

RICE UNIVERSITY

**An Oboe and Oboe d'Amore Concerto from the Cape of Africa:
A Biographical and Analytical Perspective**

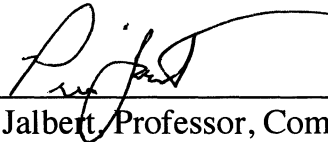
by

Erik Behr

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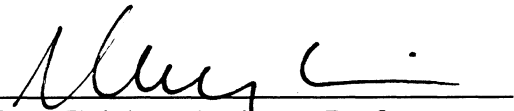
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ABSTRACT

An Oboe and Oboe d'Amore Concerto from the Cape of Africa:

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Due to the lack of quality contemporary concertos for the oboe and, especially, the oboe d'amore, this dissertation presents two works from South African composers that provide excellent additions to the concerto repertoire. Allan Stephenson wrote *Concerto for Oboe and Strings* in 1978 and Peter Louis Van Dijk wrote *Elegy-Dance-Elegy* in 1984. The outstanding quality and idiomatic nature of these works assuages the practical concerns today's oboists have when undertaking a contemporary concerto. Along with their high artistic merit, these concerti are both audience-friendly and financially feasible to present on an international stage. In addition to briefly examining the post-apartheid musical climate that exists in South Africa today, the dissertation thoroughly analyzes the works and includes biographical background of the composers.

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Introduction

Due to the large amount of time required for reed-making, preparing orchestral music, adjusting the intricate and sensitive mechanics of the oboe and finding good cane for reeds, most oboists would sooner try out a new sharpening stone than search for a new contemporary concerto to program. This mindset is predicated on two beliefs of oboists in this country - contemporary concertos are too time-consuming to prepare and there are very few quality contemporary concertos for the instrument.

The first belief has much to do with the training oboists receive in universities and conservatories preparing them for the work demands of being a professional oboist. They are generally trained to prepare for a life of playing in an orchestra, with occasional chamber music concerts and if one is fortunate enough to be a principal oboe, then perhaps playing a concerto every few years. This is hardly the easy way out! This career requires absolute dedication and an immense amount of hard work to maintain the quality of artistry needed to play up to the high orchestral standards of today. Although schools do encourage students to learn contemporary works, the foremost concerns for oboe students are to learn the orchestral repertoire, advance technique to the student's fullest potential and to make consistently reliable reeds. This mindset, instituted in these formative educational years, prejudices many oboists from exploring new concertos as they transition to professional oboists.

Most North American orchestras require the principal oboist to play every

week and this relentless schedule leaves very little time to examine a new contemporary concerto. By contrast, most oboe players in continental Europe have many weeks off in a season, due to their orchestras having two principal players who will rotate in and out of the orchestra. This affords more free time to the principals and so they are more inclined to pursue concerto engagements and discover or commission new concertos. American oboists simply do not have this amount of free time and so, when a concerto opportunity arises, most players will mentally cycle through ten or so familiar works and pick one that they can prepare on top of their other professional obligations. This time-consuming orchestra-centric lifestyle has lead many oboists to shy away from new concertos, as they would rather play a concerto that they already know.

Although oboists enjoy a wide selection of Baroque and Classical concertos, the second belief is well-founded as there is an unfortunate lack of quality concertos from the Romantic and Modern periods. Interested in stretching the expressive and technical boundaries of the concerto medium, composers of these periods found the oboe limited in range and technical facility compared to the piano and instruments of the string family. Oboe players were not ignored though, as these composers wrote many wonderful solos for the instrument in the symphonic and opera repertoire. Modern composers of the early 20th century, such as Poulenc, Hindemith and Britten did write masterpieces for the oboe's chamber and solo unaccompanied repertoire. Unfortunately, when composers turned to woodwinds as concerto instruments, they favored the flute and clarinet over the

oboe, due to extended contemporary techniques better suiting these other instruments. Technical limitations such as range, dynamic contrast, and articulation hindered the oboe in this capacity, not to mention the fact that a concerto for flute or clarinet has a better chance of being played as oboists are heavily outnumbered in the woodwind world.

In response to the limited oboe concerto repertoire of the Modern genre, I would like to examine two concertos that, in my estimation, would be a welcome addition to the oboe literature. The oboe d'amore has a far smaller concerto repertoire than the oboe (no more than a handful) and so any concerto written for this instrument is deemed noteworthy. That the concerto for oboe d'amore by Peter Louis Van Dijk, *Elegy-Dance-Elegy*, is of such a high quality is especially exciting. As this instrument is hardly used in the orchestral repertoire, it is also unique for an audience to hear it played as a concerto instrument.

Due to Allan Stephenson and Peter Louis Van Dijk living and working primarily in South Africa, the international exposure of their respective concertos for oboe and oboe d'amore has been considerably limited by their geographical location. Based in Cape Town, Allan Stephenson composed *Concerto for Oboe and Strings* in 1978 and Peter Louis Van Dijk composed *Elegy-Dance-Elegy* in 1984. Offering high artistic merit and feasible instrumentation for various types of ensembles, as well as being easily appreciated by audiences and musicians alike, the limited exposure of these works is unwarranted. These concertos are comfortably written within the technical capacities of professional oboists and the

preparation time needed to perform these works would be manageable, even with a busy orchestral or teaching schedule.

It is my hope that this thesis shines some well-deserved light on two works that are so idiomatically and beautifully written that oboists will want to venture away from their familiar repertoire and embrace these excellent works. As performing musicians, professional oboists need to constantly find new ways to engage an audience that has many other entertainment options. The mindset of relying on business as usual, in terms of playing the same handful of concertos, needs to be abandoned. It would provide an additional point of interest to an audience to hear accessible concerto repertoire of a high quality that has been found outside of the European/American tradition.

These concertos are approachable to performers as they offer both high artistic merit and are written by composers who have the practical knowledge of performing musicians. By this I mean that they are written with the understanding of the practicalities of putting a group together, rehearsing and performing these works, while feasibly controlling the cost and time needed. Although I must admit that my national pride played its part in my searching for South African concertos specifically, I would be just as confident presenting these works regardless of their country of origin. I also hope that this exposure will lead to more performances of other works from these two composers who each have a vast oeuvre and deserve wider international recognition.

CHAPTER ONE

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Peter Louis Van Dijk

Peter Louis van Dijk was born in Rotterdam, Netherlands in 1953 and moved with his family to Cape Town, South Africa at age nine. He started composing at this prodigiously young age. Since that time he has become one of South Africa's most important musical figures due to his highly successful career of composing, teaching, performing, lecturing, adjudicating, conducting, and recording for radio and television.

He was influenced by his musical family from an early age, in particular his maternal grandfather, who was a church organist, pianist, and composer for over fifty years; and also his father, who was an avid amateur violinist. His formal music education began with the study of the accordion with Max Adler at age seven and his instruments expanded to include guitar, violin, mandolin, trombone, tuba, sousaphone, and percussion. While attending Athlone Boys High School he played in both the school's military band and symphony orchestra. At the age of fifteen, he began piano lessons with two well-known teachers in Cape Town at the time, Lettie Schlemmer and Dr. Carl van Wyk. The wide variety of instrumental studies and intense musical involvement of these early years destined Van Dijk to a career in music. These experiences also provided him with a broad base of instrumental understanding and insight, which has served him well in his ability to compose and orchestrate for instruments on a highly intuitive level.

He attended the South African College of Music, a department of the University of Cape Town (UCT) where he continued his wide-ranging studies: piano under Carly Nitsche and Thomas Rajna, cello with Harry Cremers, viola with Franco Seveso and composition with Gideon Fagan. He also studied composition through private lessons with Stefans Grove. He obtained his Teacher's Licentiate Diploma (TLD) and furthered his study of recorder under Richard Oxtoby, receiving a Performer's Diploma and a Licentiate of Trinity College London (LTCL). Although his various formal studies are extensive, it is worth mentioning that his interest in music and the arts extended beyond the formal environment and he immersed himself, during these years, in music from all genres and is knowledgeable in many subjects such as art, drama and literature. Van Dijk completed his Bachelor of Music in composition, studying under Peter Klatzow, from UCT in 1983, and he received his Doctoral degree in composition from UCT in 2004.

To say that Van Dijk's music is eclectic would be an understatement. As Van Dijk has worked in every genre of the music industry, it would be impossible to categorize him in any one style as he has the ability to change style and approach from one work to the next. The nature of working in South Africa as a freelance composer has necessitated this skill. This is especially true in the new political and cultural climate that has seen the demise of many larger classical music institutions that would serve as steady income and sources of commissions. It must be noted that there are still some South African composers who are

afforded the opportunity of composing within more traditional genres because of their association with universities, but Van Dijk is not one of these composers.

His compositions (with examples) could be divided into the following categories:

Educational- *The Musicians of Bremen, Follow that Flute!*

Bushman (San Bushman of southern Africa) or African-inspired- *San Gloria,*

The Rain's People, linyembezi (Xhosa- Tears)

Esoteric- *Elegy-Dance-Elegy, Papilo*

Quasi-minimalist (some African influence, e.g. ostinato, pentatonic scale)-

About Nothing, Te Deum

Humorous- *Beethoven or Bust, The Oratorio*

The two most influential composers apparent in Van Dijk's musical style, around the time of the composition of *Elegy-Dance-Elegy*, are Stravinsky and Britten. I was fortunate to gain some insight into their influence, as I was able to interview Van Dijk, over the phone, while he was home in Port Elizabeth in May 2009. I would like to include a transcription of a brief part of that interview in which Van Dijk discusses the influences these composers have had on his style.

Erik Behr (EB): Who would name as your major compositional influences?

Peter Louis Van Dijk (PLVD): For me, for different reasons, over the years the two that have made a huge impact on me, that is quite clear in the eighties, is Stravinsky and Britten. For a piece like the *Elegy-Dance-Elegy*,

I think Stravinsky was very influential, especially when I think of his *Poetics of Music*, as there is a workmanlike quality about the piece. But there is also a power of blending emotion with technique that, of course, Bach does on a different plane. Britten influenced me for many years and maybe some of that can be heard, particularly if you are aware of this while listening to the work. That has changed for me now, as I have moved on from that period, but I do recall that if I was stuck for ideas I would just page through a biography of Stravinsky or Britten and I would get ideas and start again.

EB: When starting to compose a piece, what are your organizational principles or do you have a compositional process?

PLVD: That varies, but essentially the principles would be simplest to be explained in terms of the elements and the contrasting elements I like to use; and really the most important thing in any piece is to find the right balance, the right flow. In order to do that, you need that magical thing that, hopefully, happens between A and B material that creates enough contrast to keep it interesting and will help to extend the material. Obviously, as this piece was written in 1986, my style has changed in some ways, but I would say that this approach remains the same.

EB: Are there any particular scales or modes that you like to use?

PLVD: I am quite fond of the Phrygian as I think it has an interesting color and remember using it quite a bit in *The Selfish Giant*, which I wrote

around this time. I used it, maybe, in the *Allegro* section of the *Elegy* in the strings, but really I think that piece is very strongly built on its four-note motive.

Van Dijk wrote his first opera, *The Contract*, at the age of nineteen, which was performed by the UCT Opera School under his own musical direction in 1983. Two years later his second opera, *Die Noodsein* (Afrikaans: *The Emergency Signal*), was again staged by the UCT Opera School, this time produced by the composer's late wife, Susi Van Dijk. Van Dijk's early success was further recognized when he was the youngest composer invited to present at the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) as part of a series, *The Composer Speaks*, devised by the Cape Performing Arts Board (CAPAB).

During nearly a decade of teaching composition, orchestration, music education, and instrumental studies at Cape Town high schools, the University of Cape Town and the University of the Western Cape, Van Dijk wrote numerous smaller and medium length works. These include *Psalms and Interludes* (1979) for vocal quartet and tape; *From Death To Life* (1980), a song cycle for high voice and chamber orchestra; and the *Piano Concertino* (1980-83).

A seminal change in Van Dijk's career occurred in 1984 when he was asked to join Cape Performing Arts Board as Assistant Music Manager as this afforded him three highly productive years. He decided to pursue a new career as a free-lance composer, conductor and part-time lecturer in September 1986.

This new compositional phase at CAPAB involved him writing incidental music for many CAPAB Drama productions: *Francis*, Michael Drin's *Phantom of the Opera*, Dalene Mathee's *Fiel se Kind* (Afrikaans: Fiel's Child), and Maynardville open air arena's productions of *Twelfth Night* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Other duties for CAPAB included composing for Nico Opera House (now re-named *Artscape*). Many of these works received much critical acclaim and notable among them are the following: *A Christmas Overture* - orchestra; *The Musicians of Bremen* - narrator; audience participation and orchestra; *Elegy-Dance-Elegy* - oboe d'amore, harp, strings and timpani; *The Selfish Giant* - narrator, baritone, soloist and choirs.

After branching out on his own in September 1986, Van Dijk was still well supported by CAPAB as well as other arts institutions and received numerous commissions adding to his busy schedule of recital tours with his late wife, conducting, lecturing and adjudicating throughout South Africa. Some notable larger works from this period of 1986-2001 include: *Follow that Flute!* - Narrator, audience and orchestra; *Youth Requiem* - tenor, children's choir and orchestra; *The Prodigal Son* – one-act ballet; *San Gloria* - Bushman themes for choir, chamber orchestra and organ; *Reineke Fuchs* - singspiel in 15 scenes; *About Nothing* - for orchestra; *Iinyembezi* (Xhosa translation- Tears) *String Quartet*; *Macbeth* - Realization of Verdi's opera which was shortened, re-orchestrated with African influences (percussive elements). Beside these larger works, Van Dijk has written many smaller vocal works and occasional pieces that are used for educational

purposes or were written for specific concerts. He has also arranged African songs for orchestra and choir and is widely known throughout the country for three highly successful cabarets that he wrote, produced and performed: *The Twelve-Inch Pianist*; *Pots, Puns & Piccolos*; and *Flush in the Pun*.

After the death of his first wife, Van Dijk relocated to Port Elizabeth, in the Eastern Cape, and married the well-known choral conductor, Junita Lamprecht. Until 2004 he served as Senior Lecturer in composition and musicology at Rhodes University, Grahamstown, and is currently teaching undergraduate and postgraduate studies in the choral conducting program at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (formerly the University of Port Elizabeth). His works from this recent period includes: *Earthdiving*- a collaborative opera with his son, Xandi; *Leaving Africa*- duo for clarinet and cello; *Four American Songs*- soprano and piano; *Magnificat* - mixed choir and string quartet; *Windy City Songs* - soprano, baritone, mixed choir, children's choir, and orchestra. Van Dijk's music is published by Oxford University Press, Hal Leonard, Accolade, Prestige and under the Marco Polo label.

Being a witty and personable character, Van Dijk is a wonderful collaborator and his friendly nature has endured him to the public and his colleagues. Although he is known primarily for his compositions, he still conducts most South African orchestras and his musical genes were passed to his two sons, who are both professional musicians.

Allan Stephenson

Allan Stephenson was born in Wallasey, England in 1949. After moving to South Africa in 1973 to join the cello section of the Cape Town Symphony Orchestra, his career expanded to incorporate performing, conducting, teaching and composing. His kind-hearted nature combined with refined musicianship has established him as one of the most liked and respected figures in South African classical music today.

Although members of his family are not musicians, they had an appreciation and interest in music and supported his early musical endeavors. He began piano lessons at the age of seven and cello lessons at thirteen. Although he never had any formal composition lessons, he began composing at fifteen. He cites his active listening to many LPs throughout his younger years contributing to a thorough knowledge of stylistic, harmonic, orchestral, and formal procedures.

In 1972 he received his Associate of the Royal Manchester College of Music in cello. After a brief period of playing in the cello section of the Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra he moved to Cape Town, South Africa in 1973 to assume the associate principal cello position in the Cape Town Symphony Orchestra (CTSO), a position he held until the organization's demise in 1997.

Stephenson's musical credo is that music should entertain and please the listener. Although he is clearly linked to the late English romantic school of composition by his nationality, composers far beyond the borders of his country have influenced his music. Nielsen, Rachmaninoff, Walton and Bartok are some of

the major influences that he cites and Stephenson's music reflects his desire for clear musical form and the development of the musical line.¹

Stephenson was a gracious and friendly host when I interviewed him, at his home in Cape Town on September 17th, 2009, and asked him about his views on music:

Erik Behr (EB): It seems that your music is always accessible to people and I wonder if you would agree with that?

Allan Stephenson (AS): Well I have a simple theory, derived from Beecham, who said, "The British know nothing about music, but they love the noise it makes." And so my theory is that if I can't stand the noise my music makes, how can I expect anybody else to? So I am not going to write something that people really battle with, and also I get rather frustrated with music if I cannot find any form or any line that is developing through the piece. If that is the case, then one should just sit and punch buttons on a computer. At least with me, I think people know where the music is going as I have pretty clear signposts along the way, so nobody gets lost.

EB: What are your thoughts on writing 'Africanized' music?

AS: The only time I do that would be when I have been asked to specifically incorporate an African theme into the piece. I don't enjoy doing

¹ Allan Stephenson, interview by author, September 2008

it as I think the only way to achieve some sort of hybrid between what is called 'Euro-centric' music, which is a term I think is rubbish, and African music, is to have an African person learn composition and orchestration. His music is in his roots, in his body. I can't write music that is not going to sound English, even if I force myself. Why would I do that when I feel I have my own style? It just would not be authentic. So I just keep writing music for myself and that keeps me in work.

Although his musical style has not changed in the last decade, the size of his works changed as a by-product of the political and cultural shifts that have occurred during this period in the country. The demand for his chamber music is more prominent now than the larger scale works that were regularly performed and commissioned twenty years ago.

Stephenson's debut as conductor with the CTSO saw the premiere of his *First Symphony*. His talent, wide-ranging repertoire and affable nature have led to subsequent conducting engagements at all major South African orchestras. A champion of other composers, he is responsible for the South African premiere of many major works, such as Nielsen's *Symphony no.4 'Inextinguishable'*. Another first for Stephenson was the CD release of his *Concertino Pastorale for Clarinet* as this was the first serious music CD made in South Africa. He has recorded many works of other South African composers including Peter Klatzow, Jeanne Zaidal-Rudolph and Thomas Rajna. Stephenson has worked with many

international soloists including Boris Belkin, Jean Volondat, Karine Georgian as well as South African artists Oliver de Groote, Peter Jacobs, Aviva Pelham, Hanli Stapela and Hugh Masekela to name a few.

Being a composer of prodigious output, Stephenson has written over 110 works including a large number of instrumental and chamber pieces, three operas, two symphonies and concertos for Piano, Oboe and Piccolo. He is also a prolific arranger of ballets, such as: *Tales of Hoffman*, *La Traviata* (adapted for ballet) and *Camille*. Amongst his more recent works are *Concerto for Bassoon and Guitar* (2005), the opera *Wonderfully Wicked* (2005) and *Cello Concerto* (2009). Accolade Musikverlag publishes his music and many of his works have been recorded throughout the world.

Stephenson taught as a part-time lecturer of both cello and composition at the University of Cape Town and served as the music director of the UCT College Orchestra from 1978-88. He founded the Cape Town Chamber Orchestra and ran *Musicanti*, a string chamber orchestra, for several seasons. Although he is presently known mostly for his compositions, arrangements and conducting throughout South Africa, he continues to play cello with the Cape Town Philharmonic.

‘NEW’ SOUTH AFRICAN MUSICAL PERSPECTIVE

The Concerto for Oboe and Strings (1978) and *Elegy-Dance-Elegy* (1986)

were composed during South Africa’s apartheid era. The white minority government supported classical music during this time and various institutions were established to support composers of this era. Well-known composers of this period include: Arnold van Wyk, Stefans Grové, Peter Klatzow, Carl van Wyk, Hans Roosenscoon, and Roelof Temmingh. Following European and American musical traditions, these composers further developed the contemporary ideas that were being presented abroad. Many of these composers were employed by universities and were able to have their works presented by state-supported, professional orchestras. The influence of traditional African music in the works of this era was evidenced only by the occasional use of Afrikaans folk music. Van Dijk and Stephenson were part of a younger generation of composers that studied with many of these composers.

The first election open to all South Africans was held in 1994. Preceded by the writing and implementation of a new constitution the year before, this massive historical moment was greeted with mixed emotions in South Africa’s classical music profession. The joy of the triumph of human rights and equality was partnered with the understanding that orchestras and arts institutions would lose substantial state funding as the new government wished to focus its resources on the millions of impoverished and uneducated citizens who had been disenfranchised, discriminated against, and abused by the apartheid era

government.

Very few musicians would disagree with this new directive, but with the writing on the wall for orchestras, many people faced unemployment and great uncertainty. The rapid removal of government subsidies to all the orchestras left very little time for these organizations to secure corporate support and many orchestras were forced to close. Many musicians left the country, while others retrained and began new professions. Since this time, some orchestras have returned as chamber orchestras or smaller, more versatile symphony orchestras and others have amalgamated to combine their personnel, audiences and funding to survive. Classical music has started to make its comeback as the country further stabilizes, and the need for orchestras and the prestige associated with this art form is re-established.

Being such a well-rounded musician, the collapse of the Cape Town Symphony Orchestra just pushed Stephenson to busy himself with other musical pursuits. He missed the stability of schedule associated with an orchestra job, but the void has been filled with more composing than ever before and many engagements to conduct. With his ability to work in different genres, he is still receiving commissions for original works and arrangements. As mentioned in his biography, Stephenson believes that it would be disingenuous for him to write classical music in an African style. He thinks that someone who is from that culture and musical upbringing could write classical works with African themes,

harmonies and stylistic traits in a more authentic manner.²

Van Dijk is of the opinion that if using African themes and influences is a part of the composer's musical language, there is enough reason to incorporate this into a composition. However, he believes that composers that are not comfortable with using this material should be wary to force it into their music. Although there was a demand in South Africa for African themed classical music after the open elections of 1994, now the demand is greatly reduced. Van Dijk still encounters the request for this style of composition from Europe and the US and he is, in a way, pigeonholed to write these kinds of works to satisfy preconceived notions of South African music. Although he has written many highly successful works based on African themes, this is only one part of his vast and eclectic output.

Unfortunately, Van Dijk (like Stephenson) finds almost no opportunity to present any of his large-scale works and a work like *Elegy-Dance-Elegy* is never performed. He admits that he "shot himself in the foot" by writing a work for the oboe d'amore as it is such a highly specialized instrument and, therefore, is played by very few musicians.³ The various arts boards of South Africa were flush with money in the era of minority control and many projects were given hefty grants and subsidies. There were frequent examples of mismanagement of funds and most of the works were exclusively meant to entertain the white population. People of other races were very rarely catered towards and so the South African

² Allan Stephenson, interview by author, September 2008

³ Van Dijk, interview by author, May 2009

classical music industry now has to pay the price for this exclusivity and narrow-minded approach.

Van Dijk is still very busy with commissions, but many are from the US and Germany and he finds that he has to create opportunities in South Africa in order to get his preferred music performed. He has formed a successful professional collaboration with his wife, Junita Lamprecht-Van Dijk, and they are pleased to have many opportunities to work together in the one flourishing area of South African classical music- choir festivals. Of course, he would like to see South African orchestras find a more solid footing, but he believes the struggle that they face is not just a local problem as orchestras in the US and Europe are also facing financial shortcomings and uncertain futures.

CHAPTER 2

OBOE CONCERTO

In Three Movements

by Allan Stephenson

1st movement: Allegro moderato

2nd movement: Poco Adagio

3rd movement: Allegro vivace

Instrumentation: solo oboe, string orchestra

History

The genesis of this concerto is somewhat unusual as Stephenson was not asked, commissioned or obliged to compose the oboe concerto, but rather wrote this work purely out of self-interest. The concerto was quickly written during the months of December 1977 and January 1978, and it is dedicated to Lazlo Bohr, who was the principal oboist of the Cape Town Symphony Orchestra. In an interview with the author, when asked why he chose to write specifically for the oboe, Stephenson recalled hearing recordings of the Berlin Philharmonic and its principal oboist, Lothar Koch, and being very much attracted to the vocal style, particularly with regard to vibrato, that Koch used in his playing. Stephenson's attraction to the instrument is evident by the number of solo and chamber works he has composed for the oboe and, perhaps, oboists should give credit to the great playing of Koch for inspiring this particular composer to write these many works. As Stephenson was a member of the cello section of the CTSO, he was well aware

of Mr. Bohr's playing and thus had a clear idea of the technical and musical possibilities of the instrument and, in particular, Mr. Bohr, who was known for an impressive technical command of the instrument.⁴

Stephenson and Mr. Bohr collaborated throughout the composing process. This collaboration consisted of Mr. Bohr making suggestions for the oboe part that would help from a technical perspective. This would usually involve suggesting breaks for breathing or to help with endurance, or finding some melodic pattern that would be a more suitable fit for fingerings and scale patterns. The idiomatic nature of Stephenson's writing resulted in Mr. Bohr not having too much to suggest and the vocal melodic lines were well suited to the manner in which one endeavors to play the oboe.

As Stephenson had written this concerto purely out of self-interest, there was no immediate funding for a performance and the work was not premiered for nine years. He was finally able to persuade a benefactor to sponsor a concert of the *Oboe Concerto* and so the work was first premiered on June 6th 1986 by Bohr, with Stephenson conducting the Cape Town Chamber Orchestra, in Baxter Concert Hall. Stephenson recalls that the performance was an artistic success, but the concert barely broke even. Surprisingly, GSE Claremont Records, a small, independent recording studio, was enterprising enough to be able to fund recording projects of many previously unperformed works and had recorded the concerto before the actual premier. The recording was performed by Mr. Bohr

4 Stewart Young, *Allan Stephenson, Oboe Concerto* CD notes

with *I Musicanti* in St. Michael's Church, Observatory, Cape Town in 1984 and was digitally re-mastered by GSE Claremont Records in 1999. Other works on this recording are *Toccata Festival for Castanets* and *Piano Concerto*.

Kevin Vigneau (who was the principal oboist of the Cape Town Symphony Orchestra after Mr. Bohr's departure) was the first oboist to perform the concerto in the USA. He played the work upon returning to his home country to serve as professor of oboe of the New Mexico University.

General

Stephenson regards communication with the average music lover to be vital and that his music should always please and entertain performers and listeners alike. He describes his music as “romantic, lyrical, exciting rhythmically, but, above all, enjoyable to play and listen to.”²

The concerto is based on standard forms of a classical concerto with two faster outer movements and slow middle movement. He labeled each movement numerically, as opposed to being labeled after tempo or character. The forms are conventional enough to be recognized, but do contain some surprising variances and modifications. Easily recognizable themes are often altered in their re-appearances in the music by way of rhythm or pitch or both.

The diatonic accompaniment to the often chromatic solo line creates an interesting harmonic language that is easily recognized as tonal and is both appealing on first hearing and when more closely analyzed. Although there are

2 Klatzow. *Composers in South Africa Today*. Page 212

definite tonal centers in each movement: 1st movement- D; 2nd movement – G minor; 3rd movement – D, the composer doesn't attach a key signature as the tonality shifts at a rapid pace in certain sections. The tonal centers are, however, frequently ambiguous. His use of all the triads within the key leads to a pan-diatonic progressive tonality that shifts through various keys with seamless ease. Due to Stephenson's English heritage, he is influenced by English folk music and especially the use of the various modes including the Phrygian and Aeolian. This helps to dilute any strict sense of major/minor tonality by creating modal harmonies and a "folk song feel".³ This technique is especially apparent in the second movement with the abundant use of these scales in the melodic line and its harmonic accompaniment. Despite the fluidity of the harmonic movement, a generally slow harmonic rhythm is usually present among the melodic chromaticism and enhanced triadic harmony.

The choice of D major as the principal key of this work displays the understanding Stephenson has for the oboe, as D major is the fundamental natural scale upon which the instrument is built. Many composers often write orchestral solos for the instrument centering on a D or in that tonality. Possibly the best known of all oboe concertos, the Strauss *Oboe Concerto*, is written in D major. Stephenson admits that the choice of D was also the result of his concern to ensure that the oboist be comfortable with the low register. He had considered using C major, but he thought that key might be more troublesome as that would be

3 Allan Stephenson, interview by author, September 2008

nearing the bottom end of the oboe's range, which is often an unpredictable and uncomfortable register.

Richly orchestrated, the concerto's chromatic melodies and varied moods reveal romantic influences, but the expanded triadic harmonies, along with the percussive use of rhythm also acknowledge the Twentieth Century's influence on Stephenson. Although Bartok could be credited as an inspirational source for the use of rhythmic drive, so too can the influence of North American jazz and South American dance rhythms be felt in both the melody and accompaniment passages. Self aware of his British roots, Stephenson writes that “being English, there is a certain tendency in my music to the mature sound of Vaughn Williams, Delius and that school of composition but I find that...I need a tighter structure that precludes 'country imitation'.”⁴ Cyclical coherence is achieved in the work, although in a subtle manner, by repeating short phrases from the first movement in the third movement.

Rhythm is a major element in this work and driving rhythms, syncopation, and rhythmic ostinatos provide a high level of energy to the concerto. His use of a technique that he borrowed from Tippett, known as “sprung rhythm”, in which the music sounds like the downbeat is shifted over by an eighth note due to the syncopation, adds an off-kilter feel to sections of harmonic stability.⁵ In addition to the syncopation used in the faster sections, Stephenson also uses crisp, idiomatic

4 Elizabeth Kriek, *Die Simfonie in Suid-Afrika, 1970-1990: 'n Styl en Strikturstudie*. Dissertation, University of South Africa. November 1995. Page 303

5 Allan Stephenson, interview by author, September 2008

articulations in the oboe line to create a rhythmic drive in the melody.

Although the texture of the work is predominantly homophonic, many developmental passages receive contrapuntal treatment and the use of imitation. He creates timbre shifts by varying the expressive nature and tonality of the melody, but he also uses more obvious techniques such as muted strings in the second movement and *pizzicato*. True to his conservative style, he does not include any extended techniques, such as multiphonics or flutter-tonguing, for the oboe as this would go against his principles of making music that is “enjoyable to listen to.” Dynamics are applied on a broad scale as he writes large stretches at a particular dynamic. By contrast, he is very detailed in the application of dynamics in the oboe cadenzas. He clearly understands that the limited dynamic range of the oboe requires him to maximize all possible dynamics, tonal colors and expressive nuance.

The concerto is scored for a string orchestra, which serves two purposes: the orchestra will rarely overpower the soloist and the expense of performing the work is less than it would have been for a larger size orchestra. Stephenson achieves a rich, orchestral sound by orchestrating the chords in the string sections with large intervallic gaps at the bottom and more closely stacked intervals at the top. He believes that this orchestration mirrors the harmonic series and creates a larger sound and thus the allusion of a much fuller string orchestra.⁶ Being a practical musician and excellent orchestrator, he is sensitive to the oboe and

⁶ Allan Stephenson, interview by author, September 2008

maintains an orchestral balance throughout the work so that the strings never overpower the soloist.

The lengthy cadenzas in the first and third movements are technically challenging and they include detailed dynamic markings and articulations. While the outer movements display whimsy, frequent color shifts and interesting virtuosic writing, the second movement stands apart due to its elegance and emotional depth.

The First Movement

General

Although each movement of this work has a distinct character and clearly defined form, one of the more obvious unifying elements to these movements is the amount of dialog between the oboe and strings. These conversations in counterpoint and imitation are both charming and (on a more practical level) a welcome relief for the oboist, whose instrument is physically taxing to play. The first movement of the concerto is in modified Sonata Allegro form. The first thematic group is a collection of four themes that have a high degree of rhythmic energy, which is followed by a lyrical second theme, accompanied by Latin-inspired rhythm. This relaxed second theme is interrupted by a sudden tutti *fortissimo* in the strings that begins the development. As is the case throughout the other movements of the work, the themes are restated in various voices of the orchestra with much variance and innovation employed by Stephenson, such as

rhythmical or tonal alteration of the themes and changes in the harmony of the accompaniment.

A familiar tutti *fortissimo* in the strings interrupts the rhapsodic feel of the second theme and brings about the recapitulation. This tutti *fortissimo* is a slight variation of the opening tutti of the movement that was also used (with slight variation) to open the development. Just as we expect the traditional restatement of the second theme in the home key of the recapitulation, Stephenson inserts the oboe cadenza, which is followed by a brief coda that brings the movement to a close.

Much of this movement is written in a highly improvisatory way for the soloist and the syncopated jazz rhythms of the accompaniment enhance this melodic treatment. This quasi-improvisatory use of the oboe is quite unique as, although the oboe is often used in a free and improvisatory manner, it is not often associated with jazz. However, Stephenson's writing for the oboe is so idiomatic that this treatment does not come across to the listener as affected and the seemingly virtuosic writing in this movement is often less complex and challenging to play than it may sound.

It will be helpful to examine the large-scale harmonic outline of the movement before delving into micro level harmonic analysis. Stephenson intentionally disguises harmonic movement with enhanced triadic chords (tertian chords, such as 11th and 13th chords) and rarely writes clear modulations through pivot chord movement. Rather, his use of pan-diatonic harmony, along with subtle

introduction of accidentals that become essential harmonic pitches, and the added ninths and elevenths that become key triadic pitches of new harmonies, result in tonal shifts that seem organic and serve to enhance the melodic line. He explained this in a note he sent: “I like to utilize a system of chords that have at least two notes in common and then I extend the harmony by adding successive chords. It gives me great flexibility of tonality and allows me to shift through keys quite quickly without having to stay in one for very long.”⁵ These tonal shifts are often further obscured by modal inflections.

The organic movement of tonalities is less ordered by harmonic convention than the traditional classical forms Stephenson uses in this concerto, but he certainly does not indulge in the more contemporary harmonic experiments of the 20th Century. To him music is “melody, rhythm and pleasant sounds!” In this way, the influence of his English heritage and its late Romantic harmonic vocabulary is evident. A large-scale harmonic outline of the movement is seen below:

Exposition				
<u>Measure: 1</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>17</u>	<u>34</u>	<u>52</u>
Material: Introduction	Group 1: Theme 1	Theme 2	Theme 3	Theme 4
Tonal center: A pedal (V of D)	D	C (E,F,G min)	D-F-C	D Phrygian

⁵ E-mail to Author from Stephenson, 2nd December 2010

Development

Measure: 97 136 153 161

Material: 2nd Group Opening rhythm of expo. Theme 2 Theme 4

Tonal Center: A-D-G D min-E flat-A-D min F D min/F maj

(Down fifth from expo.)

Recapitulation

Measure: 174 227 242 255

Material: '2nd Group' Theme 2 Theme 1 Theme 2

Tonal Center: E min/B flat C D A min

(Dom. min. of expo.) (Original)

(min of original)

Coda

Measure: 272 306 324 329

Material: Cadenza Theme 3 Theme 4 *Fine*

Tonal Center: C 6/4 Chord D D Phrygian D

The Exposition

The tutti passage that begins the exposition reappears, in slightly altered versions, to open the development and signal the beginning of the recapitulation.

The use of this musical "signpost", beginning each major section of the movement, is emblematic of the traditional compositional style and clear forms

that Stephenson uses throughout the concerto. This passage consists of a repeated motive that uses the rhythm of the first theme's initial measure. It begins, marked *piano*, in the basses and cellos and progresses with the addition of the violas and violins. The strings stack together in an A9 chord at m.7 (measure 7) and this serves as a dominant chord in D, the key of the first movement. The oboe then enters to establish this D tonality at m.8 with the first theme in this thematic group. A full string section playing a simple, neo-classical rhythm and block chords accompanies this theme, which has a syncopated rhythm that provides a jaunty and up-beat quality.

Stephenson begins right here, in the very opening of the work, to insert some unusual harmonies under this opening theme. He uses a major 9 chord in m.11 and sustains a dominant A pedal for the last four measures of the theme while alternating between a minor sub-dominant (G minor) and I 6/5 (D) chord to create the allusion of a minor plagal cadence. The harmony then moves through F minor and E minor chords before resolving to the D chord on the final note of the theme. These harmonic movements are swift and would be hard to grasp on first hearing, but the effect is to obscure a definite sense of tonality and add an interesting Twentieth Century color to the passage.

Stephenson also cleverly orchestrates these chords to create a downward sliding chromatic line in the violas above the A (dominant) pedal in the cello. His ability to create fairly static tonal centers, while inserting these harmonic oddities, skillfully creates intriguing modal harmonies under rather straightforward themes.

Theme 1:

Theme 1 musical score snippet showing measures 1-5. The Oboe part (top staff) begins with a rest followed by a series of eighth notes, marked *mf*. The Oboe part (bottom staff) begins at measure 6 with a series of eighth notes. Chord symbols above the bottom staff are Gm, D, Fm, and Em.

This first theme leads immediately to the second theme at m.17 as the tonality abruptly moves to C. This tonal movement is not overstated in the strings, thus allowing the activity of the melody to provide both the harmonic interest and rhythmic definition.

This second theme, a rhapsodic melody in the oboe, contains jazz-inspired nuances, complete with improvisatory sounding appoggiaturas and idiomatic syncopation. Where the first theme had more crisply articulated rhythm and jauntiness, the second theme completes an antecedent-consequent balance between these themes by being, comparatively, more *legato* and less energetic.

Theme 2:

Theme 2 musical score snippet showing measures 1-5. The Oboe part (top staff) begins with a rest followed by a series of eighth notes. The Oboe part (bottom staff) begins at measure 5 with a series of eighth notes. Chord symbols above the top staff are C, Em, F, and Gm. Chord symbols below the bottom staff are C, Em, Fm, B°, and C.

The first violins play the third theme of the first thematic group in D major at m.32. With its arpeggiation and scalar line, this theme has a neo-classical rhythm and an appropriate march-like *pizzicato* accompaniment. Pan-diatonic harmonic movement is seen in this theme as the D tonality shift to C in the second

phrase.

Theme 3:

The image shows a musical score for Theme 3, featuring two staves: Violin 1 and Violin 2. The key signature is one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 4/4. The Violin 1 staff begins with a D major chord (D) and a melodic line starting on G4. The Violin 2 staff begins with a D minor chord (Dm) and a melodic line starting on E4. The score includes various chords and melodic lines, with a final measure marked with a double bar line. The chords indicated are D, Em, D, A, Dm, C, F, and C.

The movement stepwise down to C in Theme 2 and back to D at the beginning of Theme 3 (that slides to C again) is an example of pan-diatonic movement in harmonies on the larger harmonic scale. This stepwise harmonic movement is prevalent in themes on the micro level too, as seen already in the first and third theme. However, Stephenson has not created a distinct set of tonal center relationships in this movement, such as a median relationship, or even a few distinct recurring tonal centers that last for a noticeable period. Rather, the harmonic interest lies in the manner in which he moves to and from various tonal centers. The movement is often so rapid that it would be incorrect to label a harmonic shift as establishing a 'tonal center', as the harmony is fleeting. The shift is used to color the melody and allow for a greater range of pitches for that melody. Despite Stephenson's wish to extend his musical style beyond his English heritage, he would be the first to admit that the harmonic movement in much of the concerto is reminiscent of English folk music and its modal harmonic language.

The fourth and final theme of the first thematic group is heard at m.50. The first two measures of this upbeat theme contain an arpeggiated motive that duplicates the rhythm of the first theme. This theme then introduces a new rhythm to the thematic group, the triplet, and continues this rhythm while being lightly accompanied by *pizzicato* strings. The low strings begin on a D minor chord and ascend stepwise with root position chords based on the ascending scale of the D Phrygian mode. This provides an intriguing accompaniment to the theme and is another example of how intelligently Stephenson can weave modal influences into a melody without losing the poised nature of these themes.

Theme 4:

The musical score for Theme 4, measures 50-54, is presented for Oboe (Oboe and Oboe II) and strings. The Oboe part (top staff) begins with a melodic line in measure 50, marked *mp*. It features arpeggiated motives and triplets. The Oboe II part (bottom staff) provides a harmonic accompaniment with root position chords, marked *pizz*. The string accompaniment (bottom staff) is marked *pizz* and features a D minor chord in measure 50, ascending stepwise with root position chords based on the ascending scale of the D Phrygian mode. The score includes dynamics such as *mp* and *f*, and articulation marks like *pizz*.

Stephenson will almost never restate a theme without either altering the theme, its accompaniment, or both. An example of this is the alteration to the second theme at its reappearance in m. 60:

Theme 2- original:



Theme 2 alteration at m.60:



The oboe introduces a new rhythmic motive in m.73 that adds a whimsical moment and will resurface later in the movement.

Rhythmic motive A:



Although diminution and augmentation are techniques often employed by the composer in other works, this concerto has only a few examples of this technique. One such example of this is found in the first violins at m.79

Theme 3 fragment and its subsequent diminution in violins:



The strings, playing what sounds like a Latin dance rhythm at m.94,

precede the entrance of the second thematic group. It is interesting to note that, although the melodic contours and harmony are different, this rhythm is that of the opening string tutti. This Latin-inspired rhythm becomes the rhythmic ostinato of the accompaniment for the second theme, which enters at m.97 in the oboe. Unlike the first group, there are no short and distinct themes, but rather, one extensive melodic theme. This theme, marked *ben cantabile*, is lyrical and expressive, and Stephenson uses the oboe in a most idiomatic way here by writing large intervals to be played in a *legato* style along with sustained notes held over the pulsing rhythm of the strings. Latin influences are also apparent in the melody by his use of occasional syncopated rhythms and dance-like articulations, such as in m.104 (m.7 in the excerpt).

Theme 2 - Oboe and violin accompaniment:

The musical score for Theme 2, Oboe and violin accompaniment, measures 1-5. The score is written for Oboe, Violin 1, Violin 2, Oboe (Ob.), Violin 1 (Vln. 1), and Violin 2 (Vln. 2). The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/4. The Oboe part features a melodic line with large intervals, marked *ben cantabile*. The Violin parts provide a rhythmic accompaniment with a pulsing pattern. The score is divided into two systems, with measures 1-4 in the first system and measures 5-8 in the second system. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and accidentals.

This section is a fine example of the vague, yet subtle harmonic movement that Stephenson employs throughout this work. Per convention in Sonata form, this section is appropriately set in the dominant, A major, however, the tonality of this section is suspended for some time by Stephenson's use of a dominant pedal of E in the basses for most of the first part of this melody. This harmonic tension is finally resolved in the 12th measure of the melody when a cadence establishes an A chord. Although the E pedal did eventually help to establish the tonality of this section, the use of a dominant chord so early in a new tonal center creates an amorphous harmonic state. The harmony then progresses in a pan-diatonic fashion through various pitch levels in a D tonality and eventually resolves on G toward the end of this lengthy theme.

The harmonic movement of the second thematic group is not set up through common chord modulations or any definite cadence points, but rather by Stephenson's technique of using extended tertian chords to dilute the tonality and allowing clashes of half-steps on the same note between the voices that muddle the tonality of the specific chord. Because of this style of writing, the harmonic movement is not easily defined, but it does create an interesting aural perception of mild impressionistic tonal movement. The graph below shows the harmonic movement in a micro detail of this section.

<u>m.94</u>	<u>97 (Oboe enters with 2nd subj.)</u>			<u>106</u>	<u>107</u>
A 11 and E9 (add6) alternating each bar				F# min 11	G#dim7 (vii)
with E octave (pedal) in double bass played on E chord					
<i>Creating amorphous A tonality with Dominant Pedal</i>				<i>Establishing A center</i>	
<u>m.108</u>	<u>116</u>	<u>117</u>	<u>118</u>	<u>119</u>	<u>120</u>
A11	E4/2 (M/m3)	E11	D9	G	C#7(vii)
<i>Root</i>	<i>Clash of M/m 3rd</i>		<i>pan-diatonic movement</i>		
<u>m.121</u>	<u>122</u>	<u>123</u>	<u>124</u>		
D	C4/3	D11(add6)(V)		G	

The Development

Stephenson's creativity is on full display with intriguing variances and manipulations of the thematic material throughout this engaging development. Although some ambiguous tonality is evident in the development, tonal centers are generally emphasized by extremely traditional chordal progressions and cadences. It is interesting to note the close tonal center movement in the development. The keys themselves are within a minor third: D-E flat-E-F; and although they are chromatically linked, the music itself is diatonic.

The rhythmic opening tutti of the movement is restated with slight variances by all the strings at the outset of the development, which is followed by the first theme, played in fragments by the oboe.

Opening motive of the movement:



Opening motive of the development:



This repeating motivic pattern begins in E major and progresses with abrupt harmonic shifts through the keys of D min and E flat with a dominant cadence in D min at m.147. This leads to the second theme at m.153 in the oboe that is now supplemented with imitation in the violin line. This theme was played in a C tonality (up a fifth) in the exposition. The D minor tonality of the opening of the development modulates just before the entrance of the second theme to F major with a straightforward perfect cadence. The interplay between F major and it's relative minor of D is again witnessed as Stephenson has the oboe play the first two measures of Theme 4 in D minor at m.161 and then it is played in F major at m.167. Stephenson favors this kind of major/minor juxtaposition and this is one of the more obvious examples in this work.

Stephenson writes an interesting twist into the development at m.174 as he sets up the accompaniment for a return to the second thematic group, yet the melodic line of this section in the development is not the same as the theme in the exposition. The oboe line does, however, resemble this earlier section by its legato nature, which is embellished by rhythmic flourishes over the syncopated accompaniment. This similarity of the oboe line and the familiar syncopated accompaniment is a convincing representation of the second thematic group. The E minor tonality is obscured by the use of a B flat 6/5 chord in every other measure. This unusual clash of a tri-tone between each measure continues as the first violins imitate fragments from the oboe line at m.190 (heard previously at m.178).

Further condensed imitation occurs in a downward sequence at m.200 that is followed by a section of freely composed music displaying virtuosity on the oboe in triplet figured runs. This *fantasia* section is rooted in an E flat major tonality and this half-step shift from E min to E flat is another example of chromatic tonal movement in the development in which Stephenson rotates through the chromatically linked keys of D minor- E flat major- E minor- F major.

A reprise of the opening passage of the development is heard at m.217 and a G tonality is predominant in this passage which serves as the dominant chord setup for a straight forward modulation to theme 2 appearing in its original key of C. A D pedal precedes the string section playing the tutti rhythmic motive from the opening of the exposition and the development. This “signpost” signals the beginning of the recapitulation.

The Recapitulation and Coda

Recapitulation				Coda	
<u>Measure: 242</u>	<u>255</u>	<u>272</u>	<u>306</u>	<u>324</u>	<u>329</u>
Material: Theme 1	Theme 2	Cadenza	Theme 3	Theme 4	<i>Fine</i>
Tonal Center: D	A min	C 6/4 chord	D	D Phrygian	D

The oboe plays the first theme with the customary return (in Sonata form) to the original key of the exposition, D major, at m.246. The second theme is heard straight after this with some melodic and harmonic variance: the oboe does

not exactly transcribe the original melody and moves into an elongated improvisatory section; the underlying harmony is A minor, which is the relative minor of the original key, C major. It is important to recognize that major and minor designations can be somewhat misleading as they are frequently obscured by modal inflections throughout the concerto. The rhythmic motive A is played by the oboe at m.268 with imitation in the strings leading to a C 6/4 chord and the unexpected appearance of the oboe cadenza, which is in place of conventionally hearing the restatement of the second thematic group or other themes from the first thematic group before the cadenza is played.

The cadenza uses very little thematic material from the movement except for the early use of fragments of the fourth theme. Stephenson has wisely added explicit dynamic and articulation markings that work well, along with the virtuosic nature of the writing, to add character and interest to the material that is not necessarily melodically captivating. The tonality of the cadenza is deliberately vague although there are definite references to D minor, A major and E flat major at various points among much chromatic movement. This lighthearted cadenza ends with a series of chromatically ascending trills establishing D major at the beginning of the coda.

Cadenza

273 *mf*

278 *f* *più f* *ff* *mf*

283 *p* *f* *3* *3* *3*

286 *pp (echo)* *mf* *p* *3*

289 *p* *mf* *3* *3* *3* *3*

294 *pp* *3* *f* *3* *mf* *3*

298 *f* *3* *tr* *ff* *tr*

303 *tr* *tr* *22* *9*

Stephenson shortened the coda by twenty measures from its original length as he thought that it was “just too long.”⁷ By using themes three and four, the coda completes the use of all four themes of the first thematic group in the recapitulation. It begins with the first violins playing the third theme in D, followed by bridge material in E flat major, which is interrupted by the fourth

⁷ Allan Stephenson, interview by author, September 2008

theme, played by the oboe, in F major. This economically paced coda of only twenty-four measures finishes with a whimsical crescendo cadencing in D major.

The Second movement

General

The slow movement of the concerto is a beautifully written Baroque *Siciliana* in a G tonality that is frequently peppered with modal harmonies. This work was composed after the death of Stephenson's infant and the beauty of this movement lies in the melancholy melodies and emotional shifts from the resignation of minor to the redemption of major tonalities. He creates a wonderful balance of tonal colors by shifting in and out of these tonalities. One might expect an overwhelmingly dark work to emerge after such a tragedy, but instead this movement is poignant without being morose.

Although G minor is the basic tonality, the abundant use of A flat adds a Phrygian modal color to the tonality.

Although the style of this music is traditional, he breaks from his customary following of traditional forms in this movement, as the usual ternary form in a *Siciliana* Aria is not present. Instead, Stephenson develops the themes throughout the work without a noticeable shift to a B section. In fact, a case could be made for sonata form as two distinct themes are introduced in different keys, then they are developed and stated again in a short recapitulation with both themes remaining in the home key. An outline in the graph below shows the unusual sonata-like thematic development of the movement.

Exposition			Development		
Measure:	1	19	27	35	43
Material:	Theme 1	Theme 2	Bridge	Theme 1 motive	Theme 2
Tonal Center:	G min	B flat maj	B flat	G maj	G maj
Recapitulation					
Measure:	62	77	78		
Material:	Theme 1 motive	Theme 1	Theme 2		
Tonal Center:	C maj	G min	G min		

Stephenson uses the oboe's greatest instrumental strength in this movement by writing extended lyrical melodies. There is a great deal of interplay between the violins and oboe, especially using imitation and sequence, aptly reminiscent of a vocal duet. Given the propensity for strings to overpower an oboe in the concerto setting, this movement is wisely scored for muted strings. Even in the climax of the movement, Stephenson creates a full sonority in the string sound that maintains dynamic balance with the soloist, thus always allowing the solo line to be heard. This excellent orchestration is achieved by voicing the strings in such a way that the oboe's register is hardly ever in competition with any of the string voices.

Themes and techniques

The movement opens in G minor with a swaying rhythm in the strings that is associated with a *Siciliana*. Over muted strings, the first theme is immediately

played in the first violins. Stephenson uses the A flat in the second measure of the theme to add a Phrygian color and dilute the G minor tonality. This modal coloring is very much in line with his English folk music heritage, as was evident in the first movement's modal inflections. The dotted compound rhythm of this melody adds to the swaying feel of the *Siciliana* and the contour of the theme (and others to follow) is unmistakably vocal, which leads to an easy identification of this movement as a *Siciliana* aria.⁸

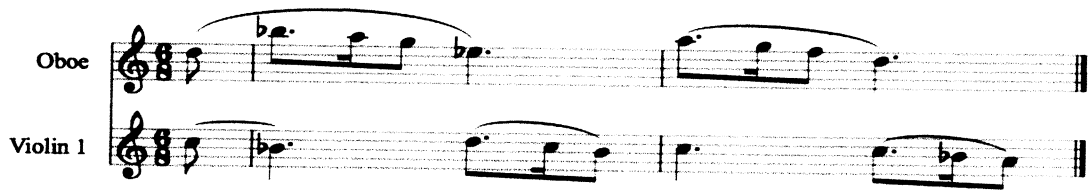
Theme 1:



Just before the oboe enters in m.9 with the theme, Stephenson writes accented slurs in the first violins that come through to the listener as sighs and these figures further emphasize the poignancy of the movement's opening. The oboe plays a variation of the theme with some octave displacement and added pitches that elaborate the melody, much as a singer would do when repeating the melody in an aria. The oboe theme is joined by first violins playing in imitation with a circle of 5th sequence in m.13, which becomes an often-used motive in the movement.

⁸ Stewart Young, *Allan Stephenson, Oboe Concerto* CD notes

Sequence between oboe and violins:



This leads to a bridge section played on the oboe with an inverted first theme played in the violins under the florid oboe line. By using a pivot chord modulation at the end of the bridge, Stephenson shifts the tonality to B flat major at m.19 as he introduces the second theme in the first violins. This conventional pivot chord modulation to the relative major of G brightens the emotional mood at this point. This second theme is more rhythmically active and has a pleading quality, which serves as a contrast to the introspective and resigned nature of the first theme. The second violins are used to support the melody with counterpoint and add to the more active nature of this theme. This is a good example of the balance that is achieved by the composer through the use of contrasting themes and tonalities in this concerto. Theme 2, first and second violins:

A musical score snippet for Violin I, Violin II, Vln. I, and Vln. II. The Violin I and II parts are marked 'p' (piano). The Vln. I and II parts are marked 'mf' (mezzo-forte). The Violin I part features a melodic line with a flat and a dot, followed by a series of eighth and sixteenth notes. The Violin II part provides a supporting line with similar rhythmic patterns. The Vln. I and II parts are marked 'mf' (mezzo-forte) and feature a melodic line with a flat and a dot, followed by a series of eighth and sixteenth notes.

The second theme is followed by a downward sequence in the strings that

has beautiful counterpoint between the violin sections. This sequential passage is used numerous times in the movement and by writing with such musical sincerity, Stephenson does not allow this over-used technique to rob the music of it's emotional integrity. The uplifting modulation from minor to major between the two themes, followed by the emotionally satisfying sequences, traces a redemptive outline of material in the movement.

Sequence:

The image shows a musical score for Violin I and Violin II. The key signature is one flat (Bb). The time signature is 8/8. The score is divided into two systems. The first system contains the first two measures, and the second system contains the next two measures. Above the Violin I staff, the chords Bb, F, Gm, and Dm are indicated. The Violin I part consists of a series of eighth notes and quarter notes, with some notes beamed together. The Violin II part consists of a series of eighth notes and quarter notes, with some notes beamed together. The dynamic marking 'poco f' appears below the Violin I staff in the first measure of the first system and below the Violin II staff in the first measure of the second system.

With all the thematic material now in play Stephenson moves into a development of sorts at m.27 where the oboe line begins an improvisatory melody using pieces of the themes. The first violins join with counterpoint and imitation, and in so doing transform the aria into a duet. Although this section begins in G minor, Stephenson shifts rather abruptly to G major at m.35. Adding to the surprise of this fast modulation is the unusual chord, F min7, which precedes this G major tonality. However, this strange modulation creates a lovely effect as the listener hears the themes passed through the strings in the new tonic major tonality.

Duet of oboe and violins and modulation to G major at m.35 (5th bar of excerpt):

The image displays two systems of musical notation. The first system includes staves for Oboe, Violin I, Violin II, Viola, Violoncello, and Double Bass. The Oboe part features a melodic line with grace notes and slurs. The Violin I and II parts play a rhythmic, eighth-note pattern. The Viola, Violoncello, and Double Bass parts provide harmonic support with sustained notes and moving lines. The second system continues the duet between the Oboe and Violins, with the Violins playing a more active melodic line. Above the Oboe staff in the second system, the chords Fm⁷ and G are indicated, marking the modulation to G major. The Violins continue their melodic development, while the other instruments maintain the harmonic foundation.

Keeping this tonality, both violin sections play the second theme at m.43 at the sixth and the theme is transformed again into one of hope, by hearing it in the major. The oboe line interjects with an ever-increasing degree of ornamentation

and passion in its line above the strings with florid 32nd note passagework, which culminates in a climax in the strings playing the downward sequence from earlier in *forte*. The key has now moved gracefully back to B flat major.

This outpouring of emotional intensity subsides as the dynamic decrescendos to *piano* at m.62 where an interesting C major tonality sets up a passage that has each string section pass the first measure of the first theme from the basses up through to the first violin. This is the first key center that is unconventional in this movement, but this pan-diatonic, ascending step modulation from B flat to C provides another moment of hope and redemption. This string passage provides a sense of cathartic release from the angst of the opening of this movement, created by this upwards modulation, also affords the oboist the added benefit of having some time to physically regroup.

A brief recapitulation is signaled at m.77 when the first violins play the first theme in a return to G minor that is followed by the oboe and violins playing the second theme at m.80, although now it remains in the minor, as opposed to the modulation to the major as before. This harmonic stability in the recapitulation is common in Sonata form and, therefore, adds credence to the modified Sonata form diagnosis of the movement. The oboe and strings climax in *fortissimo* at m.83 and the movement comes to a close with the texture thinning in the strings and a decrescendo in dynamic. A two-measure *eingang* in the oboe ends on a high G above a *pianissimo* chord in G minor. Stephenson writes an *ossia* for the oboe to end on a more comfortable G above the staff, but, although there is inherent

Final three measure of the oboe line:



The Third movement

General

The third and final movement provides a whimsical and lighthearted conclusion to the concerto. Due to syncopation and hemiolas, the interplay between the soloist and orchestra is often rhythmically complex and the meter changes more often in this movement than any of the others. This rhythmic energy drives the movement, while the *legato* middle section provides a calming balance to the movement as a whole. This middle section is preceded with a short motive from the first movement and the legato nature of the middle section reminds the listener of the *ben cantabile* section from the first movement. These small allusions to the first movement create a cyclical effect that unifies the concerto.

Unlike the other movements, the third movement is quite tricky to categorize as a specific form, as the chart below will illustrate. The first section begins with a modified rondo pattern, but the differing character of the equally long second section is reminiscent of the contrasting nature of A and B sections in ternary form. Rondo and ternary forms are dismissed as the short reprise of only half of the material from the first section would suggest that this is actually a rounded binary form with an added cadenza added to the middle of the reprise of the A material. In terms of contemporary styles and forms, this form is still extremely traditional.

The analysis as a rounded binary form looks as follows:

Section:	A	B	A`
Material:	Rondo pattern	Through-composed completely different character	Half A material returns with a cadenza in the middle of this section
Tonal Center:	D min	E min/B flat maj	D min

A Section

The four themes of the A section are unified by their interesting motivic relationships and similarities in a high-spirited, cohesive group. The rhythmic energy of these themes is generated by numerous factors in their composition, such as: the fast tempo of this section; frequent use of staccato and clipped articulation (notes tied together with the final note clipped); two of the four themes have shifted their downbeat by an eighth (sprung rhythm); and the accompaniment of these themes is most often percussive and light. Before delving into the themes, it would be best to first examine the modified Rondo nature of the A section in the chart below.

Measure:	1	8	16	31	38
Material:	Intro (Oboe noodle)	Theme A	Theme B	Theme A	Theme C
Tonal Center:	A Pedal (V of D)	D min	D min	G min (down fifth)	D Maj

Measure:	42	88	121	134
Material:	Theme A	Theme D	Theme C	Quotes from first mov.
Tonal Center:	C min (down fifth)	D Aeolian	F/ B flat maj	F→ E min

A short introduction of seven measures begins with the pitch of A being layered in octaves by the strings and the oboe, which plays a short scalar outburst in D major. This oboe line is the “warm-up noodle” that Mr. Bohr would play when preparing to perform with the orchestra.⁹ This base harmony of A is the dominant pedal of D minor in this first section of the movement. Theme A is played at m.8 as the harmony is established with a D minor chord. This jaunty eight-measure theme is immediately followed by theme B (also an eight-measure theme) in the first violins. There are distinct similarities between these themes as theme B uses an exact repetition of the last four measures of theme A and the sixteenth note rhythm in the third measure of theme A is copied by theme B in its third measure. However, the pitches in theme B are different and the melodic contour on the first beat of this measure is inverted. Theme A is also a good example of ‘sprung rhythm’, whereas the eighth note that begins theme B serves merely as an upbeat to the 2nd beat.

⁹ Allan Stephenson, interview by author, September 2008

Theme A in oboe, followed by theme B in violin:

Rhythmic drive exhibited in the accompaniment, as well as the melody, to further the interest of the listening with exuberant rhythmic activity- such as the 16th note pattern of the cellos and basses in mm.22-23.

Cellos and basses:

True to form in a rondo, the A theme is partially restated in G minor (down a fifth from its original key) by the oboe at m.31, which is followed by the theme C played in *forte* in the strings at m.38. This theme is accompanied by held chords of D major and E minor (interestingly, the two large-scale tonal centers of the movement) and has a march-like rhythm. It is interesting to note that this theme uses an almost exact copy of the rhythm and melodic contour of the first two

measures of theme B, but the strong downbeat creates a traditional march rhythm.

The first three themes have cleverly ‘piggy-backed’ their motivic content.

C Theme:



As is common with rondo form, the return of the A material is often elongated and this is the case with the return of the theme A in m.42 as Stephenson writes long virtuosic passages, including meter changes and leaps of large intervals. An improvisatory section is then heard in G major, which moves slowly to C major and ultimately, D major, as the oboe winds through virtuoso arpeggio patterns and meter changes. Growing speed and excitement in the oboe line leads to a new tempo marking at m.86 of quarter =112 and drop in the dynamic along with a break in the oboe line.

A stately new eight bar theme is played m.88 by the first violins which adds a welcome section of poise after the tumultuous previous section. Stephenson weaves the modal influence of the D Aeolian scale into this section, replacing the preceding D major tonality. Clearly defined hemiolas add to the rhythmic excitement of this section as the oboe ornaments the string theme.

D Theme:



The cyclical element of the concerto emerges at m.134 when the oboe plays a short motive that is a quote from the third theme of the first movement, which is repeated by the first violins three measures later.

Theme 3 of first movement, first two measures:



Quote in the third movement:

Oboe

Violins



B section

The music takes a very familiar turn at m.139 with the oboe playing a *dolce e ben cantabile* melody that is reminiscent of the *ben cantabile* section (second thematic group) from the first movement. It is reminiscent in that the oboe plays sustained lyrical lines over a dance-like ostinato rhythm in the strings. The melody doesn't have the quite the same rhythmic idiosyncrasies of Latin syncopation as the corresponding section the first movement, however, the shift to this accompaniment and the vocal oboe line instantly reminds the listener of the section in the first movement. The Latin rhythmic flair briefly reappears with syncopated accents in the violin solo duet at m.175. The harmony is also familiar

to the listener as the first eight measures are in E minor and then an unusual tri-tone shift is made up to B flat major. This is akin to the harmonic shift of this material in the development of the first movement, which alternates each measure between E minor to B flat major

Ben cantabile melody:

The musical score shows three staves: Oboe, Violoncello, and Double Bass. The Oboe staff is in treble clef with a key signature of one flat (B-flat) and a time signature of 2/4. It contains a melodic line with slurs and is marked *p dolce e ben cant.* The Violoncello and Double Bass staves are in bass clef with the same key signature and time signature. They contain a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes and rests, with the Violoncello marked *3 Soli* and the Double Bass marked *2 Soli*. The score is numbered 8 at the beginning of the second system.

The strings detour from the accompanying role at m.186 and begin to emerge as the primary melody with the oboe playing a more secondary role, meanwhile the counterpoint between the oboe line and strings is supplemented by running sixteenth notes in the violas that adds further excitement.

Although Stephenson creates a cyclical effect with this section and the preceding quote, he avoids this taking on a gimmicky nature by expanding the role of the orchestra to create a sweeping climax of full-voiced strings and so elevates this material to a more exciting level than its corresponding section in the first movement.

Section A`

Half the A section material is reprised in this A` to complete the rounded binary form. The syncopated rhythm of theme D is modified in theme D`, which is first heard in the cellos and is passed upwards through the string sections. The basses play a repeated A under this activity, establishing an A pedal.

Theme D`:



Stephenson, much like in the first movement cadenza, uses short irregular phrases in the oboe cadenza that are primarily composed of scales patterns and arpeggios. Motives from the themes of the movement are disguised in this cadenza by alteration and are hard to recognize. Some examples of this are: An exact copy of an extension to theme A at mm.51-54 is found in the cadenza at mm.282-285; the rhythmical pattern of the beginning of theme A is heard at m.294; the offbeat accented rhythm of the violin duet, heard at m.175, is used at mm.308-310.

Stephenson is, once again, meticulous in his dynamics and articulations. He uses the full range of the oboe's scale and dynamics. The scalar and arpeggiated passagework is virtuosic, but it is written so idiomatically that its effect is more impressive than the actual technique needed to perform the cadenza. The cadenza begins in the D Aeolian mode that transitions, with the addition of the raised C sharp, to a D minor tonality. The cadenza is printed in full on page 59.

The conclusion to the final section is a short twelve measures that begins

with the violins reprising theme B. Having stated half of the themes from the A section, Stephenson is free to end the movement with the oboe and strings in a *fortissimo* cadence in D Major. The ending is not only the same key as the opening of the concerto, but the oboe motive is a whimsical reference to the opening motive as well, which creates a charming final symmetry to this work.

Opening and ending motives of concerto in the oboe:



Cadenza, with ending of concerto:

Oboe

Cadenza

ff *p*

276 Oboe 11

mp *mf* *p* *mp* *mf*

282 3 3 3 7

289 12 7 *f* 3 *p*

295 7 *f*

301 *p* *f*

307 *ff* *p*

313

318 3 3

323 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3

327 3 5 3 3 3 3 3 3 *f* 3

332 *ff* 25 9 7 *ff*

ACC.1035

Conclusion

Stephenson's *Oboe concerto* is immediately appealing to performers and their audiences. His traditional style is clear and easily appreciated, and his natural melodies and modal harmonies provide a comfortable environment for the soloist and orchestra to excel. The movements of the concerto provide a welcome contrast to each other and, in so doing, create a well-balanced concerto that fully satisfies the listener.

The work has been commercially recorded and re-mastered by GSE Claremont Records with Lazlo Bohr as the oboe soloist. GSE Claremont Records does not have an active website, but can be contacted by writing to them at GSE Claremont Records, 55 Palmboom Road, Newlands, 7700, Cape, South Africa. The CD is available from various online retailers such as: musicweb-international.com and amazon.com. The score and parts are available for purchase through the website of the music publisher, Accolade Musikverlag, at <http://www.accolade.de/>.

This concerto satisfies the concerns mentioned in the introduction as it is both an engaging and pleasing contemporary work that is idiomatically written, and the traditional style of this work requires far less rehearsal and practice time than other works of this era that have more 20th century influences. In the current struggle to keep concert halls full, Stephenson's audience-friendly approach provides oboists with a new concerto that is sure to please and rewarding to perform.

CHAPTER 3

ELEGY-DANCE-ELEGY

Concerto for oboe d'amore, harp, strings and timpani

By Peter Louis Van Dijk

Written for and dedicated to Sharon Fligner-Lindquist

Instrumentation: Solo Oboe d'amore, Harp, Timpani, String Orchestra

History

This concerto resulted from the personal and professional friendship between the composer, Peter Louis Van Dijk, and the dedicatee of this work, Sharon Fligner-Lindquist. Van Dijk was hired as Assistant Music Manager at Cape Performing Arts Board (CAPAB) and met Sharon and her husband, Ray Lindquist, both of whom played in the CAPAB orchestra. Although this was primarily an opera and ballet orchestra, artistic initiatives were afforded to Van Dijk to write original music for the orchestra and its soloists through state sponsored funding from CAPAB. Other works that Van Dijk composed for CAPAB around the time of this composition are: *Beethoven or Bust* – for piano and orchestra; *The Musicians of Bremen* – for narrator and orchestra; and *The Selfish Giant* – for narrator, baritone, boy soprano, children's choir and orchestra.

Although Van Dijk had often heard Sharon play the oboe, he was unfamiliar with the oboe d'amore. He was drawn to the sound of the instrument because he believed that its timbre was an attractive hybrid of the tones of the oboe and English Horn. In vocal terms, he said that the oboe d'amore is a 'mixed

voice' and doesn't possess the more nasal tone of the English Horn.⁶ Van Dijk had heard it played only a few times in the orchestral repertoire, but had used it in a few works himself, notably in *Beethoven or Bust* (a humorous work for piano and orchestra). Because the oboe d'amore has a limited repertoire, the notion of writing a concerto for this instrument appealed to him, as it was a unique project. However, some time after starting to work on the concerto, he realized that the rarity of the instrument and finding oboists willing to play it would limit the frequency of this work actually being performed. Nonetheless, with the incentives of a wonderfully talented oboist willing to play the work and the unique nature of the project, he commenced composition on 16 November 1985 and very quickly completed the work on 18 February 1986.

Van Dijk finds working with a soloist during the composing process crucial and even more so in this particular circumstance. With his limited exposure to the oboe d'amore, he found the collaborative composition process invaluable, as he was able to hear Sharon play through passages. The value in this was not only for technical concerns, but also for him to acquire a deeper concept of the sound and functioning of the instrument. Although he was well aware of the many concerns oboists have, such as the fluctuations of reeds and the temperamental nature of the instrument, he found it interesting to hear how the oboe d'amore differs to the oboe in tone color on notes and in registers.

⁶ Interview with composer by author, May 20th, 2009

This is mainly because the oboe d'amore transposes down a minor third from concert pitch- meaning that a resonant note on the instrument, such as D, would sound a full, resonant concert B. However, a concert B on the oboe is not resonant at all. The result of this difference was that Van Dijk would consider using various pitches as tonal centers for the oboe d'amore that he would not use for the oboe. The voicing of notes on the instrument (manipulation of the oral cavity and speed of air in the throat and neck) is also slightly different to the oboe and this leads to a marked difference of tone between the high, middle and low registers of the d'amore. He needed to make sure that the concerto was written idiomatically for this instrument and therefore, hearing Sharon play through the music proved invaluable.

The work was premiered by the dedicatee and the CAPAB orchestra, conducted by Terrence Kern, on Feb 27 1986 and Sharon and the CAPAB orchestra subsequently recorded the concerto. After having been hired as principal oboe by the Cape Town Symphony Orchestra, Sharon also performed the concerto with this orchestra, conducted by Allan Stephenson, on 10 September 1995.

General

Van Dijk is composer who writes music deliberately and his music is full of meaning. This compositional approach is well explained in his 'Composer's statement':

“Many of my compositions may be described as *eclectic* though nonetheless possessing a recognizable personal style. Works written after 1984

reflect my entry in the 'real' music-world, as performer, composer and conductor - a world of practical musicianship and its concomitant creative stimulation... Ultimately, I aspire towards simplicity, economy of means, clarity of intention, and the effective manipulation of material, always striving to communicate *something*- whether witty or spiritual and stating it in a manner that is appropriate, provocative and fulfilling to both creator and listener alike.”⁷

Van Dijk is a deeply thoughtful composer and his works convey this attribute very clearly through their emotional depth and intricate technique. Even though *Elegy-Dance-Elegy* is only ten minutes in length, the creative input evident on various musical levels, such as melody, harmony and form, leaves the listener fully satisfied. This work is a wonderful example of his credo, as the simplicity of the subjects and economy of his compositional process is clear, yet one does not ever feel short-changed because the development of his material is both interesting and appropriate. As this concerto is considerably shorter than the average length of a concerto (25-30 minutes), the challenge in programming this work would be to find other pieces that would create a balanced program. The conventional symphonic model of programming an overture, concerto, and symphony is becoming outdated; therefore this concerto could be used in any position in a program and might even be paired with another concerto for oboe, such as a short baroque concerto, which would provide an interesting contrast.

⁷ www.plvandijk.co.za/composers_statement.html October 20th, 2008

As mentioned in his biography, Stravinsky and Britten were Van Dijk's two compositional influences during this period of his life. He was especially drawn to the workman-like approach of Stravinsky and his unique harmonic language. This is quite apparent in various tonal centers and melodic lines in the concerto that leave decidedly ambiguous key centers. His use of percussive rhythm is an even more obvious nod to the Russian master and the unrefined nature of some chords and cadences are reminiscent of the "pagan" aspects from Stravinsky's early works. Van Dijk's ability to balance exquisite tenderness and brutal force in a short work is a further example of his economical compositional process.

The influence of Britten is similarly apparent in some of the techniques that he uses, such as the development of two very simple subjects on both melodic and harmonic levels. This development is provocative and ingenious and is often impossible to notice as the music flows organically without the hint of larger application of these simple subjects. Van Dijk, like Britten, is fond of slightly unusual scales and modes, such as the Phrygian mode, which is even more widely used in other works of Van Dijk, such as *The Selfish Giant*.

The title of the work is explained by the composer in a note he included in the score of the work:

"Dances and Elegies are as far removed from each other as day/night, love/hate – or any number of symbiotically connected elements. Boundaries are fragile, feelings fleeting and deceptive, life closer now to death than even a

moment ago. We seek solace in the familiar, resist the challenge of change: through ritual (whether simple or complex) we endeavor to weld together these most opposite of poles, fearful lest some sudden passions tear them apart; arc-like the hammer rises and must fall- whether to forge some new miracle or to shatter the old...This work has been specially composed for and is dedicated to Sharon Fligner-Lindquist'.⁸

Van Dijk also wrote a poem that he included in the score:

Elegy-Dance-Elegy

a thousand times

gentle Phoenix

you rise from the ashes of my thoughts

set the sky alight with your smiles

until my eyes dance laughter

lift up their tightly-bound hands

in praise of you

only my tongue knows endless elegies

reflects your heart

refuses to be moved

December 18th, 1985

⁸ Program notes, Cape Town Symphony Orchestra, September 10th, 1995

Both the poem and note from the composer speak to his dedication and emotional investment in this work. The note is a source that enlightens our understanding of his point of view regarding the concerto's title. The relationships in the material are explained in literary terms and thus inform both the listener and performer of how to approach understanding the work and the complex relationship between the two material groupings of the *Elegy* and *Dance*. This 'fragile' symbiotic relationship is very much in keeping with his compositional view that the "balance and flow" of a work is achieved by creating "good transfer from A to B material" so to create the necessary contrast to achieve this balance.⁹ Having a composer provide such an unusually honest and direct personal insight into their outlook on any aspect of life, especially when that aspect is the subject of the work is a great source to the performers and audience.

The poem is quite different in its subject and nature than the composer's note. It is even more personal and, due to the inherent nature of poetry, vague. As a student of the dedicatee, I was privy to the close friendship of Sharon and Van Dijk and from observing their friendship first-hand can assume that the subject of the poem is Sharon and Van Dijk has written this in a first-person narrative. By having made the poem public and including it in the score, he seems to also want this to serve as inspiration and insight. This is a brave move as the poem is so openly personal in nature, yet it underscores his dedication to communicate in his

⁹ Interview with composer by author, May 20th, 2009

music. Having revealed his admiration for the dedicatee and his positive and vibrant view of her, performers of this concerto and their audience gain further insight into the music. This will be explained in greater detail in the examination of the themes of the work and their development as they relate to this poem and other compositional techniques.

Van Dijk included detailed lighting instructions for the performance of the work. With these deliberate instructions and his background in stage and opera, it is obvious that Van Dijk is comfortable and knowledgeable with this added performance element. These instructions are specific and serve to heighten the audience's musical experience without detracting from the music itself. The author knows of no other oboe concerto that calls for this amount of detail in lighting and these lighting suggestions (along with many other traits of the work) reveal Van Dijk's highly deliberate compositional style.

Below are the lighting suggestions from the composer that are meant to coincide with events in the music, as indicated by the figure numbers:

Note: If lighting facilities are available, the following is suggested:

- (i) Separate lights on soloist and orchestra*
- (ii) Soloist commences with light on her/him only (pin spot (plus light from front to avoid grotesque shadows), but adequate for reading by)*
- (iii) Orchestra lights up at figure 1= 30-second fade from 1*
- (iv) Reverse procedure from figure 23: orchestra 20-second fade*
- (v) Slow fade on soloist from last $\frac{3}{4}$ measure (10 measures from end) down to approximately 55-60%- not blackout*

(vi) A subtle, suitable slide (e.g. Reddish/abstract) maybe projected on cyclorama- if available; cross-fade of maximum of two slides possible- but could upstage soloist unless very subtle.

As implied by the title of the work, the form of the concerto is Ternary form (ABA). The contrasting A and B sections are linked by the frequent use of the main theme of the work in the form of a chord and melody, along with harmonic applications of its intervals and pitches. The size of the orchestra was a concern to Van Dijk as he believed that the timbre, range and intensity of the oboe d'amore is similar to that of the viola and so would be easily overpowered by the orchestra. In order to avoid this issue he had to keep the orchestra as light as possible. In line with this concern, he recalled the instrumentation of strings and timpani used in Poulenc's *Organ Concerto* and so he adopted this instrumentation (despite having the full CAPAB orchestra at his disposal for the work). He thought that the harp would add percussive elements to the overall sound of the orchestra. After considering these points, he decided to score the concerto for oboe d'amore, strings, harp, and timpani.¹⁰

The four-note motive of the work is derived from the four first letters of the dedicatees first name, Sharon. Van Dijk had used this technique of creating motives from names before and has used it since, but he believes this example is one of the more successful applications of this technique, due to the interesting

¹⁰ Interview with composer by author, May 20th, 2009

combination of pitches that occur. He used the German note names for the first three letters S-H-A and then the more common solfege note name for R. The motive thus looks as follows:

S (es)- **E-flat**

H- **B**

A- **A**

R (re)- **D**

When these pitches are arranged with the B as the root, the chord that is formed should be viewed as a 7th chord with both a major and minor 3rd - B, D, E-flat, A. There are other ways to interpret this chord, such as a seventh chord with a sharp nine, but the close register use and melodic interplay of the major and minor third would seem to support the original interpretation.

Motive chord:



Van Dijk enjoyed the tonal ambivalence of this chord as it is neither major nor minor and the addition of the seventh added further ambiguity. In an abstract way, he believed it suited the concept of symbiosis between the *Elegy* and *Dance* that he explained in his note on the composition. He also liked that he would start composing from such a bare minimum, as he often feels that composers start with too much material and have to pare down. This motive is used extensively in various harmonic applications in basic and complex ways throughout the concerto.

Van Dijk uses a simple motive at the beginning of the *Dance*- four repeated sixteenth notes on the pitch of D. This motive is a transposition from its original appearance in the *Elegy* where it is first heard, played by the violas in a triplet rhythm of four repeated pitches of E. He develops this rudimentary motive by the addition of more material, transpositions and augmentation. He likens this technique to the “opening out of a flower”.¹¹ The genesis of this motive comes from the composer’s first name- Peter. The repeated Es in his name serve as the pitch of the first statement of the motive. This insertion of his name leads to the question of the work having an autobiographical nature. A case could be made that, as the accompanying poem is written in the first person narrative, the subject of the poem (*gentle Phoenix*) is Sharon and Van Dijk is the protagonist. This interpretation would then lead to a programmatic view of the concerto, as it relates to aspects of the poem. This will be examined in detail during the analysis.

This one-movement concerto lasts between nine and a half to ten minutes in duration, and in the score the composer suggests a minimum number of desks of strings to be 6,6,5,4,3; and that the harp and timpani be placed fairly downstage.

Elegy

The oboe d’amore begins the work with an atmospheric soliloquy: A held out low E-flat (all references to notes in the oboe d’amore are at concert pitch) is played in *pianississimo*, which is followed by a long pause; a B is held out in

¹¹ Interview with composer by author, May 20th, 2009

similar fashion followed by another long pause; Van Dijk then begins a rhythmic acceleration as the notes are played together at an increasing tempo. This increase in rhythmic activity, the tension created by the augmented fifth relationship between these notes, and the atmospheric opening long notes successfully create an immediate air of suspense in these first twelve measures.

The composer's thoughtful and detailed style can be seen in his highly specific markings and performance annotations, such as the meticulous and varied duration markings over the first five pauses. He relaxes the opening tension at figure 1 by writing a more lyrical line with the introduction of the A and D to complete the motive. Again there are fastidious marking, such as *con calore* (with warmth) over the A and exact directions for the rhythmic placement of the *acciaccatura* D. Before venturing any further into the concerto, it is important to examine the motive in detail, as it will have various applications throughout the work. The motive exists as a melody that is comprised of four pitches (often transposed, but almost always in the same pitch order) and as a chord. For the sake of clarity, they will be known as the SHAR melody and SHAR chord.

SHAR melody:



SHAR chord:



As mentioned before, the chord contains the intervals (from the root) of a **major and minor 3rd** as well as the seventh. A **tri-tone** exists between the E-flat and A, and the minor seventh between the A and B also functions as an inverted **major 2nd**. The final interval within the chord is the **minor 2nd** between the D and E-flat. These intervals are used throughout the work in intricate ways, such as generating levels of motivic and harmonic transpositions, and this chord is the genesis of the concerto.

It would be best to first examine the *Elegy* on a macro scale to more easily view the application of this chord and its intervals in various harmonic and melodic movements.

Measure: 1	17	25
Material: Opening soliloquy	Strings join with Oboe	Motive in oboe with full
Oboe alone	playing motive	strings in aggressive forte
Pitch content: SHAR chord	Oboe centered on B	Oboe centered on D
	Root of Motive	Violins play the SHAR
		Chord on B-Flat (Maj 3
	Viola and Cello Chord:	from D center of oboe)
	Tri-tone[C] min 6 (Maj 3)	
	[E]	
	[F#] min 6 (Maj 3)	
	Tri-tone [A#]	

Measure:	31	50
Material:	Strings alone. Dark timbre	String Fugato
	Viola plays P-E-T-E-R	<i>doloroso</i> –painful.
	Sighing in Violin II	Subject passed from Bass
	Stacked cresc. Chord	up through string section
Pitch content:	4 E notes in viola= Peter	Subject played in three
	Maj/min 3 rd sighs in violin	transpositions:
	2 SHAR chords on	F - B - E Flat
	C and F# (tri-tone apart)	↑tri-tone ↑Maj 3 rd
		Maj 2 nd between E-flat and F

As can be seen from the outline, Van Dijk has subtly and cleverly woven the motive throughout the music of the first *Elegy*. He establishes his command over orchestral coloring within even the opening section with his intelligent orchestration and attention to timbre. Picking up after the opening sixteen measures, the string entrance in *pianississimo* at m.17 continues the enigmatic opening with a muted chord containing tri-tones and the Major 3rd. This chord is also harmonically interesting in that the pitches comprise part of a whole-tone scale and this aspect is worth noting as this exact chord is used at the end of the work in measure 212. He keeps the timbre dark by neglecting the brighter color of the violins in favor of using the more rounded sounds of the violas and cellos. The

harp at m.21 duplicates this chord, and this brooding mood is further enhanced with *pizzicato* in the bass.

An early example of the application of one of the motive's intervals as a level of transposition is seen at the *forte* section at m.25. In this section the oboe has moved up a minor 3rd from a B center to D. The aggression of the accompanying *pizzicato* motive chord, based on B-flat, is furthered by it being based a half-step lower than the original key of B, which is still being used by the oboe. This half-step clash sets off the oboe in a written out *accelerando* line that uses an emotionally pleading intervallic movement up to the alternating major and minor third. Please note: The oboe d'amore is written at concert pitch in the examples of both the score and individual excerpts.

The image displays a musical score excerpt for three staves. The top staff is for Oboe d'amore (concert pitch), featuring a melodic line with triplets and a *piu f* dynamic marking. The middle two staves are for Violin I and Violin II, both marked *div./pizz.* and *poco f risonante*. The bottom staff is for Oboe (Ob.), showing a more complex melodic line with triplets and a *f* dynamic marking. The score is written in 3/4 time and includes various musical notations such as triplets, slurs, and dynamic markings.

The heightened tension of this section is interrupted by a nervous new theme that Van Dijk has created from another name, his own. The violas play a

four-note motive of repeated E in an off-beat triplet pattern. This is derived from the E's of his own first name, Peter. As mentioned earlier, the personal nature of this work and the inclusion of the composers name could lead to a programmatic view of the work. With this in mind, the tense-sounding theme, signifying Van Dijk, would align with the poem that he wrote, specifically the image of “*my eyes dance laughter/lift up their tightly-bound hands/in praise of you*”. This tense theme (*tightly-bound hands*) seems to come as a reaction (*in praise of you*) to the impassioned SHAR theme (*set the sky alight with your smiles*) heard just before. The second violins interject this theme with a figure marked *quasi sospirando* (sighingly) that uses the sighing major to minor 3rd movement. This minor/major third relationship (often used in this work) originates from the pitches of the SHAR motive.

PETER theme at m.31:

The musical score shows three staves: Violin I, Violin II, and Viola. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 3/4. In measure 31, Violin I plays a half note E4 (pp) and Violin II plays a half note E4 (p). In measure 32, Violin I plays a half note E4 (pp) and Violin II plays a half note E4 (p). In measure 33, Violin I plays a half note E4 (quasi sospirando) and Violin II plays a half note E4 (p). In measure 34, Violin I plays a half note E4 (quasi sospirando) and Violin II plays a half note E4 (p). The Viola part consists of triplet eighth notes in measures 31-32 and 33-34, marked with a 'p' dynamic.

The texture thickens to include the cellos as the dynamic increases to an interesting *fortissimo* chord at m.39. This chord contains two SHAR chords, one with a C as its root and the other, an F# root. In this instance, Van Dijk has used the tri-tone interval of the motive itself to create a harmonic tension between these

two motive chords that heightens the emotional intensity of this section. In response to this agitated state, the oboe line enters with a soothing line marked *con tenerezza* (with tenderness). Returning to the original tonal center of B, the oboe plays a sustained line that attempts to soothe the nervous PETER theme in the strings, which is played by the second violins and violas a half-step apart in a juxtaposition of duple and triple rhythms. The oboe d'amore climaxes its appeal to calm with a leap from the root B up to an A, the interval of a seventh (from the SHAR chord).

The compositional contour that Van Dijk creates for the oboe d'amore in a passage like this (and the opening section) that begins so calmly and then progress to a more impassioned state of rhythmic, harmonic, or intervallic movement, gives a clear music interpretation of the '*gentle Phoenix*' that will '*rise from the ashes of my thoughts*'. The plea from the oboe d'amore is not heeded as the PETER theme continues with second violins and violas in unison. The ominous mood is furthered by the first appearance of the timpani as it plays a fragment of the SHAR theme, but this entrance is pitched down a half-step in B-flat. It is remarkable to see how, in a relatively brief section, Van Dijk has introduced a complex dynamic between these themes, just by using slight harmonic movements and intervallic relationships in the melodic lines. This subtle style of composition is also effective in evoking programmatic references to the poem that not only enhance the music, but also add further complexity to the poem itself.

The anxious and fragmented nature of the work is suddenly changed by a beautiful string fugato that begins at m.50. Van Dijk gave this section an expression marking of *subito lirico ma sempre doloroso* (suddenly lyrical, but somewhat painful). The pain of the music comes through in the beautiful, yet almost tortured, melodic writing of the subject, which is played in *stretto* entrances that are passed upwards from the basses to the first violins. While this subject is clearly the SHAR motive, the various string sections do not exactly repeat the subject as they normally would in a fugato.

The most obvious difference is that Van Dijk has the subject start at differing levels of transposition at each entrance. Each transposition looks as follows:

Double Bass- A; Cello- A; Viola- E-flat; Violin II- G; Violin I- A

While there are some repeated key centers, it is interesting to note the intervallic relationships between the transpositions. The tri-tone is once again used as a harmonic relationship- seen in the cello and viola themes, and the Major 3rd relationship is apparent between the viola and second violin themes. Once again, Van Dijk has used the SHAR theme simultaneously, both melodically and harmonically.

The subject itself also differs each time by way of the rhythm never being the same, however, the order of pitches from the SHAR theme remains true to the initial order from the opening of the work. This may not be easily recognizable on

first hearing, as the speed at which we hear the pitches in the fugato is considerably quicker than the opening of the *Elegy*.

Fugato:

subito lirico ma sempre doloroso
(tempo l'istesso)

50

5

Vla.

Vc.

Db.

pp

poco

mp

55

6

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Db.

p

poco

mp

s

s

s

The final measure of the first *Elegy* is an interesting combination of the two themes. The PETER theme is played in the cellos and double basses on an E-flat. The harp, second violins and viola play as *sforzando* cluster of an A and B, which is a major 2nd apart and this chord will be frequently used in the *Dance*. When viewed as a chord, these pitches comprise three of the SHAR theme pitches at its initial level of transposition. The missing pitch from this chord is the minor third, D, which is cleverly used to complete the SHAR theme in the next measure as the pitch of the motive for the *Dance*.

Transition from *Elegy* to *Dance*:

The musical score shows the transition from *Elegy* to *Dance* for several instruments. The Oboe part begins with a melodic line marked *subito poco Allegro* and *mp sub.giocoso ed egualmente sempre*. The Harp part features a *sf* (sforzando) chord. The Violin II part has a *pizz./div.* (pizzicato/divisi) marking and a *sf* (sforzando) chord. The Viola part has a *sfp* (sforzando/pianissimo) marking. The Violoncello and Double Bass parts feature triplet patterns marked *mp* (mezzo-piano).

Dance

The juxtaposition of the *Elegy* and the *Dance* is immediately heard at the outset of this new section. The previous lyrical, quasi-improvisatory music is replaced with rhythmically driving music that is complex and almost savage at times. Periods of melodic tranquility are interspersed in this section, but the music always returns to this rhythmic dance. There are various meter changes and syncopated patterns and Van Dijk uses the instruments in a percussive manner to accentuate these changes and distinct patterns. Having written, in his notes on the work, his personal interpretation of the nature of the *Dance* and *Elegy*, he successfully illustrates this disparity in the music and, yet, manages to “wield together these most opposite of poles” by using the SHAR theme throughout the

Dance in specific chords and by using harmonic modulations derived from the chord. This is done in both obvious and subtle ways by manipulating the many permutations of the SHAR chord, and creates an underlying unity in the work.

The theme of the *Dance* is a repeated four-note motive. Van Dijk believes that having such a simple theme and applying several techniques, such as: expansion by adding more material, transposing the theme, augmentation and diminution; is a common, but highly successful compositional practice. He likens this to “the opening out of a flower”.¹² This short theme is often followed by a sextuplet figure. This figure is interesting as it contains a root, minor third, major third, and perfect fifth. This figure is an obvious reference to the SHAR chord with the common minor and major third interval. The repeated four-note theme is most often pitched on the major third of the sextuplet figure. The theme is then ‘opened out’ by having the first of the four notes move up a minor third. This expansion is continued with the addition of a major 3rd grace note to the minor third, which creates the amorphous minor/major juxtaposition that Van Dijk uses throughout the concerto.

Theme at m.64 with the beaming is as it appears in the score:



¹² Interview with composer by author, May 20th, 2009

Van Dijk has already shown, in the *Elegy*, his skill at weaving subtle harmonic relationships into a fast moving texture and this practice continues in the *Dance*. The intervallic relationships between the pitches of the SHAR chord are used in an even wider application than seen in the *Elegy*, such as corresponding levels of transposition and simultaneous thematic groupings at these intervals. It is easiest to examine the *Dance* on a large scale to observe these various harmonic and thematic relationships and modulations.

Measure:	62-	73-	77-
Material:	Theme on D Percussive accompaniment	Theme on F#- up Maj 3rd Sustained accomp.	Theme on F in strings -down <i>min 2nd</i> Percussive accomp.
Pitch content:	SHAR chord on C at m.67 SHAR chord on E-flat at m.70 SHAR chord on C at m.70	M/m2 in accomp. min 3 rd 	SHAR chord on E M2 M7 (<i>min2</i>) in accomp.
Measure:	83	87	98
Material:	<i>espressivo</i> theme in oboe	Theme on G –Maj 2nd up Sustained accomp.	Theme on F –Maj 2nd down Percussive accomp.
Pitch content:	A-flat Dorian melody	SHAR chord on C# Tri-tone relationship to oboe SHAR chord at 91 on G (TT up)	SHAR chord on D in harp at m.100
Measure:	105	118	133
Material:	Theme on A- Maj 3rd up	Theme on G# - min 2nd down	Theme on G-
Pitch content:	String quartet –moving in Contrary motion- Maj 2 nd apart Strings pitched in Tri-tone groups	SHAR chord on D#	min 2 nd down M7 (<i>m2</i>) leap in theme

Measure:	139	144	150	162
Material:	Theme on G#- up <i>min 2nd</i>	Climax	lyrical oboe melody	Theme on F
Pitch content:	M/m 3 rd in strings	SHAR chord		
	Vln I SHAR melodic theme	on E	Phrygian scale on C	
	on G- <i>min 2nd</i> against dance theme			
Measure:	171	192		
Material:	timpani solo	SHAR Elegy theme on E		
	Theme on A flat	Theme on E flat		
	- min 3 rd up	Legato accomp. in harp		
Pitch content:	SHAR chord on C and F	SHAR melodic theme on C		
	at m.179	in harp - Maj 3 rd from oboe		
		- min 3 rd from timp.		

By viewing the *Dance* in this broader perspective, the common elements of the section are apparent: the interplay of the major and minor third tonality, the abundant use of major and minor second relationships and chords, and the deliberate use of tri-tones. It is interesting to note levels of transposition of the theme (when viewed in groups of three): D to F and F-sharp; and F to G-sharp and A- these intervals are contained within the SHAR motive. This is an application of the major/minor third relationship on the tonal center level. The accompaniment string chords are most often scored in a major second grouping and quite often are played as four eighth notes, which is a subtle rhythmic augmentation of the sixteenth note theme.

Despite the complex interplay of harmonic relationships, the dance flows smoothly and has a natural shape. The climax of the *Dance* occurs very close to

the ‘golden mean’ and the few brief lyrical moments during the *Dance* provide a welcome respite to the more energetic passages. Van Dijk is specific, as ever, in his marking and instructions, which serves to maximize his orchestration. The stark contrast between the ending of the *Elegy* and the beginning of the *Dance* holds true to Van Dijk’s statement that “Dances and elegies are as far removed from each other as day/night”. However, as the *Dance* progresses, he alludes to the *Elegy* with subtle motivic fragments and eventually consoles the theme of the *Dance* with the SHAR melodic theme from the *Elegy* at the end of this section. This could be viewed as a fulfillment of his view that “we endeavour to weld together these most opposite of poles”.

Another interpretation of the music, along programmatic lines, would be to regard the dramatic timpani solo as a musical depiction of “the hammer” as it “rises and must fall- whether to forge some new miracle or shatter the old...” This is followed by all the themes being played simultaneously for the first time, thus creating “some new miracle”.

Combination of themes at m.191

The image shows a musical score for three instruments: Oboe, Timpani, and Harp. The Oboe part is in the top staff, using a treble clef and a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat). It begins with a rest, followed by a melodic line starting on G4, moving through A4, B-flat4, and C5, with some grace notes. The Timpani part is in the middle staff, using a bass clef and the same key signature. It is marked 'wooden mallets' and features a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes, with dynamics *p* and *pp* indicated. The Harp part is in the bottom staff, using a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) and the same key signature. It plays a complex, flowing arpeggiated figure. The entire passage is enclosed in a single system with a repeat sign at the end.

Elegy

With a sustained texture and a quasi-improvisatory melodic line played in *pianissimo*, the closing *Elegy* provides a stark contrast to the energetic ending of the *Dance*. This short closing section is laden with the harmonic relationships that have been established in the work. The oboe d'amore plays a short cadenza-like passage, which uses a melodic pattern that rotates between the root, major, and minor third. This pattern is initially based on D, but then uses a familiar motivic interval as it moves up a minor third to F. The sustained string chords that accompany this melody further enhance the harmonic ambiguity that Van Dijk has propagated throughout the concerto. The first chord is a combination of an E-flat 7 and a D 7 chord (the minor second interval between these chords is a widely used interval throughout the work) and the following chord is a C# chord with both the minor and major thirds.

Van Dijk employs an interesting technique at the end of the work, as he has the oboe d'amore play the SHAR melody from the opening of the work, but this time in a much-abbreviated musical palindrome to the opening. In this way, the melody loses rhythmic activity as the pitches of the theme are heard in reverse from the opening, thus ending with a sustained E flat. The abbreviated use of this technique keeps the melodic line from becoming stagnant or predictable and is another example of the subtlety of Van Dijk's compositional style.

He wastes no opportunity to make final references to the intervallic relationship of the SHAR chord, as the right hand of the harp plays a SHAR chord

Ending of concerto:

5

Ob. *piu p* *pp* *a niente*

Vla.

Vc.

Elegy-Dance-Elegy is unique work that deserves to be performed and enjoyed internationally. Van Dijk is a master orchestrator and writes idiomatic lines for the oboe d'amore. Oboists will find that this concerto fits comfortably on the instrument and the complexity of the music is deftly woven into the score creating a wonderful flow and arc to the work. The extra-musical sources of the poem and composer's note serve to both inform and engage the audience. The poem is open to various interpretations beside the programmatic outline that I suggested in this dissertation and this provides each performer an opportunity to

present their individual interpretation of this concerto. That Van Dijk included so much depth and interpretive possibilities in the work, allows this music to be appreciated by a broader musical audience than merely oboists.

The economically sized orchestra and relatively short duration of the work allow rehearsals to be conducted within a reasonable schedule and budget. As Van Dijk observed, the difficulty in having this work performed is finding an oboe d'amore player. The flip side of this dilemma is that this concern is easily countered by the willingness of an oboist to perform such an interesting and unique work. The concerto has yet to be commercially recorded and published, and is available for purchase by contacting the composer via e-mail at: plvdijk@iafrica.com.

In this current climate of orchestral stagnation and financial instability, and the struggle of classical music to establish contemporary relevance, this unique and masterful work is able, in terms of an orchestral concerto, to supply an answer to these pressing concerns that is both financially feasible and artistically gratifying.

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