time* of the 1952 premiere of his Violin Concerto, the author had this comment:

“Composer Menotti enjoys the freedom of writing music without having to think about a libretto. ‘After I get a couple more operas out of my system I will concentrate on concert music alone,’ he says.” Menotti did continue to write for the stage, composing many more operas after making this statement.

In addition to his Violin Concerto (1952), his orchestral compositions include Pastorale and Dance for Piano and String Orchestra (1934), Piano Concerto in F (1945), *Sebastian Suite* (1945), the orchestral tone poem *Apocalypse* (1951), *Lewisohn Stadium Fanfare* (1965), Triplo Concerto a Tre (1970), Symphony No. 1 “The Halyon” (1976), Fantasia for Cello and Orchestra (1976), and Concerto for Double Bass and Orchestra (1983). His chamber works include Four Pieces for String Quartet (1936), Suite for Two Cellos and Piano (1973), Cantilena e Scherzo for Harp and String Quartet (1977), and Trio for Violin, Clarinet and Piano (1996).

Despite his success as an opera composer – or possibly even because of it – a great divide formed between the public and the critic in response to Menotti’s works, as well as among critics themselves. Apart from his early success, critics, more often than not, dismissed his music, while audiences responded enthusiastically. One of many examples can be found in the mixed reception given to one of Menotti’s operas debuting at La Scala in Milan recounted in *Time* in 1955:

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7 Chotzikoff, 67.

The composer who has come closest to America’s Verdi or Puccini, Gian Carlo Menotti, last week took his Saint of Bleecker Street…to Milan’s great La Scala. Italian-born composer Menotti, who has lived in the U.S. for 27 years, got a real gala-Scala panning from Italian critics. Wrote Rome’s Giornale d’Italia: “There is not an idea, not a melody, not a note which is not either closely or distantly attributable to someone else…If this is what it means to write opera, let’s not talk about it any more.” But the audience enjoyed the show as much as New Yorkers have, called Menotti back for two dozen bows.9

A 2007 obituary for Menotti in the Telegraph (UK) also stated that “although his music was regarded by many critics as too eclectic and derivative, as well as too accessible, to merit serious consideration, the public responded eagerly to such works as The Medium, The Telephone and particularly The Consul.”10 In 1958 a Times correspondent in Brussels, after the premiere of Maria Golovin there, cabled: “The audience applauded mightily, but the work had moments rather than momentum.”11

Menotti, as well as his fellow neo-romantic composer Samuel Barber, was a traditional composer living in untraditional times. Menotti’s musical style was firmly entrenched in 19th-century musical language. Unfortunately Menotti began his compositional career in the midst of an on-going debate instigated early in the 20th century in Vienna by the atonal and serial composer Arnold Schoenberg; a debate that continued throughout the 20th century, calling into question everything from music’s building blocks to its purpose in society. Often, if a composer’s music was deemed too

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traditional or neo-romantic, it was not heard, or at the very least, was dismissed, especially by those in academia. In 1999 Ken Waschlin described the controversy surrounding Menotti’s music, specifically his operas:

Menotti’s operas look natural and are not difficult to understand, yet they have always been controversial. Admired by most critics in their time, they were hated by others for being too “traditional.” His musical style was not dissonant enough for the atonalists, not complex enough for the academics, too melodic for the modernists and too popular for the elitists.\textsuperscript{12}

To Menotti the label “modern music” was an “unnecessary chronological separation which implies that there is something fashionable about art, making the work of the past ridiculous and old-fashioned…Any terminology which confines a work of art of a historical period is suspect because it proposes a system of snobbery which may eliminate artists of real merit who did not chance to harmonize with the fads of their day.”\textsuperscript{13}

Menotti was fighting this battle even as early as the late 1930s, as evidenced in his 1938 letter to Olin Downes, then music editor of the \textit{New York Times}. His letter disputes Ashley Pettis’ response to Downes’ somewhat positive review of the premiere of two of Samuel Barber’s early works, \textit{Adagio for Strings} and \textit{Essay for Orchestra}, by Arturo Toscanini and the NBC Orchestra. Ashley Pettis, clearly not a fan of Barber’s music, stated:

There are important American composers and important American compositions of every type of thought and tendency. But from “at least one listener’s point of view” neither Mr. Barber nor his works may be justly so termed. One listened in vain for evidences of youthful vigor, freshness or fire, for use of a contemporary idiom (which was characteristic of every composer whose works have withstood

\textsuperscript{12} Wlaschin, 5.

\textsuperscript{13} Ardoin, 14.
the vicissitudes of time.) Mr. Barber’s was “authentic,” dull, “serious” music –
utterly anachronistic as the utterance of a young man of 28, A. D. 1938!

Such a choice by the great musical Messiah in our midst can only have a retarding
influence on the advance of our creative musicians. They realize only too well
that they have a small chance of performance by the greatest musical organi-
zations and conductors (not to mention individual artists of the first magnitude)
unless they write music for people who listen with ears of the nineteenth and early
twentieth centuries at latest – whose criteria are that “new” music shall have the
familiar melodic, harmonic and rhythmic characteristics of the past, that it be a
hodge-podge of clichés, that it presupposes no spirit & musical adventure on the
part of either performers or public.¹⁴

Menotti’s response follows:

In regard to Ashley Pettis’s letter of last week, will Mr. Pettis please give his
meaning of “modern idiom”? Must there be in art one “modern idiom”? Because
there is a Gertrude Stein, must we condemn a Thomas Mann? Isn’t the field of
music vast enough for opposing currents to flow together?

I am afraid Mr. Pettis is very passé and still accepts as the modern idiom the
Parisian style of twenty years ago. If Mr. Barber dares to defy the servile
imitation of that style (which has been called American music) and experiments
successfully with melodic line and new form, is he not to be praised for his
courage?

Mr. Pettis doesn’t realize that this is a fast-moving world. Music must go on, and
it is time for some one to make a reaction against a school of composition that has
bored concert audiences for twenty years. All through Europe there are signs of
this healthy reaction among the younger generation. Mr. Pettis is behind the
times…

It was very amusing to Mr. Pettis’s artistic generation to be revolutionists. But
now let them recognize that the younger generation is left with the thankless job
of building on their ruins…¹⁵

Indeed Menotti composed his music with the audience in mind and used whatever
means necessary to evoke the desired emotional response, often breaking the rules if it fit

1938, 184.

1950, X9.
According to John Ardoin, Menotti’s rule was, “As long as you do things out of passion, you should be forgiven.”\footnote{Ardoin, 12.} “The trouble with me,” Menotti said in a 1963 interview with Samuel Chotzinoff, “is that in composing I play a dual role. I am the composer. But I am also the audience, and I want to be sure that I as the audience understand clearly what the composer intended. You can compare it with having bad breath. Everybody knows it but the fellow who has it. It is an effort to be on both sides – to breathe and smell your own breath!”\footnote{Chotzinoff, 63.}

One of Menotti’s most avid enthusiasts, the music critic Winthrop Sargeant, provides further insight:

To him, the fundamental means by which a composer can be expected to enchant an audience have not changed very radically from those employed by the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century masters, and developments like the invention of a new chord, a new scale, and a new system of stringing notes together appear to him as mere vanities – manipulations of sound whose object is to attract attention to a composer’s technique. The problem of conveying feeling – or the immediate experience of life – through music, which is all-important to Menotti, is not, in his view, advanced by such experiments in musical syntax. Almost alone among successful contemporary composers, he has stuck for many years to the idea of music as a communicative language that is not to be basically tampered with. What irritates him most about contemporary music is its “chicness,” or the tendency on the part of composers to jump onto whatever bandwagon is currently in vogue.\footnote{William Sargeant, “Profiles: Orlanda in Mr. Kisco,” \textit{The New Yorker}, 4 May 1963, 53.}

Also, according to Sargeant:

Menotti’s opinions about art in general and about the art of opera in particular are very positive, and have been expressed over and over, not only in conversation but also in fairly militant tracts, some of which he has had mimeographed, so that he can hand them out to questioners. “I firmly believe that an over-anxious
search for a personal trademark is one of the great evils of modern art,” he wrote in one of these some time ago. “Much too often, what people consider originality is nothing but a tiresome mannerism that enslaves the artist to the point of sterility. Potentially, we are all original if we are sincere, as no two people are born with the same face. But unfortunately some faces are more interesting than others. By wearing a false nose or painting one’s hair green, we may be able to startle for a brief time, but not fool anyone as to our real identity. I believe that originality can only be achieved through a relentless process of self-discovery. If, after baring yourself, you discover that what you have to say is banal and unimportant, at least you have done all that an artist can possibly do. It is only today that eccentricity and exoticism in art are being sought after so desperately as the only way to distinguish yourself from your fellow-workers. Is it not perhaps because people are embarrassed to show themselves as they really are?”

The debates continued with Menotti and Barber on one side, the modernists on the other. Menotti even argued his point in his works. For example, in his 1958 opera Maria Golovin, Menotti creates a character named Dr. Zuckertanz, a music tutor, who sings an aria in which he expresses his distaste for the nineteenth century and his fondness for the sixteenth, seventeenth, eighteenth, and twentieth. He sings, “I only like what is archaic and pure, or very modern, very sparse and very dry; I like the sixteenth century, the seventeenth, too, but the nineteenth – jamais!”

In his 1968 children’s opera Help, Help, the Globolinks!, music is the sole defense against invading aliens who speak only in electronic sounds. “When the request came from the Hamburg Opera for a companion piece to Amahl and the Night Visitors, the idea began to take shape in Menotti’s head for a confrontation between the new and the old, between technology and established musical order, between mechanization and emotion.” However, at the time of the American premiere in Santa Fe, Menotti had this

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19 Sargeant, 52.
20 Ardoin, 94.
21 Ibid., 168.
to say concerning the subject matter: “Although I agree with Madame Euterpova [music teacher character] that this kind of music is for the Globolinks and not for us, I wrote the electronic music quite seriously and not to make fun of it. Actually, I make more fun of myself in this opera than the avant-garde…”  

One final example of Menotti’s theatrical comments on the artistic foibles of the day can be found in his 1956 work titled *The Unicorn, the Gorgon and the Manticore* with the subtitle of *The Three Sundays of a Poet*. Menotti admits that it is a difficult work to categorize and described it as a madrigal fable for chorus, ten dancers, and nine instruments. According to John Ardoin:

Menotti’s fable is allegorical – a musical three ages of man, or, in this case, the poet. These are symbolized by the Unicorn (youth), the Gorgon (manhood) and the Manticore (old age). It was Menotti’s premise that the poet, or any creator, is always ahead of the crowd and his critics, and those who are destined to follow rather than to lead fall into line or adopt fashion as poets move on to new dreams. The piece is aimed at the dilettantes who lack the courage to feel or only mimic emotion and therefore they are unable to make their own judgments.  

Against this backdrop, it is surprising that Barber’s Violin Concerto, premiered in 1940, has become a staple in the violin repertoire, and, as tensions mounted, it is understandable that Menotti’s Violin Concerto, premiering only twelve years later in 1952, did not catch hold in the violin world, even though it is considered by many to be a work of equal merit.

The Violin Concerto shows some audacity on its composer’s part in this sense: Menotti spent many decades as the partner of Samuel Barber, who wrote “the” American violin concerto in 1939; any fiddle score by Menotti would inevitably invite comparison with Barber, probably of a negative sort under the claim of

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22 Ibid.

23 Ibid., 111.
derivation. In fact, Menotti’s concerto is its own creature entirely and is in some respects superior to Barber’s oft-performed showpiece.24

Robert Moon in his 2002 review in *Strings Magazine* offers an explanation:

> It’s hard not to wonder why Menotti’s Violin Concerto has landed in concert hall oblivion while his friend Samuel Barber’s Violin Concerto has become a concert and recording staple. Perhaps the reason lies in the immediate accessibility of the Barber, while Menotti’s gem needs at least a second hearing before it reveals its considerable melodic substance, colorful orchestration, and rich harmony.25

The critical response to Menotti’s Violin Concerto from its debut to the present day has been mixed, yet most reviews are overwhelmingly positive. Among the negative is a review in 1952 by Olin Downes of the *New York Times*, which, again, shows the marked contrast between the critic’s and the audience’s response to Menotti’s music:

> The concerto is in three substantial movements, with elaborate cadenzas and symphonic development. It is highly melodic too, but the invention is not the most distinguished of which Mr. Menotti has proved himself capable, and the movements tend to the diffuse. It is true that throughout they sound well and effectively. There was long applause for soloist and composer…26

In a more recent review, also in the *New York Times*, of a 1999 performance of the Violin Concerto, James R. Oestreich described the work as “no neglected masterpiece.”27

> In contrast, some of the many positive responses to Menotti’s Concerto, listed in chronological order from earliest to latest, are as follows:


Filled with themes of great radiance, the work is never less than a superb vehicle for the solo violin. [1978]^{28}

This substantial contribution to string literature isn’t known well enough by the general public. A large audience last night had a chance to enjoy its structural beauties and its felicitous writing for the violin. [1981]^{29}

Of all of Menotti’s concerted works, the Violin Concerto is the most poised, inventive and inspired. [1985]^{30}

Menotti’s Concerto for Violin and Orchestra…is a superb vehicle for the solo violinist, and it is regrettable that the piece receives few performances today. [1998]^{31}

The Violin Concerto…is a melodic work throughout, with a haunting, unforgettable first section and another of Menotti’s warmly lyrical songs as the middle section. I do not know why this piece is not more popular. [2001]^{32}

…a grand and engaging work that probably should have more exposure, and hence be given its chance to enter the repertoire. [2002]^{33}

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^{30}Ardoin, 120.


Considering the wealth of music for orchestra and violin, it is understandable why Menotti’s concerto is so rarely played, but it is an attractive piece of music with lots of charming melodies. [2009]^{34}

One of the most recent champions of Menotti’s Violin Concerto has been the violinist Jennifer Koh who recorded the work live with the Spoleto Festival Orchestra during the 2001 Spoleto (Italy) Festival. She shared her opinion of the Violin Concerto with Donald Rosenberg of the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* in a 2003 interview, saying: “It’s a shame it’s not part of the standard repertoire. It was so special to have a chance not only to record it but to play it for Gian Carlo, who’s been such a wonderful mentor and supporter.”^{35} Later in the interview Rosenberg sheds light on Ms. Koh’s level of commitment to the concerto, writing: “The violinist is just beginning to spread the word about Menotti’s concerto. This year, she is playing the piece only with the Cleveland Orchestra and the BBC National Orchestra of Wales…But she said other conductors and orchestras are taking interest.”^{36}

Indeed the frequency in performances and recordings of the Violin Concerto has recently increased. Of the six known recordings of the work, four were made since 1998. The other two date from 1954 and 1983. Of the known performances, after its premiere in December 1952 by violinist Efrem Zimbalist in both Philadelphia and New York, one took place during the mid-1950s, two during the 1970s, and one in the early 1980s. The

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^{36} Ibid.
next performance was not until 1991, followed by three more in the 1990s, and five since 2001.

One possible explanation for the surge in interest in the Violin Concerto could be the changing musical climate. Had Menotti been a young composer of today, he could have been the focus of an article in the *New York Times* titled “A Composer Freed by Opera To Be Tonal And Tuneful.” The 1999 story was written about the contemporary composer Tobias Picker and his tendency towards tonality, and it describes the current musical climate this way:

> Mr. Picker’s embrace of tonality, though particularly unambiguous, is hardly unique. Today, it seems, every composer is eager to be portrayed as a lapsed modernist, newly liberated from the shackles of Serialism. For some, this conservatism smacks of opportunism. But for Mr. Picker, it represents another step in a long and unpredictable compositional journey. Its catalyst was opera…

The 2007 *Telegraph* obituary of Menotti states: “In recent years, critical attitudes to Menotti’s work have unfrozen to some degree. For example, Professor Joseph Kerman, in the revised 1986 edition of his book Opera in Drama, omitted what he called ‘an unduly shrill attack on the operas of Menotti.’” In addition Bruce Archibald comments that: “critical appraisal of Menotti’s works has ranged from sincere appreciation (Sargeant) to bitter denunciation, later retracted (Kerman). There are signs that Menotti’s legacy in the future will be more complex and wide-ranging than anticipated. In deftly side-stepping the Second Viennese School he has provided an

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alternative model, that of the rigorously trained classical musician whose prime motivation has been to communicate with his audience.”  

Malcolm MacDonald, in his 2005 liner notes for the most recent CD recording of the concerto, wrote:

The natural, innate lyricism of his musical language, his unabashed deployment of attractive melodies, and his general rejection of any of the fashionable modernist idioms – whether Serialism or Neoclassicism – allowed him to communicate directly with a large audience which, in general, shared his predilections and loved the things he loved…While Menotti’s instrumental and vocal concert music has never attracted as much attention as his stage works, he has in fact produced concertos, symphonic poems, cantata and song-cycles which enshrine the same virtues and attractiveness, creating vivid and compelling musical images and profiting from his instinctive sense of drama.

However, in a 1991 interview with Joel Honig in *Opera News*, Menotti voices his frustration with the many references to the dramatic and melodic elements of his music, saying:

“They always talk about my ‘theatricality,’” he sighs, “but I wish somebody would begin to discover that there’s a lot of *music* in my operas, and that I’m not simply a ‘theater man.’ I’ve written a lot of music that people never mention and that very few people even listen to. I wish they would analyze it seriously, and then, if they say ‘This is not good,’ let them say *why* it is no good…And nobody has really bothered to read my texts either, carefully enough, or questioned the meaning of certain things…The texts of such songs as *Landscapes and Remembrances* are very autobiographical, but it’s ‘Oh, what a lovely melody!’ and that’s about it. I don’t think I’m a superficial composer, but I’m a victim of superficial critics who never looked into my work with any real seriousness.”

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40 Malcolm MacDonald, “Gian Carlo Menotti,” liner notes for CD *Menotti: Violin Concerto in A Minor; Cantilena e Scherzo; Five Songs; Canti della lontananza,* performed by Ittai Shapira, violin, with the Russian Philharmonic conducted by Thomas Sanderling, 2005, AVS CD DCA 1156.

It is my desire to do just that, to examine the music in Menotti’s Violin Concerto in depth. “Music is an ocean,” wrote Aldous Huxley, “but the repertory, the stuff that is habitually performed…is hardly even a lake; it is a pond.”42 Hopefully the momentum behind the growing interest in Menotti’s concerto will continue until the concerto becomes part of the standard violin repertoire.

CHAPTER 2
RECORDING AND PERFORMANCE HISTORY

Gian Carlo Menotti composed his Violin Concerto in 1952 for the Russian-born violinist Efrem Zimbalist (1890-1985). Zimbalist premiered the work with Eugene Ormandy and the Philadelphia Orchestra on December 5, 1952 at the Academy of Music in Philadelphia and on December 9, 1952 in Carnegie Hall in New York. According to Olin Downes in his 1952 review of the New York premiere: “Mr. Zimbalist played with gusto and intrepidity the concerto, which Mr. Menotti wrote primarily with Mr. Zimbalist in mind. These two worked on the concerto last summer in Maine, which doubtless has to do with the violinist character of the solo part, uncommonly practicable and idiomatic for the stringed instrument.”\(^{43}\) The collaboration not only helped with the violinistic aspects of the concerto, but also informed the musical content, reflecting Zimbalist’s style as both a violinist and a person and possibly containing biographical elements. Menotti was pleased with the concerto, describing himself as “rather fond of it.”\(^{44}\)

Efrem Zimbalist was one of three violin virtuosi who helped establish Leopold Auer’s reputation as a teacher in Europe and worldwide at the beginning of the twentieth


\(^{44}\) Robert E. Greene, program notes for the CD *Violin Concertos*, Ruggiero Ricci, violin, with the Pacific Symphony Orchestra conducted by Keith Clark, 1992, Reference Recordings RR-45CD.
century, the other two being Jascha Heifetz and Mischa Elman. He entered the St. Petersburg Conservatory at age eleven and by age seventeen was considered a mature artist, and thus began what was to be a long, successful career as a concert violinist. He moved to Berlin and then London, touring Europe extensively and, in 1911, made his first tour within the United States. He met and fell immediately in love with the American soprano Alma Gluck, and they married in 1914 and moved to New York City. The couple had two children, one daughter, Marie, and one son, the actor, producer, and composer, Efrem Zimbalist, Jr.

In 1928, while on one of his many worldwide tours, Zimbalist received a telegram from Josef Hoffman, then director of the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia, asking him to consider becoming head of the violin department at Curtis, which he accepted on terms that he could continue to tour. Thus began his tenure as a teacher and his forty-year relationship with Curtis where Menotti and Barber were already students at the time of his arrival. From 1941 to 1968 Zimbalist served as director of Curtis. In his first year he had the difficult task of removing under-performing faculty and replacing them with new ones, among whom were Menotti and Barber. Zimbalist had been the conductor at the Philadelphia premiere of Menotti’s first opera *Amelia al ballo* in 1936 and was a huge supporter and fan of Menotti’s compositional talents as well as of Barber’s.

The period surrounding the composition of the concerto was a very busy time for Menotti. In 1951 alone his film version of *The Medium* premiered in New York City on September 5, his orchestral tone poem *Apocalypse* premiered in Pittsburgh on October 19, and his made-for-TV opera *Amahl and the Night Visitors* was aired for the first time

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on December 24. The first professional stage production of *Amahl* was given on April 9, 1952 and in December 1952 came the Violin Concerto premiere. Both years are peppered with smaller pieces also composed and premiered during this hectic time. It is no wonder then that Menotti was late in meeting his deadlines for the concerto, however notorious he was for last minute completions and revisions. According to Zimbalist’s biographer and former student Roy Malan, Zimbalist recalled: “I received the last movement only two weeks before the performance.” Malan continues, “He very much liked the work and reveled in its lyricism. The only other violinist to take it up was Tossy Spivakovsky, despite Zimbalist’s untiring efforts to interest his students in the piece.”

Odessa-born, Berlin-trained Tossy Spivakovsky (1906-1998) was not only the next violinist to “take up” the Menotti Violin Concerto, he was the first to record it. In 1954 he was heard as soloist with the New York Philharmonic in Avery Fischer Hall and received the following review in *Time* magazine:

> Then…he launched into the amiable and sometimes pyrotechnic moods of Gian-Carlo Menotti’s two-year old Violin Concerto. As always, his tone was luxuriant, his pitch impeccable, and he brought the music to full-blooded life. From Manhattan’s experienced audience, the modern work drew down an extra round of applause.

Immediately one questions the reviewer’s meaning of the word “modern” in this context. Was he only noting that it was a contemporary work or that it was a progressive, forward-looking work? Further in the review his viewpoint becomes clear:

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Russian-born Violinist Spivakovsky learned to balance his repertory by experience. When he arrived in the U.S. in 1940 (at the age of 33), he already had 20 years of concert experience [mainly in Australia]. He could spin out the Tchaikovsky Concerto with every Slavic sob intact, and he was the master, in lofty interpretations, of the Beethoven and Brahms concertos as well. But as one of the younger generation of musicians, he had a strong bent for the moderns, the more “difficult” the better. He made his first big splash when he introduced the spectacularly demanding Bartok Concerto to the U.S. in Cleveland in 1943, continued to get billowing reactions wherever he played it…The word got around among U.S. orchestras: if you want to perform a modern violin score, get Spivakovsky. Temperamentally, that was fine for the fiddler, but to programmers and booking agents too much modern music is not for good business. Tossy Spivakovsky learned that there was such a thing as an unbalanced portfolio, successfully set out to rid himself of the modernist tag. Today, with a reputation as one of the most brilliant violinists alive, Spivakovsky usually limits himself to one modern work on each recital program. His aim: to live long enough to see the programmers demand more.  

The American premiere of the Bartok Concerto No.2 mentioned above was the only time Bartok actually heard the piece in performance. Spivakovsky also played its first performances in New York and San Francisco and was responsible for the premieres of many American composers’ works. In addition he taught violin at The Juilliard School from 1974-1989.

The same year as his Menotti performance (1954) Spivakovsky also recorded the concerto but with the Boston Symphony Orchestra conducted by Charles Munch for RCA Victor. Released in 1955 the album remained the only recording of the concerto for almost thirty years. At one time out of print, this classic recording has recently been re-released on compact disc in the United States by Haydn House in 2003 and in England by Naxos Classical Archives in 2008.

48 Ibid.

49 Kolneder, 528.
The time between the first and the second recordings saw very few performances of the concerto. Violinist Margaret Batjer (b. 1959), concertmaster of the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra since 1998, according to her LACO biography “made her first solo appearance at the age of 15 [in 1974] with the Chicago Symphony in Gian Carlo Menotti’s Violin Concerto.” Henry Mazur was the conductor.

Three years later in 1977 violin virtuoso Ruggiero Ricci (b. 1918) performed the concerto with the American Symphony Orchestra under Kazuyoshi Akiyama at Carnegie Hall in New York. Six years later on October 16, 1983 Ricci recorded the concerto in Santa Ana, California with the Pacific Symphony Orchestra conducted by Keith Clark for Varese Sarabande, and thus ended a twenty-eight-year drought. In some opinions his recording was much preferred over Spivakovsky’s. “The romanticism is flowingly done by Ricci without the shrill fire of the 1955 LP recording.” In 1998 the Ricci recording “was subsequently re-mastered by the die-hard devotee of vinyl, Professor Keith O. Johnson, for his Reference Recordings label.”

One other performance of note made between the two recordings was by Curtis alumnus violinist and conductor Joseph Silverstein (b. 1932), a former Efrem Zimbalist student and the longtime concertmaster of the Boston Symphony. On December 13,

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1981 Lorenzo Muti and the Curtis Student Orchestra accompanied Silverstein on the concerto as part of a weekend-long celebration of the music of Menotti or, as the Philadelphia Evening Bulletin described it, a “Menotti Feast.”

Again for a long period of time, only thirteen years this time, interest in Menotti’s Violin Concerto dropped off, and there were no additional recordings or major performances. In view of the first forty-four years of its existence, the work did not appear to be on its way to becoming part of the standard violin repertoire. However, the tide suddenly shifted in 1996, and the concerto has experienced an upsurge in recordings and performances ever since.

Conductor Dino Anagnost and the Little Orchestra Society in New York revived a number of works by Menotti including his Violin Concerto on a concert at Lincoln Center’s Alice Tully Hall on February 22, 1996 billed as a “Milestone for Menotti” 85th birthday concert. The soloist is not listed, but the reviews were lukewarm including one by Adrian Dannatt in London’s Independent in which he states that the concerto “had not been heard in New York since 1952 [not true], and sounded like it…Despite the olde-worlde aesthetics of the Little Chamber Orchestra, the music itself demonstrated that Menotti has been unfairly neglected of late…Menotti’s comeback must surely lurk in the wings.”


One year later in September 1997 violinist Mark Kaplan (b. 1953) performed the concerto in Belfast, Ireland, with the Ulster Orchestra under Kenneth Montgomery. Currently a violin professor at the Indiana University Jacobs School of Music, Kaplan began his career as a soloist in Europe in 1975, and his reputation rapidly spread internationally. The Menotti Concerto was still listed as part of his solo repertoire for the 2001-2002 season. Ian Wilson of The News Letter in Belfast, Northern Ireland, had the following comments on his Ulster performance: “The soloist in the Menotti was American Mark Kaplan, a fine and distinguished player who evidently enjoyed the work. Kaplan proved to be a very suitable interpreter of this work, possessor of an inherently lyrical tone…”

During 1997 and 1998 violinist Walter Verdehr (b. 1944) of the Verdehr Trio was busy recording the Menotti and Barber Concertos as well as the Concerto for Violin and Strings by Alexander Arutiunian with the Martinu Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Kirk Trevor and Leon Gregorian. Upon hearing this 1998 compact disc release, Menotti paid Verdehr the following compliment: “An impeccable and moving performance that, for a change, made me enjoy my own music.”

Robert Maxham had

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56 Verdehr also performed the work in 1991 with the Michigan State University Orchestra, with Leon Gregorian conducting, in hopes of enticing Menotti to write a trio for the Verdehr Trio.

57 Anna H. Harwell Celenza, “Gian Carlo Menotti,” liner notes for CD Romantic Violin Concertos of the 20th Century: Menotti: Violin Concerto; Arutunian: Concerto for Violin and Strings; Barber: Violin Concerto, performed by Walter Verdehr, violin, with
the following comments on the three concertos in his 1998 review: “While Barber’s Concerto has just about gained admission into the standard repertoire, Menotti’s, despite its drama, opportunities for virtuosic display, and straightforward appeal, remains something of a curiosity, while Arutiunian’s languishes almost entirely unknown.”

Michael Ajzenstadt in the Jerusalem Post offered this assessment of the work and of Verdehr’s recording: “The Menotti is a revelation: a beautiful, romantic opus, performed with amazing grace.”

In February 1999 longtime New York Philharmonic concertmaster Glenn Dicterow (b. 1948) performed the concerto in Avery Fisher Hall with his home orchestra conducted by Kurt Masur. The previously quoted review in the New York Times, although not enthusiastic about the concerto, was very complimentary of Dicterow’s performance stating, “The spunky moments drew an impassioned response from the violinist, though he didn’t quite let it all hang out, either, and like Mahler, benefited from that last ounce of reticence.”

Dicterow also can claim a connection to Efrem Zimbalist. Included in his list of teachers is Eudice Shapiro, a 1935 graduate of Curtis and former Zimbalist student.


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In order for a work to become more standard repertoire, younger generations of musicians must also deem it worthy of performing and recording. This has definitely become the case with the Menotti Violin Concerto. Since 2000 its three recordings and numerous performances have all been made by young violinists.

One of the concerto’s most fervent champions has been the Chicago-born violinist Jennifer Koh (b. 1976). According to her interview with Donald Rosenberg of *The Plain Dealer* (Cleveland):

…Koh came upon the concerto on “a kind of old, warped record” in the library at Philadelphia’s Curtis Institute of Music, where she studied with Jaime Laredo after leaving Oberlin. The out-of-print 1955 recording features violinist Tossy Spivakovsky, concertmaster of the Cleveland Orchestra from 1942-1945, with Charles Munch and the Boston Symphony. To say the least, Koh was bowled over by the music…“One of the great things about this piece is it’s so lyrical,” Koh said. “There’s something very familiar to those who listen to Menotti’s music, whether it’s opera or cantatas. It’s very vocal, which is perfect for the violin. It has a beautiful kind of simplicity and yet a beautiful kind of sophistication to the sound within the orchestra.” As a champion of neglected and new music, Koh jumped at the chance to play and record Menotti’s concerto…

Koh’s July 2001 live recording of the Menotti Concerto released on Chandos in 2002 - a performance that was part of a ninetieth birthday celebration for Menotti at the Spoleto Festival in Italy - has received mixed reviews including the following:

Jennifer Koh, a young Curtis graduate, another of the fine female violinists that institution is turning out, unfortunately misses the point of this concerto. Her smallish tone does not fit the piece, and both she and Hickox tend to be literal.

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Koh masters this difficult concerto with a clear and radiant tone, but the work could use a richer, more romantic interpretation. It is very well suited, indeed, to Jennifer Koh, whose tone is beautiful but slim; she plays a fine Stradivarius but never forces it.

Wonderfully played by the young Korean-American violinist Jennifer Koh, Menotti’s Violin Concerto is a work that orchestras should consider now that pretty melodies and traditional harmony are again fashionable.

Other orchestras have considered the concerto worthy of programming, featuring Koh on the work on numerous occasions in the United States and Great Britain. On August 23, 2003 as part of the final concert of the Blossom Music Festival, summer home of the Cleveland Orchestra, Koh performed the concerto with the Cleveland Orchestra under Jahja Ling and received this glowing review from Donald Rosenberg, her previous interviewer:

Her Blossom performance provided a gorgeous introduction to a piece steeped in Romantic tradition and thoroughly removed from the avant-garde leanings of the mid-20th century. Koh applied fragrant sweetness to the poetic writing and fierce vigor to Menotti’s dramatic statements. Her tone projected clearly and soaringly into the cool night air, partly because of the 1727 Stradivarius she has played for six years. Ling was as accommodating a collaborator as can be imagined, and the orchestra played the unfamiliar piece with ample panache and sensitivity.

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Elaine Guregian of the *Ohio Beacon-Journal* was also complimentary in her review of Koh’s performance:

Violinist Jennifer Koh, making her Cleveland Orchestra debut, sounded perfectly integrated into the orchestral fabric. Koh chose the Violin Concerto of Gian Carlo Menotti for her debut, and she couldn’t have picked a better vehicle to show off her considerable powers of musicianship and persuasion. She is a gung-ho advocate for this work of mid-20th century romanticism. Koh’s suave technique and alert musicianship helped her put across the lyricism that is always present in the work and also let it sound utterly fresh. It was terrific to hear such a strong, intelligent personality from someone in the 20-something generation of violinists. Koh belongs on a short list of soloists to invite back soon.67

In 2002 the conductor Richard Hickox who conducted the Spoleto Orchestra in Koh’s recording, in describing a conversation he had with Menotti in 2000, stated that he told Menotti the following: “I haven’t heard every note of every opera as yet, but I promised him that I will try and record most of his music for Chandos. We have already made four recordings. This could be a ten year project.”68 It is only natural then that such a Menotti fan would invite Jennifer Koh to perform Menotti’s Violin Concerto with his orchestra, the BBC National Orchestra of Wales, which she did during the 2003-2004 season.

Koh’s most recent performances of Menotti’s Violin Concerto were in January 2006 in Santa Barbara, California, with the Santa Barbara Symphony under conductor Nir Kabaretti and in October 2008 in Camden, New Jersey, with its aptly named orchestra Symphony in C under Rossen Milanov. Daniel Webster in his review in the


Philadelphia Inquirer described the interesting programming as well as Koh’s performance on this opening concert of the 2008-2009 season:

Lots of C’s in the air Saturday as Symphony in C opened its season with a half-jokey branding effort that referenced tonalities, the city of Camden, and probably an unspoken reminder that Schoenberg once said, “There’s lots of music still to be written in C”…Milanov led stylish readings of Stravinsky’s nearly forgotten Symphony in C, Menotti’s not-quite-repertoire Violin Concerto [in A minor with the final movement in C], and Mozart’s big C-major Symphony No. 41…The leap to Menotti’s long lines seemed effortless. Violinist Jennifer Koh, who has also recorded the piece, commands a big, inflected sound, and in her playing found extraordinary eloquence in the leisurely melodies. Melody connects and explains everything in this piece. She made the virtuosic elements seem like the flavoring they are while pointing up the melodic references, hints and completions that make it such a satisfying work.69

The second recording of the concerto since 2000 was made by Puerto Rico-born violinist José Miguel Cueto (b. 1956) with conductor Edward Polochick and the Concert Artists of Baltimore for which Cueto has been concertmaster since its founding in 1987. Unfortunately for Cueto, while he recorded the work before Jennifer Koh in April and June of 2000, his recording was released by Sonora in 2001 just prior to Koh’s release in 2002 and was inevitably compared to her performance if and when it even appeared on the reviewer’s radar screen at all. In addition, according to reviewer Justin Herman, it suffered from technical issues:

Cueto is a fine virtuoso but the poorly balanced, somewhat mushy microphoning places his solo in a backward position and makes much of it difficult to hear. The Baltimore Orchestra I raved about some years ago in their recording of Menotti’s Sebastian Suite plays roughly…70


70 Herman, 137.
One possible reason for Cueto’s interest in the concerto could be that, while a student at Peabody Conservatory in Baltimore, his violin teacher was Ruggiero Ricci.

The Menotti Violin Concerto received its first Charleston, South Carolina, performance as part of Piccolo Spoleto, Charleston’s attachment to the Spoleto Festival USA featuring local performers, in this case the Charleston Symphony Orchestra. Because of a last-minute change in schedule, guest conductor Jooyang Ahn filled in for Bundit Ungarangsee, CSO’s Associate Conductor at the time. The Spotlight Concert on May 29, 2003 featured the violin concertos of both Menotti and Barber with CSO’s Concertmaster Isabella Lippi soloing on the Barber. Violinist Jason Horowitz (b. 1972), then Assistant Concertmaster of the Colorado Symphony and presently (since 2006) a member of the Boston Symphony, was the guest soloist for the Menotti Concerto. The review in The Post and Courier of Charleston had this to say of Horowitz’s performance:

Thursday’s Piccolo Spotlight Chamber series featured the Charleston Symphony Orchestra in a tribute to Spoleto Festival USA founder Gian Carlo Menotti… Jason Horowitz was featured in Menotti’s “Concerto for Violin and Orchestra in a minor” (1952). Horowitz played with elegant phrasing and managed a sweetness of tone that was remarkable considering how often Menotti placed the violin part in its highest reaches and then extended its phrases far above the orchestral part.71

The most recently released recording of the Menotti Violin Concerto features the young Israeli violinist Ittai Shapira with the Russian Philharmonic conducted by Thomas Sanderling. Although recorded in Moscow in July 2001 just weeks after Koh’s live recording was made in Italy, Shapira’s recording was not released until 2005, thus

avoiding the same fate as the overlooked Cueto recording. Reviews of the performance have been overwhelmingly positive and include the following:

Listening to this new recording from the young Israeli violinist Ittai Shapira, (another Julliard, Dorothy DeLay creation) I have to say I am impressed.\(^72\)

Ittai Shapira is a fine young virtuoso who plays with passion and verve and knows how to sing in the lyrical slow movement\(^73\).

It’s a work teeming with operatic largesse and songful plentitude and Ittai Shapiro responds with equal fervour, digging into the string and extracting some gutty sounds. Even high up Shapira’s intonation stays firm and his tone doesn’t become starved – sweetness is kept intact.\(^74\)

The young Israeli violinist Ittai Shapira revels in the jagged rhythms of the opening movement, which send him speeding around the instrument. His Guadagnini violin sings eloquently in the operatic moments, and Shapira introduces a Russian soulfulness in the central Adagio as the work moves towards a cadenza characterized by a quiet virtuosity. The final Allegro vivace dances along as the violin executes elaborate pirouettes around the orchestral accompaniment. Thomas Sanderling is highly supportive of Shapira’s flexible tempos, although it is a pity the sound engineer is guilty of spotlight solos in an admirable orchestral backdrop.\(^75\)

Ittai Shapira plays this gorgeous work with affectionate abandon and the sound is ravishing and very well balanced. Why don’t more violinists play this work?\(^76\)

\(^72\) Dubins, 222.


CHAPTER 3

ANALYSIS OF THE CONCERTO

Introduction

Menotti’s Violin Concerto follows a classical model and has three separate and substantial movements. The first movement, Allegro moderato, is in standard sonata-allegro form. However, the traditional first-movement cadenza is delayed until the slower second movement, Adagio, “an extended and lyrical three-part aria for violin and orchestra.”[^1] The final movement, Allegro vivace, is also in sonata-allegro form and contains a small cadenza just prior to the coda.

Musical Style and Influences

In addition to the solo violin, the score calls for piccolo and pairs of flutes, clarinets, oboes, bassoons, horns and trumpets, with timpani, triangle, tambourine, suspended cymbal, snare drum, Indian drum, bass drum, harp, and strings. Menotti’s use of a limited number of brass, as well as his omission of all lower brass, helps keep the orchestration light and supportive under the solo violin, never overbearing and competitive. As his biographer John Gruen states, “…the work treats the solo instrument with singular reverence, giving it a prime thrust over the orchestra, which is supportive in

the best sense of the word.” John Ardoin further describes the violin-orchestra relationship in the concerto stating:

Though formally it follows the same patterns as the Piano Concerto, there is less of a sense of concertare and more one of a virtuoso instrument supported by a virtuoso orchestra. The soloist dominates throughout; the orchestra is left to propose ideas or second them, ideas that are nearly always coached in violinistic terms. They leave no doubt where Menotti’s heart and interest lay while composing this piece for Efrem Zimbalist…His use of the orchestra, however, is of the greatest clarity and dexterity. Indeed it was Zimbalist the violinist and Zimbalist the personality that Menotti had in mind as he composed his concerto, dictating its style and character as well as possibly its musical content. Anthony Burton had the following to say about the overall feeling of the piece:

Zimbalist’s playing has been described as ‘noble, fine-grained, never extrovert’; and although the solo part of Menotti’s concerto is technically extremely demanding, its character is essentially intimate and lyrical, with a special emphasis on melodies in the highest register.

In a 1998 interview with violinist Walter Verdehr, Menotti described Zimbalist the player as having “a wonderful tone, but not a big tone. Everything was on the surface and silky.”

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79 Ardoin, 120.

He admits that he “would have liked more drama.” Zimbalist’s biographer Ray Malan included this description of Zimbalist the player and the person:

…what of touring virtuoso Zimbalist’s violin playing? In 1915 his friend Rawlins Cottenet opined that it was of rare and exquisite beauty, elevating and replete with fervor but restrained with the unerring instinct of genius. He considered Zimbalist’s art to be particularly conspicuous for the purity of his style and the lofty idealization of his interpretations. He compared hearing him to beholding a Madonna of Botticelli. ‘While the sensuous charm of a Boucher or Fragonard is not there,’ he said, ‘his is a higher plane of expression. It is emotionally uplifting by its inspired simplicity. The perfection of his intonation, the opulence of his tone, and the clarity of his finger technique is such that his execution admits no criticism. He is an artist of the highest order and one who has no superior.’

On the purely superficial, human interest side, with the accrued ingredients of age and maturity Zimbalist gained in a certain exoticism associated with his ties to Asia, his adventuresome touring lifestyle and his esoteric concert programming. Even his name, unusual enough to hold allure for the general public, signified to them a kind of mysticism resplendent in colorful silk shirts, steeped in vintage port and perfumed with Chinese incense and the fumes of Havana cigars.

Zimbalist’s style was right in line with Menotti’s own instincts as a composer.

In describing his influences, Menotti shared the following thoughts with Ardoin:

I would say that one composer who had a great deal of influence on me…was Schubert. I adore his simplicity, and I love the way he can communicate, can create something inevitable out of the most simple means...He can write a song where one single dissonance is more dramatic than all the banging and screaming of a big symphonic work.

Ardoin continues:

Menotti has also professed debts to Monteverdi, Mussorgsky, Debussy and, closer in time, Stravinsky. This is no mere lip service, as the close examination of Menotti’s music bears out. There is ample proof, for example, of Menotti’s long-


83 Ardoin, 12-13.
held conviction that “Stravinsky is an indispensable item in a composer’s workshop. He is like electricity: whether you approve of it or not, you can no longer do without it.”

Many of these influences are easily recognizable in Menotti’s Violin Concerto, as well as the influences of other violin concertos, namely those by Aram Khachaturian and Sergei Prokofiev (specifically No. 2 in G minor), both alluded to in the first movement. And yet, the work remains original and uniquely Menotti’s.

Tonally, the work moves from the ambiguous A major-minor of the first movement (only definitively determined by the final A-minor chord), through multiple key centers in the slow movement - including G major and minor, A major, and ending in D major - to the cheerful C major of the final movement. Dissonance is present, but mainly as a dramatic tool. Menotti explained his position to his biographer John Gruen (1978) this way:

Like dance, music is also the expression of the human body. All great music has the inflection of one’s breathing and is set in motion, just as the body is, by two fundamental values: tension and relaxation. By weakening and doing away with consonance, the contemporary composer has deprived himself of the very principle of motion. Dissonance has been castrated of its propulsive power. Much of contemporary music reminds me of the erotic excitement of an impotent man. To sing, you must breathe in and out. To walk, you must lift your leg and put it down again. Great music must breathe and must walk.

There is no melody without normal breathing. There is no musical form without a sense of motion, because it is traced in time. But music must also be given a sense of direction—which is not only of motion—and it is tonality which gives us a clear point of departure and arrival. Melody and rhythm establish the motion, tonality the space—a space again created by tonal tension and relaxation. Without these principals, music seems lifeless and purposeless.

He further elaborates on his views on tonality’s function to Ardoin (1985):

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84 Ibid., 13.

85 Gruen, 224.
…in destroying tonality, we have destroyed one of the most useful dramatic elements; tonality may not be necessary, but its dramatic role has not as yet been replaced with an equivalent device. For these reasons, I prefer to write in a simple, recognizable language.\footnote{Ardoin, 10.}

Menotti’s language is recognizable, but not necessarily simple. Romantic elements – key relationships of the third, enharmonic respellings of notes and chords, and ambiguous diminished $7^{th}$ chords, as well as $9^{th}$ and $11^{th}$ chords – abound in the concerto.

Also present are “modern” elements such as polytonality and the use of such scales as the whole-tone and the octatonic. Rhythmically speaking, Menotti’s frequent shifts in meter and his many motive transformations result in irregular and varying phrase lengths.

Melody is probably the most central element of Menotti’s style often attributed to his reputation as being primarily an opera composer. Reviewer Malcolm MacDonald attributes it to the “natural, innate lyricism of his musical language,” stating that “his unabashed deployment of attractive melodies…allowed him to communicate directly with a large audience.”\footnote{Malcolm MacDonald, “Gian Carlo Menotti,” liner notes for CD \textit{Menotti: Violin Concerto in A Minor; Cantilena e Scherzo; Five Songs; Canti della lontananza},” performed by Ittai Shapiro, violin, with the Russian Philharmonic conducted by Thomas Sanderling, 2005, AVS CD DCA 1156.}

Menotti described his thoughts on the importance of melody this way:

\begin{quote}
…when prose cannot say a thing, you turn to poetry.... When poetry can’t say it, you must sing it out. The aim is to reach deep into the human heart. Melody does that. I am convinced that every great melody is buried deep in the memory of all men. When a composer brings it forth, we all respond to it as though we had always known it.\footnote{Ardoin, 12.}
\end{quote}
Reviewer Joseph Magil claims Menotti’s Violin Concerto, “does all the things a concerto should do except give the listener memorable themes.”

Many would disagree including Anna Celenza who had the following praise for the concerto’s themes: “The radiant themes of the first and final movements are both lyrical and virtuosic, and they make use of the violin’s complete range around the orchestral accompaniment.”

Reviewer Robert Greene sums it up this way:

The Concerto as a whole has stronger formal structure than might at first be apparent, but its attractiveness lies in its rhythmic vitality, melodic tenderness, and the individuality of Menotti’s musical voice, as clear here as in his operatic works.

First Movement

Although the first movement of the Menotti’s Violin Concerto is in the traditional sonata-allegro form, Menotti’s treatment of the form is unusual. To begin with, the first theme, with its conflict between C-natural and C-sharp, is ambiguous in its mode (A major or A minor). As evident in the following chart of the movement’s basic formal structure (Figure 1), on the surface the movement is tonally in line with a piece in minor with the second theme area moving to the relative major key (C major), first introduced


91 Robert E. Greene, program notes for the CD Violin Concertos, Ruggiero Ricci, violin, with the Pacific Symphony Orchestra conducted by Keith Clark, 1992, Reference Recordings RR-45CD.
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<td>Introduction, m. 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Primary Theme, mm. 2-77</td>
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<td>Solo violin, m. 2, A major/minor</td>
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<td>Orchestra, m. 41, A major/minor</td>
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<td>Transition, mm. 78-81</td>
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<td>A minor to C major</td>
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<td>Secondary Theme, mm. 82-115</td>
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<td>Transition, mm. 116-121</td>
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<td>Closing Theme, mm. 122-134</td>
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<td>Multiple key areas, new themes</td>
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<tr>
<td>RECAPITULATION, mm. 244-324</td>
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<td>Orchestra, m. 244, A major/minor</td>
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<td>Primary Theme, mm. 244-257</td>
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<td>Solo violin, A major/minor</td>
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<td>Transition, mm. 258-278</td>
<td></td>
<td>(to A major)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Secondary Theme, mm. 279-306</td>
<td></td>
<td>Oboe, m. 279, A major</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Solo violin, m. 291, D major</td>
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<tr>
<td>Transition, mm. (305)-308</td>
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<td>D major to A major</td>
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<tr>
<td>Closing theme, mm. 309-316</td>
<td></td>
<td>A major</td>
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<tr>
<td>Transition, mm. 317-325</td>
<td></td>
<td>A major/minor</td>
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<td>CODA, mm. 326-361</td>
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<td>A major/minor</td>
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Figure 1. First Movement: Formal Outline.

by the oboe. However, Menotti changes to F major, the major key a third lower than A minor and a perfect fourth above C major, when the solo violin takes up the theme. In
the recapitulation the second theme area maintains this structure with the first statement by the oboe in A major and the violin statement a perfect fourth higher in D major.

On closer observation of the formal structure of the movement, one notices that the exposition and the recapitulation are strikingly different in length with the exposition a noticeable fifty-nine measures longer than the recapitulation. It is these extra measures and their subsequent removal that creates an especially interesting aspect of the movement. The extra material, as well as some of the movement’s thematic elements, appears to be derived from three violin concertos, Violin Concerto in D minor (1940) by Aram Khachaturian, Violin Concerto in A minor, Op. 82 (1904) by Alexander Glazunov, and Violin Concerto No. 2 in G minor, Op. 63 (1935) by Sergei Prokofiev. Reviewer Carl Robert also felt the presence of others in the movement saying: “Prokofiev lurks in the background as the strongest influence to my ear – there are similarities in the brilliance of orchestration, and in the harmonic language, a very flexible tonality.”

While these similarities surely exist, and Prokofiev’s concerto clearly exerts the strongest influence, the resulting work is not merely a Prokofiev imitation.

One possible reason for the inclusion of elements from these violin concertos could be that they are all 20th-century concertos by Russian composers and, if considered in light of Menotti’s intended violinist Efrem Zimbalist, could be a biographical reference to Zimbalist’s Russian homeland, his training at the St. Petersburg Conservatory, and his solo career. Other material and themes in subsequent movements, including a possible

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short quotation from the song “America” in the second movement, also allude to this theoretical reference.

In addition Glazunov was a composition professor at the St. Petersburg Conservatory while Zimbalist was a student there in the early 1900s and “was very proud of his top student at that time, the young Igor Stravinsky.” Glazunov wrote his Violin Concerto for Zimbalist’s teacher Leopold Auer but had Zimbalist read through the piece before he presented it to Auer. Auer performed the piece only once, but a memory slip in the long, difficult sixteenth note section after the first episode caused him to have to stop and restart the passage twice. He had Zimbalist replace him in its Moscow premiere, and thus began Zimbalist’s long relationship with the piece. According to his biographer Ray Malan: “In his last year, in preparation for graduation, Efrem was assigned two great warhorses of the repertoire, the Brahms and Tchaikovsky concertos. These, together with the Glazunov, became his signature tunes.”

Malan also relates a humorous story concerning Glazunov and Zimbalist. In order to graduate from the Moscow Conservatory, violin students had to perform a concerto with orchestra and a recital with piano. They first had to perform for a jury of professors and musical celebrities to determine their eligibility. On his teacher’s suggestion Zimbalist chose to play the Glazunov concerto. Malan continues:

Glazunov, pleased to have his concerto included, offered to spend a few hours on it with Efrem and ended up playing the accompaniment at the performance, where he demonstrated his dry sense of humor. Just before the second section a simple modulation takes place to prepare for D-flat major, while the violin resolves from an open G to an A-flat. Aware of Efrem’s well-known propensity for holding long bows, the composer decided to play a joke. Embarking on the appoggiatura

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93 Malan, 17.

94 Ibid, 37.
open G, Efrem was startled by a succession of unfamiliar chords that meandered in and out of several keys before finally resolving to the dominant of D-flat, as written. When Efrem turned toward him Glazunov was grinning mischievously.95

Menotti’s reason for including Prokofiev and Khachaturian is a bit more ambiguous. Prokofiev, although younger than Zimbalist, was a classmate in St. Petersburg and once helped Zimbalist with an especially difficult homework assignment. Khachaturian and Zimbalist, due to their age difference, did not attend school together, but were both judges for the Tchaikovsky Violin Competition during the 1960s. When viewed in light of the general artistic climate in the Soviet Union in the late 1940s and early 1950s, their inclusion could be Menotti’s way of offering support to those composers condemned by the Zhadanov decree in February of 1948. A number of Soviet composers, including Prokofiev, Khachaturian, and Shostakovich, were accused in the infamous decree of “anti-democratic tendencies in music,” “formalistic perversion,” and a fondness for “confused, neurotic combinations which transform music into cacophony.”96 Although aimed specifically at Vano Muradeli’s opera The Great Friendship, the Soviet cultural decree marked the beginning of a sustained criticism of their music, which was “officially censured for employing modernistic, politically incorrect musical techniques which fostered an “anti-people art.”97

95 Ibid, 39.


Shostakovich, who lost his position at the Moscow Conservatory as a result of the decree, was interrupted while composing his Violin Concerto No. 1 in A Minor and delayed its release until 1955. This was well after Stalin’s (and Prokofiev’s) deaths in 1953 and the subsequent thaw in the artistic climate had taken hold. The years in between, though, were difficult ones for the targeted composers. Phillip Huscher describes their situation as follows:

Although each of the composers attacked confessed complicity with the “cult of atonality, dissonance, and discord,” it was difficult to figure out how to write music of atonement that was, at the same time, honest work.98

Much of the inserted material in the first movement is based on more atonal and discordant harmonies and melodies than the surrounding material and is based on pieces written before 1948.

Below is a more detailed diagram of the first movement (Figure 2) with the exposition and recapitulation presented side-by-side for easier comparison. One can see how straightforwardly traditional the recapitulation is, as well as how much extra material has been added to the exposition. Before examining the added material, though, it is important to first consider the framework surrounding it.

When compared to the arrangement of Menotti’s recapitulation, the exposition’s primary theme area has definitely been rearranged and enhanced. Instead of the more traditional orchestral statement of the theme followed by the solo violin statement and then a transition to the second theme area as found in the movement’s recapitulation, the exposition begins with the solo violin statement followed by the transition to the second

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98 Huscher, “Dmitri Shostakovich.”
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<td>THEME I: Violin, mm. 2-10</td>
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<td>TRANSITION I: mm. 11-23</td>
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<td>THEME II: Oboe, mm. 82-93; Violin, mm. 94-115</td>
<td>THEME II: Oboe, mm. 279-290; Violin, mm. 291-306</td>
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<td>TRANSITION II: mm. 116-121</td>
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<td>CLOSING THEME: mm. 122-134</td>
<td>CLOSING THEME: mm. 309-316</td>
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<td>Alternating Theme I motive and Closing Theme motive: mm. 142-152</td>
<td>Transition (Theme I Motive): mm 326-339</td>
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<td>Theme I, inverted (AM/m): mm. 185-188</td>
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<tr>
<td>Development Closing Theme: mm. 233-243</td>
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Figure 2. First Movement: Detailed Formal Outline.
theme area. However, the progression is interrupted by contrasting inserted material, which is then followed by the orchestral statement of the first theme. When the solo violin takes up the theme motive, it is again interrupted with inserted material which eventually leads to a transition based on the primary theme motive. Only then does the exposition finally arrive at the secondary theme area.

The first movement’s primary theme (Figure 3a), presented by the violin after a one-measure orchestral introduction, has many elements in common with the primary theme of Prokofiev’s Violin Concerto No. 2 in G minor, also first presented by the violin, but without orchestral accompaniment. When the initial motive of the Menotti theme is transposed down a major second to G minor (Figure 3b), the similarities are more apparent. The motives are comprised of the exact same notes, with the exception of the B-natural (C-sharp in the original key) in the Menotti. Furthermore, the second phrase of the Prokofiev, starting in measure nine and played by the orchestra, moves up a major third to B minor. The Menotti second phrase also moves to B minor (Figure 3c),

![Figure 3a. First Movement: Primary Theme, mm. 1-10.](image)
Figure 3b. Prokofiev: First Movement Primary Theme, First Phrase, Original Key, mm. 1-3; Menotti: First Movement Primary Theme, First Phrase, Transposed Down a Major Second, mm. 2-3.

Figure 3c. Prokofiev: First Movement Primary Theme, Second Phrase, Original Key, mm. 9-11; Menotti: First Movement Primary Theme, Second Phrase, Original Key, mm. 7-8.

however, by moving up only a major second. One final observation about the Menotti primary theme concerns the final two measures, which appear to forecast the upcoming conflict in much of the movement between the two concertos’ keys centers of A minor and G minor.

The primary theme is followed by a somewhat standard transition beginning in measure 11 based on the first theme’s motives with a high A-natural (m. 14) soaring above the orchestra in the solo violin. Dissonances, especially those of juxtaposed major
and minor seconds, are usually resolved tonally. However, things start to go awry as the transition progresses and, starting in measure 24 (Figure 4), tonal analysis becomes difficult. This is the beginning of the first section of inserted material. The violin’s top note has now dropped down to a high G-natural, but the underlying harmonies are contradictory in nature. The basses alternate between G-flat and G-natural, the violas between B-flat and A-natural, the bassoons between E-flat and E-natural, and the violin and clarinet parts include all these notes, plus an additional D-flat. The subsequent material only prolongs the confusion while it leads up to a short, exclamation point of a chord on beat three of measure 26 which consists of an A major triad with a B-flat in the bass. This is followed by a downward flourish in the solo violin beginning on high G-natural and sequencing lower and lower at the interval of the perfect fifth to a low B-flat at the beginning of a new section marked Più mosso (m. 29).

Figure 4. First Movement: Transition, m. 24.

Analysis of the new section gives clues to the confusion leading up to it. From the first measure (Figure 5), it becomes obvious that this section is not based on a diatonic collection, although major and minor triads, as well as half-diminished and
diminished 7ths, are present. Instead the measure is based on an almost complete octatonic collection, specifically OCT\textsubscript{01} (missing A-natural and including a B-natural as a chromatic passing tone on the final eighth note). After a repeat of the measure, the following two measures (mm. 31-32) are based on OCT\textsubscript{23}. After closer examination, including a reexamination of the previously confusing material beginning in measure 25 and leading up to this section, it becomes apparent that the whole section, from measure 25 to the orchestral statement of the movement’s first theme in measure 42, is based on the octatonic collection and its subsets.

Figure 5. First Movement: Inserted Section, Theme A, m. 29.

Further analysis of the inserted section gives clues to the material and to other elements of the movement, as well as to Menotti’s possible reasons for using the octatonic collection. The thematic material, especially in measures 29-32, is very dark sounding as the violin stays mainly in its low range. In fact, the measures could all be played on the G-string for a darker, more intense color. Although not directly a copy of Prokofiev, the style, as well as the employment of the octatonic collection, is most definitely similar. The theme in measure 34 is further developed later in the exposition
and the accompaniment is clearly Prokofiev based (to be discussed later). According to theorist Joseph N. Straus:

The octatonic collection has been another post-tonal favorite, particularly in the music of Bartók and Stravinsky. This collection, 8-28 (0134679T), has many distinctive features. First, it is highly symmetrical, both transpositionally and inversionally. It maps onto itself at four levels of transposition and four levels of inversion. As a result, it has only three distinct forms (just like its complement, the diminished-seventh chord)...Its subset structure is comparably restricted and redundant. Like the octatonic collection itself, many of its subsets are inversionally and/or transpositionally symmetrical...the octatonic collection contains many familiar formations, and...these always occur multiple times.\(^9^9\)

The subsets of OCT\(_{01}\), for example, include major and minor triads; minor and dorian tetrachords; and minor, dominant, half-diminished, and diminished seventh chords.

Although the triads and seventh chords do not function as they would in tonal music, they have much in common with tonal harmonies and still sound familiar. When considered in the context of the four concertos, the major and minor triads of their key centers, subset (037), are contained in the different octatonic collections in the following manner:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{OCT}_{01} & \text{ contains A-C-E / A-C\#-E} \\
\text{OCT}_{12} & \text{ contains G-Bb-D} \\
\text{OCT}_{23} & \text{ contains D-F-A}
\end{align*}
\]

Menotti makes use of all three collections in the inserted material in the movement.

Like measure 29, measure 25 is also based on OCT\(_{01}\), but with C-natural missing instead of A-natural. The missing C-natural shows up in measures 29-30 as the basis for a half-diminished seventh chord, subset (0258), outlined in the harp and further established by the sustained C-natural in the basses and B-flat in the French horn. Above the half-diminished chord the solo violin part consists of groups of three eighth notes on

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each beat, which form other subsets of OCT$_{01}$. On beat one of measure 29 an E diminished-seventh chord (missing G-natural), subset (0369), is spelled out, but sounds to the ear like a B-flat diminished triad (E-natural = F-flat), subset (037). However, both chords are subsets of OCT$_{01}$. Since the following C major and E-flat minor triads are also part of the subset (037), the latter interpretation seems the correct one. However, the following measures also include two subsets (037) and one subset (0369), again a diminished seventh chord missing a note, the fifth, and in an order this time that sounds diminished. The final beat of these four measures (mm. 29-32) consists of a downward chromatic passage. The next measure (m. 33) is based on OCT$_{12}$ with a rising chromatic line in the solo violin on beats three and four.

In the transition beginning in measure 34 the dissonance gradually dissipates as it moves back to the A major/minor of Menotti’s primary theme. A new motive is introduced in the solo violin (Figure 6), which is sequenced up from F-natural to G-natural (m. 36) to A-natural (m. 38) to B-natural, C-natural, and D-natural (m. 39, beats one, three, and four) finally arriving on E-natural, scale degree five in A minor, the key of the following measures and the orchestral statement of the primary theme. Natural and melodic A minor scales in the solo violin in measures 38-39 also help propel the shift to tonality. The orchestral accompaniment in measure 34, as seen in the example, and in measure 36, still contains elements of the octatonic collection, but by measure 38, the harsher dissonances begin to subside. The final chord, however, is quartal.
The orchestra begins its statement of the primary theme (m. 41) and the first phrase is basically a repeat of the violin’s first phrase. However, the cellos begin the second phrase one beat early with the violins entering as normal but in imitation with the cellos. The phrase is then altered by the inclusion of a new variation on the motive in measures 47-48 (Figure 7a), which hints at the inserted material in the next measures when the violin enters with the primary motive in D minor. This inserted material (mm. 49-52) closely resembles a phrase from the slow movement of the Khachaturian Violin Concerto (Figure 7b), which, in the original, is repeated multiple times and is easily recognizable. The Menotti violin phrase then ends with the new variation first introduced in the orchestra (Figure 7c).

Figure 7a. First Movement: Orchestral Primary Theme, Variation, mm. 47-48.
A short transition (measures 54-56), based on the primary motive, leads back to another octatonic section at measure 57. Menotti introduces another Prokofiev-like motive in the solo violin based on the first inversion triad so prevalent in the Prokofiev’s first movement (Figure 8). The contour, if not the exact intervals, of the three-note motive and of the first three beats of the measure are imitated in the following measures. The three-note motive is developed further by inversion, retrograde, and retrograde inversion. The accompaniment is an elaboration on a motive introduced in measure 34, which had four voices moving up and back at different intervals, namely major and minor thirds with a tritone in the upper voice. In measure 57 all four voices move a minor third
resulting in many parallel thirds, fourths, and sixths. The orchestration is very sparse with the violin accompanied only by pianissimo winds and then pizzicato strings starting in measure 59.

Menotti’s manipulation of the octatonic collection is very interesting in this section. For the most part measure 57 is based on $\text{OCT}_{12}$. However, on beat three the second bassoon plays an E-flat, and on the fourth beat in the orchestra, and the fourth beat plus one eighth from the previous beat in the solo violin, the $\text{OCT}_{01}$ of the following measure is anticipated. The passing B-natural on the last sixteenth note of the solo violin is reminiscent of the first octatonic section (m. 29). The same thing happens again in measure 58 when $\text{OCT}_{23}$ is introduced early.

![Figure 8](image)

Figure 8. First Movement: Inserted Theme A’, mm. 57-59.

The harmonic rhythm of the following section (mm. 59-61), in 9/8, slows down considerably (Figure 9). The orchestra changes every measure while the solo violin changes every two beats, in hemiola. To the ear, the measures sound polytonal and tritone relationships are plentiful. The cellos and violas appear to be in one key, the violins in
another, and the solo violin in yet another. On closer examination, measures 59-60 appear to be based on OCT\textsubscript{23}, with the exception of the first two beats in the solo violin in measure 59 which are based on OCT\textsubscript{12}. Even though measures 61 and 62 are still based on OCT\textsubscript{01}, the shift back to tonality has already commenced. The harmonic rhythm quickens, with changes happening every beat. The accompaniment is similar to that of the primary theme, but with parallel fifths in the harp and strings as the harmonies shift to the E minor of the closing theme in measure 67. The violinist’s highest point in the transition is, again, a high G-natural (m. 4) from which the violin descends to a low E-natural in the closing theme (m. 67).

Figure 9. First Movement: Inserted Theme A’, mm. 59-61.
One other interesting aspect of the section in measures 59-61 is found in Menotti’s choice of subset chords derived from the octatonic collection. In measure 59 the cello and viola part consists of an arpeggiated A-diminished triad, while the violins are playing a B-major seventh chord enharmonically spelled with a passing F-natural. In the following measure the violins change to a G-sharp diminished seventh arpeggio and the cellos and violas to an F-sharp diminished seventh. In the third measure the violins take up the F-sharp diminished seventh from the low strings while the cellos and violas change to C-sharp diminished seventh with an anticipatory C-sharp on the final eighth note of the previous measure. Menotti’s choice of diminished seventh chords is rooted in his Romantic leanings. One of the most inversionally symmetrical chords/set classes, the diminished seventh was often employed as a pivotal chord to be re-written enharmonically and used to modulate unexpectedly. However, in this instance, Menotti seems to use them more as a way to shift from the octatonic collection back to tonality.

A final comment about these important measures involves the passing F-natural in measure 59 in the second violins. The note is sandwiched between an E-flat and an F-sharp, and the three notes form the octatonic subset (013) in inversion. These same three notes are also found during the first octatonic transition area, specifically in measure 27 in the first violins, as part of a four-note figure. The first violins, in the previous measure, also play a transposition of the same inverted subset on the notes B-flat, C-natural, and C-sharp. These same notes are used, again in transition (m. 54), and played by the winds and French horns.

The closing section of the exposition, beginning in measure 67, is firmly set in E minor, moving from tonic (mm. 67-69) to sub-dominant (mm. 70-71) to dominant (m.
72) and back to tonic (m. 73). The thematic material in the solo violin is clearly a variation on the theme in measure 34 (Figure 10). The orchestral accompaniment is directly based on the transition to the recapitulation of the first movement of the Prokofiev concerto (Figure 11). Menotti, also, once again anticipates this new material in the orchestral accompaniment in the previous two transitional measures (mm. 65-66).

The motive is simply a descending chromatic line of varying lengths moving downwards from E-natural and B-flat. In measure 73 the intensity grows until measure 78, one of the rare times Menotti has all four brass instruments play. A four-measure transition (mm. 78-83) finally leads into the secondary theme area.

Figure 10. First Movement: Inserted Theme A’’, mm. 67-68.
Figure 11. Prokofiev: Transition to Recapitulation, mm. 179-183.

Figure 12. First Movement: Inserted Theme A''', mm. 75-77.
The secondary theme (beginning in m. 82) contrasts in many ways with the primary theme. In addition to being very firmly set in a major mode (C major in the exposition, A major in the recapitulation), the harmonic language is much simpler and far less dissonant. Tonic, sub-dominant, and dominant functioning chords abound. The result is a section that stands out in relief after the dissonance of the first theme area and its inserted octatonic material. The occasional dissonance, for example, measures 93 and 98, are formed by Menotti’s curious insertion of an A-major chord (F-sharp major in the recapitulation).

The theme itself appears to be an augmentation of the lyrical part of the Khachaturian concerto’s first theme (Figure 7b). This is especially apparent when compared with the solo violin’s entrance of the Menotti theme, which is condensed from the orchestral version by one beat and resembles the Khachaturian even more closely. In the exposition the theme is in F major, the relative major of the Khachaturian’s D minor (Figure 13), and the pitches, although up one octave, are almost identical.

![Figure 13. Khachaturian: First Movement Primary Theme, Second Phrase, mm. 15-17; Menotti: First Movement Secondary Theme, First Phrase, mm. 94-95.](image-url)
Three other motives are important to the secondary theme area, and the first two are clearly derived from the secondary theme. The first one (Figure 14a), presented in m. 91, is accompanied by a four-note descending chromatic line reminiscent of the Prokofiev-derived accompaniment of the closing theme. It is used extensively in the development section. The second motive is used to extend the solo violin’s second phrase (mm. 100-115) and is first stated in measures 104-105 (Figure 14b). The motive could also again be derived from Khachaturian’s second movement motive above. This motive also plays an extensive role in the following transition, in sequence with sustained whole notes in the solo violin (mm. 116-119), as well as in the development. The third motive is found in the violin’s extended material in measure 111 (Figure 14c) and is also sequenced in the subsequent transition (mm. 120-121) to the closing theme.

Figure 14a. First Movement: Secondary Theme Area Motive, mm. 91.

Figure 14b. First Movement: Secondary Theme Area Motive, m. 104.

Figure 14c. First Movement: Secondary Theme Area Motive, m. 111.
Although measure 120 is marked Tempo I, the closing theme actually begins two bars later (Figure 15c). The two measures instead contain the motive from the secondary theme area (Figure 14c) sequenced up in the orchestra while the solo violin plays a rapid sixteenth-note passage that continues into the next section. The closing theme is a cheerful tune, which continues the previous F major, and quickly transitions into C major (m. 125), the key of the final movement of the concerto. The section is, again, strikingly tonal all the way to the development (begins m. 142) with the exception of two instances. Just as the listener is lulled into thinking the movement had made a major shift into diatonic tonality, Menotti throws in a little spice (m. 136, m. 140). After he introduces a new motive in measure 135 (Figure 15b), the syncopation of the closing theme returns but with an A-flat below the C-major triad on the emphasized off-beat. He quickly returns to a more tonal approach for another three measures, but then repeats the gesture again in measure 140. In the following measure the orchestra comes to a screeching halt on beat three with a heavily accented C-sharp half-diminished seventh chord. The material leading up to it suggests that Menotti is suddenly moving toward a more dissonant section. However, after a grand pause, the solo violin enters alone softly and in E minor. Thus begins the development section.

![Musical notation](image)

Figure 15a. First Movement: Secondary Theme Area, Closing Theme, mm. 122-124.
The first section of the development (mm. 142-152) contains motives from very different sections of the exposition, presenting them together and out of order. As mentioned, the solo violin enters alone in E minor with the primary motive, which is then extended by the extension motive from measures 47-48. Under the solo violin’s sustained B-natural, the orchestra plays a measure based on the closing theme transition motive (m. 135) in G major. This is accompanied by an open fifth consisting of A-flat and E-flat which alternates with D-natural only to settle on E-flat. The solo violin drops out and the orchestra continues with the rising polytonal arpeggio-figure from the much-discussed inserted material in the exposition (mm. 59-61). The whole process begins again with the solo violin entering alone with the primary motive, but this time in the ambiguous A-flat major-minor anticipated in the previous measures. The motive moves directly into the inserted motive from the beginning of the second octatonic section (m. 57). The dual tonalities of C major and D-flat major/minor compete this time, and now the listener expects the next key area to be based on D-flat. Instead Menotti moves to E major and a new theme (m. 153) marked *dolce espressivo* (Figure 16).

Figure 15b. First Movement: Secondary Theme Area, Transition Motive, m. 135.

Figure 16. First Movement: Development, New Theme, mm. 153, 155.
The accompaniment of the new theme is a slower version of the first transition (mm. 26-28). A second statement of the new theme a tritone higher, but in G major, peaks again with the high G-natural in the solo violin. This is followed by a flurry of scales and arpeggios in the solo violin with very unstable harmonies caused by conflicting key areas and even quartal harmonies. This culminates in what, at first, appears to be a cadenza, although the set up is harmonically unusual. After only a short couple of measures, though, the orchestra re-enters on F-sharp and C-sharp, the dominant of the next section in B minor, which, again, was anticipated early (mm. 165-166).

The change in tempo, marked *poco più mosso* (m. 173), introduces yet another new theme, this time in 6/4 (Figure 17). Some similarities exist between this section and the second theme area of the Prokofiev concerto second movement (beginning in m. 19). For example, the triplets in the flutes parallel the flute solo in the Prokofiev (m. 28). However, the passage appears to have more in common with Sibelius’ Violin Concerto second theme area of its first movement, which is in 6/4. The left hand tremolos in the strings and solo violin are possibly a reference to the Glazunov. The melody could be based on the primary melody, starting on the third note, in the second movement of the Tchaikovsky.

![Figure 17](image)

Figure 17. First Movement: Development, New Theme, mm. 174-175.
The solo violin reaches its highest notes of the movement during the transition back to A minor that follows (mm. 178-181). The pedal E-natural (mm. 182-184) sets up a false recapitulation (m. 185) when the solo violin plays an inversion of the primary motive expanded with G minor references. Suddenly, the *poco più mosso* theme returns in A major/minor and proceeds through a fifth progression to a new section in C minor (mm. 194-201).

The new section consists of running sixteenths in the solo violin over a Prokofiev-style march complete with snare drum. The time signature switches to 4/4, and the material is based on the motive found in measure 34 and expanded in measures 57 and 58. The violin plays a high G-natural in the measure just prior to the section, moves up to a high A-flat (m. 197), and then A-natural (m. 199) before settling back to G-natural (m. 202). The orchestra, for the most part, drops out in measure 202 as the solo violin plays a series of G minor scales and arpeggios.

Three measures of the theme from measure 34 in the first inserted area are followed by a long passage (mm. 210-228) where two motives from the secondary theme area (Figures 14a, 14b) are conjoined with one another and then developed through many keys. The solo violin continues with its Prokofiev-derived, sixteenth-note scales and arpeggios. A fanfare-like motive (mm. 227-229) announces the end of the passage and heightens the anticipation of the recapitulation’s arrival. Instead, another four-measure, primary-theme transition marked *sempre più animato* is followed by a *Quasi presto* section (mm. 233-240) which sounds more like material found in a coda. In fact, it is this material that Menotti brings back to close the movement (mm. 355-357). The major and minor thirds in the solo violin outline a C-sharp diminished seventh chord. The
downward scales in the accompaniment, starting on E-natural (m. 233) and three bars later on G-natural, are octatonic and both based on $OCT_{01}$. However, both scales are interrupted by a missing note followed by a sudden shift, for a few notes, to $OCT_{12}$, only to return to $OCT_{01}$ at the end and for measures 239-240. In the coda section, the solo violin outlines an F-sharp diminished triad. The downward scale begins as $OCT_{23}$ for four notes, and then switches to a whole-tone scale starting on F-natural. The dominant-functioning transition in the solo violin (mm. 241-243) to the recapitulation does not spell out the traditional V or V$^7$ chord, but implies a V$^9$ instead.

The recapitulation (m. 244) begins with the orchestra stating the primary theme before the violin this time. However, in the third bar Menotti changes things by adding an extra five measures of material including the motive from measures 47-48 (Figure 7a). The violin entrance on the second phrase (B major/minor, m. 253) is very straightforward, as well as the beginning of the transition (m. 258). In the sixth bar again Menotti alters things by having the solo violin move up to a high B-flat (m. 262), then return to a sustained high G-natural (m. 267). The next six bars, beginning in G minor, contain primary motive development over a pedal G-natural. The G-natural pedal moves to G-sharp (m. 274), the accompaniment hints at the march-like material, and the solo violin soars upwards on a C-sharp minor arpeggio to land on a high G-sharp instead of G-natural and spirals downwards in only one measure. The last three measures of the transition (mm. 276-278) are interesting in its juxtaposition of material. The texture thins to solo clarinet, harp and lower strings while the solo violin returns to the dolce espressivo melody (Figure 16) of the development. The accompaniment consists of a G-sharp pedal underneath legato three-note arpeggios in the clarinet and harp, plus a
countermelody in the cellos, which, except for the G-sharp in measure 277, is based on $OCT_{01}$. The unison C-sharp on the final measure transitions with the second clarinet solo into the secondary theme area (m. 279).

The secondary theme is, for the most part, treated the same as it was in the exposition. The oboe makes the first statement (mm. 279-290) in A major this time, and the solo violin, the second (mm. 291-206) in D major. Motives have been rearranged a bit, though, and the transition measures at the end have been condensed and sound more abrupt as they move into the Tempo I leading to the A major closing theme (mm. 309-316). This time the transition motive (Figure 15b) alternates with arpeggios in the solo violin (mm. 317-325), for the most part remaining in A major/minor and leading into the coda section.

The coda begins with the orchestra further developing the primary motive (Figure 18) moving from F-sharp minor (mm. 326-327) to A minor (mm. 328-331) to C-sharp minor (mm. 332); all are third-relation keys to A minor. Chord progressions are also dominated by movement of the third. The C-sharp moves to C-natural (mm. 336-339), and the 3/4 to 2/4 alternating pattern is expanded with the 3/4 measures changed to 5/4 followed by 2/4. Above the orchestra is another virtuosic sixteenth-note passage in the solo violin, this time containing many chromatic scales. In the 5/4 measures the violin moves from C-natural down to B-natural and B-flat and then back up again.

Interestingly, Menotti follows this section with the same Prokofiev-style inserted theme A” in 12/8 found at the closing of the exposition (Figure 10, mm. 67-77). As is expected it is in A minor instead of E minor as before, but the harmonic motion is the same (mm. 340-350). The final ten measures are basically restatements of the primary
theme motive with three measures (mm. 355-357) of material based on the closing section of the development (*Quasi presto*, beginning in m. 233) inserted. As described earlier, the violin, in the lower voice, outlines an F-sharp diminished seventh chord while the orchestra plays a downward chromatic scale. The scale begins with OCT\textsubscript{23}, however, on the fourth note it shifts to a complete whole-tone scale beginning on F-natural. With a last statement of the primary motive, the struggle between major and minor in the movement is finally resolved on the final chord with minor triumphant. The solo violin ends on scale degree five, though, leaving an open-ended feeling to the final chord.

Figure 18. First Movement: Coda, First Section, mm. 326-339.
Second Movement

The second movement, Adagio ma non troppo, is a three-part aria that has been described as “haunting and meditative in mood.” Biographer John Ardoin made the following comments about the movement:

This *adagio*…spins a mood of bittersweetness again amid ever-changing metric designs. The cadenza separates the two halves of the movement, and it is charged with the unrest and sadness that permeate the whole. Midway in the cadenza, Menotti introduces a change in attitude – a bouncing, jiglike figure based on repeated notes and used to propel the soloist back into the mainstream of the movement and toward its ecstatic conclusion.

Again, the movement appears to have underlying biographical elements, especially in the areas included in Section A but eliminated in Section A’ (to be discussed later). Like Mahler, Menotti remains “tonal” while exploiting extended harmonies and chromaticism.

The “unrest and sadness” of the first section becomes more agitated near the end of the section just after a possible reference in the brass to the song “America,” and then gradually subsides just before the cadenza. The cadenza, although full of melancholy, also ends decidedly optimistic as the orchestra returns with the primary theme in A major. The “ecstatic conclusion” is a result of directed tonality as the movement ends quietly in D major instead of the original key of G major. The chart below outlines the formal structure of the movement (Figure 19).

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100 Celenza, “Gian Carlo Menotti.”

101 Ardoin, 120.
The primary theme in Section A (mm. 1-17) begins quietly in G major (Figure 20) with the solo violin, clarinet, and bassoon in trio. However, after the first phrase (mm. 1-5), the “unrest” begins. Open quartal harmonies and half-diminished and diminished seventh chords add a sudden exotic quality to the second phrase (mm. 6-11) which then elides into the orchestral entrance of the theme. The interplay between the orchestra and the solo violin during this section is interesting in that parts of the countermelody in the clarinet are then played by the solo violin. For example the violin melody in measure 5 is echoed in the clarinet. Then the clarinet melody in measure 6 is echoed in the solo violin two bars later with a slightly different rhythm. The second clarinet and first bassoon then play a syncopated and accented D-flat and C-natural at the end of measure 9 which is answered by the solo violin in the next bar, but with a syncopated D-natural, B-flat, and C-natural. The orchestral statement of the theme (mm. 11-18) is in D major. By the second bar, though, Menotti begins to alter the phrase length by having the solo violin enter two beats early when it takes over the theme. Two bars later the first clarinet enters...
two beats early on the third beat of measure 14, and the solo violin enters in imitation two beats later.

Figure 20. Second Movement: Primary Theme Area, mm. 1-18.
The second phrase is actually a transition to the second theme area in G minor. Once again Menotti forecasts material of the new theme area. Four measures before the key change (mm. 18-21) Menotti even introduces the new theme in the first violins. He also sets up movement to an expected chord, but, through semitone voice-leading coupled with enharmonic re-spellings and suspensions, twice sends them in a different direction (Figure 21). Also a Mahler trait, this motion is prevalent in the new theme area (mm. 22-37) and continues the sense of “unrest.”

![Figure 21. Second Movement: Transition with Deflected Cadences, mm. 18-21.](image)

The second theme, played by the solo violin, is heard in duet with the oboe (mm. 22-25), Menotti’s favorite instrument when he was younger. The melody sounds very pleading, as it sequences higher until about mid-way through the section when the solo violin is heard in a call and response (mm. 29-31) with the oboe. The two instruments continue their duet through to the end of the section (mm. 32-37).

The questioning of the previous section is suddenly interrupted by a subito forte (m. 38) and a quickening of the tempo (marked Più mosso), with the solo violin soaring upwards in unison with and an octave higher than the first flute. The writing for the

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102 “The Verdehr Trio.”
strings is very thick and Romantic in style. This is in stark contrast to the pulsating quarter notes heard up to this point and to which the strings return as the passage settles down. Also, the underlying harmonies of this third theme area are very chromatic with A major in the repeated motive battling with its Neapolitan A-flat major in an upper neighbor relationship (mm. 38-41). This is followed by the same motive up a perfect fifth with a similar relationship between E-flat major and E-major (m. 41) only to be interrupted by material that is infused with elements from the inserted areas of the first movement. For example, in the first two beats of measure 43, the strings play a portion of the octatonic scale OCT_{12}, and again on the first beat of the following bar, which is a condensed version of measure 43. The basses continue with OCT_{23} (m. 45) and with OCT_{12} (m. 46) but with its final two notes being the beginning two notes of OCT_{01}.

As the tension lessens and the outburst calms, the clarinet enters (m. 47) with a three-note motive, a subset (013) of OCT_{01} and the building block for the octatonic scale and for much of the inserted material of the first movement. In concert pitch the notes are A-flat, B-flat, and B-natural. The final dolcissimo ascending scale in the flute (mm. 48-49) begins with three notes from OCT_{12}, which overlap on the last note (B-flat/A-sharp) with six notes of OCT_{01}. The penultimate note, E-natural, begins four notes of a whole tone scale, which then shifts on A-sharp again to six notes of the chromatic scale. All of this, starting in measure 45, is over a pedal C-natural in the cellos. The solo violin further develops the theme from the beginning of this section over all of the first movement material.
The following section (mm. 50-58), again subito forte, is curious in the fact that Menotti appears to insert a short quotation (mm. 50-52) from the song “America” in the brass, again one of the rare moments when Menotti uses all four brass instruments at once (Figure 22). In A major, the countermelody in the bassoons could be construed as a variation on the motives of the secondary theme area of the first movement, especially measures 108-111. The tempo marking, Poco più mosso, agitato, and the agitato indication in the solo violin which enters four measures later (m. 53), are clues that this is the climatic moment of the section, as well as of the movement. The mounting tension is heightened by Menotti’s treatment of the solo violin motive. He shortens the length of notes, again contracting the motive, as he sequences upwards, all of this over a G-sharp pedal in the cellos and basses, and pulsated by the timpani. The final two measures (mm. 57-58) are accentuated on the first beats by a quick septuplet in the piccolo and sixteenths in the harp on the notes E-natural and D-sharp (respelled as F-flat and E-flat in the harp).

![Trumpet in C](image)

Figure 22. Second Movement: Possible “America” Quotation, mm. 50-52.

A quick diminuendo on the final chord (E-major ninth chord) leads to the next section (mm. 59-67), obviously the moment of resolution of the previous tension as it is marked Poco piu calmo. The pedal G-sharp is now respelled as A-flat (remains G-sharp
and D-sharp in the timpani). The quirky *dolce* motive in the winds in the first two bars (mm. 59-60) harkens back to the first movement and the thirds of its primary theme, as well as to measures 34-39 and measures 57-58. Menotti also changes meter at this point to the 12/8, reminiscent of the compound meters of the first movement. The motive could be described as polytonal, with the intervals of the fourth and fifth dominating with occasional moves to thirds. This becomes a sort of sighing motive (quarter to eighth note figure) in the orchestra, which sequences downwards (mm. 61-65). Suddenly it shifts to more tonal-sounding sonorities in measure 63 with a quartal chord on the quarter notes and a B-natural half-diminished on the eighths.

A change in attitude is also apparent in the solo violin at this point. Whereas the solo violin had been playing a series of upward A-flat minor scales followed by D-flat major arpeggios, the change in measure 63 to D minor scales (natural version) ending a tenth above on F-natural feels like a ray of sunshine. These scales also forecast the key areas of the upcoming cadenza. In the following measure it seems like the solo violin is even skipping for joy with its descending left-hand pizzicato sextuplets. The downward motion finally ends with the soloist landing on a G-sharp to A-natural trill for three measures resolving to a sustained G-sharp at the fermata before the cadenza.

The orchestra introduces a new theme in the oboe and flute (mm. 65-68) in B minor over the solo violin trill. Against the G-sharp/A-natural of the trill, the violas and second violins (m. 66) sustain F-sharp and G-sharp. The cellos enter with an upward scale (m. 67), which begins on A-natural. After a three-note subset (013) from OCT$_{23}$ it quickly changes to a chromatic scale ending on F-sharp. The chord under the fermata is a
compilation of all that came before and contains C-sharp, D-natural, F-sharp, and G-sharp. One possible explanation for this particular group of notes could be that the C-sharp and D-natural are included in OCT\textsubscript{01} and the F-sharp and G-sharp in OCT\textsubscript{23}. It could also be described as quartal as it contains perfect and augmented fourths. However, upon closer scrutiny of the measures leading up to the chord (mm. 65-67), it becomes clear that they contain all twelve tones, with measure 67 containing all tones except for B-flat.

Although the cadenza falls in the second movement, the thematic material, for the most part, consists of the development of first movement motives. Again, most of these motives are from the inserted material. The meter of the cadenza is interesting as Menotti shifts back and forth from simple time to compound time, finally settling on 12/8, the meter of the first movement, just before the end. Simple and compound times are linked when the orchestra re-enters in 4/4 while the solo violin remains in 12/8 for two measures. The key signature changes for the cadenza from two flats to no sharps or flats as in C major or A minor. For the most part, though, the cadenza maintains one accidental, i.e., B-flat. In fact B-flat appears to make up the key signature of this section, although a clear tonal center is not always apparent. The cadenza is comprised of three sections, measures 68-82, measures 83-94, and measures 95-98. Figure 23 provides a linear analysis of the cadenza, which will be explained below.
In the first section the twelve-tone approach leading into the cadenza is continued in the first two measures. The sustained chord on the last beat of measure 69 consists of the notes G-natural (half-step lower than the trilled note of G-sharp), E-natural, and D-natural, all notes that prove to be important in the overall structure of the cadenza. The missing B-flat is finally introduced in the following measures, which lead to a fermata on D-natural. Afterwards the next measures (mm. 72-75) hint at both F major and D minor with D minor dominating. The rising sixths and downward third arpeggios keep the ambiguous tonality feeling to the music. However, G-natural stands out as the most prominent note with D-natural second. Therefore, when combined with the E-natural and B-flat, describing the first section as being in G dorian mode seems the best choice.

The first section does move briefly to F major (m. 79-81), though, but with a G-natural pedal (mm. 76-77) and then D-natural pedal (m. 78) leading up to it. Movement to the dominant in measure 79 and a clear cadence on F major in measure 80 confirms the key, but the F-major respite is short-lived. The D-natural at the end of measure 81 suddenly moves up chromatically to D-sharp on the downbeat of measure 82, an unusual
and pivotal measure. Beginning on the D-sharp the solo violin moves up freely (marked *liberamente*), mostly by leaps, to a high A-flat using notes all contained in OCT₀₁. The violin then cascades downwards on an E-flat major scale landing on low G-natural in the next measure (m. 83).

A change to 12/8 with an added tempo marking of *Allegro* further marks the beginning of the second section of the cadenza (mm. 83-98). In G major for four measures (mm. 83-86), the *fortissimo* passage consists of a repeated open G in a fanfare-like rhythm. The motive could possibly be interpreted as being a variation on the inserted theme A’ (Figure 10, mm. 67-68) from the first movement. The solo violin rises up to a sustained high D-natural, and then heads back down again in sixteenth notes to arrive at middle C. The C-natural then moves down quickly through B-natural to B-flat, implying a shift to G minor. However, a better explanation could be that it marks a return to G dorian. The passing E-flats (D-sharps) from measure 82 appearing again in measures 90-91 serve only to accentuate the more prominent E-naturals. Along with the C-sharp and G-sharp in these measures Menotti appears to be once again anticipating the shift to E-natural and G-sharp, the dominant of A major.

The final section of the cadenza, marked Tempo I, is a simple *pianissimo* variation of the fanfare-like rhythm in measure 83 and consists only of E-naturals with the exception of two low G-sharps plucked with the left hand in the first measure. As mentioned before, these two notes imply an E major chord, the dominant of A major. The violin continues its jig-like rhythm overlapping with the orchestra (mm. 97-98) as it returns quietly with the lyrical primary theme of section A, this time, however, in A
major. In the overall scheme, it appears that the chord on the last beat of measure 69 forecasts the important structural notes of the entire cadenza and its goal of E-natural, approached from D-natural and F-natural, and of G-sharp, arriving chromatically from G-natural.

With the entrance of the orchestra on the primary theme, section A returns but in a much shortened version. The same quartal harmonies enter again in the sixth measure (m. 102), but the theme is altered. The quiet theme is interrupted by a sudden crescendo through *forte* in measure 104 and arriving at *fortissimo* for the following two measures. This leads directly into the third theme area (m. 107), which is much thinner in texture than the first time this material was heard. G major and A-flat pull against each other this time. The oboe enters briefly with a short passage (mm. 109-112) which circles around, but never plays, A-natural. As the music calms, the basses enter with a pedal C-sharp (m. 115) as the transition to the closing theme area begins.

The closing theme is unexpectedly in D major (m. 120) as the movement ends in a different key from the initial G major. The solo violin begins the section on the A-natural anticipation from the previous measure. Then begins a simple line comprised of scale degrees one, two, three, and five, ending the movement again on scale degree five (A-natural). The orchestra plays a single motive over an ostinato bass line in thirds, which is fragmented as the movement comes to a close. The oboes, however, enter in the fifth measure (m. 124) with the repeated motive, but in canon and in G major, the movement’s original key. The resultant final chord consists of bifurcated tonalities, i.e. D major and G major.
Third Movement

The third movement of Menotti’s Violin Concerto is a rollicking C-major finale also in sonata-allegro form. However, the movement has been described as being in rondo or sonata-rondo form. Malcolm MacDonald had these comments about the movement:

The finale is a joyous sonata-rondo in tarantella rhythm, its central episode an exotic quasi-oriental melody with a drum accompaniment that seems to recall the medieval tabor. Thereafter the level of bravura increases to a flamboyantly cheerful ending.\(^{103}\)

Robert E. Greene pointed out another element present in the movement in his comments:

The finale is a lively rondo, with variants of material from the first movement interspersed, in a version of the cyclic form concept.\(^{104}\)

It is true that Menotti brings elements from the first movement, and he also makes a reference to the second movement as well. However, the rondo descriptions appear to be incorrect.

One of the main differentiating factors separating sonata-allegro from sonata-rondo form is the return after the secondary theme area (or first episode) to the primary theme in the tonic. In other words the secondary theme section usually leads straight into the development section in sonata-allegro form, whereas in sonata-rondo form, a second statement of the primary theme section in its original key usually precedes the second, often developmental, episode. With these differences in mind, it would be more accurate to describe the third movement as being in sonata-allegro form, as the primary theme does not return before the central development section.

\(^{103}\) Malcolm MacDonald, “Gian Carlo Menotti.”

\(^{104}\) Robert E. Greene, program notes for the CD Violin Concertos.
Below is a chart of the formal structure of the third movement (Figure 24).

According to this analysis, the movement is indeed in sonata-allegro form. It is also the most straightforwardly tonal of the three movements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EXPOSITION, mm. 1-115</th>
<th>Orchestra</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction, m. 1-9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary Theme, mm. 9-60</td>
<td>C major to F major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transition, mm. 60-68</td>
<td>To A major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary Theme, mm. 69-105</td>
<td>Oboe, m. 69, A major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Solo violin, m. 87, D major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transition, mm. 106-115</td>
<td>(To C major)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEVELOPMENT, mm. 116-168</td>
<td>Multiple key areas, new themes; Material based on 1st mvt.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RECAPITULATION, mm. 169-199</td>
<td>C major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary Theme, mm. 169-194</td>
<td>C major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transition, mm. 195-198</td>
<td>C major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary Theme, mm. 199-217</td>
<td>C major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closing Material, mm. 218-246</td>
<td>C major (F major)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cadenza, mm. 246-253</td>
<td>F minor to G major (dominant)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CODA, mm. 253-266</td>
<td>C major</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 24. Chart of the Formal Structure of the Third Movement.

The orchestral introduction in the exposition contains motives that return often and at pivotal moments in the movement. The first motive is introduced by the winds
and strings and is loud and bombastic in nature (Figure 25). In contrast, the second motive, introduced by the French horn, is marked *mezzo-piano*, *dolce espressivo*, and is much more lyrical in character. Both are centered on G-natural and seem to imply G harmonic minor. A short *subito forte* chord (m. 9) marks the beginning of the primary theme area and the entrance of the solo violin.

Figure 25. Third Movement: Exposition Introduction, First Motive, mm. 1-2, and Second Motive, mm. 3-4.

Playful and light, the primary theme is accompanied by pizzicato strings when first introduced by the solo violin (mm. 9-18). The beginning motive contains the notes that have been key for much of the concerto, that is, A-natural, C-natural, and E-natural, plus G-natural and D-natural (figure 26). The first three-notes are the basis for much of the passagework for the solo violin, especially in the rhythm of the first three notes following this opening motive. The melody begins high, moves downwards with arpeggios, then back up again primarily with scale passages. The solo violin then plays the first motive again a third higher and the flute joins in, but in imitation. This is followed by an extensive sixteenth-note passage (mm. 17-27), which is sparsely
accompanied. Menotti has the solo violin play left-hand pizzicato (open D and G strings), in measures 17 and 18 and again in the following transition (open A and E strings).

Figure 26. Third Movement: Exposition Primary Theme, mm. 9-14.

The transition to F major begins in measure 28 with the G pedal in measures 28-29 moving to an A pedal in measures 30-33. Modal scales in the first two measures in the clarinet and then the unison flute and harp accompany the primary-theme, three-note motive in the solo violin. The following bars (mm. 30-31) are the only measures of the piece in 7/8. An upward scale in the solo violin (mm. 32-33) leads into the F major area and twice moves from G-sharp to B-flat, the half-steps on either side of A-natural, and then back down to A-natural.

The theme upon arriving in F major (m.33) is based on motive one from the introduction (Figure 27a) and is played by the orchestra. The violin enters eleven bars later (m. 44) playing a variation on this theme (Figure 27b). The first motive is similar to the primary theme and contains the same structurally significant notes, except the G-natural has been replaced with F-natural. However, Menotti is not merely developing motive one from the introduction and the primary theme. He is actually also looking
back at the first movement, specifically, the second theme area, and, more specifically, the solo violin’s statement of the theme, which is, incidentally, also in F major (Figure 27c).

Figure 27a. Third Movement: Primary Theme Area, mm. 33-38.

Figure 27b. Third Movement: Primary Theme Area, mm. 44-48.

Figure 27c. First Movement: Secondary Theme, mm. 94.
When compared with the two versions of the theme based on motive one, the similarities are undeniable. The significance of the keys of the secondary theme area of the first movement, on second glance, is more apparent now. (In the exposition they are C major and F major, and in the recapitulation, A major and D major.)

Menotti inserts a short theme from the second movement (Figure 28) in the midst of this F major section (mm. 42-43). The theme is from the third theme area (mm. 38-39), and is played by the violins (one octave higher in the first violins) and the French horn. Although the violins begin first, they are heard in imitation with the French horn.

![Figure 28. Third Movement: Primary Theme Area, mm. 42-43.](image)

Another passage of sixteenth notes in the solo violin (mm. 52-60) closes the primary theme area with the strings and flute interjecting the primary motive. The transition to the second theme area begins like the introduction, but with motive one centered on E-natural instead of G-natural. The French horn again answers, this time with an altered passage based on motive two over a C-sharp pedal (mm. 63-68), which leads to A major.
The secondary theme (mm. 69-116) is one of the most interesting and curious aspects of the entire concerto (Figure 29). First introduced by the oboe in A major, the relatively simple melody, with its repeated notes and small range, is accompanied by a small Indian drum and a tambourine. The change in color and texture is striking. The solo violin answers the oboe’s statement with its own, but in D major. The pedal A-natural and then D-natural clearly marks each instrument's version of the theme. The third statement of the theme, in the transition to the development and over a G-natural pedal, is played in unison by the oboe, flute, and first violins while the solo violin accompanies them. The G-natural pedal continues into the chromatically approached cadence in C major on the downbeat of measure 116, which marks the beginning of the development.

The thematic material in the development is almost all derived from the first movement with interjections at junctures of the two motives from the introduction. The first section (mm. 116-127) is not in compound time like most of the first movement, but
the triplets in the solo violin could easily be rewritten in compound time (Figure 30). The solo violin part is a more legato and tonal variation of the inserted material starting in measure 29 of the first movement with some half-step dissonance to adding some spice.

![Figure 30. Third Movement: Development, mm. 116-117.](image)

This section overlaps with the orchestra, which interjects with an exact version of motive one from the very beginning of the third movement causing the listener to anticipate a return to the primary theme area. However, this is interrupted by the solo violin, which starts a new section in C major marked *Poco meno mosso* (mm. 129-137). This time in 9/8, it is, again, based on first movement material. The orchestral accompaniment is very similar to that of the first movement’s primary theme. The bassoon solo is an augmented version of the unornamented theme (Figure 31a).

The section ends with a B-natural dominant seventh chord with an added A-natural (mm. 136-137), which leads, after a pause, into another statement of motive one in the orchestra, this time an exact copy of the version found in measures 60-62 which circles around E-natural. The solo violin again enters (m. 141) with its theme from the previous section, but starting an augmented second higher and in 12/8 this time. This expands further to 15/8 in measures 145 and 146. The orchestral accompaniment plays major and minor thirds, and alternates between C-sharp and C-natural in measure 141 and measure 143. The harmonies over the G-sharp pedal imply C-sharp minor (Figure 31b).
The G-sharp pedal continues as the French horn enters with motive two from the introduction transposed up a half step. The first violins answer this with the same motive transposed down a major third and played up on the G-string. The pedal note also
changes with the violin entrance to E-natural and is part of a dominant chord which cadences on A minor on the downbeat of m. 152, the start of the next section.

The final section of the development (mm. 152-168) has the character of a military march (Figure 32), again like the first movement. Instead of a snare drum, though, the material is accompanied by an insistent bass drum beat. The three-note motive of two sixteenths followed by an eighth from the movement’s primary theme is the basis for much of the solo violin’s material. The orchestral accompaniment consists of *staccatissimo* quarter notes, which continue through measure 165. The solo violin

![Figure 32. Third Movement: Development, mm. 152-157.](image)

begins statements based on the movement’s primary theme and is answered in imitation by the oboes and then the flutes. At this point this passage is very similar to the transition to the secondary theme area. The final three measures consist of upward motion to an E-
natural harmonic in the solo violin alternating with left-hand pizzicato of the open E-string moving seamlessly into the recapitulation.

The recapitulation (mm. 169-266) is fairly straightforward with themes and transitions condensed. Menotti does vary the secondary theme area considerably, though. The theme is heard only once, played by the violins instead of the oboe or solo violin (Figure 33). The solo violin, however, accompanies the theme with material similar to the march theme from the development. The Indian drum rhythm has changed to match

Figure 33. Third Movement: Exposition, Secondary Theme, mm. 199-203.
the solo violin’s line exactly. The second violins add some dissonant colorings with their D-natural against the E-natural of the solo violin and first violins on the downbeat of the first measure. After leaping down a major seventh to D-sharp, they climb back up chromatically to G-natural.

An extensive sixteenth note passage in the solo violin (mm. 217-241) begins to be peppered by the orchestra with variations of the two motives from the introduction. The solo violin drops out as the orchestra sets up the fermata before the cadenza. The solo violin joins on a high F-natural on the fermata and then sets off with a three-measure, sixteenth-note passage in F minor. A measure of G-major leads to the entrance of the orchestra which then moves downwards in parallel fifths while the solo violin, continuing to trill, moves up in parallel fifths. Three short quartal chords signal the beginning of the coda (pickup to mm. 253).

The primary theme motive is played in the orchestra while the solo violin continues its virtuosic flourishes building to the end of the concerto. In the middle of scale passages, the solo violin plays the primary theme motive in double stops (mm. 258-259). For two measures the orchestra trade off fortissimo chords (mm. 263-264), then the solo violin plays one more ascending arpeggio, this time a straightforward C major triad. The two accompanying orchestral chords, though, contain both G-natural and G-flat on the first one and both E-natural and E-flat on the second (a nod to the major/minor ambiguity of the first movement). The final chord consists of octave C-naturals.
CHAPTER 4

TECHNICAL AND PEDAGOGICAL ISSUES

When a recognized composer writes a new violin concerto, it is an event for any serious violinist. A surprise discovery of an older neglected work, such as this remarkable violin concerto by Menotti, is a treat, although a bittersweet one. It is unfortunate that, in the almost sixty years since its premiere, Menotti’s concerto has not secured a place in the violin repertoire. This could possibly be due to a lack of exposure, with many violinists not even aware of its existence. However, those who do happen to stumble upon it seem to be immediately intrigued.

Another factor that could have contributed to the concerto’s neglect might be a technical one. A composer’s knowledge and employment of basic technical issues of an instrument can be the difference between a composition which is idiomatic for the instrument and one that is not, between one that is playable with a reasonable amount of work (this, of course, varies from one player to the next) and one that would take so many hours of practice that the performer questions whether the unknown work would be worthy of the time spent. Although Menotti did consult Zimbalist on violinistic issues while composing the work, Menotti demonstrates in his concerto that he understood the intricacies of bowings, finger patterns, double-stops and chords, register and range, and special affects (left-hand pizzicato, tremolo, and harmonics, both natural and artificial). The playability of the solo violin part, then, should only serve to make the work that much more approachable. This is not to say that Menotti’s Violin Concerto is an easy
work. It is definitely a challenging piece, musically, stylistically, and technically. Yet the time it would take to learn the work would be well spent.

The first movement is by far the most difficult of the three, and the last movement is the least, although it is has its share of difficulties. The middle movement, with its long lyrical lines and cadenza, falls somewhere in between the two on the difficulty scale. Musically the first movement is challenging because it requires the performer to switch gears quickly from more tonal passages to sections often based on non-diatonic scales, such as the octatonic, whole tone, and chromatic scales. These scales do not always lie easily within the left hand. Generally the violinist’s left hand is set up on the fingerboard most comfortably with the interval of the perfect fourth between the first and fourth fingers. The various patterns of half steps and whole steps formed by the fingers within the perfect fourth create one of six possible versions of a tetrachord.

When playing one-octave major scales on the violin, only four tetrachord patterns are used, three of which are included within the perfect fourth and one which is formed when the outer fingers expand to an augmented fourth or tritone (Figure 34). The finger pattern used to play a one-octave major scale is determined by which finger begins the scale. The result is that any major scale can be played using essentially one of four finger patterns since the major scale is comprised of two major tetrachords. In addition the first four notes of any of the three versions of the minor scale form a minor tetrachord, which could also be limited to the four finger patterns, again determined by the starting finger.

Once a pattern is determined in the left hand, larger intervals can also be related to it. For example, within the first pattern a major third is formed between the first and third fingers, and a minor third between the second and fourth. The patterns can also be
maintained across strings for even larger interval relationships and when forming double stops and chords. The violinist is essentially always measuring the distance from one finger to the next within the framework of the left hand in order to play in tune on a fretless fingerboard.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STARTING FINGER</th>
<th>FINGER PATTERN (Whole Steps/Half Steps)</th>
<th>TYPE OF FOURTH</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1—2—3—4</td>
<td>P4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1—2—3—4</td>
<td>P4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>1—2—3—4</td>
<td>P4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1—2—3—4</td>
<td>A4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 34. Four Basic Finger Patterns on the Violin.

The mastery of all major and minor scales and arpeggios, as well as the related double stops, is an essential requirement for all violinists. The chromatic scale, which involves placing the fingers directly next to each other in succession, is next in line to be learned because it is still relatively comfortable within the hand, as it does not require any stretching motion. However, in order to play a whole tone or octatonic scale, the left hand has to constantly adjust its position on the fingerboard, which is why these scales would be learned only after the student has mastered playing in tune the more securely positioned major and minor scales.

Applying this knowledge to the Menotti concerto, one discovers, for example, that the first movement’s primary theme is very tonal and lies comfortably within the left hand. However, once the first inserted section begins with its unusual patterns,
everything changes. This section, and especially the passage beginning in measure 29, requires constant measuring of the distances between the notes and fingers and adjusting of the hand, aided by an acute inner ear predetermining the non-traditionally ordered pitches before they are played. This is also true for many of the other more dissonant sections of the concerto.

In addition to the standard détaché, martelé, legato, and spiccato bow strokes, other bow techniques are utilized in the concerto. For example, Menotti indicates that ricochet bowing be used on a number of occasions, most notably by the solo violin at the end of the second movement cadenza in the section leading back into the primary theme. The example below suggests a possible way to bow the motive. The up-bows of the motive could be played collé helping create a light, jig-like feeling (Figure 35).

![Figure 35. Second Movement: Cadenza, m. 97.](image)

Collé is also important in the last movement, namely in the solo violin part as it plays the first motive of the primary theme (mm. 9-10) and as it accompanies the secondary theme in the recapitulation (mm. 199-216).

As noted in the analysis, the solo violin often plays double stops and occasionally chords. Also pointed out were the moments when the solo violin plays left-hand pizzicato and tremolo, as well as harmonics. These effects definitely show off the violinist’s skill, but they also always serve the music. The most important aspect of
violin technique that Menotti does “show off” is its ability to sing. Menotti understands the violin’s essentially lyrical qualities and provides the solo violin with many beautiful melodies.

The Menotti Violin Concerto is a major, full-scale work with many challenges for the soloist. Therefore, a student must be proficient with their major and minor scales, arpeggios, and double-stops before attempting the work. Pedagogically the concerto could work well as a bridge between the concertos of Bruch and Mendelssohn and the major warhorse concertos by Sibelius, Tchaikovsky, and Brahms. It would also serve to expose students to music based on non-traditional scales and prepare them for 20th-century Russian concertos, especially those by Prokofiev, Khachaturian, and Glazunov.
CHAPTER 5
CONCLUSIONS

Menotti’s music has been criticized as being derivative, too Romantic, and not adhering to compositional rules, and these statements could all be equally applicable to his Violin Concerto. However, when closely studied and possibly viewed as a programmatic work instead of as a hodgepodge of mismatched parts, the concerto forms a unified and cohesive whole. Yes, the derivative comment might be true, but the borrowed music and styles serve a purpose and do not negate the originality of the work. Yes, melody is supreme and Romantic harmonies abound. However, as with the electronic music portions of his opera Help! Help! The Globolinks!, Menotti has demonstrated his knowledge of and his ability to work with modern elements with skill and ease.

Ken Wlaschin states in the foreword to his book Gian Carlo Menotti on Screen: Opera, Dance and Choral Works on Film, Television and Video that, “Menotti’s reputation today is a paradox…His music was never as simple as the critics made out and is not dated today. His operas may be melodramatic, fanciful, sordid, sentimental or poetic, but they are never bland.” Paul Wittke comments further, saying, “it is not secret that Menotti has never been the darling of the avant-garde. But even his detractors

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have never accused him of being untrue to himself. And there is a Menotti style; at his best, he sounds like nobody else.”\textsuperscript{106}

As to the fate of his music, according to Michael White in 2001, Menotti claimed “not to worry about the ultimate fate of his music.” White quotes Menotti as saying, “Things come and go…It’s fashion. And maybe fashion is against me now, but who does a composer write his music for? No one except himself. You do the best you can within your limitations, and I accept mine.”\textsuperscript{107} Obviously, at age ninety, Menotti’s attitudes concerning writing with the audience in the mind had changed.

Susan Feder, vice president of the music publisher G. Schirmer Inc., the sole publisher of Menotti’s works, wrote a letter to the editor in response to the somewhat dismissive article by Michael White saying:

Contrary to what Michael White writes, Gian Carlo Menotti’s music most certainly thrives beyond Spoleto, Italy. In addition to the evergreen “Amahl,” scarcely a month goes by in which there are not productions of “The Telephone” or “The Medium” on university and professional stages in the United States and abroad. A revival of “The Consul” last December at Washington Opera followed productions in the last five years at Lyric Opera of Chicago, the Finnish National Opera, Organización Musical Sud Americana (Buenos Aires), the Berkshire Opera and l’Opéra de Montréal. The Violin Concerto was performed by the New York Philharmonic (February 1999). Mr. Menotti’s works are also regularly performed in Finland, New Zealand and Japan, among other far-flung places, and the number of performances has increased steadily over the last 10 years. The glory days of opera on Broadway may be over, but Mr. Menotti’s music remains visible nonetheless.\textsuperscript{108}


As to the fate of his Violin Concerto, only time will tell. Hopefully interest in the work will continue to increase, finally securing it a well-deserved place in the standard violin repertoire.
APPENDIX A

POSSIBLE BIOGRAPHICAL ELEMENTS

Many components of the second movement point toward possible biographical elements, and, as Menotti seems to have included them in the first movement, it is not too far-reaching to look for them again in subsequent movements. After close scrutiny, the second movement could very easily describe Efrem Zimbalist’s relationship with his wife Alma Gluck. It was definitely a case of love at first sight for the young Zimbalist. Alma, who was six years his senior and a divorcée with a daughter, was a bit slower to warm to the relationship. As Zimbalist’s biographer Roy Malan recounts:

Zimbalist wasn’t the slightest bit hesitant in making his intentions known, proposing almost immediately, if to no avail. He reminisced: ‘Meeting Alma was the luckiest thing that ever happened to me. Her positive influence was tremendous. Despite my successes and travels I was still, at twenty-one, an innocent young man. Meeting her not only helped me to mature, but also protected me from the darker sides of life, of which I was so ignorant. At that time I was completely open to influence and could easily have fallen into all sorts of hands. Alma was probably the most extraordinary person I have ever met. I was only sorry that she didn’t agree to marry me sooner.’

Malan continues:

…the age issue apart, Alma had considerable misgivings about being able to combine a busy career with the sort of marriage she wanted the second time around. It was a thorny dilemma, one she wrestled with for more than two years.

It is their courtship and marriage that is possibly the basis for the movement’s contents.

\[109\] Malan, 113.

\[110\] Ibid., 114.
The primary theme is a beautiful lyrical melody that could be described as full of the passion and the urgency of an idealistic young man who has fallen in love. The conversations with the clarinet in the first theme area could represent Zimbalist and his accompanist and friend Samuel Chotzinoff. Chotzinoff was Zimbalist’s constant traveling companion and was present when Zimbalist first met Alma, and whom, no doubt, bore the brunt of many conversations about Alma. Chotzinoff had some misgivings about the relationship in the beginning, and the overlapping of the clarinet and solo violin, especially in measures 11-17, could easily represent their discussions.

The second theme area, as mentioned before, includes a duet between the solo violin and the oboe, Menotti’s favorite instrument. The oboe could represent Alma and the section could depict his proposal to her, her delay, and then her ultimate agreement to marry Zimbalist. In the beginning the countermelody is very different from the solo violin line. The oboe, which consists of a descending octave leap followed by an ascending minor third is repeated two measures later. However, in the fifth measure (m. 26) the motive is inverted, then sequenced up, and then joined with the clarinet in a sixteenth note passage quickly moving upwards (m. 28). The deflected cadences during this passage only help confirm the underlying tensions between the two. The texture suddenly changes in measure 29 to the call and response between the solo violin and the oboe. The oboe melody (m. 32) then takes the shape of the solo violin melody at the beginning of the section, while the solo violin begins to anticipate the rhythms of the following section.

The *Più mosso* tempo marking, coupled with the rich, romantic string writing and high soaring solo violin part in the following section could represent Zimbalist’s
overpowering joy. However, the oboe is not present. The unison flute, though, could represent Alma’s young daughter who was smitten with Zimbalist and very much in favor of the marriage. At the very end, as the strings move back to their previous pulsating quarter notes, the clarinet and flute have the last words.

The following section, with its possible quotation of “America” and heightened tensions can also be explained biographically. On June 15, 1914 Zimbalist and Alma Gluck were married in England, and, after Zimbalist’s highly successful recital the next day at Queen’s Hall in London, embarked on an extended honeymoon. They spent the first part of their honeymoon in London and then rented a cottage in Chamonix, France, in the Pennine Alps, near the Swiss border. On August 1, word came that Germany had declared war on Russia and two days later on France. On August 4 they invaded Belgium and were advancing on France. World War I had begun. Roy Malan recounts the couples experience this way:

Pandemonium erupted…Zimbalist as a Russian citizen feared being captured, though Switzerland promised to remain neutral…Neither did Zimbalist wish to fall afoul of the Russians, since he was of prime draft age and in wartime his military pardon was unlikely to be respected.

The Zimbalists were determined to return to the United States as quickly as possible. They made a hasty foray back to Chamonix for belongings; since France had declared war, the plan was to recross the Swiss border and head south through Italy. Their greatest immediate problem was financial—travelers’ checks, letters of credit and even paper money were now invalid. Gold was the only accepted currency, and they had very little of it. Stalled in Chamonix, their reserves dwindled. For days Zimbalist wrestled with consulates for help with funds and travel arrangements…Alma spent her last gold piece on a present for Abigail, from whom she had received a letter begging her immediate and safe return. Finally they were able to leave, via Turin, for Genoa, departure point for many boats bound for the United States.

At the French border guards separated the Zimbalists to search their baggage and persons; the fancy camera Efrem was carrying attracted the searcher’s attention. Alma returned to find her husband, red-faced, attempting to explain in
German... ’Es ist nur ein Apparat! Nimm es. Ich will es nicht! (It’s only an Apparat! Take it. I don’t want it!) But the Apparat, in conjunction with Efrem’s nervousness, nearly caused his and Alma’s internment.

They considered themselves extremely lucky when the Espagne nosed away from land and headed toward open sea and the freedom of America...^{111}

The accentuated E-natural and D-sharp in the piccolo and harp enharmonically could represent the tense time Zimbalist was having at the French border. The Più calmo and then the orchestra’s quarter-to-eighth-note motive could portray their arrival on the ship and then the swaying motion of the ocean. The switch in moods in measure 63 would coincide with their arrival in New York and the new more serious theme in the oboe and flute (m. 65), the reunion of mother and daughter.

The placement of the cadenza at this moment could represent Zimbalist’s first extensive tour away from Alma after the war. The trill of the solo violin leading into the cadenza is on the notes G-sharp and A-natural, the notes coinciding with the initials of Alma Gluck. It then moves to G-natural, which is also the closest to a tonal center of the cadenza. The E-natural at the end of the cadenza coincides with Zimbalist’s first initial and leads back to the primary theme, which is in A major. When these notes are considered in relationship to the rest of the movement, we find they define almost all the key areas except the D major in the second phrase and at the closing. The final A-natural in the solo violin and the E-natural and G-natural in the oboes also fit this pattern. The best explanation for the D-natural/D major references could be that the young couple had a collie named Droog. According to Malan, in 1915, while at their summer home at Lake George, Alma went into labor with their first child. Malan relays the event in the following way:

^{111} Ibid., 133-134.
Efrem and the maid, doubtless not calmly, put Alma into the Hudson and drove her to the nearest doctor, fifty miles away in Glens Falls. In all the excitement no one noticed that their collie Droog (Russian for ‘friend’) had hidden under the back seat, and three times on what turned into an increasingly frantic trip Zimbalist had to stop and tend to the unfortunate car-sick puppy.\footnote{Ibid., 141.}

With a name like “friend,” their puppy was obviously an important part of the couple’s early life together.

Finally, the sudden crescendo in the second phrase of Section A’ (mm. 103-106) followed by the third theme area could represent Zimbalist’s joy at returning home to Alma. The calm ending could represent the peace and contentment of finally being home.

In light of the last movement, it might serve well to revisit the secondary theme of the first movement, which returns here in such a structural way. The theme itself seems out of place with its major tonality set among the dissonance of the other theme areas.

Two explanations are now possible. Since the orchestra’s first statement of the theme is in C major, the same key as the third movement, and the violin’s statement in F major, the theme would easily fit most comfortably in the third. When considered in the ongoing programmatic timeline, the first movement’s secondary theme could be construed as coinciding with Zimbalist’s first encounters with Alma Gluck, and her subsequent positive influence upon his life, as well as forecasting their future happiness together.

The theme itself begins with E-natural and D-natural in the oboe (the instrument possibly representing Alma) statement and with A-natural and G-natural in the solo violin. The oboe also introduces the third movement’s secondary theme.
Therefore, the third movement could represent their busy life as a young couple, to include Alma’s daughter plus two children of their own and, of course, the dog. Theirs would definitely have been a lively household. Setting up house in New York City with its energy and bustle alone could warrant such a lively third movement. Although Alma stopped performing fairly soon after they were married, Zimbalist continued to tour extensively.

The most interesting aspect of the third movement is its secondary theme; its exoticism causes it to stand out in relief from the rest of the movement. One immediately is reminded of Menotti’s opera *Amahl and the Night Visitors*, which he composed around the same time. A better explanation for its inclusion, though, could again be drawn from Zimbalist’s life. According to Malan, “by far the most significant concert tours of his career were the six Zimbalist made to the Far East between 1922 and 1935.”\footnote{Malan, 183.} The first tour was very long and Zimbalist was very homesick, telling Malan that, “the whole trip took about three months, and I missed my family so badly–it was the longest time I had ever been away from them.”\footnote{Ibid., 184.} Significant is the fact that, while on these tours, Zimbalist sought out local customs, foods, and music. During his tours of India, Zimbalist, according to Malan, noticed that, “audiences were made up almost entirely of British and Europeans, along with some Parsees, ‘the most Westernized of the Indians. The vast Hindu masses had little opportunity to come into contact with Western music. This
disappointed me,’ said Zimbalist. Whenever possible he made a point of getting himself invited into Hindu homes for Indian music and curries.”

If it is true that Menotti’s Violin Concerto is a programmatic work, then one might wonder why he would not have made this known. It is possible that Menotti, and even Zimbalist, could have kept this information to themselves out of respect for Zimbalist’s second wife, Mary Louise Curtis Bok Zimbalist. A wealthy patron of the arts, she was the founder of the Curtis Institute of Music and a longtime supporter of Menotti’s and Barber’s music. In October of 1938, after a long illness, Alma Gluck had died at age fifty-four. In July of 1943 Zimbalist and Bok were married, and nine years later Zimbalist premiered the concerto he had commissioned.

115 Ibid., 199.
APPENDIX B

GLOSSARY OF VIOLIN BOWING TERMS

Collé: A single-note stroke, with the bow coming off the string between notes; the stroke begins from above the string and, at the moment of contact, the string is pinched and then immediately released; played in the lower half of the bow; length varies from very short to fairly broad; “bowed pizzicato”.

Détaché: A single-note stroke played on the string with notes connected without stops between them and sustained for their full time-value; played in all parts of the bow and in varying lengths.

Martelé: A short single-note stroke with clear stops between notes, usually played with a rapid bow speed and with the bow remaining on the string during the stops; played in all parts of the bow and in varying lengths.

Ricochet: A short stroke in which two or more notes are played by the bow from one initial attack, with the bow’s natural springiness causing it to rebound between notes; usually playable only in the upper two-thirds of the bow.

Spiccato: A short single-note stroke in which the bow is dropped onto the string and leaves the string between notes; usually played in the lower two-thirds of the bow; length varies from very short to fairly broad.
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Philadelphia, Academy of Music; Efrem Zimbalist, violin; Eugene Ormandy, conductor; Philadelphia Orchestra.

DECEMBER 9, 1952
New York, Carnegie Hall; Efrem Zimbalist, violin; Eugene Ormandy, conductor; Philadelphia Orchestra.

APRIL / MAY 1954
New York, Avery Fisher Hall; Tossy Spivakovsky, violin; New York Philharmonic.

SPRING 1974
Chicago, Orchestra Hall; Margaret Batjer (age 15), violin; Henry Mazur, conductor; Chicago Symphony Orchestra.
OCTOBER 1977
New York, Carnegie Hall; Ruggiero Ricci, violin;
Kazuyoshi Akiyama, conductor; American Symphony Orchestra.

DECEMBER 13, 1981
Philadelphia; Academy of Music; Joseph Silverstein, violin;
Lorenzo Muti, conductor; Curtis Student Orchestra.

NOVEMBER 6, 1991
East Lansing, Michigan: Michigan State University; Walter Verdehr, violin;
Leon Gregorian, conductor; Michigan State University Orchestra.

FEBRUARY 22, 1996
New York: Lincoln Center; Alice Tully Hall;
Dino Anagnost, conductor; Little Orchestra Society.

SEPTEMBER 1997
Belfast, Ireland; Mark Kaplan, violin;
Kenneth Montgomery, conductor; Ulster Orchestra.

FEBRUARY 1999
New York: Avery Fisher Hall; Glenn Dicterow, violin;
Kurt Masur, conductor; New York Philharmonic.

JULY 2001
Spoleto, Italy; Jennifer Koh, violin;
Richard Hickox, conductor; Spoleto Festival Orchestra.

MAY 22/29, 2003
Charleston, SC, Piccolo Spoleto; Jason Horowitz, violin;
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Blossom Music Festival; Jennifer Koh, violin;
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