

COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS OF MOVEMENT ONE OF JENNIFER
HIGDON'S *VIOLIN CONCERTO*

By

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Jennifer Higdon (b. 1962) is quickly becoming one of the most performed and sought after American composers of our time. Her works have been played by all major American orchestras, along with several major European orchestras. As a Pulitzer Prize and multiple Grammy winner, she writes exclusively for commissions and her music is an audience favorite among concertgoers. The primary focus of this research is to investigate the first movement of Jennifer Higdon's *Violin Concerto*, addressing concerns of linear and contrapuntal development, along with the harmonic language employed in this movement, to prove that these traits are at the heart of Higdon's compositional voice and are what make her works accessible, yet engaging.

The thesis will then provide a formal analysis of the complete work, noting key elements of each movement and notable connections between the three movements. A formal analysis of the first movement will then be provided.

Following these formal analyses, a discussion of pitch collection, voice-leading, motivic development, linear unfoldings and contrapuntal devices utilized in the first movement will be explored, including parallels between the movement's title, 1726, and the pitch and intervallic content exploited throughout the movement. Next, Higdon's harmonic language will be examined, with discourse regarding the use of triadic figures, polychords, and planing.

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HIGDON'S *VIOLIN CONCERTO*

A Thesis

Presented to the Faculty of the
Department of Music Theory, Composition, and Musicology
East Carolina University

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Music in Music

by
Brittany Green
July 2018

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Chapter I: Introduction

Jennifer Higdon (b. 1962) is quickly becoming one of the most performed and sought after American composers of our time. Her works have been played by all major American orchestras, along with several major European orchestras. As a Pulitzer Prize and multiple Grammy winner, she writes exclusively for commissions and her music is an audience favorite among concertgoers. What is it that makes Higdon's music special amongst conductors, performers, and audiences alike? The primary focus of this research is to investigate the first movement of Jennifer Higdon's *Violin Concerto*, addressing concerns of linear and contrapuntal development, along with the harmonic language employed in this movement, to prove that these traits are at the heart of Higdon's compositional voice and are what make her works accessible, yet engaging.

This investigation will begin with biographical discussion of Jennifer Higdon, noting her successes as a composer, her musical upbringing, composition teachers, and her relationships with conductor Robert Spano and violinist Hilary Hahn, and the connection each of these have to her *Violin Concerto*. This discussion will also include overviews of her seminal orchestral works *Shine*, *City Scape*, *Concerto for Orchestra*, and *blue cathedral* to provide a contextual understanding of the compositional techniques employed in Higdon's *Violin Concerto* and to strengthen analytical arguments posed regarding movement one of *Violin Concerto*.

Following biographical discussion of Jennifer Higdon, background information regarding *Violin Concerto* will be explored, specifically performance and program notes written by the composer, the collaborative relationship between Hahn and Higdon, and connections to works that both Higdon and Hahn alluded to as influences in the composition and interpretation of the

piece- Arnold Schoenberg's *Violin Concerto*, Benjamin Britten's *Violin Concerto*, and Charles Ives' *Violin Sonatas*.

After this contextual groundwork is established, the focal point of this research will shift to the analytical discussion of Higdon's *Violin Concerto*, beginning with a formal analysis of the complete work. For movements two and three, this analysis will be general, noting key elements, pitch centers (when applicable), and structural landmarks in each movement, and notable connections between the three movements. A detailed formal analysis of movement one will be discussed, noting melodic and harmonic trends associated with each section and the controversy regarding the movement's form, in addition to general discussions of key elements, pitch centers, and structural landmarks.

Following these formal analyses, discussions will become more specific in scope, exploring the pitch collections, use of voice-leading, motivic developments, linear unfoldings and contrapuntal devices used in the first movement. Parallels between "1726" and the pitch and intervallic content exploited throughout the movement will be investigated. Next, Higdon's harmonic language will be examined, with discourse regarding the use of triadic figures, polychords, and planing.

Lastly, the thesis will review the reception history and notable performance history of the piece including, most notably, winning the Pulitzer prize, inclusion on Hahn's CD with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, and a brief discussion of the "encore piece" *Echo Dash* on Hahn's *In 27 Pieces: The Hilary Hahn Encores*. Brief discourse on the work's role in contemporary violin literature will occur as well.

Jennifer Higdon began composing her *Violin Concerto* just ten years ago in 2008, thus academic research on this piece is rather limited. Currently, there is only one academic source that features analytical discussion of this concerto— a doctoral thesis by Max Williams, a DMA candidate in Violin Performance at Florida State University. However, this thesis focuses mainly on the role of Higdon’s concerto in contemporary violin literature and projections on its longevity in the violin world. Only one out of six chapters in this thesis is dedicated to analysis, and only eight pages of the analysis chapter includes analytical discussion of movement one. The analysis in this chapter is relatively broad in scope, and though some details of motivic development are explored, discussion is presented from the perspective of a performer. Unique to this source are the quotations and direct interviews between the author and Jennifer Higdon, Hilary Hahn, Maestro Mario Venzago, and members of the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra (ISO) that it contains regarding the work and its premiere. Many of these interview, however, (including Higdon’s and Hahn’s) were redacted from the appendices. Currently, there are no academic sources specifically addressing the analytical content of *Violin Concerto*.

There are analytical dissertations addressing other works—solo, chamber and orchestral, works— by Higdon. These sources are written by a both performance and musicology doctoral candidates and are valuable for tracking compositional trends of Higdon. In addition to these academic sources, there are several non-academic articles (interviews and reviews) that are helpful. Many of these sources provide Higdon’s remarks and insight to musical elements that are important to her— most notably, the dominance of melodic line, rhythmic motives, and pulse in her music. While many of these sources quote and cite direct interviews with Higdon as well, they do not include transcripts of the interviews in their appendices.

Other academic sources, aside from the score and recordings, include inclusion in Michael Slayton's *Women of Influence in Contemporary Music: Nine American Composers*, articles in academic journals *Strings* and *Library Journal*, and biographical sketches of Higdon and Hahn in *The New Grove Dictionary*.

Higdon's chapter in Slayton's *Women of Influence in Contemporary Music: Nine American Composers* includes an interview of Higdon conducted by Donald McKinney. The interview is preceded by biographical information about Higdon and includes a discussion of Higdon's thoughts about her compositional process, including her choice of line, rhythm, pulse, form, and harmony. The interview transcript is followed by an analysis of Higdon's *Concerto for Orchestra*, a comprehensive list of her works, discography, and a bibliography. The chapter also includes brief analyses and score samples of the following pieces: *Fanfare Ritmico*, *Autumn's Cricket*, *City Scape*, *O Magnum Mysterium*, *Shine, blue cathedral*, and *Concerto for Orchestra*.

The two articles in academic journals *Strings* and *Library Journal* feature discussions of Higdon and her work. "Every Composer's Dream," an article by James Reel, was featured in *Strings* preceding the world premiere of Higdon's *Violin Concerto*. The article discusses, in a broad sense, what the piece is about, what influenced it, and how Hahn approached the piece. "Modern Composition," featured in *Library Journal*, contains an interview with Jennifer Higdon conducted by Steve Kemple regarding the (then) upcoming world premiere of her opera *Cold Mountain*. In this interview, Higdon not only talks about *Cold Mountain*, but also mentions important contemporary composers and compositions she has found influential. Her comments provide insight into her thoughts about composition, including aspects she finds important in a

work, and concepts that might have been in the forefront of her mind during the composition of her *Violin Concerto*.

The New Grove Dictionary articles on both Jennifer Higdon and Hilary Hahn provide biographical information not found in other sources. The articles are helpful in understanding how the relationship and circumstances of when Higdon and Hahn met relate to the title of movement one and the intervallic and pitch collections contained within it.

Many non-academic sources on Higdon exist in the form of reviews, press releases, articles (in non-academic journals/magazines), and interviews of Higdon on the website YouTube. While these sources are non-academic, they are both helpful and reliable because they all feature direct quotations from Higdon herself.

Among these sources are YouTube interviews of Higdon conducted by the Library of Congress, Drexel, and collaborative partner Hilary Hahn. In these videos, Higdon discusses the use of pulse and rhythm in her music and her process in composing her *Violin Concerto*. During an interview with Hahn, Higdon explains that prior to composing the piece she listened to all of Hahn's recorded concerti and was particularly inspired by Britten and Schoenberg. She goes on to explain that the opening gesture in movement one of her *Violin Concerto*, which features high harmonics and jagged rhythms, was inspired by the violin concerti written by Britten and Schoenberg— a comment that aids in the analysis of this movement. Articles and press releases addressing the announcement and reception of the premiere performance of *Violin Concerto* exist and are used to gauge the reception history of the piece.

Chapter II: Jennifer Higdon, Biography

Jennifer Higdon is an American composer from Brooklyn, NY. Her works have been commissioned by several major orchestras, including the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, where her former professor, Robert Spano, serves as music director. During her career she has received awards from the National Endowment of the Arts, the Pew Fellowship, and Guggenheim, along with three Grammys for her *Percussion Concerto* (2010), her *Viola Concerto* (2018), and her album *Higdon: All Things Majestic, Viola Concerto, and Oboe Concerto* (2018) and a Pulitzer Prize for her *Violin Concerto* (2008).

Musical Upbringing

Known for her “use of open fifth intervals and attention to tone color, accomplished primarily through unorthodox string soli,”¹ she is considered by many a prolific composer of this generation. Her works often explore octatonic scales, creating a blend of tonal centricity and post-tonal language, and often juxtapose thin and dense textures and dramatic dynamics.

Higdon’s family relocated to Georgia during her formative years, exposing her to the bluegrass of the Georgia Appalachian Mountain region. Without a strong, formal background in music, Higdon often cites bluegrass and rock as influences in her music, particularly the work of John Lennon, Paul McCartney, Bob Marley, and Peter, Paul and Mary.² Evidence of popular music influence— most notably driving pulses and dominating melodic lines— permeates throughout her music, both chamber and orchestral alike. Higdon’s works are considered neoromantic by many, drawing influence from genres of the past.

¹Christina Reitz, (2012-02-06). Higdon, Jennifer. Grove Music Online. Retrieved 1 Mar. 2018, from <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-1002219143>.

²Micheal Slayton, *Women of influence in contemporary music: Nine American Composers* (Lanham, Md: Scarecrow Press), 142.

Connections at Bowling Green

Higdon began her music career as a flutist, studying under Judith Bentley at Bowling Green State University. While at Bowling Green, under the influence of Bentley, Higdon began exploring the world of composition, taking lessons from Marilyn Shrude, Wallace DePue, and Harvey Sollberger. She also began studying conducting with Curtis Institute graduate Robert Spano, forming one of the most significant relationships of her career.

Connections at Curtis

After leaving Bowling Green, taking the advice of Robert Spano, Higdon pursued studies in composition at the Curtis Institute of Music, working with David Loeb and Ned Rorem. She then attended the University of Pennsylvania, where she earned her doctorate studying under George Crumb— whose influence is evident in her works.³ After completing her studies, she returned to Curtis as a professor, teaching Composition, Counterpoint, and 20th Century Music. In 1995, violinist Hilary Hahn enrolled in Higdon’s 20th Century Music class, beginning a long-standing musical friendship between the two— one that would become significant in both their futures. After meeting in Higdon’s 20th Century Music class, the two talked frequently about the idea of collaborating, and in the early 2000s the two began working together to commission a major work for violin to be premiered by Hahn.

Seminal Orchestral Works and Compositional Trends

Higdon rose to national fame with the premiere of her orchestral work, *Shine*, in 1996. The work was commissioned by ASCAP in celebration of former ASCAP president Morton

³Reitz, Grove Music Online.

Gould and the Oregon Symphony's one-hundredth anniversary.⁴ *Shine* is known for its rushing rhythms, high energy, and use of chaconne— a signature of her works and a characteristic that makes its way into “1726.”

In 2002, Higdon composed *Concerto for Orchestra*, a work which highlighted the orchestral sound. The work calls for a solo from each principal player, showcasing the timbre and virtuosic capabilities of each instrument in the orchestra. Aesthetically, this work draws influence from Bartok and Stravinsky, most notably in its use of octatonic scales, dyad pitch oscillation, quartal harmonies and melodic material, and “primitive” rhythmic pulses. Many of these characteristics can be found in the *Violin Concerto* as well. Worth noting, this work was pivotal in Higdon's success as a composer, marking the beginning of a string of commissions by large orchestras throughout the United States.

Later that year Higdon composed *City Scope* for a commission by the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra (ASO), an ensemble under the direction of Maestro Robert Spano: Higdon's conducting professor at Bowling Green. The piece is also dedicated to Spano, and each movement represents an image of Atlanta, GA. *City Scope* features colorful percussive writing, indicative of the influence of her former teacher George Crumb. The work calls for a water gong and for crotales to be struck while on the head of a timpani and while moving the timpani pedal rapidly. This colorful use of percussion also finds its way into Higdon's *Violin Concerto* with the use of crotales on timpani heads struck by knitting needles.

In 2003, Spano and the ASO recorded Higdon's *blue cathedral*. Though the piece was originally premiered in 1999, it lay dormant until Spano and the ASO's recording. Written in

⁴Slayton, *Women of influence in contemporary music: Nine American Composers*, 146.

memoriam of her brother,⁵ it serves as a catalyst to many of the characteristics previously discussed. Percussionists playing metallic percussion instruments with metallic beaters activate an ethereal timbral backdrop behind the sound of the strings playing polychords in parallel motion.⁶ Likewise, Higdon's *Violin Concerto* begins with ethereal percussion and exploits planing polychords throughout. Spano's recording of *blue cathedral* brought Higdon more critical acclaim and commissions from large orchestras, proving as critical in her career as Spano's premiere of *City Scape*.

Though Higdon is a self-described intuitive composer who doesn't utilize systems or rely heavily on pre-compositional plans,⁷ close examination of Higdon's seminal works reveals compositional trends that can be used to strengthen analysis of her *Violin Concerto*. Most notable of these trends is Higdon's treatment of form. Higdon rarely uses traditional forms and when she does, she uses them in unconventional ways. For example, in "Chaconi," the second movement of her *Violin Concerto*, Higdon draws from the classical Chaconne form; however, instead of the movement comprising one chaconne, she juxtaposes two chaconni, concluding the movement with the convergence of both chaconni into one chaconne.

When not drawing influence from traditional forms, Higdon tends to employ arch or modified rondo forms, for the structure of her works or movements within her works. Motivically, her works tend to be cyclic in nature, an attribute that can be contributed to the order in which she composes movements and sections. In *Violin Concerto*, along with many of her orchestral works, inner movements are composed first, and the first movement is composed

⁵Brenda Roscow Phillips, "Jennifer Higdon: A Stylistic Analysis of Selected Flute and Orchestral Works." DMA, Arizona State University. "ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 2005.

⁶Slayton, *Women of influence in contemporary music: Nine American Composers*, 148.

⁷Christina Reitz, "Comprehensive Analysis of Selected Orchestral Works by Jennifer Higdon." ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 2007, 29.

last. Composing material in this order allows for her to compose introductory and transitional material with the end in mind, thus removing the need for extensive pre-compositional planning. Thus, using this composition process, it seems the formal construction of Higdon's works are not as intuitive as she asserts.

Overall aesthetic varies from one work to the next, but three elements are present in all of Higdon's works— dominance of melodic line, rhythmic pulsing, and use of triadic and quintal/quartal harmony. Overall aesthetic varies from one work to the next, Higdon's works are linear in development, with drama and melodic lines her primary expressive means. "Her polyphonic passages often exhibit fugal qualities with overlapping layers of imitation entering at rapid intervals"⁸ and her pieces are constructed through a "counterpoint of textures." This is a term Higdon coined to describe "two independent musical lines progressing at different speeds,"⁹ a feature of many of her works. Higdon also utilizes basso continuo and pulsating rhythms in her works, a characteristic she attributes to her rock and bluegrass background.

Harmonically, Higdon employs quintal and quartal harmonies frequently. These harmonies are often found in the brass or strings and exist by themselves and juxtaposed with triadic harmonies. Higdon maneuvers between triadic structures with chordal planing. She often implies pitch centers through centricity, not through functional harmony. Her pitch language makes use of the cross-relations between major and minor scales as well as non-diatonic scales (i.e. the octatonic collection) and modal mixture. Though often a pitch center is clear, the free exchange of modal mixture and lack of functional harmony sometimes obscures the quality of scale being employed.

⁸Reitz, "Comprehensive Analysis of Selected Orchestral Works by Jennifer Higdon," 37.

⁹Ibid.

Chapter III: Background on *Violin Concerto*

“Begun in March of 2008, Jennifer Higdon’s *Violin Concerto* took approximately six months to compose.”¹⁰ The work is the result of a joint commission from the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra (ISO), directed by longtime friend of Hilary Hahn, Mario Venzago; the Toronto Symphony Orchestra (TSO), directed by Peter Oundjian; the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra (BSO), directed by Jennifer Higdon’s longtime friend Marin Alsop; and the Curtis Institute of Music, under the leadership of President Roberto Diaz. Additional support for the commission came from LDI, Ltd., The Lacy Foundation, and the Randolph S. Rothschild Fund.¹¹

Though the composition of the work technically began in 2008, Higdon and Hahn had been discussing collaborating for years. These talks didn’t become serious until maestro Mario Venzago “put the bug in Hahn’s ear for this collaboration.”¹² While Hahn was on tour with Venzago in Europe, the topic was suggested during a dinner conversation of a collaboration between Hahn, Higdon, and the ISO. Venzago had a vested interest in this collaboration, as he hoped premiering a work that was the result of a collaboration between two prestigious artists would increase the ISO’s chances of being included in Carnegie Hall’s *Great American Orchestras Series*.¹³

Once it became clear the ISO would not be chosen, Higdon and her agent leveraged her and Hahn’s connections with other large-city orchestras to generate co-commissioners, namely The Curtis Institute of Music, the TSO, and the BSO. The relationships between Hahn, Higdon,

¹⁰Williams, Max Brenton Harkey Williams. "Jennifer Higdon's *Violin Concerto*: The Genesis of a Twenty-First Century Work." DMA Diss. Florida State University. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 2010, 38.

¹¹Jennifer Higdon, 1962. Program Notes. *Violin Concerto*. Philadelphia, Pa.: Lawdon Press, 2010.

¹²Tom Aldridge, “ISO with Hilary Hahn,” Nuvo: Indy’s Alternative Voice, February 11, 2009 <http://www.nuvo.net/arts/article/iso-hilary-hahn>.

¹³Ibid.

and the BSO was particularly strong. The BSO accompanied Hahn on her orchestral debut and is directed by Maestra Marin Alsop, who had a history of programming Higdon's works. Marin Alsop describes Higdon's works as "direct, immediate and visceral with clear direction and shape."¹⁴ The ISO remained the leading commissioner among the co-commissioners and performed the world premiere of the work on February 6, 2009.

Conception

Once official collaborative discussions began, Hahn told Higdon "right off the bat...that she wanted a major work."¹⁵ Hahn's description of a "major work" not only referred to her desire for a work that was substantial in length, form, and scope, but also "a transformative work that would come to define how the instrument could be composed for in the future."¹⁶ During these discussions Higdon asked Hahn several questions, with the most influential questions being:

1. Which concerti do you enjoy playing and why?
2. Are there concerti where you feel you have to fight the orchestra for balance?¹⁷

She also brought sketches for demonstrations, feedback, and to determine the idiomaticity of what she was writing, though Hahn rarely provided any changes, believing it was the responsibility of Higdon to write her ideas as she hears them and her responsibility as a performer to figure out how to bring them to life. Hahn did however, make the following requests.

¹⁴Marin Alsop. "Jennifer Higdon And Me: A Musical Friendship." NPR Music. <https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=104464863> (accessed July 8, 2009).

¹⁵Williams, "Jennifer Higdon's Violin Concerto: The Genesis of a Twenty-First Century Work," 41.

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷James Reel. *Every Composer's Dream*. Vol. 23. USA: String Letter Publishing, Inc, 2009, 1.

The two discussed Hilary’s love for the G-string on the violin– which became the focal point of the opening sections of “1726.” Additionally, she made the following requests:

1. “A little bit of polyphony, just abstract stuff really.”¹⁸
2. That one set of double stops originally found in her part to be shared with one of the violin sections (movement 1, measures 165-180).¹⁹
3. The addition of polyphony in the second movement via double-stops.²⁰

Influential Concerti

For Higdon, “balance between the ensemble and the soloist [was] a top priority”²¹ as well as showcasing the stretch of Hahn’s hand (such as heard in movement 1, “1726”), her color and lyricism (such as heard in movement 2- “Chacconi”), and her virtuosic abilities (such as heard in movement 3- “Fly Forward”). She immersed herself in Hahn’s music, listening to Edgar Meyer’s violin concerto (which was written for Hahn) and all the concerti that Hahn recorded. The violin concerti of Arnold Schoenberg, Benjamin Britten, and Samuel Barber were particularly influential, and correlations between these works and Higdon’s *Violin Concerto* will be discussed in later chapters. During the preparation of Higdon’s work, Hahn states that she drew influence from the Charles Ives violin sonatas and finds correlations between Higdon’s *Violin Concerto* and Dmitri Shostakovich’s *Violin Concerto No. 1 in A minor, op. 77*. She notes that “the most striking resemblance concerns Shostakovich’s Passacaglia and Higdon’s Chacconi

¹⁸Reel, 1.

¹⁹Williams, "Jennifer Higdon's Violin Concerto: The Genesis of a Twenty-First Century Work," 57.

²⁰Reel, *Every Composer's Dream*, 1.

²¹Hilary Hahn. “Hilary Hahn Interview Jennifer Higdon 2.” YouTube, 6:22. Hilaryhahnvideos, 2009, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AWGhLPEblR4>.

movement that, in addition to the formal similarities, do share some characteristics regarding slow harmonic motion.”²²

Prior to beginning *Violin Concerto*, Higdon had just completed *Concerto 4–3*, a concerto commissioned by chamber group Time for Three.²³ Within measures 113-121 and the cadenza section of the *Violin Concerto*'s movement three, the music features the open strings and shuffle rhythms pervade, a characteristic Max Williams believes stems from *Concerto 4–3* and Higdon's bluegrass roots. He also states that “Higdon's penchant for principal and reduced section soli had a more personal inspiration and resulted in, among other things, a number of prominent concertmaster solos”²⁴ because Zach de Pue (violinist in chamber group Time for Three) was the new ISO concertmaster. Williams cites his interview with Higdon for both theories.

Program and Performance Notes from Higdon

While “Chaconni” draws inspiration from music of the past, “1726” and “Fly Forward” draw from extra-musical influences. In James Reel's *Every Composer's Dream*, an interview and article preceding the premiere of the piece, Reel reveals:

Higdon so far has been mum on that reference, except to say in her notes that the number (1726) represents an important aspect of such a journey of discovery, for both the composer and the soloist. Higdon is offering a reward- a free autographed score- to the first six people who can figure out the meaning of “1726.”²⁵

Max Williams corroborates this sentiment in his DMA dissertation (written during the process of rehearsing and premiering the work), quoting from his interview with Higdon “I kept it [the title of movement one] in the back of my mind but I never overtly thought about it.

²²Williams, "Jennifer Higdon's Violin Concerto: The Genesis of a Twenty-First Century Work," 45.

²³Ibid.

²⁴Williams, "Jennifer Higdon's Violin Concerto: The Genesis of a Twenty-First Century Work," 46-47.

²⁵James Reel, “Every Composer's Dream,” *Strings Magazine*, 2004, 1.

There's kind of an emphasis on some of the leaps on those intervals, but other than that I wasn't consciously thinking of it."²⁶ However, in her program notes, Jennifer Higdon explains the meaning behind the title of movement one- "1726", stating:

This number represents an important aspect of such a journey of discovery, for both the composer and the soloist. "1726" happens to be the street address of The Curtis Institute of Music, where I first met Hilary as a student in my 20th Century Music Class. An exceptional student, Hilary devoured the information in the class and was always open to exploring and discovering new musical languages and styles. As Curtis was also a primary training ground for me as a young composer, it seemed an appropriate tribute. To tie into this title, I make extensive use the intervals of unisons, 7ths, and 2nds, throughout this movement.²⁷

Higdon goes on to describe the second movement, "Chaconni" as "calm and pensive."

Unlike her comments regarding movements one and three, Higdon explains the form of movement two, clarifying that the movement consists of several chaconne contrasting and interacting with one another to facilitate a dialogue between the soloist and the orchestra.²⁸ She simply describes "Flying Forward" as "a compelling image, that I could not resist the idea of having the soloist do,"²⁹ though Williams suggests "she was inspired by the media blitz leading up to the 2008 Beijing Olympics,"³⁰ citing his interview with Higdon as the source of this idea.

Curtis Institute Reading

Though the ISO scheduled seven hours of rehearsal time prior to the premiere of Higdon's *Violin Concerto* (more rehearsal time than most premieres receive), the scheduled time was insufficient for Hahn to become familiar with the orchestral parts in relation to hers, nor for

²⁶Williams, "Jennifer Higdon's Violin Concerto: The Genesis of a Twenty-First Century Work," 77.

²⁷Higdon.

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Williams, "Jennifer Higdon's Violin Concerto: The Genesis of a Twenty-First Century Work," 89.

Higdon to adjust the score if orchestration issues arose. With this in mind, Higdon hired the Curtis Institute Symphony Orchestra, under the direction of David Hayes, for a five-hour reading session.³¹ The session occurred in September of 2008— six months before the ISO premiere— and allowed Higdon to assess the balance and blend of the orchestral parts as well as the balance and blend of the solo violin against the orchestral parts.³² Higdon made significant orchestration adjustments to the work after this reading. Most of these changes involved thinning out textures to balance the solo violin with the orchestra. To avoid the circulation of multiple scores for *Violin Concerto*, the score for this reading no longer exists.³³ As such, specific comparisons between this score and the score premiered by the ISO cannot be made.

Additional adjustments were made during the rehearsal process with the ISO and immediately after the premiere. Max Williams provides a detailed account for these changes (see table 1 on next page) in his DMA dissertation discussing this work. Most of these changes affect the weight of the orchestra against the solo violin through the addition of *flautando* in the strings, addition of rests, adjustment of dynamics and addition/adjustment of *con sord* instructions for the brass parts (for example, the use of cardboard and a bag over the bell of the instrument for mutes, staggered removal of mutes, etc.).³⁴

³¹Williams, "Jennifer Higdon's Violin Concerto: The Genesis of a Twenty-First Century Work," 48.

³²Williams, "Jennifer Higdon's Violin Concerto: The Genesis of a Twenty-First Century Work," 55.

³³Williams, "Jennifer Higdon's Violin Concerto: The Genesis of a Twenty-First Century Work," 56.

³⁴Williams, "Jennifer Higdon's Violin Concerto: The Genesis of a Twenty-First Century Work," 57-59.

Table 1: Alterations made to Higdon's *Violin Concerto* post ISO premiere.³⁵

Movement	Measures(s)	Alterations	
I. "1726"	24-33	Harp, remove harmonics (same at 329-339)	
	115	Trpt. 2, change dynamic to PP	
	118	Trpt. 1 & 3, change dynamic to PP	
	119	Hn. 1 & 3, Trpt. 1, change dynamic to MF	
	142	Trpt. 1, add FLAT to E	
	165	Change tempo back to Quarter = 82	
	203	Perc. 1, add F quarter-note to first of measure	
	204	Trpt. 2 & 3, change dynamic to PP, add "Bag over Bell"	
	205	Trpt. 2 & 3, change dynamic to PPP	
	236	Vc., change dynamic to MF	
	257	Picc., change dynamic to F	
	257	Harp, change dynamic to MF	
	268	Trpt. 1, add FLAT to D on & of 1	
	274	Vln. 2, first notes of measure should be A-natural and E-natural (not C & G)	
	334	Solo violin, 3 rd beat, change A# to F#	
	II. "Chaconni"	78	Tbn. 1 & 2, add "con sord. – cardboard"
		81	B. Tbn., add "con sord. – cardboard"
121		Vln. Lower Part, last note should be a D-natural (not D#)	
127		Vc., Remove "stagger removal of mutes"	
136		Vc., add "senza sord."	
154		Vln. 1 & Vc., add "sul tasto"	
159		Vln. 2, change dynamic to PP	
160		Vla., Vc., change dynamic to PP	
163		Fl. 1, change to MP	
166		Fl. 1, change dynamic to F	
166		Bsn. 1, change dynamic to F	
180		Vln. 2, D# should be 8va	
190		Perc. 2, remove 3 rd quarter-note of measure; make a rest	
191		Perc. 2, remove half-note on 2, make a rest	
200		Fl. 1, Cl. 1, Cl. 2, Bsn. 1, Bsn. 2, remove all dynamic changes in this measure	
201		Cl. 1, Cl. 2, Bsn. 1, Bsn. 2, remove PP in this measure	
202		Vln. 1, Vln. 2, Vc., C., add "flautando"	
214	Fl. 1, Fl. 2, Cl. 1, Cl. 2, Bsn. 1, Bsn. 2, change dynamic to PP		
III. "Fly Forward"	6	Perc. 2, Glock, change dynamic to PP	
	14-24	Tuba, Tacet measure	
	19	Hn., 2 & 4, change dynamic to MP	
	19-20	Trpt. 2, Tacet measure	
	28	Bsn. 1 & 2, change dynamic to MP	
	28	Tbn. 1 Tacet measure	
	29	Bsn. 1 & 2, change dynamic to MF and Crescendo on 4 th beat to F on downbeat of 30	
	30	Perc. 1, change dynamic to F	
	31	Cb., remove "arco," and change dynamic to FF	
	32	Cb., remove MF	
	34	CB., remove "pizzicato"	
	34-51	Tuba tacet measures	
	39	Cl. 1, change dynamic to MP	
46	Vln. 1, Vln. 2, Vla, change dynamic to MF		

³⁵Williams, "Jennifer Higdon's Violin Concerto: The Genesis of a Twenty-First Century Work," 57-58.

Chapter IV: Formal Analysis of *Violin Concerto*

Like most concerti, Higdon's *Violin Concerto* consists of three movements, organized fast-slow-fast, with a modified rondo followed by a modified chaconne and concluded with a modified rondo. Each movement has a title: the first movement is "1726," the second movement is "Chaconni," and the third movement is "Fly Forward." The overall pitch centrality from movement-to-movement is connected by stepwise motion, moving from G to A to B. This motion reflects the surface level harmonic motion in each movement, which typically consists of stepwise triadic planing. Controversy over form, however, occurs for the first and third movements. Both of which have been classified as both sonatas and rondos.

"1726"

Though some classify "1726" as a sonata, including the work's premiering maestro Mario Venzago, through careful analysis of motivic and thematic trends throughout the work, I argue that this work is in a modified rondo form. This modified rondo form consists of sections A, B, A, B, Cadenza (or C), A (see table 2 on next page). The A section occurs in measures 1-53 with G serving as the pitch center. This section is delicate and lyrical and focuses on timbre and texture—featuring crotales played on timpani, glockenspiels played with knitting needles, and harmonics at the highest end of the solo violin. The motivic material in this section emerges from trichord, tetrachord, and pentachord cells. It is also very exposed, beginning with just the solo violin, then just violin and glockenspiel, slowly adding woodwinds, and finally strings and brass towards the end of the section.

Table 2: Formal Overview of “1726”

Formal Type: Modified Rondo

Section	Measures	Pitch Center(s)
A	1-53	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • G: mm. 1-34 • F: mm. 35-39 • D: mm. 44-53
B	54-158	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ab: mm. 54-79 • Gb: mm. 80-93 • Bb: mm. 94-104 • B: mm. 105-106 • C: mm. 107-109 • C#: mm. 109-110 • Eb/Ab: mm. 111-114 • A: mm. 115-125 • F: mm. 129-158
Transition	159-164	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gb: mm.159-160 • G: mm. 161-163 • Gb: mm. 163-164
A	165-215	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • F: mm. 165-197 • Db: mm. 200-204 • F: mm. 205-215
B	216-282	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ab: mm. 216-227 • Gb: mm. 228-240 • F#: mm. 241-242 • G: mm. 243-256 • Bb: mm. 257-282
C (Cadenza)	283-317	Sequential Chromaticism with emphasis on 7ths and 2nds/9ths
A	318-360	G

The B section begins in measure 54 and lasts until measure 158. Marked with a doubling in tempo, this section is jaunty and pointed in comparison to the A section. It features syncopation, triplet figures, and pulsing rhythms that move through the entire ensemble, and it is developmental, moving through several pitch areas. The motivic material from this section emerges from competing “whole/half” and “half/whole” octatonic scales in each key area. In thicker passages in this section, pitch class centricity is established through drones and rhythmic ostinati on a singular pitch. In these passages, rhythmic intensity takes precedence, and pitch class variety forms from oscillation between the centric pitch, and either a major seventh or a minor seventh.

The B section begins with a pitch center of Ab but moves to Gb in measure 80. In measure 102, Bb becomes the centric pitch, with the ensemble alternating between Bb, A, and Ab beneath a rapid, rising tremolo in the solo violin. The harmonic rhythm begins to increase in measure 105, with the pitch center rapidly shifting from B (mm. 105-106) to C (mm. 107-109) to C# (mm. 109-110) to Eb/Ab (mm. 111-114) and to finally A (mm. 115)³⁶. In measure 115 the harmonic rhythm slows down again. The pitch center shifts to E in measure 125 and F in measure 129, where it remains for the rest of the B section.³⁷ In measures 158-164 chromatic transitional material appears over a Gb chord before resolving to an F at the return of the A section in measure 165.

The return of the A section begins similarly to the first iteration of the section, with delicate solo violin gestures; however, this time the gestures are placed in the lower register of the instrument and pizzicatos are used in place of harmonics. This section also sees the return of the original tempo, 84 bpm. The second iteration of the A section draws from motivic material established in the first A section, though harmonic contrast is increased with emphasis on F (mm. 165-197; mm. 205-215) and Db (mm. 200-204) as pitch centers.

The B section returns in measure 216, accompanied with a doubling of the tempo and an increasing thickness of texture. The section moves through four pitch centers Ab (mm. 216-227), Gb (mm. 228-240), F# (mm. 241-242), and G (mm. 243-256). Starting in measure 257, Higdon isolates the interval of a 7th by alternating between pitch classes Bb, A, and Ab (G#) in the ensemble. Above, the solo violin performs a compound melody consisting of two stepwise ascents. This section is comprised of three against two ostinati (mm. 257-265) and two

³⁷Williams, "Jennifer Higdon's Violin Concerto: The Genesis of a Twenty-First Century Work," 81.

sequential chromatic motives leading into the *cadenza*. The *cadenza*, (mm. 283-317) is highly chromatic and sequential, with an emphasis on sevenths and seconds/ninths.³⁸

The A section makes a final return in measure 318, accompanied with a shift in tempo, mood, and density of texture. The melodic material in the solo violin is an amalgamation of the material found in the first and second iterations of the A section, featuring both high harmonics and low *pizzicati*. These, along with the G³ *arco* drone, create a compound melody of three layers in the solo violin. The section thickens in texture and then thins out with open, quintal harmonies that bring the movement to a close.

“Chaconni”

“Chaconni” (as the name suggests) features two chaconnes that follow, and at times overlap, each other through the course of the movement (see table 3 on next page). In contrast to the first movement, this movement is lyrical, delicate, and highlights the tone of the violin. The first chaconne appears as a six-measure phrase in the opening measures of the movement. Though it is notated as six 4/4 measures, it sounds like eight 3/4 measures. This chaconne (see example 1 on the next page) emphasizes the pitch center of A and begins with pianissimo woodwinds. It has quartal harmonies in the low woodwinds juxtaposed against planing triadic harmonies in the upper woodwinds, a harmonic design like “1726.” These two harmonic progressions move largely in contrary motion to each other.

³⁸Williams, "Jennifer Higdon's Violin Concerto: The Genesis of a Twenty-First Century Work," 83.

Table 3: Formal Overview of “Chaconni”

Formal Type: Double Chaconne

Section	Measures	Pitch Center(s)
Chaconne 1	1-6	A/Triadic Planing against Quartal Harmonies
Chaconne 2	7-60	Bb
Chaconne 1	61-64	D/Triadic Planing against Quartal Harmonies
Chaconne 2	65-103	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bb: mm. 65-77 • E: mm. 78-103
Chaconne 1	104-119	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • D/Triadic Planing: mm. 103-109 • Bb: mm. 110-119
Chaconne 2	120-142	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bb: mm. 120-126 • Db: mm. 127-131 • G: mm. 132-133 • Ab: mm. 134-136 • Db: mm. 137-139 • C: mm. 140-142
Chaconne 1	143-151	G
Chaconne 2	152-195	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bb: mm. 152-169 • E: mm. 170-195
Chaconne 1	196-201	G
Chaconne 2	202-213	Bb
Chaconne 1 and Chaconne 2	214-218	A

Example 1: Movement 2, “Chaconni,” Piano reduction of mm. 1-6.³⁹

The musical score is a piano reduction of the first six measures of the second movement of 'Chaconni' by Debussy. It is written in 4/4 time with a tempo marking of quarter note = 52. The score consists of two systems of staves. The first system covers measures 1-3, and the second system covers measures 4-6. The music is characterized by complex triadic and quartal harmonies, often with triplets. Dynamics include piano (p), mezzo-piano (mp), and piano (p).

³⁹Williams, p. 85.

The second chaconne enters in measure 7, marked by a slight increase in tempo, moving from 52 bpm to 60 bpm, and a change to triple meter. This chaconne features triadic and implies Bb major tonality (see example 2 below). The start of this chaconne also marks an introduction to the melodic material of the movement.⁴⁰

The first chaconne returns in measure 61, scored for soli strings. This return marks a shift in rhythms with the upper voices a fourth higher than before. “The progression, which previously was six measures in length, is now cut to four, as the second chaconne emerges (in measure 65) ahead of schedule.”⁴¹ This time, the solo violin enters right away with the start of the second chaconne.

Example 2: Movement 2,” Chaconni,” Piano reduction and harmonic analysis of mm. 7-14.⁴²

♩ = 60

Piano *mp*

B-flat: I VII 6/4 I V I VI III7 I VII

6

I V I VI III7

A return to 4/4 meter ushers in the return of the first chaconne in measure 104, “here recalling measure 61 more than the opening appearance in regard to range and scoring.”⁴³ This

⁴⁰Williams, "Jennifer Higdon's Violin Concerto: The Genesis of a Twenty-First Century Work," 85.

⁴¹Ibid.

⁴²Ibid, p. 86.

⁴³Williams, "Jennifer Higdon's Violin Concerto: The Genesis of a Twenty-First Century Work," 87.

return marks the first time that melodic content accompanies the harmonic progression of the first chaconne, immediately leaping from the low range of the violin to the high range. The result of the leaps creates a compound melody that explores the intervals of seconds, sevenths, fourths, and fifths.⁴⁴

The second chaconne reappears in measure 110, along with a change in tempo (72 bpm to 66 bpm) and the return of Bb pitch center. Here, a modified version of the original melodic material of chaconne 2 appears in the solo violin in counterpoint with countermelodies presented by the concertmaster and principal cello.⁴⁵ Tonally, the pitch center is transposed up a minor third to Db in measure 127, then up a tritone to G in measure 132. Rapid harmonic motion continues with a motivic sequence that “moves the pitch center through Ab (measure 134), Db (measure 137), and C (measure 140).”⁴⁶

The first chaconne returns in measure 143 to the pitch center of G. Here, the chaconne is stretched rhythmically from six measures to nine. A modified version of the melody from measure 104 appears in the solo violin in counterpoint with a countermelody in the first violin. The second chaconne returns in measure 152, along with the original melodic material and pitch center, lasting until measure 196 when the first chaconne returns for a final time. At the close of the movement, both chaconnes appear in counterpoint with one another for the first time in the movement.⁴⁷

“Fly Forward”

Like “1726,” “Fly Forward” is in modified rondo form (see table 4 on next page).

⁴⁴Higdon.

⁴⁵Williams, “Jennifer Higdon’s Violin Concerto: The Genesis of a Twenty-First Century Work,” 87.

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷Higdon.

The most aggressive in energy, virtuosity and compositional prowess, the third movement begins in the pitch center of B with an A section full of syncopation and ostinati. In measure 33 the B section appears, first in C# (mm. 34-46) then in D# (mm. 47-52)⁴⁸. A C section enters in measure 53, lasting until measure 76. This section moves between the pitch centers of Eb (mm. 53-68), F (mm. 69-72), and F#/Gb (mm. 73-76). The B section returns in measure 77 at the original pitch center and concludes with sequential modulation from D-D#-E-F-A in measures 91-99.⁴⁹ In measure 100, the D section enters for the first time, featuring developmental material. This section begins in A, but the pitch center becomes ambiguous during the Bluegrass-inspired *cadenza* in measures 113-120, emphasizing both D and its dominant, A.⁵⁰ The A section returns in measure 121 in A, down a whole step from its first iteration. In measure 129 the C section returns, moving to the dominant, E (mm. 129-144), then to F (mm. 145-148), and then F# (mm. 149-152). The A section returns one final time in measure 153, moving through a variety of pitch centers- A, Bb, and B, before settling in D in measure 184. A coda section, reminiscent of the D section closes the piece, occurring from measure 188-198. Note that the pitch class numbering assigned to the pitches heard in the last three measures are the same as the numbers in the title "1726": m. 196- G (7), m. 197- Db (1), m. 198- D (2) and F# (6).

⁴⁸Williams, "Jennifer Higdon's Violin Concerto: The Genesis of a Twenty-First Century Work," 95-96.

⁴⁹Ibid.

⁵⁰Williams, "Jennifer Higdon's Violin Concerto: The Genesis of a Twenty-First Century Work," 95-96.

Table 4: Formal Overview of “Fly Forward”

Formal Type: Modified Rondo

Section	Measures	Pitch Center(s)
A	1-33	B
B	33-52	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • C#: mm. 34-46 • D: mm. 47 • D#: mm. 49-52
C	53-76	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eb: mm. 53-68 • F: mm. 69-72 • F#: mm. 73-76
B	77-99	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • C#: mm. 77-90 • Sequential movement from D-D#-E-F-A: mm. 91-99
D (Cadenza mm. 113-120)	100-120	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A: mm. 100-112 • A/D (ambiguous): mm. 113-120
A	121-128	A
C	129-152	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • E: mm. 129-144 • F: mm. 145-148 • F#: mm. 149-152
A	153-187	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A: mm. 153-154 • Bb: mm. 155-156 • B: mm. 157-174 • D: mm. 175-181 • B: mm. 182-183 • D: mm. 184-187
D (Coda)	188-end	D

Chapter V: Pitch Analysis of “1726”

“1726” explores melodic material compiled of trichord, tetrachord, and pentachord motivic cells, seventh, ninth, and seventh linear development, and material drawn from octatonic scales. Motivic cells and intervallic linear development serve as the primary focus of the A sections. The B sections focus on material drawn from octatonic pitch collections and triadic planing, and the C section focuses on intervallic linear development. The former occurs in the A sections and the latter in the B and C sections. In her program notes, Higdon alludes that “1726” influences material throughout the movement. Through close study, it is clear the movement’s title is embedded through both pitch and interval classes, appearing as C#, G, D, F#, semitones, major sevenths, perfect fourths, perfect fifths, major seconds, minor seconds and tritones.

The fundamental pitch cells utilized in the A sections all develop from fundamental set class (02357) and its subset (0257), creating interplay between G major, minor, and pentatonic, with the avoidance of Bb and exchange between B natural and Bb. This set class, and its subset (0257)– which Higdon frequently uses– are found in several works by Stravinsky. Set class (0257) unifies Stravinsky’s Russian period and neoclassical works, serving as a catalyst for ostinati and melodic segments, respectively. This set class is used as source material for passages in *Rite of Spring*, *Firebird*, *Petrushka*, and *Agon*.⁵¹ In a work filled with neoclassic tendencies– triadic harmony, centricity, contrapuntal development, and rhythmic pulsing– it is fitting for such influences from Stravinsky to appear. Subset (0257) holds additional properties of interest, consisting of pitches from the F pentatonic collection (see example 3 on next page), and Higdon’s use of the subset emphasizes major second and minor seventh intervals– the “7”

⁵¹Van den Toorn, Pieter C., 1938, and John McGinness. 2012. *Stravinsky and the russian period: Sound and legacy of a musical idiom*. Cambridge;New York;: Cambridge University Press, 215.

and “2” of “1726.” An unfolding of perfect fifths at the end of each theme creates an emphasis on quintal relationships, which Higdon later develops with the frequent use of quintal harmonies at the end of the A section and throughout the B section (see example 4 below).”

Example 3: F pentatonic collection compared to subset (0257).

Example 4: The ends of themes X (mvt. 1, m. 5; solo violin) and Y (mvt. 1, m. 10; glockenspiel) end with articulated Perfect fifths leading down to G (with the omission of D) at the beginning of theme Z (mvt. 1, m. 13; solo violin).⁵²

F#-B-E-A-(D)-G

Unfolding of set 02357

“1726” opens with centricity around pitch class G, with an emphasis on G³. The material comprising section A all develops from three thematic passages– Theme X, Theme Y, and Theme Z– each of which appear in succession in the opening measures of the movement (see examples 5, 6, and 7 on next page). Note examples 5 and 6 are represented down an octave for clarity of pitch class. These examples will be discussed in further detail in the analysis that follows.

⁵²Higdon

Example 5: Jennifer Higdon’s *Violin Concerto*, movement 1, mm. 1-5. Theme X and motives x1, x2, x3, and x4.

Musical notation for Example 5, showing Theme X and motives x1, x2, x3, and x4. The notation is in 4/4 time and consists of a single staff with a treble clef. The music is divided into four distinct sections, each enclosed in a large bracket. Below each section is a label: 'Motive x1', 'Motive x2', 'Motive x3', and 'Motive x4'. The first three motives are short, rhythmic fragments, while the fourth is a longer, more complex phrase.

Example 6: Jennifer Higdon’s *Violin Concerto*, movement 1, mm. 6-12. Theme Y and motives y1, y2, y3, y4, y5, y6, y7, and y8.

Musical notation for Example 6, showing Theme Y and motives y1 through y8. The notation is in 4/4 time and consists of a single staff with a treble clef. The music is divided into eight distinct sections, each enclosed in a large bracket. Below each section is a label: 'Motive y1', 'Motive y2', 'Motive y3', 'Motive y4', 'Motive y5', 'Motive y6', 'Motive y7', and 'Motive y8'. The motives vary in length and complexity, with some being short rhythmic fragments and others being longer, more melodic phrases.

Example 7: Jennifer Higdon’s *Violin Concerto*, movement 1, mm. 13-19. Theme Z.

Musical notation for Example 7, showing Theme Z. The notation is in 4/4 time and consists of a single staff with a treble clef. The music is a single, continuous melodic line that spans the entire duration of the example. It features a series of eighth and sixteenth notes, with some longer notes and rests.

Theme X appears first, presented unaccompanied and in the solo violin. Theme X consists of four motivic fragments– motive x1, motive x2, motive x3, and motive x4. Pitches are produced through high harmonics on the violin and are presented in syncopation, characteristics Higdon notes draw influence from measures 68-73 of Schoenberg’s *Violin Concerto* (see example 8 on next page).⁵³

⁵³Strawser, “Jennifer Higdon’s *Violin Concerto*–in Baltimore & Online,” *Thoughts on a Train*.

Motive x1 (m. 1) consists of tetrachord set class (0157), which is a half-step away from the prime form of the movement's title (0156). The pitches comprising this tetrachord— G, F#, C#, and B— are close to the corresponding pitch classes to the movement's title. The B would need to be raised a minor third to D to create “1726.” Higdon's choice of pitches here is perplexing, given its closeness to the prime form of the movement's title and her suggestion of the title's influence on pitch and intervallic content in her program notes. Perhaps the semitone or minor third discrepancies will create tension and delayed gratification throughout the piece, with their resolutions occurring the final moments of the movement.

Another theory worth exploring is an alteration to cell (0156) to accommodate the low G string. If pitch class G was raised to G#, the prime form of motive x1 would be that of the movement's title. This, however, would not allow Higdon to make use of the open low G string (G^3), significant pitch in this section and the movement at large. In early collaborative discussions, Higdon and Hahn spoke about Hahn's love of the G string. The inclusion of the open G string allows Higdon to exploit the entire range of the instrument. Furthermore, because G^3 is executed on an open string, G^3 and $G\#^3$ produce differing timbres, with the former producing a thicker, stockier sound that lacks color shaping from left hand (e.g. vibrato). As a frequent composer for strings, it is likely that Higdon knew this. Perhaps this color is what Higdon was after in sections like mm.12-25 that emphasize G^3 .

Motive x2 (m. 2) is comprised of pentachord set class (02479), a superset of (0257). This set is an adjustment of the set used in motive x1, with one pitch raised by a half-step. Set class (02479) is also an alteration of fundamental set class (02357), with three pitches being altered— one by half step and two by whole step. Motive x3 (measure 3) is subset (0235) and motive x4

(mm. 4-5) is the fundamental set. Motive x4 also serves as the source material for theme Z and motive y1 (see example 9 below).

Example 9: Motive x4, motive y1, and theme Z compared to fundamental set class (02357).

Motive x4; mm. 4-5; solo violin

Motive y1
m. 10; glockenspiel

Theme Z: mm. 13-19; solo violin

Fundamental Set-Class (02357)

Theme Y enters in the glockenspiel in measure 6 and occurs in counterpoint with theme X. Because the material in theme Y is largely presented during rests in theme X, these two themes are heard as a compound melody. In fact, Higdon combines these two themes within the piano reduction into a singular line in measure 13, once the solo violin begins theme Z. This theme consists of eight motives: y1, y2, y3, y4, y5, y6, y7, and y8 (see example 6 on page 29). Close relationships between motivic material in theme x and theme y are formed through semitone alterations, subsets/supersets, and repetition of sets. Theme Y motivic material exploits elements of symmetry through the alteration of pitch class cells found in theme X (see examples 5 and 6 on page 29).

Motive y1 (m. 6) is the fundamental set class (02357). This fundamental set is embedded into each theme, and thus all material in the A sections. Theme X ends with the fundamental set, theme Y begins with the fundamental set, and theme Z is the fundamental set (see example 4 on page 28). Motive y2 (mm. 6-7) contain set class (0147), an alteration, one pitch lowered by semitone, of motive x1, set class (0157). The compound melody formed between themes X and

Y, creates a sense of sequence and call and response between the solo violin (motive x1) and glockenspiel (motive y1) in mm. 6-7. Further solidifying the close relationships between x motives and y motives, motive y3 (m. 7) contains set class (0247)– an alteration of motive x3 and a subset of fundamental set class (02357) and motive x2, which is occurring simultaneously in the solo violin (see example 10 below). Alterations to motive x3 created symmetrical properties in motive y3. The tetrachord comprising motive y3 is an intervallic palindrome, with an interval-class vector of <021120>.

Example 10: Movement 1, “1726,” Piano reduction of mm. 6-7.⁵⁵

Motive y4 (m. 8) is a superset of the fundamental set. Containing hexachord set class (012357), it is the largest grouping of pitch classes. Motive y5 (mm. 8-9) is set class trichord (026). This trichord is a subset of motive x1 and contains symmetrical properties, featuring the interval-class vector of <010101>. Set class trichord (026) is a favorite among neoclassical composers because it implies dominant harmony and emphasizes the tritone. This set is nearly immediately followed by pitch class G, suggesting V⁷-I harmonic motion. Higdon’s use of authentic cadences within non-functional harmony and linear emphases will be discussed further

⁵⁵Higdon.

in chapter seven. Motive y6 (m. 9) consists of set class tetrachord (0237)– a subset of the fundamental set class (02357). Motive y7 (m.10) forms set class tetrachord (0247) and is an alteration of motive y6 and a subset of both motive x2 (the fundamental set class). This motive comprises the same source material as motive y3. Lastly, motive y8 (m. 10) consists of a doubling of A and E, forming two perfect fifths separated by a perfect fourth. This dyad appears in both the ensemble and as a double stop in the solo violin. It resolves to a solo C# executed by striking a crotale on a timpani (also tuned to C#) and quickly depressing and releasing the tuning pedal to create a “wah-wah” effect. Motion from the A/E dyad to C# implies a V/V in G.

Theme Z enters in the solo violin in measure 13, accentuating the low register of the violin (see example 7 on page 29). Pitch classes used in theme Z form the fundamental set class (02357), forming counterpoint with the compound melody formed from themes X and Y. Vertical relationships between themes X, Y, and Z emphasize “1726” intervals and trichords related to the fundamental set class (02357). At the attack of each pitch in theme Z, the dyad formed between the pitch in theme Z and the compound melody of themes X and Y creates an interval related to “1726.” When reduced within an octave, the following vertical dyads occur: octave in measure 13, minor 7th in measure 14, perfect fifth in measure 15, perfect fifth in measure 16, major seventh in measure 16, tritone in measure 16, minor seventh in measure 17, perfect fourth in measure 17, perfect fourth in measure 17, unison in measure 17, perfect fifth in measure 17, and a unison and octave in measure 18 (see example 11 on next page). Vertical trichords formed from stacking and harmonizing themes X, Y, and Z are (015) in measure 14, (024) in measures 14 and 16, (026)– a verticalization of motive y5- in measure 16, and (025) in measure 16 (see example 11 on next page). Note that each attack in theme Z (solo violin) creates

a dyad with theme X and Y (piano) that is intervallically related to “1726.”⁵⁶ Additionally, the vertical trichords formed are related to the fundamental set class (02357).

Example 11: Movement 1, “1726,” Piano reduction of mm. 13-18.

The image displays a musical score for a piano reduction of measures 13-18 from Movement 1 of the piece "1726". The score is divided into two systems. The first system covers measures 13 through 18. The top staff is labeled "Solo Violin" and begins at measure 13. It features a melodic line with dynamics ranging from *p* (piano) to *mp* (mezzo-piano) and a "norm." (normal) dynamic marking. The piano accompaniment is shown in the right hand, with a "stacc." (staccato) marking above it. The left hand is mostly silent. The second system covers measures 19 through 24. The violin part continues with a melodic line, and the piano accompaniment becomes more active in both hands, with a "(stacc.)" marking above the right hand. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

In measure 20, complex gestures begin to arise out of the motivic material presented in themes X, Y, and Z from mm. 1-19 (see example 12 on next page). Note the leaps of a seventh (measures 20, 21, and 23 for example) and a perfect fifth (measures 21 and 23 for example). This passage also features motive y5, set classes (013) and (01358), which are found in theme Z and the fundamental set class (02357). Both vertical and linear trichord subsets of the fundamental set appear throughout, with an emphasis of stacked perfect fifths. Trichords (013),

⁵⁶Higdon.

(037), (027), and (025) occur most frequently in the passage (see table 5 below). In measures 35-53, triadic and quintal harmonies begin to take precedence over fundamental set (and subset) verticalizations, as the movement begins to transition into its B section. See table 6 below for a list of occurrences of themes X, Y, and Z throughout the piece.

Example 12: Movement 1, “1726,” mm. 20-23.⁵⁷

Table 5: Occurrences of cells (013), (037), (025), and (01358) in measures 12-30.

Cell	Number of Occurrences	Locations of Occurrences
(013)	6	m.13, m. 20, m. 29, m. 30
(037)	2	m. 28, m. 31
(025)	4	m. 16, m.29, m.30, m. 31
(01358)	3	m. 14, m. 20, m. 21

Table 6: Occurrences of themes X, Y, and Z throughout ”1726.”

Theme	Locations of Occurrences
X	mm. 1-10, mm. 13-18, mm. 24-33, mm. 169-188, mm. 318-328, mm. 329-336
Y	mm. 6-10, mm.13-18, mm.24-33, mm.190-199, mm.208-214, mm. 329-336
Z	mm. 13-34, mm. 165-195, mm. 318-360

⁵⁷Higdon.

Example 14: Movement 1, “1726,” Piano reduction of mm. 54-55.⁵⁹

This texture is interrupted at melodic arrival points by thick triadic and quintal harmonies in the brass sections, the characteristics of which will be discussed further in chapter six. Melodic figures in the solo violin are, at times, harmonized at the ninth, sixth, and seventh- (emphasizing the “2” and “6” of “1726”) via double stops (see example 15 below). Linear emphasis on sixths, sevenths, fifths, ninths, and tritones- also relating to “1726”- appear throughout the solo violin in measures 60-63, measures 80-81, and throughout (see example 16 below).

Example 15: Movement 1, “1726,” mm. 76-77 in solo violin.⁶⁰

Example 16: Movement 1, “1726,” mm. 60-63 and measures 80-81 in solo violin part.⁶¹

⁵⁹Higdon.

⁶⁰Ibid.

⁶¹Higdon.

The B section features three melodic themes: theme BX, theme BY, and theme BZ (see examples 17, 18, and 19 below and on next page). Theme BX is presented immediately in the solo violin in measures 54-59. This theme is largely stepwise, alternating frequently between whole-step and half-step motion to create a quasi-chromatic, “wedge-like” texture. Upon its reiteration in measure 60, theme BX expands intervallically to emphasize the tritone, perfect fifth, and the seventh, though it generally maintains its rhythmic properties. Towards the end of the phrase, however, stepwise motion regains precedence (see example 16 on page 38). This material serves as source material for measures 73-78, 111-118 and measures 134-141, each of which feature the quasi-chromatic texture and rhythmic emphasis found in the first iteration of theme BX, in expanded gestures (see examples 20, 21, and 22 on pages 40-41).

Example 17: Theme BX; Movement 1, “1726,” mm. 54-59.⁶²

mm. 54-59

Solo Violin

mp sub. *mf* *mp*

⁶²Ibid.

Example 18: Movement 1, “1726,” Piano reduction of mm. 66-70.⁶³

mm. 66-70

Solo Violin *f*

Piano *mf*

Pno.

Example 19: Movement 1, “1726,” mm. 78-80 in brass. Theme BZ⁶⁴

4/4

Example 20: Movement 1, “1726,” mm. 73-78.⁶⁵

mm. 73-78

Solo Violin *f*

Piano *mf*

⁶³Higdon.

⁶⁴Ibid.

⁶⁵Ibid.

Example 21: Movement 1, “1726,” mm.111-119.⁶⁶

Example 22: Movement 1, “1726,” mm. 134-141.⁶⁷

mm. 134-141

Theme BY presents itself in call and response form between the soloist and the ensemble, and generally consists of only two beats of material (see example 18 on page 40). This theme-

⁶⁶Higdon.

⁶⁷Ibid.

presented as a succession of 3-6 pitches- is quasi-chromatic as well, however it is iterated in short, articulated passages unlike theme BX’s longer, slurred passages. The rhythmic gesture of this theme changes frequently, alternating between triplet eighth notes, duplet eighth notes, and sixteenth notes– creating a linear two-against-three pattern. This exchange occurs in measures 66-72, 82-88, and 126-132.

Theme BZ is found exclusively in the ensemble and generally marks melodic, tonal, and textural arrival points (see example 19 on page 40). While the first measure of this theme is typically doubled at the octave, the second measure is always harmonized by root position or first inversion triads (see example 23 below). This theme is found in measures 78-80, 103-104, 123-124, 146-147, and 150-155. See table 7 (on next page) for a list of occurrences of themes BX, BY, and BZ throughout the piece.

Example 23: Movement 1, “1726,” Piano reduction of mm. 78-80 and 152-155.⁶⁸

mm. 78-81

f

mm. 152-155

Piano Reduction

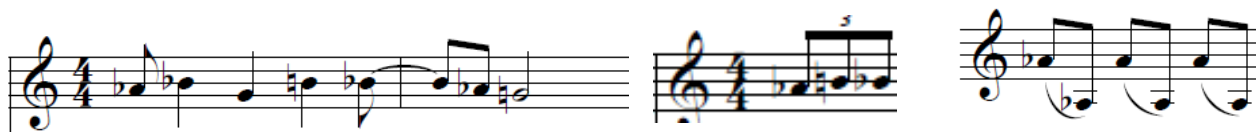
⁶⁸Higdon.

Table 7: Occurrences of themes BX, BY, and BZ throughout “1726.”

Theme	Locations of Occurrences
BX	mm. 53-65, mm. 216-227
BY	mm. 66-78, mm. 82-84, mm. 228-237, mm. 245-247
BZ	mm. 78-79, mm. 103-104, mm. 123-124, mm. 146-155, mm. 241-242, mm. 266-269, mm. 272-274, mm. 276-279

Much of Higdon’s rhythmic dialogue in section B develops from three motives: motive bx, motive ‘by,’ and motive bz (see example 24 below). Motive bx is an eighth, quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter, eighth syncopated rhythm found at the core of theme BX (see example 17 on page 39) and in the ensemble- typically on repeated notes or oscillations between octaves of a pitch class (see example 14 on page 38). Motive ‘by’ is a singular triplet figure- used for both melodic and pulsating purposes (see example 24 below). Lastly, motive bz is a steady eighth note pulse, used to create a pulsing drone and to create vertical two-against-three tension in the ensemble (see example 24 below).

Example 24: Motive 1, “1726.” Motive bx (left, mm. 54-55), motive ‘by’ (middle, mm. 66), and motive bz (right, mm. 55).



In measure 90, vertical emphasis on the major seventh (interval-class 1) takes precedence, beginning with accented double stop glissandi in the solo violin (see example 25 on next page). These glissandi increase in rhythmic pace, leading to the collapse of the interval into a minor second on beat four of measure 93. Here, the solo violin begins a “fast and furious” bowed tremolo, following the graphic shape provided on the score, while maintaining the major-second interval (see example 26 on next page).

Example 25: Movement 1, “1726,” mm.90-93.⁶⁹

mm. 90-93

Solo Violin

fff

Example 26: Movement 1, “1726,” Piano reduction of mm. 94-97.⁷⁰

94

Bowed tremolo, fast and furious, moving along the general lines of this graph, ending up at the very top of the range.

*Vary dynamics widely and wildly

ff

Beneath, the ensemble is alternating between Bb, A, and Ab (G#) in a vertical two-against-three rhythmic pattern. This alternation emphasizes Bb and the seventh interval, as it moves between a major and minor seventh above Bb (interval-classes 1 and 2). In measure 98, the lower voices begin a triplet chromatic figure, underpinning the Bb seventh intervals in the upper voices and the major second tremolo in the solo violin, leading into the return of theme BZ in measure 103.

Measure 134 marks another nod to the movement’s title. The solo violin begins a compound melody, separated by alternating intervals of sixths and sevenths. Each melodic line

⁶⁹Higdon.

⁷⁰Ibid.

moves by semitone in a general ascent (see example 22 on page 41). Beneath, the ensemble begins a chain of alternating falling sevenths and falling ninths before arriving at a series of planing triads in measure 141 (see example 27 below). The section concludes with a fragment of theme BX in the clarinet and a sweeping chromatic descent in the low woodwinds leading into a passage of Gb harmony. Harmonic details will be discussed further in chapter 6.

Example 27: Movement 1, “1726,” Piano reduction of mm.135-141.⁷¹

The image displays a piano reduction of measures 135-141 from Movement 1, "1726". The score is presented in two systems. The first system, labeled "Piano Reduction", shows measures 135 through 141. The second system, labeled "Pno.", continues the piece. The music is written in 4/4 time and features a complex texture with multiple voices. A prominent feature is a chromatic descent in the bass line, which is highlighted with dashed lines in the first system. The score includes various harmonic structures, including planing triads and a chromatic descent in the low woodwinds. The piece concludes with a fragment of theme BX in the clarinet and a sweeping chromatic descent in the low woodwinds leading into a passage of Gb harmony.

The A section returns in measure 164, beginning with an augmentation of theme Z over an F⁴ drone in the first violin. Here, the ending Gb from the B section (measure 164) resolves outward to a G natural in the solo violin and F in the first violin. This is another reference to “1726” as the section returns with a minor seventh dyad (see example 28 on next page). This iteration of theme Z features a timbral change as well. Largely marked *pizzicato*, the solo violin only plays *arco* when accenting the F³ drone with an interjecting triplet figure.

⁷¹Higdon.

Example 28: Movement 1, “1726,” Piano reduction of mm. 165-169.⁷²

mm. 165-169

Solo Violin

Piano Reduction

pizz.

arco

3

mp

mp

Theme X enters in the flute in measure 170. In measure 170, Higdon slightly alters the thematic material from theme X through intervallic inversion and changes in direction and quality. The intervallic make up of theme X is: up a major seventh; up a perfect fifth; down a major ninth; up a perfect eleventh; down a perfect fifth (see example 29).

Example 29: Movement 1, “1726,” Piano reduction of mm. 170-174.⁷³

mm. 170-174

Piano Reduction

8va

p

The intervallic make up of measures 170-174 is (beginning with the second sounding pitch of the measure): up a minor seventh; down a perfect fifth; up a minor seventh; down a perfect fourth; up a minor seventh; and down a minor second. Because the first pitch in measure 170 is an F³ that is simply heard as a continuation of the solo violin’s interjecting F’s and support for the F³ drone, it was not included as a part of the theme X motive. Another iteration of theme

⁷²Ibid.

⁷³Higdon.

X enters in the strings on beat four of measure 74, beginning on Ab³. This iteration is a rhythmic augmentation of the original theme and contracts the perfect fifth into a tritone (see example 30).

Example 30: Movement 1, “1726,” Piano reduction of mm. 174-179.⁷⁴

mm. 174-179

Solo Violin

Piano Reduction

arco pizz.

mp *niente mp*

p *mp*

8va

As the A section return continues to unfold, melodies continue to emerge from themes X and Z. Measures 190-195 in the solo violin, for example, expand the intervallic material presented in themes X and Z, emphasizing seventh and ninth leaps. Theme Y returns in the glockenspiel in measure 190. Transposed down a major third from the original iteration, theme Y maintains its rhythmic and intervallic properties (see example 31 on next page).

⁷⁴Higdon.

Example 31: Movement 1, “1726,” Piano reduction of mm. 190-195.⁷⁵

Despite alterations to original thematic material, this return to the A section maintains the delicate and exposed texture established in the first A section. However, Higdon alters the return of A to a more intimate chamber music setting. Quartal and quintal dyads are used sparingly to

⁷⁵Higdon.

maintain a harmonic emphasis on the perfect fifth throughout, while maintaining the light, gentle texture of the section.

The B section returns in its original pitch center in measure 216. It begins with a series of quasi-chromatic sweeps in the solo violin, pulsing A-flats, and falling sevenths in the ensemble, leading up to the introduction of a new rhythmic motif- sixteenth, eighth, sixteenth (see example 32 below). Theme BY returns in measure 228, often providing harmonic material, scalar material, or encapsulating a pitch (see example 33 below). As the theme ends seventh dyads begin to appear in passages played by the solo violin.

Example 32: Movement 1, “1726,” m. 223. New rhythmic motif.



Example 33: Movement 1, “1726,” mm. 228-229 and 240. Theme BY.

35.1: Harmonic Material (B \flat m \sharp 7)
Taken from measure 228

Solo Violin

35.2: Encapsulating Pitch G \flat is emphasized because two pitches are executed above it and two beneath it.
Taken from measure 229

Vln.

35.3: Scalar Material
Taken from measure 240

Vln.

Theme BZ returns in measure 241, leading back into the return of motive BY heard in measure 245. In measure 252, the accented, double stop glissandi from measure 90 return,

collapsing to a major second as before (though now the fast and furious tremolo is omitted).

They collapse to a major second, as they did before, however, the “fast and furious” tremolo is omitted. Instead, this gesture leads directly into the compound melody gesture previously heard in measure 134, with the two-against-three oscillating major/minor sevenths from measure 94 occur in the ensemble. Like measure 94, the emphasis is on seventh dyads of Bb– Bb to A and Bb to Ab (G#) (see example 34 below).

Example 34: Movement 1, “1726,” Piano reduction of mm. 257-258.

mm. 257-258

Solo Violin

Piano Reduction

f

Both the compound melody and two-against-three oscillations continue until measure 266– the peak of the section– where the solo violin plays consecutive sixteenth-note D-flats at *fff*. Beneath, theme BZ is in the ensemble, along with chromatic sweeps and quintal harmonies. The music builds, and following a brief sequence of the BZ theme, a dramatic and fortissimo statement of Theme BZ, now rhythmically altered, is heard that leads into the cadenza, or C section.

In the C section, Higdon emphasizes the major seventh and its inversion, the minor ninth both linearly and harmonically via double stops. She often employs scalar runs between long double stops to showcase Hahn’s virtuosity. These runs are constructed from three motives with different intervallic contours: motive cx, motive cy, and motive cz (see examples 35, 36, and 37 on next page).

Example 35: Movement 1, “1726,” mm. 282 & 283. Motive cx (left) and its retrograde (right).⁷⁶



Example 36: Movement 1, “1726,” m. 283. Motive cy (left) and its retrograde (right).⁷⁷



Example 37: Movement 1, “1726,” m. 288. Motive cz.⁷⁸



Motive cx is distinguished by its conjunct contour, moving up a step, then down two steps. While the first occurrence of this motive is heard on beat three of measure 282 (moving up a semitone, down a semitone, and then down a whole step) not all occurrences of motives cx maintain the same interval qualities. Higdon often transposes this motive diatonically. Higdon also uses the retrograde of this motive throughout for contrast and to maintain octatonic qualities in each gesture. Motive cy, first heard in 283, is distinguished by its broader contour (moving up a minor third down a semitone, and then down a whole step). Like motive cx, motive cy is transposed both chromatically and diatonically throughout and appears in retrograde. Motive cz is a stepwise scalar pattern, typically appearing within a slurred sextuplet or a sextuplet-triplet combination. The scalar pattern is always an octatonic one, outlining either octatonic collection 1 or 2.

⁷⁶Higdon.

⁷⁷Ibid.

⁷⁸Ibid.

Most dyads formed by double stops create sevenths and ninths, though occasionally tritones and tenths are formed. Higdon adds additional emphasis on these intervals by moving the distance of a seventh between seventh dyads via triplet scalar patterns. For example, in measure 290, a dyad (pitch classes C and B) resolves into a series of three linear major sevenths: B \flat to A, C to B natural, and G to F \sharp . Pitch class F \sharp then resolves into a major seventh dyad containing E and D \sharp (E \flat). Through a scalar triplet pattern, the dyad moves through pitch classes A natural, B, and C to a seventh dyad containing D \flat and C. D \flat is a diminished seventh above E (see example 38).

Example 38: Movement 1, “1726,” mm. 290,⁷⁹

Two vertical sevenths a seventh a part (E-Db)

Melodic emphasis on the seventh and the ninth occur throughout as well (such as heard in measures 302, 307, and 308) where successions of linear ninths, sevenths, and occasional tritones appear. While the rhythmic intensity slows down in measures 313-317, the melodic emphasis on sevenths and ninths continues. The section closes with a leap down from B⁴ to a sustained B \flat ³, then rises to, and sustains, an A \flat ⁴ before resolving to a G³ at the beginning of the A section return (see example 39 on next page).

⁷⁹Higdon.

Example 39: Movement 1, “1726,” mm. 313-317.⁸⁰

mm. 313-317

Solo Violin

mp

As the A section returns (m. 318), the solo violin enters with a compound melody, combining both themes X and Z above a G³ drone. The themes are distinguished by both register and timbre, with theme X marked *arco* with harmonics— as it was in the opening of the movement— and theme Z marked *pizzicato*. A third line is added in measure 324 when the interjecting triplet figure from measure 169 returns, this time accentuating the G³ drone. Theme X returns in the flute and glockenspiel on beat four of measure 325, and theme Y returns in measure 329, with the same instrumentation. A diminution of theme Z marked *legato* returns at the same time. This iteration of theme Z returns to the *arco legato* character found in the original statement of the theme. Like measures 26-34, expanded melodic lines emerge from theme Z material starting in measure 332, exploring the full range of the instrument, with frequent leaps of a seventh. Simultaneously, rhythmically active lines arise from theme Y material in the glockenspiel.

At the end of the movement, the solo violin leaps a major seventh, moving from G³ to F#— emphasizing the open G string and the interval of a seventh. Beneath the violin’s leap, a series of falling sevenths can be heard in the orchestra over a quintal drone, forming set class (013578). The movement concludes with the alternation of pitch classes F# and C# above the sustained chord consisting of the pitch classes G, D, and F#, forming the subset (0156). Most

⁸⁰Higdon.

importantly however, this combination of pitch classes (C#, D, G, and F#) as they correspond with pitch class numbers 1, 7, 2, and 6, ending the movement with its title “1726” (see example 40).

Example 40: Movement 1, “1726,” Piano reduction of mm. 356-360.⁸¹

mm. 356-360

Solo Violin

Piano Reduction

In conclusion, Higdon engrains the movement’s title’s (1726) corresponding intervals and pitch class throughout the thematic and harmonic material. The A sections develop motivic cells based on this material, while the B sections develop material derived from octatonic pitch collections. The C section focuses primarily on intervallic development and expansion, exploiting intervals of a second, seventh, and ninth.

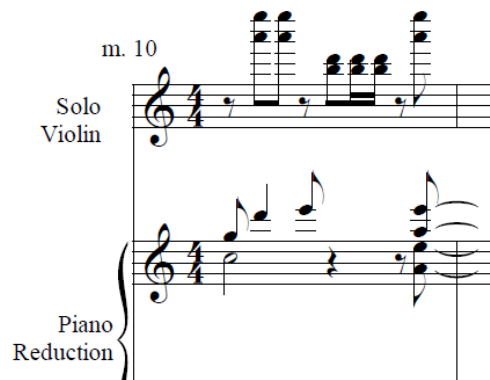
⁸¹Higdon.

Chapter VI: Harmonic Analysis of “1726”

The foundation of Jennifer Higdon’s harmonic language is built on quartal and quintal harmonies, and stepwise triadic planing. While harmonic structures do not operate in functional harmony, standard cadential harmony precedes arrival points throughout. Sections A and C focus primarily on linear movement, while the B sections contain denser vertical harmonies.

Vertical quintal harmonies are presented early on, starting in measure five (see example 4 on page 28). Here, the B and F# dyad are executed through double stops in the solo violin. These quintal double stops reappear in measure 10, transposed a whole step higher as A and E. This dyad resolves inward to a minor third (B and D) before expanding back to the A and E dyad. By this point, theme Y has entered and reiterates the quintal harmony with a C and G on the downbeat of measure 10. The C/G dyad ultimately resolves to an A/E, doubling the solo violin’s double stops (see example 41).

Example 41: Movement 1, “1726,” Piano reduction of mm. 10.⁸²

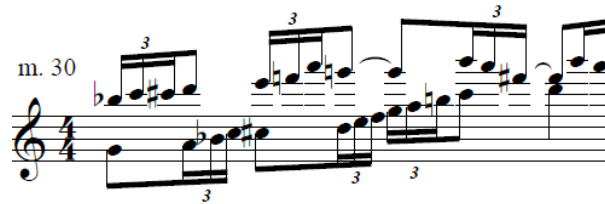


Though an occasional harmonic second or octave appears, Higdon seems to favor harmonic quintal dyads throughout the A section. Trichords formed as the result of the

⁸²Higdon.

unfolding of themes X, Y, and Z simultaneously emphasize subsets of the fundamental set class (02357). As the movement moves closer to the B section, appearances of both triads and the interval of the harmonic third begin to take precedence. This shift first begins in measure 30 with parallel 13ths and 3rds on each beat (see example 42 below). In the second half of measure, the harmonic motion of 35, v^{11} - I^{11} occurs simultaneously with a textural shift (see example 43 below). Here, the rhythmic motion of the solo violin decreases, and triadic planing is first introduced in the ensemble. While step-wise triadic motion occurs in the upper voices, quintal pedals are sustained in the lower voices.

Example 42: Movement 1, “1726,” Piano reduction of m. 30.⁸³



Here the triadic motion in the upper voices alternates between major and minor quality (measure 54), while at other times (such as mm. 43 and 47) Higdon chooses to maintain only major quality (see example 44 below). Linear dominant harmony is implied in measure 52-53, though it resolves to an $A\flat^{9\#7}$ in measure 54 instead of G major harmony, marking the shift between the A and B section (see example 45 below).

Example 44: Movement 1, “1726,” Piano reduction of mm. 43-46.⁸⁵

m. 42-46

Example 45: Movement 1, “1726,” Piano reduction of mm. 52-53.⁸⁶

mm. 52-54

legato

Solo Violin

Piano Reduction

Triadic planing and quintal drones are characteristic of the B section. These harmonies are typically associated with the occurrence of theme BZ (see example 46 on next page). At times, theme BZ is harmonized as both parallel thirds and parallel fourths in lieu of the quintal

⁸⁵Ibid.

⁸⁶Higdon.

Example 47: Movement 1, "1726," Piano reduction of mm. 159-164.⁸⁷

mm. 159-165

Solo Violin

Piano Reduction

mp

molto rit.

Vln.

Pno.

p

pizz.

mp

Similar harmonic characteristics occur between the first and second iterations of the A section. Triadic/seventh versus quintal harmony returns in measure 200. Here, the root of each chord in the upper voices composes out the (Db7) harmony (F, Ab, C, Db), while the root of each quintal dyad spells a Gb major triad (see example 48 on next page).

⁸⁷Higdon.

Example 48: Movement 1, “1726,” Piano reduction of mm. 200-201.⁸⁸

mm. 200-201

Piano Reduction

mp sub.

molto rit.

Pno.

p

Similar motion occurs in measures 203-204. “With the return of the B section (measures 216-282), the harmonic function is like the first occurrence of the B section. In the C section, seventh, second, and tritone double stops comprise the harmonic motion of the material. The final return of the A section brings a focus on quintal harmonies, with triadic harmony occurring in only two places—measures 339-340 and 344-349 (see example 49 on next page). The final vertical harmony of the piece (G, B, C#, F) contains pitch classes 1, 7, 2, and 6, serving as an homage to the movement’s title (see example 40 on page 54).

⁸⁸Higdon.

Example 49: Movement 1, “1726,” Piano reduction in mm. 339-340 (below) and 344-349 (next page).⁸⁹

The image displays three systems of musical notation for a piano reduction. The first system, labeled 'mm. 339-340', shows a treble and bass clef with a 4/4 time signature. The second system, labeled 'mm. 344-350', continues the piano reduction with similar notation. The third system, labeled 'no.', shows a single treble clef staff with a 4/4 time signature, likely representing a solo violin part. The notation includes various chords, intervals, and melodic lines.

Quintal harmonies and triadic planing are staples in Higdon’s harmonic language throughout “1726.” Dyads formed by double stops in the solo violin and points of attack between the solo violin and ensemble emphasize interval classes associated with the movement’s title. While quintal harmonies are used throughout, triadic harmonies are often saved for transitional moments. Triadic planing often maintains the chord quality as chords move by whole step. At times, Higdon juxtaposes quintal harmonies in the lower voices of the ensemble against triadic planing in the upper voices in the ensemble.

⁸⁹Higdon.

Chapter VII: Reception History

The world premiere for Jennifer Higdon's *Violin Concerto* was performed by Hilary Hahn and the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Mario Venzago on February 6, 2009.⁹⁰ The Canadian premiere was performed by the Toronto Symphony Orchestra conducted by Peter Oundjian on March 11, 2009, the east coast premiere by the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra conducted by Marin Alsop on June 4, 2009, and the Philadelphia premiere by the Curtis Institute of Music Symphony Orchestra. Hilary Hahn performed the solo for each premier.⁹¹ Its premiere was greeted with positive reviews from audiences and critics alike. Many praising Higdon for her approachable musical language, strong sense of pulse, and references to classical tonality.⁹² Reviewer Tom Aldridge praised:

Higdon handles the modern orchestral style with a mastery that eludes a majority of her colleagues. All too many new works: (1) contain too few tonal references or common chords, (2) fail to balance the various ensembles such that one section (often the percussion) tends to predominate or the soloist is drowned out and (3) represent a compendium of compositions that are either revealed only by musicians studying their scores or containing repetitive figures that 'groove' the listener in. The unity/diversity factor so audibly prevalent in great works from earlier centuries is all too often absent. Everything new that Higdon incorporates is tasteful and in balance such that the entire orchestra remains articulate, containing many tonal references while sharing special sonic colors modern orchestras can provide.⁹³

On May 28, 2009 Jennifer Higdon's *Violin Concerto* had its United Kingdom premiere with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by Vasily Petrenko. Following

⁹⁰Hahn, Hilary. "Hilary Hahn Interview Jennifer Higdon 1." *YouTube*, 6:43. Hilaryhahnvideos, 2009, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YRHR6NyVRAA>.

⁹¹Higdon. Program Notes.

⁹²Reel, 1

⁹³Tom Aldridge, "ISO with Hilary Hahn," *Nuvo: Indy's Alternative Voice*, February 11, 2009 <http://www.nuvo.net/arts/article/iso-hilary-hahn>.

the premiere, Hilary Hahn and the Liverpool Philharmonic recorded the work. The recording is a multi-track recording and took place over twelve hours of recording. The work was recorded in the Philharmonic Hall without an audience. This recording was marketed as the official recording of the piece⁹⁴.

In 2010, the work became the first self-published orchestra piece to win the Pulitzer Prize in music. Two days after receiving word of her *Violin Concerto*'s Pulitzer Prize, Higdon began composing *Echo Dash*. A short work composed for Hilary Hahn's In 27 Pieces: The Hilary Hahn Encores, the work serves as an "encore" to the *Violin Concerto*.

⁹⁴Williams, "Jennifer Higdon's Violin Concerto: The Genesis of a Twenty-First Century Work," 97.

Chapter VIII: Conclusion

Movement one, “1726,” of Jennifer Higdon’s *Violin Concerto* explores contrapuntal layering, cellular development, octatonic pitch collections, triadic and quartal harmonies, and pitch relationships to the movement’s title—“1726.” The A section is largely compiled of three moving lines, stemming from themes X, Y, and Z. After introducing these lines, Higdon layers them, then expands them, exploring the interwoven results of interaction between these lines. Higdon also creates compound melodies in the violin to layer multiple lines, and layers harmonically static pulsing lines with lyrical and angular gestures, particularly in the B section.

Themes X, Y, and Z, which serve as catalysts to all material in the A sections, are formed from set cells connected to set (02357), a set that represents pitches from the F pentatonic collection and is frequently used by Stravinsky. This, in combination with the B sections use of octatonic collections 1 and 2 showcase Higdon’s neoclassical influences and creates cohesiveness between the cellular A sections, scalar B sections, and gestural C section.

Quintal harmonies are emphasized throughout the piece, while triadic harmonies are generally reserved for the B sections. Theme BZ typically appears with triadic harmonizations and always precedes a textural and/or pitch center change. These triadic harmonies appear in both root and 1st position and are executed through triadic planing. At times, triadic harmonies in upper voices are juxtaposed with quintal or quartal harmonies in the lower voices. Though harmonies are not products of functional harmonic progressions, occasionally dominant to tonic harmonic structures appear at cadential points.

The movement’s title, “1726,” is the address for The Curtis Institute of Music, where Higdon and Hahn first met. Higdon incorporates this number into the musical material of the

movement by way of intervals and their inversions (unisons/octaves, sevenths/seconds, and sixths/thirds), collection of semitones- semitone, fifths, whole steps, and tritones-, and pitch class numbers- C#/Db, G, D, F#/Gb. These connections are formed both linearly and vertically. The movement begins with tetrachord (0157), featuring pitch classes G, F#, C#, B– with one pitch (B) being a minor third away from the pitch needed (D) to create the tetrachord associated with the movement’s title. The piece ends with tetrachord (0156) including pitch classes C#, F#, G, and D– finally resolving to the movement’s title.

In closing, “1726” is a strong opener to Higdon’s *Violin Concerto*. This movement, a part of a seminal work for both the Higdon, herself, and the violin explores the lyrical and virtuosic capabilities of the violin. It also explores the virtuosity of Higdon’s contrapuntal writing and the depths of her harmonic language. This movement is representative of Higdon’s compositional voice and reflects what makes her music both engaging and accessible to a wide variety of musicians and audiences.

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Appendix: Jennifer Higdon's *Violin Concerto* Instrumentation

Solo Violin

2 Flutes (Piccolo doubling)
2 Oboes (English horn in F doubling)
2 Bb Clarinets
2 bassoons

4 F Horns
3 Trumpets in C
3 Trombones
1 Tuba

1 Harp

Timpani (C# and G)

2 Percussion
Chimes/Crotales (C# and G)
Suspended, Sizzle, and Chinese Cymbals
5-octave Marimba
Glockenspiel (played with knitting needles)
Bass Drum

Strings

